

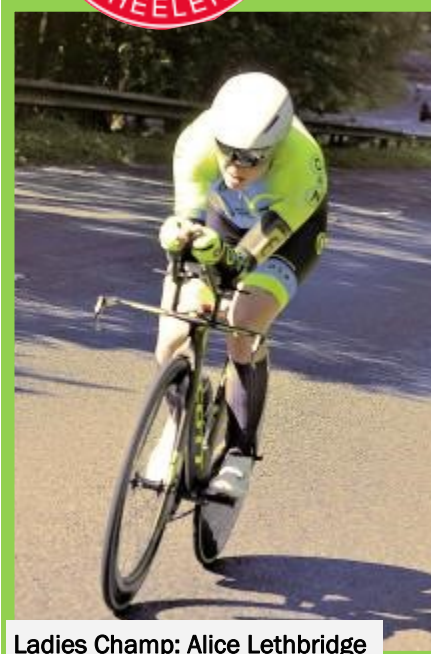


Quarter Wheeler

2017 Issue 2

Autumn Issue

The magazine of the Hounslow & District Wheelers



Ladies Champ: Alice Lethbridge



Winner: Kieron Davies

Photos: Chris Lovibond

National 100 Mile Time Trial Double victory for Drag2Zero

Summer Camp 2017 More pics back page



MEET A
MEMBER
Guess who!
Find out p12

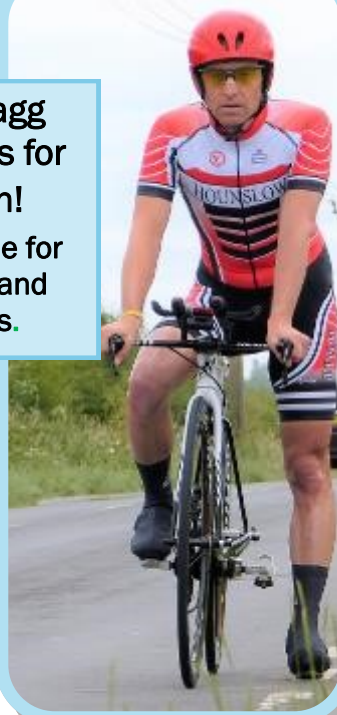


Wales: End-to-End
Pages 16-22



RACE FACE!

Nic Stagg
prepares for
action!
See inside for
reports and
results.



28 Page Summer
Bumper Issue!

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Please contact me if you
have any comments or would
like to suggest news or an
article for the magazine.

For more information about Hounslow & District Wheelers, visit our web site:
<http://www.hounslowanddistrictwheelers.co.uk/>
To discuss articles in this issue of the club magazine, you can use the forum:
<http://www.apollonia.org.uk/hounslow/> or find us on Facebook.



2017 RTTC 100 Mile Time Trial National Championship

Sunday, 9th July 2017

Report: Chris Lovibond

Photos: Patsy Howe

Kieron Davies (Drag2Zero) is the 100 mile Champion for 2017. He finished in 3.23.48 to beat former competition recordman Charles Taylor (Team Botrill/HSS Hire) by the clear margin of 7 minutes 17 seconds, with Mark Nulty (Glossop Kinder Velo) just 19 seconds further back in third place.

Davies, who won this Hounslow event last year as a novice 100 miler, progressed smoothly from start to finish. His was a well judged ride, he had no bad patches but, he said, he "had nothing left in the tank at the finish". Although conditions this year were rather less favourable than last, particularly in terms of heat, this championship ride was an improvement of 3 minutes 46 seconds over his 2016 performance.

Surprisingly, he does not see the hundred as his best distance, preferring fifty miles. He was disappointed not to win this year's 50 championship, although he was only 57 seconds in arrears and did take the silver medal; perhaps this is an example of a champion's mindset. A teacher from Carmarthen and originally a rugby player, he is in his fifth racing season. Kieron is keen to mention the vital help he receives from Drag2Zero, particularly from Simon Smart, Natalie Alkins and Alan Murchison. Perhaps most of all he is grateful for the understanding and support of his wife. The new champion, at thirty years of age, is still relatively young and clearly not yet at the summit of his powers.



Winner: Kieron Davies



Charles Taylor

Silver medallist Charles Taylor has enjoyed a distinguished career over the past eighteen seasons. He is a recent competition record holder (3.21.31. in 2015) and said he 'just likes riding' and that his main target for this event had been to help win a team victory for his club, something he comfortably achieved. He was perhaps unlucky to come up against a rider as formidable as Kieron Davies on the day.

If cycling is a good antidote to the modern plague of obesity, Mark Nulty could be a perfect standard bearer for the cause. Now aged thirty two, he had never ridden a bike until 2013 when he weighed nearly twenty stones and took part in a charity event on a mountain bike. He immediately fell in love with cycling, bought a road bike and worked up to a 300-350 weekly mileage. That was the end of his weight problem.



Mark Nulty

Let us consider his potential, bearing in mind the following: he has reached his current level without a coach or financial backing, he rode this event unsupported having driven from Manchester and 'sleeping' in his car. We await future results with interest.

Adam Duggleby, the favourite and holder of a glittering new comp. record for the distance, was suffering from an infection. He honourably came to the start line, went well for the first half, but unsurprisingly ran out of steam and abandoned at 70 miles.

Ladies Championship.

Drag2Zero certainly had an excellent day, since in addition to Davies' victory, they took first and second places in the Ladies department.

Alice Lethbridge is the new Ladies Champion having recorded the excellent time of 3.48.14. Surely a personal best for her? No, she is the current competition record holder with a time of 3.42.37. Perhaps even more stunning is the fact that the comp. record came in only her second 100, and this championship victory is her third ride at the distance. Even with this 3.48, her winning margin was not great since her team mate Kate Allan (the current 50 mile champion) finished in 3.50.38, which itself would have been comp. record as recently as 2010.

Alice started cycling only in 2012 after injury problems ended her career as a runner; she thought bike riding looked more fun than keeping fit in the gym. She is not a pure time trialist and likes road racing "I like riding for a team. I just sit on the front and try to break the field up, and then I protect the team's sprinters"

Another teacher, she says her best form usually comes towards the end of the summer holiday. There's no doubt it's a stressful profession.



Ladies winner: Alice Lethbridge



2nd: Kate Allen



3rd: Jackie Field

It's worth noting that the riders all complained of the heat, especially in the later stages, and thirteen, over ten percent of the field failed to finish. A further point is that although the organisers had no choice but to use this course since it is currently the only approved hundred in the London West District, there must be a question mark over its suitability for an event at this high level. Because it consists of just ten miles of road (that's to say: five twenty mile laps) there was inevitably a lot of overlapping and even bunching of riders, in addition this situation was aggravated by a number of local triathletes 'training' on the same road. I wish to stress that I did not see anyone taking pace, but it was clear that difficult situations could arise in the future. Surely a championship is a race to find the best man or woman on the day, so there should be no need to use a 'fast' course.

In spite of these difficulties it is true to say that the event was a great success and was efficiently organized by Bruce McMichael of the Hounslow & District Wheelers. It attracted 120 competitors and took place on the Farnham-Alton course.

Acknowledgements

Bruce McMichael Event Secretary 2017 RTTC 100 Mile TT



It has taken 445 emails, 192 start sheets, 57 helpers and technical support from many London West clubs. Special thanks to the Bath Road Club, Farnham RC, Farnborough and Camberley CC, Alton CC and the friends and members of the Hounslow and District Wheelers.

I would like to express my thanks to my wife, the London West D.C. and Hounslow Wheeler's committees for their guidance and support. If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulder of giants, in particular Jim Parker, Jim Burgin, Barry Quick, Mark Ashton and Jeff Marshall.

Thank you to Jeff Bowler and Stewart Smith at CTT for measuring the course and patiently answering the 445 emails. The network team at Heathland School, Hounslow for multimedia facilities. Thank you also to High Wycombe CC and Turing Velo and my sons Johnny and Jerry.

2017 RTTC 100 Mile National Championship

Incorporating Hounslow and District Wheelers' Ron Brown Memorial 100

Sunday, 9th July 2017 Results

Men's Prize Winners

1st	Kieron Davies	Drag2zero	3:23:48
2nd	Charles Taylor	Team Bottrill/HSS Hire	3:31:05
3rd	Mark Nulty	Glossop Kinder Velo CC	3:31:24
4th	Jonathan Shubert	Arctic Tacx RT	3:37:52
5th	Andy Jackson	SSLL Racing Team	3:37:57
18th	Edward Nicholson	Team Bottrill/HSS Hire	3:51:14



Overall winners

Photo: Chris Lovibond

LWDC Award

12th	Matthew Charlton	Farn & Cam CC	3:42:54
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Team Champions

Team Bottrill/HSS Hire

Charles Taylor	3:31:05
George Fox	3:40:48
Edward Nicholson	3:51:14
Team Time	11:03:07

Age Awards

40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74 ETC

A	Andy Jackson	SSLL Racing Team	3:37:57
B	Rich Hunt	Army Cycling Union	3:42:32
C	Andrew Meilak	Velorefined.com A'smiths	3:38:04
D	Gregory Woodford	Reading CC	3:52:12
E	James McKenzie	CC Ashwell	4:10:43
F	Edgar Reynolds	Born To Bike-B'town Cycles	4:59:30
G	Harry Haseley	North Lancs RC	5:01:47

Women's Prize Winners

1st	Alice Lethbridge	Drag2zero	3:48:14
2nd	Kate Allen	Drag2zero	3:50:38
3rd	Jackie Field	CC Ashwell	3:57:36

LWDC Award

17th	Jill Bartlett	Hounslow and District Whs	5:11:49
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Women's Team Champions

Born To Bike-Bridgetown Cycles

Katja Rietdorf	4:08:54
Lynne Biddulph	4:21:33
Jacqueline Hobson	5:19:08
Team Time	13:49:35



Team Champs

Photo: Chris Lovibond



Jill Bartlett

Photo: Patsy Howe

Age Awards

40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64 ETC

Group A	Karen Ledger	Team Bottrill/HSS Hire	4:07:15
Group B	Katja Rietdorf	Born To Bike-Bridgetown Cycles	4:08:54
Group C	Jackie Field	CC Ashwell	3:57:36
Group D	Theresa Taylor	Preston CC	4:40:21
Group E	Alison Vessey	Mickey Cranks CC	4:57:44

Hounslow Riders

Nic Stagg	3:59:20
Stuart Hewlins	4:07:26
Paul Holdsworth	4:14:34
Jill Bartlett	5:11:49

Results extracted from finish sheet.
With thanks to Bruce McMichael

Hounslow & District Wheelers Open 25

28th May 2017

Report: Chris Lovibond

On the start line:

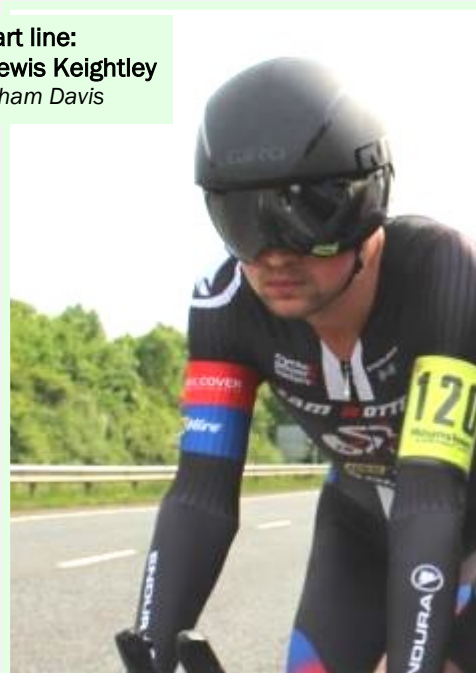
Winner: Lewis Keightley

Photo: Graham Davis

The clear winner of this 2017 edition was Lewis Keightley (Team Bottrill) who recorded the excellent time of 50.03. This on form 26 year old scored his second time trial victory of the season (he won the CC Weymouth 10 in April) with the comfortable margin of exactly one minute over second placed Oliver Mytton (Verulam Really Moving).

In third place was Stephen Williamson (A3crg) a further 50 seconds in arrears, but this time made him leader of his club team in taking that award. The other counters were Darryl Barr (58.08) and Simone Dailey (58.12). Ms Dailey also led her club's women's team (two counters only) with Laura Bartlett, the second placed woman, who recorded 59.06. It is perhaps worth noting here that the women's awards in this event are part of a tradition which goes back before World War II when the Hounslow started promoting a ladies only 25, which was then a new and controversial idea.

Best veteran on standard was Greg Woodford (Reading CC) with a plus of 16.13 (actual time 53.06 at age 56, seventh place on actual time).



