



# Quarter Wheeler

2026 Issue 1  
January

The magazine of the Hounslow & District Wheelers

**Inside:** *Race results*  
*Club News*  
*History*  
*Rides /tours*  
*Photos*  
*And more*

**'The Route'**  
Pages 24-25



**Island hopping  
in Japan**  
Pages 30-33

### Contents

Ron Brown Memorial 100	2-4
Interclub 25	5-6
Racing Results 2025	7
Trophy Winners 2025	8-9
Captain's Report	10-11
Meet a member	12-17
Chris's 80/80 ride	18-19
My Machine	20-21
A Hard Day in January	22-23
The Route	24-25
Is Progress, progress	26-27
Roggo's Ramblings	28-29
The Shimanami Kaido	30-33
That pothole	34-36
Drawblud & Stinger	37
Armenia	38-44
Kirkpatrick ride	45-55
Hounslow Out and About	56

**Editor: Patsy Howe**  
patsyhowe@live.com

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

**The Kirkpatrick C2C**  
Pages 45-55

For more information about Hounslow & District Wheelers visit our web site:  
<http://www.hdwcycling.co.uk>



# Ron Brown Memorial Hundred Report 2025 (AKA The Hounslow 100)

Jake Sargent (Team Bottrill) was the winner for the second consecutive year – his 3.33.25 put him more than seven minutes clear of second placed Alex Royle (Manchester BC) who recorded 3.40.48.

Anthony Jones (VMCC) was third with 3.45.54 while fourth placed Karl Norris (360 VRT) took the Vets' Standard Award recording 3.46.28 which gave him a 'plus' of 1.7.19.

Last Sunday was never going to be a comp. record day – according to the Met Office at 9am there was a South West wind averaging 21 and gusting to 31mph; on this Farnham-Alton course this is a straight on headwind going out towards Alton. Sargent told me his time was a full ten minutes down on his personal best but that he felt he had judged his effort well and had 'got it all out'. As is so often the case, back at the HQ it was the fastest rider who looked the least tired. His ambitions for the immediate future are the National 12 Hour Championship and the BBAR – he thinks he will have plenty of tough competition. He has developed well since his first season in 2019, but he has, he says, plenty of enthusiasm to continue racing for many years and these seem likely to bring more success.



Emily Martin (Team Bottrill) came down from Cheshire to take the Women's Prize with the impressive (given the day) time of 3.56.33. which gave her a comfortable margin of nearly 30 minutes over her nearest rival, Lara Franklin (Loose Cannons Conditioning), who finished in 4.26.05. Emily is not a pure time triallist, tackling some gravel and road events, and says she is in her fourth 'serious' (her word) season. Her immediate time trial target is the short distance BBAR, but let's hope that in the near future she gains enough confidence to attempt a 'twelve' for the traditional full distance championship. With a sub four hour hundred in the conditions of last Sunday not a lot of luck would be needed for a good result.

Team Bottrill easily won the team race, their counting riders were Sargent, Martin and David Halliday (3.48.09) – aggregate 11.18.07. The second placed team with an aggregate of 12.05.38. was the New Forest CC (Lloyd-Williams, Harris, Lock).

Fastest road bikes were (men) Tom Foreman (Sherwood CC) 4.03.19 and (women) Sien Van Der Plank (New Forest CC) 4.45.39.

The event attracted fifty seven entries and there were forty one finishers; thirteen of these were inside four hours.

We should all recognise the hard work of organiser Bruce McMichael and the efforts of the Hounslow members which made the day possible. If the event is run in 2026 it will be the seventieth anniversary of the first time it was run by the Hounslow – the club had taken the event over from the legendary Calleva RC which had started this as a club 100 in the nineteen thirties. Sadly the Hounslow’s membership is ageing and will not be able to continue promoting the event indefinitely – are there any clubs out there who might be willing to help and ultimately take over this great event?

Chris Lovibond  
May 2025

### The Prize Winners:

	Rider	Team	Time/Std	Prize
Fastest	Jake Sargent	Team Bottrill	03:33:25	£50
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Alexander Royle	Manchester Bicycle Club	03:40:48	£30
1 <sup>st</sup> Vet on Std	Karl Norris	360VRT	+01:07:19	£50
Fastest Woman	Emily Martin	Team Bottrill	03:56:33	£50
Fastest Team	Jake Sargent	03:33:25		£25
	David Halliday	03:48:09		£25
	Emily Martin	03:56:33		£25
		Team Bottrill	11:18:07	
Souvenir Trevor Gilbert	Tom Foreman	Sherwood CC	04:03:19	£38

Congratulations to our winners, as above and to all of the others who completed the course, on an exceptionally windy edition

Thank you to everybody who assisted at HQ , or out on the course. Thank you to the a3crg team Maria, David and Kathleen for the result. Hope to see you all again next year. Traffic lights permitting.



Bruce McMichael Event Secretary: 205 London Road Twickenham Middlesex TW1 1EJ (T) 02088916066 (M) 07503251549 (E) mcmichael.205@gmail.com

# Hounslow 100 Results

Position	Rider		Club / Team	Time	VTTA +/-
1st	Jake	Sargent	Team Bottrill	03:33:25	
2nd	Alexander	Royle	Manchester Bicycle Club	03:40:48	
3rd	Anthony	Jones	VMCC powered by Y Beic	03:45:54	01:04:04
4th	Karl	Norris	360VRT	03:46:28	01:07:19
5th	Sven	Sabas	Rapha Cycling Club	03:47:21	
6th	David	Halliday	Team Bottrill	03:48:09	00:53:31
7th	Henrik	Persson	Fulfil The Potential RT	03:48:45	00:52:55
8th	Daniel	Legg	North Hampshire RC	03:53:53	01:01:19
9th	Emily	Martin	Team Bottrill	03:56:33	
10th	Lee	Williams	Fulfil The Potential RT	03:57:17	00:43:57
11th	Will	Weynberg	Sotonia CC	03:57:19	
12th	Neal	Beauchamp	Kingston Wheelers CC	03:58:38	
13th	Henry	Lloyd Williams	New Forest CC	03:59:00	
14th	Chris	Harris	New Forest CC	03:59:16	
15th	Richard	Pywell	Team Bottrill	04:02:23	
16th	Tom	Foreman	Sherwood CC	04:03:19	00:37:55
17th	Karl	Roberton	Worthing Excelsior CC	04:05:53	00:42:57
18th	Nick	Esser	Hashtag Coaching	04:07:15	00:45:12
19th	Gary	Lock	New Forest CC	04:07:22	00:38:27
20th	Henry	Farrell	Wightlink CRT	04:08:38	
21st	Gregory	Woodford	Reading CC	04:12:38	00:58:45
22nd	James	Parkes	Army Cycling	04:14:02	
23rd	Simon	Butteriss	Ely & District CC/B&T Motor Repairs	04:15:03	00:29:54
24th	Paul	Tippett	Destination Bike RT	04:15:17	00:34:41
25th	Adam	Rogers	Eastbourne Rovers CC	04:15:24	00:33:26
26th	Nicky	Wilson	Destination Bike RT	04:21:09	00:21:37
27th	Lara	Franklin	Loose Cannon's Conditioning	04:26:05	
28th	Sarah	Matthews	...a3crg	04:32:12	01:06:27
29th	Daniel	Kempe	Bristol South Cycling Club	04:33:02	00:28:33
30th	Christian	Geldard	Fulfil The Potential RT	04:33:07	00:15:43
31st	Will	Trevor	ADDFORM Vive Le Velo	04:33:28	
32nd	Jamie	Richardson-Paige	Magspeed Racing	04:37:51	
33rd	Naomi	Shinkins	Horsepower Coaching	04:42:45	00:26:55
34th	Sien	Van Der Plank	New Forest CC	04:45:39	
35th	Ray	Sullivan	Metropolitan Police CC	04:46:18	00:13:35
36th	Stephen	Skinner	Velo Club St Raphael	04:49:06	00:34:28
37th	Sean	Mcdougall	Bedfordshire Road RT	05:04:25	-00:13:15
38th	Stephen	Peirce	Poole Wheelers CC	05:07:24	-00:12:12
39th	Jymmy	Trevor	City RC (Hull)	05:07:39	-00:15:12
40th	Anita	Turner	Eastbourne Rovers CC	05:38:05	-00:22:21

**Interclub time trial, 25 miles (HC0001) team handicap event  
Sunday 11th May 2025**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Handicap</b>	<b>Club</b>	<b>Actual time</b>	<b>Pos'n</b>	<b>Net time</b>	<b>Pos'n</b>
Sam Williams	00:06:00	TCC	00:58:02	4	00:52:02	15
Henrik Persson	00:05:00	KWCC	00:55:19	1	00:50:19	8
James Cadman	00:06:00	H&DW	01:03:27	11	00:57:27	26
Margaret Murphy	00:39:00	TCC	01:26:08	30	00:47:08	5
Zoe Calder	00:32:00	TCC	01:18:43	25	00:46:43	4
James Lawn	00:13:00	KWCC	01:02:15	10	00:49:15	7
Miles King	00:16:00	TCC	01:07:00	15	00:51:00	10
Loz Wintergold	00:08:00	H&DW	01:00:36	7	00:52:36	16
Daren Austin	00:05:30	TCC	01:01:11	8	00:55:41	22
Heather McCulloch	00:37:00	TCC	01:25:34	29	00:48:34	6
Jonny Newel	00:05:00	TCC	00:59:44	6	00:54:44	20
Dan Thisdell	00:00:00	VC Meudon	01:16:44	22	01:16:44	30
Neal Beaucamp	00:06:00	KWCC	00:56:49	3	00:50:49	9
Alex Brett	00:32:00	TCC	01:23:38	28	00:51:38	13
Lisa West	00:27:00	TCC	01:18:41	24	00:51:41	14
Jill Bartlett	00:13:00	H&DW	01:07:07	17	00:54:07	19
Mark Silver	00:13:00	H&DW	01:07:07	16	00:54:07	18
Ben Bodley	00:22:00	KWCC	01:04:13	13	00:42:13	1
Adrian Brown	00:09:00	TCC	01:20:13	26	01:11:13	29
Tony Dodsworth	00:11:00	TCC	01:03:59	12	00:52:59	17
Denise Quinlan	00:38:00	TCC	01:22:42	27	00:44:42	2
Jay Bracey	00:07:00	TCC	01:05:11	14	00:58:11	27
Bruce McMichael	00:17:00	H&DW	01:13:48	20	00:56:48	25
Phil McLean	00:20:00	TCC	01:15:11	21	00:55:11	21
Bill McClatchie	00:11:00	KWCC	01:02:10	9	00:51:10	11
Daniel Goldsmith	00:15:00	TCC	01:11:42	19	00:56:42	24
Neil Grunshaw	00:12:00	KWCC	00:58:43	5	00:46:43	3
Julie Skinner	00:27:00	TCC	01:18:13	23	00:51:13	12
Gareth Williams	00:00:00	TCC	00:56:32	2	00:56:32	23



## Interclub time trial results

<b>H&amp;DW</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Loz</b>	<b>Wintergold</b>	<b>00:52:36</b>	
	<b>2</b>	<b>Jill</b>	<b>Bartlett</b>	<b>00:54:07</b>	
	<b>3</b>	<b>Mark</b>	<b>Bartlett</b>	<b>00:54:07</b>	
				<b>2:40:50</b>	<b>3rd</b>
<b>KWCC</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Bodley</b>	<b>00:42:13</b>	
	<b>2</b>	<b>Neil</b>	<b>Grunshaw</b>	<b>00:46:43</b>	
	<b>3</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>Lawn</b>	<b>00:49:15</b>	
				<b>2:18:11</b>	<b>1st</b>
<b>TCC</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Denise</b>	<b>Quinlan</b>	<b>00:44:42</b>	
	<b>2</b>	<b>Zoe</b>	<b>Calder</b>	<b>00:46:43</b>	
	<b>3</b>	<b>Margaret</b>	<b>Murphy</b>	<b>00:47:08</b>	
				<b>2:18:33</b>	<b>2nd</b>

This is a team handicap event where rides receive a time deduction (based on their handicap) from their actual time. The winning team has the fastest aggregate time based on the individual handicap results of 3 riders.

### Club Strava Group (reminder)

Anyone wishing to join should search for 'Hounslow' in Strava and you will find the Club Group, you can then request to 'join the group' and one of our group admins will admit you to the secure group.

I am happy to answer any questions via email if anyone would like to know more.

