

## Wessex report March 2013

A dire weather forecast meant that only five tandems and two solos turned out for a short morning ride in the Avon Valley led by John and Sheila Ward before the Wessex Annual Lunch at the Alice Lisle pub, Rockford, in the heart of the New Forest. Several of us had been thwarted by a swollen stream pouring over a ford en route to the pub, which required a diversion of several miles to all vehicles except 4x4s. However the rain held off for the morning



and we enjoyed a gentle ride along the western side of the Avon Valley before climbing up the not-too-steep escarpment beyond to the 'Sticky Buns Café' at Wolvercroft Garden Centre. Sadly with a large lunch ahead we nobly restricted ourselves to coffee.

After a long coffee stop we dropped down into the Valley again, through Fordingbridge, across the swollen Avon and southwards along the eastern side of the Valley, avoiding the ponies and

donkeys which linger in the middle of the road. We even saw some watery sunshine. Shortly before we reached the Alice Lisle we encountered another ford made impassable by a swollen stream, but being on bikes this time we could use the footbridge to cross it. The total distance was all of 11.6 miles!

At the pub we met up with twenty-one more members to enjoy a substantial and leisurely lunch with us. It was a particular pleasure to welcome some longstanding members who don't ride much these days, also two new members. Sheila Ward presented the clock award for the tandem couple attending the most events on the Wessex programme in the previous year to Josh Muir, who was delegated to accept it by his parents Dave and Clare Muir. During our lunchtime chat we agreed that we should use our e-mail group more to try to arrange ad hoc local rides when the weather forecast is promising, in order to enable those members who have no means of transporting their tandems to rides to get out and ride with other local members.

