

### **Mystery Tour 3**

Here we go again, it's about 33 miles long and to keep things constant, we use the same start point of Palmers Fish And Chip Shop car park. As usual you cross the roundabout and head west along Bluebell Road. Turning left at the end, over the bridge above the A3088, past the gates of the big house and up New Road. This time go straight across at the cross roads, pass Long Run and take the next right turning. This is Landshire Lane, but you will have to take my word for it as it's not signed anywhere. At the end of the lane follow the road around left. The land to the right used to be the main landfill refuse site for Yeovil and it was said, that you could walk up there, put a bike together and ride home. It wasn't fenced in those days and people used to wander about picking over the rubbish. My first bike came from the dump. My dad came back with an almost serviceable girls Pink Witch bike and I learned to ride on it. Continue on down hill and take the next right. This junction is called the Stump Stone, I haven't a clue why. After a shallow climb you reach a ridge taking you west. Lovely views to the south from here. Cycle on, taking a right turn at the next junction and a short while later descend a hill that brings you out on a common with lovely views of a pretty village and a church with a spire (not common around here). As you drop down, look for a wooden seat on your left.

**Question 1, Who is the seat dedicated to? And for a bonus point, look at the hill to the west. What is the animal depicted on its summit?**

Drop down and turn right at a T junction. You may remember coming the opposite way, if you did Mystery Tour 1. Continue for about 600 yards before following the road around sharply left at a junction. Drop down a shallow hill, into a village, passing the end of Broadmead Lane, where my grandmother was born. Further on is a pub, named after a son of Norfolk, who's last words was a request for a kiss from a son of Dorset.

**Question 2, Who was the son of Dorset?**

The village you are cycling through is not only the birthplace of several generations of my family, it's also the birthplace of John James Henry Sturmey, who with James Archer invented the three speed bicycle hub. Continue past the Reading Room Cafe on the left and take the next right into New Road. Cycle the length of this road until you reach the outskirts of the next village. Go left at the T junction and head west. As you leave the village look out for the finest collection of used UPVC doors and windows in the west. This is Leggs Stores, which used to sell groceries. Mr Legg was always excentric but I think it's reached a whole new level now. At the end of the road turn right. As you do, have a look left. This place is known as Holy Tree and a Wellingtonia tree stands here. They have planted a replacement for when the old tree dies. It is thought that this was a holy place, but recently evidence has come to light that suggests the original name for this cross roads was Holly Tree, so no real religious connection. The old Wellingtonia was planted in the mid 19th century.

Drop down the hill, going under the A303 and go around right, up the hill. Take the next left and climb before dropping down into a village. On the first corner you reach, is the old Sparrows engineering works. My great uncle Tim was the foreman here and my father served his apprenticeship as a cabinet maker and carriage builder in the 1930's. Continue down through the village, actually this is part of a much larger village, but has become adjoined over time. Keep a look out to your left:

**Question 3, what does Tom Clark do for a living?**

You will eventually see Yandles Timber Merchants on your left, take the next left turn and go west for 3/4 of a mile, until you come to a group of buildings beside the River Parrett. Originally this was a mill for grinding corn and later it was used for milling snuff from tobacco, which was imported to Bristol from the West Indies and then brought to the mill by barge and wagon. The Bridge where you cross the River Parrett is still officially Cary's Mill Bridge but the name of the group of buildings derives from an Iron Works founded here in 1857. Since then it has been the home of many small businesses, including Castle Reclamation, which is owned by my cousin Adrian and his business partner. Continue on this road for another mile, climbing a hill and entering a sizeable village. On your way up the hill, look over to the left to see the hospital. Originally an isolation hospital for TB sufferers in the 1930's, it was a convalescence hospital, when I was incarcerated here for a few months in 1965. Revamped in recent years, it's now a community hospital with 24 beds. Drop down to the bottom of the hill and go around to the left along Prigg Lane. At the end of the lane turn right, along St James Street. This is the main thoroughfare of this well appointed village. It used to be a town and quite an important one in pre medieval times. In the dark ages, a large battle was fought

here between the Saxons and the Celts, also King Ina of Wessex 688 to 726AD had a palace here. More of a big hut, I suspect. Keep on this road, past the Blake Hall, originally the Liberal Club and slightly climbing along Palmer street, until you reach Compton Road.

