

Numbers were down for the Christmas week ride but twelve was a pretty decent turnout given recent weather and a forecast of more rain on the morning of the ride. After a brief powwow we decided on a route that would take us from Three Sisters by road to avoid using the muddy route down to Hawkley Hall.

We left the car park via the industrial estate and headed down Bryn Road, through Stubshaw Cross and Bamfurlong before joining the canal. We proceeded along the canal to the lift bridge at Plank Lane where we crossed the canal to make our way to the access point to Fir Tree Flash where we had a brief refreshment stop. The ride had been fairly uneventful up to this point and the weather had been kind with barely a spot of rain.

Phil 1 led the group onto the rough footpaths around the flash. The ride became a bit more challenging during this section as there were a few short climbs on bumpy surfaces and the paths were pitted with some decent puddles. We had decided not to circle the flash as those paths tended to get really heavy so instead we made our way to the fishery car park off Wigan Road, Leigh. From there we joined Wigan Road and made our way up to Tamar. Jim H took the lead for a short while as he showed us a useful route into Bickershaw using a good quality footpath that brought us out onto the back of the Bickershaw Council estate. We skirted through Bickershaw with Phil 1 upsetting a few of the troops as he managed to find a few muddy bits. We took the path up by Hindley Prison before navigating the ditch and heading down to Low Hall. Well we all navigated the ditch except Christine – you were spotted Chris taking the easy route! You must take the ditch next time it's much more fun.

The route then took us into Platt Bridge where Enid picked up a little something on her shoe that she hadn't bargained for. John S, ever the gentleman, helped to remove the smelly substance with a stick. We then cut through Platt Bridge and back to Bamfurlong before making our way up the paths back to Three Sisters. It was around 14½ miles with mince pies and Christmas cake at the end thanks to Enid, Doreen and Christine – well worth turning out for.