



Back on Track

Readers will be overjoyed to hear that WDCF has at last been able to resume guided rides. We are taking it steady to begin with, concentrating on Easy Rides which focus on those just starting cycling, returning to it after a break, needing to build up their confidence or unfamiliar with the area. Rides are at present restricted to six people, including front and back markers, but the small number in the group does mean that the ride can be tailored more precisely to the needs and skills of the riders turning up.

You will know from our recent email that Steady Rides will be resuming in October from Darrington, Nostell and Castleford Mill and details of Easy and Steady Rides will appear on our Facebook page. In all cases, booking is essential on info@cycling-wakefield.org.uk. If a ride looks particularly popular, we may be able to call on additional ride leaders to enable a second ride to set off from the same point at an appropriately socially distanced interval! If you are driving to Nostell, you will need to book and pay for your parking in advance with the National Trust. Although existing National Trust members park free, they do still need to book. If you arrive on your bike there is of course no charge.

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Your help is needed in stopping the installation of unnecessary barriers on Wakefield's cycle network.

One of the few positives to emerge from the Covid 19 lockdown is the increase in the number of people getting out on their bikes. A knock-on effect from this saw local and national governments committing to do more to encourage people to cycle and walk. New cycle lanes sprang up in many towns and cities and more investment was promised for cycling infrastructure. Making life easier for cyclists will be at the heart of this new mindset. The Countryside Section of Wakefield Council is, however, bucking the trend.



Regular readers of this newsletter will recall Wakefield District Cycle Forum (WDCF)'s unsuccessful attempt in 2018 to halt the installation of a new gate at the Santingley Lane end of Anglers' Lake. Well, they are at it again and have installed a new gate at the entrance to Haw Park Woods. These gates are on the route of the Wakefield Wheel (the Wheel) and the Wonders of Wakefield (WoW) cycle trails, which are not only hugely popular with cyclists in the district but also attract visitors from all over the country. The Wheel and WoW were featured in Wakefield Council's recent publication highlighting the best attractions in the district which

acknowledged the contribution WDCF made to their development. Since their inception, WDCF has worked hard, and largely successfully, to remove barriers on the trails.

The two reasons given by 'Countryside' for the installation of these gates are:

- *'concerns raised by disabled users which highlighted that the 'A' frame barrier restricted access for them and their scooters - the barrier has had to be replaced with this more suitable kissing gate which allows them, along with all other legitimate users, access to the woodland.'*
- *'the persistent and significant problem of antisocial behaviour from motorcycles and quad bike users'*

In actual effect, the installation of the gates at the Santingley Lane end makes it more difficult for disabled users as there was no barrier there before the installation of the gate and the simple removal of the A-frame at Haw Park Woods, which WDCF has been asking for, would have served disabled users better than a kissing gate.

WDCF have asked for details of the instances of *'the persistent and significant problem of antisocial behaviour from motorcycles and quad bike users'* but have been informed ***'we aren't in a position to provide you with the additional information you have requested.'*** You may wonder why? When WDCF asked for this information in 2018, Countryside were unable to provide it but information gained from the police indicated five instances of antisocial behaviour over a period of 2 years - hardly 'persistent and significant'.

WDCF will continue its campaign to remove unnecessary barriers from all the cycle infrastructure in the district, but we need your help. You can do this by writing to Wakefield Council to complain about the erection of these gates and the persistent use of 'A' frames in a variety of widths.

Please email customerservices@wakefield.gov.uk . Below is a sample email which you can adapt to your personal style and views:

'While most of the country seems to be accepting that cycling is something that needs to be encouraged and that cycle-friendly infrastructure is a good investment, Wakefield Council continues to waste money on barriers that deter cyclists. The latest example is a new gate at Haw Park Woods, on the route of two popular cycle trails. As far as I am aware this was installed without any consultation with cycle groups in the district and is contrary to Wakefield Council's Cycling Policy and government guidelines. The A-frame that was in place previously was bad enough, but this new gate suggests that deterring cyclist is not a problem for Wakefield Council.'

Thanks for your help.



Of course, A-frames do not just affect cyclists. The picture alongside shows one on a footpath branching off the Dando Way bridlepath.