Ian Kirk: [ianjkirk@gmail.com](mailto:ianjkirk@gmail.com)





# HDW Club Racing Results 2025



Date	Event	Dist	Pos.	Result
------	-------	------	------	--------

## Tim Budd

07-Sep	Rocco Memorial VTTA	25 miles	6th	55:45:00
13-Jul	VTTA (London & Home Counties) 10	10 miles	77th	21:37
06-Jul	Westerley Cycling Club 25	25 miles	6th	55:50:00
01-Jun	Farnham RC 250	25 miles	9th	59:18:00
11-May	Dave Jones Memorial Open TT -	25 miles	8th	56:47:00

## James Cadman

13-Jul	VTTA (London & Home Counties) 10	10 miles	96th	22:37
06-Jul	Westerley Cycling Club 25B20	25 miles	12th	58:24:00
01-Jun	Farnham RC 25	25 miles	16th	01:01:06
04-May	May the Fourth Ham Barn Storming 10	10 miles	53rd	23:57

## Loz Wintergold

28-Jun	Horsham Cycling 10	10 miles	8th	23:45
01-Jun	East Sussex CA June 50	50 miles	9th	02:04:00

## Jill Bartlett

11-Sep	VTTA-LHC 10	10 miles	23rd	29:09:00
14-Aug	VTTA-LHC 10	10 miles	34th	28:10:00
14-Jun	Hemel Hempstead CC 10	10 miles	13th	27:07:00

## Nic Stagg

11-May	Dave Jones Memorial Open TT	25 miles	15th	58:14:00
22-Mar	Southern Counties Cycling Union 10	10 miles	9th	23:58



# Hounslow & District Wheelers Club Trophy Winners: 2025

Winner	CLUBMAN TROPHY	Category	Qualification
		Most points for Club Runs: <b>Jeff Marshall</b>	<b>26 Points</b>
		Second: <b>Les Saunby</b>	<b>25 Points</b>
		First Lady: <b>Jill Bartlett</b>	<b>12 Points</b>

Winner	ALBAN TROPHY	Category	Qualification
		Meritorious Long Distance Ride <b>Jill Bartlett</b>	One more city Charity ride. Venice to Bologna <a href="https://www.onemorecity.cc">https://www.onemorecity.cc</a>



Winner	SPELTHORNE CUP	Category	Qualification
		Ladies Fastest '10' of the Year <b>Jill Bartlett</b>	<b>27:07</b> 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31925-hemel-hempstead-cc-10">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31925-hemel-hempstead-cc-10</a>
Winner	E. G. MENDAY CUP	Category	Qualification
		Fastest '50' of the year <b>Loz Wintergold</b>	<b>02:04:00</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31248-east-sussex-ca-june-50">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31248-east-sussex-ca-june-50</a>
	DAVE FINCH MEMORIAL CUP	Category	Qualification
		Vets Fastest '50' of the Year <b>Loz Wintergold</b>	<b>02:04:00</b> 1 <sup>st</sup> June 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31248-east-sussex-ca-june-50">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/31248-east-sussex-ca-june-50</a>
Winner	PETER MARROWS MEMORIAL CUP	Category	Qualification
		Fastest '10' of the Year: <b>Tim Budd</b>	<b>21:37</b> 13 <sup>th</sup> Jul 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30725-vtta-london-home-counties-10">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30725-vtta-london-home-counties-10</a>
	PENNINGTON CUP	Category	Qualification
		Fastest '25' of the Year: <b>Tim Budd</b>	<b>55:45</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30708-rocco-memorial">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30708-rocco-memorial</a>
	VETERANS CUP	Category	Qualification
		Fastest Vet' on Std' '25' of the Year: <b>Tim Budd</b>	<b>+ 11M 01S</b> 7 <sup>th</sup> September 2025 <a href="https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30708-rocco-memorial">https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/events/30708-rocco-memorial</a>

Trophies will be awarded at the Club AGM in June 2026, at Staines S.C.  
See you there!  
Bruce McMichael: Race Secretary.

## CAPTAINS REPORT 27th Oct. 2024 to 26th Oct 2025



Since my report in the last magazine I listed, on our HDW website, 50 Sunday runs to 20 different venues for elevenses on our Sunday Clubruns. At present we have 11 venues in Surrey, 6 in Berkshire and 4 in Buckinghamshire with their addresses, route distance and downloadable Strava Routes for your GPS devices. Eleven of those planned 50 runs had to be abandoned due to bad weather, rain or cold or occasionally, both.

The **Sunday Riders Whatsapp group** is very useful on these occasions so that everyone is aware of an 'abandon' or last minute change of plan. It also helps considerably when I am compiling the points to discover the winner of our HDW **Clubman Trophy**

**Clubman Trophy\*** Currently, one point is scored for each attendance on a Sunday clubrun and one point each is scored for riding or helping in both our Ron Brown Memorial 100 miles Time trial and at our Inter-club 25 miles T.T.

The first three rides in **November** went as, planned with 9, 5 & 4 of us riders on each. I was having a break in Newcastle at end of November when I saw on my phone that the ride to Manor Farm Tearoom at Seale, on 23rd Nov was abandoned due to bad weather. ( It was wet in the Toon as well! )

In **December**, 3 of the 5 listed rides were abandoned due to wind and rain, but the rides to Seale and Squires garden centre at West Horsley, went ahead with 4 and 8 riders.

Weather on Sundays during **January and February** was particularly unpleasant with only two of the eight rides going ahead. Luckily I missed this bad spell as I was having **another** break together with bro. John, on the Costa Blanca in Spain, where we endured blue skies and sunshine and rode every other day.

Back home, we fared better in **March**, with three of the four planned rides taking place but as late as 16th March it was judged to be too cold for the ride to Sheplands garden centre at Hare Hatch.

During **April** I was not able to ride myself (recovering from a cataract op. and a bout of flu) but the weather improved and all 4 rides went ahead as planned.

With our Open 100 miles time trial on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> **May**, there were only 3 listed rides which also went ahead as planned. I missed the ride on the day of our Inter Club 25 to Lakeside café, Cranbourne, on 11<sup>th</sup> May, as I was on my annual spring cycling holiday in Mallorca, which did not go to plan, but that is a whole other story.

In **June** the four runs went ahead with no more than four riders on each, despite decent weather. I was absent or out of action, for three of the four rides (recovering from a cataract op on the other eye)

**July's** four planned rides became three when the ride to West Horsley on 20th was surprisingly rained off.

**August** was uneventful in as much as all five rides went ahead in the heatwave weather whilst our club camping holiday in Wiltshire was under way.

Our **September** rides were in mild and balmy weather, but the ride to Marlow on 14<sup>th</sup> Sept. was marred by a nasty crash for my brother John, after refreshment at Wyevale Garden Centre. We had only just left, heading toward Marlow Town Centre, when a careless dog walker stepped into the road without looking, causing a melee and snatching of brakes which resulted in John taking a header over his 'bars, landing heavily and breaking 6 ribs. He was winded and in considerable pain, and is no spring chicken! So we sat him in a handy bus shelter and Bruce phoned 999 for an ambulance. We were shocked when an ambulance was refused on the grounds that he could still talk!!!??? He could not ride, so we phoned Dave 'n Patsy Howe, who responded brilliantly by coming to the rescue all the way from Shepperton.

As they approached at high speed (I was able to follow their progress on Whatsapp, which was reassuring) as they zoomed along the M4 motorway and A404(M) dual carriageway.

They saved the day by rescuing John and his bike and delivering him to St Peters Hospital, Chertsey, where he had x-rays and treatment for the pain. Fortunately, he has somewhat recovered now and is riding again.

The four rides in **October** to Henley, Penn, Clondon Park and, once again, Marlow were fortunately uneventful. A new venue for us, The Crown Inn pub at Penn, en-route to our Hughenden Valley venue, is at the very top of the long steep and poorly surfaced Pauls Hill. It was excellent for the eight of us who arrived there and crowded around the log fire on the **12<sup>th</sup> October**. Stopping there, avoided us tackling the dreaded Cryers Hill to get to The Village Coffee Shop in Hughenden Valley. I have added it to our runs list for future visits.



**\*After all of the above, at 26 October 2025, this season, our Clubman Trophy winners are as follows:-**

**Men:**

1. myself, 26 points
2. Les Saunby 25 points (pewh that was close !?)

**Ladies:**

Jill Bartlett, 12points

Clubmates, beware out there on two wheels.....Your Captain, Jeff



*Club rides 2025*



## *MEET A MEMBER*

**Peter Bennington, aged 70, kindly consented to be the subject of our regular item.**

I started cycling at a young age and remember clearly as a 9 year old riding from my parents home in Ashford Common along Clockhouse Lane to Heathrow Airport. I would sit on the tunnel bridge next to the runway and watch the planes landing. Sometimes as the aircraft rolled out to my position I would get a wave from the pilot. So that was the start, I guess, for my interest in cycling and a career in aviation.

My first beginnings to club cycling started when two schoolboy friends introduced me to the Feltham Road Club which I joined in Autumn 1969. I was 13 years old and started on club runs. One of the first destinations I remember was Horsham, in pouring rain, wearing a big yellow cape and a sou'wester hat. I got so wet as with no mudguards the cape was like a mobile shower cubicle! Nothing like learning the hard way.

My first race was the Feltham Road Club 25 on the C.C. 107 (Staines Windsor-Ashford-Staines) course on February 8th 1970. It was so cold that I resorted to running along the Staines by-pass to make myself warm. Hence the rather dismal time of 1:41:39. The event was won by one Dave Stalker. Another memorable race, not for good reasons, later in the year was another FRC 25 mile time trial. A rider who started 2 minutes behind me was about to catch me after 2 to 3 miles on the Staines causeway whereupon I took great advantage in the slipstream of a passing Job's milk lorry. The rider, Mr Trevor Gilbert, eventually caught me approaching the Windsor turn. As he came past me, turning a monstrous sized gear he was in an incandescent rage, swearing, snorting and shouting at me. Later as I completed the ride everyone had been fully briefed, numerous times no doubt, about my misdemeanour and before I crossed the finish line Trevor was there bellowing "you're disqualified, disqualified". He didn't stop berating me all that season. The shame of it all, I still need counselling even now! However, at the end of my first season, as a 14 year old, I won the Feltham Road Club schoolboy cup and recorded a 10 TT mile personal best of 25.45 and a 25 TT mile personal best of 1.05.23, a big improvement on the earlier 1.41.39.



I joined Hounslow & District Wheelers in the early months of 1971 when events known as Reliability Trials were promoted by quite a few London and Surrey clubs. The local ones which were most popular were from Hampton Court to Brighton and back. Groups of riders of similar ability were formed into groups and assigned a time limit for the ride. They were not intended as racing and were quite leisurely with time built in for lunch at Brighton. Certificates were awarded to riders who successfully completed the ride and there was also an award for the club with the most cumulative miles completed. I rode the Brighton reliability trial in early 1971 and after lunch started the ride back. After leaving the environs of Brighton I became bored with the glacial progress of my group and decided to ride ahead on my own. After 30 miles or so a rider from another faster group, which had set off much later, must have had similar thoughts and came past me like a steam train. I jumped on his wheel and hung on back to the finish. The rider was Martyn Roach and, guess what, I joined the Hounslow & District Wheelers. As usual I caused some problems with the organising club as I claimed that I started the ride as a Feltham rider but finished it as a Hounslow member. I think I was again disqualified as I hadn't completed the ride in the proper time, I was over an hour quicker (unreliable?). Furthermore they didn't know which club should count my mileage for the team event.

It is difficult to pinpoint how long I have been a member of H&DW - as they say in the employment/pension sector I have a record of broken service. So from memory I joined in 1971 until about 1979, at which time I had discovered beer and women. I had also started playing rugby for Staines Rugby Club and these two sports were quite incompatible. I started my flying career, which put a stop to regular cycling, in 1986 operating the British Airways 747 jumbo jet and then flew for Cathay Pacific based in Hong Kong. I sometimes got to ride a bike when on a trip away. Redondo Beach to Santa Monica along the beach track in California was a favourite. Vancouver around Stanley Park was also nice. I rode around New York a few times which was terrifying and stupid! My flying ended in 2007 & I rejoined the club in 2008. Then another break as I rode with the South Western Road Club for a few years, but then rejoined HDW six or seven years ago.

Apart from a penny farthing, I have ridden just about everything! I have ridden on the track when I used to ride in a Friday league at Paddington. Also ridden at Herne Hill, Palmers Park and the old SKOL SIX Day track at Calshot. Road racing, which I enjoyed the most, gaining a 2nd Category Licence. Time trialling at all distances except the 12 hour and 24 hour event. Also competed and won a Cyclo-Cross event.



Anyone who rides with me nowadays knows that, as soon as the road rises uphill, yours truly slides off the back never to be seen again. It may surprise you to know that my strongest talent back in the day was hill climbing. I have several old club Hill Climb medals with 1st and 2nd places engraved on them to prove it!

Club runs with the HDW in the 70's were great times. It would be an all day ride stopping for elevenses, lunch and afternoon tea. Riding back in the dark with Ever Ready bicycle lights which were worse than useless - not fit for purpose. There were numerous mechanical problems with a large group; cotter pins working loose, bottom brackets the same, buckled wheels and endless punctures. I once returned from a club run to the Bluebell railway, having run out of tubs (tyres) and patches, in the back of a Transit van. The van belonged to a bird rescue sanctuary and the driver kindly picked me up from the roadside and gave me a lift to East Grinstead. Only trouble I was wet and became covered in feathers, bird seed and the stuff that's supposed to be lucky if it lands on you!

Those club runs seemed so much more orderly than groups I see out today. Riding as a group, two on the front for 10 miles, then change to the next couple. Everyone stayed together and could hold a tight wheel. No Garmin splitting the group with erroneous directions, just someone who knew the way.

In recent years I have enjoyed the David Howe magical mystery tours with my favourite being the coast to coast from St Davids Head in Wales to Lowestoft on the Suffolk coast.



*St David's start, Long Coast to Coast*



Also enjoyed very much riding the Prudential Ride 100 based on the London Olympics Road Race route. I have ridden it three times with my best time at 5hr 20 mins.

I couldn't, honestly, say which is my favourite ride. Depends on so many things over the period of time I've been riding. I take my bike to Barbados in the winter and enjoy riding in the warmth along the coast. In particular I ride up to Cherry Tree hill where, at the top, I am rewarded with spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean crashing into twenty miles of the east coast.



*Cherry Tree Hill, Barbados*

Always tried to ride when I had time off on a flying trip. San Francisco to Sausalito, for coffee, over the Golden Gate Bridge is awesome. Torrance, Los Angeles to Santa Monica via Marina Del Rey is most pleasant. Vancouver around the Burrard Inlet too. As mentioned earlier New York was terrifying!

My wife Jackie and I had a flat in a French ski resort called Les Gets, close to the Swiss and Italian borders, and I cycled a lot in the Alps. I've ridden the Col de Joux Plane many times. It's an uncategorised climb used in the Tour de France. It is hard but beautiful with Mont Blanc as a backdrop. It takes me well over an 1hr 40mins of hard slogging. Marco Pantani still holds the record at 35mins 50seconds set in the 1997 tour. Avoriaz at over 2000 metres was a climb I did several times. On one occasion taking refuge in a plastic roadside porta-loo for over an hour as a mountain storm caught me out! I was up there one day to see a TdF finish and bumped into another HDW member - Brent Skinner.

A really nice ride I would recommend is around Lake Annecy, France. Half of the route around the lake is a disused railway line converted into a cycle track from Doussard to Annecy and it is beautiful. And flat!! The Col de la Forclaz is a climb to 1160 metres where the view of the entire lake is spectacular.



I love riding in Mallorca from Puerto Pollensa. I usually go several times a year and enjoy the total cycling culture which is present there. A good ride is to climb from the Port up to Lluc then a fantastic descent to Caimari and back home via Campanet. I would have liked to have done the ride to Sa Calobra but never did and probably never will now!

