



# THE SQUIRREL

Spring 2012



# From the chair

By Mike McConville

I joined the club in June 2003 and was first elected to the committee in November 2004 as TT secretary. In November 2008 I became chairman.

I have had a great time serving the club and have had an enormous amount of help from a great number of people, far too many to mention at this point, all of which deserve a big thank you.

I have decided after careful reflection that it is time for me to allow someone else to have the role of chair of the club, and so I am not allowing my name to be put forward at the next AGM. It's time for a change.

During my time as chairman the only real re-occurring problem that has concerned me has been that from time to time we forget to show all road users the respect and consideration they deserve. There have been a couple of incidents in the last few weeks, that have caused me to raise an eyebrow or two.

Firstly, there was a large group travelling towards Winsford. The front of the group was a mess; three abreast and all over the road. An experienced rider asked for them to sort themselves out but this was greeted with one of the number up front reacting with a "salute" as if he was addressing a passing motorist with an attitude problem. Not the behaviour I would expect from a member of this club.

Secondly, one group was overtaking another on the way out of Altrincham on Oxford Road. Not much room for a complete group



to pass one another there. The last members of the faster group were just about hanging on, not knowing where they were going and worried about being dropped in Alty. As they turned left at the end of Oxford Road they managed to knock one of the slower group off his bike. The faster group were completely unaware of the mayhem they had created.

We should always remember to show all road users respect but especially our club mates. And it is always the responsibility of the people on the front of the group to ensure that they are travelling in a safe manner and at a speed that all members of their group can cope with; racing out of Alty is simply not on.

These are two examples of where we need to take more care to be respectful to each other and other road users, particularly as we are always welcoming new members to the club. The habits they learn with us should be good habits – and ones they keep for a lifetime...

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## Contents

3	Meet your clubmates	16	The club dinner	26	Llangollen from a lay-by
4	Another milestone for Reg	17	Time trialling back in time	28	All roads lead to Cerrig
5	London calling	19	Cafe corner	30	Javea got any painkillers
9	Walkers & cyclists ding dong	20	Billy no mates?	32	From the Archive
10	Tour de France mountains	23	Racing report	34	Shorts & longs
13	Montgomery 2011	24	Remembering Bob Davies	35	Adios Roberto y Maria
15	Pasadena				

# Meet your clubmates... Karen Popplewell

*Club record-breaker Karen Popplewell reveals all about the secrets of her success: rare steak washed down with lots of red wine, listening to dangerous guitar solos and finding the ideal way to forget any embarrassing moments.*

## When and where were you born?

Leighton Hospital, near Crewe, 1974. 10lb 6oz.

When did you start cycling and what was your first club?

I went on family bike rides around Bradwall as a child and stopped cycling when my bike was stolen at university. I took it up again five years ago, trying to get fit after baby number four. When I'm racing I do occasionally wonder: "What on earth am I doing here? I only wanted to lose a few pounds!" My first club: Seamons.

## What was your first race, and first win?

My first open event was the Altrincham Ravens in March 2011, where I crashed on Twemlow lane! My first win was a couple of weeks later, on the Withington Wheelers 25-mile.

## Which performance do you rate as your best?

Well, I was happy with the 58.43 for 25 miles. But perhaps I'm most pleased about finishing the 12 hour. I was in pain from the outset; first with my knee and then many hours with hot foot! I remember crying a lot at the end. My feet went into buckets of water and I just had to keep telling myself that the pain would eventually go away. I said "never again" – but I think I'll go for it next year.

## What is your favourite meal?

I love breakfast. Curry...or a rare steak with lots of red wine!

## What were you like at school?

A sporty swot that got into bother.

## What kind of books do you read?

Making my way through the BBC Big Read top 100 books, a mix of classics and contem-



*Karen Popplewell is somewhere behind the silverware at the M&DTTA prize presentation*

porary fiction. CTT handbook.

## What kind of music do you enjoy?

Funky house, groovy chill-out, trance on the turbo and dangerous guitar solos.

## And your favourite type of TV programme?

Not much time for TV but I'll sit down and watch a film every now and then. When Harry Met Sally is a favourite – gives me hope that romance may still be out there.

## Which newspaper do you read?

Guardian. Red tops when no one's looking.

## What is your ideal holiday destination?

Anything with mountains and bikes. My weekend in Majorca was heaven.

## Do you have any hobbies?

Single mum of 4. Angry Birds.

## Who would play you in a film of your life?

Nicole Kidman, she's tall...or Miranda, she's tall.

## What is your greatest fear?

My children or family being

# Another milestone for Reg

Founder member Reg Blease celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday in style when friends from the club he helped set up as a teenager gathered in the OMT to mark the occasion.

He followed up his thanks on the night with a letter of appreciation to the committee, printed below:

“Thank you for organising a memorable evening at the OMT – the engraved tankard is the only trophy I’ve got!

“Little did I know as a 16-year-old that 60 years on I’d still be at it (and more to come I hope), sometimes on the same bike.

“I am bursting with pride as an active member of Seamons CC, now bigger and better thanks to the great increase in new members, young and old, both sexes.

“I hope every one of them enjoys club life and cycling with the Seamons as much as I have.

“Many thanks for everything.”

Cheers Reg.



## Meet your clubmates...

hurt. Not being able to go for a pedal – provides sanity in an otherwise hectic life.

**How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts column?**

Trouble.

**What is your favourite training ride?**

Brickworks, Windgather, Derbyshire Bridge, Cat, Wildboardclough...I love the Peak District; I think we should head that way more on club runs.

**What is your most unpleasant characteristic?**

A smidge untidy.

**Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?**

Dishonesty, intolerance and unkindness.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

Oh there have been plenty. Thankfully I've been too drunk to remember them.

**Four words to describe yourself.**

Open. Determined. Busy. Lucky.

# London calling

By Gordon Peake



If you're heading to London for the Olympics or to join in the Queen's Jubilee, taking a bike could be the perfect wind-down to all that excitement.

Touring secretary Gordon Peake likes to travel with his bike, as you'd expect, and here he recounts one of his capital rides.

Off-roading in London is nigh on impossible. In fact I'm surprised off-road bikes sell at all in a city that is 99 per cent tarmac.

However, it was our off-road bikes we chose to get as much "off tarmac" as possible in a day's ride around the capital.

It had been a couple of years since our last adventure, that time around north London. Where did those two years go? We'd promised ourselves then that next time we would head for city centre for our personal "critical mass", and see, feel and hear just how crazy

London cycling really is.

So Steve (my daughter's fella) and I set off from Stoke Newington towards the River Lee whilst the girls went for some retail therapy in Oxford Street.

The River Lee is a bit of a misnomer as it's so built up and canalised it's hard to spot that it's actually a river at all. However it features large in the historical industrial development of Ye Olde London Town. It's not even in an obvious valley as it slips slowly across a flat Hackney Marsh.

The tow path south is a green ribbon past Lee Valley Ice Rink, but in front of us – the Big City. However, first comes the great clearance of Stratford, from which was appearing the "Olympic City".

Passing under a road bridge and quite sud-

## London calling...

denly on the dry side of the tow path, a 12-ft top quality fence appears with another three foot of electrified wires stretching above.

Hardly what you'd find around an ordinary building site. Inside the camp - the competitors' accommodation blocks; the Olympic Village looking very like prison blocks.

A sign of the times? A site gate, well marked with "Private - Authorised Persons Only" signs, proved too inviting for me. Steve's protests were wasted as I led him into the Promised Land.

Within seconds we were bombarded with verbals from a dayglo jacket.

"Where do you think your going?" shouted Bob the builder.

"Apparently no further," I replied.

"Can't you read the signs?"

"Err yes - we ignored them in the name of curiosity." I was digging us a bigger hole - we turned the bikes around and retreated.

"Where are you from?" he asked, now right beside us.

"Manchester - well not by bike, not today - we just wanted a closer look - can you help direct us," I smiled playing the "we dumb country bumpkin card". He quickly calmed down and realised we weren't bolshie southerners (well not me) and he very helpfully reaffirmed our intended route.

Through a maze of hoardings and waterways we found an access to an elevated "greenway" that takes bikers and walkers right across the whole Olympic site. On a small bit of surviving Victorian wall is a blue plaque dedicated to The great Northern Sewer and Elevated Pipe or similar. A plaque to a sewer - what next?

A bit of research later informs me "The Greenway Bridleway" actually runs on top of a huge sewer that carries most of North London's waste to a famous Victorian pump

house. An architectural phenomenon to be enjoyed another day.

So, when you're watching the opening ceremony, think about the thousands of gallons of sewage flowing a hundred yards on the south side of the prestigious arena. That said it's a hugely impressive building site, including its own traffic lights and monolithic stadiums appearing across the panorama. The Red Tower alone is costing £20 million and it's only temporary! Ah remember the rejoicing in July 2005 when we won the bid and just needed £2.43 billion? Well the big boys moved in and its now £9.3 billion after a 38 per cent increase in the last 12 months. The good news is the stadium bit, at £246 million, is finished on time and within budget. Err - which budget do they mean? Almost another rant!