Walkers prefer to skirt round it rather than attempting to squeeze through and the gap is now filled with nettles and other weeds as the mowers can't get near them. The flanges represent a health hazard for those with impaired balance or mobility and the structure as a whole is an eyesore and complete waste of taxpayers' money. Why do they do it?



Rides Review



Our first post lockdown ride took place on the 8th August from Castleford Mill. A select group of five set off along the canal to Fairburn Ings.

The weather was lovely and the spring flowers which blossomed on our last ride had been replaced by shiny fat sloes and glistening blackberries. Although the café there was closed and we had to walk a short way through the RSPB reserve, the day was fine and all enjoyed the ride, which was a splendid introduction to WDCF for some of the group.

Nostell was the starting point for our next sortie. Those attending were split between those with electric assistance and the dinosaurs relying on pedal power alone.

Each group set off at different times and kept within the limit of six. We did cross fleetingly at the café at Anglers' but proprietries were always observed.

Brambles, nettles and Himalayan balsam all attempted to encroach on the track and in places, the path was crunchy from fallen acorns.



The solitary non-leader/backmarker on our next Castleford ride received individual attention. This extended tour went out to the St Aidan's reserve and on the way back took in routes through Castleford which most of the group were unfamiliar with. The plethora of bottles lining the track next to the Aire after the spring floods seems to have been cleared although idiots continue to drop litter. The opportunity was taken to look at improvements to the cycle path near new housing developments and places where more work needs to be done. We hope to inspire more members to join our next working party, details of which will appear on Facebook.



80 Miles for 80 years



Having been thwarted by the covid restrictions in her attempt to thread her way through the tulips earlier this year, one of our more mature members (in years at least), Janet Taylor, decided that she would like to celebrate her 80th birthday by cycling 80 miles along the Bay Circuit from Barrow in Furness to Glasson Dock, Lancaster taking in Ulverston, Grange over Sands and Carnforth along the way. She was joined on her enterprise by Cherry Oldham and Meg and Neville Andrews on their tandem.

The team stayed at hotels and bed and breakfasts along the way, breaking the journey into manageable chunks and allowing for some sightseeing en route. The weather was perfect; dry and sunny with sufficient sea breezes to keep the riders comfortable.

The first two days had some really steep climbs, reminding all parties that they were on the edge of the Lake District.

After a short diversion to view the fantastic topiary at Levens Hall, the group took a tour of Ulverston on foot for photo opportunities with the Laurel and Hardy statue commemorating Stan Laurel's birth in the town. They had a brief encounter at Carnforth Station, but the museum was closed.



When the party hit precisely 80 miles on the following day, streamers were let off to celebrate. The debris was of course then carefully collected up for later disposal. The group pressed on to the end of the ride which finished at Glasson Dock where, once again, the riders were able to find yet another willing bystander to take a photo of the group. Despite cropping, you may be able to spot some-one's hand at the edge of one photo and the photographer's shadow on another.



On the last day the team cycled back to Lancaster station to catch the train to Barrow-in-Furness to pick up their cars. Unfortunately, the train wouldn't take the tandem so Neville and Meg then had to drive back to Lancaster to collect their bike.





Carrying luggage for a six day trip made the bikes much heavier than usual and all appreciated electric assistance. The journey actually took 92 miles, as we had to cycle back to the hotel in Lancaster from the Dock, so Janet doesn't need to repeat the feat for another 12 years. The ride made a pleasant break in good company and it was good to learn that carrying the equivalent of two small suitcases and a backpack is feasible, although I'm not sure we could manage a tent and sleeping bags too. Personally, I think my next 'mile for each year' birthday ride will be celebrating our grandson's 12th birthday, when no luggage will be required.

Lockdown

Has getting out on your bike ride kept you sane during lockdown? Have you tried out new routes and gone exploring while on furlough? Has the need to avoid so many children on bikes meant that you have travelled more widely than you usually manage or have you ridden out with a line of grandchildren strung out behind you like ducklings?

Send your Covid Cycling stories and photos to info@cycling-wakefield.org.uk and you may feature in our splendid Christmas edition.

