

## **THE STRAWBERRY LINE – 5 YEARS ON**

In 2013 I wrote a monthly account of my walks along the ‘Strawberry Line’ from The Old Station to Thatcher’s Cider Factory. Thanks to my Daughter lending me one of bikes, I have taken to the saddle and enjoyed a few leisurely rides along the ‘Old Railway Line’ and thought some might be interested in what’s happened in the last 5 years.

Looking back at my account of September 2013, we were remembering the last train that travelled from Wells to Yatton on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1963 - 50 years ago. I haven’t seen any accounts of the 55 years that have now elapsed, but a lot has happened in the last 5 years.

Firstly, the Strawberry Line is as beautiful as ever. We are so fortunate to have this open space on our door step. I haven’t been as far as Thatcher’s Orchards for a few years and not since we lost our beloved Black Labrador ‘Minton’. He was the main reason I walked along the Strawberry Line every morning and evening. But, its pure magic and the views are spectacular with wildlife in abundance.

Just past ‘Carditch Rhyne’ is a field of Solar Panels; they have appeared in the last 5 years. But, of the hundreds of Solar Farms that I have seen, this is the first with sheep grazing around the panels. I understand that the Village gets a small income from the electricity generated. They must have produced a few kilowatts this year! Another bonus was the contractors resurfaced the track so we don’t have deep pot holes. In fact the surface is in really excellent condition.

Just on the boundary between Congresbury and Churchill is a splendid new ‘Farmhouse’. A little way along towards Churchill was a vast Badger sett and the Line was subsiding with the underground tunnels. I couldn’t see if the Badgers are still there, but the track has been repaired.

This year has produced a massive crop of Blackberries. The verges are black and I cannot recall seeing so many or perhaps we don’t go ‘Blackberrying’ anymore. At the moment they are delicious and will make one of my favourite puddings ‘Blackberry and Apple’ crumble. Hint!

Perhaps it’s an omen for a bad winter, but the Hawthorns Trees are loaded with ripe red berries. The Fieldfares and Redwings usually turn up in a few weeks time with large flocks feasting off the bounty. They are in for a treat this year. After the hot dry summer the recent rains have turned everything into a verdant green with the cows and sheep in the fields enjoying some of the best grass of the year. I was delighted to see a herd of Ayrshire Cows towards Churchill. The only other herd I know are the Queens in Windsor Great Park. Perhaps they are on their holidays in Somerset!

Most of the flowers are now making seeds ready to start the season off again next year. A few of the Ash trees are starting to turn colour, but the autumnal spectacular of the leaves turning gold has still to start.

I have enjoyed good humour and friendship every time I walk or ride down the ‘line’. As I sedately peddled along and was over taken by two young ladies who offered to

give me a tow, which I thought was very kind. Approaching another young couple I rang my bell and was answered by I've got one of those, but it's bigger than yours. Ah well – perhaps a trip to Halfords would solve that problem.

One of my favourite places to visit was the Café at Silver Springs fishing lake. Regretfully, it seemed to be closed and I must enquire if it is just temporary. One thing is certain, I don't intent to wait another 5 years before enjoying a trip down 'The Strawberry Line'.

Michael Greaves  
16<sup>th</sup> September 2018.