At the Pudding Lane end is a temporary café with a crow's nest viewing area, cleverly built from old lorry containers. If you really want the full tourist bit - guided walking tours up and down the fence (?). There were a couple of hundred "tourists" milling around on this sunny April Saturday morning. The dockland light railway brings and returns the visitors, and creeps past us with NO driver. That's just not right.

I was just about to rant about Olympic ticket issues here but you can insert your own rant. Beyond the disruption of Olympic City we regain the towpath at Three Mills Studio, home of the company that's going to inherit, sorry "manage" all our Olympic investment. That's on top of the £2.6 million of Heritage Lottery money this lovely tidal mill has already had. In fact if you're wondering where all the country's tax goes - just pop down to London.

We carry on the next couple of miles towards the Thames and the Limehouse Basin. I suppose I was expecting a busy dockland with warehouses, Sherlock Holmes, opium dens



*An over-sized grey squirrel on Club Row, in Shoreditch*

and eye-patched seafarers from around the globe quaffing rum and porter in pyjama bottoms, talking to parrots and banging on about the exchange rate of doubloons to the Euro. Apparently the Luftwaffe had shifted all that in the 40s.

Now it's thousands of very expensive water-side, apartments. (Posh for "flats"). Today it was swarming with stick insects having a warm-up jog, prior the London Marathon tomorrow.

Within yards and now following one of Boris's cycle motorways we pass through Shadwell estate. Shadwell Army, famous home of Millwall supporters. What a contrast! And so close.

I've always fancied riding my bike across Tower Bridge. Iconic image of Le Tour in London 2007. Whilst not as scary as it looks, it's still an experience. London traffic is very cycle aware. Not always overtly friendly but

surprisingly tolerant of, or resigned to, assertive two wheelers pushing to the front at every traffic light and moving off before the green light – for reasons you soon learn when on a bike: survival!

As we ventured through the busiest parts of London I realised the biggest hazard wasn't traffic, which rarely goes much faster than yourself, but pedestrians. Usually on mobile phones, completely unaware of anything smaller than cars. They just step out and look surprised as you park your front wheel between their legs. I'm tempting retribution but we did notice it was 90 per cent gender specific. Nuff said!

We picnicked on the grassy knoll between the iconic Town Hall building and Tower Bridge. Celeb spotting proved fruitless, as did trying to find a convenient loo. The capital

## London calling...

just like the rest of the country, seems bereft of decent, cared-for loos. You could cover the whole country in public loos and get change from £9 billion! Insert “Loo rant” here!

No time to waste – We needed to be back before the United-City semi kicked off about 5.30pm. Being close to Wembley wasn’t going to help!

First it was straight through the grounds of Southwark Cathedral. Sacrilege? Hardly. It’s packed full of people sat on the grass eating takeaways from a splendid food market right next door; washed down with a bottle of Bud – Arghhh!

We had a brilliant ride from Waterloo Bridge through Covent Garden, Leicester Square, Ronnie Scott’s, Soho, Oxford Street, Harley Street and a couple of mews to the York Gate entrance to Regent’s Park. There are green-painted cycle lanes but you’re best ignoring them because everything else that moves ignores them!

Drafting a rickshaw we ploughed on through the crowds. Whilst incredibly busy (no recession around here!) with shoppers, revellers and tourists, it’s easy to manoeuvre through it all.

Diverting left and right and down any streets that take your fancy. We stopped to admire the mews we found ourselves in. Two up, two downs on top of a garage. A posh terraced house with no front garden in reality! You can pick one up for about two and a half million quid. I kid you not! The rent on a garage is a salary! The properties exude even greater wealth as you progress north to Regent’s Park – a real millionaires’ spot.

Unusual for London parks but Regent’s Park itself has a cycle ban. You can drive a Porsche through the park (on the roads), but cycling in comparative safety of a park is frowned upon. The signs specified “on the pathways”, so we set off across the grass. Well, we can

only get shouted at – again. Without a hitch we pick up the Regent Canal towpath going east through cages of hyenas and vultures: London Zoo!



The canal is very well used by pedestrians, especially when the sun shines, and it was a beautiful day with all of London’s population out catching the rays. A cycle bell comes in handy and everyone moves over to let you pass without complaint; oncoming cycles keep left, something not always automatic on “off road” tracks (why is that?)

Londoners are used to being in each others’ way; it’s a way of life. They look puzzled when you get eye contact and say hello. Apparently you don’t bother speaking in London. Consuming alcohol outdoors (responsibly or not!) seems to be currently frowned upon, but still ok if your spilling out of expensive bars with a mortgage-priced Pimms. In contrast, the use of “Jamaican Woodbines” is prevalent, open, blatant and tolerated by all. A stream of heady whiffs mixed with fresh coffee, becomes almost constant as we enter Camden Locks. A coffee, paperback read and splif culture pervades. Even the local bobbies stay at a distance and catch the sun on the limited flesh on show. At Camden Lock the towpath has been lost amongst an incredibly busy market that spills right up to the water’s edge. A great spot for a plate full of food from any part of



# Walkers & cyclists ding dong

By Vera Blease

I am a member of Seamons CC and one of the original lady members.

I do not cycle as much now but I am still able to enjoy our beautiful countryside as I am a member of Altrincham Rambling Club. We have a membership of nearly 400, by the way, although we don't all walk at once. I walk twice a week.

What, you may ask, is the point I want to make? Cyclists without bells on their bikes. Walking with a group of people, whether it be on paths, canal towpaths or whatever, we often meet cyclists who want to pass us but give no warning; neither a bell nor a shout. We walkers are very amenable people who will willingly make way for cyclists to pass us if you warn us. You come right up behind us and suddenly you are there; that's the first we know about it.



Why don't you have a bell or use it? Are they not fashionable? It isn't as if there is any weight involved in a bell.

Don't forget; I am one of a family of cyclists so I know that there are poseurs among you. But, come on: a bell!

Let me tell you, this subject has caused many arguments with Reg because he doesn't think it is necessary to have a bell as he always shouts to announce he's there. But put yourself in a walker's shoes (boots).

I do use a bell on the tandem and know how important it is as a warning even though it is on the back handlebars.

I apologise to the minority of you who do have bells. But perhaps those who don't realise now how important it is for the other people using the same path as you.

## London calling...

the world that you fancy. A mass of people just "chillin", "spending" "eating and drinking".

We push our bikes through the middle of the crowds – no complaints – it's what cyclists do in London. Back on the towpath, past the gothic rear end of King's Cross Station and more baby ducks, coots and even swans nesting on artificial floating islands.

At Islington the canal disappears under the bricks and mortar for half a mile without a useable towpath. So up you go, into the town centre. I volunteered for a Twix and Kit Kat shop. I was served by a chap in really stunning purple-coloured traditional Asian dress. "That looks comfy, where does it come from?" I enquired.

In a broad cockney accent he replied: "M & S on the High Street" and fell about laughing.

Waiting outside Steve asked what I'd done to amuse him. "I'm not sure really?" I replied. "Perhaps it was my accent?"

Finding the re-start of the towpath is not straightforward but this bit we knew from previous walks to Islington hostelryes. Down a few Victorian steps and onward east. At the A10 Kingsland Rd we leave the canal and relative tranquillity for a couple a miles of side-street manoeuvring back to Stoke Newington.

In total we'd covered less than 30 mile, but it had filled most of a fascinating day. A chaotic exploration! I have a hankering for more already. A great day "playing out", spoilt only by the United-City result. If I'd known we could have stayed out at least another 90 minutes. Ah well, it was nice to see two **small** teams in the final!

# Tour de France Mountains

By Dave Matthews

*Inspired by the Tour de France and the majesty of the mountains? Dave Matthews returned to the Alps to emulate his heroes.*

2010 marked the centenary of the first visit of the Tour de France to the high mountains. On July 19 1910 Octave Lapize pushed his bike over the Tourmalet to win the 289km stage from Pamiers to Luchon, and eventual Tour victory.

I have been to the Alps with my bike before, travelling with one of the recognised cycling holiday operators on a very enjoyable and reasonably priced trip to and from Geneva. However, the price of these trips seemed to have doubled/tripled in the meantime. As a result I decided to travel using my own car this time, on a two-centre holiday based on the itinerary helpfully posted on the internet by the holiday operators.

The Alpine stages of the Tour were arranged in a horseshoe, with the centre roughly based on Albertville. A quick internet search of French gites found suitable accommodation at Monthion nearby. Amazingly, this gite was booked for every summer week except the Tour – which shows that not everyone in France is as Tour-obsessed as we tend to believe. The gite has a large swimming pool which ensured that my wife would have an enjoyable time swimming and sunbathing whilst I was away at the Tour.

The first stage I visited was from Station Des Rouses to Morzine Avoriaz, which included the 1000m ascent of the Col de la Ramaz. I drove over to the foot of the col at Taninges through Cluses, where I had previously stayed prior to following the Tour on the Col de la Colombiere and subsequently at the Lake Annecy time trial.