**Question 4, What creature is depicted in pebbles on No12?**

Follow this road out of the village and continue on on a road surface that looks just resurfaced, but brings to mind the Arenburg Trench.

**Question 5, in what country is the Arenburg Trench and what is the road surface of the Trench made of?**

Cycle for about half a mile, taking a right turn as you reach a small hamlet. This used to be the home of a convent of Franciscan nuns. They used to be out and about locally, doing good works, when I was a boy but the convent was closed in 2010 and the remaining nuns moved to Lincolnshire. Follow the road past the convent and climb up to a T junction. Turn right and speed down a shallow hill to another T junction. Turn right through another hamlet with west as part of its name, climbing up as the road goes around to the right. Take the next right turn and speed down the hill to reach another village but not too fast. On your way down look on the left for a house named Westmoor View.

**Question 6, What is the interesting garden feature? And does it suffer from bindweed rather than barnacles?**

This next village has east in its name. You will have to take a right and then immediately turn left before the village pub, going around a closed off section of road, where a house is being repaired after a fire. You end up regaining the road you were just on.

Take the next left, just as you leave the village. It's called Southay and you stay on it until the next right turn where you go east on the South Somerset Cycle Route for about three quarters of a mile. Take a left at the next T junction and then a right in a village you visited on Mystery Tour 1. Pass the pub, where Sandra's dad used to help out behind the bar on occasion, and continue on past the village lock up on your left. People will tell you that thieves and vagabonds were locked up in here but in reality it was meant to house stray farm animals, the impounded goods of tax dodgers and the occasional drunk. Head on out of the village going north for just over a mile to a hamlet that suffered quite badly in the floods of 2014. You climb up and over a railway bridge that hasn't seen a train since the mid 1960's and on your right, a small industrial site the last remnants of a busy terminus, where local farmers sent their produce to market. My grandfather (not the dynamite one, mentioned in Mystery Tour 1) used to bring the milk and cheese down here in a wagon to be sent off.

Once over the bridge look right again at the campsite. It's here the annual Nudifest has its headquarters. It will probably have to be cancelled this year, to avoid the participants mingling. On the opposite side of the road, the large field is the site of the Lowland Games, not held at the same time as the Nudifest, which is just as well as naked welly throwing and nettle eating might not work well. Although bog snorkling might be OK.

**Question 7, what is depicted on the weather vane on the roof of the cottage, just after the next corner? Think, Marianne Faithfull film 1968!**

Cycle on to the next village, which became an island during the 2014 floods, gaining a lot of media attention and a royal visit.

**Question 8, keep an eye out and look up, for an AA road sign. How far is it to London from here?**

Pass through the village, past the ancient religious buildings, the church and the village cross and ride past the flood gates, heading north. This straight road takes you across the floodplain to the outskirts of a small town. Turn right at a T Junction past a large church and then go right at the next junction to join the A372. Go past Eli Scott's pub, where 40 years ago you helped yourself to drinks and put the money in a box, there was no bar, also none of the chairs matched. I imagine that's all changed now. Look out on the left for the turning into Wagg Drove. Take this turning and follow this small lane. Just along here a small but important battle took place on 10th July 1645, during the English Civil War. 7000 Royalists faced an army of 10,000 Parliamentarians. The Royalists drew their cavalry up on what is now Picts Hill and sent their poorly trained infantry down to Wagg Drove, along with a couple of cannons. The Parliamentarian cavalry charged up the lane and broke through the Royalist lines, about where the railway bridge is now and attacked the cavalry on the hill. After a short fight the Royalist forces were routed and retreated to Bridgwater. There are

thought to have been 400 killed in the battle, mostly Royalists.

