

'Old Ma' celebrates 'young Brian's' birthday - 25th February 2015

Welcome back bloggers (who you are). Bad weather and a bad bike combined to prevent my usual load of nonsense reaching the page. Last week on our way to Café Fresh in Dunham-on-the-Hill, my Trek bike (not as expensive as Lance's) gave up on turning my back wheel as we were entering Christleton. I made the decision to call a black cab from the Ring o' Bells pub, and took it to Cheshire cycles. A phone call later, I was told I needed two new wheels - but while it is in dock I do have the use of my son's bike until my Trek is back on track.

Today's ride was to be to the Black Dog in Waverton but was changed because of a rabies scare(!), but Old Ma said we would love to have you on our farm as it is free of foot and mouth.

Twenty four riders lined up at the bus stop so Jane relayed the route to Sylvia who led the leading group. On some rides, when we split up, we find we meet up again but that didn't happen today, so if anything interesting happened you will have to ask Sylvia's bunch. Nothing outstanding took place in our group except to say you could feel the warmth of the sun on your back, and with no wind to contend with it did feel like spring had come early.



Jane took us down Woodbank to Saughall where we were splattered with a mixture of mud and dung - a small price to pay for the pleasure of being outdoors on such a fine day. The Greenway was particularly busy with dog walkers and ramblers giving the back markers a chance to close up, and with a pleasant banana stop later, I think Jane knew Sylvia's group would have bums on seats at Old Ma's before us. After leaving the Greenway we went through Bruera and nearing Farndon we turned left on a seldom travelled road to Coddington and Tattenhall.



As we expected Sylvia's group was already on the cake course and had been joined by George, Ada and Chris R. Brian S was the last person to enter the café and someone had let it slip that it was his 69th birthday. He was greeted by a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday". Old Ma rose to the occasion by donating a large slice of chocolate cake. During lunch there was some chat regarding last night's TV - a programme about Chris Froome. I happen

to be reading his book called "The Climb". There's a part in the book that did not get a mention. I am sure it was to protect the Kenyan cycling team from embarrassment. One of Chris's first rides representing Kenya was in the Tour of Egypt. It was in the Sinai Desert one of the team got a puncture so he waited for the support vehicle - the temperatures were at boiling point and he had no water. Hours later he knew he was in desperate trouble. He dug a trench and buried himself in the sand, covering his head with his helmet. Then it went dark and he risked freezing to death. Eventually a motorist on this little used road spotted his bike in his headlights who knew of the Tour and thought a rider had abandoned and left the bike - but that seemed strange. Then he saw the helmet and discovered the rider asleep or comatose. It later transpired that the support team had gone sightseeing looking for Mount Sinai where Moses came down with the Ten Commandments I think another one could be added "thou shall not desert in the desert".



Brian Lowe was involved in an 'episode', or should that be 'trailer', when a tractor and trailer cut him up turning into a field (he, Glennys and Joseen had taken a shorter route) - Brian was overheard saying "*I'll never listen to the Archers again*". Roy was conspicuous by his absence. He had an altercation on the stairs and damaged his hand - the doctor said "*stay of your bike for a week*" but gave him the 'thumbs up' after that!

We left the café the way we arrived - Sylvia first and us a bit later. We rode to Waverton then to Chester Zoo and as it was starting to rain the group fragmented to find the shortest way home. In conclusion I think women are rubbish at leading the country but Sylvia and Jane proved they are excellent at leading CTC rides - well done and thanks.

If you are reading this I get well soon mate, or I will have to start extracting the urine from someone else.

Chris Byrne

Photos by John Ferguson