



This morning Martin welcomed everyone and reminded all members about the 5th anniversary celebrations. He stressed the importance of telling Gia if they were intending coming to the two social events on the 5th and 7th May.

Martin also welcomed back Dave Preston who was returning to cycling after his knee operation.

Short Ride Report

What a great day for cycling hence maybe the small number of riders today for my (one week late!) short ride, others opting to make the most of miles and miles of sunshine. With Young Mr Preston and his "doctor" Darren plus 2 able nurses in the forms of new rider Ann and myself, we set off making sure that Young Mr Preston didn't do too much on his first outing since his knee op in March!

It certainly wasn't a day though to be heading into the Yorkshire Showground, at least not for cyclists who do their best to keep away from traffic! In fact, we had to queue inside the grounds whilst coaches dropped off their flower passengers.

Once out of the Showground and other cars heading in the opposite direction to the grounds, we made our first stop in Spofforth where the leader showed how much extra weight she was carrying, that was not on her person but in the form of bricks for practise for the forthcoming bike trip! After crossing over from the busy A661 towards Little Ribston and Knaresborough, it was a lovely, quiet and very warm morning. Young Mr Preston making the most of the free-wheeling down hills, being careful not to over-do the up hill sections.

At the end of Abbey Road we parted company - Darren was required elsewhere (maybe to perform more "doctor skills"), YMP and more than able Ann for a coffee along Waterside and myself, home just in time to catch Emmanuel Mutai smash the record for the London Marathon!

Thanks to the three of you for a delightful ride, advice and spot of bike maintenance! Well done especially to Dave for an impressive return to fitness. Sue T. Total 4 riders and an average 15 miles.

Click on slide show for all today's photos

Medium Ride Report

The medium flatter option ride set off with 16 riders and 15 bikes. (a little WE puzzle). The sun shone and spring was going for it as we perambulated our way through villages and along flower strewn roads to our destination in Boroughbridge, the 'Laden Table'.

By this time we had shed one rider who wanted more pace and one who spurned all temptation that the Laden Table could offer. The rest of us occupied two large tables and spent a good half an hour talking and eating excellent food. The piece of Rocky Road which I was served would have made the knees of a mountain biker with fat knobby tyres tremble.

From here we decided on the Marton cum Grafton route home enjoying more beautiful views. We managed to stay just within the 30 mile limit for this ride and I knew exactly where I was for the whole ride. I'm also not aware that we lost anyone, surely deeming this ride a success? Steve P

Today there was a choice of 2 different medium rides, I was leading the hilly one. We had 15 riders on 14 bikes - Michael and Kathryn were out on their tandem for their first Wheel Easy ride. We rode out via Knox bridge and on to Hampsthwaite where Geraldine and Joe left us to head back home and then they were off for a day at the races, but I am sure they felt better for a short cycle ride before going off to back a winner. Whilst we were in Hampsthwaite Julie had to decide which gloves to wear for the next part of the ride which included Clint Bank and Cut Throat Lane so I would have thought that hill climbing gloves would have been the best choice. At the top of Cut Throat Lane we met up with Crawford who had taken the short cut to watch the rest of us climb the hill. We then rode through Bishop Thornton and left at the crossroads then left again towards Brimham Rocks. We were going to take the next left again down the track that leads back towards Bishop Thornton again but Julie and Stuart tried to make their escape. I had to give chase and round them back up. I told them that you don't escape from one of my rides that easily. After regrouping we slowly made our way down the rough track past the food factory and back towards Bishop Thornton, this time turning right at the Drivers crossroads and down the hill towards Ripley where we had our coffee stop before the short ride back to Hornbeam. 15 riders 24 miles = 360 miles. Fantastic weather, good company. Thanks to all who came and special thanks to Trevor who led the second group, Terry

Medium Plus Touring Pace Ride Reports

I am not sure that this qualifies for a medium plus ride as the mileage was 31 miles but real quality hilly ones! Alison, Debbie, Sandy and Gia decided to follow the medium plus ride route with the option of not doing the Ilkley bit. Malcolm stayed with us for a while but his fancy bike got the better of him and he joined the others.

We were chased up to Stainburn Woods by lots of guys (No girls!!!) doing a Sportif from Leeds and we tried tagging on to them for a while. Sue D's husband George also shot past us but one sole rider was so tired that he hooked on to Alison's wheel for most of the ride to the woods. Alison then made a good job of selling Wheel Easy to him.

At Norwood we met up with some of Richard's group which had clearly splintered many times but as there were a lot of us this was probably a good idea. Martin started riding back towards us from Swinsty responding to an urgent call from Sue and Yvonne to sort out a puncture. You see we girls do need to ride with you men!

The ride from Timble to the top of the moor is spectacular and the views wonderful on such a sunny day and with no wind. At the top of the moor where Richard and some of his group were waiting I was remonstrated for not following the prescribed route (the Little Snowden Bit). But no hard feelings and off they sped to Ilkley.

