

Packetts' Tour De Dales 2022



Last weekend saw the fifth annual running of the Packetts' Tour de Dales charity cycling ride, in support of the local Bradford charity One In A Million, which supports under-privileged children and young adults to break the cycle of poverty and get a better start in life. See more about their remarkable work at www.oiam.org.

Despite some initial concerns about the weather, we had sunshine and pleasant temperatures throughout, but as the 43-strong lime-green peloton set out from Packetts' offices at Saltaire early on Saturday morning, little did some of us know what was in store. "It's a social ride, not a race" said [Marshall Sugden](#) (MD of Packetts) as we got ready to leave. Tell that to those of us racing up the last hill to the Wetherby Whaler after 120km in the saddle on Sunday afternoon!

I now know that, unlike Berkshire where I cycle normally, Yorkshire has hills, disarmingly called the Dales. The course designer thought it would be amusing if they built some of these steepest hills into the course on day one. For those that cycle regularly, 100km in a day is not excessive; 100km horizontally with 2km vertically is a little tougher (at least for those of us from flat counties). We set out to discover a warm up hill immediately after the start ("this isn't a real hill" our Yorkshire colleagues kept telling us). 20 minutes in we had our first incident with a minor crash (no car involved) that caused a puncture, so we had an early rest.

The day continued with some "not really hills" until, as we approached lunch after three hours, what appeared to be a mountain rose up in front of us. But we're only in Yorkshire, not the Alps I thought. This was the first of the hills that were grudgingly acknowledged to be actual hills. We all managed fight our way up it, albeit very very slowly in some cases and stopped at Stump Cross Caverns for lunch, where a short nap on the grass was felt to be necessary (at least for me).

Over lunch provided by the amazing support team (more below), rumours were circulating about an even steeper hill coming in the afternoon. Can't be right some of us thought. We were wrong. An undulating post-lunch ride took us through some spectacular scenery (of which there was a lot) down to the river for a break. As we prepared to leave, [Wayne Cowley](#) from Packetts' mentioned quietly to me that there was a sharp left hand hairpin coming up and I should make sure I was in bottom gear as I got to it. Thank you Wayne.

Shortly afterwards, we found ourselves on what felt like the north face of the Eiger. The sign at the bottom said '18% gradient'. Must be a typo surely. Nope. For those not used to cycling, there comes a point where if the road is too steep you cannot keep the bike moving forward. You either fall off, or get off. Quite a few of us took the sensible option before we fell off. But it was all downhill (literally) from there. As the effect of the hills wore off our energy came back and we finished the day in good spirits, arriving in the beautiful market town of Masham to find the Theakston's brewery (a Packetts' client) nestling near the market square with frosty glasses of Theakston's best beers waiting for us. I strongly recommend the Gold Pale Ale.

It is amazing how quickly the efforts of the day are forgotten, especially when presented with cold beer, a post-ride leg massage and a full-on hog roast. However, there were some early bedtimes that evening and not too many party animals.

Day two was longer but flatter, and overall was very enjoyable. We worked our way through some stunning North Yorkshire countryside with a lot of picture postcard houses and views. The stiffness from day one soon eased off and we made good progress with locals clapping and cheering the green snake as it weaved past their houses. Despite the extra length the flatter route on day two meant that we all retained our energy for most of the day. I should mention that we were riding the 'short' route, but a number of the participants rode the 'long' route – an additional 120km over the two days. Well done to them! Half an hour before the end the two groups came together and we all rode together down into Bradford to finish at Bradford City's football stadium where One In A Million run a free school for local children.

It was a fantastic weekend which would not have been possible with the support of Packetts', the commitment of Marshall (and his family) to the event and the tireless support of the behind the scenes team – whenever you needed a break there they were in a layby with sandwiches, snacks and drinks and plenty of words of encouragement. Special mention to Kirsty who marshalled us on day two, and Steve, Wayne, Joss, and Ben from Jensten/Packetts' for their company and humour throughout the weekend, and again to Ben for his medical assistance!

The Packetts' Tour de Dales has raised almost £100K for OIAM since it started, and if we can raise just a little more we will hit that brilliant target. Please go to www.justgiving.com and search for Tour de Dales 2022 to help.

See you there next year!

Alistair

