



Douglas Macmillan Hospice Charity Ride Diary: 17th May 2009

Stoke-on-Trent to Llangollen and back: 110 miles
Sponsorship raised to date: approx £450



With a forecast of strong southerly winds and heavy rain showers, it was pleasing to open the curtains at 6:30 to see blue skies! However, judging by the weather over the past couple of weeks, I knew it was unlikely to last so left complete with full waterproofs and prepared for at least some time in the rain – which I duly got!

With signing on for the 110 mile route between 7:00 and 8:30, I decided to have a lie in and aimed for an 8:00 start. However, one thing led to another and it ended up being 8:30 when I left the Michelin Sports Club in Trent Vale. Unfortunately for me, that meant leaving as a lone rider and not in a group, which I had hoped to do so I could get dragged along, especially as I knew I would be riding into a strong head wind at some point!

The first 30 miles passed pretty quickly, with the sun still out and a good tail wind in places pushing me along nicely. However, just as I was passing through Ellesmere it started to rain and, as I hit 35 miles on route to St Martins, the heavens opened. I then had to endure 20 miles of torrential rain all the way to Llangollen. The run into Llangollen on the A5 was especially demoralising. Despite the road running downhill for a fair few miles, it was impossible to get the bike rolling, (maybe due to the rivers which were now running across the road!) meaning a continued grinding of the pedals as opposed to a short free wheeling rest.

As I cross the bridge in Llangollen to head home and with 55 miles done, things started to look up, as the rain started to ease off and blue skies again appeared on the horizon. With the weather improving and the circulation returning to my wet and freezing cold hands, I was starting to feel good again so cancelled my planned rest stop and continued to push on. The next 15 miles passed really quickly and, before I knew it, 70 miles appeared on the computer – only 40 to go!

By now I had passed a few groups and used them to pull me along in places but never really found anyone riding at my pace so typically ended up solo again. Whilst this hadn't really bothered me until this point, I had hoped to hook up with a group around now as I knew the last 40 miles would be into a head wind. With no groups around, 70 to 75 miles was a bit of a slog into a wind, but then I saw a pair ahead and got my head down to catch them. I managed to get their wheel and used them for a very welcomed rest until around 85 miles.



Another push saw me arrive in Nantwich and 90 miles appear on the computer in just shy of 5 hours. At this point I stopped to report in with Kate, who was planning to meet me at the finish with Dad for photos, and took the opportunity for a 10 minute rest and to get some food in me for the final effort.



The last 20 miles were hard. The 10 miles from Nantwich to Wrinehill were the worst, and I was starting to think the stop in Nantwich had been a bad idea. Luckily, as 100 miles loomed, I passed the final water station just as a group were setting off. Grabbing their wheels and chatting to a couple of them gave me renewed energy as they dragged me to Madeley Heath, where I dug deep and found a final burst of energy to get me up the hill to Keele and the University. From there it was a nice easy roll down hill to Clayton and back to the Sports Centre to finish on a high in a total of 6 hours 17 minutes (6 hours excluding stops for photo's, map reading and phone call!). All in all another great cycling experience!

Finally, a big thank you to all those who have supported my efforts and helped me raise so much money for such a great charity, especially my Dad who was there to see me off, see me return and take the photos!

Steve Bowers