

Spokes competition 2015, Entry 19

Colinton to Harlaw via the edge of the Pentlands

2. Who is it suitable for? [it doesn't need to suit everyone] *circle all that apply...*

Families with young children / **Experienced cyclists** / **Novice cyclists** / Other – specify...

3. Where is the route located? *circle all that apply ...*

Ed central / Ed north / **Ed south** / Ed east / **Ed west** / East Lothian / Midlothian / West Lothian

4. Brief description of route

a. Start point... Colinton Village b. End point (or circular)... Circular

c. Brief description...

Head over the bypass at Bonaly Primary, turn sharp right and climb up to and alongside Torduff and Clubbiedean Reservoirs. Here the path becomes quite stony: a mountain bike or rugged hybrid is ideal - or you can dismount and push for a short distance. Continue round to Easter and Middle Kinleith, and westwards along the minor road to Harlaw Farm. Turn left for the regional park visitor centre, then follow the track alongside Harlaw and Threipmuir reservoirs. Turn right (or left for an optional push up the beech avenue), then head down to Balerno. Further options include bearing left at Marchbank for a country lane pedal around Cockburn and Glenbrook before heading back into Balerno. Just before the centre of the village, turn right up Harlaw Road and follow it back to Kinleith. Left down Currie Kirkgate; right along to Blinkbonny. Rather than taking the hairpin bend down to the Water of Leith, go straight along on another short off-road stretch to join Woodhall Road. Return to Colinton village under the bypass.

5. Any interesting / useful / beautiful features / facilities en route ...

Off-road sections beside the reservoirs on the edge of the Pentlands; great views (weather permitting); toilet, walled garden and refreshments (at weekends) at Harlaw Visitor Centre.

6. Why is this a favourite route of yours? [This question is very important in the judging. You can just write one or two sentences or up to 300 words maximum].

It's out in the country but a novice's distance from the south-west of the city. There's a variety of terrains, fantastic views, four reservoirs and a number of possible extensions and detours. And plenty convenient walls and seats if you need to stop for a breather.

I love the contrasts: the deep glen road alongside Torduff formed from a combination of glaciation and engineering - a great spot for foraging berries in season; the steep kick up to the Scots pines at Clubbiedean. I feel most like myself when cycling towards Balerno with East Cairn Hill on the horizon. The headspace afforded by this rural lane is a great antidote to the city. Below, the forth valley and the bridges; and if you're lucky, the sight of Fife and the Ochills and the start of the southern highlands.

The visitor centre at Harlaw has a stone still seat in its sheltered wildlife garden, or benches overlooking the Reservoir. And maybe refreshments: from the Vanilla Pod van at weekends, or a Friends of the Pentlands tea & cakes day, four Saturdays a year. I recommend the sausage pie.

Refuelled, you have a number of options, best of which is the popular woodside / waterside track along to Threipmuir Reservoir. I also like to add in a loop around the lanes between Balerno and the Lang Whang.

It's all downhill on the way home. Freewheeling down Currie brae is much better than slogging up it! In the evening it can be good to return down the A70. It's fairly quiet, you can get in a bigger gear, the light on the stone houses can be lovely (where it's faded on the WoL path), and you can stop off at one of the pubs.