We turned left to Cockpit Farm where we met one group of medium plus guys who were settled in the garden and discussing their next move. Here Mark and John joined the girls and we rode back to Harrogate via Farnley, Stainburn, Almscliffe Crag and North Rigton, meeting another Wheel Easy

member, Dave out on a ride from Leeds. He is in training for the 100! Great ride, 6 x 31 very hilly miles! Gia

After a quick check of this week's route seven set off in the sun on the medium plus ride. Route was as prescribed until talk of a stop at the Cockpit café manifested itself into a plan. Therefore Ilkley was avoided and an early break was enjoyed by all outside in the sun, much to the appreciation of the local chickens who were enjoying the crumbs from our scones and biscuits. Suitably replenished the pace quickened and we followed the set route thoroughly enjoying some fast and quiet roads in glorious weather reaching Kirkby Overblow in double quick time. Consequently we were now in danger of being home for lunch and because Andrew had not suffered enough pain by this point all seven agreed to a detour to Wetherby. We finally lost two at Wetherby no doubt concerned that Roger was now into high mileage mode and they had homes to go to. The remaining five had further discussions at Kirk Deighton and because Geoff had to be back in Harrogate for 2pm we were able to rein Roger back in with a route up the old A1, breaking with medium plus tradition with some compact group riding, to Arkendale, Knaresborough and back to Hornbeam. Approx. 45 x 2 and 53 miles for five riders at an average of just under 15. Great weather, good company and a thoroughly enjoyable ride. Martyn B

We set off as 8, and never saw the fast group all day, but there were plenty of sportive riders to mix with round Stainburn, plus many other leisure riders on a superb windless day. The medium tourers excluding those punctured or repairing caught us at Snowden for the photoshoot. Obviously the extra 40 ft climb persuaded them to come the direct way rather than Low Snowden. We shuffled the team to allow the early lunchers to go via Cockpit while we settled for Ilkley via the old foot bridge. We must be faster downhill than up as there was a look of surprise on the long riders that we were leaving Ilkley as they arrived, so more team changes. As it was busy we added 200ft and did not bother with Pool but the more attractive Farnley Park. Then a mingling with charity riders and home via Kirkby Overblow and the Flowershow. 6 x 45 and a net 2 transferred. 2100 ft. Average speed 13.6. Richard.

A tyre blowout on Sue C's bike before Fewston was patched up by Martin well enough to enable them and Yvonne to make it back to Harrogate where Martin was able to make more permanent repairs. They then drove with the bikes to Ripon and did a loop to Masham, for a fabulous day's cycling of 50 miles.

Long Ride Report

Five go to Ilkley. Five brave souls (2 x Peters, Dennis, Glyn and Jim) set off to get to Ilkley. Leaving Hornbeam Park via Pannal and Kirkby Overblow everything went according to plan. On arriving at the junction of Castley Lane and the A658 the committee decided to amend the route and go to Otley via Farnley. On arriving at Otley Dennis left the party to attend to his boats leaving 4 to continue on to Ilkley. The climb up the Chevin was tough but the views were excellent. Then it was onward to Ilkley Moor. We had the privilege of riding on some newly laid tarmac through Burley Woodhead, but was then followed by the road with a 1000 road humps. On arriving in Otley we met up with another Wheel Easy ride and Jim decided to join the Medium Plus Long Touring Pace ride, leaving only three in the group. The three then decided to change the route again and cycle to Beamsley and then cycle up Beamsley Beacon. Again it was a tough ride but we were rewarded with magnificent views of Wharfedale. The descent from Beamsley via Middleton was exhilarating given the succession of downhills. We then proceeded to Askwith and climbed yet again up another hill to reach Fewston and finally we returned to Harrogate via Little Alms Cliff crag. The mileages for the short (50 miles) hilly long ride are as follows: 1x25 + 1x29 +3x50 giving a total of 204 miles. Peter J

Click on slide show for all 200Km photos

Phil's 200km Recce Ride

Phil was planning to lead the long ride at the end of May on a 200km (=124 miles) Audax route. If you are not familiar with the Audax cycling scene, it is a branch of the sport that organises rides over long distances, which must be completed within a specified time. The

name means "audacious", as the routes can be extremely lengthy (Paris-Brest-Paris 1200km = 745 miles, and London-Edinburgh-London, 1400km = 870 miles, are the epitome of Audax rides), and they usually involve spectacular scenery because they prefer the hilliest route between 2 places. As Audax originated in Europe, distances are always quoted in kilometres.

