

Pant-yr-Ochain, Gresford - 9th September 2015

After last week's washout it was good to be back in the saddle. A good forecast saw fifteen riders on the grid led by **John F** and another small group bypassing the marshes led by **Brian L**. **John's** ride led us to **Pant-yr-Ochain** - not so much a place more a restaurant/pub by **Gresford** converted from a very impressive home with its own lake. **John** must have seen the menu because he recommended the nearby Chippy.

John's route took us after the marshes to the blue bridge, then up to **Hawarden**, with the steep climb through **Bilberry Wood**. Lower mountain road took us to our banana stop by the 'Guitarist carved in a tree'; opinion was split "Is it Paul? Or Is It Jimmy?"

Guitarist carved in a tree

This was followed by an excellent downhill section. A short stretch on a main road took us on another long and quiet lane; it was only as we came to its end I recognised it from our ride to **Cefn-a- Bedd** recently. When we got near to our venue we had to walk over two footbridges giving us some upper body exercise.

About six people chose to eat in the pub and the rest of us headed to the chippy, and ate lunch by a huge duck pond. The chips were very generous portions much to the delight of the ducks.



In Pant-yr-Ochain having lunch

Later when we tried to enjoy a pint (£3:60) **Brian L** let it slip that **Mike C** sitting quietly at the table was celebrating his 81st birthday, so we all raised our glasses wishing him all the best. It was only when I read about the **Gresford Mine Disaster** that I realised that it happened on September 22nd 1934 exactly 81 years ago. As you may know 266 men and boys were killed in

one of the worst ever mining disasters, only 11 bodies were recovered - the rest were entombed. (*the worst mining disaster was that at Senghennydd, near Caerphilly on October 13th, 1913 when 439 miners died. My grandfather and his two sons (pictured) were three of only eighteen survivors - I have an original book of the disaster written at the time - Ed*)



Miners helped make the nation wealthy, but a certain person called them “*The enemy within*”.

As we were leaving we got to wondering who the Pant-yr-Ochain had belonged to originally, I don't think it was a miners' club - more like a miner owners' house, What's that **Smiths** line from their song “*Bought on stolen wine.*”

It had gone a bit cooler so we put our plastic jackets on

- we passed **Bob Jill and Roy**, **Brian L** went a different route. Again **John** found some great lanes on the way to **Rossett** but it's the hedge cutting season and **Mike M** found a hawthorn in his front wheel. He said to carry on as he knew the route, although he must know a shorter one as he joined us again near **Eccleston**.

With a tail wind we chose to ride alongside the **Dee**, crossed the **A55 to Woodbank**, so well done again **John** for a very enjoyable ride - and a good Chippy as well!

Chris Byrne

Photos by John Ferguson

