

Big Apple Ride: a pressing engagement

Written by Marcus Morris

Monday, 12 October 2009 23:46 - Last Updated Tuesday, 20 October 2009 10:41

I must admit to finding certain types of cyclist rather intimidating. You know the kind I mean - serious fellows with custom kit, all Lycra and bums in the air, slicing through the atmosphere like day-glo meteors. Personally, I've always felt that if your Harris Tweed starts flapping or your hat blows off, you're cycling too fast - then again, I'm of a different generation. The one where five gears were a luxury and tyres were inflated to the prescribed level of "board-hard".



It was with some trepidation, therefore, that I made my way to the Market House (Ledbury) last Sunday to join the Big Apple Ride. I need not have been concerned. All ages and persuasions of cyclist were represented; some seriously tooled-up bods, of course, but also those whose cycles were, like my own, held together with cable ties and bits of gaffer tape. In common were smiles all round, each cyclist looking forward to a grand day out.



Organiser Bella greeted us all, gave a route briefing and then divided us into three groups according to our preferences. The Fast group was to leave first, followed by the Middle group and finally the Slow group. I elected to join the Middle group but, due to an unforgivable lapse of attention whilst I mucked about with my camera, I ended up leaving with the Fast group. Oh dear! It wasn't long before my tweed jacket was flapping uncontrollably, my giant non-aerodynamic panniers creating sonic shock waves throughout the Herefordshire

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countryside and frightening the livestock.

Cycling along the Little Marcle Road I was reminded how much one misses when driving in a car. The sights, the smells. Hay bales. Orchards heavy with fruit. I would add the feeling of wind in one's hair but I regret this is a rapidly diminishing experience for me.



Lagging behind the Fast group somewhat, I was pleased to meet up with some similarly challenged cyclists who had stopped for a rest. I pulled up alongside and did that "not out of breath" thing of breathing deeply but slowly and quietly, smiling all the time. The game was up when I tried to drink from my water bottle. It felt like I was drowning. I now know what it must feel like to be "waterboarded". Together we agreed to become the Fiddle group (somewhere respectably between Fast and Middle).

Ahead of us was the steep climb out of Rushall. To our credit, nobody had to get off and push but we were somewhat alarmed to see Middle group not far behind. Pride kept us going and it was not long before we were rewarded with the truly thrilling switchback beyond Rushall. Here you scarcely need to pedal as the ascents and descents work together like a kind of rural rollercoaster. I hit 26.5mph on this stretch, no effort at all.

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In no time at all, it seemed, we were entering Much Marcle and the "Big Apple" itself. First stop Awnell's Farm for a tour of the orchards and a chance to meet the Herefordshire cattle (a closed herd), then on to Gregg's Pit to enjoy real cider and perry produced the old-fashioned way from their own orchard.

James Marsden and Helen Woodman of Gregg's Pit Cider & Perry had arranged a pressing for visitors to see. A chap from a certain well-known posh glossy magazine had turned up to photograph proceedings and I couldn't resist having a little bit of cheeky fun at his expense:



Put your leg up on the trailer in a strange rural fashion and show me your apples...



What, these apples? They're not apples, they're pears. This is a perry pressing. Do keep up...

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Like this in his mind? OK, to the pressing down now?



James takes the picky bits with a big chopper, which is like a domestic



James starts the process, James explains how each layer of fruit pulp will be wrapped in



James takes the "apple pulp" from the chopper and puts it into a large wooden box. The box is already filled with layers of pulp.



Nearly there!



James operates the press...

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Black History Month is a time to celebrate the achievements of African American people. It is a time to learn about the history and culture of African Americans and to appreciate the contributions they have made to the United States. Black History Month is celebrated every year from February 1st to February 28th.