

Wessex Region Ride Report April 2014

The gang assembled at the home of leaders David and Alison in Romsey, and 2 tandems plus 2 solos set off into the slight drizzle which hung about for a lot of the day, sometimes quite damp, but drying up into the afternoon.

An easy start on a cycle path alongside the A27 got us to the metropolis of North Baddesley and soon we were on the very quiet Hoe Lane, making our way West to the Broadlands estate (former home of Lord Mountbatten) where we crossed the swollen River Test using the not-open-to-cars road and a short stretch of muddy puddles. 3 or 4 weeks ago David had cycled this stretch with a friend and most was a foot or more deep; they got very wet feet. Fortunately since the rains abated the levels had dropped a lot.

After the Broadlands excursion we turned north and uphill to cross the A3090 dual carriageway and then via small roads and places like Dandys Ford to our coffee stop at Gilberts Garden Centre. A mile or so before the stop we took a minor detour to St Margaret's Church in East Wellow and the grave of Florence Nightingale. The Valentine's day storms felled a large tree which inflicted some damage on the grave. We were pleased to see that it has been perfectly repaired. In addition, Lesley pointed out to us the very old and faint murals in the church.

There was too much choice at Gilbert's for John who after a lot of indecision settled on a scone. Good choice. We were well and truly stuffed when we left heading North through Lockerley and East Tytherley, to Broughton. On the way we passed a few patches of very early bluebells, and typical Test Valley landscapes. No rest at Broughton though, (coffee was really not that long ago) and we headed East to re-cross the Test at Horsebridge and from there a short distance to King's Somborne. Peter knew of a couple of well-sited benches there, and so that was our very pleasant lunch stop.

A bit of a shock for the legs straight after lunch as we went uphill on the road to Braishfield, but we were soon there. From Braishfield we gradually worked our way back to the outskirts of Romsey and with a quick dip over the Halterworth railway crossing, were soon back where we started. Cups of tea and biscuits all round were appreciated. Peter especially needed his cuppa because he still had about 10 miles to do to get home in Winchester and since he had done the same to join us in the morning, he had easily cycled the furthest. Ann unfortunately had not felt well enough to ride with him. Lesley was on the other solo. John and Carole were on their shiny new (3 months) tandem as they both settle into a new post-retirement life. They had been visiting this part of the world (from Leeds area) and had spotted our event on the Tandem Club calendar. We greatly enjoyed their company. Please come again! David and Alison's slightly more aged tandem completed the group. Thanks to the leaders for another grand day out.