Fastest Hounslow rider:
Nic Stagg

Photo: Patsy Howe

The Hounslow has always put a high value on team results, particularly in its own events, but this time it had to be content with second place. Counting rides here were Nic Stagg, 53.41, James Cadman 57.33 and Paul Holdsworth 58.47.

Back at the HQ Lewis Keightley told us that this was his first full season of time trialling, and that he feels he still has a lot to learn. This ride was 19 seconds faster than his previous best on the course, although his personal best for the distance is 48.05 so, if Lewis does go on learning, people at the top of the time trial game will have to watch out for him. His next target is the National 50 Championship.

Second placed Oliver Mytton, whose fast time of 51.03 would have given him victory every year up and including 2014, is clearly a man who practises what he preaches – he is a researcher at Cambridge University for their Physical Activity and Public Health Programme, with a special interest in the benefits of cycling and walking; it certainly seems to work for him!

The event attracted 114 entrants, was held on the Farnham-Alton course and was promoted by Nic Stagg.

Result:

1. Lewis Keightley	Team Bottrill/HSS Hire	00.50.03
2. Oliver Mytton	Verulam/ReallyMoving	00.51.03
3. Stephen Williamson	a3crg	00.51.53
4. Eddie Allen	Redmon CC	00.51.59
5. Matt Peel	Redhill CC	00.52.45
6. Jamie Pine	Nuun-Sigma Sport-Lon.	00.52.46
7. Gregory Woodford	Reading CC	00.53.06
8. Nic Stagg	Hounslow & Dist. Whs	00.53.41
9. Stephen Whitewick	VeloRefined.com Aero	00.53.51
10. Simon Henderson	Thanet RC	00.53.56

Record Ride at Newbury Road Club '15' mile TT:

Saturday 22nd July.

Nic Stagg reports

The Newbury Road Club promotion was held in torrential rain on the Woolhampton 15 mile course between Aldermaston, Kennet Park and Thatcham roundabouts. It's on the historic A4; a road very famous in time trial circles. I started hard as I wanted to get my average speed high as soon as possible, using 55 x 13 and 14 into the wind, and mainly the 12 and 13 with a tailwind, the course is too flat for the 11!! I knew that in order to beat the record I had to average over 27mph and with the Garmin showing between 27.4 and 27.7 I knew the record was within my grasp. The rain was very heavy and the roads were flooded, with cars and lorries throwing up an awful amount of spray; I was pretty lucky that the course isn't very technical. I powered through the finish line to see that I'd recorded 32:50 – a new record, taking 1 minute 2 seconds off the existing one. Hopefully next year it'll be dry and quicker.



Good Friday '25'

Report: Chris Lovibond

The 2017 traditional season opener produced what has become a traditional result with Nic Stagg recording 58.50 to win from Damian Poulter, who was unlucky not to score a sub hour ride, finishing in 1.0.18.

It was striking that from a reasonable entry of eighteen Hounslow riders there were four very good rides (see below) then Neil Blundell whose ride was better than his time suggests since he had mechanical trouble; after that times fell away sharply.

Result

Nic Stagg	0:58:50
Damian Poulter	1:00:18
James Cadman	1:01:04
Paul Holdsworth	1:01:09
Neil Blundell	1:07:24
Hugh Johnson	1:10:36

All the slower riders should take heart from the fact that this is always a tough course, and on the day this was compounded by a cold wind. These conditions generally have a greater effect on those not going so well compared with the fast men who can take difficulties in their stride. You will find that riding on a better course in warm conditions will give you a more encouraging result.

In the handicap section Hugh Johnson made good use of his 14 minute allowance to take the first handicap award with a time of 56.36. Linda Williams was second with 57.02 (including her allowance).



Nic Stagg

Mid-Summer 25

Report: Chris Lovibond

Nic Stagg duly retained his club event crown by recording 58.24, which put him in a class of his own on the day. After finishing he complained of feeling that he had not fully recovered from his ride in the Newbury Twelve two weeks earlier, but everyone else present felt that this ride was indeed up to his usual high standard.

The nearest challenger was James Cadman who finished in a creditable 1:01:00, almost a full minute clear of bronze medallist Paul Holdsworth.

First handicap went to Neil Blundell, whose actual time was 1:03:00. (5th place on scratch). This was the outstanding ride of the day, bearing in mind that he had improved from 1:07:24 on Good Friday while others had done much the same in this event as they had done in April.

Neil is moving forward: this year he has achieved his first sub-hour ride and has been doing some chain gang work which has clearly been useful. Adam Topham is just one example among many of successful time-triallists who come into the sport when they have passed the first flush of youth – perhaps Neil Blundell may prove to be another.

James Cadman



Photos: Patsy Howe

The Interclub 25

Report and photo: Chris Lovibond



Handicap 'star' Les Howson

Nic Stagg retained his leadership of the HDW time trial elite by recording 1.00.02, while Damian Poulter recorded 1.1.05, Stuart Hewlins 1.1.44, Paul Holdsworth 1.1.53 and James Cadman 1.2.52.

Naturally these riders were all a bit disappointed with these times when they spoke to me, but looked at together it is clear that these performances are roughly in the same relationship with each other as usual; so it can be seen there was something about the conditions that morning which slowed everyone.

The Handicap Section is the more significant part of this event since the only award is the trophy won by the best club team on handicap. This went to the Twickenham CC with the following counting riders (handicap allowance, in brackets follows their actual time): Rufus Greenway 1.03.21 (22.30), Miles King 1.06.57 (17.30) and Phil Brown 58.50 (9.00). The fastest time of the day came from Chris Holmes also of the Twickenham, who recorded an excellent 56.11.

The Hounslow came second, led by the handicap 'star' Les Howson, whose handicap time was 44.37 (including a 37 minute allowance). Paul Pember's 1.21.13 should probably have made him the second counter, but the rather generous allowances allocated to Damian (1.01.05, allowance 9.30) and Stuart (1.01.44, allowance 10.00) made them the other two HDW counters. This suggests doubt over the handicapping since one would not normally expect shortmarkers like them to do so well.

No criticism is intended here towards the handicapper himself, who can only work on the information he has. The club believes that if the formula of this event is to retain credibility in the future it is necessary to ensure the handicapper has enough material at his disposal to make a sensible assessment. If entrants fail to provide information they should be allowed to ride, but be excluded from the handicap competition.

Newbury 12 Hour

Report and photo: Chris Lovibond

This was an event notable for the Team Competition Record achieved by the Arctic Tacx RT, and the excellent distance of 300.213 miles recorded by the winner Andy Jackson (SSLLRT). The Arctic Tacx counters were: Jonathan Shubert (294.734), Michael Broadwith (294.023) and Tim Bayley (284.043), giving a total of 872.8 miles.

Looking at these results it would be natural to get the impression that it was a fast day, but this would be a false conclusion. In fact the south-west wind was bending the trees so much that the spectators believed that the Arctic Tacx attempt on the team record was a hopelessly lost cause. In addition to the wind the temperature was uncomfortably high in the afternoon, and there were many retirements including such big names as Pete Harrison, Richard Bideau, Andy Cook and Jill Wilkinson.

In this light Nic's 258 can be seen as a strong performance which gives him an honourable claim to this year's Hounslow BAR championship.



Jo delivers essential supplies to Nic during the 12 hr.

RESULTS

Evening 10s



20th April

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:57
Mark Silver (trike)		31:32
Jo Wells		33:04

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	22:36
Ayrton Pope	Paceline	23:25
Tom Crump	Sigma	23:58
Darren Hague	Paceline	27:44
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	27:48

4th May

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:57
Stuart Hewlins		25:42
Jo Wells		30:26

Other rides

Ayrton Pope	Paceline	23:14
Martin O'Sullivan	T&TV	24:32
James Nicholson	PMCC	25:17
Alistair Taylor	PMCC	26:19
David Larkin	PMCC	26:24
David Parker	Private	29:49
G. Whitby	T&TV	32:34

11th May

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:29
Bruce McMichael		29:31
Jo Wells		30:20

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	22:12
Ed Bradbury	JLT Condor	22:34
Neil Houldley	Private	23:55
John Nicholson	PMCC	24:10
Mark Ingham	Private	28:26

25th May

Jo Wells	HDW	29:52
Nigel Forward		30:46
Simon Wroxley		30:14
Les Howson		31:40

Tandems

Mark Silver & Jill Bartlett		26:08
Stuart Hewlins & Steve		26:34

Other rides

Ed Bradbury	JTL Condor	22:06
Neil Houldley	PMCC	23:21
John Nicholson	PMCC	23:58
James Harris	PMCC	24:11
Andy Lindsey	PMCC	27:00
Julie Chaisin	TCC	28:44
Mark Ingham	PMCC	31:40

1st June

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:48
Simon Wroxley		28:53
Jo Wells		29:10
Jill Bartlett		30:10
Les Howson		30:57

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	21:55
Ayrton Pope	Paceline	23:52
Robert Attreed	M'head	25:10
David Larkin	Pure Motion	25:17
Roger Brown	Kingston	26:26
Darren Hague	Paceline	27:24

8th June

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:56
Les Howson		29:50
Jo Wells		30:16

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	21:50
Robert Attreed	M'head	23:25
Darren Austin	TCC	24:31
Roger Brown	Kingston	27:42

15th June

Jo Wells	HDW	29:10
Les Howson		29:28
Bruce McMichael		29:31
Jill Bartlett		30:58

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	21:51
Robert Attreed	M'head	23:25
Peter Allan	Wyndym'a	24:23
Neil Mitchell	Th's T'bo	27:05
Richard Buckham	TCC	29:15
Mark Ingham	Private	29:31

22nd June

Stuart Hewlins	HDW	24:46
Joanna Wells		28:51
Bruce McMichael		29:13
Simon Wroxley		29:25
Les Howson		29:43
Callum Howson		33:23

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	21:43
Ed Bradbury	JLT Condor	22:35
Pat Wright	Paceline	23:08
Martin Richardson	Private	26:39
David Hegerty	Viceroy's	26:50
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	27:11
Richard Buckham	TCC	29:23



No TTs

27th April, 18th May,
20th July, 27th July

29th June

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:30
Stuart Hewlins		24:45
Les Howson		29:20
Joanna Wells		29:41
Simon Wroxley		29:47

Other rides

Peter Allan	Wyndym'a	24:01
David Larkin	PMCC	25:02
Martin Richardson	Private	26:03
David Hegerty	Viceroy's	26:59
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	27:12
Roger Brown	Kingston	27:20
Richard Buckham	TCC	30:00
Andy Caie	Private	35:06

6th July

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:44
Stuart Hewlins		24:15
Les Howson		28:46
Simon Wroxley		28:53
Jo Wells		29:12

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	22:19
Paul Buckley	SD racing	23:44
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	26:34
Mark Ingham	Private	29:10
Richard Buckham	TCC	30:07
Jo Caie	St M'rets	30:14
Andy Caie	St M'rets	36:51

13th July

(9m course due to traffic lights)

Simon Wroxley	HDW	26:32
Nigel Forward		27:19

Other rides

Neil Houldley	Private	21:10
Darren Austin	TCC	21:23
Joel Crossland	Private	22:02
Tim Springett	Private	24:02
Mark Ingham	Private	25:36
William Taylor	Private	26:00

3rd August

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:37
Les Howson		28:57
Simon Wroxley		30:23
Jo Wells		30:38
Jill Bartlett		32:12

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	21:57
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	27:12
Roger Brown	Kingston	27:44
Tim Springett	Private	28:07
Hugh Johnson	Ch'ville	28:14
William Taylor	Private	29:08
Mark Splinder	TCC	30:02

10th August

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:51
Les Howson		28:15
Jo Wells		29:25
Brent Skinner		29:52
Simon Wroxley		30:35

Other rides

Liam Maybank	TCC	22:22
Ayrton Pope	P'line	24:24
Mike Miller	TCC	25:27
Ragnor Leon	TCC	25:39
David Gunn	Liphook	26:18
Hugh Johnson	Ch'ville	27:27
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	27:28
Harvey Nott	Liphook	28:26
Janine Lawler	Liphook	28:42
William Taylor	Private	29:17
Emily Turgoose	Liphook	29:36
Richard Buckham	TCC	30:10

17th August

Nic Stagg	HDW	23:49
Les Howson		28:02
Dave Howe		28:59
Simon Wroxley		29:02
Jo Wells		30:06

