



THE SQUIRREL

Christmas 2012



JP

Editorial

By John Carberry

A big thank you to all of the contributors to this edition; it's given us a bumper magazine with tales from across the sections and from around the world.

Attendees at the annual meeting will have heard me and others whittering on about the need for everyone to actively support the club. Sharing stories in the mag is a wonderful way of doing that. Well, I suppose I would say that but it is true.

The Squirrel captures not only some of our club spirit, it also shows just how much is going on with members.

Even before we end this year, members are already planning trips and events for 2013. Some are regular features in the club calendar, others are new editions.

The common thread that weaves them together is the opportunity for any one of us to take part. While you might prefer the pace, distance or time taken for your Sunday run, **there's no rule – or reason – which says that's the only bunch you've got to ride with all the time.** Why not make your New Year resolution to try something different in 2013?

There's plenty to go at.

And if you are making a resolution about cycling, bear in mind your editorial team. We've committed to a quarterly run for the mag in future. The intention is to add some regularity and consistency to its publication. This means we'll be keener than ever to hear from you, dear reader, in order to fill as many pages as possible!

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Seamons, it's not just about the bike. Phil & Roger bring out the ukuleles on the Montgomery weekend. No sign of that certain little lady, though...

Answers to TV Quiz (p.4)

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|--------------------|------------------|
| 12. What's My Line | 1. Grandstand |
| 13. Country File | 2. Eastenders |
| 14. The Bill | 3. Crossroads |
| 15. Countdown | 4. Porridge |
| 16. Morecambe | 5. Brookside |
| 17. Downton Abbey | 6. TopGear |
| 18. Spooks | 7. Heartbeat |
| 19. Coast | 8. Blackadder |
| 20. Waterloo Road | 9. Blind Date |
| 21. Airport | 10. That's Life |
| 22. Dr. Who | 11. Juliet Bravo |
| 23. Mash | |

Cover photo

Joanne Blakeley crowns a spectacular year with a 5th place in the Women's National Hillclimb Championship at Ramsbottom. The Squirrel joins the rest of Seamons in wishing Jo continued success in 2013!

Meet your clubmates... John Hammond

Not being John Malkovich, Seamon's Treasurer's brain does not have a secret chute for casual visitors to drop in. However, he's subjected to the next best thing in this edition of the Squirrel, the MYC interrogation...

When and where were you born?

June '52, Lincoln, Lincolnshire.

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

I had to cycle to the school bus as a kid, and **then for three years at college. I didn't** really start again until I went to work in Houston, when I started cycling again with the guys at work. Moving back to Poynton I used to just go out every Sunday with a friend and then when I moved to Altrincham on my own, **until one day three years ago Dave Mac's crew** came past me near Byley and I said I want to be one of them. My first club: Seamons.

What was your first race, and first win?

I try not to race.

Which performance do you rate as your best?

Well, my only one was the Club 10m; 2 years ago I did in 27m 35s

What is your favourite meal?

Steak and Kidney pies from the shop at the cross roads in Goostrey ;O)

What were you like at school?

Bit of a swot, I really enjoyed maths and I guess I was quite good at it; but did enjoy playing rugby for the school especially when we won.

What kind of books do you read?

Science fiction and fantasy, authors like Iain M Banks and Janny Wurts, and I like reading poetry particularly Dylan Thomas and Ted Hughes.

What kind of music do you enjoy?

Well in order of appearance Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Cream, Yes, Pink Floyd, Genesis, Miles Davis, Cold Play and Bon Iver; and a lot of assorted classical.

And your favourite type of TV programme?

Series like Silent Witness and Law and Order



John Hammond -

UK. I'm enjoying 'Homeland' at the moment, oh and 'Family Guy'.

Which newspaper do you read?

www.bbc.co.uk

What is your ideal holiday destination?

Cycling anywhere in Europe.

Do you have any hobbies?

Keeping fit in the great outdoors.

Who would play you in a film of your life?

Someone like John Malkovich.

What is your greatest fear?

Having lost my eldest son to leukemia anything like that ever happening again.

How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts column?

A good listener.

What is your favourite training ride?

Mobberley, Frozen Mop, Marthall, round to

Club news

First Aid

15 members attended the course, led by a Red Cross instructor, and we are now ready for anything. We are proficient at bandaging wounded arms, doing slings and things, and most important of all, CPR. Our instructress organized a First Aid Time Trial at the end of the session, in two teams: in turn we had to approach the body on the floor and assess the situation, give CPR, and hopefully go and sit down. BUT, if we did anything wrong, we had to go to the back of the team and do it again, correctly, when our turn came. It certainly put you under stress, and made you concentrate on what you were doing so as not to let your team down. A good exercise. Thank you John Hammond for organizing this.

Air Ambulance

£1,000 was raised on the Club 100 in 8 which was ridden this year as a charity ride, prompted by the rescue of Mike McConville on the unfortunate club weekend in Yorkshire. Most of the Club turned out to ride the 100 in 8 in different groups, and at different speeds, thus avoiding a glut of hungry Seamounts all arriving at the cafes at the same time.

It was a sad end for Reg Blease who hit a pot-hole on his return home through Hale. He broke his hip and had to be hospitalized. He has been on crutches ever since, and is getting crutchety – or should that be “crotchety”? **Get well soon, Reg. Hopefully,** after his nomination as our incumbent President for 2012-14, he will feel cheered up, and have something to look forward to, apart from brewing up on club nights – we miss you Reg!

TV Christmas Quiz 2012

E.g. The people next door = Neighbours

1. £1000 don't sit
2. Regulars at the Queen Vic
3. Street intersection
4. For breakfast in Scotland
5. Edge of stream
6. High class clothes
7. Cardiac pulse
8. Dark viper
9. Unseen tryst
10. C'est la vie
11. Code for Police Detective
12. Guess my job
13. Rural rasp
14. Paid after the meal
15. 9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1, zero
16. Seaside town with yyyyy
17. Highclere castle
18. Ghosts
19. Not inland
20. Way to Napoleon's defeat
21. Luton for instance
22. Medic in the police box
23. Sausage and...
24. He's learning a trade

Answers on page 2

Meet your clubmates...

the Whipping Stocks and back via Seven Sisters.

