

Sunday, January 4, 2009

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 141



Thirty five riders turned out today despite freezing temperatures sure to test us all. Also nice to welcome back some "lapsed" riders and new members. So all dressed up and ready to go, Malcolm Y stepped in to lead the long ride as Ben was called in to work, Caroline resolved to find her way to somewhere beginning with "C" following Martin who was leading a mountain bike ride and Gia lead the medium ride to Otley.

The magnificent seven took to the rough stuff today, if only because it was too damned cold to be speeding along in the chill winds, and, oh yes, because Sue's road bike was in for repair so the mountain bike route was a fortuitous option.

Losing Debbie at the start, because she had no shoes, was soon rectified as we met her at the Gardener's Arms and we all set off for Knaresborough and Farnham via the Beryl Burton Way. Caroline had left after us saying she was also leading the short ride down the Beryl Burton Way so when we caught her group up on the road to Farnham they had obviously obtained assistance from a passing 101 bus. Then it was off to the wilds but with no mud, only frozen ruts and lumps that made for some exciting riding on the tracks out of Farnham. Along the route to South Stainley through fields everything was picturesque and crisp in the frost.

Malcolm saved his first puncture on his new mountain bike until we were on the rough Bridleway Section before Ripley. He refused all offers of assistance and demonstrated his new found bicycle maintenance skills (courtesy of the Edinburgh Cycles Training Course). Despite a multitude of of silly comments he progressed to an inflated tyre, and we then set off to Ripley Castle cafe to thaw, chew and chat. Then it was through Ripley Woods and at the far end I decided to make Malcolm feel better by having a puncture myself. Again it was

soon sorted, but this time I found myself taking Malcolm's advice on refitting the wheel to the bike. So we set off for home via Hampsthwaite. About 25 miles and all good fun.

Finally a comment on my photos - clearly no-one takes a blind bit of notice when I say "smile for the camera" because at least half the people were looking away. I must work on this charisma thing - do Edinburgh Cycles do a training course for that I wonder? Martin

The long ride left Hornbeam and headed for Knox Ford then onto Ripley. A long climb at steady pace followed up to Brimham Rocks and on to Dallowgill Moor, down Silver Hill into Wath past the Sportsmans Arms. Lunch was at Howstean Gorge where we were made very welcome. Bill and Dave headed back for home through Pateley Bridge.

Five hardy souls then headed over the top at Lofthouse to Fearby. Lots of snow on the climb up and on the moors with great views and a scary ride down to the reservoirs and on to Fearby. We turned right to Ilton and the last big climb of the day. Stopped for tea and cake in Ripon then usual route back to Harrogate.

All enjoyed the day. Rider of the day goes to new member Chris on his lightweight mountain bike with 26 inch wheels who rode very strongly and is a great addition to the hardy long riders. Well done to Phil, Nick and Eric as well. A hard day but some great views of the Dales and some tough climbing. Back to Harrogate at 4.30 and 62 miles done. Well worth the effort. Thanks to all who put up with me! Cheers Malcolm Y

The medium ride of 15 took the usual route out to the Black Swan at Burn Bridge then up the hill at Brackenthwaite Lane to the Top of The World. Instead of tackling North Rigton and the Crag we went straight across past the Montessori School to the B6161. This route avoids a couple of steep hills and keeps us on the tops and plenty of downhill runs to Leathley.

We turned left to Stainburn, right to Braythorne and had to negotiate sheets of ice covering the whole road. Steve skied down legs astride his crossbar and feet on the ground, the rest of us dismounted and clung to the edges of the road to get through (see photo). At Leathley, Paul, David, John and Peter headed home for lunch and the rest of us rode on the back road to Otley with the threat of the Greasy Café looming large!

Luckily there was a queue and Steve's suggestion of the café at the Stephen Smith Garden Centre was an excellent choice. Clean, good value and plenty of room for us. We were even treated to Dennis joining us as he told someone that he had had his Sunday lunch yesterday! Keith P who had joined us after a long break left before the café stop. Nice to see you again Keith!

We sped home along the main road to Pool then turned off to come home via Castley, Weeton, Dunkeswick and Kirkby Overblow.

Twenty eight miles on a bright but cold day with excellent views all around. Good to see old and new riders with us, the ride was quite testing but enormously sociable. Gia

Six keen enthusiastic riders opted to do the short ride, which was an excellent start, as although Otley sounded lovely and the spirit was willing, the body definitely was not. We set off very carefully due to the temperature noted in my back garden minus 2, thinking the roads would be treacherous. The ride to Knaresborough was speedy and without any

slipping incidents. Adam, Peter and Jo new to Wheel Easy proved they were far fitter than the rest of us and were raring to continue on after we discussed various escape options. We saw Sue Threadgold organising a very efficient looking run, and told her to join us, but she was too busy.

We sped on through Knaresborough and were overtaken as we entered Farnham by an exhausted looking group of mountain bikers who must have got lost en route. They dashed off into the fields as we quickly climbed the hill out of Farnham and off towards Cowthorpe. Yes I'm sure it was Cowthorpe, not Copmanthorpe, Copgrove, or Cattal or Calcutt. (Actually, it was Copgrove, but I don't want to spoil Caroline's narrative. Ed.) Everyone was keeping up - probably far too well for my liking, and we passed the lake with the black swans the turn off to Ripon and at the edge of Burton Leonard we started along the track to the Mountgarrett estate.

Having eaten the Nigella-bites, and had a quick drink we powered on to the stream which was too river like to ride across and kind Peter helped everyone get their bikes across the stile in style. The white peacocks were in evidence in the nearby farm. From there we saw one of Jo's garden projects and we reached Ripon Road with the lure of the Ripley cafe stop helping everyone.

After dicing with the A61 Ripon Road, Adam and Peter decided to stop for refreshments in Ripley before tackling the last leg of the journey, but Caroline, Sue, Skipton Lynda and Jo continued homewards via Killinghall and Knox Lane, where we all looked decidedly fitter than the two gentlemen struggling up Knox Lane who had suggested we were getting rid of the Christmas Pudding earlier in Killinghall.

We tackled a very busy Skipton Road and commented how lovely this ride will be when the new cycle track is completed. From there I went home to cook Sunday lunch for visitors and the group hopefully got home across the Stray to the far reaches of Hornbeam and Leeds Road. About 22 miles in several hours, with the mist filtering a watery sun from the fields, the first Sunday ride of the year. Caroline

