

Wessex region ride report April 2013

It was a sunny start to the day as five tandems, including two guests from Oxfordshire, and three solos converged on Blandford Forum for coffee followed by a ride led by Ted and Jo Greenwood. We were however not alone. A huge British Heart Foundation charity ride based outside Wimborne Minster filled the roads everywhere with cyclists of every age, shape and size. We ambled south-eastwards down the Stour valley under increasing cloud, through Shapwick and paused outside Sturminster Marshall to view the charming White Mill before heading through Wimborne Minster.

Then our route began to climb north over Gaunts Common before turning west towards Witchampton down a quiet private road to Witchampton Mill on the river Allen. A tour round this pretty village involved some steep downs and ups, before we climbed up and whizzed down towards a leisurely lunch at 'The Drovers' at Gussage All Saints.

After lunch was even hillier as we made two ascents from Gussage St Michael to Long Crichel before a high speed descent into the Tarrant valley, stopping briefly at Tarrant Rushton where the BHF ride had a feeding station near a memorial to those who operated from Tarrant Rushton Airfield 1943-80 and served with 298 Squadron RAF and C Squadron Glider Pilot Regiment. Then we dropped down to the river Stour again, reversing our route for the last few miles back to Blandford. The 35 mile ride was agreed to be a great success, thanks to the careful planning of leaders Ted and Jo.



White Mill, Sturminster Marshall



John and Sue Sutton pounding uphill (sorry about Sheila's finger – we were also pounding uphill at the time!)



Lesley Fuller, the Greenwoods and the Hawkens working hard up a hill



Pausing at Tarrant Rushton Airfield and the memorial there