What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

I'm a bit OCD

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?

Bullies

Who would you most like to have met and why?

Myself last week so that I could have given **him this week's winning lottery numbers.**

What was your most embarrassing moment?

I remember when I was about 9 letting out **this enormous guff in the doctor's waiting room.**

Four words to describe yourself.

Sensitive, Pragmatic, Optimistic, GSOH

Road race report

By Nigel Harrop



Another excellent season for Seamons road racing members, with successes across most of the categories. In the Youth category, Sean Davenport has produced a number of excellent rides in the company of experienced Senior competitors, achieving two first places in his age group. Junior Jack Robinson has achieved a notable 3rd place in a British Cycling CDNW event, crossing the line ahead of the main bunch and first in his category. The two of them are set for excellent racing careers in the years ahead.

New girl on the road racing scene, Joanna Blakely has impressed everyone with her “first female” placing in the challenging TLI High Peak Road Race and a second place in a criterium on the Blackpool Palatine circuit.

Other successes for the veteran category riders include Ashley Cress with a first, second and fourth; Phil Brydges, a second and third; Rob Cleary with a fifth place; and Nigel Harrop with four category wins and numerous other placings.

Senior riders Ed Blum and John Spearman have got a taste for bunched racing by taking part in the Oulton Park events on the famous circuit and it won't be long before they too begin to get into the placings.

One of the road racing highlights of the year has been the promotion of the club's annual Seamon's Evening Road Race under the rules

Photo: Sean Davenport (centre) mixing it with the Seniors. Watch out, guys, things can only get better...

Road race report...

and regulations of TLI Cycling. This year's event, mercifully dry, was held on Tuesday 26th June. Such is the popularity of the event that once again the event was full and entries closed a month before race day!

The event consists of three consecutive age related races with up to 30 competitors in each, starting at five minute intervals, over three and three quarter laps of a nine mile circuit based on Allostock in Cheshire. Once again there was tremendous support from club members, twelve of whom were participants, and scores more who turned out to marshal the course, organise the riders signing-on, drive the event lead-cars, judge the finish and set out the course signs. First Aid was provided by British Red Cross.

Event 1, for riders aged under 45 was won by Andrew Prince of Stafford RC; Event 2, for the 45 to 54 age group with Youth and Junior competitors, was won by top local Junior Tom Bracegirdle of Team Elite/Paul Bethell Electrical, with Seamons CC's Sean Davenport the first Youth category rider; Event 3,

for the 55+ age group was won by the country's premier veteran racing cyclist Alan Kemp, Weaver Valley CC, with former National Professional RR Champion, Milk Race Stages and Kellogs Criterium Series winner, Phil Thomas, Liverpool Mercury/Dolan, in second place. Nigel Harrop from Seamons CC managed 8th place.

Without the support of club members, excellent promotions such as this could not be staged. Many competitors have expressed their thanks to the club and to its members, who were magnificent with their support. Provisional date for 2013 is Tuesday 25th June.

Road racing ropes

If the idea of running a road race has ever piqued your interest then please contact Nigel Harrop. Nigel is more than happy to show prospective impresarios the TLI ropes at the Seamons RR in June.

Helping out is also a great way to contribute to the continuing success of club life.

Local audax events

For further information contact the organiser or Audax UK. [Full details and entry forms are available from the Audax website.](#)

Saturday 6th April 2013: From Eureka Cafe ---Eureka Excursion 200k; Two Mills Tour 120k; Two Mills Twirl 60 K (all flat!) (org Dave Matthews)

Saturday 18th May 2013 (tbc): From Willington Hall--- Seamons CC Tour of the Berwyns 200k, 3 AAA; Seamons CC Llangollen Panorama 135k, 1.5AAA (org Dave Barker)

Saturday 8th June 2013: From Corwen--- Barmouth Boulevard 200k, 3.5AAA; Barmouth Boulevard-Vrynwy Variant 200k,

3.75AAA; Brenig Bach 100k, 2 AAA; Bala Parade 60k (org Dave Matthews)

Sunday 25th August 2013: From Bala--- Wild Wales---approx 85miles and 7000ft ascent (org D. Holder---non Audax)

Sunday 15th September 2013: From Old Ma's Tattenhall----Pystill Packing Momma 200k, 3.5AAA; Momma's Mountain Views 135k, 2 AAA; Momma's Leafy Lanes 60k (org Dave Matthews)

Saturday 19th October 2013: From Corwen ---"The Clwydian 200k, 3.5 AAA; The Clwyd Gate 135k,2.25AAA; The Bala MiniBash 60k (org Vicky Payne)

Be sociable

By Darren Buckley

Volunteers are being sought to help support Social Section rides, the first place many new riders experience a club run.

Club Development Officer Darren Buckley, the member who has led the club's youth work and helped set up the Social Section, says the Social runs have become victims of their own success with increasing numbers of riders – not just new ones – trying it out. The requirement for volunteers is to ensure that new riders are not only introduced to the etiquette and discipline of group riding, they are also properly chaperoned all the way around while they find their fitness and Seamons compass.

Darren says more runs co-ordinators are needed so the burden of making the Social Section a continued success is shared out, rather than relying on a few key individuals. "We should all remember our first rides with the club and how much help we needed. I relied on the club and its members for my introduction to club runs, racing and time trials. I remember my earliest rides as a 15-year-old being looked after by older members. I didn't ask them, they just did it.

"Two I remember in particular were Malc Judge and Bob Davies. Sadly, Malc died of a brain tumour a few years after I had surgery to remove mine. Bob used to help juniors get

to and join in races and lead junior rides too. He was also a sad loss for the club when he died of cancer a few years ago. Those members watched out for new riders and helped them learn the wheels.

"That early help is why I tried to put something back in to this great and growing club we are all members of! The people who helped me did so because they supported the club; we need more people like that to help support the Social Section," said Darren.

"Many members have got years of experience of club riding and a huge knowledge of lanes and roads, all I'm asking is for more of them to share that with our newer members. I reckon anyone volunteering to help out would only have to commit to a date maybe once or twice a year," he added.

