

## Alternatives Ride, The Morris Dancer, Kelsall - 27<sup>th</sup> Feb 2019

After discussing venue options including the scheduled [Cleopatra's](#), [Lily's Coffee Shop at Aldford](#), [Jemoley's in Penyfford](#) and the [Morris Dancer in Kelsall](#) we opted for the latter. In anticipation of this outcome I had a route of about forty miles in mind which is becoming a distance norm for this group. We are obviously losing our shine as this week we were down to eight (12 last week's). Of the missing four, usual regular [Tony S](#) could not resist his beloved [Welsh](#) hills with such fine weather forecast, [Alan S](#) was otherwise engaged, [Mike M](#) and [Tony](#) opted for the more demanding group ride - and perhaps the £6 butty and chips offer - and returned to the main group.



Our route out was via [Dunkirk](#), [A5117 cycle path](#), [Stoak](#), with customary banana stop at [Mickle Trafford](#). A sort of 'deja vue' route. [Alan O](#) was the only one who complied with tradition and brought a banana. We moved onward to Barrow, [Stamford Bridge](#) then up [Stamford Lane](#) towards [Christleton](#). I had not advised the group that I intended to use [Hockenhull Platts](#), but [Alan O](#) who had anticipated the route and had recently ridden that way advised me that we could hit some mud. I thought that the recent good weather would have dried the mud and that there would not be a problem.



[Hockenhull Platts](#) or better known to most as the [Packhorse Bridges](#) is the subject of a [Wikipedia article](#) which is worthy of a read if you have a spare five minutes and are interested in local history. I initially thought that perhaps part of the name was associated with cycling but my wife pointed out that the "peddling" was not the same thing as pedalling. (and to think that spelling was one of my strongest subjects at school.)

The unmetalled path to the first bridge was not too muddy and rideable but we dismounted to cross the bridges on foot.

The main challenge was still to come. Having crossed the bridges safely we only had the half mile or so of path to negotiate but at about the halfway point and at a junction with a farm exit, we were confronted with a sea of soft gooey mud across the path. (Ignore **Alan O's** advice at your peril). **Alan** demonstrated how to navigate it using a narrow bypass path along the bank created by other frustrated walkers and dare I say pedallers and who knows, perhaps even peddlers.

Most of us followed **Alan**. **Peter J** showed his cross country expertise by hoisting his bike on his shoulder and navigating the narrow by-pass without much ado but the e-bikers were in a quandary. Being an experienced e-biker myself (nudge nudge), and a gentleman of the old school, I offered to assist **Margaret**. She quickly declined and I realised at that point that I had stupidly challenged her independence Oops!

**Margaret** decided to run the gauntlet on foot which she successfully did with only very muddy shoes as the outcome. **Peter W** was more cavalier and powered through the mud equally successfully except that rather than muddy shoes he now had a muddy bike for his efforts.

At that stage I had not been landed with writing this report so missed this tremendous photographic opportunity to enhance this text with some action photos. Had **John F** been with us I am sure the various crossing techniques would have been recorded for posterity. Maybe next year.



Without more ado and not one single moan from the group, we continued to the venue via **Oscroft**. As one of the **Brunning and Price** chain of pubs there was no butty and chips deal on here and we chose from a varied menu.

**Margaret**, not known for her beer drinking, had obviously developed a thirst at the mudhole and had decided to order two bottles at a time. (Message to **Chris S**. "Don't worry **Chris**. **Margaret** is not on the way to becoming a plonky, I can assure you that it was non-alcoholic beer".)

We left the pub fully satisfied having enjoyed excellent food and service.

Our ride back was straight forward with a wind that was more or less in our favour and with sharing the lead we made good time.

We took **Holland's Lane** towards **Delamere** passing under the **A54** through **Woodside** to the **B5393** then onward to **Ashton** and the **Greenway**.



**Alan O** stayed with us up to **Lodge La/Woodbank Lane junction** and four of us stopped at the **Eureka** for the inevitable cup of tea and **Tunnock** courtesy of **Peter W**.

I thought I would mention why there is no reference to **Penyffordd Pete's mudguard problems** in this report other than now. He has got rid of his mudguard rubbing problem altogether by simply removing them . Nice bit of lateral thinking there **Pete**.

**N.B.** Lateral thinking is a manner of solving problems using an indirect and creative approach via reasoning that is not immediately obvious. It involves ideas that may not be obtainable using only traditional step by step logic. Perhaps it wasn't lateral thinking after all but problem solved for now anyway.

**Text and photos by Brian L**