

Sunday, August 12, 2007

Wheel Easy! Ride Report No. 67



Long Ride. The forecast said showers, but if they were showers one of them followed the road to Ripon via Bishop Monkton and it kept us company all the way. So 14 very wet cyclists dripped all over the floor in Spa Gardens Café, and contemplated modifying the planned route in view of the weather.

It eventually stopped raining and we set off climbing up the drive through Studley Park. A huge herd of fallow deer were spooked across our path in the Park making quite a spectacle, but the following herd of much larger red deer were also spooked, and visions of being run down in a Wild West stampede were coming to mind. Fortunately the red deer calmed down and we continued through to the top gate, and the weather really brightened up by this time.

We returned to our original ambition of climbing up to Brimham Rocks, and so we followed the back lanes up through Sawley to the summit. Continuing past the Rocks we descended to Hartwith, Birstwith, and Hampsthwaite before returning to Harrogate. Only 42 miles but in view of the conditions a good effort.

Highlights

- The long riders felt shamed by the medium riders who sped past as we sheltered at the start of the downpour. After a few mutterings we also set off not wishing to be seen as wimps, only to find the medium riders 200 yards further on enjoying the comfort of a bus shelter.
- In the deluge at Bishop Monkton Yvonne spotted a Prince disguised as a frog trying to get up the kerb. Obviously Princes don't really like that much rain even when dressed up as frogs.
- Malcolm was absolutely determined to get up to Brimham Rocks, clearly being stung by the fact that Gia has more miles in than him so far this year. MW
[Correction: comparative mileage details Top Secret, but NB this is NOT a competition - or at least that's what we keep telling each other. MM]

Medium ride. Brian and Liz became leaders of both the medium and the short ride just after arriving at Hornbeam Park on their tandem. Therefore, the route was made up to try and accommodate both levels of rider.

In glorious sunshine we set off for Knaresborough where, despite leaving a long gap, we caught up with the elite group of long riders. A quick shuffle of groups gave us an extra rider for the loop of the lakes. Just as we were about to send the short ride group back to Harrogate the rain started - and then set in. It really was wet!

Towards Farnham we again caught the elite group trying to shelter under trees (not much hope in the torrential rain!). Having made our comments about their commitment we then took shelter in a much more appropriate dry bus shelter. After five minutes we were starting to get cold and decided to press on again despite the rain. We headed for Stavelly but turned left back towards Copgrove and then followed the bridlepath to the Boroughbridge/Bishop Monkton road. In Bishop Monkton three riders decided they had reached saturation point and headed home.

The group, diminished in numbers but not in spirit, continued to Ripon via Littlethorpe. A very welcome stop for refreshments at the Spa Gardens Café followed, where we again caught up with the long riders.

A more direct return route back was decided upon and we retraced our track back to Bishop Monkton and then to Knaresborough. The weather had decided to be kinder to us on the return journey and the sun came out and dried us out a little.

The ride leaders ended up losing the whole group - some in front and some behind. We turned round and went back a mile but couldn't find two (who we hope headed back to Harrogate via a different route), and didn't catch those that had gone in front. Probably the first time the ride leaders got back last!

Now the apology! Not having chance to plan a route can lead to problems, the medium ride was going to be 26 -28 miles but ended up being about 38 - Sorry, but well done! BT