The point was not just that co-ordinators took part in the Social rides, they made an actual commitment to help run them on the dates they'd agreed, said Darren. Typically, that would involve maybe leading the run, being the sweeper at the back of the run or partnering any newbies as the run made its way.

"Please think about helping," he added. If you can help, please contact Darren Buckley on 0780 3513098 or the Social run co-ordinator Neil Rothwell.



A member of London Cycling Campaign's Brompton Users' Group is teased one time too many by the capital's cycle couriers (left).

The experimental Stealth Cycling Reconnaissance Corps founders on the limitations of 1870's technology (right).



The circuit of death

By Dave Matthews



Back in July 1998 the “Etape du Tour” took one of its more difficult routes over a distance of 189km from Grenoble to Les Deux Alpes. In the process, the Col du Glandon 1908m, Col de la Croix de Fer 2068m, Col du Telegraphe 1566m and Col du Galibier 2646m were traversed.

This is the stage on which Marco Pantani destroyed Jan Ullrich’s challenge to win the 1998 Tour de France in terrible wet and cold conditions by riding away from him and gaining 10 minutes on the last climb up to Les Deux Alpes 1650m.

Just a few days before the Tour stage, we had conditions of extreme heat for the Etape du Tour, following exactly the same route as the Pros---so hot that the melted tar on the climbs seemed to be flowing down hill. Out of 7000 entrants only 5500 turned up and of these only 2200 managed to finish in the extreme conditions. I was one of the many failures on the day---starting off feeling very weak from a bout of flu gained on a 220k audax ride the previous week in Provence, getting fried by the sun and eventually being swept up by the broom wagon near the sum-

Photos: *Seamons team at the foot of Alpe D’Huez, July 2003 (above); On the Col de Sarenne (right)*

mit of the Croix de Fer.

There was however, one outstanding Seamons ride on the day by John Pardoe. John did not have an official entry, but managed to join the event surreptitiously somewhere on the road from Grenoble to the base of the Glandon. He then rode up the col holding a video camera in one hand as he powered up the slopes. We were hoping to join up on the road, but due to their being several thousand riders in the way and my early departure into the broom wagon, we never did connect until Les Deux Alpes after the finish.

John continued his film making exploits throughout the route. At St Michel De Maurienne John met Carol who had cycled from Bourg D’Oisans back over the Galibier to deliver an essential supply of John’s favourite honey butties for lunch. The two of them then continued over the Telegraphe and Galibier, still filming, until we three met up again in the finish village.

I still have a copy of the video which also includes film of a Seamons traverse of the Way-



farer track above Chirk in the mid 2000's. Quite a nostalgia trip!

My failure on the Etape route was not to be taken lightly and over the next few years I made strenuous efforts to return to ride either the "Brevet Randonee des Alpes" or the "Marmotte" --- both of which follow equivalently strenuous routes over the same cols as the 1998 Etape. "It had to be done!" to set my mind at rest.

Finally everything came together in 2003 when I travelled out with a bunch of the Seamons CC and my wife to Bourg D'Oisans to watch the Tour on Alpe D'Huez and attempt the 160km "Marmotte" round the Croix de Fer, Telegraph and Galibier.

During early acclimatisation a group of us cycled up to Alpe D'huez and returned east via the beautiful Col de Sarenne to the Barrage and the lower slopes of the Col du Lauteret which then lead to Bourg D'Oisans. Whilst chatting to a group of racing lads up on the Sarenne we happened to mention the Marmotte route. Oh yes---that's known locally as

the "Circuit of Death" they responded. Can't be sure if that comment added to or reduced my determination to do the ride, but it did emphasise the need to adopt a sensible pace to avoid burn out.

After spending a non cycling day watching the Tour ride up to Alpe D'Huez, my alarm was set for 05:00 next morning to get an early start on the Croix de Fer before the sun got to work. I arrived where the Seamons were camping (we had a gite nearby) at the foot of Alpe D'Huez and set off for the cols at 07:15. The early part of the ride to Rochetaillee and then up to Allemond was pleasant in the early morning cool. I found a cafe there which had coffee but no food, so broke the rules by eating my own muesli bar to store up energy for the slopes ahead.

The ride up to the Col du Glandon, the start of the Croix de Fer, is a long steady haul except for one section where the old road has collapsed on one side of the valley. At this point you have to descend to a stream way down in the valley and then follow a steep 12% as-

The circuit of death...



cent up the far side to regain the original road line.

The Col du Glandon road arrives from the left eventually and you continue on past a large lake, Barrage du Chambon, to the summit of the Croix de Fer, 32k from the start. I was accompanied on this section by two Dutch lads who were riding with a support car carrying all their food, extra drinks and spare clothing. This certainly cuts down on the weight and stress on a big ride---a luxury I did not possess on this occasion.

There is a good summit cafe on this Col. Sitting in the sun drinking a Coke, I nervously remembered descending this col in the broom wagon in 1998. The road seemed very steep and a number of bends contained crashed race bikes with forks forced back into the down tube--- with no sign of the unfortunate rider.

Remembering to be careful, I descended without incident until I had my big scare a few kilometres from the foot of the col when my wheels caught in a rut as I was descending at around 60kph. Fortunately the rut disgorged me still upright and pointing for-

wards as I thanked my lucky stars for not crashing onto the tarmac.

The road turns east into the Maurienne valley following the 30k descent at St Jeanne de Maurienne, whence a gentle 15k rise takes you to St Michel de Maurienne and the foot of the Col du Telegraphe. At this point I decided to get a meal as the dreaded Col du Galibier loomed far above the Telegraphe and I would need all the energy I could get to ride up it.

Whilst this meal was necessary, it contributed to me having a really hard time on the Telegraphe as I strove to deal with the heat, the gradient, my accumulating tiredness and digesting the meal. I was also reminded of distressing sights on the Etape when I saw quite a few riders collapsed at the side of the road in the heat---some of them with their eyes rolled back in the sockets. Not a pretty sight!

Eventually I crested the Telegraphe which is currently rated as my worst col experience to date; a record I have no wish to beat! The road then descends to Valloire at the foot of the Galibier where I was able to recover at a cafe drinking yet another Coke.