Continue to the end of the lane and turn right onto the B3153 and almost immediately, right again, climbing a hill. Follow this road for about a mile before taking the next left turning. If you reach the A372, you've gone too far. Go down this lane to a cross roads, where you go straight over and drop down hill. Reaching a left hand bend, follow the road until you do come to the A372 in a village.

Cross straight over and take care, as this narrow lane goes left and right a couple of times before you emerge at a T junction. I think there is a dog poo bin on the right. Go right and continue to the top of a slight rise. The pub opposite the junction you have now reached might make you think that you are in the wrong county, but up until 1919 most of the village belonged to the Duke of Devonshire. There is a long tradition of the Quaker faith locally and the village still has a meeting house, where the Palmer family of Huntley and Palmer Biscuits are buried.

Turn right and continue out of the village, heading south on the B3165. Pass by a golf club on your left before reaching a narrow bridge over the River Yeo, with traffic lights, which are always on red when you reach them. This bridge withstood the full force of the 2014 floods. The water was roaring through and over it. The Environment Agency expected it to collapse but when the structural engineers examined it after the floods subsided, it was found to be quite sound. Not bad for a Scheduled Ancient Monument that can trace it's origins back to 1335. Cycle over and through the village beyond as the road climbs slowly away from the river. Once out of the village take the next left. Now this really is the land that time forgot. The hamlet you now come to, according to my dad, had no new dwelling built in it in the 20th century and none started in the 21st either. There are a few new farm buildings but that's all. Turn left at the T junction and continue along a narrow lane.

The road is quite rough and gravelly until you have negotiated your way past a farm and on to a junction. Turn right and climb up to another hamlet. My great grandmother used to herd cows up this road. I've got a photo of her milking one of them. Pass through the hamlet and climb again up to a village crossroads. There used to be a farm on the left, that my great grandmother lived in as a tenant farmer from 1890. She bought the farm in 1919 and my mother was born there the same year. Turn left and drop down through the village and continue on for a further mile, crossing a bridge over the A303. Climb a shallow hill to the village that Sandra grew up in, taking the second right turning where the postbox is set into the wall.

#### **Question 9, Looking right, what sort of Factory do you cycle past?**

Continue on for a mile, climbing before a sharp left turn. The buildings on your right as you take the corner are called Icicle Barn, I've no idea why. Take the next left turning, as you start to drop down hill. Cycle along this lane dropping down hill before a short steep climb, then turn next right, which will take you to a small village, which seems about to be swallowed by the encroaching

town. This was my paper round as a boy, with the house you passed before the last turning being my furthest delivery. Continue through the village, looking out for the post box.

#### **Question 10, what is the last collection time on a Saturday?**

Cycle by the big house on the left, now a rural training college for special needs adults, and climb the hill, passing through a new housing development to reach a T junction. Turn left and cycle past the new school on the corner to reach a roundabout. Go left through the bollards to join a dead end road. This is Preston Road and you go east, taking the next right turn opposite lamp post 10. Go down this lane, through the barriers and under the bridge. A left turn at the bottom of the lane brings you out in a hamlet, that was swallowed by urban sprawl about 25 years ago and the old Garden Centre is now a development called the Shires. Cycle up the lane and turn right by the red dog poo bin onto a cycle path that brings you out on the roundabout you first crossed after leaving the Palmers Fish and Chip Shop car park at the start of your quest. Carefully cross the road back to the start point.

As before, with some local knowledge and half an hour in Google Earth and Wikipedia, you could work out the route and most of the questions but some you can't so you will have to do the ride. It's not a ride to do at speed so relax, enjoy the scenery and be observant. Have a nice ride. I apologise if some of it is a bit self indulgent but you can ignore those bits if you like.