

## Cotebrook Shire Horse Centre - 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014

Today we are off to the **Shire Horse Centre** in **Cotebrook** for our lunch stop. **Jane M** was our route master and the perfect weather forecast encouraged sixteen riders to the start. **Sue**, who has been our only woman rider for a few weeks was pleased to see **Ruth** and **Sylvia** as well as **Jane**. Our snapper **John F** left the **Eureka** alone to visit one of our members.

**Jane** said the route would take us through **Saughall** and then stay on the **Greenway** to the end. There were a few borderline fitness riders. **Mike K**, who had been half eaten by mozzies on the **Burton Marshes** and **Brian S** had suspected gout but undeterred he wore his trainers and altered his pedals.

**Jane** had just returned from **France** and from the start it looked like she had been practicing on the **Alpe d'Huez** as the pace was very brisk. We were allowed to get our breath back at the end of the **Greenway**.

From here we headed to **Christleton** and the **Pack Horse bridges**. We don't ride over the bridges very often and although the mud wasn't so bad the nettles made staying in the middle of the path a priority.



These bridges over the **River Gowy** are in a very scenic area so we had our banana break here.



**Hoofield** came next and its chocolate box cottage on the bend is home to two black swans and a heron. We now had **Beeston Castle** in our sights but turning left we rode up the only hill to **Tarporley**.

After a quick look at the map **Jane** directed us towards **Eaton** and after a nice downhill stretch arrived in **Cotebrook** and our lunch stop. It's a lovely setting for a stop, surrounded by rolling hills; there were **Shetland** ponies, hens with a clutch of chicks, geese and ducks

but no **Shire Horses**. The **Shire Horses** turned out to be '**SHY horses**' as they were out of sight unless you paid to see them!

The ploughman's lunch was an obvious favourite but they ran out of apple pie - a bit of a let-down. **John Maudsley** who rides with the **Christleton** group joined us. During lunch there was an exchange of stories re: **T.O.B.** It seems one of the most popular places to watch it was **Holt** and **Farndon**. Being Cyclists I think we appreciate more the fantastic speed they maintain throughout the stages.

On the way home from **Holt** with **Brian S** we were held up by a farmer taking his herd of cows down the road to another field. The thought struck me - what would have happened if the breakaway group go past his farm, then he brings his cows out blocking the peloton? After lunch we cycled back up the hill that we came in on but soon turned off to go through **Utkinton**. Then the shout **PUNCTURE** was heard above the sound of motor bikes practicing at **Oulton Park**. **Pete** was the unfortunate one but he lost any sympathy when it was discovered that he didn't have a pump!! So from now on he will be known as '**pump-less Pete**'. It was a brilliant day for cycling - that's what brought out the cycling wounded, but there were more wounds to come. We were on the last leg near **Chester Zoo** where, in a narrow lane, a sharp bend hid some of our group who had stopped, a shout on the last second could not prevent myself and some others piling into each other. No serious injuries but loads of nettle stings from the verge. I've heard that beer is a good antidote so I headed to the **Wheatsheaf pub** with **Brian S**.

Thanks again **Jane** for a really nice ride on probably one of the best weather days of the year.

**Chris Byrne**

P.s. Congrats to **Brian and Sylvia** on becoming grandparents. We hope 4lb something **Zach** is doing well.