My favourite end of ride venue is Tolo's bar restaurant. Interesting cycling memorabilia inside from Bradley Wiggins Olympic TT bike to signed photos from Sean Kelly and a host of other cycling greats. I once did a ride with a group and found out later that one rider was the 1996 Giro d'Italia winner Pavel Tonkov.



*Puerto Pollenca ride with Pavel Tonkov (far right)  
1996 Giro d'Italia winner*

A ride I always remember was, I think in 1972, when I rode with a fellow club member the late John Wise. We rode from Staines to Worthing, Sussex to support our club riders in an RTTC National time trial. From Worthing we then rode to Hadlow Down on the Sussex/ Kent border to watch a British Professional Road Race which was in the afternoon and then back home. It was over 140 miles. How do I know how far it was in those pre Garmin days? John had a 'mileometer' on his bike. This infuriating device had a striker attached to a spoke and every wheel revolution it hit a counter attached to the front forks. It was calibrated for wheel size and thus distance was measured. Only problem was the noise. Click, click, click, click. The faster you rode the clicking frequency increased. Click, click, click, click for a 140 miles. It drove me insane!!

My first bike was a Dawes hand-me-down from my Dad. First serious bike was a Reynolds 531 Ken Ryall with double Zeus Chainset 48/51. Handlebar control for gears and Universal centre pull brakes. In 1973 I bought a Condor Baracchi track bike which I still have today. It is an interesting frame as it is 'lugless'.

Then a Dave Russell 531 road bike which had something wrong with its geometry. Despite numerous measurements checking dimensions it wouldn't ride properly. When riding 'hands off' it would lean to one side. It would not track straight. I eventually crashed on it riding back from a British Heart Foundation London to Brighton event and it was unrepairable.

In 1995, after the Brighton crash, I bought a lovely steel Colnago Columbus SL with Campagnolo Record throughout and sold it recently to a guy who lived in a squat in the winter of 1962 with the Rolling Stones. He is mentioned in Keith Richards autobiography 'Life'. He is an interesting man - read the book!



Then the carbon era. I have a Wilier Cento Uno with all Campagnolo equipment. An ORRO gravel bike with Shimano 105 11 speed and hydraulic discs. A Boardman PRO carbon mountain bike with Sram equipment. I threw away the hydraulic disc brakes, which were fitted, and refitted Shimano ones which are far superior. And then my pride and joy is a Colnago C59 fitted throughout with Campagnolo. It is a fantastic machine which handles beautifully and for a 'full race' bike setup is incredibly comfortable.

I also owned, for many years, a tandem which was great fun but was eventually sold as my wife refused to ride the thing on the grounds that she felt quite unsafe on the back of it with me!

My favourite bike snack? Nothing really. I usually just have a decaf coffee - I don't normally take any snack with me. Unlike most cyclists I don't really like cake as I have a savoury tooth. On the odd occasion that I do have a snack it will be a sausage or bacon sandwich on brown bread.

I find all our usual stops much of a muchness really. I like the stop at Seale. The Milk Churn, Rudgwick is good. Fair Oaks I like, providing the entire Twickenham Road club aren't in there as they usually are on a Saturday. The coffee stop I use the most is Cinnamon in Windsor. They give discount to cyclists and the manager there is a club cyclist himself.

I very much like all the coffee stops which we frequent when we are on the club camping holiday at Potterne Wick. Likewise the riding in that area is very good.

I'm not at all keen on the Royal Oak. The food is hit and miss but normally poor and I will generally only have a coffee or a beer there.

But going full circle now and I'm going back to cycling and aviation. So my favourite is Redhill Aerodrome. The food is good, the prices are fair as pilots are too mean to pay too much! The reason it's my favourite is because to use the toilet facilities you have to walk through the hangar to get to them. I get to see some interesting aircraft in various states of repair and chat to the engineers about what they're doing!

# My 80/80 Ride

*For full information on the '80 miles in a day at 80 years of age' project, see the section on the Pedal Club web site.*



## 5<sup>th</sup> September'25

My significant birthday was on the 7<sup>th</sup> August and I was keen to get my ride done before I got any older.

With the weather for the 5<sup>th</sup> September seeming favourable and the forecast for the following week looking doubtful, it was a case of seizing the day. I did have offers of help which I would have liked to take up, but none for the day with the right weather and suitable conditions were certainly necessary.

It was always my plan to use an out and back route, if possible with a tailwind home. A gentle west or south-west wind would be OK for a westerly route like the Bath Road from Theale (near Reading) which would give me 30 miles of wide and well surfaced road, running roughly parallel to the M4 which takes the bulk of the traffic. The road west from Theale was a classic time trial course, so there had to be something good about it and at my pace I hoped 'speed' would translate to easy progress, so this route became my favoured choice.

On the day I didn't manage to get going until after ten o'clock but, once in the saddle, things went smoothly. The traffic was a bit heavier than I'd hoped and a jungle of traffic lights before Newbury didn't help. Newbury to Hungerford went well, although the wind (about 8mph from the S.W.) was a noticeable hindrance, but I had allowed for that with a planned cafe stop in Hungerford on the basis that I shouldn't overdo things early on in the day.

From Hungerford the road is easy..... until the Savernake forest. The ancient 100 mile TT course described the far west turn as being at 'Savernake Gate' and it soon became clear why that spot was chosen. At this point my over-experienced legs had been pushing into the wind for nearly 30 miles and were complaining that they could do with a bit of back wheel to follow; the climb to Forest Hill (above Marlborough) required the use of some low gears.

Through Marlborough the road continues to rise and fall and it is exposed to the wind. Stopping at the top of a climb just west of Fyfield to check the map, a small doubt crept into my mind: was I sure I would get back to Theale in daylight? I had intended to turn at the village of Cherhill which would have given me just over 40 miles, but this is at the bottom of a fair descent (about 200 feet/ 70 metres) and I had failed to check if I could get any refreshments there. Not feeling especially vigorous, I decided to turn right at Beckhampton and go to Avebury where I knew I would find a cafe. It meant I would be a bit short on distance but, at the worst, I could always make it up by doing multiple laps of Theale high street.

Avebury provided a good rest and a photo opportunity with a megalith. Refreshed and back on the road with the promised tailwind, I had a surprising chance encounter near Silbury Hill with Tony Cosstick (who is a clubmate in both the Pedal Club and the Hounslow). He was driving past, but recognised me – we stopped and chatted so, by good luck, I had a reliable witness for my ride.

The wind was now helpful, but I had little power in my legs. Immediately after Marlborough there is the big climb (about 200 feet) back into the forest which required my lowest gear and a slow pace; I stopped at the top for a couple of minutes. However, I was now fully committed to riding back to the car – I had a descent in front of me, very little climbing left and a good tail wind; of course I could do it.

By this stage, with that wind, I could bowl along at 17 – 18mph on the flat, but my legs did not want to climb anything except on the 32 ring. I had a final stop at the Halfway Inn before Newbury. The last few miles were not comfortable but they weren't all that slow. I did an extra leg to Ufton Nervet shortly before reaching the Pangbourne roundabout in order to make up the distance and arrived back at the car with my odometer showing 80 miles 1 furlong (that's 200 metres to younger people).

One surprising point was that I didn't seem to need to eat much – yes, I did feel a bit weak, but I think that was more lack of fitness than fuel. During the ride I ate two smallish fruit scones (Hungerford) and a fair sized piece of bread pudding (Avebury), plus most of a bottle of sweetened coffee and a pint of cola (Halfway Inn). I didn't even feel all that hungry when I got home, but I did need alcohol!

Inevitably, this account of my own ride is mostly about me, but it is important to say that this whole project is not really about the individual riders, it's about the potential of the bicycle, which can allow even elderly people to cover big distances without powered assistance.

### **For the technically minded**

My bike, not modern or special. Built recently by me on an excellent Mick Gray frame (753 tubing) made for Peter Horsnell (Chelmer CC), probably in the nineteen eighties. I used a good pair of 32 spoked 700s with 28 mm tyres. Perhaps most significant, my gearing was 45/32 at the front with a 14-22 five block: this might sound limited or unusual by modern standards, but I found it perfectly adequate for my purpose.

Chris Lovibond,

September 2025.

### Footnote



We have one new entry for the register - Rod Brooks, Warrington RC, who tells me he read about the 80/80 project on the Hounslow web site - so that's quite encouraging for the HDW.

# My Machine

## A Bike for my Ninth Decade



Longstanding HDW members will be aware that I've been around for quite a long time, and while I've made concessions to age in the actual riding that I do, I haven't yet altered my bikes very much. It would be foolish to think that this can go on indefinitely and 2025 has seen the assembly of another machine which I hope will be suitable for an eighty year old. Obviously, Chris being Chris there was never any question of going to a shop to see what they had in the way of suitable new bikes, so here is my alternative path.

### Frame

I acquired the frame at a modest price. It's in fairly good condition although the paint really needs redoing, but I'm not bothered about appearances - I just want this bike to ride.

It was built by Mick Gray, an Essex character with a reputation for big mileages and with some success as a racing man. It was made for Peter Horsnell (Chelmer CC) a well known time triallist who continued racing into old age. If he's still alive, he would now be 95; the East Anglian Times reported that he was 'preparing for another season at the age of 90' and that was in 2020.

I have other frames I could have used for this project, but this one came along and it is 753 tubing. When I was doing a bit of not very successful road racing, I fancied a new 753 frame - I painted a few of them for Clive Bonavia, and I imagined that it would give me a little help (although looking back now, I don't think it would have made the slightest difference). I never did get one on the grounds that if it got damaged in a crash, it could not be repaired, at least not with 753 tubing. This might sound like meanness but it was a feeble attempt to be responsible; I had two small children at the time, so really it was irresponsible to race at all. In the end I did have a new frame, built by our then clubmate Kevin Juggins - it's a very nice frame built with Columbus tubing and silver soldered, but I never did a decent ride on it. I think that was my fault and nothing to do with the bike. Anyway, this may explain why, when offered a 753 frame now, I took it.

### **Gearing**

You probably won't be surprised to hear that this is the main difference of this bike compared with my other machines. My current bottom gears on various other bikes are around 45", but this one has a 32 inner ring. At the moment I'm still managing with the 45", but looking to the future, if I can still ride, a lower gear may be necessary - I think the 32 should keep me going for a few more years at least. Currently I'm using a five block ('cassette' for new readers) with a 22 bottom sprocket giving a 39" gear, but there's plenty of scope to reduce this as necessary

My short arm Campag record mech is just about adequate in the chain tension department to deal with my requirements, especially bearing in mind that I don't expect ever to use the inner ring with the top sprocket.

Cranks, as fitted, are 165mm. Until recently I thought that 170s suited me best, but now I'm having doubts. I have a feeling that, for me at least, 165s combined with a low enough gear may be better for climbing. It seems to me that the shorter cranks reduce the 'dead' part of the arc at top and bottom dead centre. I'm not convinced about this, we'll have to see how it turns out in practice, but so far the theory seems correct.

### **General**

I know the cabling could be neater but since it all works well I may not bother to change it. Tyres are currently 28mm which is as big as I'm prepared to go to follow modern fashion. Without spares and pump it weighs 21 pounds, which is light by my standards.

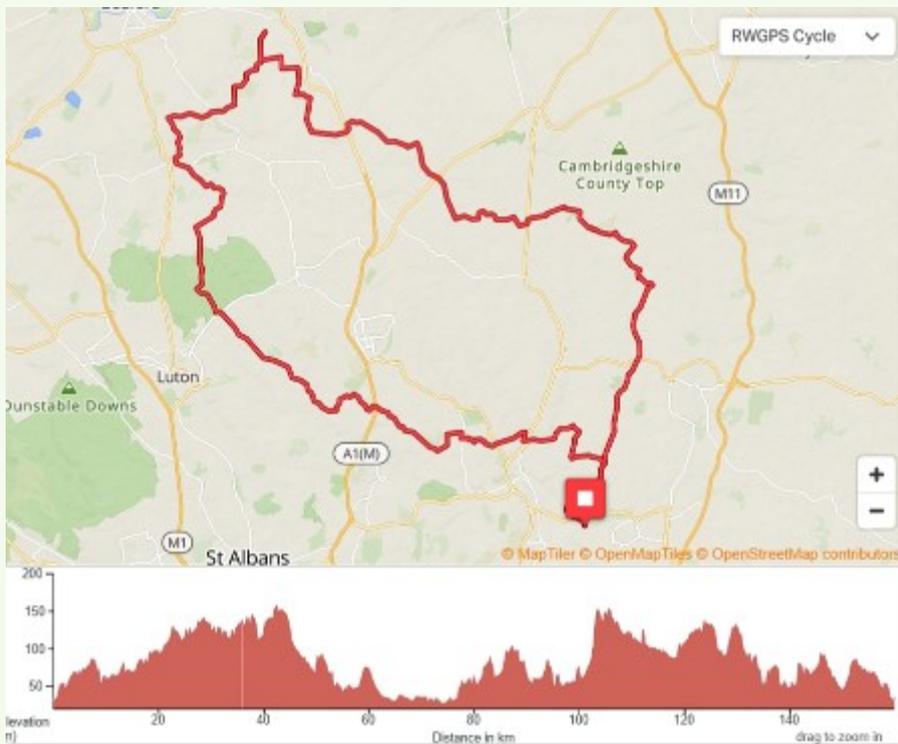
If I'm lucky enough to be able to go on riding for a bit longer, I think this machine should see me out.

Chris.

January 2026.

# A Hard Day in January

## The Route



The 2025 Hard Day took place on Saturday, 18th.

This event has existed, at first informally, since 2009 and commemorates a ride Chris Lovidbond did in 1959. It is intended as a fixed gear / single-speed mid-winter ride and has had a thread on the lfgss forum since the beginning.

After the brutal lumps of the 2024 ride, this ride aimed for flatter and flowing fixed group work. Again it extended past the 90 miles.

Starting in Roydon for a loop meant that they reached quieter lanes very quickly.



