

Weather forecast had been all over the place leading up to the ride, 40mph plus winds predicted at one stage, luckily for us though the morning was in fact quite bright, breezy, but definitely bright. Ten optimists had ventured out, including three new members and a guest. 10:00am and no signs of anyone else we set off along the towpath for Haigh Hall.

Towpath conditions from Top Lock to Red Rock wouldn't have been very inviting, so the alternative route through the Plantations was a no-brainer. Steady climb from Trencherfield to the Whelley Loop, followed by an even steadier climb up to the Hall before joining School Lane for the well-earned descent down to Red Rock. Turning right at the canal bridge we had a scenic ride through the grounds of Wigan Golf Club to join back up with the canal for our journey to Heath Charnock.

Another slight change of route to avoid one of the busier road sections saw us exploring some bridleways (thanks for that Jim H, will remember that one) as we meandered our way across open fields to the outskirts of Coppull. Next port of call Charnock Richard followed by some more climbing to Wrightington Bar and the much anticipated coffee stop, or at least that was the plan, wont go into too much detail Jim H but the idea was there. Slight detour (yet again) took us down Smithy Brow (Cardiac Hill) then half an hour later, neither watered nor fed and much to the delight of Enid who had done it on the previous ride, back up Smithy Brow (don't ask). Someone must have fancied a bit more climbing; before you jump to conclusions, for once it wasn't me

By this time the bright and breezy conditions had been replaced by wind, rain and hail, so much so that the ride has since been renamed "Wet N Wild 55". Toogood Lane, (Toobad Lane according to Enid) next to climb as we wound our way via Robin Hood Lane to the Dicconson Arms and the great downhill run into Appley Bridge. Canal towpath back to Trencherfield was again a non-starter, so the last of the day's diversions took us along Skull House Lane and Miles Lane into Shevington, Church Lane and Wigan Lower Road through to Crooke and Martland Mill.

At this point the group dispersed, Denis had abandoned us and scarpered for home, Jean, Doreen, Enid, Jim H & Anthony went their separate ways leaving Jim T, Alan. Roy & yours truly to head back to Trencherfield along the canal.

Not the best of routes we've done to be honest but you have to keep exploring, can't keep covering the same ground week after week. Some positives to take out of the ride I'm sure you'll all agree and the turn in the weather didn't help matters. Great bunch of people though, as always, looking forward to the next one already. Hope it hasn't put our new members off!

Have ordered sunshine and 20 degrees for the next outing, just hope it gets processed in time!