

Sunday, September 23, 2007

## Wheel Easy! Ride Report No. 73

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Long ride. An advertised ride of 45 miles turned out to be a significant underestimate, as the actual distance added up to about 60. But perhaps this was no bad thing as 11 riders were tempted to start out on the day's long ride to Masham.

The ride leader was one of two unlucky enough to pick up a puncture en route to Hornbeam Park, but two kind and able Wheel Easy riders replaced my inner tube in quick time despite cursing the bike which had no quick release breaks.

So we had a late start but set out at a good pace with the encouragement of Mike Bissell inevitably taking the lead without ever seeming to get out of first gear. We continued to make good time to Ripon despite a near catastrophe when Malcolm tried to make contact with Mr. Wills who happened to be passing in his tractor to have a chat about an order for manure and found himself on the wrong side of a quiet road at precisely the wrong time. Fortunately, the oncoming driver was alert to the mad cyclist blocking his way and had good brakes. After this, the faster riders wisely sped away and arrived in Ripon early enough to be well into their coffee and cakes before the stragglers arrived.

The highlight of the day was the route north of Ripon, through Galphay and Kirkby Malzeard, before a glorious descent into Masham for a lunch stop in the square. More undulating country lanes with lovely views took us to Snape and back into Ripon. With some of the faster riders speeding ahead to beat the threatening rain home, a group of 5 finally returned to Harrogate around 4pm. M&G

Medium ride. The number on the medium ride was a little uncertain from the start: was it 12 or 15? The weather was not at all bad, and after a delay for an unprecedented number of punctures and some indeterminate technical problems at Hornbeam, we eventually left and proceeded to Knaresborough via Calcutt. A brief stop to buy water allowed the intrepid 3 with technical problems to catch us up, so we were 15 again, but only for a couple of minutes, as

some more gremlins re-emerged. 13 of us went along the banks of the Nidd, turned left and right, avoiding the cart-track to Goldsborough, which we thought might be too muddy. We nearly lost Crawford at the roundabout, but his self-preservation instinct prevented this potential disaster.

Through Goldsborough (where Geraldine considerably did not leave her phone this time) on to the rather unpleasant crossing of the busy A59 and 500 metres to the left turn to Flaxby, Coneythorpe and Arkendale. The twitchers in our group spotted some Buzzards, Red Kites and either Swifts or Swallows. We stopped for a photo in what could have passed as a rural French setting, with some geraniums and ivy on a set of stone steps. I think we still had 13 in the group at that stage, but a phone call indicated that someone's fire alarm had gone off and the Fire Brigade were itching to break down some doors, so our numbers went down to 12 at Ferrensby.

On to Farnham and Scotton and then a detour to and from Brearton, where we saw the Beech trees planted in celebration of Victoria's 50th anniversary and Elizabeth II's coronation. We were haemorrhaging members of the group by then, and when we passed several fields with what seemed like dozens of people with metal detectors, we lost a couple more. By the time we got to the old bridge over the Nidd just south of Ripley, the attrition rate had reached epidemic proportions, and only 6 of us were amazed by Dennis's tales of jumping off the bridge in his youth. Back round Killinghall by way of Crawford's bypass, Knox Ford and by the time we reached the top of the hill, we were just 3 in number. About 28 miles, and no rain. J&G

Short ride. Here is the ride report for the slow - sloe ride. Despite an appalling forecast the sun tried to glow and the wind and rain held off, as two slow riders set off with the main purpose of collecting sloes en route from Hornbeam via Ridding Park to Follifoot and Spofforth. Returning via North Rigton and Knaresborough, we realised that the sloes had all been taken, we were too late, and only the highest branches of the sloe trees had any sloes worth picking.

Undeterred we cycled onwards and found several damson bushes instead, so we will be able to fortify ourselves with damson gin rather than sloe gin on the cold winter Sunday rides in the future. The ride took about one and three quarters of an hour and we covered 19 miles door to door, Sue showed that she should really be on an intermediate ride, with her speed and hill climbing capacity, whereas Caroline showed that she should have stabilizers on her bike, when she fell off trying to open a gate without dismounting. A thoroughly enjoyable morning, although we did notice traffic on the side and back roads was far heavier than normal. CG