*“Everyone arrived on hot bikes, shared the work up front, watched out for each other, helped with the two punctures, and were super strong. Saturday was really cold and I think that made it all the more satisfying, it’s what gives it that extra bump into Hard so as to meet agreed advertising standards to do a 99 mile loop at pace on sweet fixies in January.*

*Everyone wheeled-up and rode fast, the misty visibility probably helping concentration since it was hard to see much beyond 1km, but the trees and undulating snake roads were great. The route integrated some of the TNRC Roydon and Welwym Garden City loops – verifiable classics for a reason. Only one notable climb which was pretty straightforward and we had a long downhill sorta section as a reward. I had a grim final 25 miles which I can only explain with useless excuses, but was very happy on the day and working hard to help us get to the café in good nick. Brilliant riding everyone. Seriously, mega thank you.”*

*(Extracts from the lfgss forum: youramericanlover aka Yal)*

## Most Meritorious Ride

Chris Lovibond

I won't attempt a full report - it's difficult to see much from a following car, even if you succeed in finding the whole route and I was, at best, only moderately successful in that task.

However I can report that JMG412 was awarded the Meritorious Ride Trophy. After doing a lot of work at the front early on, he survived a bad patch and then recovered well to ride strongly in the closing miles. Picture below shows YAL presenting the trophy to him.



There were ten riders, nine fixed and one single free. Gears ranged between 64" and 77"

Average speed: a little over 16 mph for the 99 miles

Older HDW members will remember early season training rides like this. However I think only two of last Saturday's riders are likely to race this year, whereas the HDW riders in the past all intended to race.



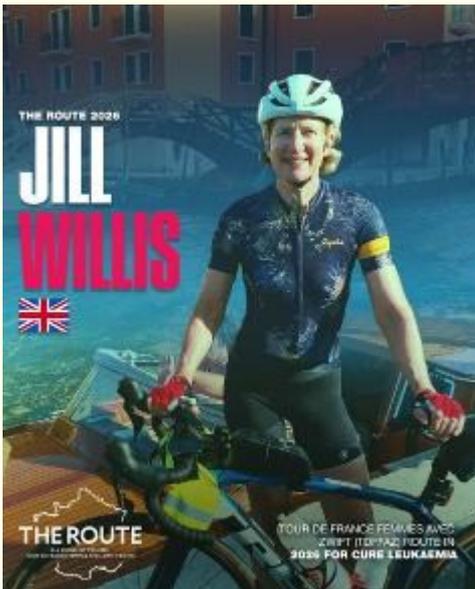
# The Route, Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift In aid of Cure Leukaemia

## Jill Willis

In July 2026 I will be taking part in a huge challenge.

I will be riding The Route, which means cycling every stage of the Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift, one day ahead of the professionals, alongside a team of female amateur cyclists. Over 9 days, we'll cover more than 700 miles (1175 km). But this is nothing like the challenge that anyone with blood cancer has.

My husband, Andrew, passed away in October 2024. He battled diffuse large B Cell Lymphoma for 2 and a half years. He had many cutting edge treatments including genetically modifying his cells in Car T Cell therapy. As part of this, some of his cells remain at John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford and he asked for them to be used in research. Andrew specifically wanted to help others as part of his journey and so we are working with The Institute of Cancer Research and their Centre for Cancer Drug Discovery, who have been designing and discovering drugs that knock out the activity of BCL-6 (B cell lymphoma). Even within the last month, a new drug combination has been discovered to help patients combat this disease.



Cure Leukaemia helps blood cancer patients to access pioneering drug and transplant treatments by funding a network of specialist research nurses across the UK. Without these nurses, to ensure patients are monitored and cared for, clinical trials of these new treatments would not run and patients, that have exhausted standard treatment options, would miss out on potentially lifesaving therapies. Every penny raised for Cure Leukaemia helps save lives and also hastens global progress towards the eradication of all forms of blood cancer.

Although Andrew passed away from Lymphoma, it's still blood cancer and all are included in the charity, Cure Leukaemia. The charity was set up by Geoff Thomas, ex footballer who still has Leukaemia, and was a guest speaker at our club dinner about 20 years ago.

Some club members have already donated for which I'd like to say thank you.

However, It's not always about donating money direct. I am selling a lot of Andrew's things on eBay, Marketplace, Sell my books and Vinted - all funds will go directly in to the fund. Others may want to sell something to raise money rather than feel they have to find cash.

I have to raise 10k in addition to the 4k I have paid to enter, so have to think of very innovative ways to raise money! This includes looking for famous athletes who would give their time for 'an evening with.....' where I charge to attend in order to raise money, also cafe, restaurants or cycle shops who would be prepared to add a nominal charge to each bill for Cure Leukaemia. I am also looking for raffle prizes, so if you can offer anything to help, from a voucher for something in your business that you offer (a massage or beauty treatment with proceeds going to Cure Leukaemia, for example) or a bottle of wine or maybe an unwanted Christmas present! Plenty of social media coverage for your business, too.'

## Tour de France Femmes avec Zwift

*Spanning 1175 kilometres, the biggest Tour de France Femmes ever, featuring a staggering 18795 metres of elevation, the event is set to be the toughest yet, culminating in an unmissable mountain stage finish on the mythical Mont Ventoux.*

*For the third year running, the event will start outside of France with a three-day Grand Départ in Switzerland, before twisting through France and finishing on the spectacular Côte d'Azur in Nice.*

### 'The Route' Stage-by-Stage

Stage 1	Fri	31-Jul	Lausanne – Lausanne	137km
Stage 2	Sat	01-Aug	Aigle – Geneve	149km
Stage 3	Sun	02-Aug	Geneve – Poligny	157km
Stage 4	Mon	03-Aug	Gevrey Chambertin – Dijon	21km
Stage 5	Tue	04-Aug	Macon – Belleville en Beaujolais	140km
Stage 6	Wed	05-Aug	Montbrison – Tournon sur Rhone	153km
Stage 7	Thu	06-Aug	La Voulte sur Rhone -Mont Ventoux	144km
Stage 8	Fri	07-Aug	Sisteron – Nice	175km
Stage 9	Sat	08-Aug	Nice	99km

### Company Sponsorship

Ultimately, I would like to find a big company sponsor who would like to have their name on the tour bus or team cycle kit (this includes the same event for the men's tour, which Tony Costick did, so exposure for 6 weeks altogether) or sponsor a stage for lots of social media coverage for the involved organization, of course.

All sponsorship is supported by the Sponsorship team at Cure Leukaemia. So if I find anything of interest they will step in to sort out the details!



Left: QR code for Jill's JustGiving page

**GET IN TOUCH**

**ALEX SMITH**  
HEAD OF SPONSORSHIP

07734 857510  
alex@cureleukaemia.co.uk

## Is Progress, Progress?

There is a belief that innovations are necessarily improvements and this is particularly true of technical changes in the bike game. However, just as in economic life, new technology tends to increase inequality, so in cycle sport new developments tend to detract from the riders themselves. The use of radios is an obvious example: in the past a winner could claim credit for using his own knowledge and ability to read the race, whereas now he has usually followed the instructions of his DS.

In terms of equipment most assume that if a new bit of kit works better than its predecessor, then it must be good for the sport. Leaving aside the question of cost, the most famous example of the opposite view is Henri Desgrange's refusal to allow the use of dérailleurs in 'his' Tour de France, which he maintained until he fell ill after the 1936 edition. His argument was that the race should be 'man against man' and that complex new equipment would confuse the issue, so making the race itself less interesting.

It is impossible to deny that there was at least a grain of truth in this idea, even though it was doomed not to outlast Desgrange himself. The following paragraph is taken from Raymond Huttier's 'Le Cyclisme', published in French in 1947 (my translation). It gives an insight into the practice of pre-dérailleur racing:

*"In the past, when it was necessary to make a choice of a single gear which had to serve at the same time for the flat, the hills (up as well as down), tarmac, cobbles, wind, accelerations and the final sprint....it can easily be understood that the business demanded deep thought. It often happened that some of the great champions, such as Henri Pelissier and Girardengo, would delay making a decision until the very last moment, coming to the start line with a handful of sprockets. Only after a final inspection of the sky and test on the wind strength would they fit the desired gear. I've seen this done many times. In this way these master roadmen give themselves the best chance of success and what's more, strike a theatrical blow against the morale of their adversaries.*

*It has often happened that the evening before mountain stages of the Tour de France experienced riders would publicly tell their mechanics what gear to put on for the next day then secretly, in the shelter of their bedroom and away from prying eyes, put on a completely different set of sprockets. The bike would then spend the night at the foot of their bed.*

*This trick of the trade would wrong foot the lesser men, those whose knowledge of their metier was imperfect or those, let us say, not clever enough to find the best gear for themselves."*

Desgrange was criticised for being a stubborn dinosaur, but did his management damage the popularity of the event? This photo shows Antonin Magne (the leading French hope) reaching the top of the Tourmalet in the 1936 tour – he is about to dismount to turn his wheel to get a bigger gear for the descent. Just look at the crowd and think how difficult it must have been then to reach that bleak summit. Note that many have arrived by bike, but it's the enthusiasm of the crowd which is striking. While there's no suggestion that variable gears killed the sport, it's obvious that there was an abundance of passion without them.



**Antonin Magne reaching the top of the Tourmalet during the 1936 tour**

The following is a rough translation of the words within the caption of the photograph: -

*'Certainly, the sporting crowd were not mean with their cheers and encouragement for the Belgian, Sylvere Maes who had given a great demonstration of his courage and worth.*

*However, the heart of this Gascon crowd was beating, above all, for Antonin Magne. The courageous Antonin, left to himself, without aid or support, but whose will had proved to be unbreakable. Here he is at the summit of the Tourmalet, which he has just climbed, and he is being welcomed with enormous and affectionate enthusiasm by thousands of spectators clinging to the steep mountainside; he even has to restrain the excesses of over enthusiastic zeal. But, at the bottom of his heart, he must find a soothing balm for his suffering in the unanimous tenderness which surrounds him.*

*Antonin has unclipped his left foot and is about to get off his bike to change gear. Behind him, in white, can be seen Jacques Goddet, the race director.'*

The question now must be that as more and more tech takes cycling further away from the activity we know and love, can the sport retain its relevance and survive?

Chris Lovibond, January 2026.

# ROGGO'S RAMBLINGS

Roger Sewell



It should be made clear that this article has not been done with the help of AI (artificial intelligence) but, unsurprisingly, with LI (limited intelligence!). It also contains graphic details of medical conditions and, rather than Roggo's Ramblings should be called "Slowing Sewell's Sad and Sorry Saga".

Significant mileages and dates during 2025:-

41 - January 2nd. First ride of the new year on single free wheel bike with mudguards to favourite cafe, 'Ollies at Unique', just this side of Spalding. Fruit scone, jam and small pot of tea £5.65.

2721 - March 31st. Total to the end of March so looking good!

44 - April 1st. (no it's not a joke), nasty pains in stomach, ambulance called and duly delivered at King's Lynn's Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Very quickly hooked up to various intravenous drips as, apparently gall stone had blocked the bile duct resulting in (those of you of a nervous disposition read no further), acute pancreatitis, double pneumonia, pulmonary thrombosis, sepsis and possible heart damage. April became the worst month of my life with only a few light hearted moments, such as, the moment they started to give me oxygen and put the mask over my nose and mouth was the exact time dinner was served! Several times this occurred as if by magic! Arrived home 18.00 hours May 1st but a sorry sight and weighing just 8 stone 7 pounds. Walking frame issued by the hospital as I could hardly walk (luckily I never had to use it) and on May 19th a pre-op assessment and chat with anaesthetist. His optimistic schedule for operation was for late June early July so better get fit. 24th May first walk down the road about half a mile, it could be a slow process!

June 3rd I had meeting with Mr. Zach my surgeon who dashed my hopes of an early operation by announcing that it would be probably September before my body could take the stress of surgery and that they couldn't wait too long as it all might flare up again!

Walking mileages increased although still rather unsteady on feet and a tentative try on turbo. "Come on lad!!"

4 - June 18th. Could I balance properly? Yes, easier than walking but slow average speed 10.8 mph! Funnily enough I managed to puncture!!

12 - June 19th. A bit further and seemingly easy but speed only 13.4 mph.

26 - June 20th. Gentle potter 13 mph to local cafe.

30 - June 21st. 13.7 mph for 30 mile ride.

35 - June 22nd. To Ollies and they were so pleased to see me I didn't have to pay!! Also weight up to 9 st 6 lbs.

80 - July 3rd. Birthday mile per year done over two rides, 45 in the morning and 35 in evening. Why 80? I miscalculated and did 2 miles too many.

47 - July 10th. First ride averaging 15 mph

10 - "Stuff it!" Decided to take my health in my own hands and rode Norwich A.B.C. 10 miler (6th. September) - rather tentative to start with but finished with 26-42. Very pleased, also did the King's Lynn C.C. event two weeks later, 27-16 on a harder course and windier day. Third race ruined by Storm Amy - race cancelled

6,000 - Achieved by September 30th.

3407 - Distance ridden since meeting with surgeon and October 9th, day for operation!

Bad news, after preparation for five days (5 special baths/showers and two injections) our 05.30 rising and 1 3/4 hour wait in arrivals, Mr Zach informed us that there were no beds available in the H.D.U. (high dependency unit) and that being on blood thinners I would have to be closely monitored. Home we go! Now re-scheduled for 23rd.

DONE!! Now road to recovery begins (again). I have to say the treatment was first rate and the doctors and nurses were wonderful. Food was rather a let down, Pam used to bring a flask of gravy for some of the meals - so dry! My only other gripe was the fact that no monitoring of my condition was made, as someone who is generally fitter than many 78 year olds it was clear (to me) that I would get fitter quicker. Fact that I was doing 200+ miles week was largely ignored by staff.

0 - The total I can do before 6 weeks is up and I can start riding again.

FOR SALE: One used (but reasonably fast 54-24 and 400,000 miles ridden) gall bladder complete with 4 gall stones. Any reasonably excessive offer accepted!

That's it folks, I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a safe and happy cycling in 2026.



Footnote:

Roger added later that exactly five weeks from his op he managed to get back on the bike, he said that he only completed 13 miles and it was very hard work, but a start!

## Summer Camp 2026

Saddleback Lane, Potterne Wick,  
(nr Devizes) SN10 5QT.

**Come and join the fun!**

Family and friends welcome!

