

Forest of Dean Spring Classic Sportive - Sun 1st May 2011

Contributed by Jennifer Hill
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The website proclaims; 'Now in its sixth year, this Classic based on the town of Monmouth just across the border in Wales offers 89 miles of the most varied terrain available with three mile climbs followed by 25% walls. Couple this with stunning scenery and all within 25 miles of the start and finish in Monmouth, our route will not only challenge the fittest riders but also offers a great chance for those wanting to ride their first Classic event'

Adam and I had ridden this sportive three times but never quite to our satisfaction! The first year was horribly wet and beset with puncture problems, the second year was better but I failed to climb Symonds Yat which is vicious after 80 miles and last year I ran out of fuel and dropped out. So a great deal was hanging on this fourth event.

The day was bright, windy and a bit chilly and the countryside looked fantastic. The scent of lilac and hillsides of bluebells was unmistakable in several places. The route was well-marked; there were pretty good refreshments; the 800 riders included ex pro Steven Rooks.

There were eighteen marked hills of varying difficulty culminating in Symonds Yat. I was very pleased to complete that climb which on the day was not nearly as fearsome as I had remembered. There was a small crowd of people cheering on the bridge at the top and a marvelous descent into Monmouth shortly after.

We finished in 6 hours 38 minutes which meant that I received a gold certificate. Despite being the stronger cyclist Adam's certificate was silver...sometimes it is good to be female!

I would recommend this well organised sportive to others who are wanting to cycle up an interesting range of hills on a bank holiday weekend on quiet roads.