

Sunday, September 21, 2008

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 125



A fabulous late summer's day, and Malcolm Y produced a long ride to match the conditions which the 10 riders who completed it (or most of it) will remember for a long time.

For a change we took the direct route up the A61 to Ripley, turned towards Pateley but then went first right up to Bishop Thornton before dropping down to Fountains Abbey. With some of the club's strongest riders in the group, the pace was needless to say a good one, but whenever necessary the group waited at the tops of hills and at junctions to allow the backmarkers (i.e. yours truly) ample time to catch up.

We carried on to Winksley, Kirkby Malzeard and Grewelthorpe and then tackled the big hills around Ilton and up to Healey where there was a very welcome banana stop. A short downhill towards Leighton Reservoir gave a brief respite before the long slog of almost five miles up and over the moors culminated in the fearsome hill down to Lofthouse. Far better going down, however, than up.

We had planned to go north to How Stean Gorge, but changed tack and raced towards Pateley Bridge for lunch at Wildings riverside café. This was our third choice, the first two being closed, and when we learned that hot dishes were 'off' it looked unpromising. But then it turned out that hot apple and fruit pies with custard were in fact available, latte and filter coffees, and cups of tea in ample supply, and the sandwiches were more than satisfactory, so lunch proved to be well up to Wheel Easy's demanding standards.

This was just as well, as it was immediately followed by the delights of Yorke's Folly, which we all managed, but Peter J had the misfortune of a tyre blowout as he reached the top. The mechanics set to work making his bike roadworthy again while the rest enjoyed a chat and the panoramic views. We sailed down idyllic lanes to Thornthwaite and Darley, clambered up the hill from Birstwith and down again to Hampsthwaite, finally re-entering Harrogate via Knox Lane, and for those who had earlier driven in from remoter parts, back to Hornbeam after around 60 glorious miles. MM

There was a good turnout for the medium ride which was lead by Martin and Gia as two separate groups to cater for different paces. Gia took the first group to Kirkby Overblow via Pannal and Drury Lane, a nice long downhill and a steep climb up! A taste of the ride for the day. About 25 miles of testing hills but lovely downhill swoops and the joy of being in the countryside with excellent views on one of the nicest days of the year.

After Kirkby Overblow with an extra loop for one group we crossed the A61 to Dunkeswick and then through Weeton to cross the A658 and a steady climb up Crag Lane to Almscliffe Crag. Next the nasty steep climb out of

North Ripton and then up to what I call the top of the world. Fabulous views all round and a view of the Water Tower at Harlow which was our next focus.

Actually the goal was the Valley Gardens where both groups met to enjoy very rich ice cream, delicious cinnamon lattes, vanilla slices and scones. Ripley Stores have taken over the Valley Gardens café and it was an excellent finishing point for the ride. Everyone admired new Paul's bargain purchase from eBay and soon we are promised sight of the "first" Paul's new bike!

A lovely ride, very companionable, a real Wheel Easy day. GM



