

Sunday, September 24, 2006

## Wheel Easy! Ride Report No. 21

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Despite the photo, this was not the first Wheel Easy! midnight ride, just the wet and gloomy scene at Hornbeam station at 10am where 15 of us gathered regardless of the conditions. We welcomed first timers Adele, and James and Caroline and their tandem.

In view of the array of talent we agreed that the 'short ride' would dispense with the usual assorted Harrogate loops and head out of town towards Wetherby, while Martin and Yvonne on tandem, together with Brian, set off on a 50 mile route to Masham in the opposite direction.

The larger group were soon circling round Ridding Park and crossed the southern by-pass to drop down to Spofforth along Hags Road. We were briefly joined by Dave G who was out for a solo ride, but as he was on his road bike left us at Spofforth where Caroline and Max also went their own way home due to time constraints.

The group followed the splendid, if today wet and muddy, Sustrans line to Wetherby. Here about half took the right hand fork to Linton, while the rest with less time available chose the shorter option home, the left fork to join the road to Kirk Deighton and Knaresborough before the final climb into Harrogate. As we enjoyed the exercise, the rain eased and poured by turns, but before the end it had turned into a rather fine day. Total distance about 25 miles.

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### 50 MILE RIDE

Riding in company is good for you as we found out again. If Brian had not volunteered to ride with us on our route to Masham we would probably gone home, got a cup of coffee and read the Sunday papers. Instead we covered 50 quick miles on our tandem in his company and enjoyed ourselves thoroughly.

We set off in intermittent heavy rain to Knaresborough, Bishop Monkton and Ripon, on the way negotiating several flooded roads where "feet up" was the order of the day. Brian, as we soon realised, is the front half of another accomplished tandem, and was finding it strange being on his own as Elizabeth could not join him.

At Ripon we took shelter in the Spa Gardens Cafe (highly recommended - clean and smart, good food and reasonable prices). The Crazy Golf was flooded giving the gardens an exotic water garden look.

We decided to abandon Masham as it was still raining. Instead we headed out on a route to give us a few short-cut options. So we went to Boroughbridge, Aldborough, Lower and Upper Dunsforth and on to Great Ouseburn. With the sun breaking through we extended the ride on to Thorpe Underwood, Winksley, and across the A59 to Cattal, Cowthorpe and Little Ribston. At this point we separated as Brian headed back to Knaresborough and we returned to Harrogate via Spofforth and Follifoot.

Apart from getting back into Harrogate it was quiet lanes almost all the way, and we did our 50 miles though not in the original intended direction.

MW