From Taninges I descended west for 10km to the pretty village of Mieussy, where the Tour arrived from the east, for one of the first true



*"You are murderers, yes murderers!"  
Octave Lapize takes the Tourmalet in 1910.  
On foot.*

mountain tests of that year's Tour. The heat was intense as I ground up the col in silent, sweaty, groan mode. This was my first col of the year and it was taking some time to get back into my climbing rhythm on these big, hot hills.

One of the key factors in getting up these cols (for those of us not strong enough to carry a large saddlebag) is to find enough food and drink to sustain the effort. Fortunately there is a small hamlet half-way up this col which enabled me to buy a hot dog and lots of water for my bottles. After this welcome feed stop I pressed on to the summit where I could join hundreds of other Tour fans waiting for the riders.

After an hour or so the publicity caravan came through led by a 10ft tall motorised Miguel Indurain in the yellow jersey. This was

followed by an amazing range of giant animals, washing machines, drinks bottles and various other crazy vehicles. The crowds scrapped ferociously for the "tourtat" thrown out from the procession. Fortunately, there was some useful stuff like an up-to-date sports newspaper and various hats to deflect the burning sun.

A convoy of gendarmes on motorcycles follow the publicity caravan to ensure the route is clear for the race. At one point a teenage French lad decided to squirt water from a bottle all over one of the motorcycle cops. With an ace bit of riding the cop quickly reversed into the crowd and gave the lad a massive bollixing whist his colleagues stood around threateningly. Not a good idea and I'm sure that anyone but a French lad would have been thrown in the can and the key dropped down a ravine.

Eventually a group of riders came through, closely followed by Team Sky – all cheered to the echo by the watching crowds. Today's surprise was the late arrival of a bruised Lance Armstrong who had been the victim of several early crashes. He crashed yet again on the next minor col and effectively gave up any chance of being on the podium in Paris that year.

I then followed the Tour route back down to Taninges through some of the biggest traffic jams I have ever seen. These were caused by large tour support lorries travelling up to Morzine whilst everyone else was descending; compounded by spectators cars parked on both sides of the road. I suppose they sorted it out eventually but I was very glad to be weaving my way through the jams on my bike to escape the deadlock.

Following a rest day in Morzine, the Tour followed monster stage over four big climbs culminating in the 25.5km, 1,500m climbing ascent of the 1,993m Col de la Madeleine. I decided to ride this col from Abbeville which allowed a 20k warm-up before the ascent be-

gan.

The weather was even hotter than previously with the temperature climbing to an unhealthy 38C. Fortunately there were various drinks and hot dog vendors in place to meet my energy needs as I ground my way past the crowds up the seemingly endless col.

One of the features of col climbing at the Tour is the "passing the gendarme" game. These worthy officials have strict instructions to ensure that riders dismount and walk up the col. Once you are past the gendarme and out of sight, you then get back on the bike until you meet the next gendarme and repeat the process until you eventually reach the top of the col. Normally I find it irritating to occasionally dismount and then remount as it breaks up the climbing rhythm. On this occasion however I was only too grateful to be told to walk occasionally as it gave me a chance to get a quick breather before continuing the struggle up the col.

Eventually I reached the summit cafes, in time to see on TV that Cadel Evans in the yellow jersey was getting dropped off the back of the Tour contenders. It transpired that Cadel was riding with a fractured elbow so it's no wonder he couldn't follow the pace.

Soon the Tour came over the summit, with Andy Schleck and Alberto Contador closely marking each other. The rest of the riders passed over during the next half hour until finally the sprinter's "autobus" rode over, including Mark Cavendish surrounded by his team mates for protection.

The "autobus" normally marks the last riders but on this occasion there were huge cheers as David Millar followed ten minutes behind, in spite of cracked ribs sustained in an earlier crash. What a hero! And he went on to finish the Tour in spite of his injuries.

Later in the week I rode up the 2,012m Cormet de Roselend which featured in the Tour the year before. There is a beautiful lake at

## Tour de France...

*A wiggle on the Cormet de Roselend*

two-thirds height and wonderful views towards Mont Blanc from the summit. It made a refreshing change to ride a col in peace without the noise and colour surrounding the Tour.

At the weekend we motored 600km to visit my friend's house near St Gaudens at the foot of

the Pyrenees. From here I could ride stage 15 up the Port de Bales 1,755m which has gone into Tour legend as the "Andy Schleck chain jump" col.

This col has a reputation for being hard and steep. However it seemed reasonable to me in comparison with the Col de la Madeleine – probably because the weather was cooler than in the Alps and I was becoming more acclimatised to the cols.

This stage was won in fine style by Thomas Voeckler to the delight of the French fans. I descended the col to Luchon following after the Tour, managing to liberate a yellow direction sign during the descent as a souvenir. The sign was stuffed up the back of my jersey for the remaining 20km ride to collect my car, which caused a few problems as I tried to keep it in place whilst mixing it with the chain gangs heading down the valley to St Gaudens.

Next day the riders followed a very hilly route finishing over the Tourmalet. As I had ridden this col the previous October with Pyractif, I opted to catch the Tour on the Col d'Aspin (1,489m) and then sprint home to watch the Tourmalet ascent on TV. The weather had cooled down well by now and I enjoyed riding up one of the easier cols after the stress and efforts of the previous week.

The showdown stage 17 of the tour crossed



the steep Col de Marie Blanche (1,035m), ascended the north side of the Col du Soulor (1,474m) and then dropped to Luz St Saviour at the foot of the Tourmalet, prior to the mountain top finish on the Tourmalet (2,114m).

My plan was to watch the action at the top of the Col du Soulor but the weather was so wet and misty that I opted to watch the action on TV, rather than shiver in the mountain mists.

As we all know, Schleck was unable to drop Contador on the long ascent of the Tourmalet and Contador went on to become a worthy, if somewhat controversial, overall winner in Paris.

The weather improved next day so I followed the Tour route up the Col du Soulor and then took a right turn to follow the stunning balcony road up the Col d'Aubisque (1,709m). I then descended to Laruns from where I rode a further 30km back to my start point under the Soulor at Asson. This ride is highly recommended as one of the most scenic trips in the Pyrenees.

Once back in UK, my next ride was the mid-week Audax 109k from Marple into the Peak District via the Snake Pass and the gritstone edges. Cold, wet, dull and windy – a great route but roll on the Tour for more hot action on the big cols.

# Montgomery 2011

By Martin Wiggan

Johnny P asked me again: "Will you have a \*shot\* at writing up the Montgomery Weekend?" My reply was \*short\*: "Go on then but for \*good measure\*, I best keep it about the cycling".

I once wrote that the MG weekend was like SAS training on bikes, which was six years ago. These days, I get on the bike for a rest from Holmsey's generosity at the bar.

I have a lot on my mind this time of year – work is usually like the final ten miles' pain of a 50-mile TT in the build-up for Christmas; nothing left in the tank, you just have to keep the speed up and get to the finish line with as little reserve as you can manage. So a three-day "break" for fun with your mates is just what you need. (Isn't it?)

The weather was better than this time last year. No sign of the minus-6 degree temperatures and blanket of snow that we experienced in 2010; in fact it was almost perfect. It was clear and dry and above freezing.

The first day we reverted back to the old favourite of Stiperstones for lunch, but not before we tasted a couple of off-road sections to whet the appetite of the few who like an additional challenge, and who think it's reasonable for people to risk breaking their expensive winter bike on a mountain track. I didn't mind. Riding my Cross bike, and with the handling skills of Robbie McEwen in rush-hour traffic, I enjoyed the challenge. That couldn't be said of a couple of the gang and although it took us a while we did eventually find Karen's dummy and toys.

The tension was broken with what can only be described a poetic justice, (and I am sure his embarrassment had a lot to do with the havoc wreaked and the revenge served in The Crown on the following night). If you know Ian Holmes, then you'll know that he's a shy, retiring kind of chap; one of those whom you have to really nurture in a crowd to get him to

join in? Well, just after we recovered Poppo's dummy, he set off confidently down the hill proclaiming that the girls shouldn't ride be "such wusses". Well, the ensuing topple was justice indeed.

Have you ever seen a cyclist, clipped in, just topple? Ha ha! Well imagine that, on a white winter bike, on a 10% descent on a muddy field, in December – smashing! Girls, you were vindicated almost instantly. Montgomery fun indeed. Ian's response was tremendous. In true Holmsey style, he invited young Jack to earn himself a few quid to wash and iron his muddy kit. Very funny.

The afternoon was cool, rides over Long Mynd, down the glider-club, and home to base in the dark. Interjected with a couple of punctures and a very close shave on the last descent of the day, the day passed off almost uneventfully.

And so to Bala. It was most people's intentions to have a quiet one on Friday so they were ready for Saturday. And so it was, sleep broken only by Mr Mathers' deeming 5am an appropriate time to start video editing the previous day's film.