Other rides

Rory Townsend	Bike Chain	21:44
Liam Maybank	TCC	21:57
Jason Harris	PMCC	24:50
Jamie Parnell	LSCC	25:27
Mike Millar	TCC	25:38
Andy Gibson	PMCC	26:11
David Gunn	Liphook	26:35
Mike Harrison	N Hants	26:36
Dave Parnel	Private	27:50
Roger Brown	Kingston	27:51
Hugh Johnson	Ch'ville	28:11
Harvey Nott	Liphook	28:40
Dave Howard	Private	28:44
Austin Reynolds	Liphook	28:59
Joseph Moran	TCC	29:29
Grace Reynolds	Liphook	30:31
Alison Brophy	Foxhills	33:00
Francis Jaques	Weybridge	33:08
Brad Markz	Foxhills	33:26

RESULTS

Evening 10s (cont)



25th August (9m course due to traffic lights)

Nic Stagg	HDW	20:51
Les Howson		24:26
Simon Wroxley		24:48
Trevor Day		25:44
Simon Hancock		26:15
Jo Wells		26:51

Other rides

Neil Howdey	Private	20:42
James Nicholson	PMCC	20:56
Ragnar Laan	TCC	21:50
Jason Harrison	PMCC	22:01
Ayrton Pope	P'line	22:31
Mike Harrison	N Hants	24:00
Tim Springett	Private	24:05
Russ Wingfield	SWRC	24:15
Roger Brown	Kingston	24:27
William Taylor	Private	25:09
Mark Spindler	TCC	26:40
Mark Ingham	Private	31:20
Nathan Wooldrige	Private	31:20
Francis Jaques	Weybridge	32:35

A Tribute to Hounslow racers 2017

(With apologies if anyone has
been missed)



ROGGOS' RAMBLINGS

Roger Sewell



2016 SEASON: Fifty three years of time trialling completed with 48 entered, 48 started and 48 finished not including the one cancelled 10-mile event due to rain and spray. So accumulative totals since 1964; entered 1775, started 1646 and finished 1611 which does not include evening club races, only pre-entry races. Hit inside 22 minutes on three occasions with 21-55 being timed twice – weird really as I've already got two 21-40 rides and two 22-40 rides.

Managed to set three Veteran Group Standard records (subject to ratification) knocking the great Roger Queen's 10 and 25 mile records, he beat me by 7 minutes in a 25 in 1970! Also stopped that UCI record-breaking young 65-year old whippersnapper Robert from claiming an age record

Hit THE float day on the E2 in the Shaftesbury Middle-marker event didn't realise it at the time but the speed hovered around the 27 mph mark for almost the whole way except up the slopes, especially the one just before re-joining the A14.

Overjoyed at winning the "Rocco Richardson" memorial trophy for the best vet on standard in the last VTTA event.

TEAMS: As a very ordinary racing man I gained considerable pleasure being in a winning team and can still remember when entries to events was based on "fastest 120 with consideration to teams", somehow this has been lost over the years and I have been surprised by the lack of club teams in lots of event. I rode the Vet's Championship 25 at Alcester and didn't really expect to see any other Hounslow and District riders but with 52 names on the start sheet there were 41 different clubs – what is that all about? Wobblywheelers.com/Racing Team How's Your Father seems to be a modern trend but what has happened to the good old honest club teams?

TRAINING: Not much speed work only evening events and club 10's with the Wisbech Wheelers, 200 miles a week suits me fine and have found a farm Shop café where I can indulge in a cream tea a couple of times a week. I go with a friend and we have persuaded the owners to let us have a free cream tea every 10th visit, it's amazing what a bit of polite cheek can do for you. 10,000 miles completed on November 3rd so 11,000 is now likely as long the weather holds.

CENTENARY: Now December 2016 saw the 100th anniversary of grandad Sewell (Charlie) joining the North Road C.C. so there was not much chance of our family being involved with the Hounslow so the N.R.C.C. became our family club. Brother David now has more membership years for the family (57 years 10 months) and I am just behind great uncle Arthur "Sailor" with 53 years 3 months to 53 years 7 months. Grandad was a member for 49 years 7 months and Dad (Jack) has 38 years 1 month and my other great uncle, Ted, rode only for the record breaking years 3 years 11 months. What a wonderful family, over 250 years of continuous membership. Just a great pity that granddad joined the NRCC because that is where the family loyalty was and although we all lived in Hounslow we supported the NRCC fully

OLYMPICS 2020: Ambitions about having a couple of weeks in Japan and riding the time trial took quite a knock when I was caught by a one legged Paralympian in a 25 at the end of the season. Brought back memories of being passed by Hounslow's Ron Brown (one arm) back in the mid 60's, up a slope just out of Ripley in Surrey.

THE INFAMOUS "TUES": When I was up in Scotland one of my training partners said to me just before a race as he was taking his medication for Asthma, "You want to have a go of this". I didn't, but now with all this fuss about TUES I perhaps wonder perhaps I should have given it a go. It does, however make you wonder what if any advantage can be gained and have I missed out on a National Championship medal during the course of the years. Only today I read that several medallists from London 2012 have tested positive for drugs and therefore the ninth placed weight lifter has been awarded the bronze medal. Stands to reason that I might have won a medal if the 70 or so riders above me were tested positive. Of course I don't need to these days because I am on THURS*, which includes TTS, Cinflaj and the occasional Dextrosol. Taken before all my Saturday 25-mile events 54-49 and 55-13 so the supplements really seem to work. Energy drinks and protein bars/drinks are far too costly so I don't bother with them.

2017: Started on January 1st.

*(THURS = Terrific Help Uplifts Roger's System)

(TTS = Tesco Triple Sandwich)

(Cinflaj = Cinnamon Flavoured Flapjack)

You didn't really think.....

Hope you are all having a good successful season.

Roggo's Bucket List for his 70th.

- 1) Beat the hour for 25 miles - Did it, 59-58 in Reading CC 25 (July 8th.)
- 2) Get a mobile phone - Still thinking about it
- 3) Get a coach - Had a word with Daniel Bloy and asked how much he would pay me to become my coach - Hasn't got back to me yet, perhaps it's because I haven't got a mobile phone?

The Bike Maintenance Page

FIX IT!



Gear Adjustment

Nic Stagg advises

Rear Mech

Presuming that your gears are set up, but not shifting properly here's a quick guide to getting your rear mech running smooth.

Make sure the cable is tight on the rear mech using a 5mm allen key. There are 2 screws on the rear mech; the one marked 'L' dictates how far towards the wheel the rear mech can move (the lower limit). Turn the screw clockwise until the derailleur is unable to move beyond a point directly under the largest sprocket. This is crucial in order to prevent the derailleur getting tangled in the spokes. The screw marked 'H' (the higher limit) stops the chain falling off the smallest sprocket and getting wedged between the frame and the cassette.

The barrel adjuster on the rear mech adjusts tension of the cable, turning it anti-clockwise increases tension on the cable, bringing it closer to the wheel. Clockwise decreases the tension moving it towards the frame. If the chain seems hesitant to shift up, increase the cable tension by turning the barrel adjuster anti-clockwise; if it skips over a gear, turn the adjuster clockwise to decrease tension, listening to the noise coming from the drivetrain. This will tell you when it's set up correctly. You want it to run as smooth as possible.



Front Mech

The front mech should run parallel to the chain rings; when directly above the large chain ring the outer edge of the derailleur should sit 2-3mm above the teeth of the chain ring.

Shift onto the smallest front chain ring and the largest sprocket on the cassette; of the 2 screws on top of the mech, the one nearest the frame controls the lower limit, this dictates how close to the frame the mech can move. Adjust so the inner plate sits just clear of the chain. Spin crank to check it's not catching.

The second screw on top of the mech controls how far out the mech can move. Put the chain on the large chain ring and adjust the screw so the derailleur can move no further than 1mm past the chain. This will ensure the chain can't over-shift and fall off.

Shift through all the gears to check there is no rubbing. Job done!



Medium Gear 10 mile Time Established

Nic Stagg established a medium gear 10 mile time on Thursday evening (31st August) in the Maidenhead & District CC event on CC234. He recorded 24:21 on a course that is not known for being the fastest.

MEET A MEMBER



This issue, our subject is the indefatigable and irrepressible Mr Eddie Green

Hello Guys and Dolls,

I 'am under strict rule to follow the code of practice laid down by the editor; must not mention fishing so I will abide by the old trout's ruling, to the best of my ability, however I have great respect for Patsy and in my eyes, she is really an angel fish. I can now mention the club's Treasurer Martyn Roach genuinely without fear of a backlash. Although in one T.T event I was a Blind Goby and took his start number so he gave me a right old carping.

Moving on I slipped into cycling whilst still a pupil at St Luke's Modern Grammar School, in Portsmouth. My mother had religiously saved enough on one of those mutual schemes run by the Co-op in the 1940's, to buy a Raleigh Lenten Sports, I must have been the tender age of 14. I felt just like the bee's knees owning this bike. Another year on, in 1949, I entered the real world at 15 by commencing an apprenticeship at Portsmouth Royal Dockyard as a plumber, based on parental guidance. I had passed the Civil Service entry exam for all Naval Dockyards in 10th place and on the day of selection, however, it was advised that the lead trade was shipwright; the opportunities with that trade were more available. So, over the next 5 years, a great deal of hard work academically had to be taken onboard to progress. Eventually I became a Ship Constructive Draughtsman, then over the years in my career, a Naval Architect, and a Senior Ship Surveyor with Lloyds Register of Shipping.

Whilst doing my apprenticeship I met other persons having close ties with club riding so I joined the Portsmouth Wheelers CC. This club was ideal as it molded young dockyard lads to learn track skills and bike handling. It was a great competitive opportunity entering all types of events held with the Portsmouth & Gosport Track League, run by Jack Gay. Also, with two meetings a week the Alexandra Park cycle track (now the Mountbatten Centre) was a popular venue for other south coast riders to compete against the locals. We had a great crowd of local talent with the likes of Dave Fleming and Wally Errington (Portsmouth CC), Tony Hoar (Emsworth CC); ex T de F rider, John Hayles (father of Rob Hayles the international track and road rider and now a pundit) and me, (Sir Ed — a WhatsApp nick name)



Photo: Ian Seccombe

RTTC 25 mile Championship
Oxonian CC, 3rd June 1956



Photo: Len Thorpe

In 1956, I was posted as a draughtsman to the beautiful city of Bath where the Admiralty technical staff were entrenched, during WWII. My work place was Foxhill Hutments, Coombe Down, situated well above the city. A very good training area for hill climbing, which I tackled each morning riding to work, from Bristol. I chose to board there, as it was much easier on the pocket, and in order to get the training in. Once settled in Bristol I joined the Severn R.C. as another draughtsman namely Dick Henley (England International) recommended I do so. We became training partners, riding to and from work together. In the winter time, the Severn R.C. training rides encompassed routes into Wales, using the Aust ferry (no longer in operation) over the Mendips, through the Cheddar Gorge, Exeter and Lyme Regis.

The editor asked me "what have you done on the bike?"; Not a lot, and I cannot compare myself with the two stalwarts of this club in their heyday — Martyn Roach and Jeff (route de "lost soul") Marshall; or is it which way; left or right here on the club runs. I have been under the hours respectively a few times for 25 and 50 miles, and got near to an 07 but not below it for 100 miles which was my favorite distance. I also rode the Solihull Invitation 25 mile TT, for the fastest

25 riders in the 1950's . In addition I received an invitation to ride off scratch in the 440-yard handicap at the inaugural 1955 meeting at Maindy Stadium. I have also won a few road races in the veteran class and set the age standard hour record at Palmer Park in 1994 and for beating the hour for 25 miles at the same time. I also rode the 1994 Veterans Worlds and European Road Championships finishing 7th and 6th respectively.



Vets Race series 1996 - North Chapel 1st by 6 mins

Another of my interests was riding tandem time trials on the road and track. In the early days we relied on timekeepers with stopwatches to get it correct, not the electronic timers they use today. One incident springs to mind when I rode a 10-minute tandem pursuit final at Alexandra Park against the Sydenham Wheelers pairing of Ron Beale and Ron Best. This went down to the wire and we tied, what a choker. So, would this happen now, one of us would surely have been the winner?

Enough of racing. When I did stop, my attentions turned to trips abroad, like the yearly event in France, known as The Semaine Federale, run by the FFTC (equivalent to our Cycling UK). This week long event is held in August and each year a town is selected to host the proceedings. It has been, and still is, very popular with some members of the club. The organization and logistics are superb and to be enjoyed.

