

Sunday, February 8, 2009

Wheel Easy Ride Report No. 146



Wheel Easy Walk - Harewood and Eccup.

The driver of the number 36 was obviously a bit bemused by so many walking cyclists filling up his bus to go to Harewood, and judging by the whoops and hoots from the naughty ones upstairs memories of the school bus were still fresh in the mind. At Pannal we were joined by Gia and Denis Kaye. Denis went decidedly pale when he realised that £5.50 was buying just one return to Harewood and not two. (Just at that point I thought it undiplomatic to point out to him that a few of us were out on a freebee! Seniority has its benefits.) We met Paul and Andrea at Harewood to make a total of 15 refugees from the saddle.

A bright blue sky heralded the start of the walk with fabulous snowy views. The pace was definitely brisk through Harewood estate. By the time we reached the climb through the woods we were overtaken by a group of mountain bikers making a brave attempt at the climb on sheet ice. In fact there were many mountain bikers around, and their speeds and balance in the conditions had to be admired. Were we envious? Well perhaps a tad - it did look fun!

We added a loop around Eccup village as we were making such good time, and managed to see a lot of geese flying over near the reservoir. A few lucky ones also saw some Red Kites circling in the middle distance. The walking on this section was quite hard through snow and on ice and we felt as if we had covered a few miles extra. We ended up on the edge of the Harewood Estate overlooking the set of Emmerdale for lunch.

Then the pace slowed a bit as we finished our walk through the estate with views of Harewood House. Then it was back to "our bus" and we all took over the top deck for a nice ride home. Martin

Long ride. After a chilly start from Hornbeam four long riders split from the medium group at Knaresborough heading towards Sessay via Boroughbridge. At Sessay we decided to head towards Kilburn to get a closer look at the White Horse.

Picture 1: Here we had our first coffee stop and all agreed it would be shame to come so close and miss out on a trip up White Horse Bank. As we approached the snow got deeper until the road became just 2 wheel ruts through the snow. Just before the White Horse car park most of us gave up trying to ride and decided to opt for a Wheel Easy walk for a while. The views were stupendous and the snow clean and crisp as we made our way to the visitor centre at the top of Sutton Bank for a lunch stop.

Pictures 2, 3, 4 (picture 3 is the 4 bikes in the snow, below) We came down Sutton Bank and miraculously all the snow disappeared. En route to Thirsk we passed a farm which claimed to have kangaroos - sadly the fields contained just sheep. Picture 5

From Thirsk we headed back to Boroughbridge (by a circuitous route) for our third cafe stop and then back home. About 66 fantastic miles, mostly flat but with the added bonus of great views from the top of Sutton Bank. Phil St

Medium ride. With many choosing to join today's walk, just nine met at Hornbeam, five cyclists heading off on Phil's long ride and four on Malcolm's medium ride. The two groups met up again at Low Bridge where we were joined by Dave W and Norman. After a brief discussion about the likely distances, which turned out to be around 30 or 60 miles, the newcomers opted for the shorter, and Dave P switched to join them rather than stay with the long ride as he felt he might slow the others down a little.

So seven medium riders continued along Waterside to St James Park and through Little Ribston before turning left to Cowthorpe. Malcolm had led at a decent lick to try and keep fingers and other parts warm, but after a word of advice from more experienced hands settled down to a more relaxed pace. All went well in the glorious and ever so slightly warming sunshine through Cowthorpe and along Rudgate Lane to Thorp Arch Trading Estate. However, at just the wrong moment Malcolm eased back to tell Dave P a poor joke which meant that the riders ahead turned up the road to the Bistro and suddenly his dreams of a Costa latte were shattered. There are times when democracy loses its appeal.

After a disappointing latte (at least for some) but some very acceptable scones and teacakes, we tackled the cycle path to Wetherby, very icy for short stretches but mostly clear and lovely in the sunshine. From Wetherby we returned through Sicklinghall, and deferring to Mark's preference to enjoy the fine snowy views kept to the high ground back to Kirkby Overblow. Norman stopped to do some serious photography, accompanied by Dave P. Dave W turned straight down the bypass to Knaresborough, which left Debs, Sarah and Mark to take up Malcolm's offer of tea and biscuits at home before the final climb up back up Almsford Bank. Around 32 miles in total. MM