It was going to be my first ever run there, and I have to say I was a little intimidated, if not anxious about the prospect of it, in the middle of winter. It's an 80-mile round trip. What a great day though, low sun and cold, but not icy. We had a great breakfast in the Dragon (as ever), and mounted up in the car park out back.

Setting off directly towards Welshpool, we were in high spirits. After a good 15 minutes of riding we had our one and only puncture of the day. Watching Keith B putting eight bar back into a mended tyre with consummate ease, I made the mistake of offering to add an extra ten pumps to top it up...Ah bless me, I couldn't manage two. Instead, I made pumping a tyre up look amateurish. I snapped the

## Montgomery...

pump, buckle! Muppet! Apologies to Keith, and some more air into the tyre from my little pump and we were off again.

The climb out of Welshpool was great. I sat on the front, and we kept the pace to a level that all could maintain. And so we were, riding like a well-oiled Seamons family; two abreast. We must have looked a magnificent sight in yellow and blue set against the pale green and grey of the Welsh hills backdrop.

The final climb before Bala was epic. We rode gently, knowing there was a good 6-8km of gentle 7-12% to come. Really lovely scenery but relentless climbing and great pace-setting from Jack and Sean showing us older lot how easy it is to ride up hills (when you're young fit, oh and five stone wet through).

Fuelled by the promise of fish and chips for lunch, we were initially crestfallen to find that we couldn't get them in the cafe selected. That said, the ensuing plate sizes of chips and "whatever" made up for the initial disappointment.

Never have I enjoyed an afternoon on the bike as much as I did that ride back from Bala. As we set off, Mr Bailey reminded how hard it was going to be. I was spooked a little, especially since it had started to rain lightly.

As we swept up the first hillock and over into the first valley the rain halted, I was reminded just how close to the heavens you can feel riding in the hills in Wales when the sun is out. The valley rose gently alongside a mountain river, passing remote farms and small-holdings. Then as we climbed the valley that would take us over to the northern tip of Lake Vyrnwy, the sun broke through the clouds as we looked to the top. A spiritual sight indeed, to see silver shafts of light pour through broken heavy cloud. The descent was great too, long straights of single-lane tarmac coated in pine needles, and we freewheeled under Scotch pine until we reached the shore of the lake. I was initially panicked when I saw Ian Holmes lay out in front of us on the tarmac, I

thought he'd crashed, turns out he just wanted to stretch (?)

It was at that moment, that Karen P psssst me from behind a cupped glove that we ought to make a dash for a seat next to the fire at Emily's – our next cafe stop. So it was 25mph, two-up around the lake and over the top. We got there and baked ourselves in front of the warmest, friendliest fireplace in mid-Wales. Emily was there, she looks more beautiful every year, and her mother, always younger and better of hearing.

After a good 30 minutes of tea and cake, (oh and having fed the pot plants three litres of unwanted whiskey) we set off home. It had been a great day.

The evening was nice and relaxed and the food impeccable for the price being charged. High spirits in no small measures. ;- ) The less said about some of the "shots" played on the pool table the better, but I think I wasn't the only one with a sore head the next morning. I left the bar relatively early, although I don't remember what time...all I know is there was much more frivolity after I left. I'm glad I did. Breakfast the next morning was a very quiet one, if not completely sober. The Sunday ride is traditionally shorter. Or at least that's how it gets advertised. Although I regret to say it, I decided on the shorter of the options meeting the guys in Bishop's Castle for lunch.

There were several others who opted for that one, with another splinter group lead by Dan Mathers on a mega-tour of surrounding hills, no doubt taking in Kerry Ridge at some point (it's Dan's fave).

With two hours in the warmth of the Dragon's entrance porch to kill waiting for Bobble Hat Rob (not to be confused with the Simpsons' "Sideshow Bob" – to whom I was giving a lift) I had plenty of time to reflect on another year.

With mixed emotions I watched as Dan's group drip-fed back into the hotel to get changed and leave. I sat and snoozed and drank tea. It had been another completely bonkers trip, one never to be repeated.

# Pasadena

By John Verbickas

*The well-travelled John Verbickas has some tips for a weekend ride in Pasadena.*

It was that time of year again, and I was out on a visit to my sister in Pasadena; bike all packed and ready to go.

Once there it's down to me to put the bike back together again. Scarey or what?

The first Saturday in October, 7.45am and it's already 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

I ride out to Trader Joe's market at south Pasadena to meet up with the Montrose Ride, a 45-50 mile ride with onwards of 250 riders.

Waiting at Trader Joe's, I start to sweat a lot, and that's just riding there.

The ride starts at Descanso Gardens in La Canada (three miles north west of the Rose-Bowl). Soon it appears; a mass of bodies (and we thought the tempo have a lot out). We all join in and away we go.

This year it seems different as it stops at lights (never used to) and I find out that people have been warned by the police that they must obey the stop and traffic lights. This helps me a lot as by this time I'm pouring in sweat, it must be 90 degrees at least.

Down Huntington Drive in San Marino, doing 32mph. What? This can't be right. Smooth, wide roads and a slight downhill, along Arrow Highway, trying to say to a guy: "It's too fast," but he says it's not as fast as last week. There's a big spill on Cerritos in Azusa, maybe about five riders go down.

Some stay with them so I carry on, not many behind me. Soon the riders are leaving me behind; it must be the heat.

After 20 miles there is a small group of us that have been well and truly spat out of the back. We head towards Sierra Madre where we finish at Starbucks. Not as I intended but ok, 45 miles done.

The next day is cooler at 7.45am and I cycle up to meet Velo Pasadena, a group that cycles out on a Sunday from the shop.

About 14 guys turn up, nobody that I remembered from last year. Surprisingly we are cycling the Montrose ride but in reverse and slightly shorter.

At last riding at a pace that I could manage, we rolled along. By contrast, it is much quicker than riding our roads as these are smooth and wide but you still have to keep a eye open for the odd pothole and storm drains that are 10ft long and about 2ft wide.

It's getting a lot warmer and as we turn for our trip back to the shop the talking slows down and the speed builds up. Not again!

I manage to hold on till the end and arrive home to see that its 89F. Not bad and still in one piece.

The next few days I spend riding in the hills at the back of the Rose Bowl but I put a stop to that when I see on the news that a couple of mountain lions and a brown bear had been spotted in the area. After that I stayed closer to home. I wonder what are out on the hills of Cheshire, and the Peak District?



In 1890 an elevated wooden cycleway was built to link Pasadena with Los Angeles, some 9 miles away. The route included 'Moorish' pavilions at each end and a Casino. But sadly no loop-the-loop.

# The club dinner

By Johnny Pardoe



The annual dinner was sold out this year as new members joined more established ones to pack the Cresta Court Venue.

Organising the highlight of the club's formal calendar is no easy task and the committee passed on its thanks appreciation to everyone who helped make the event such a success, especially Karen Popplewell and Sally Cowan who do so much of the heavy lifting. The planning for next year's dinner hasn't quite started yet but if you would like to help with the organisation, just contact any committee member.

Guest of honour this year was John Leach, a familiar face on the Manchester cycling scene.

In a letter of formal thanks to the committee John paid tribute the friendliness of the club, which made him and wife Val so very welcome.

*The prize winners gather with the trophies (top), some of which are more coveted than others; Jeanette takes the Half-Wheel, (middle).*

*Karen Popplewell showed she is as unstoppable on the dance floor as on a bike (right). Nice hat.*





# Time trialling back in time

By Keith Stacey

It is 1965. The season had been going well and I had won every event I had entered so the decision had to be made. Was it worth travelling all the way to Devon to ride the National 25 Championship on Whit Sunday, June 6?

Of course, without the help and support (mentally and financially of H) (Harold Nelson) there would have been no choice to make. But his confidence in me made up my mind. The entry was sent off, the hotel booked and Harold agreed to arrange transport.

Harry Hall (of Tour de France mechanic fame) offered to build me a special pair of wheels and were they beauties! Highly polished Fiamme rims with Campagnolo Record large flange hubs, six-speed close ratio block (13-18). The spokes were stainless steel, tied and soldered (so if a spoke broke one could usually keep riding without the loose one flapping about, and they added extra strength). The wheels were finely balanced by putting small lead fishing weights inside the rim in the spoke holes held in with rim cement which is used to hold the tubular tyres on. Clement Silk Imperforables were my tubular of choice, blown up as hard as I could with a normal hand pump. I tried them out in the club ten the week before the National and did a personal best time of 22.16. The bike was cleaned and polished on the Friday and early Saturday morning a knock on the door announced the arrival of H and my chauffeur. I had never met the driver before (and never met him again after the weekend!) but he was one of H's mates from the Territorial Army and he was to drive us some 500 miles in his Triumph Herald convertible. The bike was duly strapped to the boot-mounted rack. H sat huddled up with a scarf on in the back seat and I settled down



*Keith Stacey underway in 1965*

to the long journey ahead (no motorways then!)

We arrived at The Ship Hotel at Crediton, Devon in time for tea. A quick look at the course and it was time for bed (at least it was for me).

