

Sunday, June 4, 2006

## Wheel Easy! Ride Report No. 5

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### 10 Mile Ride

We decided to have a leisurely ride around Harrogate today, taking in the beautiful sunshine following the route that we have now done on several occasions. Several members of the group had made some minor alterations to their bikes since last week, so what better opportunity to try them out.

We left Hornbeam Park a little after 10.15am there were 8 of us today. Our ride took us through Raleigh Road, down Wheatlands and onto Oatlands Drive. From there we went through the Saints and across the Stray to Granby corner.

We sauntered down Kingsley Drive and along Bogs Lane to join the top end of the Beryl Burton. We passed the Gardeners Arms and took the cycle path towards ASDA encountering a few spots of rain along the way but fortunately it didn't amount to much.

From ASDA we headed up towards the Odeon and Victoria Avenue, cut along the back of the Stray and cycled through the Oval towards the new houses on the St George's Estate.

We then took the cycle path behind St Georges and meandered our way through to Leadhall Lane. We cycled down towards Appleyards corner but just before took a right hand turn through the Mallinson/Firs Estate to join Leeds Road at the top of Almsford Bank. We crossed over Leeds Road and headed down to the bottom of Fulwith Mill Lane to the cycle path that joins the top end of Hornbeam Park.

We arrived back at Hornbeam Park at approximately 11.45 after having cycled about 13 miles. For the first time in 4 weeks we encountered no punctures, falls or bike malfunctions - long may it continue!

### Longer Ride

Today's ride promised to be the toughest to date with several fairly testing hills west of Harrogate on some quite different terrain from last week's relatively flat trip to Boroughbridge. We were very pleased to welcome Sarah B's friend Jane to our group, and Lynne and Emily who joined the shorter route.

Boldly, we retraced the route of two weeks ago to Stainburn Woods when we had suffered pouring rain, punctures and a broken chain. As we approached the woods, the fine weather did start to deteriorate alarmingly, the rain came down lightly and the surrounding horizons were spotted with rain clouds. However, this soon cleared away and we made our way along the now

familiar track where there were ample signs of more logging since our previous visit.

Out of the woods, we turned left expecting to join the cycle-unfriendly B6161 with the intention of approaching Almscliffe Crag before deciding which way to go from there. However, with the benefit of Dave P's intimate knowledge of every lane within a 20 mile or more radius of Harrogate (backed up by Malcolm's Ordnance Survey map) we turned south instead sooner than originally planned down a tempting looking hill which brought us to Leathley much more quickly.

Soon after this the rain returned and those of us who hadn't brought our rainwear wondered whether we would regret it. There was a short stop for those better prepared to don their fluo waterproofs and on we went to the busy junction with the A658 near Pool bridge, by which time the rain had become a nuisance, and threatened to take away the pleasure offered by the next few miles of country lanes.

However, once we had crossed the main road, the gods decided to smile and things just got better and better. The road is a gem, with very few vehicles on it, running south of the A658 for a while partly alongside the River Wharfe to Castley, and then up a gentle hill almost back to the real world. Happily a sharp right turn avoids that unwelcome outcome, and the lane continues via the somewhat more cardiovascular but very manageable Wescoe Hill before a lovely coast down into Weeton. Here we did a geographically pointless but delightful detour down Gallowgate Lane which loops back into Weeton just a little further into the village. As Dr. Bynoe succinctly observed, this is what cycling is all about.

Onwards to Dunkeswick past the organic produce shop and at last there was no escaping the world of motorized transport in its full glory on the A61. We had to survive only a couple of hundred yards of this before turning right towards Kirkby Overblow, at the top of another decent hill which everyone managed at Wheel Easy! pace, with ease.

However there was no question of ignoring the refreshment offered by the Star and Garter, positioned irresistibly at the top of the hill. By this time the sun had come out and we enjoyed our halves, pints and cokes on the outside tables, warm and also within view of our combined several thousand pounds worth of cycling machinery.

By this time some had had to move on due to time constraints, Dave decided to go home by a slightly indirect route - Wetherby! - and eventually we were five pedaling up the hill (which I'm sure is flatter now than it used to be - where was all that struggle and sweat?) out of Kirkby 'O' towards Pannal. We crossed the ring road, turned right along it and then left into Drury Lane where Paul and I, who both live in the neighbourhood, left Geraldine, Joe and Alec to make their way back into Harrogate.