The climb up the Galibier from Valloire, one of the most iconic climbs in Europe, rises 1216m in 18k to a breathtaking altitude of 2646m. The views of the surrounding mountains are fantastic as the road winds up at an average gradient of 7% and maximum 10%. Being fairly tired by this time, somehow the phrase **"Cream Crackered"** kept on floating through my head as I ground up the slopes.

There is a road tunnel entrance cutting through the upper reaches of the mountain, which has been used by the Tour de France at times, but no such luck on this occasion. After a short rest at the tunnel entrance I set off to ride the steep upper hairpins with the summit looking deceptively close. Eventually, I crested the final bend to the col summit



Photos: (clockwise from above left); *Croix de Fer summit; Neat the summit of Galibier; Dave Matthews “cream crackered” having completed the ride.*

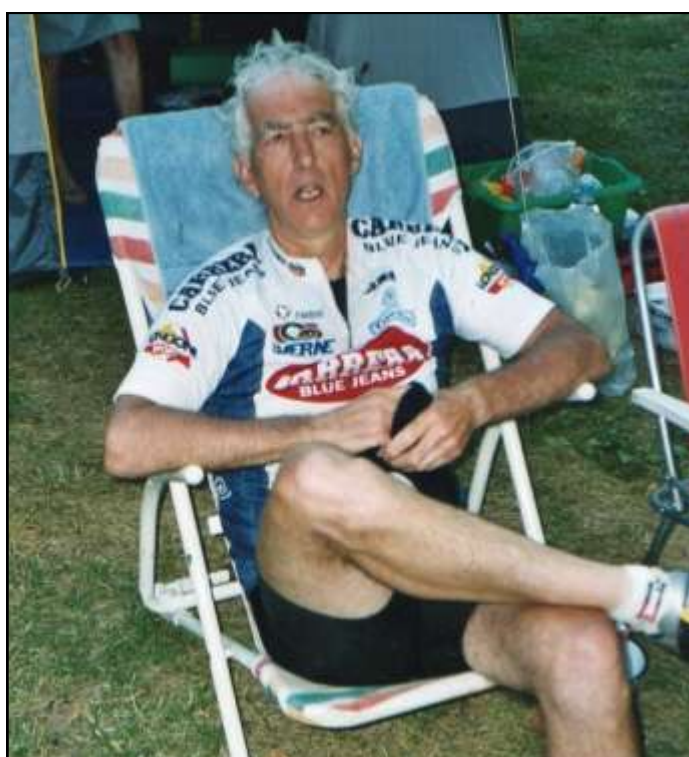
and a whole new set of spectacular views over to the Dauphine Alps opened up. I had a fantastic sense of elation here as surely the ride was in the bag---after 5 years of frustration attempting to rectify my Etape failure in 1998.

The descent on the south side of the col is very steep with sharp bends, so I rode down very carefully to the cafe at the head of the Col du Lauteret. At the cafe I had a good rest prior to descending 20k west down the Lauteret road to Bourg D’Oisans. It is tempting to think that all is easy from this point, but there is a sting in the tail. After a long descent to the Barrage, the road rises again for a couple of kilometres. As my body had generally frozen up during the descent, this hill demanded a real effort to conquer my fatigue and seized up leg muscles.

Once over the top of this last hill, I enjoyed a further long descent to the campsite and my **Seamons friends at the foot of Alpe D’Huez.** A small welcoming party cheered me in and Carol, Club President at the time, mopped my

fevered brow with a cloth straight out of the mucky washing up bowl. It felt great—and as I had already been up to Alpe D’Huez 3 times that week, we decided to give that further treat a miss.

So then I settled in to a hot shower, big feed, lots of drink and a great sense of satisfaction that I had finally managed to ride one of the most iconic and challenging circuits in the Alps.



Testing times

By John Barry

I started in my role as Time Trial Secretary at the AGM in October 2011 so I have just completed my first year. I don't race myself, so this is the first time I have been so closely involved with the racing members of the club. I have previously helped out with the Wednesday night races but I see now that Wednesdays are only a small part of the racing year. Many of our riders turn out to race on Saturday mornings, then to ride with the club on Sunday mornings, and then to race again on Wednesday evenings. Some race in between too.

It's been great to see new members to the club showing interest in racing. Some have hesitated to commit to an event, but after a bit of encouragement from more experienced racers, they have all taken the plunge. Usually they start with one of our Wednesday races because they are so friendly and informal. They have all enjoyed themselves and gone on to take part in open events.

What is also great and doesn't get acknowledged enough is the veteran riders who are still turning in performances that many a younger rider would be delighted with. We have a lot of very competitive racers in their 50s, 60s, and even in their 70s. How do they do it? We take them for granted because they have been winning awards for so many

years.

It has been a particularly good year for our junior members. They have developed and progressed and are competing on an equal footing with senior riders both in our club events and in open events.

All the Time Trial competitions we run, both club and open events, are listed in the racing rules section of our handbook. I have just finished drawing up a table that summarises them and you may find it easier to look at. It shows the competition name, the relevant events, and the prizes. If anyone would like to have a copy, I can email it to you. I will also put it on the forum to download.

The final competitive club event of the season is our hill climb. We had beautiful weather this year and a wonderful day. I would recommend it to everyone as both a riding experience and a social event. It's the closest most of us will ever come to the experience a competition mountain top finish. As you reach the top of the climb, the lane narrows and your clubmates close in on you, shouting encouragement. For anyone who doesn't excel at climbing, there's the downhill event afterwards. For anyone who doesn't want to do either, there's the following meal.

In addition to the competitions, what about



the Fun-10, which just gets better every year? The costumes (optional) were outrageous and the excellent meal in our own room in the Kilton afterwards made for a terrific evening. **If you didn't make it in 2012, put it in your diary now for 2013!**

All these events happen because of the people who put their time into arranging them and making them happen. Most importantly, they make them happen in safety. Thanks to everyone who has contributed. If you want to help, let me know. **You won't just be giving; you'll also get plenty back because it's one of the best ways to get to know your clubmates.**

I haven't listed any names because if I start, it's very difficult to know where to stop. I do name some of our many stars though in my end of year report, which is available on the forum or by email. Please get a copy.