The event started at 6am and I was off number 75. There was no headquarters as such, just a table in the car park to collect numbers from and to exchange for a cup of tea from another table on return.

Following cars were strictly forbidden and I was very surprised when our car came past me part way through the ride with H shouting at me to "get my bl--dy finger out". Turns out he had got himself appointed as a mobile marshal and he had mistaken my start time thinking I had started 5 minutes earlier than I had.

It was a simple course, straight out and back, with very little traffic. It was a nice mild day and my time of 56-07 was good but was it good enough?

# Out & about



### Clockwise from top left:

A road-side master class in progress; Carol & Johnny toast the camera at the M&DTTA Lunch; The Social Section at Poole Marina enjoy the bizarre March weather; The Tourists take a photo stop in Middlewich; Mark Watson takes in the view at Shutlingsloe



## Time trialling back...

Just less than 40 minutes later we were to find out. Reigning champion and then current competition record-holder Bas Breedon, from the Rockingham CC, had done 55-18 to win the event and push me into second place.

An excellent ride and the fastest ever winning time for the national championship.

All that was left for us to do was to make the long trip back home. I can't say that I wasn't disappointed. It's the old saying: "Nobody remembers who came second".

# Café corner

Updates from Café Queen

Cafe Queen has completed another royal tour to ensure Seamons find the finest places to eat, drink and, err, talk to the animals.

"Lyme Park visitors' centre is well set up with beans on toast, bacon butties, egg and chips and cakes," she says. And she even recommends a very interesting way to get there: "It's a great stop after, say, a loop up the Brickworks, left down Charles Head, left to Moorside and down to Disley, then the back entrance to Lyme Park on your left." Now you know.

Just up the road is the Coffee Tavern at Pott Shrigley. Closed on Tuesdays but with a warming fire to reheat you after a cold run. "Pricey but nice," says our Queen.

Much nearer to home is the ice cream farm at the Knutsford end of Seven Sisters Lane. No soup or savoury for the summertime but okay for tea and cake, and, of course, ice cream, says her highness.

Behind Astbury church is Glebe Farm. "It's a farm shop," says CQ, "handy for a quick snack stop, and if you want to buy some organic fruit and veg, and talk to the animals!"

Meanwhile, if you're touring – or very far off your Cheshire map – there's Shropshire. "The Knighton craft shop and cafe at the top of the hill, opposite the clock tower, does enormous lattes and great homemade bara brith.

There's also the Lion pub on the bridge in Knighton. Very welcoming with great coffee and chocolate muffins."

And as we learn about some new places, there's news of the closure of some familiar

haunts. Booseys in Middlewich is closed but Tesco is building another store. Maybe they will include a cafe, hopes Cafe Queen.



She warns also that Hopley House on the main road from Middlewich to Nantwich now only does B&B.

"Maybe the breakfast without the bed? Depending how desperate you are!"

Ever helpful, Cafe Queen confirms that Radway Green is still a cafe in business, although it seems to

change hands a lot, and passes on a request from Riverside Organic at Whatcroft, Davenham.

"They said it would be very helpful if we let them know in advance if we're coming," she said. Runs leaders please note the number: 01606 46258.

An attempt was made last year to drop off Squirrels – complete with their runs lists – at the cafes we're visiting. If runs leaders want extra copies to take with them for the more frequently visited cafes, please contact the editor.

Meantime, some useful telephone numbers: **Aqueduct Marina**, Church Minshull: 01270 525043.

**Peak View** (Cat and Fiddle) open Thursday-Sunday: 01298 22103

**Chester** – the Blue Moon: 01244 322481

**Dagfields**: 07932 880245/01270 841336

**Poole Marina**, Aston-juxta-Mondrum: 07985 351999

**Llangollen**: 01978 860929



# Billy no mates?

By Johnny Pardoe

I hope not. I'm a pretty sociable person really, writes Neil Walton.

I have often wondered how I would enjoy long distance independent travel having had my appetite whetted through reading motorcycle and cycle travel books.

A couple of months riding down to a holiday apartment on the south coast of Spain owned by two friends in Northwich seemed to be ideal way to dip my toe in the water.

My plan was to leave immediately after retiring from work at the Bikeshak, cycle through France, the Picos de Europa in northern Spain, down through rural Portugal and on to the apartment near Marbella. There I would meet up with David and Denise from Northwich who would have brought out an empty bike box. We would return together after a few days holiday for them and some R&R for me. I was hoping to camp most of the way.

Two changes had to be made to this concept. Most campsites were closed when I got to them, which meant that I finished up using small hotels and youth hostels a lot of the time. I did find a couple of really good sites where I spent several days. One in the hills in Portugal and another on the coast in Spain meant that I was able to do some walking, swimming and reading on a beach! I have not done that for many years.

The other change was that the bike box idea was dropped as I was enjoying myself so much that I decided to leave the bike at the apartment and ride it back. I will be riding back through Spain as you're reading this. I blogged about my trip and have edited a couple of posts below to give you a taste. I could not give a blow by blow account of the trip as that would take a couple of years' worth of Squirrels and would see me banned from Seamons! I hope that they give a flavour of the trip.



*Life's a beach - time for a spot of non-bike R&R*

**- 23/9/2011 -**

Funny feeling as the ferry pulls alongside at Roscoff. It feels much more exciting than when arriving on a motorbike. Ride out through the big doors on to the quay and notice the first difference from a car or motorbike arrival. The customs lass wants to have chat about my destination, daily distance, not mileage I note, and if I am camping. She was probably concerned about the welfare of the old gent heading off on a heavily loaded bike! Got riding at 15.30 and arrived at Huelgoat by 19.00. The second campsite I tried was open. The shop and bar were unfortunately closed. Closed sites are always going to be a problem at this time of year. They did, however have 660cl bottles of locally brewed, bottle-fermented beer. I chose a bottle of the black. It was a 2.5k steep uphill ride back into town so the owner offered to drive up and bring back a pizza.

I put up the tent and had a quick shower just in time for the arrival of my enormous marinere pizza. I opened the beer, ate, drank and Zzzz until 8.30. Perfect. Almost. Being fairly high and a clear night meant that it was 4 degrees C.

I left at 11.00 after a chat with the Irish couple who were the only other tent on the site.

Brittany is very hilly, not mountainous but relentlessly up and down. You notice this with an all-up weight of 45 kilos. It is also very lovely.

Why do we always head south and miss out on such a good area? I had a lunch at the side of the Nantes to Brest canal. Artisanal baguette, tomato and ham all tasted great in the sunshine.

The afternoon was on single-track roads with a superb surface. Still very hilly though. Did I mention the wind was blowing from the south, my direction? I arrived at Baud at exactly 18.00. That was a surprise as it was my ETA to the minute. Phoned Bob who drove out with Pam to guide me in to his home. Straight back up the steep hill that I had just ridden down!

Fortunately I had put my bags in his car. The 35lb Salsa suddenly felt like a carbon race bike! Save money. Load your old hack up to 45 kilos, ride it for two days and when you unload the old thing feels fantastic.

The stay with my old business partner Bob started as expected. He still has his love of good beers and wines. I didn't expect to be up to a bottle of Jenlain then a shared 1.5 litre bottle of 2005 Chateau Barthez Haute Medoc after the ride, but we tried, leaving just a couple of glassfuls for tomorrow

It's so good to see Bob and Pam again. I thought that it had been 20 years since we met, but he reminded me that it was my 50th birthday party. I was not far out then!

The road to Evora.

**- 26/10/11 -**

Did I mention that strong headwind? I've just done 15km into possibly the strongest headwind that I have experienced on a bike. Memories of grinding back from Stoney Middleton on the front with John Coles come to mind. We were making all of 7/8 mph. I turned to John and said: "Some of the young lads won't like this when they get to the

front". His reply: "Character building, Neil". It was the first time that I had heard that, now commonly used, expression. It was 1987.

John and I were a bit stronger in those days.

Even my heavily laden bike was blown onto the verge a few times. The problem with the front and rear panniers is that as soon as a gust moves off straight head it grabs the front panniers and twists the handlebars. At the same time it gets a really good angle of attack on the large rear windward pannier to make its full effect felt. Oh joy!

The sign says 17km to Borba. That's about another two hours of "character building" at my current rate of progress. Thanks for the memory John.

It got worse, much worse. The rain returned with a vengeance and the wind certainly did not abate. I had to resort to Pam's fruit cake. It was a big piece that she and Gary had given to me back at the campsite. I ate it in three lots, each time vowing to keep the remainder for an emergency. By the end it was an emergency.

I reached Borba by 17.00. The place where I had intended to stay was full. It looked scruffy in reception which was manned by an irritable one-toothed old guy. His partner

*Gary & Pam - purveyors of fortifying cake.*



## Billy no mates...

told me of a place, "Vila Borba", but that was over 70 Euros a night in Lonely Planet. I set off to the next of the marble towns, Vila Viçosa. There were two recommended residencia's there. When I arrived, both were full. I had to resort to the three star hotel.

