

The Wychwood Byways Awards 2013



After more than 25 years of walking and cycling in the Wychwoods, I know most of the local byways, putting me in a good position to propose nominations for the *Byways Awards 2013*.

Most scenic road. We are spoilt for choice here but a personal favourite is the road heading for Leafield, above Judd's Grave, dropping down towards Ascott. Just before it dips down, and with the cross-country horse riding course on the left with its rustic jumps and modern sculptures in the foreground, the view opens out beyond the conifers into the Evenlode valley. At this point, the most distinctive sound is the wail of a buzzard, a sound that sums up the quiet solitude of a typical Cotswold view.

Most demoralising road. For the cyclist, the road leaving Milton past the Baptist Chapel, rising in a dead straight line towards the Fifield road, takes some beating for a tedious climb; never steep but never-ending.

Best downhill. The main road down into Shipton from Burford is arguably the best, traffic notwithstanding, and the views, even at speed, are terrific. (Challenge for the cycling enthusiast: see if you can trigger the 30m.p.h. warning light outside the Wild Garden!)

Most congested road. No contest: the road outside the Coop in Milton. Traffic, parked cars, free-range children and transient dog walkers all combine to make this the busiest road, why it can't be widened by taking a strip off the Green is a mystery to me.

Muddiest footpath. After the wettest year on record, there is plenty of competition in this category. Personally, I have found the most glutinous stretch to be the one where you turn left off the road down from Milton to Bruern, heading for the woods and the BBOWT reserve.

Most uneven road. The road down from Milton Green past St. Jude's church has been dug up, masticated and spat out more times than anyone can remember with dips, almost-filled trenches and occasional potholes.

Most potholed road. Plenty to choose from, but the short stretch down from Shipton post office to the Red Horse is my proposal for this prestigious and long-standing award.

Most attractive footpath. There are no arguments here; a stroll around the Wild Garden, especially in the spring, can put a smile on anyone's face.

Bob Forster