

New Forest Bike Ride 18th June 2017

A report by Hugh Marchant – updated at 11:42 on 19 June.



I followed the route back from the crossroads where Braggers Lane meets Thatcher Lane and immediately noticed one major difference between this event and some other mass cycling events. On the way there I had encountered several participants who generally seemed to be treating this as a nice gentle cycle ride in the countryside rather than a race. They were individuals or in small groups of 2, 3 or 4 and presented little difficulty to the motorists. At this Bragger Lane junction was a marshal who (at around 10:15) informed me that 15-20 had already passed her since 9:30. Then she noticed someone cycling down and immediately moved to stop this cyclist until the road was clear for him to turn onto the more major road. An excellent piece of marshalling.

From this point driving back to the event start point at Brockenhurst College, I encountered 240 cyclists between 10:15 and 11:18. Adding the 20 or so that the marshal told me about, and taking into account that there was a route split (at Burley) where some may have taken the medium or short routes and thus avoided my count, I believe that the total number of participants is unlikely to have exceeded 300. There was also a family friendly route which was mainly along cycle paths and this is not included in the count.

Throughout my drive, I did not see any groups of more than 5 cyclists. Indeed there were very few groups at all, the majority of the cyclists leaving enough gaps for motorists to use wherever necessary.

I saw 3 marshals along the 20 miles or so of my drive – one at the junction of Braggers and Thatcher Lanes, one at the route split in Burley and one at the feed stop at Holmsley Tea rooms. I would have hoped to see as many as 9 more. Suggested locations would be the junction of Pound Lane and Ringwood Rd at Burley Cross, cross roads at Marlpit Oak, junction of Pitmore Lane and B3055, Junction of

Mountpleasant Lane and Pitmore Lane, Junction of Sway Road and Mountpleasant Lane, Junction of Undershore Road and B3054, Junction of B3055 and B3054 (Hatchet Pond), Junction of Mill Lane and B3055 and coming out from Brockenhurst College onto the A337. It could be that some of these were marshalled earlier and I missed them. Considering the slow speed of the cyclists along Pound Lane Burley, I did not think it necessary to have marshals at the pinch points as I have suggested for other events.

As mentioned earlier, cyclist behaviour was excellent. I observed just one incident of poor cycling where one cyclist overtook a small group of others without looking behind for motorists overtaking him.

Event organisation appeared to be good despite the lack of marshals. Numbers were well within the 1,000 maximum required by the New Forest Cycle Events Charter. Participants had been provided with numbers on the front handlebars and on their clothing. However I think the organisers need to ensure in future that this second number is pinned to the backs of the participants and is not obscured by back packs. I would guess that at least 1 in 3 participants was not displaying their number correctly such that it would be visible to following motorists. Some were wearing them across their chests, and others appeared to have removed the second one completely although they still had the small number on the handlebar. I even saw one who had tied the second number onto his handlebar on top of the smaller one! It just needs better briefing and someone to check before allowing participants to start. Perhaps with more marshals there would also be the opportunity to stop such people and remind them of the need to wear their numbers visibly on their backs.

The last participants I observed would have left Brockenhurst College at around 11am, an hour after the scheduled time. I assume that these may well have been some of the organisers on a sweep run?

My only other comment is that at Marlpit Oak where participants turn left off the B3055 to go along C10 past Longslade view, one cyclist decided to take a short cut across the heathland. This is contrary to forest by-laws and another case where better briefing of participants may well be required.



In summary, this was a well organised, good natured event that other event organisers should try and emulate. My only criticisms are a lack of marshals and the way that the numbers were not being properly displayed on the backs of the participants.