It was late, raining and dark. I was exhausted and cold. 75 Euros. Ouch. Stuff the economy drive. It was this or the pavement. The price did include breakfast.

I sent an email using their wi fi to book a hostel for tomorrow in Evora. I don't think I'm in the middle of a Portuguese holiday, but I decided not to take a chance.

I went out and had dinner after washing my soaking wet kit. The top half of me was still dry. I was pleased that I had decided to bring the heavier of my race capes for a touring trip. I left the room with the three table lamps switched on with mitts, socks and knee warmers draped over the shades. It worked well except that one of the knee warmers slipped and the bulb burned a hole through the elasticated hem.

- 27/10/11 -

Evora is a shortish ride so I decided to have a leisurely start.

I dried my shoes by sticking the hairdryer into each in turn. It was one of those hotel dryers with a back vent that you can open. That stops the dryer from overheating when stuffed in a wet shoe. I blew up a conventional hairdryer in a hotel doing this stunt years ago. One shoe dried over breakfast and the other whilst doing odds and sods. Shorts were dried in the same manner. I was trying to get my money's worth!

Same story at the admittedly very good buffet breakfast (they had museli and natural yoghurts). I snaffled some fruit and a pastry to supplement lunch.

I must stick to hostels and camping to help the budget recover.



*A hostel - thankfully with table football to take you mind off that view...*

It was another hard ride. The wind was the same but, fortunately, the rain was very much less than yesterday.

I went straight to the hostel in Evora, again somewhat weary and battered by the headwind. It was closed. It was not listed in Lonely Planet but was on the hostel leaflet that I had picked up in Braganca. The girl's words now came to mind: "Ignore the prices as it's a bit out of date". Doh! I found my rejected email booking the next time that I logged on to a wi fi connection.

Off to the only cheap residencia listed in LP for Evora. I was greeted by a firmly locked door. I rang the bell to no effect. B.....cks. Was just getting out the Kindle to check for the campsite location and there was a loud click and the door opened. At the top of a long marble staircase was my angel "Quarto?" I enquired. Yes. Lovely room. Clean. Not en suite, but two shower rooms just outside the door to my room. "One night?" she enquired. I looked at the room and said: "Nao, dos". It has turned out to have been exactly the right thing to have said.

Read more about Neil's trip at:

[wobblywalton.blogspot.com](http://wobblywalton.blogspot.com)

# Road racing report

By Nigel Harrop

The 2012 road race season has had a positive start for Seamons with a number of riders taking part in bunched racing.

Joe Lockett had a good ride in the season-opening Eddie Soens Criterium on the famous Aintree racecourse. Well, actually it was the motor racing track not the steeple-chase course!

Juniors Sean Davenport and Jack Robinson have also ridden well, particularly at the Tameside circuit, with Jack on the verge of achieving a British Cycling second category licence.

Amongst the senior racers, Ashley Cress and Rob Cleary have achieved 1st and 5th category placings respectively in TLI cycling races.

New to road racing with Seamons, Phil Brydges came 3rd in his first 4th category BC event at Tameside. With Robin Haigh taking a gap year, Phil now leads the club's Open

## Marshalling support

Members can indulge their passion for racing and helping by responding to a plea for assistance from road race secretary Nigel Harrop.

He is organising the club's evening road race taking place on June 26 and is seeking marshals to ensure the event runs safely and successfully once again.

The event is now three years old and has proved very popular, says Nigel.

"The race enjoys tremendous support from club members and friends who act as marshals, judges, HQ signing-on officials and lead car drivers. Last year the event also had a large number of Seamons members as competitors," he said.

He added: "It runs under the rules and regs of TLI Cycling, which provides age-related cycle races for competitors of all abilities.

"Many of the riders in the older age groups



*Nigel Harrop in 2nd place as the bunch tackle the climb on the Swynnerton Circuit in Round 1 of the LVRC National RR Series 15/04/12*

Road Race Championship.

In the Veterans Championship, Nigel Harrop (above) is once again setting the pace with a 1st, 2nd and 5th place in age-related competitions.

Very early days and much more to come from these and many other club members.

are former professionals and national representatives, so the racing is always exciting and competitive.

"Last year one of the events was won by Colin Lynch who is now a para-Olympic multiple world champion on road and track."

The event, based at Allostock, uses a ten-mile circuit and features three age-related races starting at five-minute intervals from 7pm.

The first event will be for under-40s, the second for under-55s and the third for the 55-plus age group.

Nigel added: "The event cannot succeed without support so if you are available from around 6.15pm to 8.30pm on Tuesday June 26 please let me know asap by emailing:

[lanesman2006-tli@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lanesman2006-tli@yahoo.co.uk)

Alternatively please give me a call on the number in the club handbook."



# Remembering Bob Davies 1943-2012

Obituary

By Johnny Pardoe

It is with sadness that I have to report the death of former Chairman and President Bob Davies, who has passed away after a long and courageous battle with cancer.

that day, the national team record would have been ours – that's life.

Bob and I once rode down to Loughborough



Bob joined the Seamons in 1957 and it soon became obvious that he would become the ultimate all-rounder, enjoying in equal measure touring, road-racing, tricycling, tandem events, cyclo-cross and mountain biking.

He soon became a leader of the touring section, looking after many of the younger members in the club.

After taking part in an early cross-country event against the Sale Harriers he was to become a talented cyclo-cross rider, even joining the crack Flixton team for a while, before eventually returning to the Seamons.

Bob also enjoyed riding three wheels, and in 1963 set up one of the fastest ever rides in the Isle of Man cycling week, recording a superb 1.07.35 on a hilly 25-mile course with three dead turns. He also turned out a superb 224 miles on a trike in a Tricycle Association 12-hour event, backing me up to win the team prize. If only we'd had a third man

for the TA dinner, on my fully laden tandem trike – the same one on which Carol and I won the world championship in France in 2009. The trip was not without incident, just south of Leek Bob shouted: "Should I be seeing three inches of the axle?" No! The track nut had sheared off. If Bob hadn't spotted it the outside wheel would have fallen off. As the front spindle has the same size thread, we used one of those nuts, which meant that the wheel was catching on the brake blocks. Progress was slow. On the return journey, having replaced the missing axle nut, we took a detour down the Manifold Valley, stripping a sprocket on the climb from Wetton Mill – happy days!

In the 1960s it was tradition for a group of Seamons and other local riders to ride down to Shrewsbury for the Mid-Shropshire Wheelers dinner, stopping overnight at the youth hostel. Getting up the following morn-



ing it had snowed heavily, and as we set off north it soon became obvious that progress was going to be slow, almost impossible in fact.

We stopped just a few miles north of Shrewsbury to strategize when an eight-wheeler BRS flat-bed lorry pulled into the lay-by and



asked if we were OK. Not really, we replied. Within minutes trikes, tandems and solos were strapped on to the back of the lorry, and we took turns to sit on the back wrapped up in our capes, or in the cab.



But Bob insisted on carrying on alone, getting home very late, very cold, and as a result suffering from mild frost-bite. That was Bob for you, always ready for a challenge.

Another of Bob's unique talents was club auctioneer. Years ago members would be invited to bring all their old equipment and clothing up to the clubroom for disposal at the annual mock auction. Bob would then somehow obtain unbelievable prices for what in a lot of cases was mainly junk. All in aid of club funds. He was also former club 100 mile and 12 hour champion, road-race champion, and club best all-rounder. He won on two occasions the best clubman trophy and the most meritorious award. Bob enjoyed all aspects of his favourite sport and past-time. He was the ultimate all-rounder, encountering all he undertook with a cheerful disposition.

I personally have many treasured memories of club life, weekends away, and cycling holidays in Bob's company. He will be sadly missed by all who had the privilege and pleasure of knowing him. On behalf of the Club I offer our sincere condolences to Jill and his family.

# Llangollen from a lay-by

By Carol Pardoe



bypass.

The rain had eased; I wondered whether to hold out the flask of hot coffee and towels. Decided against it, who would stop (silly me)?

I could see snow on the tops of the Welsh mountains in the distance.

Marford and Pulford took their toll, I waited the other side in another lay-by. The group had now splintered, a lone rider forging ahead. It was Martin Wiggan. Are you mad, Martin? Yes! The others appeared to be working together, maybe 400 metres

It was pouring down, and very cold. A text from JP said snow at Cerrig, where the touring section had spent the weekend.

The Llangollen group came through in close formation just after 10am at the top of the rise to the Brick Tower on the main Chester road. I got a photo then jumped back in the van and chased after them to the Wrexham

metres behind, but where was Karen Popplewell? I waited to make sure she was OK. "Where do I turn off?" she shouted when she came by. The main group was now out of sight, I told her to follow the signs for Llangollen, hoping it was marked on the next turn-off! It was.

The final five mile run-in to Llangollen is





lumpy, especially up through Trefor.

I started catching pairs of riders who had been shot off, then the main group appeared ahead, making much faster progress than I was expecting. I had to get a move on to get ahead to be there at the finish, and tell the waiting crowd (!) they were due any minute.

