

The Druid Inn, Pontblyddin - 24th September 2014

The ride today is to **The Druid** pub in **Pontblyddin** and led by yours truly. The forecast was for clear blue skies and a strong breeze. At 9:30am I didn't want to leave the house as it was pouring down - "*The only rain will be down south*" was forecasted. They must have meant south of the **Dee**.

I left home between showers and managed to remain dry but there were some very dark clouds knocking about. There are two things that discourage cyclists from a ride, hills and bad weather. It must have been a combination of them both as only ten were on the grid. Two of those were **Martin** and **Sarah** fresh from their mega trip around **Europe**.

I asked the usual question - "*how many are eating in the pub?*" - the answer was five. **Richard** and **Dave** were joining us at **Northop** and that made six. I called the pub to let them know, but because of traffic noise I couldn't hear his reply (in future ring away from main road).

I used the voted best route to **Northop** up **Papermill Lane**, the first of our three long climbs. To get this far we used the **Greenway** to the railway bridge, going over and under it to **Connahs Quay**. This place is named after **Mary Connah** (its true) - she owned the dock where the ferry used to cross from **Neston** and **Parkgate**. There is no Q in the welsh alphabet. They called it **Connahs Cei**, but there *is* a B&Q in the town.

Our next cat 1 climb was up to **Gwernaffield**. I was now leading from the back but loyalty made the group wait for me at the top. Turning left at **The Hand** pub we soon came to the rainbow - we only had the last bit to summit and then we freewheeled to **The Swan** pub half way down. This next section provides some brilliant views on the way to **Nercwys** where there is a Grade 1 listed welsh fortified house - it's been in the same family for six centuries. **Rheinallt ap Gruffydd ap Bleddyn** who features in the continuous border warfare, hung the **Mayor of Chester** in his dining hall in 1465 - an iron staple in the ceiling marks the spot. His family motto was *Heb Dduw, heb ddim*, which translates as "*without God there is nothing*". The **Mayor of Chester** said that's Boll***S "*without rope there is hope*".

We now faced our most difficult climb up to **Treuddyn**. My elastic - already stretched - finally snapped near the top. After a breather I remounted and got going again. I was looking forward to **Martin** and **Sarah's** tales of their **Euro trek** during lunch but at the last minute they turned off and headed for **Rossett**.

On arrival at **The Druid** it was good to see our friends who had made their own way **Tony S** (motorbike) **Bob & Jill** (car assist) **George and Ada** bike (car assist) and **Mike Cross** (car

assist). These extra diners brought the remark from the manager - "*I thought you said six!*" You can't always legislate for people making their own way, since the first group were about half an hour ahead of us - but shouldn't they be glad of the custom?

If the going was tough coming out it was the opposite on the return. We hadn't gone far when we passed **Bob** and **Jill** who had just finished fixing a puncture.

We went through **Penyffordd** to **Lower Mountain Road** and down to **Hawarden** whose residents have included **Emma Hamilton** and the most famous scouser since **John Lennon** and **Jim Larkin** - **William Gladstone**.

Then it was down again to the **blue bridge** and into **Woodbank**. There were two notable achievements this week **Jens Voight** at 43 set a new record for the hour it was 37.4 miles and **Wiggo** is the **World Champion Time Trialist**.

No **John** today - so no pics - sorry!

Chris Byrne