**Sunday, 16th to Wednesday, 2nd September**

Further info: Martyn Roach  
07779 718228



## The Shimanami Kaido cycle route: linking the main island of Honchu to Shikoku, the smallest of the 4 main islands.

By Dave Howe

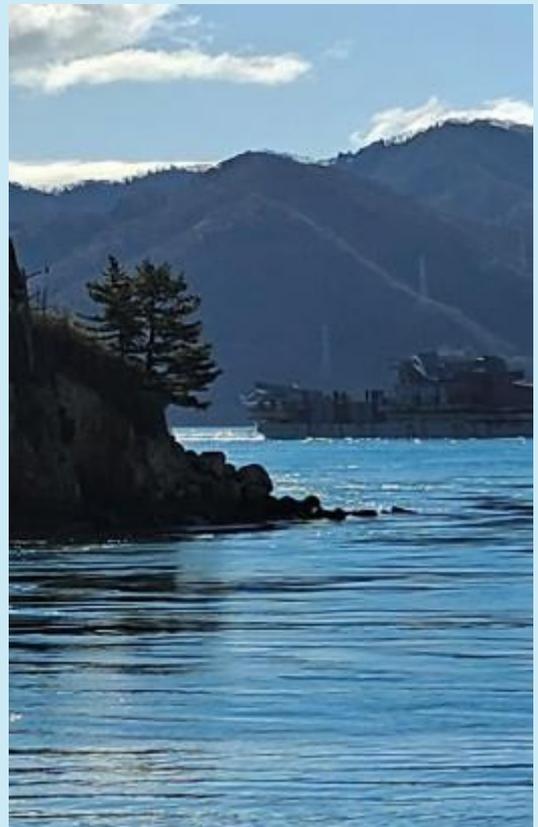


Japan is a long way to travel for a bike ride, but if you ever find yourself near Hiroshima or Osaka, don't miss the chance to cycle the Shimanami Kaido. It's not a demanding route for a club cyclist -most people can complete it on one of the hundreds of basic bikes available from the dozen or so rental shops along the way.

What the ride lacks in technical difficulty it more than makes up for in beauty and variety: a string of largely unspoiled islands linked by elegant, high-tech bridges, with sweeping sea views, quiet shrines, engaging museums, and warm Japanese hospitality.

The Nishiseto Expressway spans 6 of the Geiyo Islands: bridging the Seto Inland Sea between mainland Honshu and Shikoku Island. The route features fifty-five bridges, among them the Kurashima Kaikyō Bridge, the world's longest series of suspension bridges, and the Tataru Bridge, the world's fourth-longest cable-stayed bridge. Opened on 1 May 1999, the expressway runs 59.4 kilometres (36.9 miles) and comprises of four lanes with links between the islands, touching down on the hilltops and leaving much of the landscape untouched, whilst bringing very little extra traffic to the islands themselves. The expressway also provides separated paths, linking the islands, for pedestrians and cyclists.

Calling it merely a "path for pedestrians and cyclists" undersells the experience. Once you descend to sea level from the bridges you can explore multiple island routes or simply follow the blue-painted line that marks the most direct course - about 70 km end to end.



We travelled by train from Hiroshima and stayed the night at the Cycle Hotel in Onomichi, a short walk from the cycle rental store at the railway station. The hotel is an old dockside warehouse which now contains high-quality bedrooms and a very good restaurant, definitely recommended.

As it was 22<sup>nd</sup> December we were outside peak season and it was very quick and easy to hire bikes and helmets. December is generally a dry month in Japan, and the temperature was a comfortable 10 to 12 degrees with winter sunshine.



The recommended way to begin is by taking the ferry from outside the rental shop across to Mukaishima Island and then following the blue line. From that point, we cycled along the island's west coast until we passed beneath the Innoshima Bridge, wondering, "How on earth are we supposed to get up there?"



A little further on we found the access ramp, and everything suddenly made sense: a gentle, traffic-free 3% incline leading up to a dedicated cycle and pedestrian deck beneath the main carriageway. The same impressive standard of engineering was repeated on all the major bridge approaches.

Although 70 km would make for an easy day's ride, we decided to explore a few of the islands along the way, extending the route and turning the trip into an overnight adventure. Our first stop was at the beautiful Munimal Café on Omishima Island where we had a tasty Japanese curry for a late lunch.



We then continued, hurrying on to the ferry port for a visit to the small island of Okunoshima (aka 'Rabbit Island') - just north of Omishima. We had to wait an hour for the ferry and were starting to get concerned about reaching our accommodation by nightfall.



This small island was once a secret military base developing chemical and biological weapons during WWII and was omitted from most maps. Today it is uninhabited except for the hundreds of rabbits that have taken over the island and continue to multiply. These remarkably tame creatures are now a major tourist draw.

We're not accustomed to cycle touring in mid-winter and, after catching the return ferry to Omishima we realised that sunset was approaching even more quickly than we had anticipated, our accommodation was on the far side of the island and we had no lights. The ride to the port of Miyaura was..... memorable. For the last few miles we could barely see the road, but we eventually reached our hotel: a traditional ryokan with futons laid out on tatami mats and communal bathing facilities. It was all part of the Japanese experience—and made for a very comfortable night.



The next morning we visited the Oyamazumi Shrine and its treasury. Set within a grove of ancient camphor trees, the shrine has long been dedicated to the god of the sea and to the samurai. Its treasure museum holds the largest collection of samurai armour in Japan. It was customary for victorious samurai to donate their armour here after major battles. We had the museum entirely to ourselves, one of the perks of staying nearby and arriving by 9:30 a.m.

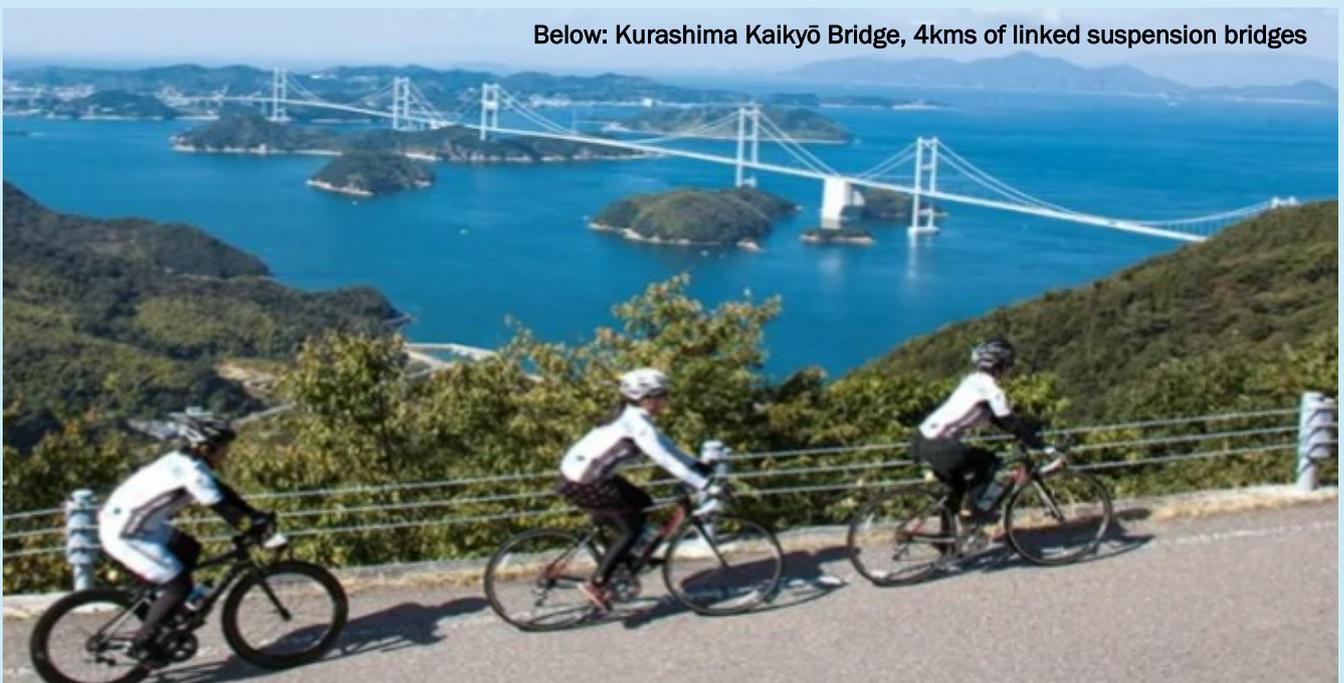


We then continued, bridge by bridge, toward our final destination: Imabari City railway station. Each bridge has its own distinctive design, adding yet another layer of interest to the journey. The final crossing, the Kurushima Kaikyō Bridge, consists of three linked suspension bridges spanning a total of 4 km. It could be a tough ride on a cold, windy day, but we were blessed with still, sunny weather and could fully enjoy the views.

As we approached Imabari we briefly lost the blue line—likely due to resurfacing works—but we soon spotted the railway tracks and followed them straight to the station. There we returned our hire bikes and caught the bus back to Onomichi along the expressway itself.



Below: Kurushima Kaikyō Bridge, 4kms of linked suspension bridges



## A Pile-up on The Tuesday Ride:

Chris Evans, Simon Phipps and Andrew Horsfall recount the events

### That Pothole Issue

Chris Evans joined the regular Tuesday ride on Jul 1<sup>st</sup>, and the only thing to worry about was that it was going to be 33C. Ironically the council had closed the beginning of the normal route to fix potholes, so the group of 5 took a detour on an unfamiliar road. They'd just completed a gentle climb of Chobham Common and had just started freewheeling down the other side when Simon Phipps hit a series of potholes, which led to him falling suddenly to the right, leaving Chris with nowhere to go, and his fall brought Andrew down too. Chris landed on Simon's bike and ended up with 16 fractures across shoulder, collar bone, ribs and pelvis, and both lungs slightly collapsed. The heat came into play too because waiting for the ambulance entailed lying on black tarmac under the noon sun.

Chris was taken to St Peter's hospital where the fact that he had virtually no scratches on his body meant there was no rush to deal with him. When they finally got round to X-raying him things started happening rather faster, and he was transferred to the major trauma ward at St George's in Tooting, where he stayed for 17 days in total, including a 4.5 hour operation to reconstruct his shoulder and collar bone which, according to the surgeon, looked like they'd been hit with a sledge hammer.

Chris was fortunate in the excellent care at St Georges and being rapidly supplied by his daughter with an iPad and noise-cancelling headphones (particularly useful in the hospital at night). Consequently, for the first time since he was a lad, he could watch every ball of 2 great test matches, plus the Lions tour of Australia and the Tour de France (though the crashes made him wince!).



## Accident = An unforeseen event resulting in injury, loss, damage ... and paperwork

Tuesday morning began in the usual way, a cup of tea and a weather check. With the Fabulosos Big Band concert in Byfleet coming up the following day, I had various musical preparations to sort out later on. I was particularly looking forward to the concert because our barbershop quartet, The Bum Notes, had a brand-new rock & roll number ready to unveil. Chris Evans, Dave Howe and I make up three-quarters of the group, and we'd been practising enthusiastically. We even had some dance moves and very complicated footwork. This alone should have been taken as a warning sign.

It was a lovely sunny morning and Dave, Chris, Andrew, Antonio and I met at Homewood. Word reached us that Stonehill Road was closed so we diverted over Chobham Common. All was very pleasant. By the time we reached Staple Hill, Dave was leading and I was trying hard, as usual to keep up. Chris, Andrew and Antonio were behind me pretending the hill was no problem. My front wheel hit a pothole. Instantly the bike felt like it had a flat tyre and swerved across the road. I tried to stay upright and gracefully coast to a halt with dignity, but almost immediately hit something else and went down.

I heard Chris shout a word not found in the Cycling UK code of conduct. Interesting fact – all the letters in the word apart from the 'F' are found in Cycling UK. Chris crashed into me and performed an impressive cartwheel over my body. Andrew came next, announcing his arrival with a yell and, unable to avoid the oncoming carnage, hit one of the bikes on the road with his front wheel, and performed a spectacular somersault, landing on the front of his helmet, then sliding to a halt using the left side of his face to brake along the road.

At this point we had unintentionally recreated a low-budget re-enactment of the 2021 Tour de France, Stage 1 crash but without the helicopters.



Once I had confirmed that we were all still alive, the main concern was the chance of a car finishing us off, so we stopped the traffic. Andrew was dazed but up and walking and his head was covered in blood. Chris was lying in the road moaning about his shoulder. Given that Chris has been constantly moaning about his shoulder since his last accident a few months ago, I assumed this was business as usual and he'd soon be up and about.

I called for an ambulance, which proved more complicated than expected. The operator wanted our exact location and asked for a What3Words reference. I had the app but no internet signal, which led to several minutes of me trying to explain what part of the Northern Hemisphere Chobham Common was on. Eventually this was resolved.

The ambulance arrived and concentrated on Chris and Andrew. I had acquired a particularly nasty open wound on my hand (pictured) but I heroically declined treatment so the professionals could focus on the others' injuries that were more convincing. Chris was still making lots of noise about his shoulder.

While the medics did their stuff at the scene, I made a few admin calls for Chris and also to sort out a deputy player to replace him playing sax at the next day's concert. I found someone to do it and it is worth mentioning that she is much better looking than Chris. Someone asked on the Whatsapp group for help to transport bikes and Simon Graham came down straight away offering assistance – thanks very much.

Chris and Andrew were taken to St Peter's Hospital, and the ride was officially abandoned. Dave and I cycled home then both drove to the hospital to see what we could do to help. Andrew was patched up and released the same day. I was half-expecting Chris to be released with a 'light bruising' diagnosis and then we could take him home. Sadly, it turned out to be more serious and he was transferred to St George's for specialist treatment.

When I visited Chris in hospital a few days later, it was like walking onto the set of a Carry On film. He was lying in bed surrounded by attractive nurses, gripping them with heroic tales of bravery and endurance. It probably helped that he was the only patient in the ward without dementia. When they discovered I'd also been involved in the accident, they expressed great concern for my injuries. I showed them my slowly healing hand wound. They gasped in horror and asked if they should fetch the surgeon immediately. Selflessly, I declined as they were probably in the middle of doing an operation or saving a life or something similar and I didn't like to make a fuss. Chris, lying in bed, unable to move much, sixteen broken bones and covered in bandages didn't show much concern for me at all. Some people are just 'me, me, me' don't you think?

