

# Mike's message .....

## Saltires, Sprockets and Sponsorship

“Why don't you do a sponsored bike ride for St Andrew's?”, said Susan.

Well it seemed a good idea, I enjoy getting out on the bike and try and do a couple of rides, each of around 25 - 30 miles, every week. The problem was how to give it a theme and make it a bit of a challenge?

I decided to visit every church dedicated to St Andrew's that I could find in the four Black Country boroughs. A search of a Methodist and Church of England websites revealed that there were seven, including our own, and another one - St Andrew's, Kings Hill, Darlaston - that has now closed. Although a “dot-to-dot” “as the crow flies” exercise showed the route as 31 miles I guessed, correctly as it turned out, it'd be around 40 miles to actually get round.

I set out at 8.30 a.m. on Monday 22nd September from our own St Andrew's ▲ and travelled the route on the map above in an anticlockwise direction. That took me to; Kings Hill, Birchills (Walsall), Whitmore Reans (Wolverhampton), Sedgley, The Straights (near Sedgley), Netherton and finally Wollescote. Some of the speed and distance stats are shown above. There were of course plenty of Saltires (the flag of St Andrew) on display on the church noticeboards. It's a Saltire month with the Scottish referendum.



Date:	Mon 22 Sep
Start:	8.30am
Distance:	41.6 miles
Moving Time:	3 hrs 32 mins
Av. Speed:	11.8 mph
Max Speed:	26.2 mph
Climbing:	2441 feet
Churches:	8

Things slowed down once I entered Dudley! It wasn't tiredness, rather two other factors. Born in Walsall, having worked in Wolverhampton for many years and now here in Sandwell for over ten - I know those areas well. Dudley isn't as familiar so there were frequent stops to inspect the OS Map. (I had a Garmin cycle computer and an iPhone on me but still love a map!). The other factor was the terrain (below). That first big lump at about 18 miles is Sedgley. After that the route was, to say



the least, undulating. That where the gear sprockets come in to get up and over. At least the climbs were rewarded by plenty of glorious descents to enjoy.

Saltires and sprockets. Oh, and by the way, Sponsorship is still welcome too.

Mike

22nd September 2014