Touching briefly, in 2010, I did enjoy the Drau valley cycle route, starting in Brixen, ending at Maribor, passing through Austria, Italy, and Slovenia. The

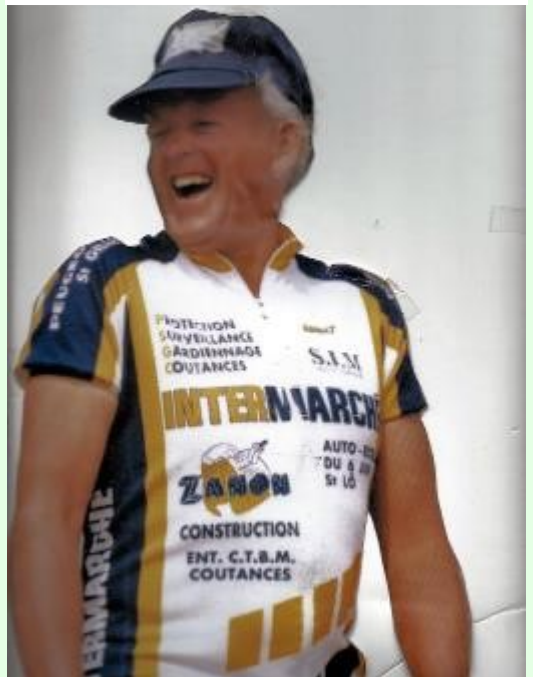
river held your attention due to its enormity and the sights and towns along its banks. I was accompanied by Ron Jones, and Clive Williamson, who organized the trek. We flew to Innsbruck, and returned home from Ljubljana. The route taken required train rides at the start and finish of the cycle route. I rode my Specialized mtb, retrieved from my daughter and revamped. It's condition required some TLC. So, with help from Jeff who reamed out the old saddle pillar as it was unmoveable, and fitted a new one, the rear end comfort was sorted. The front end was still a problem; no way could the handle bars and extension be turned after removing the center head securing bolt and cone. I decided to leave alone, replacing the bolt and cone. Penetrating fluid had been applied without success. After many miles of our trip done, I was well ahead descending off the hills around us down a narrow gravel ledge with a huge drop to my left, going at breakneck speed and reaching the bottom I came to the main road and waited for the others to re-group. As we climbed along the road leaving the river valley below us on our right, I suddenly find myself in an uncontrollable situation (am I living the dream?). I turned the handlebars right, then left, then right and left again, and again. The bike was in charge and careered across the road and crashed, leaving me with one leg pinned under the bike, weighed down by the panniers. What if it had happened on that descent? I realized how lucky I had been to be climbing, and that no cars were passing on the road at the time. I just had minor grazes and a "memory stick" that relived the events for a few weeks. I retightened the head bolt, with great care! At least that problem had been resolved, and off we continued on our journey.

Last year 2016 Clive again came up trumps and organized a week of cycling in the Chalosse Region, Southwest France, staying at the Chateau Coxe. We, that is, Clive, Jeff, Richard Callum, and Francis Jacques, are going again this year. Other ventures for training have been the Algarve, Quartiera in Portugal, for several years, and lately the island of Majorca, for over 30 years.

Next - I consider my best ride(s) (apart from racing) to be the marathon night rides of 88 miles from Bath to Portsmouth nearly every Friday in the summer months, when courting my wife to be, Pamela. Leaving the Foxhill Offices at 5.30 pm. riding a 66-inch fixed, lights front and back, with spare batteries in my rollup under the saddle. Aiming to reach the Southdown Bus depot at Cosham by 9.45pm. Then ride back to Bath, Monday morning to be in the office for the pm shift. What a weekend!!!!

Actually, I am a first claim member of the Farnborough and Camberley CC, being a life member with British Cycling, it was less trouble to stay as I am to avoid altering licenses, etc. So, I joined "your club" the H &DW CC as a "2nd class citizen" -

1993: Racing in the Duo Normande (tandem category) with partner Martyn Winter. They were a good pairing, successfully winning most events they entered. On this occasion, however, mechanical failure let them down and they were unsuccessful.



only joking, as a second claim member, to be with my cycling buddies, enjoying their company on the Tuesday meets and having a well-earned coffee at "il Rustico" near Horsell. Some club members are carrying on the tradition of the original Thursday "over the hill" meets, started in 1992 by three retired riders - Ron Jones, John Pound and I. The route taken from Bisley remains nearly the same, going up Tunnel Hill, through Ash Vale, Tilford, Churt, Elstead, Shackleford, or for the legless across to Seale, to avoid climbing Puttenham Hill, and then on to the Royal Oak, Pirbright, for a refreshing pint of "TEA" and a bowl of chips. The run is now on a Friday, to suit the majority, it is great to see that they carry on this legacy. The young bucks from the club, roar off down the road, like I once did. For me now, it is a leisurely ride to Seale for a cuppa. Sometimes, I will ride the complete circuit, but at my pace. The girls, Patsy and Linda have knitted in well and are part of the group which is good, as they mother me sometimes. Originally on a Friday, I fished (sorry I must not say that word so angled) in matches, with reasonable success on the professional circuit.

The editor asked me what bikes I ride and I replied "only one at a time". Wintertime it is a Fort; this was the bike I converted to an E-Bike with the drive generator fitted in the front wheel, excellent for that short period. I USED IT TO THE EXTREME, UPHILL, over-riding the power and eventually the torque washers opened the fork drop-outs causing the front wheel to drop out. Food for thought of a disaster waiting to happen. In the summer, I use a trek with guards, and a Van Nicholas on dry days, both these bikes, have Shimano accessories. Stored In the attic, I have a top of the range Boardman aero pro road bike with Ultegra accessories (unused). Also, a 653 Cougar road bike, and a 653 Mike Mullet TT bike.

Next a piece on Administration duties, in 1995 I was elected National Chair for the Veteran Time Trials Association. Prior to that I was Vice Chair for one year. The organization was stagnating, so it was a painful term of office to bring round the rank and file to accept change, also some officials wore two hats being closely connected to the CTT. After 10 years my efforts showed signs that change would come about, so it was time to go - my choice, and another person had to be elected to carry on the process. Every year I arrange the Xmas Bash at the Royal Oak and training is required by all our 'over the hill' MOB, to enjoy the lunch and liquid marathon. Starting at 13-00 and continuing on until around 19:30 hrs (or later) - pockets are generally required to be deep.

I suppose the next item may be humorous to some. Eventually in 1958, I secured a top floor flat from the Admiralty Housing List, situated in Lansdowne Crescent, Bath. This crescent was above the well-known historic Royal Crescent. The whole building housed government employees and families. After a few months, the owners contract ceased with the Admiralty, and all tenants had to vacate the flats within the agreed timescale as the owner was to modernize the building. As tenants moved out, the power source at each flat level was cut off and the whole building became a very scary place. For the interim I sent the wife and child to Portsmouth. As it panned out, I was the last to go whilst awaiting a house vacancy. The owner made several late-night visits which kept me on edge. So just imagine the scenario, complete darkness, a flash light and with a heavy chicory walking stick as protection. It's winter, another fear was the journey to the coal bunkers under the road where the solid fuel for heating was delivered. Every shadow became a spectre to the imagination, no quick exit with a bucket of fuel and a flash light. Although on one occasion I dropped the lot and ran when the bell-pull fitted at the front door to the basement servant quarters sounded. The peels from the bells sent me into action, panic worked every muscle and with heart pounding, (well above my threshold for scientific training), I ascended two flights of stairs flashlight in hand. On passing the huge front door, another noise greeted my ears, it was carol singers singing good joy. I certainly needed it that night sitting on the stairs, contemplating and calming myself, listening to their angelic voices. They were ones doing the campanology and not a supernatural force that nearly caused an underwear disaster.

A nudge from the 'angel fish' indicates I must close, hope you have enjoyed my catalogue of errors. My excuse is that all my records and photographs in the attic have been hidden from sight under a massive heap of my son's effects.

Thanks for your plaudits from a very relaxed and relieved writer, now it's all done and dusted



Eddie - riding his pike?

A fishy story (editors response!)

When I asked Ed if he would consider being the subject of this issues 'Meet a Member' I said "Come on Ed, don't be Koi". Ed said 'can I talk about fishing?' I said 'no - this is a cycling magazine'. Ed said 'Oh my Cod! That's a bit disappointing!' Riding my pike is not my sole interest you know - I don't perch on a saddle all the time, although I have been known to use a turbot trainer once in a while. I said 'That's brill Ed but don't carp on about it - best not to skate on thin ice. If you're not careful you'll flounder!'

I asked him what his best plaice was in a 100 mile TT and he said that, although he made a sturgeon effort, he would have had a better result if Martyn Roach hadn't been riding! He told me that, in those dace, he sported a mullet and finding a suitable aerodynamic cap was quite hard!

He has fallen off his pike on a few occasions but luckily most scrapes were sorted out with a dab of antiseptic.

I could have sworn that at the end of the interview I heard him mutter something about an old trout but perhaps my herring let me down there! I did snapper back though 'See you later you old gudgeon'.

Eel have something to say about that next time we meet! What a load of pollocks probably!!

(With thanks to The Tuesday Social Ride who provided inspiration for above)

L'Ariégoise 2016

Kevin MacConville

With the best intentions Brent Skinner, Jeff Marshall, Rob Gilmore, Neil Holdsworth and Kevin MacConville planned to undertake this challenge (once again) in June 2016. The course was advertised as 127 km with 2733m of climbing finishing up the gruelling HC Category, Plateau de Beille. A frequent mountain top finish for the Tour de France. The best laid plans – what can be said!

Unfortunately Brent, the ATOB tour operator, team leader and “Seanachi” could not make the trip so the rest of us were left to our own devices. Jeff and Rob immediately booked a fly drive holiday package with BA, the car being a Fiat 500. One appreciates that Jeff and Rob’s bikes are small, but quite how they would fit in or on top of a Fiat 500 leaves a lot to the imagination. Then they went to book Les Deux Velos with Mark and Elma; this was the H&DWs cycling lodge of choice for the last millennium and so far every year of this millennium, only to find out that it was full. OMG – what to do! Unfortunately, even with help from Elma, all alternative enquiries drew a blank, so Jeff decided to go off to Spain and Rob kept on pedalling.

Meanwhile the industrious Kevin (KJ) looked further afield for accommodation and came upon - Cycle Pyrenees. This is a small and friendly family run cycling holiday business situated in Foix. This turned out to be a gem. The hosts Ian and Bernadette are well attuned to the needs of cyclists, Ian being an ex top UK amateur bikie. The accommodation was most comfortable and the food was of splendid quality and quantity. The package offered a pick up from local airports and accompanied rides in the local area. Foix a frequent TdF stage town is an ideally suited base to prepare for the L'Ariégoise with a choice of rides from flattish, to rolling hills, foothills and of course mountains. So the industrious KJ, sole remaining member from the gang of 5, set off on his own to experience the new accommodation and take on this mountainous challenge. Arriving a week before the event KJ spent valuable days in the warm sometimes very warm 32° C sunshine training for this prestigious event. Availing of the varied terrain, starting with days in rolling hills he eventually ventured into the mountains and soon the pain of climbing continuously for 20 – 30 Km with, of course, many café stops, was all in the mind!

Come the day – well prepared and fuelled up, he set off at a pace suitable to his status as a “Born again Bikie”. In the Ariège valley the day started warm and sunny and progress was good to the first food stop, listed in the race programme at 50km. The route to that point was undulating hills with a steady 8km climb to this first stop. Actually turned out to be 55 km at 900m elevation. Thinking he had missed the stop, his plan of attack (I breathe so I attack) needed to be revised, but reassured by other riders was soon reinstated!

The event is a UCI Cycle sportive attracting top French amateurs and ex professionals and similar bikies from all over the cycling world. Motor cycle out riders marshalled the peloton stopping oncoming traffic and providing priority at junctions. As the day toiled on and the gradients increased the climbing took him from lush sunny river valleys into the clouds and misty rain and then after 85 km to the 3rd climb of the day, the Col de Marmore at 1375m. Fuelled by gels and energy bars (as supplied to Team SKY), a long decent followed with a leg sapping rolling hilly section for a further 15 km before plunging down to into the sunny valley at Les Cabannes (112km).

Mentally prepared for the final ascent his body responded with the help of further gels. The gradient (average 9.1%) started immediately upon leaving the town and so into the mist and rain once again he ventured. Thankfully he had listened to Jeff and glided down to the 32 sprocket! With legs spinning, he soon settled into the “zone” (again as advised by Jeff) and to his amazement began to catch up and glide past other groups. Physiologically, because he could see no further than 200m ahead, he sort of enjoyed the experience – being Irish helped. Reciting the well known Irish cycling blessing (below), before you knew it, he was there!!

STATS

Totals: - Distance 130km; climbing 3010m; riding time of 6h 50mins

Plateau de Beille - 17Km of climbing to 1785m elevation; riding time of 1hr 45mins .

