

Sunday, May 14, 2006

Wheel Easy! Ride Report No. 2



There was another excellent turnout for Wheel Easy!'s second outing with 27 riders joining the group despite unappealing grey and drizzly weather, and quite a few of last week's cyclists being unavailable, including some who had sensibly gone to more Mediterranean climes.

Several new riders had come either because they had seen the website, or by recommendation from our 'veterans.' Word of mouth is the best advertising of all, and I ask everyone to spread the word so that Wheel Easy! continues to develop, encouraging more people to take up and enjoy cycling which will also help ensure cycling routes and other facilities in the area continue to improve.

After a few welcoming and advisory words from Malcolm and Bill, and the photos (we won't always need to take a photo at the start!), 18 left to join the longer ride led by Norman, Bill and Dave. The rest waited until just after 10.30 by which time there were 9 of us for the 10 mile ride.

10 Mile Ride

The first half of this ride followed, in reverse, the route by which we had returned last week. So, Rayleigh Road, Wheatlands Road East, Oatlands Drive and so on until we reached Silverfields Road, after crossing the Skipton Road. Here we used the cyclists right of way which is a contraflow against the one way traffic.

It turns out, though I failed to notice it, that after a short distance cyclists are supposed to turn right, or if they want to go up Silverfields, they should dismount. We didn't and as luck would have it a driver came round the corner, rather fast though not endangering any of us, and decided to make an issue over the correct use of the cycle lane. I suspect he may live in the area, as I have since learned that local residents stopped the cycle lane going further and unsuccessfully tried to prevent any cycle lane in the road at all. He and Alec had a fairly lively altercation for a short while before he and we decided to go our separate ways. (I have emailed

the cycling officer to see if this unsatisfactory situation with the bike path can be looked at.)

So on down Kingsley Drive, Bogs Lane, Bilton Hall Lane, and then to the Beryl Burton Cycleway. We decided to use the path to go down to Knaresborough and return up it, except for 2 of our number who chose to sacrifice the tempting opportunity for some extra cardiovascular benefit and found a comfortable bench for a chat half way down, rejoining us as we puffed back up the hill!

The rest of the route was new to Wheel Easy! and made great use of the cycle paths on that side of town. We continued along the Beryl Burton to Bilton Lane, left after the Gardeners Arms into the Bilton Triangle taking the right fork to the wonderful new foot and bike bridge across the railway line. The bike route continues parallel with the railway to Asda. From there it is still good cycling with bike lanes and a marked cycling route almost all the way back to Hornbeam, along East Parade, behind Waitrose, a toucan across the A59 into Stray Rein and quiet residential roads to finish.

25 Mile Ride

The first 'longer' Wheel Easy! ride ultimately amounted to about 25 miles, but as far as I know everyone made it, except for Dave who had the misfortune to puncture right at the start, and even our first time family who discovered too late that they were on the long ride and not, as they had thought, on the short one! (However, as dad used to be a serious racing cyclist, this was not a disaster.)

There were one or two other minor mishaps, including another puncture on the way back, but fortunately there were ample ride leaders and other very experienced cyclists to deal with all eventualities.

The route began through Hookstone Woods, the Yorkshire Showground and then on the pavement to Rudding Lane. The bypass was bypassed using the tunnel built for horses, then Follifoot, onto Spofforth and the excellent Spofforth-Wetherby off road route on the old railway line. In Wetherby the group took a break at Morrisons for tea, before returning via Sicklinghall and Kirkby Overblow.

I hope that all enjoyed the ride and that, like last week, some of those who haven't done much biking recently will have stiff muscles for a day or two. That means it's doing you good! Keep riding, on Sundays with Wheel Easy! and, if you can, at least one day during the week, and you will soon feel the improvement in your fitness.

Details of next week's rides, and other developments will be emailed to you during the week. Where appropriate they will also be shown on the website.