I won't go into detail about Chris and Andrew's recovery as that is their story to tell. Cycling UK were contacted and they agreed to represent us all in a claim against the council due to the pothole causing the accident. I have found their solicitors to be very good so far and the claim is ongoing.

Learning points:-

- Cycling can be dangerous
- Accidents happen
- Potholes are patient, malicious, and always waiting – someone should look into them.

Ride safe.

Simon

It is also worth adding that the canny and experienced Dave H riding on the front, successfully negotiated the road defects and the equally canny Antonio remained some distance behind the group and therefore wasn't able to enjoy or witness the spectacle at all, until he caught up with the three of us, sprawled across the road.

I don't think there's any need for the graphic mugshot taken at St Peter's but perhaps a much less graphic X-Ray attached showing my broken little finger.

By way of an update on the three insurance claims, Simon and I have both been advised that our respective claims will no longer be pursued by Cycling UK's legal counsel as the two cases are assessed as "less than 51% likely to succeed". Chris's claim remains ongoing.

Andrew



# If you go down to the woods.....

(A tale of highway thuggery)



Rubus Fruticosus (alias Drawblud Bramble)

Come.....draw a little closer whilst I whisper to you a story of two highwaymen: Stinger Nettle and Drawblud Bramble, whom I discovered are of a time-honoured fraternity, taking delight in spreading themselves about woodland paths, intent on any exposed flesh within their grasp.

At the time of plotting a partly off-road cycling route, for one of Noel Richardson's monthly rides earlier in the year, I encountered none of these er.... gentlemen of the byways. Yet later, when rainfall and warmth had strengthened the resolve of the no longer baffled bees as they hovered over newly opened buds, I rode, ever exploring and fell into the trap set by our highway men who held me to ransom. I was left with only minor scuffs and scratches - but strangely was showered with table condiments? I took my leave and luckily arrived home before nightfall (God only knows why Stinger and Drawblud needed the battery but not the bike lamp).



Messrs Nettle and Bramble have since been apprehended and have appeared at the Elmbridge Assizes, charged with 'a salt and battery'. They will only be released from prison when they have seen the light.

The group cycle ride is yet to take place, cancellation being not only due to illnesses and bad weather, but also to my fear of re-encountering and perhaps being eaten by 'you know who'.

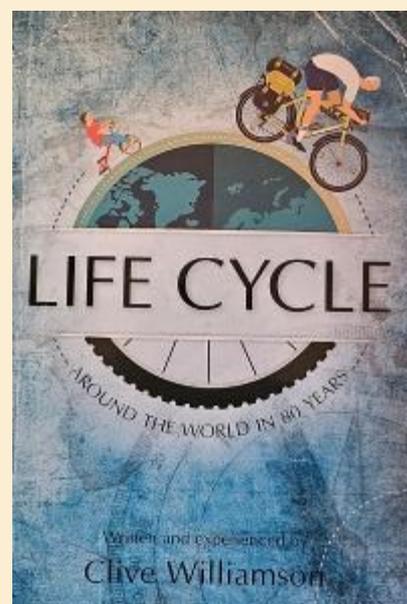
*Richard B. Callum (of the cycling group)*

## From His Book: Life Cycle: Around the World in 80 years



### Armenia

**Adventurer, Clive Williamson** recounts his adventures in Armenia. An interesting recollection of a country trying to re-establish itself following its decision to leave the Soviet Union and not join the Russian Federation.



On the arrival of each New Year the same question presented itself: where shall I go for my annual tour this year? In the year 2000 the choice more or less fell in my lap. One of my friends, Seta, is an Armenian classical pianist, and although she was born in Istanbul and had never lived in Armenia, she had visited often and had told me many stories of her family, particularly of terrible experiences during the Armenian genocide in 1915. This year when she returned from a concert engagement in Yerevan, the capital, I chatted to her about the possibility of a cycle tour. She had a friend, Roy, another pianist, who had returned from America to live in retirement in Yerevan, and he would be available to act as my guide until I left the city.

#### YEREVAN

Roy met me at the airport and saw me comfortably installed at the Hotel Armenia in the centre of the city. The Armenia History Museum lay opposite the hotel with a fine display of documents and artefacts recording the very disturbed history of the country, now much diminished from its former glory. A large map on one wall showed the extent of the old boundaries of Greater Armenia, which included much of what is now Eastern Anatolia in Turkey and, much to the chagrin of the Armenians, Mount Ararat. Ararat, with its biblical connection, is regarded in semi-mystical reverence by Armenians. Lying as it does just inside the Turkish border and clearly visible from Yerevan, it's almost as if Turkey is sticking up a rude finger at its former enemy.

The next morning Roy drove me to Etchmiadzin, the Christian heart of Armenia. Armenia converted to Christianity in the year 301, thus becoming the first Christian nation, building a Cathedral at Etchmiadzin as its primary seat of worship. The Cathedral has been restored and developed over the centuries and contains many historical artefacts, some of questionable authenticity, dating back to Christ's crucifixion! A fascinating insight into the early history of the Christian Church.

Roy was well connected at Government level and that evening we met two Government ministers over drinks. The minister for Social Services, Razmik Martirosyan, seemingly had very little to do - he had no money to spend! Corruption was a problem at that time and during my trip I came across many instances where embezzled funds could have been put to good use. They asked me to report on my trip when I returned to Yerevan, which I duly did - in censored form. I did not think in my position, as a guest in their country, to report the unvarnished truth.

At the crack of dawn next morning Roy guided me in his car up the climb out of the city in the direction of Lake Sevan, arranging to meet me on my return. So I set off to confront whatever the fates had in store for me with my sturdy Orbit bike beneath me, what proved to be an indifferent map of Armenia, a helpful but in many ways deficient dictionary and a highly trained pair of legs. No guide books in those days, but the staff at the Armenian History Museum had been very helpful. Now steeped in Armenian culture and history, I felt in Armenia 'mode' for the journey ahead.

## LAKE SEVAN

I lost no time in leaving the highway, dropping down to Nor Hachn and picking up the valley road alongside the river Hrazdan. The sight of a foreign cyclist must have inspired the lady at the roadside stall where I stopped for a drink. She burst into an almost word perfect rendition of 'Oh my Darling Clementine' - several verses in fact. Unfortunately, apart from the song, she could not speak a word of English, but we managed somehow! I am perfectly sure that the lady did not understand a word of the song she had learnt as a child. Why 'Darling Clementine'? Reflecting on it though, I think maybe she did understand the word 'darling'!

Map deficiencies guided me back to the main highway where I stayed until I found myself on the shores of Lake Sevan and registered for the night at the lakeside campsite.

The number of hotels and restaurants in the Lake Sevan region belied its current importance as a tourist centre. They were all closed! In former years Lake Sevan must have been a great attraction for tourists from the Soviet Union. No longer. Such a region should have been crawling with tourists and yet, here I was, the only tourist in sight. At the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, former satellite members of the Union were given the opportunity to join the Russian Federation. Armenia voted against, thus losing the majority of its foreign markets and, in the process, its foreign tourists. Everywhere idle cranes lay alongside half-finished buildings. The Armenians paid a heavy price for their freedom.



I was a pretty popular guy as a rare tourist!

Also with virtually no traffic on the road and a reasonably good road surface it was perfect for a cycle tour. I spent a relaxing day by the lake and visiting the ninth century Sevanavank Monastery which was positioned on a peninsula in the lake. The peninsula was formerly an island until the lake was drained by hydro-electric and irrigation schemes. Afterwards I enjoyed a superb Armenian meal of local fish - cooked especially for me as the only visitor. However, while visiting the monastery I had to leave my bike outside and unfortunately, experienced the first of several thefts of food from my pannier. It was understandable; many people distanced from Yerevan were literally starving! During the trip, I learned to stock up with food as often as I could. I was sympathetic to the plight of the people I came in contact with, but I still needed energy to get me through each day of hard cycling. But I emphasise, nothing other than food was ever taken. I stayed that night at the only hotel on that side of the lake at Covag'uch, which seemed to be a haven for weekend trippers from Yerevan.

## DILIJAN

Anticipating a hard climb the next day over the Sevan Pass to Dilijan, which rises to 2114m, I was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was. Lake Sevan lies at 1900m and indeed the whole of Armenia is at an altitude with only ten percent of the country below 1000m. Having climbed the pass, I was blessed with a long beautiful descent through Dilijan Nature Reserve into Dilijan itself. Enquiries at a bus stop guided me up a lane behind, where a hotel had been indicated. Pushing my bike up the steep incline I was caught by two students from the neighbouring college. Lilit and Sophy spoke reasonable English, this being part of their commercial course and, since their college campus was adjacent to the hotel, they introduced me to their tutor and some of their fellow

students. They were then deputed by their tutor to act as my guide and interpreter for the morning, a task they undertook with great relish and enthusiasm - with no objections from me either. The chalets were pretty run down and the sagging mattress didn't help my slumbers that night. The girls negotiated the terms of my residence and the menu for my evening meal - which I had to pay for in advance. The money was needed to buy the food they were going to cook for me!



*Lilit (left) and Sophy in their college grounds*

I needed provisions too for my journey the next day, so we went down to the market in town to stock up and also, with the girls help, to telephone both home and Roy, who had asked me to keep in touch. Surprisingly, in spite of the poverty and famine they were living through, the girls needed a lot of persuasion to accept the gift of food I bought them at the market. Don't take food from strangers, even though you and your family are starving? Apart from the fun we had, it was very interesting to get to know some young Armenians and to learn something of their lives. Lilit particularly had family problems. At that time her father was still alive, but was more or less bed-ridden, and her elder sister needed constant care after brain surgery in her early teens. Her mother, an engineer, was out of work but in any event, was needed at home.

After my return, I was able to give a little help to Lilit with her education. She is clearly a clever girl and she made the most of the opportunity. We are still very much in touch, indeed she visited my wife and I some years ago.

## **ROAD TO CHAMBARAK**

Dilijan, Armenia's major spa town, lies in the heart of the beautiful Dilijan National Park, with its wooded hills and diverse wildlife, and is one of the country's major attractions. In retrospect, I wish I had spent at least one more day there - there was much to see. But I was eager to keep on the move, so the next morning I set off along the Aghstev Valley towards the Lower Caucasus Mountains. Fortunately, my route turned south before the mountains began to bite but there were still plenty of hills with difficult gradients to tackle; particularly if visiting a monastery, which mostly seemed to be built in the most inaccessible places.

*Horse rider who followed me all along the Aghstev Valley*



My present target was the thirteenth century Goshavank Monastery. Built on the site of an old monastery destroyed by an earthquake, its most unique attraction was the Khachkar, a beautifully decorated stone carving of the Armenia cross - stone originally carved in 1291. Goshavank lies in a magnificent location surrounded by wooded mountains and with a view down the valley. The monastery has been restored in recent years but seemed little visited when I was there.

The climb to the village of Gosh defeated my legs and I was joined in pushing my bike by a small boy who lent a 'helping hand'. He was quickly joined by others, including a little girl about three years of age, who was enthusiastically pushing at the back as though her life depended on it.

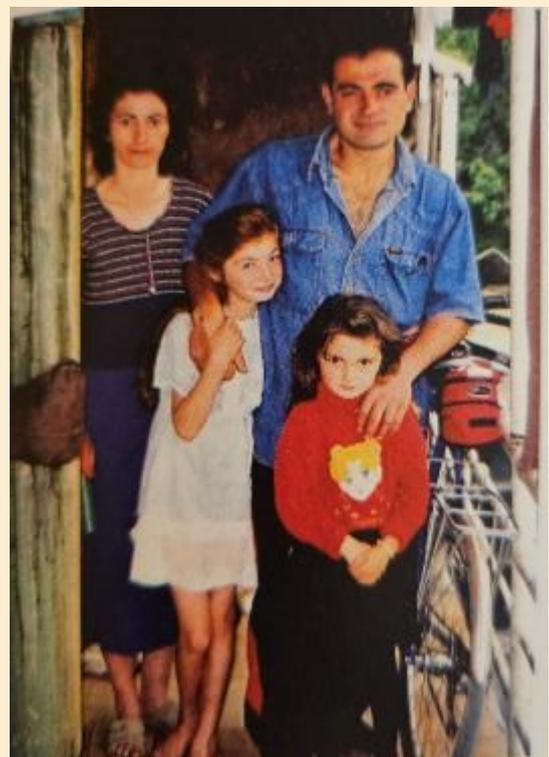
After returning to the valley road, I stopped for a picnic lunch only to discover that others had had the same thought - but with my picnic. As a solo traveller it is impossible to keep the bike under observation all the time. With a long way to go still, and with dwindling food reserves, I decided to skip lunch that day. Not that it did me a lot of good. I was targeting Chambarak for the night as I had been told there was a hotel there. A short way after restarting, a man carrying a child seemed to appear from nowhere into my path. He was talking excitedly and pointing to the child. His gestures clearly indicated he wanted food for the child. It was not a situation you could ignore. The child was undernourished and in need of a lot more than I was able to provide. I now continued with the bare minimum I thought I needed to get to Chambarak. The road along this section was flat and one feature of the region is the clear and, particularly for a thirsty cyclist, sweet tasting water flowing from any number of springs in the hillsides.

I stopped to fill my water bottle at one such spring in the settlement of Gekend, which had a standpipe to supply the whole village. I was invited in for coffee by a local family. They lived in a tiny house with only one room, but were so proud to be entertaining a foreigner. In this instance, as in many others during my trip, I was a guest not a tourist. The family, a couple with one child, lived together in that one room, eating, sleeping, cooking and just relaxing. Sustainable in summertime but in the winter? The local Chief of Police got wind of my presence and had to come and see for himself. He showed me the utmost courtesy and was at great pains to inform me of my journey ahead, So - what was I to do when I returned to my bike, which I had leaned against the wall of the house, to find that every vestige of my remaining food had been stolen - this within ten metres of where the Police Chief had been sitting! Was he complicit? Would he lift a finger to help when all the people under his protection were starving? I decided possibly in the first instance and definite no in the second.

### **CHAMBARAK**

So off I went on my way, with a hilly 40 km ahead and no food to get me there. Would my crossed fingers be enough? Well I did manage to get to Chambarak, only to find the hotel had closed several years earlier. The nearest 'possible' hotel was in Vardenis - some 100 km hence.