An Old Irish Cycling Blessing

May the road rise up to meet you.
May the wind always be at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
and rains fall soft upon your bike.
And until we meet again,
may your punctures be few and far between.
May the road rise up to meet you
And a host of friends that never ends
Each day your whole life through!



Thanks Jeff for all your help and advice - Kevin

A short bedtime story

“A tale from a cycle tourist”

By Ian Seccombe

Wales End2End – Simple!



The plan was simple ... (How often have I said that!)

“Anja, all we have to do is catch a train to Holyhead early one Wednesday morning, arriving in Holyhead sometime in the afternoon. This will give us enough time for an easy afternoon spin across Anglesey, over the Menai Straits and down to Caernarfon. With another four days of poodling down through the Welsh countryside, following Sustrans route No. 8, with some pretty tea stops, some comfortable B&Bs and of course plenty of tasty pub food. We will arrive in Cardiff Sunday afternoon, in time to catch the train home”. Dates fixed, Anja’s holiday time off booked, Sustrans maps purchased, accommodation researched, reservations made and deposits paid! Touring bikes cleaned, serviced and saddle packs retrieved from the loft. Yes, simple it was! Except the Great British (modern) train system started to say otherwise.

Well, the matter of the train tickets started with a casual conversation one Tuesday lunchtime at Il Rustico with Jeff Marshall, who at the same time was putting in place his plans for a Coast to Castle cycle tour. “Make sure you book your bikes on the train first before you buy your passenger tickets”, said Jeff. Wise words I thought, as Jeff went on to explain there was only space for three bikes per train and only two of these could be reserved! Last time we had toured with a bicycle in the UK, as well as en route trips to south coast ports for ferries to mainland Europe, there was such a thing as a guards van, with hooks for your bike, in fact many hooks, for many bikes ... ah but nowadays we have new fancy modern trains with less doors per carriage, that are all part of a sustainable, integrated transport infrastructure! A modern train system that forbids you to take a bicycle on between the hours of 07.30hrs and 09.30hrs and modern rolling stock without guards van, that only have space for three bikes per train, only two being reservable! The price of progress and an attempt to reduce our carbon foot print! After a complete lack of success in trying to book two bicycles with their riders on a train to Holyhead, via a modern online website customer interface, I thought I would follow the old trusted route and pick up a phone and speak to someone about it. After various phone conversations with the train companies and their off-shore call centres, it was clear to see that it was going to be impossible to travel with two bicycles to Holyhead from our local station. So, a new plan was needed!

The new plan was hatched and to a certain extent it meant forgetting all about reducing carbon foot prints. In fact, the new plan seemed to be the only possible plan! Arriva Trains could fit us and most crucially both our bikes on their train from Cardiff to Holyhead. So, we drive to Cardiff on the Tuesday evening, stay in the city centre Premier Inn and leave our car in their car park for four days. Then catch a train the next morning from Cardiff to Holyhead, arriving at 14.00 hrs, leaving us the afternoon to cycle onto Caernarfon for our first night’s accommodation on the actual cycle route. The M4, however, turned out to be shut in two places, at Hungerford and Newport, so this meant time wasted exiting the motorway twice and following the various diverted traffic signs to get us back on the M4, and consequently resulted in a 01.00 hrs arrival at the Cardiff Premier Inn. Other than that, the plan was impeccable and worked a treat. Moving on though, with the stresses and strains of the Great British transport infrastructure behind us, we arrived relaxed and raring to go in Holyhead at around 14.00 hrs on the Wednesday. Now the holiday can begin!

Holyhead to Caernarfon

Setting off from the Holyhead Pier with the sun shining we easily picked up the Route No. 8 signs. The signed route led us down dedicated cycle paths and small quiet undulating country lanes, lined with hedgerows full of beautiful purple foxgloves and creamy white wild roses, most in full blossom. In the accompanying fields sheep and lambs were happily grazing on the lush green grass.



Anglesey with Snowdonia in the distance

Soon in the far distance the mountains of Snowdonia became visible, marking where we would be the next day, or more emphatically a direct indication of how far we needed to cycle that day to arrive at Caernarfon!

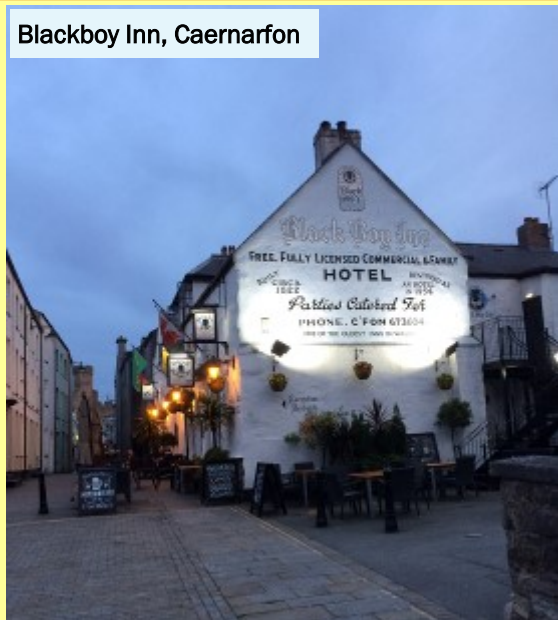
Via the village of Bethel our cycle ride across the southern part of Anglesey led us eventually to the Menai Strait, crossing the Menai Bridge just to the west of Bangor. By this time, it was early evening, so I telephoned ahead to the B&B, just to let them know we would actually arrive and soon!

From the Menai Bridge, the route to Caernarfon followed a well-tarmacked cycle path parallel to the Menai Strait, keeping

us away from the road and cars. We enjoyed a flat run into town, with views of the sea through trees lining the cycle path.

After checking in to our B&B, located just outside the old walled town of Caernarfon, a shower and a change of clothes we headed out on foot to enter the old town in search of an evening meal. Immediately upon entering one of the old arches leading into the walled town we were soon rewarded with the sight of a great looking old pub situated in a cobbled lane. The Black Boy Inn, looked just like an ancient pub should look like, exuding the belief that inside one would find some good food and a decent pint, we were going no further! The black writing on its whitewashed walls stated it was built in

Blackboy Inn, Caernarfon



1522 “One of the oldest Inns in Wales”.

Fortified on chef's Steak & Ale Pie, Beef Brisket and Sticky Toffee pudding and a pint and a half of local ale we felt replete and ready for a saunter around the ancient town. It did not take a long walk around the town's narrow streets before we came face to face with Wales' most famous castle, location for Prince Charles' investiture in 1969 as the Prince of Wales. Built in the 13th century by Edward I as a royal palace and military fortress, it was in a commanding position alongside the walled town. A quick walk around the heavy stone perimeter walls and a wonderful view of the setting sun across the sea to the west and we were soon back at our lodgings for some well-earned sleep.

Altogether, it had been a great start to our tour and today's experience was to become a recurring theme throughout our whole route. Well tarmacked cycle paths, small quiet farm lanes and beautifully flowering hedgerows, fields of very green grass, sheep, sheep and more sheep, comfortable lodgings; characterful hostelrys with good food and beer.

Cycling statistics for the first afternoon: 38.5 miles / 567 metres of climbing

Caernarfon to Dolgellau

After the obligatory “Full Welsh” we were back in the saddle. The route out of Caernarfon followed a scenic cycle path alongside the Welsh Highland railway and gave us wonderful views of Caernarfon Bay and Snowdonia, with an impressive view back to the castle with fields of Leeks in the foreground! So, more traffic-free cycling. All was quiet and we were making good pace until two other cycle tourists arrived on the scene, travelling in the opposite direction. Proper old timers at the cycle touring game, sun-faded purple paniers and top-quality bikes (one being a Dave Hind) of their time. They turned out to be two retired vets, they had met each other at veterinary school over 50 years ago. One from the Welsh borders with neutral accent and one with a strong sing song Welsh accent, Mr Sing Song playing straight man to his old college mate's comedic tendencies. After the usual daily greetings and friendly banter on where and to, and other usual name dropping on the places we had all cycled in the past etc. the comedian seized on my map, a Sustrans map of the route in a water proof case attached to my handle bar. “You should throw that away and get one of these” he said pointing to his Garmin GPS Touring Model computer attached to his top tube, “fantastic bit of kit, no need for maps with one of these”. “Ah” I said, “I am bit old fashioned, still a map and compass man myself”. Anyway, after a very pleasant chat about everything and nothing we all prepared to move on. In parting, he says “by the way, does this path take us straight into Caernarfon and how much further to go?” There was only one answer, wasn't there ... “you know what, you need - a good map!”

The sun had come out and we were enjoying the warm weather cycling. After continuing south on very quiet roads we were soon near the coast again. We followed a short dog leg inland and our next stop was for lunch in the town of Porthmadog. Here one gets to see the Ffestiniog railway with its steam train. The Ffestiniog Railway is in fact the world's oldest narrow-gauge railway with almost 200 years of history; it makes a 13½-mile journey from Porthmadog harbour to the slate-quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog and the heart of Snowdonia. The historic trains climb over 700 feet from sea level into the mountains. The three original locomotives are over 150 years old and still with their original carriages.

After watching the steam train pull out of the station we did a perusal ride up the high street in search of an appealing cafe for lunch. There were quite a few but we seized on an interesting one called “The Rock Cafe and Bakery” and what a fantastic little place this was, definitely the best choice. We were immediately drawn to its rustic ambience, with wooden floors, furniture and counters, along with an equally fascinating selection of rustic breads and rolls, a great choice; sour dough, whole wheat, nutty, seedy, pitta etc. There was also a massive choice of hot and cold fillings along with an extensive choice of coffees, teas and other drinks. With several nook and cranny rooms with seating we made our order, took a seat and enjoyed chilli con carne and salad-filled whole wheat pittas, with flat whites and full-fat Cokes, and not to forget a piece of Welsh Bara Brith cake with a knob of butter to replenish our energy.

Setting out with full stomachs from Porthmadog, we cycled over The Cob in the direction of Harlech. Now the sky became filled with big fat clouds and the sun kept coming and going, but trundling along with a fair head of steam, we were still quite warm in our short sleeve jerseys. The route we followed that afternoon undulated up into the hillside overlooking

Caernarfon Castle with field of leeks in foreground



the coast. For much part, we were surrounded by lush green farmland with fields full of sheep and cattle, we followed small country lanes with farm gates across the road to prevent the animals from roaming. To our right were views westward to the sea and to our left the land rose even higher into the hills and mountains of the Snowdonia National Park. By now there was a little sea mist and the wind had picked up and typically it was on our nose, so on our descent down to the town of Barmouth on went our wind-proof gilets. It was early evening when we passed quickly through Barmouth and straight on to the long wooden bridge that took us out over the water and across the estuary. Once across the bridge it was head down and a fast cycle along the A493 to Dollgellau, here we would be spending the night.

Upon arriving late in Dollgellau, I phoned the Trem Hyfryd Guest House and agreed with them that it would be best if we had our evening meal in the village before checking in, as I had a very hungry wife on my hands. They recommended the Torrent Pub which we soon located in the centre of the cute old village. Within minutes we were at the bar ordering rib eye steak for myself and a beef burger, chips and salad for Anja along with sticky toffee pudding and ice-cream and a couple of pints of their best! With a very happy albeit tired wife and with stomachs stretched we cycled over the 17th century bridge spanning the river Wnion and up to our accommodation, a large traditional Victorian Welsh granite house where we were welcomed by the owners. They had a plentiful supply of out buildings for bikes and motor bikes as they catered well for groups of cyclists and motorcyclists touring this amazing area. So, we were first shown to an out-building called 'Harry's Canine Hydrotherapy', yes it was a spa facility for dogs and our bikes were safely stored next to the doggy indoor pool, which had a large pump to create a current for the injured and lame pooches to swim against. The owner was a qualified Canine Hydro Therapist and he had named it after his very ancient black retriever called Harry! In fact, they were multi-talented, as besides being B&B hosts, they were also qualified motorcycle tour leaders, the husband was retired from the London Fire brigade and ex motorcycle racer and his wife was a retired motorcycle policewoman. In the dining room were also a selection of guitars and a piano! We slept well that night, with a wonderful view of Harry's Canine Hydrotherapy Spa from our large sash window.

Cycling statistics for the day: 64.9 miles / 1,435 metre of climbing.

Dolgellau – Rhayader

After a very sound night's sleep and a fantastic "Full Welsh", grilled not fried (so of course very healthy), we retrieved our bicycles from the spar facilities and were back on the road. We were forewarned that every route out of Dollgellau necessitated the ascent of some, quote "generously lumpy terrain". No sooner had we passed the Torrent Pub, site of the previous night's gluttony, we settled into some low climbing gears. Indeed, the road out of the village in the direction of Machynlleth was in some places, according to my wife, extremely lumpy. After a couple of miles of wife challenging road at around 15 & 20+%, the morning's route broke away from the road onto a tarmac cycle path come farm track and headed through farmland. We passed a couple of farm houses and some farm buildings before ascending into open sheep covered hills.