Finally, this is not just my first year as **Time Trial Secretary; it's also of course my first year on the club committee.** This has been a **great experience and I've seen some of what all the other committee members do for the club.** Their names are on page 4 of the handbook and each of them fulfils a vital role in the club. Karen Popplewell has chosen to not take a formal role but without her help, Sally would have an impossible task in organising the annual dinner. Many thanks to all of them for making the club possible, and many thanks to all of you for joining in and making the club a club.



MDLCA news

MDLCA dinner

Karen P dashed over from the club AGM in Altrincham to the Ladies' Dinner in Stockport, arriving just in time to receive the award for **her and Sally, who won the BAR and "50" team shields for 2012.**

JP arrived in time for the dancing, hooray. **Hopefully the dates won't clash next year...**

MDLCA delegate's report

The Manchester Ladies Association have promoted their usual 6 events this year, sometimes teaming up with other clubs to prevent course clashes or to share catering facilities.

Seamons Ladies have done well again, Karen Popplewell being runner-up in the Ladies BAR behind Viv Slack of the Manchester Wheelers, and Sally Cowan and Karen winning the BAR team and the 50 Shield. Joanne Blakeley has done some great times in her first time-trialling season, and did an excellent ride in the National Hill Climb (nothing to do with the Manchester Ladies, just great! She came 5th out of 21 ladies on the infamous Rake, in Ramsbottom).

Remember you don't have to be a lady to enter the Ladies Invitation events, just enter. You still ride on your own, but your time is combined with the lady of your choice – if you make one.

The Manchester Ladies had their annual weekend away in the camping barn at Cerri-gydrudion, 11 of us between 12-87 years old, all on bikes.

The Chelford Chicks rides on Saturdays from Chelford Post Office attract between 7 and 12 girls, covering 40-60 miles depending on weather, terrain, and who is out. The cafe is the main thing...

Aberdeen to the Orkneys

By Jeanette Barber



Early on Saturday morning 25th August, Paul and I cycled up Hale Rd. on heavily laden bikes (Paul's, to be honest, considerably heavier than mine) towards Scotland! We cycled as far as the airport station and took the train to Aberdeen. We followed Sustran's Aberdeen to Shetland route (but only going as far as the Orkney Isles), pretty much following National Cycle Route number 1. Our first week was spent on the Scottish mainland, making our way to Thurso, cycling approximately 55 miles per day, and staying in a different B&B each night. Then we took the ferry to the Orkneys and spent six nights (two nights in each of three locations) on the Orkneys before getting the overnight ferry back to Aberdeen and the train back home.

As we wheeled the bikes out of Aberdeen station it started to rain lightly but within 30

minutes the heavens opened! It was really some of the heaviest rain we have ever cycled in and combined with the fact that we were both adjusting to the handling of such heavy bikes and our route took us through Old Aberdeen which was all cobbled roads, it was not the most auspicious start to a two week cycling holiday. We took shelter under the canopy of a tree for a while, but still the rain came through, and as lightning was flashing all around, we decided it would be more sensible to carry on and, anyway, it was impossible to get any wetter!

The Sustran's route was great, it kept us away from busy roads at all times and was well signposted. Mostly the route followed small roads but with good surfaces and if we went through a town or city, we were kept on cycle tracks or quiet residential roads. We

hardly saw a pothole in a fortnight – quite a change from cycling around Trafford and Cheshire! Sometimes we cycled along disused railway tracks, but it was no problem, Paul was riding his Trek hybrid and I was on a Cannondale cyclocross with 28mm tyres and mudguards.

There was only one point where we had some doubts about the route (and we realised afterwards that an alternative was marked on the map. In fact it said “steep steps on both sides of footbridge over the Kyle of Sutherland” and “alternative route if unable to negotiate steps at Invershin”). Hindsight is a marvellous thing! We were heading for a hotel in Invershin (once again in torrential rain) and were quite tired – amazing how much harder it is to cycle with a heavy load – and we blithely followed the NCN1 signs along the edge of Dornoch Firth to Culrain (about 15 miles). At Culrain we could see Invershin on the opposite side of the Kyle of Sutherland and a NCN1 signpost told us to turn right, although it looked suspiciously like a footpath! Well, despite being clearly identified as a cycle path it was actually a slightly muddy footpath which after approximately 250 metres led to a very, very high railway bridge and attached to the side of this railway bridge was a scary-looking metal footpath for pedestrians (and stupid cyclists). The side of the valley we were on was much higher than the other side and so to get to the bridge, there were approximately 100 steep, narrow metal steps. It was impossible to carry our laden bikes, so all the panniers had to come off and we carried first panniers and then bikes down the steps and then (well for me) the real horror started! The bridge was constructed of metal



Photos: Lunch stop on Orkney's busy A836 (left); the scary bridge (above).

mesh and you could see through it and it was VERY, VERY HIGH and I was completely unable to look down at the rushing water miles below so I held the handrail and walked slowly across without ever looking down, leaving Paul to manoeuvre panniers and both bikes across.

Another scary moment involving high bridges was crossing the Beaulieu Firth from Inverness to the Black Isle. We used the cycle path alongside the A9(T) which is completely segregated from the traffic but the bridge is high and exposed, about 1/2 mile long and there was a very strong wind blowing from our left and I had great trouble controlling the bike and keeping in a straight line. Even worse I had to suffer most unwelcome criticism from hubby following behind!

We stayed in some absolutely delightful B&Bs and were always made to feel so welcome. Our first stop was only 30 miles from **Aberdeen**, we hadn't arranged for an evening meal but as we walked in our hostess said that as the weather was awful, she had popped a chicken in to roast and if we wanted we could eat with her. We did and it was lovely, full roast dinner with pudding

Aberdeen to Orkney...

and wine at her kitchen table, for a fiver each! Other B&B hosts offered to do our laundry and on the Orkneys, on one day when we **couldn't cycle due to 50 mph winds and gusts** of 70 mph, our host took us out for 4 hours in his Land Rover, to show us all the sites that we had planned to cycle to that day and the next day his wife drove us and our bikes to Kirkwall. What service!