As this 200km Audax route covered parts of North Yorkshire Phil was not familiar with, he decided it would be sensible to test the route out beforehand - such is the dedication of our ride leaders! He also decided that as the route involved 6000' of ascent it would be ideal training for Peter B and myself prior to our ride over the Himalayas this summer, so he hatched a cunning plan to attack us when our resistance would be lowest: Wetherspoons on a Thursday night. We let him off very lightly and agreed within a few seconds. With hindsight, we should have played 'hard to get' and bribed him for a few more beers to help the decision making process.

And so at 7.45am on Sunday morning I left home for our rendezvous at Penny Pot roundabout at 8am. Peter had decided to set off ahead of us, so Phil and I met up with him in Grassington at 9.30. Cobblestones café served our breakfast with the usual impeccable service with a smile, and soon the three of us were heading up the top end of Wharfedale. This area is always my idea of 'cycling heaven', but today was very special.

It was unusually quiet, due to our early start, there was little wind, the early morning chill was receding as the sun bathed the meadows and hillsides in its glorious light. My winter tights were even swapped for shorts!. At Buckden we amused ourselves playing with the road signs to see what sort of conditions we might expect ahead (see photos - the signs were all corrected afterwards!). A few miles later the serious climbing started out of Langstrothdale up to Fleet Moss (1,932'). The descent down Sleddale was straight and frighteningly fast. We stopped to admire 25 or more parascenders enjoying their sport above the neighbouring peak of Drumaldrace.

Entering Gayle the route directed us across a very picturesque ford. It was unusually wide (at least 20 yards), very shallow (only a matter of 3 or 4 inches), and rather than the usual concrete, the water flowed over a smooth natural rock formation. Little did we know, this was a recipe for disaster - the rock was extremely smooth, slippery and treacherous. I immediately took a very heavy fall into the water. It was little consolation to be told by a couple sitting in their campervan that it is impossible for cycles, motorcycles and walkers to get across as it is so slippery. They assured us Harley Davidsons make the most spectacular falls as they generally ride in large groups. It was clear they preferred to sit in their vehicle willing another accident to happen for their own entertainment, rather than trying to prevent one!

A mile further on we stopped at the Wensleydale Creamery in Hawes for our second refreshment stop: apple pie with Wensleydale cheese, of course. We had time for a quick visit to the shop, sampling some of their less well known produce: smoked Wensleydale, smoked Cheddar, Wensleydale with pineapple, Bishopdale and Coverdale cheeses. Then back onto the bikes (still wet!) to tackle the famous Buttertubs Pass (1,725') taking us from Wensleydale into Swaledale. The climb is long but the scenery stunning and spectacular, and worth the effort. We stopped frequently to take in the beauty, and to discuss how fortunate and privileged we were to be experiencing the Dales on such a fantastic day. The next climb started at Keld and took us up West Stonedale to Tan Hill, the location of Britain's highest pub (1,732'), and our third refreshment stop. The A66 was visible a short distance beyond. We arrived at 4pm, and noted we were now only halfway round our course: it had taken 8 hours to complete the first 60 miles. However, we were confident that the second half would be much easier and faster. Most of the main climbs had been completed.

After basking in the sun and eating a scone with jam & cream, at 4.30 we set off on the 11 mile descent down the length of Arkengarthdale to Reeth in Swaledale. The final big climb took us from Grinton in Swaledale over Ellerton Moor (1,175') to Leyburn in Wensleydale. At Leyburn we're back on familiar home turf, having been here many times before on Wheel Easy rides, so its now plain sailing back to Ripon (lights on as its now 8pm) and a quick blast down the A61 arriving home just after 9pm. We ended up covering 113 miles at an average speed of 11.5mph. We'd climbed 6,000' and 13 chevrons, and boy, was it worth it!!!! 24 hours later, I'm still on a high from the experience Phil said: " If I live for another hundred years, I doubt if I could ever do another ride as good as this one". I should point out that Phil has the disadvantage of not being a pensioner and he would therefore be only 154. Peter (who has the advantages of both being a pensioner and having already lived for nearly 100 years) said "If I have ever done a ride as good as this one before, I've forgotten

it". (Shame there's no cure for dementia!!!!) Eric says: "Truly one of the greatest rides experiencing The Dales at their sublime best, just look at those photos! This must be repeated - perhaps stopping overnight to enjoy the hospitality of Tan Hill."

Finally, will this be a long ride at the end of May, after all? Phil's post-ride analysis: "Having completed this ride in perfect conditions with 2 Wheel Easy stalwarts I feel unable to lead it as a club long ride. Should we have had a mechanical failure, or even a puncture, we would have struggled to get home at a reasonable hour. The ride is so fantastic that I would be happy to do it with others on the basis of a group of friends riding together without being a ride leader. If anyone is interested we could arrange this on a suitable Sunday, with a good weather forecast at fairly short notice."

Note for the Captain's log, 3 riders enjoyed a sublime 113 miles each.

A total of 339 miles of sheer joy. Eric

2011 Wheel Easy Miles (approx) Today 2404 YTD 49951



