

A Merry Xmas Ride?

You suggested it you organise it I was told!

Where to go?.....how far?.....how many to plan for?..... when?.....it's winter!

Not daunted, having organised plenty of rides over the years, I wanted to make it enjoyable yet worthwhile. Most were not winter rides, which gives an extra dimension, organising in poor weather and early darkness. Timing to be near Xmas to be in the mood, but not too near because of other commitments, so a date was set a fortnight before. A little fancy dress is always a good idea in my book, not to be too serious about things. It was to be at a leisurely pace: a safe ride with time to chat smile and experience the joy of cycling – no steep hills, frequent stops and a scenic route. Penclacwydd is not too far (11 miles), is mainly off road with a very scenic route and good destination. It was then a matter of looking at the timing putting out a poster with a bit of colour (get Quackers...) to encourage the faint hearted and put the word about. My family added in a rescue service as well.



There was support out there when we asked, a manageable 20 to 30. The weather forecast was wet and windy – not good – but snow and ice was unlikely. This continued right up to the day, but riders committed and most joined the ride with just a few pulling out, replaced by others joining.

We split into two groups with a lead and back rider for each and rode, well separated so as not to cause problems for other path users, or on the roads at junctions and on Pontycob Rd. The weather was a light drizzle at the start which petered out, brightening up a bit by lunchtime.

The splendid views across the Loughor Estuary were not what they might be on a clear day, but the tide was up and it was still spectacular. The lunch stop at Penclacwydd proved very enjoyable with plenty of space and freedom to have a coffee and cake, supplemented by Dareyoush and Pat's mulled wine and mince pies – very seasonal. We had the benefit of one family of three generations cycling who were brilliant... and a group from Bikeability who were lively to say the least. Riders were led at the front by David Naylor with Nick Guy at the back. We also had the benefit of experienced Wheelrights members in the groups to assist if necessary. We didn't need the rescue backup but my family's *Mad Hatter* appearances at the various stops was both colourful and useful with a bit of traffic control.

After a good rest and refreshment at the Centre we set off back with a strong south westerly behind us and in no time were enjoying the gradual downhill run from Dunvant to Blackpill.

All in all a very enjoyable day with reasonably good weather and a lot of chat and smiles along the way. What a good way to celebrate seasonal goodwill at this time of year: leisurely cycling along, enjoying fresh air and good company with the bonus of a little gentle exercise...roll on the next ride!



At the Wetlands Centre

David Judd
Wheelrights President
and ride organiser