It was definitely quandary time with dusk approaching, no food and nowhere to stay. I did, however, have a sleeping bag with me and I approached a couple who were standing on the side of the road, in front of their house, asking if there was somewhere I could settle down for the night. They immediately invited me in, offering me a couch bed in their main dining-sitting room. The couple had four children under the age of nine, with the youngest still a tiny baby, clearly the apple of his father's eye. They lived with the father's elderly parents, a cow and a few chickens. They had no money since no one in the family had work, but were virtually self-sufficient in food from the produce of their livestock. The father, as the considered bread winner, was totally demoralised by his position and by the poverty in which they lived. The mother, under enormous stress for similar reasons, looked careworn and old before her time. Yet there was so much love and affection binding that family together. And from that environment they took in a total stranger, a foreigner who could not speak their language, and then took the utmost pride in extending their hospitality to the limits of their ability.



*The family in Chambarak who sheltered me for the night*

That evening, not having eaten since breakfast I could have done justice to a large T-bone steak with a mountain of potatoes and a couple of beers on the side. Instead I ate at the normal Armenian village subsistence level. Our meal consisted of a small amount of cheese made from their own milk and apricots from the tree in the garden, which were in season. No stomach filling bread or vegetables. After a comfortable night's sleep, I sat down to breakfast with exactly the same fare as the previous evening. I left some money for their pains and to ease their lives for a short while, but the future for that family was pretty bleak. Leaving Chambarak I had to surmount the nearby Karmir Pass at 2176m before dropping down again to the eastern side of Lake Sevan. Here I was lucky. There was a small grocery store on the junction with the lakeside road, where I managed to stock up with provisions for the day. Choice was limited to biscuits and choc bars were going to give me sufficient energy for the day's ride.

### **ALONGSIDE LAKE SEVAN**

Vardenis was about 80km distant, lying on the southernmost point of the lake, but here conditions were much different. The road surface was bumpy, to say the least and got worse the further round the lake I went. But the worst enemy for a cyclist that day was the wind. The southerly prevailing wind got stronger as the temperature got higher and it sped unhindered across the lake, and with no shelter of any kind the ride turned into the unrelenting slog known to many experienced cyclists. A few lakeside villages gave temporary respite and also, on one occasion, the chance to replenish supplies. I remember in one such village I had stopped to try and find a village store and possibly accommodation. I was approached by a young girl who asked to help and offered to introduce me to her English teacher. In retrospect, I wish I had taken her up on her offer because I'm sure it would have been an interesting encounter. But the striking thing about the girl was the gold tooth in the middle of her mouth. I had noticed on earlier trips in Eastern Europe that gold teeth had some kind of social caché, which transposed in the eye of the observer into a thing of beauty. Beautiful it was not, in this young girl. It destroyed her youthful beauty entirely - for me that is. No doubt she felt it enhanced her chances with the young lads of the village.

### **VARDENIS**

Arriving at Vardenis I found, quelle surprise, the hotel was closed, but there was a rumour of a YMCA in the town which I eventually tracked down. It was closed! It seemed that I was going to spend the night in the open and I was eyeing the park opposite the YMCA with this in mind, when a lady standing nearby indicated that I should wait - somebody was coming. They did - two hours later. The lady waited with me, urging me to continue waiting as I made moves to go. Eventually Kamo and his assistant Razmik arrived in their vehicle and settled me into the one room still habitable. Although the hostel was officially closed, they still had YMCA duties to perform. Later we all went out to dinner at the one decent restaurant in town, almost certainly previously patronised by Communist officials. Conversation was difficult because neither spoke English but we had a superb Armenian meal, which was followed by a visit to Kamo's apartment to meet his wife, an English teacher and small son. Comparison with the family in Chambarak was inevitable. Employment by an overseas organisation provided a level of prosperity unimaginable in Chambarak. The little boy had toys strewn all over the apartment, but I don't recall seeing a single toy possessed by the four little ones in Chambarak.

### **MARTUNI**

My intention for the completion of my trip was to continue round the lake as far as Martuni and then turn westwards over the Selim Pass (2410 metres) to Areni, returning to Yerevan along the Aras Valley. But I was dissuaded from making the attempt, both by an upset stomach and by strong discouragement from Kamo and Razmik. The road gradient is apparently very steep and the surface little more than exposed rock. Therefore, I decided to complete the circuit of Lake Sevan and return to Yerevan by my outward route. With the wind now behind me, the ride to Martuni was easy and finally I found a hotel that was open. If you are the only tourist in town, having arrived by bicycle, which almost certainly is the only bicycle in town, then there is a tendency to stick out from the populace like a sore thumb. I quickly became the centre of attention and was, to some extent, taken

over by a bystander, Benik who spoke some English. Such was my rarity value, I was invited to appear on local TV where I was questioned about my experiences a cycle tourist in Armenia. This was very early days for local TV and I think the producer was thankful he had found something to produce! It seems that, as a foreigner, I must automatically be a multi-millionaire, and I have many investment opportunities offered to me. One, I remember, was a man who had a hairdressing salon in his village outside Martuni. He had plans to open hairdressing salons all over Armenia, provided of course I came up with the cash.

### **GAVAR**

Gavar was my next stopover, and here I decided to stay a couple of nights. I booked into the usual ex-communist high rise concrete block, masquerading as a hotel. Again a local English speaker, Grigor, quickly fastened on to me with many offers of guiding and introducing. Grigor had worked as a taxi driver in Beirut and consequently spoke excellent English and also was more worldly wise. He was an amusing companion, and introduced me to many of his friends who told me horror stories of the war against Azerbaijan in the early 1990s. War dissolves all vestiges of humanity as we are witnessing today in the Middle East. Grigor decided my 'ex-commy' hotel was not good enough for a rare overseas visitor, so he introduced me to a small and very charming boutique hotel, clearly established for the benefit of former senior communist officials. Here, the cuisine was several rungs higher than I had previously encountered and Grigor and I enjoyed a superb dinner washed down with excellent Armenian wine. Much more expensive than the other hotel, but still modest by Western standards at the time.

### **ABOVYAN**

I took my leave of Grigor the following morning and set off in the direction of Yerevan. The heat was intense and I was in no hurry to exert myself. With a following wind and little traffic, it was a pleasant lakeside ride, with occasional stops for refreshment. I stopped on one occasion for a drink at a café, deserted apart from the young couple running it. The girl brought me my coke and sat down immediately in front of me, looking intently at me. She was beautiful and it was clear what she was offering. I glanced across at her husband on the other side of the café looking rather miserable. Poverty, the desperate need for survival, changes everything. Although my childhood was relatively modest, I have never experienced poverty and I have no idea how I would behave in such circumstances. Perhaps if I had been younger than my sixty-nine years, I might have felt inclined to help relieve their squalor!

The time to leave the lake had now come and I decided to try and stay the night at Abovyan rather than continue into the centre of Yerevan. I was guided to a hotel from the edge of town by a very helpful police car. On registering I was given a two litre plastic bottle of water and effectively told - 'that's your lot'. The hotel had no running water in the rooms and the supply to the hotel was severely rationed. A gymnast would have no problem having a shower with less than two litres of water (I had to keep some back for other ablutions!). The contortions required for such an exercise, without spilling any, would be easy for them, but at my age, it was a different matter. But needs must as they say, and I managed.

The hotel had no restaurant and I was informed none were open near the hotel, so the floor assistant offered to go and buy food from a store and put together a meal for me. She was a very friendly lady and, with no lock on the door she wandered in and out of my room at will, and even when I had turned in for the night, she came and sat on my bed for a chat. But she had dirty fingernails. As a matter of principle, I never go to bed with a women who has dirty fingernails!

### **GEGHARD MONASTERY**

The drop into Yerevan went quickly the next day and I met up with Roy again to recount my adventures. Lilet had strongly recommended that I visit the Geghard monastery in the mountains not far from Yerevan, so I decided to become a normal tourist for a day and booked with a travel company for the following day. The Geghard monastery was originally founded in the fourth century, almost from the moment Armenia adopted Christianity and established the Armenian Apostolic

Orthodox Church. Originally it housed a broken spear (hence Geghard) claimed to have been involved in Christ's crucifixion, now transferred to Etchmiadzin for protection. Armenia had always been surrounded by Muslim nations with Azerbaijan to the east, Iran to the south, Turkey to the west and with its only Christian neighbour, Georgia to the north. This has meant conflict virtually throughout its history, with Christian monasteries a prime target. Geghard was no exception to this scenario, in spite of the remoteness of its location.

*Geghard monastery*



After major destruction in the thirteenth century, two new churches were carved out of the rock on the mountainside. Tradition has it that construction of one was started high on the mountainside and built from the top downwards in order to prevent discovery. Modern day access is easier of course. The acoustics were demonstrated while I was there by a priest singing a chant. Perfect resonance. The location is superb, lying as it does at the side of the Azat river gorge with mountains towering all around the complex. Its isolation has been provided by strict control of development and access, and its status as a world heritage site. Definitely one of my wonders of the world.

## **YEREVAN**

My final evening was enjoyed in the company of Roy and his two ministerial friends over drinks. They were quite optimistic about Armenia's future, although admitting to its current parlous state. Since independence in 1991, Armenian politics had suffered extremes of political conflict, with a strong-arm President attempting to set up a police state and finally being ousted by a, more or less, democratic process. Not for long however - an armed invasion of the parliamentary building resulted in the most senior ministers of the new government being killed, and the rest held hostage. This, not long before my visit. The problem had been the emergence of nationalism, fuelled by the situation in Ngorno-Karabakh - far too complex to go into detail here.

But on a more recent visit to the country I found their optimism was justified. Armenian nationalism survives, even amongst Armenians who have become part of the worldwide diaspora. Armenia is their homeland, even if they may be second or third generation residents of their adopted country. Hence, much investment has been directed into the country, particularly in the IT industry. Agriculture and IT seem to have replaced the manufacturing economic base of the Soviet era. Yerevan has been transformed, with fountains, monuments, restaurants, boutiques - all the elements of a modern, bustling capital city.

On the flight home I was accompanied by a large group of Canadian-Armenian teenagers, all chattering excitedly in their native Armenian tongue! The world is Armenia's oyster.

# Kirkpatrick C2C

Stranraer to Eyemouth, Monday, 2nd June 2025

## The group:

1. Jeff Marshall
2. John Marshall
3. Martin Brown
4. Dave Howe
5. Patsy Howe
6. John Mathieson
7. John Ruskin\*

8. Peter Bennington
9. Andrew Horsfall\*
10. Linda Williams
11. Jill Willis\*
12. Franka Glisson\*
13. John Glisson \*
14. Graham Davis

Bike Van: John Marshall, Martin Brown, Jeff Marshall & 8 bikes

Bus: Graham, Dave, Peter, Patsy, Linda, Math.

Mon 2<sup>nd</sup> June. Travel to Stranraer

\* making their own way to Stranraer

## Recounted by Dave, Patsy and Jeff

A striking interactive sculpture of the world's first pedal bicycle (Kirkpatrick MacMillan's Velocipede) has been installed on the West Pier in Stranraer at the official start point of the Kirkpatrick C2C: South of Scotland's Coast to Coast bicycle route. We took a short ride from our hotel before supper to have a look.....and interact!

Northwest Castle Hotel, Portrodie, Stranraer



## Tue 3rd June. Ride 60.3miles, 3692 ft climbing



### Day 1 Stranraer to Crocketford

Heading out of Stranraer on quiet roads, we passed through farmland and the small towns of Castle Kennedy and New Luce before climbing steadily, the surrounding farmland changing to woods and moors as we approached Artfield and Balmurrie Wind Farms.

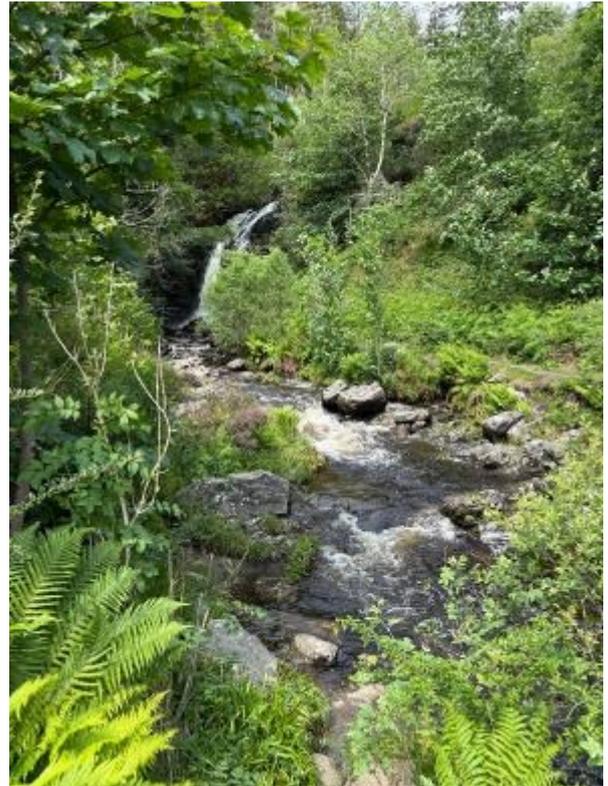


Our first stop was at the Belted Galloway Visitor Centre in Newton Stewart, with bar and restaurant, where we had lunch.

Having learned as much as we will ever need to know about Belted Galloway cows, we pushed on into another steady climb through Galloway Forest Park.

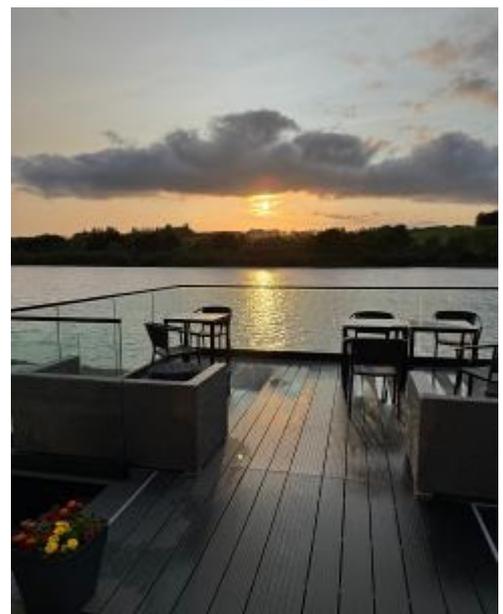
## Mare's Tail Falls

We passed the Mare's Tail waterfall, spotted only by the ever-observant Peter Bennington, who stopped for a photo. We continued upwards to around 700 feet as Clatteringshaws Loch came into view. This was the UK's first designated Dark Sky Park. We certainly saw very little to cause light pollution. The landscape felt wonderfully remote, and with a gentle tailwind and comfortable temperatures, the riding was idyllic.