JP and our president, Dave Barker, were at the sign, JP poised with camera, and Sally, desperately stuffing herself with cake after riding out earlier, with Mike McConville and a few others. "Here they come!" came the cry, as a now much smaller elite group came hurtling down to the finish. Wow! Keith Bailey flew past the sign, hotly pursued by Charles Carraz and Martin Wiggan.

And so to the cafe. Fifteen of us altogether, Sean and Jack had done really well hanging on, Karen didn't look too happy, but at least she made it. And everyone was warm and dry now.

The cafe owner made us very welcome and kept the beans on toast and mugs of tea coming. The route back was discussed, and I heard Horseshoe Pass mentioned.

The traditional group photo was taken outside, and the sun put in a welcome appearance. Well done everyone.

PS – Look at the photo of the 1959 thrash – collar and tie? White socks! No helmets! And Johnny Coles is still riding. He was on the tourists' weekend up at Cerrig. A great club tradition.

#### Photos (clockwise from bottom left):

Riders pass the Brick Tower; Beefy takes the finish; Some of the rider pose for the camera at Llangollen; Llangollen 1959.



# All roads lead to Cerrig

While the tough guys battled it out to be first to Llangollen on Sunday, the race to the border was easily won by the tourers.

Their traditional weekend break to Lynda's lovely bunkhouse in Cerrig started early on the Friday.

Two groups headed for the hills, one on bikes from Alti (Peter Coles, Roger Haines and John Hurley), the other in cars (John Coles, Peter Devine, John Carberry, Reg and Gareth Blease). Meanwhile, John Pardoe saddled up at Allostock and Saturday saw Dave Barker finally catch up with a solo effort from home. The car-assisters squeezed in a day-ride over the tops to Llanrwst for lunch, with the Welsh weather being kind enough to bathe the riders in some early sun.

The return leg via Betws-y-Coed took in the usual pub stop where absent friends were remembered before the trundle back to base.

By then the day-riders had appeared to recount their tales of derring-do and the epic battle to keep John Hurley's rear mech functional.

Roger's running repair was soon made permanent by Reg with the addition of an elastic band, formerly the cuff of a pair of Marigolds. (You can't make anything up with the touring section, it's not worth it.)

Fuelled by the best of Lynda's home cooking, it was time to rest our bones in front of the fire and pretend we weren't tired and ready for bed.

Saturday saw two groups again, all heading in roughly the same direction to start with – up and over in the general direction of Bala. The wonderfully named Fairy Glen beckoned for Pete's group, while the rest headed for a longer run to the lake.

The long, draggy climb out of the valley to the moorland top soon split everyone up. And





then the whipping rain came in, howling in revenge for the previous day's pleasantness. The result was a complete splintering of over two counties.

While Pete's group were disappointed by their lunch stop, the others regrouped at Bala before enjoying a leisurely circumnavigation of the lake and a spin home. The rain had eased a bit over lunch but by the afternoon had decided we needed a reminder we were still in Wales.

Dave Barker had now arrived to join us all for tea and it was time for more groaning tables and straining tummies as Lynda shovelled another three courses into us.

Sunday should have been the day when we all rode to Llangollen to welcome in the real hard-riders. But a farmhouse breakfast, faint hearts and the weather soon took their toll.

Those who'd ridden out had no choice but to clip in and head for home. For the car-assisted shirkers – those with the least excuse of all – they took the even easier route

and missed out Llangollen altogether. Well, it looked a bit cold. And it might have rained. Plus it's a traditional cop-out for us. So it was for the best really.

Thankfully, JP and President Dave were on hand to welcome the bunch – the very reason we'd made the trip in the first place!

Maybe one year we'll all make it on bikes to Llangollen. But tradition in the touring section does run deep...



# Javea got any painkillers

By John Carberry



Through secret turbo sessions and the pain of too many circuit training workouts I'd looked forward to the week-long blast on super-smooth Spanish tarmac.

Through those dark winter months I'd overpowered the odour of my hard-won sweat with imaginings of orange-scented groves, quality coffee and the briny breeze from the sun-kissed Med.

Instead of pounding heartbeats banging through another hour of intervals, shuttle-runs and press ups I heard the whisper of tyres, the chattering of cicadas, a distant church bell on a sleepy Sunday.

Through the gritted teeth of January I could taste the cake from the cafe in Denia, the bocadillos of Bar Daniel in Pego, the fish and chips of Scallops.

By February I was flying, ready. The wait for March 23 and take-off seemed endless.

But by day three of our trip my Spanish

dream was over. An inflamed Achilles tendon putting paid to any more cycling for the week. I'd swapped cleats for crutches.

The German doctor's impeccable English couldn't have been clearer as he strapped my foot into a tippy-toe position to relieve the numbing pain: "Stay off the bike for at least three weeks."

So each morning I'd wave off my so-called mates – Dave Barker, John Hammond, Rob Morton and Dave Matthews – as they set out for a day's riding in the sunshine and I returned to doing the housework and making that night's tea. Okay, I made up the bit about the housework and the dinner but you get the picture.

We'd set ourselves a target of 400-plus miles for the week (each, not collectively) with a planned schedule that mixed up the best of what our part of the Costa Blanca had to offer.

With different friends, I've made many trips to the same villa to enjoy the early-spring sunshine on cycle-friendly roads. By now the trip has a rhythm of its own with our well rehearsed arrangements making it a very hassle-free way to start the cycling year.

Fly out Friday, pick up the hire car and get to the villa in time for a late tea, start riding on the Saturday.

Bikes are hired locally. We've been going for that long, the 105-equipped machines we broke in when they were new are now as care-worn as the bikes they replaced several years ago.

But the friendly, helpful welcome at Xabia's Bike Centre remains as fresh as ever. They always look after us. New owner Martin and the ever-present Alex soon get our bikes on the road, attaching the pedals we've brought from home.

Then it's a quick personalising fettle of the bikes a long mile up the road at the villa and we're off for our first day's run.

The day one destination tends to be a shake-out-the-bike-bugs ride; not too far, not too challenging.

Flowing around the bends of the coast road, the glistening Med on one side, the opportunity of inland routes on the other, sun on your back, this first ride gets you straight into the holiday spirit.

With a well-matched group making up this year's bunch, the spin towards Calpe and lunch boded well for another classic and rewarding year.

As official organiser I tend to suggest the runs for the week, trying to give us a programme of the cycling equivalent of light and shade; hilly and flat. A first this time, I circulated a runs list in advance, giving us all the chance to see what was up the road ahead.



*Rob Morten & a tiny President Dave*

And even though it was a holiday, I'd suggested a 9am start. Who'd be in charge? Who'd tempt fate?

With an ever-improving knowledge of local roads we're able to pretty much follow our noses now, choosing various ingenious routes to land us in our favourite places. Bike shop Martin had suggested a couple of new places to try too so it was to be a week of mixing the old and familiar with the new and exciting.

Well, it was for everyone else of course.

Grumpy old me had to endure tedious hours poolside, with only a book, barking dogs and visiting gardeners for company.

No amount of delicious artisan bread, baked just hours ago and sandwiching the finest organic Serrano ham, served in a beach-front bar, is going to make up for the fact you're on your tod, having to watch the world go by rather than going by the world on your bike. (It's a funny thing, but none of my non-cycling friends have any sympathy for me whatsoever. I'd like to see how they felt if they'd endured the hours of turbo torture I went through as part of my holiday countdown!)

Each day the riders would return from their



# From the archive

By Johnny Pardoe



*Alan Heggs competing in an RTTC National Championship on a Pemberton Arrow (above). Alan & Johnny (right) on the tandem trike.*



## Alan Heggs

A quick glance at the club handbook will reveal that during the mid-1970s and early 80s Alan was the man to beat.

A multi-champion at 10, 25, 50 and 100 miles, twice 12 hour champion and club best all-rounder on two occasions. And just to prove he WAS an all-rounder he was hill climb champion twice, and also road race champion.

In 1977 he broke the club tandem 25 and 30 mile records with none other than Keith Stacey, and both these records are still on the books with times of 53.58 and 1.05.52 respectively.

Although he still holds the 12 hour record of 267 miles, set in 1980, in my opinion by far one of his best ever rides was his incredible 1.47.32 50 mile record in 1978.

According to the cycling press of that period it was one of the best ever days on the notorious Boroughbridge course, just north of Wetherby, on the old A1 dual carriageway.

## Javea got any painkillers...

exploits, giddy with tales from the saddle: "A lovely climb", "Found a great place to eat", "You should have seen the view", "Great roads up there". They even meet up with Stuart Kay, who has a holiday villa nearby, and enjoy yet another ride on a route I'd planned. I listen attentively. I am interested but deep down I'm crying inside.

I want to be in these memories. I want to have soaked up the atmosphere of that sleepy square, felt the wind on my face firing off the top of the Bernia, been the one to have found that cafe. Instead I'm just nodding along, trying to not let my disappointment show. It's not their fault they're having the great time I'd looked forward to, I reason.

