

## Christmas Trail Ride 2013

With Big Nige and brother Richard suffering from Man Flu the only other reliable ride leader – Jason – was called upon to lead this group of odd shapes. Beer talk at the annual curry night on the Friday before had fuelled some competition and a few strangers arrived at Aberbeeg Hill climb with a look of trepidation and an air of regret. Wheelie kings Richie and John, Crumby, Andy Powell, Dom & Paul Morgan, myself, Rob Strinati and Jason plus newbie Andy on the CRF who was coerced into coming along by Big Nige who then stayed in bed! Some of the beer talkers had also opted for the duvet which was probably what we all should have done. The temperature had dropped to -4 the night before and the roads were literally white with ice, offering no grip whatsoever for a chunky tyre.

With Jase leading the way we hit the trail across the top to Brynmawr, cracking iced puddles and bouncing off frozen ruts. A coffee and bacon roll was welcomed at the petrol station hoping the sun would get a little higher in the sky to melt the frost. The road around the mountain heading for boulder lane was crazy, frozen streams crossed the road due to recent heavy rain and patches of thick frost forced the boys to a steady 20mph. The drop down to the farm yard was entertaining with Andy Powell dropping the Six Days with a heavy fall on the ice. No harm done so we continued through the farmyard, under the trees and into Boulder lane. Recent rains had deposited leaves and branches all along the lane plus a few fallen trees to contend with. By the time we reached the bottom we were thoroughly warmed up. Riding through Llangatock and on to Crickhowell we noticed the change in conditions as the frost was much less severe. Richie peeled off as we picked up some great flowing lanes that were slick and wet but fast – only stopping for a guy walking his cows and another – more conventional chap – walking his dogs.

A bit of road work took us to a cracking stream crossing, Jase went first, the water was high due to recent rain but crystal clear and you could see in the bottom the rock steps that needed to be ridden to climb the bank to the other side. Throw in the odd basketball sized boulder at the bottom – plus the fact that the water was maybe 1 degree Celsius and the old sphincter was twitching. The water was above the front wheel as one by one we bounced through, filling our boots with cold water. Just then, Jason pointed out that there was a bridge just upstream – now he tells me! John drowned his 525 and had to get out the spanners - the remainder of the group (the sensible ones) took the bridge.

A bit more road work and a few slippery lanes took us to Brecon for Fuel. Some minor repairs were called for as we thought about the possibility of riding the Gap road. There was snow on Penylan and the forecast was for bad weather that afternoon. Heading out from Brecon we hit a stoney lane that tested the forearms and brought on some armpump for most. Andy on the CRF250 got more than he'd bargained for when the gear selector punched a hole in the engine casing spilling life giving engine oil and forcing the use of some metal putty to get him going and limping home. By now the rain/sleet/snow was tumbling over the Beacons and we were ready to head home. Talybont beckoned, then Trefil and home for some whilst others rode to Merthyr before heading to Nelson then home. A good days riding that was a big a test on road as well as off it!

Thanks to Jason for leading and to Rob Strinati for modelling the Snake Skin seat cover now desired by every self-respecting Caerphilly club member!

Ride report Ian Craig.