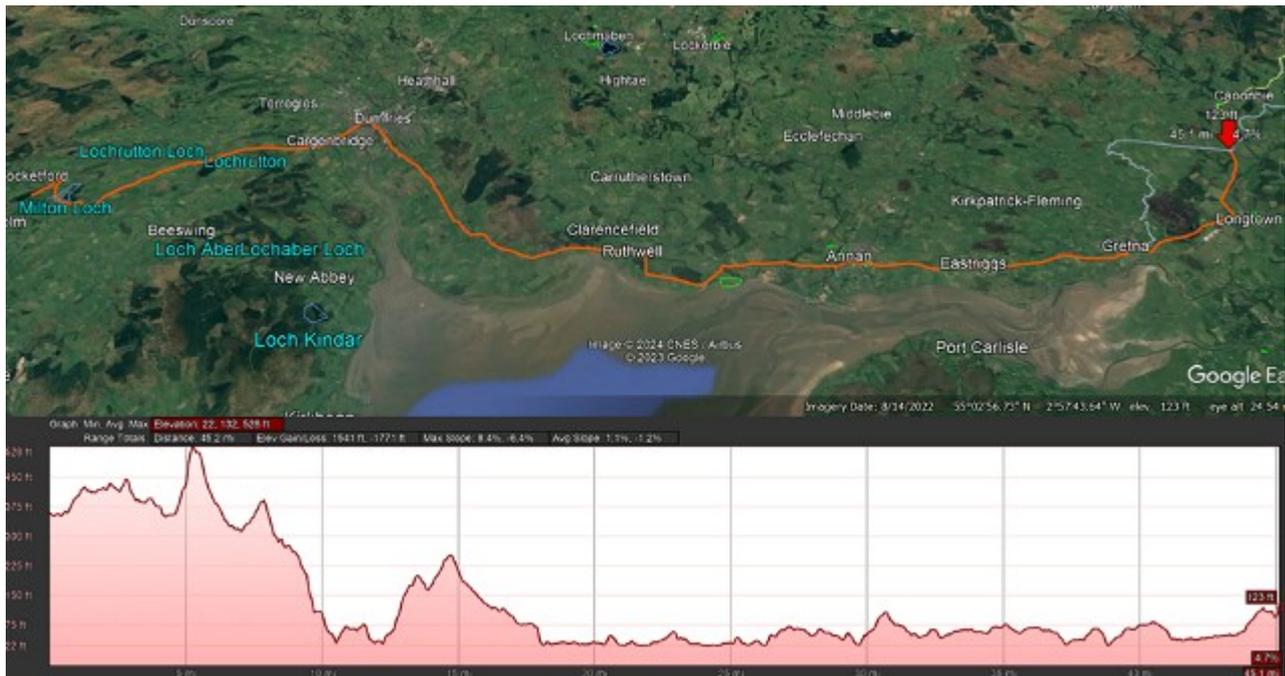


A glorious five-mile descent swept us into New Galloway, where we paused at the CatStrand café before tackling the final stretch to our overnight stop at the Inn on Auchenreoch Loch. The last mile required us to join the A75 — a nasty surprise to encounter a road with other traffic on it!

The Inn on the loch included a variety of well appointed cabins, in a watersports location.



## Wednesday, 4th June: Ride 45.3 miles 1573 ft climbing



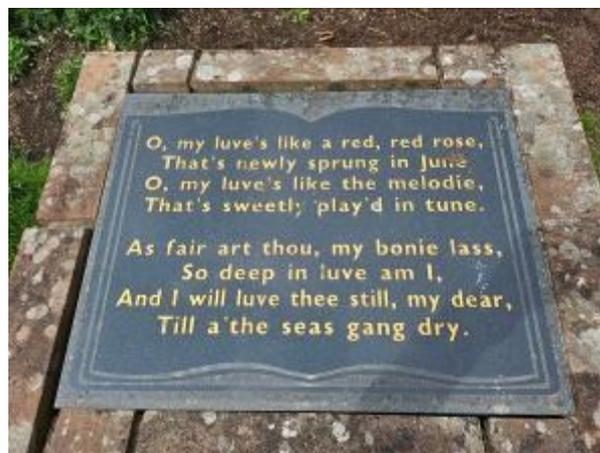
### Day 2 Crocketford to Scotsdike

The day started with us posing for pictures wearing our newly gifted team shirts (many thanks Andrew and David)



### My most vivid memory was of day 2 of this brilliant ride Contributed by Jeff Marshall

We were riding in an easterly direction, with a favourable wind, as we left The Inn on The Loch at Crocketford, for our next hotel at Scotsdike near Longtown. We set out in favourable conditions and soon reached our first café stop at Dumfries, 12 miles from our starting point. Robbie Burns had lived in this small town, his old home now being a museum/tourist attraction. So a few of us did the tour, before continuing towards our next stop at Annan.



As we continued east, roughly parallel with the Solway Firth, off to our right the skies darkened and it turned chillier. We were soon caught in a downpour with nowhere to shelter. I was quickly soaked to the skin as my rain jacket was totally useless.



We arrived at the strangely named **\*Devil's Porridge Museum and café** like drowned rats, shivering and dripping all over their floor/chairs. The ladies serving were completely unfazed by the state we were in however and carried on serving us with wholesome tucker, as though this was a regular occurrence. I suspect that in this part of the world it is!?

The Devils Porridge Museum tells the story of H.M. Factory, Gretna. The greatest munitions factory on earth in World War One, where the 'devils porridge' or cordite, an explosive, was mixed. Thousands of workers, mainly women, did the mixing and it is thought to have helped women get the vote.

My first thought was to get warm and dry. Martin, seeing my predicament, opened up the van and I got in the back and stripped off every bit of kit. Delving into my bag I found a load of dry kit and changed everything. My skin was so wet I had a difficult time getting my dry clothes on. Martin gave me a large Windtex jacket that comfortably went over everything else, so I must have resembled a 'Michelin Man' but at least I was warm and dry. With blue plastic bags inside his shoes my bro' John kept his feet dry inside his wet shoes as we left.



*Ref: Devil's Porridge Museum home website*





When we finally did leave the café the squall of rain had blown over, so we continued on wet roads, east to Gretna, Longtown and finally Scotsdyke and our home for the night, the beautiful Marchbank Country Hotel.

I think it was the nicest place we stayed on this jaunt in lovely extensive landscaped grounds and was family run. They were great hosts and looked after us royally: Including drying our wet kit.

Well done for finding it Dave.

Jeff

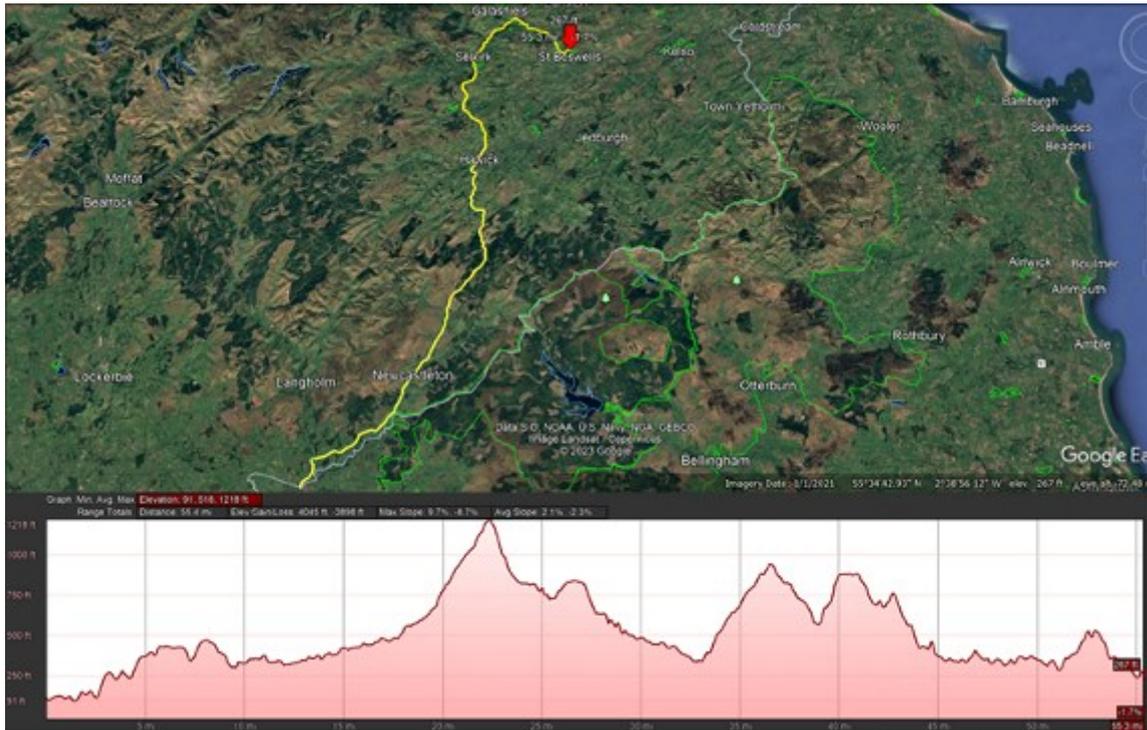


*We arrived a bit before schedule so made ourselves comfortable on the very plentiful comfortable seating in the gardens of the hotel. We didn't have to wait long before making ourselves even more comfortable in the hotel!*

*Martin loved his cabin in the hotel grounds and would have happily remained there for the rest of our trip! (right and bottom right)*



## Thursday, 5th June: Ride 59.6 miles, 4123 ft climbing



### Day 3 Scotsdike to Dryburgh Abbey

Leaving the Marchbank Hotel, we crossed back over the border into Scotland (front page photo) crossed the river Esk at Canonbie, and rode alongside Liddel water to Newcastleton where, after only 12.3 miles, we had an early coffee stop at the Olive Tree café. Setting off again we then turned left to follow hermitage water up into the hills, reaching the highest point of our trip at 1218 feet above the Whitrope railway tunnel.





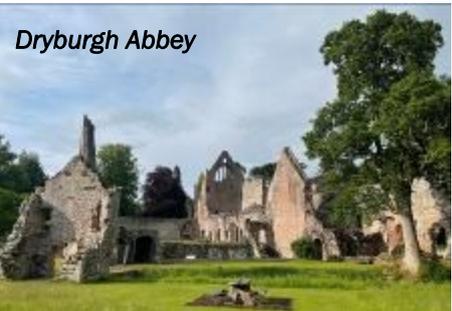
Descending into Hawick we managed to get separated into a few different groups at the entry to the town. (We must have forgotten how to deal with traffic)



The Bourtree Wetherspoons where we planned to stop was just one block off the route, so several rode past without spotting it, and some missed a turning to a pedestrian bridge across the river anyway. Eventually we all found our several ways to the right pub and enjoyed a good lunch.



Onwards from Hawick, the final stage of the day was all on minor roads across farmland until we reached Newtown St Boswells, where a footpath and a suspension bridge brought us into the grounds of the very grand Dryburgh Abbey Hotel.



*Franka and Martin doing an amazing job looking out for everyone*



## Friday, 6<sup>th</sup> June: Ride 54.8 miles, 2934 ft climbing



### Day 4: Dryburgh Abbey to Eyemouth and then on to Berwick on Tweed.



After breakfast we headed through undulating farmland in a general easterly direction, following the River Tweed. We passed through the little hamlets of Clintmains, Millfield, Greatridgehall, Makerstoun, Manorhill, Stodrig and Broadloan before skirting to the north of Kelso. Then on through Ednam, Eccles and into Coldstream where we stopped for coffee. We then continued north-east, through several more small settlements before reaching Ayton, on our approach to Eyemouth.



With a bit of a climb and a final descent into the town on a particularly unpleasant piece of tarmac, we had reached the end of the Kirkpatrick C2C.

Left: Lucy the seal in Eyemouth harbour

Group 'end of Kirkpatrick' photo, Eyemouth



The C2C was complete but it had been decided that, as it was still reasonably early, the ride would continue back across the border to Berwick-upon-Tweed. (I was happy to have finished the Kirkpatrick ride however and, deterred by a long climb out of the town as well as the thought of Martin's amiable company in the van, I opted out of the last 10 miles or so - Patsy)



### The final climb out of Eyemouth

From top left: Andrew, Jeff, The two John M's, Jill and David

Left: John R and Linda



Our accommodation for the night was split between the Queen's Head Hotel and the nearby Premier Inn.

We met up in town at the Magna Tandoori restaurant for supper.....and a few drinks!



Berwick-upon-Tweed is in Northumberland and is 2.5 miles (4km) south of the Anglo-Scottish border: it is the northernmost town in England.

The Old Bridge (below), a 15-span sandstone arch bridge 355 m (1,164 ft) long was built in 1610–1624 for £15,000. The bridge continues to carry road traffic, but in one direction only. The bridge, part of the Great North Road from London to Edinburgh was built by order of James VI and I.



### On the Way Home

*Above: The intrepid Jill setting off for her 75 mile ride to Morpeth  
Left: The minibus taken from the van - bit wet at times!*

*With thanks to everyone for their great photos: The Ed.*

# The Hounslow out and about in 2025



**Next Issue**  
 Will cover 2026  
 Please contact the  
 editor with your  
 contributions or  
 suggestions.  
 It's your magazine!

## Your club Committee

- President**  
Jeff Marshall
- Chairman & Mem Sec**  
Graham Davis
- Secretary**  
Bill Carnaby
- Treasurer**  
Martyn Roach
- Racing Secretary**  
Bruce McMichael
- Captain**  
Jeff Marshall
- Clothing Secretary**  
Linda Williams
- Magazine Editor**  
Patsy Howe
- Press Officer**  
Chris Lovibond
- Website Manager**  
Ian Kirk