Just before this though we came across the curious sight of a sheep trapped in a cattle-grid, somehow it had managed to fall through the cattle grid grating. An amazing feat as it appeared to be twice as fat as the distance between the grids. With no means of escape the poor thing would have died with no water and food, so we went in search of a farmer. A few miles on we found the farmhouse and knocked on the door to advise the farmer's wife of the situation. Thanking us very much she said she would get her husband to go and pull it out when he arrived home.

By now the landscape appeared incongruous, with a tarmac cycle path heading into the wild hills, us cycling up it, with hill walking hikers in walking boots only a couple of hundred yards away. After a couple of miles or so, we came to a farm gate across the road, just as I was opening it an old landrover arrived coming from the other side, I opened the gate for him to drive through but he stopped by Anja behind me, Anja shouted up to me saying he would like a word with me. Ah I thought, have we done something wrong? As it turned out he was an old farmer coming to check on some of his sheep and he just wanted to stop for a chat. He was talking to me in a very heavy Welsh accent in a way someone does when they haven't spoken to anyone in months, so it clearly appeared he was pleased of the company and would have been very happy to have chatted all day. He was in his seventies, strong and tough and had sheep farmed the family land there all his life, so conversation was very interesting. Conscious of the miles ahead of us and the passing time, we wished him well and eventually said our good byes and peeled ourselves away. It certainly made us realise that this central area of Wales, with its few farms and many sheep was very unpopulated and farmers living there were very self-reliant.

We continued up to the col on the ridgeline, before the long and in some places steep descent through an amazing forested valley the other side. We passed through some ancient hamlets with old stone buildings, where it felt like time had stood still for hundreds of years. After some miles of wonderful country lanes and interesting valley scenery, we arrived at an old mill and some rows of houses. From here we seemed to have reappeared into the beginnings of modern life and civilisation and before long we had free wheeled down into town of Machynlleth.

The historic town of Machynlleth was the ancient capital of Wales. Owain Glyndwr, an iconic figure in Welsh history was crowned king of a free Wales in this town. He assembled a national parliament at Machynlleth in 1404 and the parliament building still stands proud in the middle of town to this day. Having read up on the history the night before, upon our arrival in Machynlleth our minds were entirely focused on food! For my wife, it was an "I need it, I need it now"

Route over to Barmouth



moment! One of the most prominent land marks in town is the old clock tower, visible in every direction, next to it was a very nice café, so minutes later we were sat there with two cheese and ham baguettes, two cappuccinos, two pieces of Bara Brith with butter and a couple of cokes. Fantastic, a happy wife and husband I may add!

Alpine like ascent up to the highest point at Bryn y Fedwen before the descent to Llanilloes



With that tight stomach feeling again, we left town in the direction of Llanidloes. Another case of out of the valley and up into the hills. We settled down to a reasonable pace on roughly Alpine gradients of between 4 and 7% interspersed with flat, taking us up into dramatic high rolling hill territory. Guess what, in every direction we saw sheep, sheep and more sheep. We both wondered why as a country we ever imported sheep from New Zealand.

We were now heading up towards the highest point on Sustrans route 8 from Holyhead to Cardiff at Bryn y Fedwen, 509 metres above sea level. At the beginning of the ascent I spied a couple of other over-laden cycle tourists. Tapping out a steady pace and unfortunately leaving my wife in my wake, they were soon over hauled and good time was made to the summit. At the misty windy summit look-out car park, I waited

for people to arrive. First, one of the two over-laden guys, second was Anja and sometime later the other guy. Having time to chat with the first chap before the others arrived, it turned out that they were both medical students, studying at Cardiff University. He said that the regional health authority was having problems finding sufficient GP doctors to go and work in the wilder areas and quiet villages of central Wales, cut off miles from major towns, so there were incentives to attract volunteers. He and his mate thought that they would check out the region before they qualified, to see what it was like by cycling from Holyhead back to Cardiff in three days with a tent! He admitted they were carrying too much gear, their bikes did not have enough gears and they should have bought some cycle shorts! But they were determined to finish what they had started and he said it was a good job they brought the tent to wild camp as they could start at 7 am each day and cycle till 10pm. After a few jokes and words of wisdom, we set off on our descent from the mountain top, leaving the boys to their days picnic provisions. After our mountain top descent, we picked up the valley and followed the river on a pretty route into Llanilloes. It was by now another “I need it, I need it now” moment so on entering town, we headed straight to find food before the shops shut!

A cafe called The Oak Tree was found, 10 minutes before closing time, so two giant flap-jacks, two cokes, two flat whites were ordered in double quick fashion and were consumed very soon thereafter. It was good to have a happy wife once more!

Our route out of Llanidloes followed a quiet country road in the direction of Llangurig, where we picked up the River

Wye in the valley amongst the beautiful rolling hills of Plynlimon. There were five main peaks in this area and they formed the largest watershed in Wales and were the source of not only the river Wye but also the Severn and Rheidol. We followed the delightfully scenic country lane that leads alongside the River Wye all the way into Rhayader, our place of rest for the night.



The road to Rhayader; just perfect!

Enjoying great weather and views on the run into Rhayader



alongside the River Wye all the way into Rhayader, our place of rest for the night.

On entering the town of Rhayader we quickly found the Lamb & Flag public house. To the delight of Anja we actually managed a shower before dinner and were soon seated in the lounge bar with large sirloins and a couple of pints, followed by sticky toffee puds. After a brisk walk to check out the town and ease the stretched stomachs, we returned to our room to sleep very soundly indeed!

Cycling statistics for the day: 55.2 miles / 1,771 metres of climbing.

Rhayader to Llanfrynach

After fresh fruit, yogurt and the ubiquitous full Welsh in the comfortable breakfast room, we hit the road in search of the small cycle path out of Rhayader. It was a beautiful warm, bright and sunny morning and the path out of town soon led us between fields of sheep into open country scenery. We eventually joined a quiet country lane, the route taking us in the direction of Newbridge-on-Wye and then on to Builth Wells, following sparkling fresh waters of the River Wye all the way. Before arriving at Newbridge on Wye my Sustrans map indicated we had a choice of route for a two-mile section. We could either take an old coach road that was very scenic but 'rough and muddy when wet' or divert to the main A470. Preferring not to cycle the main road and, as it was warm and dry we took the scenic option. It was a pretty shaded avenue of trees all the way, with a mixture of stones, gravel and dried mud so perfectly cyclable with our touring tyres. We met a couple of other cyclists coming the other way "slowly" on slicks. About two thirds of the way along the coach road by a farm gate, we met a camping cyclist from London with paniers and mountain bike, just cooking up his second breakfast of the day, the smell of fresh eggs and bacon diffusing into the air from his small pan. He was an interesting, if not eccentric character, in his faded Molteni cycle jersey, having cycle camped around Europe for many years as well as completing the Welsh end-to-end route we were doing in both directions, several times over the last 20 years.

On the outskirts of Builth Wells, we picked up the cycle path along the River Wye which led into the town park, where there was a carnival of sorts going on. In a small cobbled street, we found a café with seats outside and ordered tea, Bara Brith and lemon drizzle! By now it was a hot summers day and we were glad of the sun screen.

From Builth Wells our route on a quiet country road continued to follow the Wye valley and river, we were heading for Glasbury, where we would turn and travel south west to Brecon. At Glasbury we stopped at Foyles restaurant and pub for two pints of orange juice and soda, some salt and vinegar crisps and to fill our bottles; it had become an unusually hot day for Wales! From the style of the restaurant pub and my reception in salt stained sweaty lycra, we noted we were moving into a potentially trendier and better-heeled region of Wales.

The ride from Glasbury to Brecon was beautiful. We were ascending on a quiet road through open countryside, over another watershed with marvellous views of firstly, the Black Mountain with Lord Hereford's Knob standing prominent and then the Brecon Beacons with Corn Du, Pen y Fan, Crybin and Fan y Big in the distance. We were now into familiar territory, having hiked these mountains many times over the years. Once over the watershed we descended quite quickly on very steep lanes; at one point 25%. Then from all the wild and rural terrain, we suddenly popped back into civilisation as we skirted round the outskirts of Brecon town, heading for the small village of Llanfrynach. For a while we followed the tow path alongside the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal. As per usual, near the car park, there were quite a few people walking along the path but as we progressed further along, walkers became less and there were several other cyclists. In a quiet shady stretch, suddenly, I was over-taken by a young woman cycling at a respectable speed, on a very classic looking lady's shopping bike, including wicker basket on the front and a dress protector partially covering the rear wheel. No words passed between us, just her bell was rung as she passed with her blonde hair floating behind, she was humming contentedly to herself, lost in a trance and the most remarkable thing was she was cycling with no hands on the handle bars. I tucked in to follow a few metres behind as she continued along the tow path. In billowing flowery muslin trousers and thin strappy top, her arms were performing yoga type movements and placements, sometimes held above her head and sometimes dancing to the side at shoulder height, all the time singing and humming quite loudly to herself, lost in another world. We followed this "vision" for a couple of miles, not once did she touch her handle bars and as we turned off at one of the locks into a lane, we watched her continue into the distance. "Have you ever seen anything like that" I

said to Anja ... the reply was "she had good balance!"

We followed the country lanes tunnelled by high hedge rows until we eventually reached the village of Llanfrynach, we passed the White Swan pub and restaurant we knew well from previous visits, heading out the other side of the village to the old farmhouse Ty Newydd. The old farm house is set in an idyllic location in the foot hills of the Brecon Beacons and next to the Monmouth and Brecon canal and not far from a cutting where narrow boats can be turned, stored and rented.

The owner stored our bikes in his workshop which he had in one of the old stone barns. We took to our room for a pot of tea and a shower. Soon after, feeling clean and in a change of clothes, we walked up the lane in our flip-flops for dinner at the White Swan. It was our last night on the road so we celebrated with a shared starter of liver pate, green leaves, onion marmalade with toast, followed by large plates of beer battered cod, with rustic chips, fresh garden peas and salads and of course it was hard to refuse chef's own sticky toffee pudding! We toasted ourselves with a couple of glasses of Sauvignon blanc.

Cycling statistics for the day: 54.9 miles / 1,034 metres of climbing



Black Mountains and Lord Hereford's Knob



Llanfrynach to Cardiff

We woke to yet another crystal clear blue sky, completely absent of cloud. By the time we descended to the breakfast room and terrace it was already quite warm. Ty Newydd farm house offers a marvellous breakfast selection, so we each settled on muesli, yogurt and fresh fruit, followed by three rashers of locally-farmed thick-cut smoked bacon, fresh farm eggs poached, with tomatoes, toast and home-made marmalade. What more could one ask for before another and, in our case, last day in the saddle of our Welsh end-to-end?

Our route today culminated in Cardiff and would pretty much follow the Taff Trail all the way. A short while after leaving Llanfrynach, we left the road and joined the Taff Trail. After cycling over the dam, we started to ascend, the route taking us first up past the Talybont Reservoir and then the Pontsticill Reservoir, affording us wonderful views to our right. It was an easy gradient on a well-prepared gravel forest road, with stunning views across the mirror-flat reservoir and the surrounding lush green countryside.

The Taff trail runs all the way from Brecon to Cardiff. It is the route of a disused narrow-gauge railway constructed in the 18th and 19th centuries to transport coal and iron ore from Merthyr Tydfil, the Cynon Valley and the Rhondda valley to the docks at Cardiff and Barry. Now it makes a wonderful cycle and walking route direct from the once industrial heartland of Wales to the beautiful hills of the Brecon Beacons and their surrounding villages.

Between the two reservoirs there is the Taf Fechan forest and Sustrans route 8 offers a short detour track through the forest (if forestry operations allow) or a slightly more direct route following the tarmac road. As there was some form of



Loading luggage before leaving Ty Newydd Bed & breakfast in Llanfrynach

Taff Trail with Talybont Reservoir in the background



military running event with fatigue clad, backpack carrying runners, enjoying a feed station just before disappearing down the Taf Fechan forest track, we decided to stay on the road to keep out of their way. As the part of the track that would have been on the route was only a mile in length it did not really matter. In any case, we had made a fantastic decision and were shortly rewarded only 500 metres down the road, with a beautiful farmhouse tea garden and barn astutely called "The Old Barn Tea Garden!" For those of you who would one day wish to visit it, its address is; Ystradgynwyn, Torpantau, CF48 2UT! At its rear is a delightful cottage garden and lawn with chairs and tables and a wonderful landscape of both cultivated and wild flowers. Enjoying the sun, we sat at one of the garden tables and enjoyed incredibly polite and friendly table service from the young farmer's daughter. After enjoying a really good pot of tea for two, we entered the barn on the other side of the garden to pay, being

surprised as to how attractively they had renovated the old stone barn into a comfortable seating area with tables and a large fireplace at one end; a perfect little hide out to enjoy tea or lunch during inclement weather.

