

## Christmas Trailride 2015

Our illustrious ride leader had a Christmas to remember. Instead of an 8am start heading for Druids way he was scratching his head to come up with a way to extract a broken 10mm tap from the front sprocket shaft of his brand spanking new (Christmas present to self) Beta RR430. Ah well, nice ornament at the back of the garage! So with big nige out of action and 12 eager riders waiting at the dance centre plan b was hatched. Who knows the way to Eppynt? Bryn diesel, old man Barry and Andy Morgan reckoned they could manage it and we hatched a plan.

We set off to Nelson on the road, still dark. A tricky stoney lane took us to Mountain Ash and a ride North across the mountain to Mardy before the drop down into Glyn Neath. All was going smoothly. Petrol at Glyn Neath and some minor fettling saw Rob Strinati swap his worn out rear pads. A few neat little-used lanes and some rocky paths took us over the mountain in a loop outside Walters Arena. Still heading North and more rocky trails with deep water we were all begging for some soil.

By the time we dropped into Sennybridge for more fuel for body and bike the weather was much cooler, the rain was holding off though. Onky Roberts realised he'd picked up a front puncture and set about telling Bryn how he should fix it for him, he also realised his rear pads were shot and scrounged a new set off Spread. Back on the road we headed over the mountain in a loop past the red flags to the top of Druids Way. The sun was low in the western sky and dazzled under the peak and off the water filled ruts. I'm not sure how long 'the way' is but it must be one of the longest ruts in Wales, 6 inches wide and full of water!

The run down off Eppynt was straight forward but the mountain track that followed was a whole new experience. Our morning prayers for mud turned to prayers for stone as the grassy surface resembled a thick layer of butter on victoria sponge. On the up hills the tail end wagged and on the downhills the front end slid wherever it fancied going. Engine braking on the four strokes was helpful, front braking was out of the question. Somehow no one actually got thrown off, miracle. A bit of road work to Brecon and more fuel and the realisation that we weren't getting home till after dark brought out the Crimbo presents; 600 lumen Cree LED twin mini headlamp complete with mounting kit - one million candles or summat - instant daylight. These are a must if you own a KTM as anyone who owns one will know. Some easy (not) rocky Brecon lanes including a river crossing which was knee deep and some narrow overgrown boulder strewn gullies took us to the foot of Penyfan. By now it was dusk and all that could be seen from the back of the pack was a string of red tail lights. The blast over the mountain on the pegs strained the backs and finished off the wheel bearings. Harry Crumb found the only muddy puddle on the stoney track and discovered that it was about as deep as the 21 inch front wheel on his Husaberg earning him a nice lie down in the nearby bog and a few bruises next day probably! A graded forest road that felt like a motorway took us to the mountain and over the bogs in the dark without losing a single rider (we think). All that was left was the road home.

A great days riding on every type of terrain you could think of (in South Wales anyway). Thanks go to Andrew, Bryn, and Barry - top notch. Barely any incidents although Vance, Spread, Barnaby, Harry all had at least one spill that brought out a chuckle from the boys! No harm done. Here's to a few more like this in 2016!

Ride report: Ian Craig.