

Old Ma's, Gatesheath - 8th November 2017

Colin was all set to lead the ride when he was phoned by his work to say they needed him to come in. Twenty-two people presented themselves at the starting point outside the Eureka. Very few potential replacement leaders were present, fit, and knew the route so we had a difficult few minutes. We split into three with Colin, Chris D and I leading each of these groups. As my group were about to leave another three riders emerged from the Eureka increasing us to eleven and also, one of our group fell off his bike (no injury). There was also a group of three riders going on a more direct route.

We got underway and I turned my attention as to how I was going to replace Colin when he had to go to work. By the time we reached the Zoo, Christine had been identified as a leader and Pauline offered to loan her a Garmin with the route already loaded. At this point John (in Group 2) had a puncture, and we (Group 3), caught up with him and the rest of Group 2. I briefly explained the situation to Chris D and left him to sort it out while I chased after Group 1, knowing that Colin was about to leave them. I caught them at Sandy Lane just as Colin was about to go, and found Liz had decided to lead - understandably a little reluctant, since she did not know the route and had crashed dramatically the week before whilst looking at her Garmin!



I felt now I could relax and enjoy the ride and the beautiful day. On arrival at Old Ma's we found that the cook had phoned in sick and so service would be at best a little slow. In addition to the twenty-seven people I have mentioned, there were also at least five and a few other customers who had made their own way there.

We then learned that Pauline had fallen from her bike on the slippery surface and, feeling shaken, cut and bruised had decided to ride directly home with her husband Martin. We have since heard from her saying *"Just a nasty case of road rash. Luckily no broken bones. I got home fine thank you, Martin and I decided to head back home after my little accident. Everyone was very kind and made sure I was ok."*

It took a very long time to get all the orders placed let alone get the food served, so some people were wanting to leave, saying they had been there an hour, whilst others were still waiting for food. Fortunately a lot more of our leaders were confident of finding the way home than they had felt on the outward ride.

A number of smaller groups set off and **Harry** and **John W** who were amongst those still waiting for food said they would ensure no one was left behind.

So despite the difficulties I hope everyone enjoyed the ride. **Colin** had planned an interesting route and it was unfortunate that he was dragged away at the last moment. The group I rode home with decided we were getting back too early, and as it was such a nice day we would add an extra loop, and a cafe stop, and go via **Foxes Cafe**.

It may be that we should reconsider using **Old Ma's**. but if we hadn't had the combination of the cook being ill and the unusually good weather we may not have had any problem there.

Many thanks to all those who unexpectedly found themselves leading the groups.

Chris Smith

The Alternatives

A happy band of three left the **Eureka** (after the very large main group, who were assembled opposite the café) Margaret S who was on her electric bike, Peter W, and me (Glennys). Our often-pedalled route out included **Stoak** and **Mickle Trafford**, past the **Greenway** and **Guilden Sutton** to the **A51** and over to **Waverton**. Then to **Huxley**, over the two bridges to **Gatesheath** and **Old Ma's** - nineteen miles in total. Some of the main group had already arrived and were lunching. it was good to see **Bob** and **Jill** who arrived soon after us. Service was slow because of the number of riders but eventually, everyone was served and fed. The weather was dry with occasional sun adding to our enjoyment of just being out on our bikes!

Glennys Hammond