Most of the time the weather was OK, always **quite windy but it didn't rain too much** and we did have some lovely sunshine too. The scenery was fantastic. It was so varied, we cycled from Aberdeen to Banff on the Moray Firth through beautiful, slightly undulating countryside, then from Banff to Inverness it was a mixture of picturesque fishing villages (Portsoy, Cullen, Buckie) and interesting small towns (Elgin and Forres). After Inverness we crossed onto the Black Isle and it began to get a little more hilly and forested but very pretty. We took the Cromarty ferry to Nigg and then headed directly north across wonderful highland moors with truly spectacular views on hilly but empty roads (the A836 is a single track road with passing places). Once we hit the northern coast of

Scotland at Tongue we turned east and headed to Thurso, again beautiful and quite hilly. Amazingly we were passed on the **outskirts of Bettyhill by other Seamon's members** (Karen and Steve)!

Eventually we reached the Orkney Isles and **they were wonderful! We didn't have enough** time to explore all of the smaller islands but we saw pretty much all of West Mainland, East Mainland, South Ronaldsay and Hoy.

These islands are made for cycling (well if you discount the wind), the roads are quiet and no pot holes! Ferries go regularly from one island to another and bikes are carried for a nominal charge. There is so much to see, the archaeology is really impressive, masses of Neolithic sites, amazingly well preserved (unfortunately, we **didn't get to see the most impressive one** – Skara Brae – due to storms and high winds that day, the site was shut as it is so close to the sea) but we

still saw Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and Tomb of the Eagles. There were several small museums showing how life was in the past (unbelievably hard) and at Lyness on Hoy, the Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and Museum was absolutely fascinating, so informative and well done (and amazingly it had free entry). We spent about 3 hours at Scapa Flow Visitor Centre and wanted longer but we had to catch the final ferry back to West Mainland.

Our final two days were spent on South Ronaldsay and to get there we cycled over the Churchill Barriers, a series of four causeways with a total length of 1.5 miles which link the Orkney Mainland to South Ronaldsay via Burray and the two smaller islands of

Lamb Holm and Glimps Holm. The barriers were built in the 1940s, by Italian prisoners of war, as naval defences to protect the anchorage at Scapa Flow. In October 1939, HMS Royal Oak, at anchor in Scapa Flow, had been sunk by a German U-boat despite the presence of sunken block ships (which you can still see above the water at low tide). These permanent barriers were built to prevent any further attacks.

One of the loveliest churches I have ever seen, the Italian Chapel, right next to the Barriers, is a highly ornate Catholic chapel built by Italian prisoners of war during World War II. Two Nissen huts were joined end-to-end, the corrugated interior covered with plaster-

board, the altar and front facade (concealing the shape of the hut and making the building look like a church) were made out of concrete left over from work on the barriers and then it was painted, the interior decoration is exquisite.

It was an absolutely fantastic touring holiday and Paul and I highly recom-



mend it. If anybody from the club wants to do the same route, we can provide details of all the amazing B&Bs we stayed in. But be warned, the food was so good, I came home 6lbs heavier than when we started!

Photos: On Hoy (above, left); the Churchill barrier and block ship (above); the Italian prisoners of war chapel



Route des Grandes Alpes Pt.1

By Dave Matthews

This inspiring adventure route heading south from Lake Geneva to the Mediterranean Sea through the mountains of the French Alps was initiated by the Touring Club de France in 1911, as a way of stimulating motorised tourism. A major road building programme was initiated in 1913 which culminated in 1937 with the completion of the road over **the Col de l'Iseran 2764m, which at the time was the highest road in Europe.** The consequent **"Route des Grand Alpes" (see map)** was a great success and is still a popular motor route, especially with motorcyclists who were present in large numbers during our journey. Total climbing for the route described is approximately 14,700m (48,250ft).

These mountain roads, "Les Cols Mythiques", have always featured in the Alpine stages of the Tour de France since the turn of the last century with the riders racing over such legendary cols as the Cormet de Roselend 1967m, Col du Galibier 2646m, Col d'Izoard 2361m and the highest of them all the Cime de la Bonette 2802m

There are several allowable variations to the **"Route des Grande Alpes", but all start from Thonon-Les-Bains** which is situated midway along the south side of Lake Geneva, and finish at the Mediterranean Sea. The official cycling **"Raid Alpine" organised by the cycle club of Thonon-Les-Bains** follows a similar route to the Grand Tour, finishing in Menton. A medal is available for those who can complete the Raid in 7 days or less.

There is an article on the Raid by Sarah Blackburn in **"The Squirrel" autumn/winter 2010.** Sarah rode it along with husband Alan and Charles Carraz in July 2010 climbing lots of cols and burning up thousands of calories which were replaced with many litres of ice cream.

Background to this trip

Last summer I joined an international group of **40 cyclists to ride the "Raid Pyrenean"** from Atlantic to Mediterranean in 5.5 days, supported by Pyractif. This group contained a great range of riding abilities from gold standard Etape riders to doddering pensioners such as myself. Thanks to the slick planning of the Pyractif team, we all finished the raid successfully at more or less the same time. Flushed with a combination of elation and exhaustion after this ride, I immediately resolved to retire from extreme challenges and ride more sensibly in future.

A couple of weeks into this retirement I inevitably got the itch to do another big ride--- but at a slower pace than this Raid Pyrenean which had been right on/slightly beyond my personal limits. Crossing the Southern Alps seemed a suitable follow-up and after some research on the internet I found that KE travel run a supported Alpine trip over 9 days. This seemed like a more relaxed plan than the Pyrenees traverse and I decided to book the ride for June 2012. Once the route was booked, I discovered that the ride was actually accomplished in 7 days as day 1 (prologue) consists of riding from the airport to Thonon-Les-Bains (50k) and day 9 is a short run into Nice Airport (14k). Consequently, the difficulty level is in fact the same as the Official Raid Alpine.

Once I was committed to this trip in late 2011, as my main holiday for 2012, a number of fellow Chester Easy riders expressed an interest---so eventually four of us (DM + Ray Stigter, Dr Martin Donaldson & Dave Pipe) decided to give it a go.