After our pleasant refreshment stop we continued down the Taff Trail towards Merthyr Tydfil passing on route yet another steam train leaving its little station, this time it was the Brecon Mountain Railway. As the Taff Trail that we were cycling was following the route of the old branch line to Cardiff and had been converted to a dedicated tarmac cycle track, it was going to be pretty much car-free all the way to journey's end now. When we arrived in Merthyr Tydfil we passed through the town on a very straight and direct prepared cycle path, between the houses; straight rows of terraces.

South of Merthyr the cycle route followed alongside the river Taff. The only people we saw were a few other cyclists, mostly locals out enjoying a Sunday ride or using it as a commuting route to go somewhere. We followed on all the way to Pontypridd with the smooth cycle track, enjoying a route mostly lined by trees and leafy bushes, although, we were actually passing through southern Wales' once industrial heartland. We passed over a few old bridges both iron and stone that once carried the railway and sometimes up on cuttings, where the track was once let into the valley side. At one point, we cycled down a steep path that led to an old stone bridge over the river, coming up the steep track on the other side I saw there was a sign for tea and cake at £2, feeling a little parched and having not eaten much since breakfast, we cut off the track to investigate. It turned out to be a private house that was a member of the National Open Garden Scheme, a significant charity funder of nursing charities in the UK. As I went on to read, their beneficiary charities are: The Queen's Nursing Institute, Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie, Carers Trust, Hospice UK, Perennial, Parkinson's UK and other guest charities. It is a scheme where owners can open their private gardens to the public, to raise donations to the charity. This particular house had a beautifully laid out front, side and rear garden and was not just having an open garden but also had a small self-service kitchen in an out building, where they were offering a cup of tea or coffee and a piece of cake for £2. Milk and cake were in the fridge, kettle, tea, coffee and sugar were on the work top,

along with an honesty box. So, we made ourselves two cups of tea, helped ourselves to two pieces of home-made chocolate cake, put five pounds in the honesty box and settled in the sun on the bench in front of the house, to enjoy our afternoon tea. In these crazy fast-changing and often troublesome times we now live in, it is lovely to see that there are still good-hearted and trusting people around, raising money for such excellent causes.

Alongside the route around Pontypridd, there were many examples of old artefacts, buildings and ancient industrial infrastructure, with storyboards providing historical overviews and explanations on the industrial heritage of the area and how it once looked and operated. From Pontypridd, we were now on the last 16.5 mile section of the Taff Trail which finishes in Cardiff in Bute Park, next to the Castle. Over recent years much regeneration has gone on, resulting in cleaner water ways, maintenance of pretty parks and public open spaces and with the Taff trail walking and cycle path, it makes a beautiful way to explore the best of Cardiff and the Taff valley. The River Taff is now a haven for wildlife, with kingfishers and grey heron feeding on the banks of the river and sightings of leaping salmon at Blackweir. It was a beautiful warm late sunny Sunday afternoon, when we cycled into Cardiff, passing on route, Blackweir, with people bathing in the river and the Glamorgan Country Cricket ground. We were enjoying the last of Sustrans route 8. Passing through the various green open spaces and public parkland. We were seeing more people than we had done for the last four days. Families, children, youths and older people all enjoying the lawns and parkland, with picnics, games and ice creams. By now we were ravenous, wanting definitely more than an ice cream. It was getting on for both a wife and husband "I want it, I want it now moment", so eyes were on the lookout through Bute park for real food.

Bute Park with its Arboretum and surrounding subsidiary parks, gardens and fields is the 'green heart' of Cardiff, making one of the largest park urban parks in Wales, covering some 56 hectares, equivalent to 75 football pitches. Located within these beautiful parklands is Cardiff Castle, its thick heavy walls and fairy-tale towers conceal 2,000 years of history. The castle passed through the hands of many noble families until in 1766, when it passed by marriage to the Bute family.

So, it was at the crenellated archway in the wall at the end of Bute Park, nearby to the main entrance to Cardiff Castle, where we satiated our "want it now" moment. Here we found the Bute Park Tea Rooms". Just in time, with 30 minutes before closing, we were shown to a table in the roped off terrace and enjoyed bagels, cream cheese, smoked salmon and sparkling mineral water. We looked at each other and smiled, yet another very enjoyable adventure completed!

On leaving the tea rooms I picked on a guy sitting on the grass with a woman. He was making a ham-fisted attempt in mending what turned out to be his sister's puncture. He said they had been out for a ride in the park. I asked if he could make a better job in taking a photograph of Anja and I as a memento of a wonderful cycle tour. He asked where we had come from and Anja confidently replied "Holyhead!"

Cycling statistics for the day: 50.5 miles / 655 metres climbing

In Sustrans own words "The Route 8 from Holyhead to Cardiff is one of the most picturesque of all the Sustrans routes in the UK." We certainly found it extremely enjoyable, were amazed at the beauty of mid Wales and were very thankful that we had been able to enjoy it with almost perfect weather. For its most part, quiet country lanes and cycle paths along with lack of motorised traffic made for a wonderful cycling experience.

We would rate it 10 out of 10 and would certainly consider doing it again, possibly the next time with the other Sustrans option of finishing the route in Chepstow. It is possible with longer daily stages, to complete the route in three days and with the number of interesting villages and accommodation options on the route most certainly possible to extend over more days.

Total statistics for the whole route: 264 miles / 5,462 metres climbing

Technical details for the buffs!

Both our bikes were of almost similar spec.

Frame: Reynolds 725 steel touring bike frame, with 531 forks

Gearing: Shimano XT triple group set 22/32/44 with 11-34 cassette

Brakes: Tektro CR 720 Cantilever

Wheels: 700c Rigida Spunik double wall rim with 36 holes, built on XT Hubs with DT Swiss stainless spokes

Tyres: Schwalbe 28mm Marathon Plus

Handle Bars: Anja - FSA Vero Compact / Ian Salsa Cowbell 2 cyclocross bars / both with Dura Ace bar end shifters

Peddles: SPD mountain bike

Saddle: Anja - Brooks B17 Titanium / Ian - Brooks Cambium C17 carved

Luggage: Apidura - Saddle packs, bar packs + front accessory bag

Garmin Edge 500 cycle computer

Tools & Spares: Carried between us

Multi tool x 1 each, screw driver small x 1, chain breaker x 1, spoke key x 1, tyre levers x 2 each, lubricant, rag, spare skewer springs x 4, puncture outfits x 1 each, spare inner tubes x 2 each, pump x 1 each. Swiss multi tool with knife, can opener, pliers etc x 1, small Abus cable combination padlock x 1.

Navigation:

Sustrans: Cycle Route map - Lon las Cymru North (covering routes 8 & 82)

Sustrans: Cycle Route map - Lon Las Cymru South (covering routes 8 & 42)

Ordnance Survey map - Sheet 6 Wales & West Midlands 1:250,000

1 x Silva Map case, 1 x Silva Compass



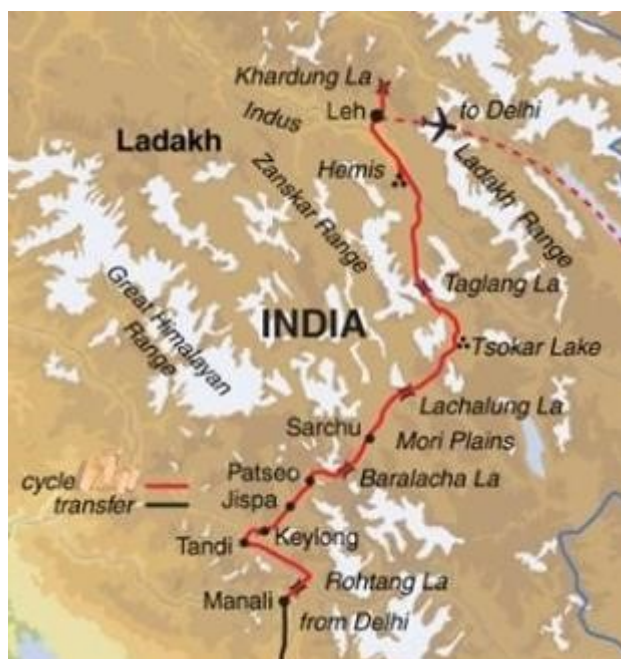
Main entrance to Cardiff Castle

A Ride in the Clouds

Patsy Howe



Photos: Patsy Howe, John & Pat Ashwell



This was an opportunity not to be missed; a chance to ride some of the highest roads in the world. Back in August 2009 armed only with the combined confidence of ignorance and inexperience I flew off to New Delhi in excited anticipation of an upcoming Himalayan adventure with the CTC. The road from Manali to Leh is in north-west India (Himachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir). Pakistan and Afghanistan lie to the west and Tibetan China to the east. An arm of Afghanistan continues in a strip to the north and beyond is Tajikistan.

The road is generally open between June and mid-October, however because road and weather conditions are different every year, this may vary. Landslides, the amount of snowfall, glacial melts and progress of the

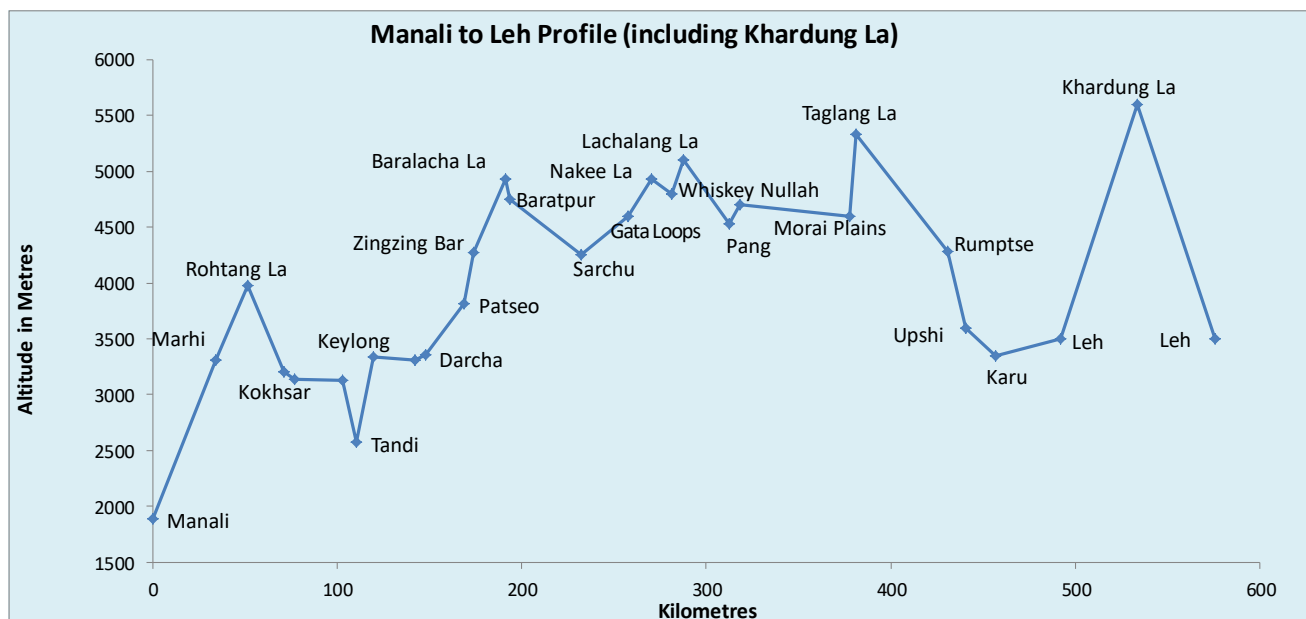


Border Roads Organisation (BRO) all contribute towards the uncertainty. BRO is an Army support organization whose job it is to build and maintain all roads leading to the Indian Borders and they have a unique way of getting their message across on road signs. They begin to repair the broken roads and bridges each year from May onwards, generally stopping in October or when the snows and

severe winter weather make any further progress impossible. For almost half its length the highway is over 13,000 feet and is a roller-coaster ride of 5 major high altitude passes. From Leh there was an 'optional extra' ride to the top of the Khardung La pass and back after a days' rest. I was determined to complete it all!