To mix it up a bit, not to rub it in I hope, Dave  
Page 32

M did a couple of car-assisted runs. He's been to another part of the nearby area before so knows some of the other roads. His accounts give us food for thought for future trips and new possibilities.

*The Derny*







That day no fewer than 19 riders beat 1hr 50min, and 80 riders were inside two hours, with Alan finishing in ninth place in a field that contained the cream of British 50-milers. A virtual national championship. What is more remarkable, he was riding a locally built steel Pemberton Arrow, complete with visible brake cables, long before tri-bars

The other Dave misses a day because of a bad chest, Rob's feet take him out of action on another day. Dave M, still recovering from a fall on the winter ice, takes it easy on a couple of occasions. He and I meet the rest of the group for lunch, taking the car over roads more familiar from the saddle than the driving seat. It's nice, but it's not the same!

Only Superhammond rides every day. He gets a reputation as a hard man, the Deryn of the bunch. His big legs grind out the big gears, pulling the peloton along, his fitness earned (it turns out) over countless spin classes. He would have clocked up over 500 miles we reckon. But, of course, only my bike has the computer on it, so his miles don't count for the official total. Shame.

We'll have to go again next year to make it count.

or disc wheels were thought of. In spite of the advances in technology and scientific training methods his incredible record still stands to this day – 34 years on!

Alan married Janet Hill, daughter of one of our founder members, the late Bob Hill.

I believe they now live in mid-Wales, although Alan works in Manchester, and rumour has it he turned up at one of our mid-week events last year.

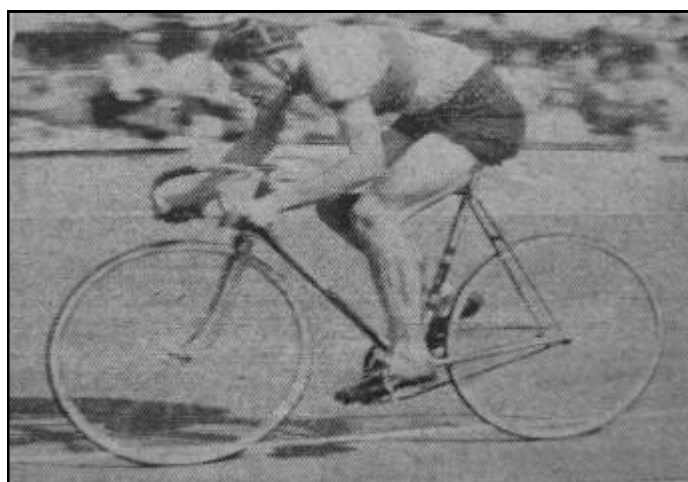
His wife Janet was a former club ladies record-holder at 10, 25 and 50 miles.

So come on you racing members, 34 years is too long for any record to be on the books – make this record your target for this season – or you could just go for the 12 hour! Why not both?



### Don Smith

As this is Olympic year I thought I'd just mention that back in 1952 Don Smith was invited to ride the Olympic trials event held at Fallowfield Stadium, Manchester.



It was a great shame that Don was not selected, but what an honour to have a club member invited for selection.

Don was a leading short-distance rider in the 1950s, and on one occasion beat by two minutes Olympic rider and local star and former competition record-holder Cyril Cartwright in a local 25!

Don was the first club member to beat the hour for a 25, recording 59.43, on fixed of course, 61 years ago.

## Shorts & Longs

The touring section made history in the rainy days of April when, first, the hard men were beaten into submission and then the section failed to ride out at all.

In Case One, even Reg Blease turned for home within six miles of leaving Alti. It is noted that Roger Haines was with him, a man with more fear of water than the Wicked Witch of the West.

In Case Two, the tourers didn't even get TO Rackhams.

Again the rain was blamed but clearly it was a case of just not being tough enough – another group made it to Buxton the same day.

I know for a fact if my ankle had not been playing up I would have made it to Rackhams and the published destination, just like I always do, and would at no point have started whinging and bidding for an alternative lunch stop...

The mechanical prowess of Roger helped John Hurley complete his ride out to Cerrig as part of the tourers' weekend to support the Llangollen run.

A knackered derailleur had nearly kyboshed their show-off ride from home but for Super Roger's roadside maintenance skills.

While the running repair meant John got to the bunkhouse, Rog was not offering any warranty with the work he'd carried out.

Step forward Reg Blease, a man with more accumulated bicycle knowledge than Wikipedia.

One look and he knew what was needed – a giant elastic band.

The aim was to give the springless mech some tension, thus ensuring it would a) make it back to Alti and b) might actually work too.

Unlike normal mortals who don't have giant

elastic bands knocking about, Reg was able to produce any number of them from his magic-hat saddle bag.

Job done.

It only later emerged that these giant rubber bands were in fact the cut-off cuffs from rubber gloves; Marigolds, to be precise.

This was impressive enough – having the foresight to cut up the cuffs and then put them in your bag, I mean.

But what next came out Reg's mouth really did underline the difference between the modern cyclist and the guys who invented it all: "You can get about four from each glove; I always cut them up

when they wear out," said Reg.

Think about that for a minute.

First, he has cut up enough pairs and had enough practice of using them in anger that he knows how many you can get out of each cuff; not too fat you don't get enough, not too thin they are no use.

And then: "...when they wear out..." When they wear out? I don't think I've ever even heard of someone wearing out a pair of Marigolds in my life!

But then this is the guy who once loaned a clubmate a tube in a roadside emergency.

When it was given back later the recipient commented on the two dozen puncture repairs he counted on it!

"Plenty of wear left in that," said Reg.

Regular readers will know that sympathy is an over-abundant commodity in the touring section.

Whether it be inconvenient punctures, mechanical failures, the wrong choice of kit on a hot or cold day; you name it, there's always a



# Adios Roberto y Maria

The Squirrel doesn't often carry nuptial news but by the time you read this, Rob Morton and his fiancée Maria-Jose will be counting down the hours to their wedding in Spain.

Clubmates and other friends bid buen viaje to the happy couple with a very British pub send-off in the OMT a few weeks earlier.

Typical of our unassuming clubman, Rob had to be persuaded that such an event would be necessary!

The pair will make their new home in Madrid, where Maria works, and are promising/threatening to be frequent return visitors.

As part of his transition to a new life Rob joined Facebook shortly before his departure so you can keep up with him via the club's page or contact the editor for their postal or email address.

Congratulations to the happy couple!



## Shorts & longs...

friendly word from clubmates to make you feel loved.

It was positively overflowing for Rog when he tried to sit on a non-existent seat during a banana break.

The picnic bench had little cut-outs in the middle to divide the normal seating platform into two instead of the usual one.

Unfortunately, Roger – in mid-pontification – didn't notice and sat down all the way to the ground with a bump.

When his mates had finally stopped laughing they did ask if he was okay. Sincerely, of course.

"He'd leant his bike against the seat just a minute earlier, so it's his own fault," said one still-giggling clubman as he recounted the tale.



# CLUBS RUNS LIST

	Half day	Tempo	Touring	Social
<b>6th May</b>	Manley	Meerbrook	Elvis Cafe	Henbury
<b>13th May</b>	Castleton	Two Mills	Hope	Astbury
<b>20th May</b>	Rose Farm	Summer Trees	Bartholmey	Jodrell Bank
<b>27th May</b>	Astbury*	Astbury*	Grindleford	Delamere ****
<b>3rd Jun</b>	Meerbrook	Poole Marina	100-in-8	Whatcroft
<b>10th Jun</b>	Dagfields	Buxton	Monsal Trail	Spinney, Allostock
<b>17th Jun</b>	Paddock Farm	Beeston	Whitmore	Wizard Cafe, Alderley
<b>24th Jun</b>	Beeston	Dagfields	York Rally W/E	Poole Marina ****
<b>1st Jul</b>	Garth	Blaze Farm	Southport	Budworth Ice Cream
<b>8th Jul</b>	Two Mills	Rose Farm	Ipstones	Pott Shrigley
<b>15th Jul</b>	Blaze Farm	Congleton GC	Wrenbury	Astbury
<b>22nd Jul</b>	Tattenhall**	Tattenhall**	Holmfirth	Lach Dennis
<b>29th Jul</b>	Buxton	Delamere	Stoak/CheshireCycle Way	Dagfields ****
<b>5th Aug</b>	Delamere	Dagfields	19 Gates	Henbury
<b>12th Aug</b>	Prees ***	Chestnut Centre	Ma's Kitchen	Whatcroft
<b>19th Aug</b>	Congleton GC	Elvis Cafe	Hartington	Wizard Cafe, Alderley
<b>26th Aug</b>	Summer Trees	Walk Mill	Parkgate	Beeston ****

## Cover image:

Transport for Greater Manchester get a surprise visitor bearing a copy of your favourite cycling quarterly...

- \* Malham Weekend
- \*\* 24-hour
- \*\*\* 12-hour
- \*\*\*\* Last Sunday of the month the Social runs are longer and are not advisable for less experienced riders.

## Nuts

By Lomas

