

Sunday, December 30, 2007

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 87



Brightening skies as we left Hornbeam Park made for a promising start and we followed Paul's suggestion of heading off for Fountains Abbey via Hampsthwaite and Shaw Mills. In all there were seven riders on the Long Ride all determined to shake off the festive excesses.

Approaching Beckwithshaw we passed a large group from Otley CC, as they had stopped for a break, and being a super fast group they soon swept us up as we headed for Pot Bank. The last we saw of them was a multi-coloured snake disappearing up the hill towards Pennypot.

As we climbed out of Hampsthwaite we had the second of our social calls when we met our sister club, Ripon Loiterers' long ride, heading South. By the time we reached the Bishop Thornton we were caught up by four mountain bikers who knew us as Wheel Easy (fame follows us everywhere!). They soon left us as we headed to the Fountains Abbey Visitors Centre for re-fuelling. Ripon, Bishop Monkton and Farnham. On the road we again met the Ripon Loiterers and took a photo to celebrate the reunion!

A good 35 miles was covered and lots of socialising by the time we returned to Harrogate. MW

Perhaps it was something in the previous night's half glass of wine, or it could have been trouble getting out of bed in the morning, but the leader of the medium ride was happily oblivious of the downpour a little earlier which everyone else was discussing and could see only sunshine and blue skies. His sense of direction was also uncertain, but with some help from the others our group of eight managed to make our way by a slightly original route to Whinney Lane, via Harlow Avenue and a short previously unnoticed ginnel which, in our defence, did not actually have one of those virtually ubiquitous no bicycle signs at its entrance.

We approached Otley Road to find ourselves trailing the short riders who had come by a more direct route. We rode together through Moor Park and met again later below Stainburn Woods. A mystery bug made its way through our manly ranks, and one rider was forced to return early

while another took his opportunity to switch to the short ride with the reassurance of female care and attention which was totally lacking in the medium ride.

Peter, with limited time, took a shorter route back down Pennypot Lane, and the remaining five continued to Menwith Hill, and then turned right for the real glory of the ride, the long run down to Birstwith, Clapham Green and Hampsthwaite, with the breeze at our backs and the bright winter sun lighting up the hills and valleys to the north. What goes down must come up, and the climb up to the A59 was followed soon after by the testing, but calorie burning, hill at Pot Bank. Here we finally split to go our separate ways for a total of around 26 miles. MM

Despite early rain, and a dull outlook 3 short easy riders set off for the short ride, following in the bike tracks of the medium ride and the long ride up Hookstone Road and towards Rossett. As Max seemed to be leading there were no concessions for hill avoidance and we headed towards Beckwithshaw the hilly way, close on the wheels of the long fast riders, who were going the long way round to Carlisle or somewhere before lunch, and the medium riders who were also going somewhere quickly up a hill, with no downs. En route we picked up a brave medium rider who admitted being defeated by man flu and felt the short ride was a sensible option. At Beckwithshaw we met up with the medium ride and had a photo opportunity, and lost our leader, who felt he would rather be tucked up in bed, than scaling the heights of Little Alms Cliff and Pennypot Lane. As we powered up towards Little Almscliffe with our new leader Laurie, we came across another case of man flu to be reported to Malcolm if we ever saw him again.

At Little Alms Cliff the sun came out and three short easy riders gloriously glided (or is it glid?) down towards previously uncharted territory of the Sun Inn, meeting Malcolm trying to round up his medium fast men ready for mounting the heights of Birstwith. We followed a little out of the way road to Pennypot Lane and found another medium ride man realising the short ride was a good option, when one had social commitments elsewhere. He kindly helped us with another photo opportunity. and whizzed off down a wonderful few miles towards Oaker Bank, past Ethelburgers new estate. Our ride leader warned Sue and Caroline of the final hill back to Harrogate, advised us to count curb stones and go down the cogs. Remarkably we all got to the top of this virtually vertical slope without needing to walk or tipping over backwards or having to call out the ambulance service. A superb ride much enjoyed by the healthy slow women riders of 18 miles door to door, done in a respectable and enjoyable 2 hours! CG