



The Leinster loop - August 2017

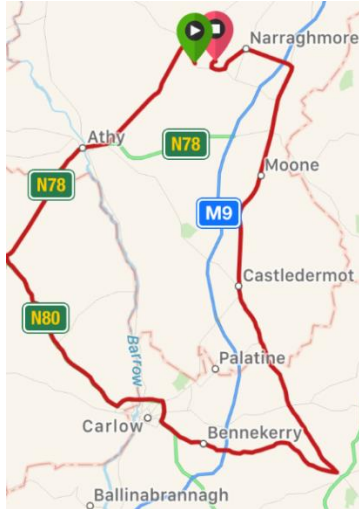
The Leinster Loop annual cycle event consists of five distinct routes, **The Leinster Loop** – a challenging 130km cycle through south Kildare, Laois, Kilkenny and Carlow; **The Barrow Challenge** – a 90km cycle through the river Barrow valley through Kildare, Laois and Carlow; **The Cill Dara Cruise** – a 50km cycle through mid Kildare; **The Local Loop** – a 25km fun cycle through historic south Kildare; and **The Roche Ramble** – a 12km family fun ramble through historic south Kildare and open to individuals and families. The two shorter distances held on the Saturday with the rest on Sunday. It's a very well run event, for a great charity always big numbers and great support teams. The goodie bags were good this year, supplying a nice pair of fingerless cycling gloves & other bits n pieces. Along with the decent food on offer at the food stop as well as the start/finish in St. Lawrence's Community Complex, the short commute & the charitable nature of this event, participation is a no brainer for cycling enthusiasts residing in the Kildare area.

This year I opted for **The Barrow Challenge** on Sunday and **The Ramble** on Saturday (merci beacoup to club members for supplying my two nieces & young fella with bikes on short notice – another touch of class from ATC members) .

The Saturday Ramble is a lovely event that allows adults and kids of all ages get out on their bikes together. With the likes of (His Right Hounourable!!!) Lord Major Martin Miley Junior comparing and aided by Community Officer Sean P O Mathuna there was a jovial, family fun feel to events.

There are actually some testing hills on this route for little legs and there were a few minor injuries had by overly enthusiastic young mites but my lot loved it, even the hill climbs, but especially the burgers afterwards! There was a pit stop halfway round where **The Griese Youth Theatre** performed a very interesting costume piece scene with a reading from "The Annals of Ballitore". It added to the countryside feel of the event, even if the 2 Jackeen cousins hadn't a rashers what was going on!!



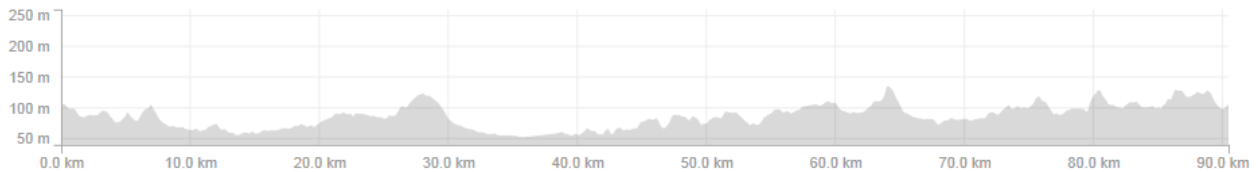


Sunday was just for “grown ups” and as usual there was a good turn out from ATC. I counted 15 ATC heads at the startline for the 90k alone. Just as well too as I’d forgotten my puncture kit so needed to stick close to some friendlies in case I came a cropper on the road.

These types of events have two main objectives for me. One of which is obviously to give the auld legs a turn over in good cycling company but just as important for me is the challenge to consume more calories than I actually exert on the bike!!! All of Sundays routes start off with a plentiful supply of grub at St. Laurence’s Community Complex and a decent feed of sambos and cakes at the food stop about 45k in, so half of the days goals were achieved before we even broke a sweat!

With the weather being spot on and a promise from Padraig Kavanagh and Joe Dunne to take it easy pace wise we set off in good spirits. The 90km route takes you on a loop from Narraghmore through Athly – Ballylynan – Carlow (feed station) – Tullow - Castledermot and back to Narraghmore.

With most of the boy racers away on the 130k (kick off 9:30am) there was a more relaxed and leisurely group on this one and the pace was nice and steady for the 1st half.



There’s approx 540m of climbing in total over 3 hours or so of saddle time. With a few cheeky climbs and drawn out drags along the way (like heading into Arles & before Castledermot) but nothing too challenging. You also get the opportunity to up the gears on some fast sections too (before Carlow & Castledermot) for those who like a bit of speed. Personally, I’ve clenched cheeks and white knuckles going anything over 50kph so the downhills are controlled sections for me. We were going great guns up to about 70km when Padraig had the misfortune of a puncture. Personally I was delighted as it gave me a chance to catch my breath (their earlier promise about keeping the pace easy went out the window after the half time sambos) but from 70km on we were really chasing the field and each other. We finished back in Narraghmore, congratulated Ciaran Mulhall on his personal sprint victory over Arnold Kane and hit the hall for grub followed by a visit to the post cycle massage tent – another nice touch (no pun intended) and a few post race refreshments back in Ando’s Athly.

All in all a very enjoyable Sunday afternoon. Defo one for the 2018 Calendar. I found a selection of nice photos (taken by Tom Horan) online too, check out his Facebook page for more.....



