

March 2022 NCG AGM – Martin’s Rides Report

Another difficult year with more Covid lockdowns early last year followed by the need to keep safe. With this in mind we have been splitting into two groups lately with one group visiting a café and the other group doing a non-stop ride (apart from a short rest). The café visits have often involved sitting outside as well – weather permitting.

We have a number of new members join over the last year with over 20 cyclists now turning up on some Wednesdays, so the group is going from strength to strength.

With some new volunteers, we have up to eight regular ride leaders available on any ride so we can spread out the load and have backups, especially for Wednesday morning rides. These rides are normally between 25 to 30 miles with the occasional longer ride.

Howard has discovered three new cafes near Newnham and Cinderford with some challenging hills to match. Mike has found another new café at Barton Court, Colwall plus the Woodshed, Eastnor Castle so even more choice for a tea/coffee stop.

We even visited the Café at the Trumpet crossroads recently for part of the Ledbury ‘Big Breakfast’. This was a great success and we need to include this café as one of our regular venues. Maybe make the Big Breakfast a regular annual event, like we do with the Big Apple.

Some of the longer rides included a day out riding from Llanfoist (near Abergavenny) along an old railway track, then round to Pontypool and back along the canal towpath. This ride could be repeated again this year. This was led by Howard and Anne. Bryan also led a ride south of Gloucester for a pub lunch in Epney followed by an ice-cream on the way back. Susanna also led a ride from Ledbury heading north, and Mike did a bluebell ride over to the Malvern Hills, starting in Wellington Heath.

Last autumn we set off from Dorstone for a charity ride via Hay-on-Wye and beyond in memory of Robin Harrison who passed away earlier in the year. The charity, Peace and Hope, was the charity Robin worked for. They help disadvantaged people in Nicaragua. We had 16 members turn out for two routes, one flat and the other hilly and longer via Hay Bluff. In September, 5 of us also took part in a 50 mile charity Sportive in aid of Peace and Hope, starting in Hereford and heading towards the Black mountains.

Later in the year, we lost Bill Foster, who was also a very popular member and came out mainly on our Thursday evening rides. I now plan to organise another charity ride in Bill’s memory. Justine, his wife, and he worked as doctors in South Africa for another charity (the Hewel Trust), so Justine suggested we donate to them. Their son and Daughter-in-law also want to join us. Details are yet to be decided but probably two groups riding a 43 and 48 mile ride via Colwall for lunch and including a coffee stop. This needs to be on a Saturday.

Howard is planning to do a few more weekend rides and away days, so is open to suggestions. This could include a repeat ride from Llanfoist and a ride over the Gospel Pass in the summer. Susanna has also suggested doing a weekend ride in the summer to Ludlow with an overnight stay. This would be around 50 miles each way.

Thursday evening rides are due to start again sometime in April when the evenings get lighter, starting from the Kings Arms car park – assuming we don’t have another lockdown.

There has been an increase in the number of members using e-bikes (including myself), which is fine as at least we are able to get out for group bike rides and keep up with those who are younger and/or fitter.

Howard is doing a grand job since I have taken a less demanding role due to my illness. With that in mind I am also standing down from the committee with Howard standing to take my place – assuming he gets voted in. So please give him your support.

Over the last 5 years as Ride Coordinator I have seen the group rides grow in popularity and we are now in a very healthy position – assuming we don’t have any more Covid lockdowns.