

Mike & Lesley's Tipple Ride

by Lesley Smith

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Sixteen people aboard thirteen bikes gathered at Alton Station for a cuppa before we set off through the town centre, heading for The Tipple Inn. Erica, coincidentally enjoying a cafe breakfast in the warm September sunshine with her family, waved as we passed on the start of a winding route through the lanes and villages of Hampshire - and a little bit of Wiltshire.



Predominantly following 'B' roads, our 60 mile route initially headed West in the general direction of Basingstoke, taking in the pretty village of Preston Candover, before dropping Southwards, through Itchen Abbas, Martyr Worthy, and Hurstbourne Priors. The joy of Mike's excellent routes is their rambling nature. And today's was no exception, as we veered back Northwards, skirting both Winchester and Andover, but instead, taking in further delightful villages such as St Mary Bourne, Vernham Dean and our final destination, Collingbourne Ducis. These are all names evocative of the rural idyll and they don't disappoint, with thatched cottages, narrow roads and village pubs.



The scenery ranged from wooded lanes to open countryside where farmers were busy haymaking, and the views towards Pewsey Down were stunning from the minor road leading into Collingbourne Ducis. Riding on these roads is always a pleasure. They can be slower and winding or faster and open but always with very little traffic.



The Tipple Inn provided a tasty and plentiful roast dinner to round off the ride. They were happy to provide child portions for those with a smaller appetite and the landlord provided jump leads and a car battery to one rider whose bike wouldn't start when we left!

After the poor weather of July and August it was a pleasure to lead a ride in warm sunshine, even though the day started cool and misty. Thanks to Chris and Alison for acting as tail-enders and to everyone who joined us on the ride. Welcome also to Ray Cawte who joined us from the Oxford Section.



Thanks go to Lesley for words and photos and to Alison Bailey for additional photos.