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Bike route

Ride that's part of the furniture



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A visit to the West Yorkshire town of Otley is worth it anytime of the year. Leave this ride until June and it'll be even better. The town is celebrating the tercentenary of its most famous son, furniture maker, Thomas Chippendale. Celebrations are planned with six events, from a birthday party on the 2nd to an antique fair at the Courthouse on the 30th, listed for June. Check www.visitotley.co.uk for the full list.

The ride is around 19 miles and Otley comes just after half way after a series of descents, quiet country lanes and a couple of busier roads.

1 Park in the Arthington Road car park for Golden Acre Park outside Bramhope. The surface, at the time of writing was uneven, but notices were pinned up about forthcoming work. Leave the car park and turn right down the hill to the first left turn. Turn left here and in a short while turn left again into Eccup Lane.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Thomas Chippendale's statue in Otley.

PICTURE: GARY LONGBOTTOM

2 Continue past The New Inn pub. Continue down the hill into Weardley, watching the distressed road surface in places and turn sharp left heading towards the A659. Red kites are prevalent in this part of the world and one of these majestic birds swooped down in the road a few feet from our front wheels.

3 At the A659 turn right and ride towards the A61, Harrogate to

Leeds road. Turn left at the junction and head towards Harrogate on the A61 for a short distance, over the narrow bridge crossing the River Wharfe, before turning left just after a copse on your left. You should now be on Weeton Lane. In a couple of hundred yards there's a couple of benches in Dunkeswick where you can have a breather.

4 Carry on through Weeton, past a magnificent tree on your left. The barren, leafless tree

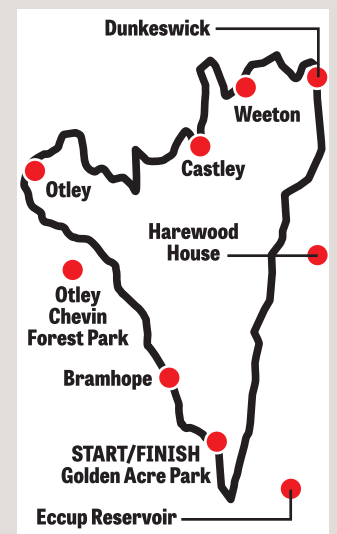
was compensated by snowdrops in the verges. Stay on the road through Weeton and steadily climb up Wesco Hill. After the climb there's a short, steepish descent to a junction where you must give way. It's unfair that you cannot enjoy the downhill but it's a sharp left turn to Castley.

5 Through Castley, edging the River Wharfe as red kites continue to glide across the sky. The river forms the boundary between West and North Yorkshire and you'll cross it at Pool Bridge to be back in West Yorkshire. Turn right before the Shell petrol station and right again to head towards Otley on the A659. Enjoy a cafe stop and all things Chippendale if you're there in June.

6 Leave Otley along Bondgate, past Chevin Cycles, and snick the bike into a lower gear for the climb out of the town on the A660. I was slightly apprehensive of this climb but managed it with plenty left in the legs.

7 The road continues to Bramhope and after the village turn left at the roundabout into Kings Road. The road climbs and you're not hallucinating if you see a horse and cart on a roof to the left. Turn right on Arthington Road and in a few hundred yards you are back at Golden Acre Park.

FACTS



- Difficulty Rating: ★★★★★
- Distance: 19 miles
- Time: Without stops, 1 hour 45 minutes
- Cafe stop: In Otley there's a choice and back at Golden Acre Park.
- Public toilets: Golden Acre Park and Orchard Gate in Otley.
- Download file at <https://ridewithgps.com/routes/26863650>

Birdwatch

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For most birdwatchers the firecrest has got the lot! Its tiny size, weighing in at just six grammes and only marginally larger than Europe's smallest bird, the goldcrest, plus its mix of colours, olive-green, bronze, black and white and a yellow or orange crown are hard to beat.

In addition, there is the challenge of finding one, even when you know it is there, as it is constantly on the move searching for insects and will rarely give itself up easily.

All the more satisfying when you finally manage a good view.

One has been present this week at Methley Copse on the St Aidan's Nature Park, Leeds and, typically, has been highly elusive, flitting through dense stands of brambles and only coming to the edges occasionally.

It follows one that was present for a month further up the River Aire at the Rodley Nature Reserve – this could be the same individual.

Firecrests turn up on the east and south coasts in September and November as those that breed in Germany, Poland and the Baltic states move south west to the Mediterranean while others are seen on the return passage in spring

There is also a small UK breeding population of some 500 pairs, tiny in comparison with the estimate of between 3.3 and 6.7 million pairs in the rest of Europe.

The first breeding record was in the New Forest in 1962 and since then the firecrest has consolidated its position, mainly in south-east England and Wales. There is also evidence that they are expanding their range northwards with nesting pairs observed recently in the woodlands surrounding South Yorkshire's reservoirs and singing males reported at other sites.

The songs of firecrests and goldcrests sound very similar and are easily confused.

The goldcrest's song is like the sound of a tiny spinning wheel growing louder and louder and finishing with a whirling flourish while the firecrest's song begins the same way but without the flourish at



the end. Worth remembering both species will be singing next month.

Seabird numbers are starting to build up at the Bempton Cliffs reserve including the early arrival of at least ten puffins also plenty of guillemots, razorbills and gannets.

There have been some big movements of pink-footed geese

across the region also some whooper swans moving back to breeding grounds in Iceland.

Work is nearing completion to improve the car park and raptor viewpoint at Wykeham Forest, North Yorkshire with the Forestry Commission and volunteers clearing unwanted scrub and thinning out surrounding trees.

Now an appeal has been launched to raise £1,000 for two extra seats and a notice/interpretation board at the viewpoint.

Birders who have visited the site especially to watch honey buzzards, are invited to contribute via the Scarborough Birders account 43926468 sort code 09-01-27 or by contacting Nick Addey, chairman of Scarborough Birders at nickaddey@dsl.pipex.com.