We arrived in Manali by prop plane on Sunday, 16th August and set about assembling our bikes and getting to know each other. Everyone seemed to know what they were doing and appeared to be proficient and experienced bike riders - 2 of the group owned penny-farthings! Ages ranged from 26 to over 70 years of age. The tour leaders were the amazing John and Pat Ashwell; I had been on a tour to Rajasthan with them the previous year. My room buddy was Sheila Simpson, probably known by some of you. I found out later that she had been quite a racer in her day completing 600 km and 36 hour rides as well as Paris - Brest - Paris! There was also a couple who were taking part on a tandem!

The following day was a warm-up ride along the valley to visit Nagar. The profile looked easy enough but it was a tough climb up to the temple and castle once we got there. The round trip was about 46 km and my legs were sore already! The profiles for the next week or so were very worrying in comparison!



So on Tuesday, 18th August we set off from **Manali** to **begin the climb to the Rhotang La pass**, a continuous ascent of 52 km. The roads were busy leaving the town and I managed to disgrace myself by cycling into the back of John, our tour leader, when the traffic ahead stopped suddenly. So I managed the ungainly 'unclip with the left and tip over to the right' manoeuvre; fortunately no damage except to my pride!! Our first stop was at Marhi, a 36 km uphill ride from Manali. By the time we arrived our tents were already up and I was very impressed by the standard of accommodation! The tents were big enough to stand up in and cot beds were provided - everything seemed very civilised! The site was in a great location with stunning views in every direction and our dinner was being cooked while we sorted ourselves out, washed and changed!



First camp: Marhi

We were given plenty of encouragement from passing vehicles



That evening we had a God stay in the little building beside the campsite; very good luck for us apparently. He was going to be carried up on a stretcher by around 250 villagers but eventually we were told "God is coming by truck" and he did! The rain set in with a vengeance that night

The next morning we continued our climb to the top of our first pass (the Rohtang La). The road was in a bad state all the way making much of it unrideable! Thick mud, stones and lots of traffic (mostly lorries and tourist jeeps) made the going very tough! At the top there were tents selling drinks and snacks, chains of ponies, prayer flags and a little stupa. It was cold and in cloud so we didn't stay for long.

We headed down into the Chandra Valley and stopped for chai and lunch at Khoksar.



Sometimes it's safer to be on a bike

The road was still muddy and stony but it was not raining. After Khoksar the road followed the course of the river and for the next 15km or so smooth, gently undulating tarmac took us to the campsite; a real treat!

The army was using our intended campsite at Gondla and we had stopped at a little place called Sissu, 17km short - so extra mileage the next day! As we approached the site we had to ride through a group of excited kids and teenagers. I slowed down, smiled and said 'hi' as I rode slowly through. Then one of them then suddenly grabbed my rack pack by its handles and tried to wrench it off the back of my bike, bringing me to an abrupt standstill. I shouted which seemed to shock them into backing off a bit while I made my getaway! Later that evening we heard shouting and saw our cook racing across the site in hot pursuit of a couple of youngsters who had taken one of the bikes. The bike was abandoned during the chase and the cook, who knew people in the village, caught one of them and took him to his parents to let them know what had happened. In my own experience of India, this type of incident is very unusual, although when we got back to Delhi two member of our group had cameras stolen on the underground!

Thursday, 20th August took us from **Sissu to Patseo** and was the hardest day yet. It was dry and dusty on mostly un-made roads. My throat felt like it was sealing up at times, not nice, particularly when combined with thick black diesel exhaust from trucks! We stopped for lunch in the only bit of shade we could find, strung along the side of the road under a cliff.



Darcha is considered the gateway to the Higher Himalayas and we stopped here for chai before tackling the hairpin bends ahead. They looked horrendous from where we sat! The road continued, mostly uphill, after the zigzags until we reached our campsite. Totally exhausted; supper then bed.

The following day took us from **Patseo to Whiskey Bridge (Sarchu)** and we started off early in order to get to the top of Baralucha La (4918 m). We left Patseo through an enormous army camp and then headed up through a tented village known as Zing Zing Bar. It was very hard going but at least more of the road was tarmacked. As we continued our ascent the driver of our support vehicle (a little Himalayan, high wheel-base bus) came past, warning us that they would have to start picking us up in an hour as time was getting on and we still had a long way to go! That stung me into action and I managed to get to the top before being scooped up! Others were not so lucky! From there we descended to Baratpur and had chai in one of the tents selling refreshments. It was beautifully furnished with cushions and low tables.

A long descent took us the final leg to our camp at Whiskey Bridge. A little dog had followed the tandem for the last 20km and he settled in front of our tent as the sun went down.

Top of Gata Loops: we still had two passes to negotiate though before we reached camp



The next section took us from **Whiskey Bridge to 6km short of Pang** and before we had gone very far we reached the Gata Loops. The Loops take you about 480m higher in a series of 21 hairpin bends. We stopped at the top, near to a little pagoda for drinks and snacks and to admire the view.

The promised 2km ride to the next pass (Nakee La) turned out to be 10km and we were very happy to get there.

The road headed down to Whiskey Nallah where we had lunch by the dried up stony river bed and then started the climb to the Lachulung La pass (5077m) - nicknamed by Pat as the Lostalung La! This was our first pass over 5000m and most people had been suffering for several days the effects of altitude with headaches and bouts of nausea. Oxygen was carried in our little bus in case of emergency! Anything over about 4000m was very hard work and sleeping was difficult!

The run down from the pass towards Pang was very picturesque and followed a river valley. The road crossed the river several times. One of the fords was in two sections; the first flowed over slabs of concrete and was easy to negotiate but the second bit was deeper, wider and the water flowed over large pebbles and rocks. I tipped over and submerged in the icy water, still attached to my bike! Fortunately I was riding with Alex who dashed in and helped to release my cleats —

what a gent! The lack of any humidity in the air meant that it didn't take long to dry out. We stopped in another pretty campsite that evening. The dry atmosphere took a toll on sinuses and pretty much everyone had badly chapped lips. Our sweet little dog was no longer with us - had got into trouble for chewing the tent ropes!

Sunday, 23rd August we set off for **Tsosario Lake** and I was tasked with taking a list of passport /visa details



Alex

to the police check point on the outskirts of Pang so that everyone could pass through easily with minimum of fuss. I set off early and then carried on towards the Morai

The long road from Pang up to the Morai plains



Morai plains: dust devil



Snack and drinks stop

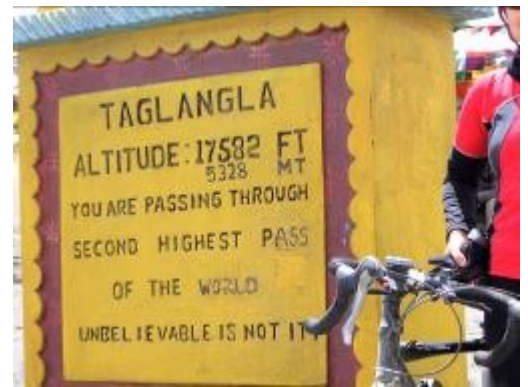


plains, a climb of 400m. The scenery changed; sandy and rough surfaces with the occasional piece of tarmac. Dust devils would appear from nowhere forcing you to stop and cover your face.

We had lunch by the road and then, soon after, turned off the Manali - Leh road towards Tsosario Lake. This road was a nice surprise, well tarmacked and gently undulating - good fun to ride! Finally we had to turn off again, down a steep drop onto a sandy track which continued for a couple more kilometres. Ricky had a swim in the salty lake.

The following day we headed back to the main road for the ride to **Rumtse** and had to cycle into a cold wind up the valley. It looked cloudy ahead and did not look good for our ride to the Taglang La pass (5328m).

Felt ill by the top so quick photos, followed by getting down to a lower altitude as soon as possible. Thank you Chris and Roger for the lovely chocolate fudge which really helped!



Long army lorry convoys passed us at regular intervals all the way from Manali to Leh



Chortens and (right) a prayer wheel



After the main descent the road ran along a pretty river valley with small villages, chortens (Buddhist shrines) and big prayer wheels. The rocks were wonderful colours in contrasting pink and green. After supper the support crew presented us with a 'welcome CTC' cake. The cook had made it on one burner by heating sand in a pan and then inserting another pan with the cake mix inside it!! That's what I call baking!



Our fantastic support crew! (left)



Sheila

Tuesday, 25th August: the **final section** of our ride from Manali to Leh. The first part was lovely, slightly undulating but mostly downhill, very picturesque with lots of photo opportunities although it was still nice to get to our lunch stop at Thikse Monastery. I opted for rice and dahl for lunch! The gardens were very pretty there and after lunch Ricky, Tom and I walked up to the top of the monastery, unfortunately all the prayer rooms were still closed for lunch but there were plenty of roof tops to explore and fantastic views.



Thikse Monastery



Tom and Ricky

Then we continued on towards Leh and the final stretch was horrible; well tarmacked but uphill and masses of traffic belching black smoke! Our accommodation was situated above the town and called Mantra Cottages. Each cottage had it's own veranda with spectacular views across the valley with mountains beyond.



Leh

Wednesday, 26th August; spent the day resting and looking around Leh. It's a hilly town with Tibetan markets and touristy shops. We passed a Moravian school, which surprised me a bit as I'd spent 3 years at a Moravian school in Yorkshire! At lunch we had a very nice Kashmiri dish on a roof terrace watching all the hustle and bustle below.

Looked like 7 of us were going to have a go at the Khardung La the following day; some of the others were going white water rafting – tempting!

Final day: We set off early, winding out of Leh and at first I felt quite good! It's about 40km (2000m climb) to the top; a steady gradient and good tarmac for the first 30km. The tarmac then becomes increasingly patchy until the road becomes a stony track 5 or 6km from the top. As the air got thinner the familiar symptoms of pounding head and breathlessness reappeared. It was a knacker 6 hour struggle for me. The 3 men passed

the rest of us early on and eventually I found myself behind everyone. We had two jeeps with us for support and they offered a lot of encouragement. That night though I wrote in my diary "I WILL NEVER, EVER CYCLE TO THE TOP OF THE KHARDUNG LA AGAIN!!" Twice I was on the verge of turning back and only the thought that this would probably be my only chance to do it made me continue. About 8 to 10 km from the top I found the only way to progress was to pedal until it became impossible, get off and push the bike for a little while then to get back on and pedal again. Towards the top I couldn't manage more than a couple of turns of the pedals without having to push for a few steps – it was excruciating! Have never been so relieved to arrive anywhere in my life. John (and Pat) had ridden the Khardung La several times in the past and he was not riding that day. He was in one of the support vehicles and organised everything at the top and told us where to stand for photos. Then Cathy and I were given a roll of prayer flags which we were told to touch to our foreheads and then tie up with the others – which we did! Roger, Ken and Andy had already left to get back to Leh by this time and Chris, Cathy and Sheila were taking transport back.



The Karakorams with K2 to the left of my left shoulder



Roger

After making it to the top I couldn't bring myself to get into a jeep. John said "you're joking!" - it had been a long day for him as well! We agreed that he would wait with the jeep where the tarmac started and make sure I was OK, then they would return to Leh. Many thanks John – I was very happy with that. At the top, every bump jarred my altitude head but, completely done in, I finally made it back to town.

Then I got lost!

I didn't want to drop too low so ended up pushing my bike across fields and lowering it down the 4/5 ft. terraced walls! I then met a Russian with a map - also lost. He spoke no English, but we somehow made ourselves understood. He was on his way to the Stupa, just past our cottages and we finally found our way!

Strange looking back - to chance across a Russian with a map in the middle of a field just when I needed it most! Hallucination??

A week after our return the highway was closed due to heavy snowfall.

Club Matters



Top: Club ride to Farncombe Boat House
Above left: Gavin & Jeff Marshall in Menorca
Above right: Club ride to Secretts at Milford
Left: Ian Seccombe sports wet weather gear - Ibiza.

Summer Camp 2017

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SN10 5QT.

Come and join the fun next year!
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Hounslow Camp 2018

Friday, 10th August until

Tuesday, 28th August

Further info: Martyn Roach



Hounslow and District Wheelers welcomes new members



March 2017

Peter Martin 1st claim Vet

June 2017

Paul Pember 1st claim Vet



Photos: Ian Seccombe (including front page) and Patsy Howe

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Jeff Marshall

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Jo Wells

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Linda Williams

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Chris Lovibond

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This magazine is primarily distributed by electronic means. This saves the club time and money. If you're reading a paper copy that you received in the post and would be willing to switch to reading it on your computer or printing it yourself, please let the editor know.

Next Issue

The next issue will be the Dinner issue in February 2018

Please contact the editor with your contributions or suggestions.
It's your magazine!