

T'Owd Man's Revenge

Harborough Rocks, Griffe Grange, Grangemill, Bonsall Moor, Bonsall, Cromford, Longway Bank, Breamfield, Wirksworth, Hopton, Harborough Rocks

Distance = 35.0 km (21.7 miles); off road = 20.4 km

Total Vertical Ascent = 957m

Ride Time = 3 to 3.5 hours

Maps = OS White Peak Area (OL 24) 1:25,000

A mean route filled with hatred and spite. It combines more than its fair share of climbing with some steep, technical downhill. Sustained effort required. Not one for the faint hearted and check your brakes before setting off!

Leave Brassington via the uphill road heading north to Longcliffe. After 700 metres, turn right in front of the telephone exchange onto the road to Wirksworth. This soon levels out and passes in front of a large factory (Hoben's Industrial Minerals) behind which are the looming crags of Harborough Rocks. Immediately after the entrance to the factory is a stile and sandy path leading to the High Peak Trail. Reach the trail and turn right.

After 1.1 km, a short distance beyond the crossing of a tarmac road, is a large wooden gate on the left. Go through the gate and across the grass field keeping close to the left hand wall. Continue in a straight line over the summit of the hill and down over more grass to a T-junction with a wide, gravel track – the Chariot Way. Turn left and follow it for 1.8 km of fast, up and down riding (more down than up) to a sharp left hand bend with a gate. Don't go through this gate, instead go through the gate below and to the right. The trail now follows an interesting, diagonal path across a grassy field, not really contouring and not really descending either, but kind of doing both. On the far side of the field is a muddy patch and beyond that is another grass field. At the bottom of the hill is Grangemill.

Go straight across the main road (care) and make a start along the road to Winster. Almost immediately though, take the narrow road on the right signposted to Ible. After 300m of gentle uphill, turn right again and follow an alarmingly steep and narrow lane up the hill. Thankfully this soon levels out and leads to a narrow, tarmac track heading off left up the hill. Go up the track.

At the top of the hill is a crossroads – go straight on. The now unsurfaced track continues across the moor to another crossroads. Go straight across again onto the rock-strewn Blackmere Lane. Climb a short hill and follow the main track where it bends around to the left. A short distance further up the hill is a turn to the right. This is Moorlands Lane which begins fairly ordinarily, but then turns into a mud bath before turning into an exciting, rock-filled gully for a finale. The lane emerges onto a road, opposite the entrance to another narrow, tree lined track. Follow this and turn left at the next road. Ride for 900m to where a hedge-lined farm track (Pounder Lane) turns off to the right.

Follow Pounder Lane for a few hundred metres to a gate, after which it becomes a steep, narrow path with rocky sections. Just beyond a second gate, ignore the mega-steep footpath forking off right and continue straight on. More narrow, rocky path follows: first down, then along and then slightly up to the head of a very steep concrete road. Go down this to arrive at the village cross of Bonsall.

Take the slightly rising road (Church Street) to the left of the cafe and follow it for 500m to a gate. Go through this and along the track around the top side of Balleve Quarry. The track is followed by a steeply descending path down through the woods into Cromford. Keep on the path closest to the quarry fence in order to avoid getting lost here. The final 200m of the path, before it enters Cromford, is a footpath and not a bridleway so walking is required. Join and follow the A5012

into Cromford proper. Turn left at the T-junction and then right at the traffic lights onto the main A6. Escape the traffic and fumes by turning up Intake Lane, on the right after 200m.

Beyond the point where the houses and tarmac end, the gradient lessens and a sandy track climbs gently through the woods. Shortly after passing beneath the bridge (the High Peak Trail) there is a right-left, dog-leg bend after which the track whizzes all the way down to Longway Bank.

Emerge onto the road (B5035) and turn right. After 300m, turn right again onto the driveway to Meerbrook Farm. Just before the drive reaches the farm buildings, a grassy track heads off left up the hill. Follow this to a gate. Go through the gate and across the grassy fields keeping on a beeline for the top of the hill. In the fourth field, the path joins a gravel track which leads past Wigwellnook Farm to Oakerthorpe Road.

Turn left and ride nearly 1km to a junction with the B5035, the Malt Shovel pub is on the right. Go straight across and, almost immediately, take the turn right signposted to Breamfield. Part of the way along this road is a bench with a great view of Wirksworth – an ideal lunchstop. In Breamfield, turn right, go down the hill for 400m and take a left onto a wide, descending track with a loose, rocky surface. At the bottom is a turn right onto a steep tarmac road. Follow this down the hill, over the railway and into the metropolis of Wirksworth. Turn left at the T-junction and right at the mini roundabout that quickly follows. This is the foot of Summer Lane.

Head up Summer Lane, through leafy suburbia, until a gate blocks the way on. Do not go through this gate, instead take the track to the right. After a short distance this bends back to the left and heads towards the top of the hill. Due to the loose surface and small steps, this climb is hard going, despite the gentle gradient. Having monstrous nettles claw at your legs doesn't help much either. However, the descent on the other side is nice.

Where Summer Lane emerges onto the road, turn right and go to a T-junction. Turn left and, after 400m, turn right into Hopton. Another 600m beyond that, turn right up a steep hill. A short distance over the summit of the hill is a crossroads. Go straight on, but, before going under the bridge, turn right onto a path leading up and onto the High Peak Trail. When the trail is reached, turn left and slog your way up Hopton incline (hahaha...vengeance is mine!). At the top is the gate and bridleway leading to Grangemill and 1.1km beyond this is Harborough Rocks. Turn left onto the path leading back to the road. Turn right, then left after 1.2km and freewheel down the hill into Brassington. Give yourself a well deserved pat on the back.

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