Training

Whilst looking at my ride stats in mid No-



vember 2011, I realised that with a big effort I could just get in 12,000km for the year.

This seemed like a good challenge and a good way of starting to get fit for 2012---so I rode over 300k per week for the last six weeks of 2011 to achieve the goal.

The New Year started well with the hilly and very windy 106k Audax "Hokey New Year" on 7 January and then a Chester Easy Riders' 116k ride to Malkins Bank on January 12th. This latter ride elicited a written comment

about the excessive pace, so I knew that the training was going well. Unfortunately, as with all the best laid plans, this training plan came to an abrupt halt when I hit black ice on a short downhill stretch near Bala on January 14 and flew off into a grass bank at the side of the road. Nothing broken, but a twisted groin, bruised hip, 2 displaced neck vertebrae, bruised shoulder and a crown blown off one of my teeth with the force of the impact meant no cycling for the next few weeks.

Route des Grandes Alpes...

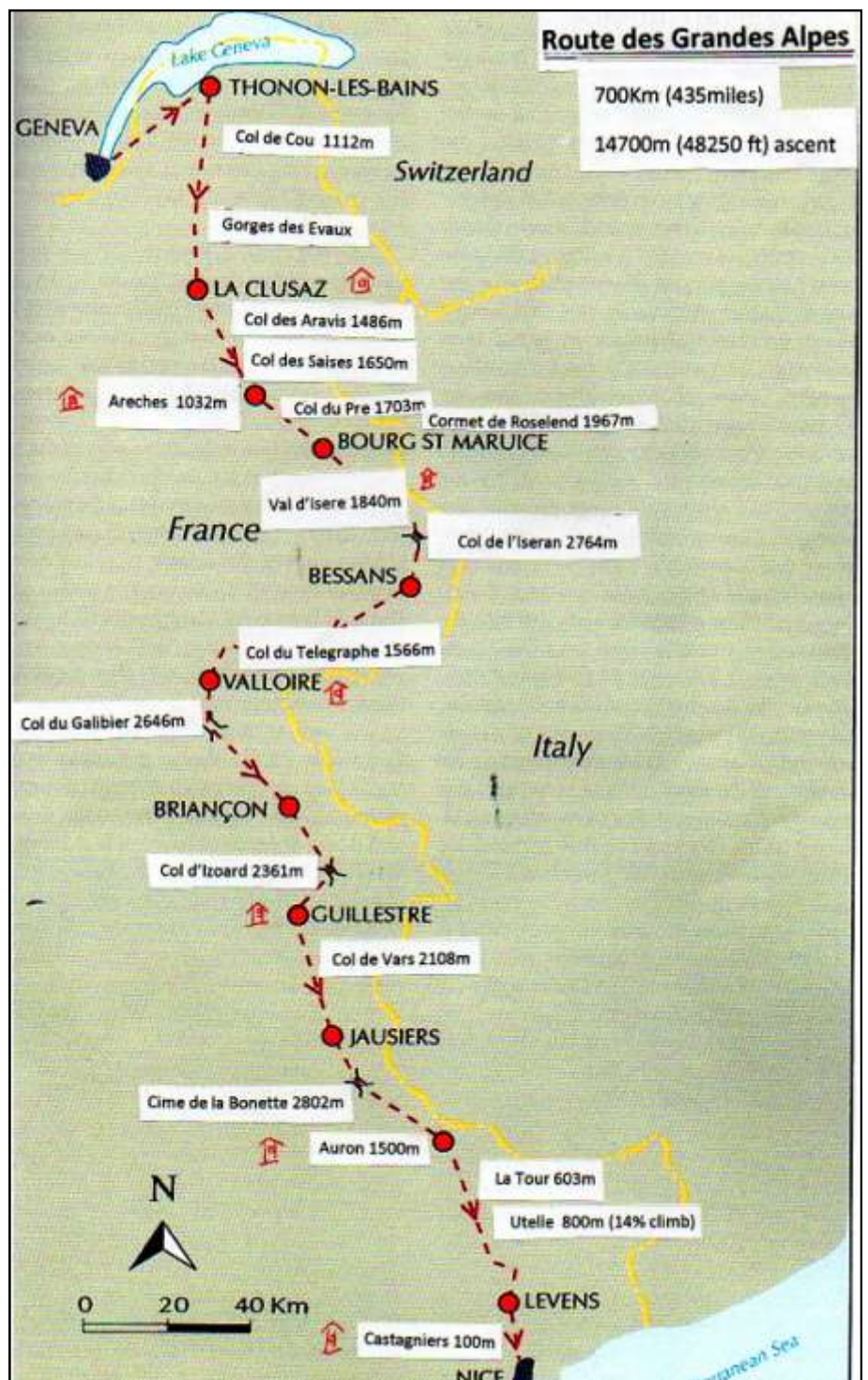
The timing of this crash was especially unfortunate as I was due to travel with the Chester group in late January for a week's training camp in Javea, Costa Blanca. Well I missed this trip, but fortunately a crack Seamons CC cycling team, ably led by John Carberry, were due in Javea in late March for their annual cycling holiday and still had room at the villa for me.

I wasn't too sure how well I would be riding

in Spain, as I was still recovering from my injuries--- especially my shoulder which was still giving a fair amount of pain. However, the warm weather must have helped recovery as by the end of the trip I was able to comfortably ride two of my favourite 100k hilly routes from Altea on separate days---the Col de Tudons 1031m and Castell de Castells with the Col de Rates 540m. My recovery was in marked contrast to the other lads, who in spite of logging up a record mileage for the week left with a series of fitness problems--- John Carberry-strained Achilles tendon; Dave Barker- Bronchitis; John Hammond- hernia. Rob Morton flew off to get married to his Spanish fiancÈ which might affect his fitness long term---but he seemed pretty relaxed about that prospect.

At the end of the week, my four Seamons mates left to fly back to Manchester on the Sunday. I then enjoyed an extra day's

ride to Pego before packing up to return alone to Alicante to fly to Liverpool on Monday evening. All was going well until news came through that the French air traffic controllers had gone on immediate strike and many flights were being cancelled, including the one to Liverpool. This is always very frustrating, but especially so for me as I was carrying a large bike box weighing 28Kg as well as a suitcase and rucksack. As a result, I was not able to move without an airport trolley for the luggage, and was stuck in the air-



port for an indefinite, possibly several days, time period.

