

Sunday, December 16, 2007

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 85



Celebration Day for Sustrans Connect2 £50 million Big Lottery success proved to be bitterly cold, but freezing temperatures didn't deter a tremendous turnout of supporters at the Bilton Lane end of the path to be built on the former railway track over the Nidd Viaduct to Ripley Castle.

Riders converged from Hornbeam Park and Harrogate Library to meet with pedestrians at Bilton Lane for a celebratory photo. Most of the cyclists then continued on their usual Sunday ride, with around 13 setting off on the medium ride. This was originally planned to go west of Harrogate, but after the photo shoot with limited time to spare before the Christmas lunch, it was decided to go east to Staveley and Boroughbridge.

After a short break, the ride returned via Dunsforth, Great Ouseburn, Branton Green, through Marton to Ferrensby, and finally back up the Beryl Burton cycleway and over Dragon Bridge, around 30 miles of mostly flat cycling.

The short ride, with about 10 cyclists, headed up Bilton Lane and down Kings Road into Harrogate. Shedding riders along the way, seven were left as they cycled along Cornwall Road beside the Valley Gardens and then into the Pinewoods, emerging near Harlow Carr Gardens. Two more returned down Otley Road while the rest continued towards Lady Lane and Whinney Lane, and the Pannal contingent carried straight on to Hillfoot Lane and into Burn Bridge.

As today was the Wheel Easy Christmas lunch it was going to be a relatively short "long" ride. It was a chilly start for the seven people who set off from Hornbeam Park. One person had to turn back almost immediately due to mechanical problems, but we soon picked up another cyclist on our way out towards Hampsthwaite. The steady climb up towards Brimham Rocks kept everybody reasonably warm for a while and we had a short stop by the entrance. It was too cold to linger and much to the disappointment of some we had to turn down the opportunity to visit the tea hut for coffee in order to get back for the Christmas lunch. A heavy frost was making everything look very seasonal, but as we headed towards Warsill we began to feel the combined effects of the cold wind and a long downhill run. "We could do with a hill" is not something heard on many rides, but we welcomed anything which provided the opportunity to warm up a little. We headed back through Markington, Bishop Monkton and Knaresborough, while those not going for lunch made their separate ways home, the final four headed to the welcome warmth and hot food at the hockey club. A total of 32 miles.

