

## CYCLING GROUP

It is nearly Here..... I think!

The winter is never the best time for cycling but this year rather than cold bright crispy days we seem to have more than our fair share of grey wet ones. Our first ride in January was cancelled but we have managed two rides this year both on grey days

Our third one is tomorrow. (16th). It starts from the Derby Arms and heads along the old road and then the flats to a very steep climb into Brigsteer. A long drag takes up Levens Hill to a great downhill to coffee at the Castle. The second half of the ride takes us to Hincaster on to Heversham then past Levens Hall and Low Levens Farm back to Gilpin Bridge. It is 21 miles long with 1,000 feet of climb

I recced it last Monday when my only concern was a rather large puddle and the normal pot holes. Yesterday I decided I would check out the puddle to make sure it hadn't got deeper or bigger and I set off once more with a grey sky that looked like rain and feeling fairly miserable. But within a few hundred yards I came across the first little circle of snowdrops, they were so bright and cheery that I began to feel more positive about my ride. Many of the hedgerows had loads of the lovely white flowers swaying gently in the wind and then the purple heads of crocuses and even a few early daffodils began to appear. In Hincaster I stopped to marvel at a gorgeous display of snowdrops in a little wood and even spied some sort of buttercup with bright yellow flowers. I was really beginning to enjoy my ride

I then arrived at the puddle/flood I had come to check out and to my relief it had not got any worse and maybe even dropped a little. As I had no need to re-check the rest of the route I decided to head to the canal. On my way I passed a field of lambs. As I stopped to look, they all came running thinking I was the farmer with some treats.

Again, when I arrived at the canal, the positive signs of Spring were all about with all the various ducks appearing to have paired up, two Herons standing close and lots of swan couples it was as if all of them knew it was nearly Valentine's Day. To make my ride even better the kingfisher with his amazing colours dashed past and then stopped on a branch to wait for me, before dashing off and stopping several more times.

I was feeling much more positive about the whole ride and this winter's riding in general. When I left the canal and was hit by the very cold strong north wind. I hid behind a wall to put on yet another layer of clothes (making six) and set off again but even the effort of trying to make headway into the wind failed to warm me up and the effort of getting home became an endurance test. The wind, which was now hitting me from the side, was getting through my hat and helmet and my ears had started to hurt when I suddenly remembered my sister's birthday present to me. (she tells me it's a bum wipe!! I use it to clean my glasses). I placed it inside my hat and helmet and it became an excellent ear defender. I will never laugh at her presents again.

So now I am hoping that tomorrow's ride will go ahead and that I will finish it knowing spring is really nearly here and not freezing.

***Today's ride did happen with 11 of us enjoying sunny spells, all the signs of spring and a great gossip. SPRING is definitely on its way.***

*Sue Edlington*