

## January Trail Ride 2014 – Richard Smiths Birthday

As this ride was to celebrate Richard Smiths birthday, albeit he believes us to think he's 21 but we don't believe him!

We all met at Crosskeys at 9am assembling in the garage keeping shelter from the rain as the heavens had opened and the rain was torrential! James Williams was there first and then joined by Little Nige, Andy Morgan, Paul Morgan, Dom Morgan and Spread who was making his first appearance since having his wrist pinned, no excuse but someone has to use it!!

We all waited with baited breath for the arrival of the leader for the day, Big Nige and the birthday boy who were running a bit late! Big Niges social life seems to be getting in the way of his riding! Once all assembled it was back out into the weather fit for a tsunami and head our way over the mountain to Henllys!

The rain was running down the lanes in torrents as we made our way through Cwmbran and on to Croesycelliog where we made the stream crossing which was now a raging river, well so it seemed to Paul Morgan as last time we crossed it he fell in!!

As we progress towards Newbridge on Usk the weather was not letting up and the roads were flooded with the amount of rain that had descended from the heavens in the previous hours! Shelter was taken underneath the bridge of the A40 to wring out our gloves, wipe our goggles and debate what the hell we were doing there even if it was a birthday!

From there we made through a number of lanes heading for Pant Glas steps so that we could get our blood running through our veins and try and warm up! Pant Glas provided yet again a good work out and resembled being on the moon with the large boulders waiting to knock you off like ten pins! Having all arrived in some shape at the top of the lane we headed then for a welcome break in the corner shop of Llandogo.

From there we carried on riding through the Wye Valley and experienced more rocky strewn lanes and rode down the infamous Devil's Stair Case which seems to be rougher now than ever! Making our way through the rocky lane of Tregagle Paul Morgan had the idea to tell little Nige that his rear wheel was wobbling more than his guts! It turns out that as usual Little Nige's mechanic had let him down and didn't change the rear wheel bearings and that not only were the bearings shot so was the hub!

A bit of quick thinking and a phone call to Ian Craig resulted in him jumping in Andrew Morgan's van and driving to Monmouth with a spare wheel. We all rode down to the petrol station in Monmouth and waited for our guardian angel to appear! Some 90 minutes later and loads of abuse going Little Niges way we were back on the road again heading to Abergavenny, at this point it was getting dark.

10 miles in to the road journey to Abergavenny we were met with snow and hail stones that were hitting us like bullets! We persevered but eventually admitted defeat and sheltered under the trees on the side of the road. After 5 minutes had past the weather broke and we carried onto Abergavenny to shelter in a bus stop.

The decision was then made to make our way to Pontypool and do a few more lanes now in the dark before arriving Pontymoile and then up over the mountain dropping down by the Gwyddon in Abercarn and home.

Having been out for almost 10 hours, albeit some 2 hours hanging around in the petrol station in Monmouth we covered 93 miles of good physical and demanding lanes. Good banter was had by all, mostly going Little Nige's way but all in all an enjoyable days riding in some harsh conditions.

Many thanks once again goes to Big Nige who never ceases to amaze us with his talent for navigating and not getting lost! Again happy birthday to Richard and a big thanks to Ian Craig for fetching the spare wheel, which was lucky for Little Nige as we'd contemplating leaving him there!!!

Roll on the next one!

Report Paul Martin