

Sunday, March 23, 2008

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 99



After 2 or 3 inches of snow fell overnight the 99th Wheel Easy Sunday ride looked in doubt, but by 10am the sun was out, the snow was melting fast and 10 cyclists set off together towards Knaresborough. The planned Daffodil Ride to Thorp Perrow Arboretum, and the dual start in Ripon had already been cancelled due to the poor forecast, but the suggestion of a shorter circuit south to the coffee pots of Wetherby appealed to everyone, though not all had time for the full trip.

To add interest we took a relatively unusual route to Knaresborough, bordering the Stray which was still white with snow and busy with families building snowmen. One of the dads kindly took a photo of us next to one. At the bridge on Bogs Lane, we dropped down to the Avenue Road/Bilton Lane bridleway, then up the Beryl Burton to Bilton Hall Drive where some on road bikes continued to Knaresborough Road, others down the track, and two went their own way to return home.

We agreed to regroup at the Riverside Café, but by the time most arrived we found Dave and Paul already installed and enjoying a hot drink. The rest headed along the Wetherby Road, and within a couple of miles they were caught by the drinkers. By this time the weather had become pretty ideal, and we enjoyed a lovely run into Wetherby. As if drawn by magnets, we turned into The Shambles and the point of our visit, The Gourmet café. Disaster! Closed for Easter Sunday. After a bad moment we pulled ourselves together, made for Market Place, and found Costa open and willing to take our money (or in my case, Paul's - I'd forgotten mine). Two riders with deadlines to meet had to keep going.

As the photos show, they do a champion cyclist size and actually very good mug of coffee at Costa, and we enjoyed a somewhat extended R&R before venturing out again into what was still a surprisingly fine day. With two obvious routes to choose from, a straw poll showed a strong preference for Sicklinghall and Kirkby Overblow, to take advantage of the clear views. Near Barrowby we stopped to admire a red kite swooping and gliding majestically almost overhead, and to take photos.

At Kirkby, Stuart and Ben took off down Walton Head Lane, the remaining four continuing to Pannal and ultimately three finishing back up Almsford Bank to Harrogate. I had to return to Hornbeam to collect my car as I'd driven there because of the early snow, and took the opportunity to visit the bridge over the Crimple washed away in last year's floods, to see if it was still passable. As the photos (slideshow) make clear, it's gone completely, so the route from Fulwith Mill Lane to Follifoot road remains closed. Total distance about 26 miles, and an unexpectedly good day. MM

Re the café scene below, Dave P offers the following captions:

1/ I`ve got a hoody in my soup.

2/ I asked for a cup of coffee. I could wash my socks in this bucket.

3/ My cup runneth over - its so heavy.