The one glimmer of hope was that a later flight might get through to Gatwick and fortunately I was able to transfer on to it. Eventually this flight left after many nervous delays and I got home to Chester after a sleepless journey via Gatwick, Manchester and Liverpool airports, some 24 hours after leaving Javea. Whilst glad to be home, I had strained my back severely moving my cumbersome luggage several times during the journey---so it was back to fitness square one again with a very short 2 month time scale to recover and be in shape for the Alpine trip.

The next 2 months were filled with a combination of visits to the physio to sort out my back and (still sore) shoulder, along with a series of gradually longer, flat rides after two weeks complete rest. My first hilly effort came when I struggled round the 94k Forest of Bowland Audax on June 10th, just 5 days before we left for the Alps. Hardly the best preparation for seven days of col climbing! Fortunately, the prologue and first two days of the Grand Tour are not too difficult, so I left for Geneva hoping that I could ride myself in to some kind of form. In contrast, Ray and Dr Martin had been training flat out and were looking ominously lean and fit. Dave Pipe had been putting in a lot of secret training to the extent that his knees were giving trouble. So he might be joining me in the “autobus” as the other riders raced up the cols.

The prologue (51k, 200m ascent)

We flew out to Geneva on prologue day minus one to ensure that we could be back in the Airport at noon next day to assemble the bikes, meet the other cyclists and ride through to our start hotel at Thonon-Les-Bains. At the airport we met Stuart, our ride

leader from KE, Alex from Canada, Warren from New Zealand, Dr David from the Lake District and Mandy from Chamonix who did a sterling job driving the support van and setting up al fresco lunches on the route.

Once the bikes were assembled and luggage stuffed in the van, we initially followed an aerial cycleway that got us safely away from the airport, then onwards through Geneva City and eventually around the lake to a cafe stop in the beautiful old hamlet of Yvoire. During this initial ride I suffered a front wheel puncture (the first in 20 years cycling in the Alps) which was soon fixed, but an unfortunate omen of things to come.

It was a short ride from Yvoire to the Hotel where we met Paul from Aberdeen---the final member of our group to join us.

Day 1 Thonon-Les-Bains to La Clusaz (79k, 1600m ascent)

Ray and I set off 30mins early into the cool but fine morning, so that I could get a head start on the other, faster and fitter riders. A short way up the Col de Cou (1117m) Ray smoothly surged ahead while I rode a more sedate pace behind. Just as Ray moved out of sight round a bend, I suffered puncture number 2---this time in the rear wheel. By the time this puncture was fixed, all the other riders had streamed past and my cunning plan to ride the col in peace had failed.

I climbed the rest of the col without incident alongside Stuart, and then descended to our first al fresco lunch stop in a lay-by near Bonneville. It was now getting hot so we all took the opportunity to get well refreshed before entering the Gorges des Evaux en route to La Clusaz.

The road is fairly steep early on in the Gorges des Evaux and we were surrounded on the climb by a multitude of other cyclists in various stages of suffering due to the heat and

Route des Grandes Alpes...

the gradient. It transpired that many of these riders were nearing the end of a weekend sportive that had covered 1000km through the big Alpine cols of the area. Chapeau to them.

Eventually the climb angle lessened to enable us to enjoy a very pleasant ride through the wide upper reaches of the Gorge and eventually arrive at the ski resort of La Clusaz.

Day 2 La Clusaz to Areches (58k, 1600m ascent)

This day starts with an ascent of the Col des Aravis (1486m) which rises immediately from the hotel. Once again I attempted to get a 30 minute start on the younger riders and once again this was thwarted by puncture number 3 which reduced my lead to 15 minutes. However the Col is relatively easy from this side and I was able to get over the Col ahead of the bunch, to descend for 12k and meet up eventually with the support van at Flumet, at the foot of the Col des Saïses (1650m). This Col passed unremarkably, followed by a 16k descent to Beaufort where we all regrouped at an excellent cafe prior to climbing the initial slopes of the Col du Pre (1703m) for 5k to our overnight stop in the hamlet of Areches.

Day 3 Areches to Val-d'Isere (73k, 2200m ascent)

The first hard day of the trip started by continuing the climb up the steep Col du Pre for 7k and 700m, direct from the Auberge at Areches. Dave Pipe and myself left 30 minutes before the others and by a brilliant piece of planning the whole group arrived at the summit of the Col at the same time. All that is except Dr Martin who had obeyed a road blocked sign (ignored by the rest of us) and climbed 400m up the wrong road to a dead end. He eventually joined us in Bourg -St

Maurice after a lengthy delay.

We descended from the summit of the Col du Pre with its spectacular views of the surrounding mountains down to the Barrage de Roselend which forms the side of a huge mountain lake. The scenery in this area is truly beautiful and the climb to the Cormet de Roselend summit (1967m) follows an awe inspiring line through huge cliffs to its windy and barren summit. This ascent and the Col du Galibier were, in my mind, the highlights of the entire trip.

The 20k descent from the summit of the Cormet down to Bourg-St-Maurice is a really enjoyable classic on smooth roads with an ideal gradient and lots of interesting bends. Following this exhilarating experience we regrouped at the van for lunch, prior to the long 33k drag with 1000m ascent up the main road to the large ski resort of Val d'Isere (1840m). About 5k from Val d'Isere the road goes through several tunnels which are only dimly lit. Whilst travelling with great care through the longest of these (1k) a car swerved in close to me whilst overtaking and the next thing I knew was that my front wheel grabbed something and I sailed over the handlebars to a soft landing in a big pile of black muck.

Whilst picking myself up and examining the damage to bike and person, I found that a large, invisible mound of black grit, dirt and salt had built up at the side of the road in the tunnel, consisting of consolidated, dried spray from car and lorry wheels. When the overtaking car had swerved in towards me, my front wheel had touched this invisible trail of dirt and sent me flying into it.

My bike wasn't too damaged and I soon managed to kick all the bits back in a straight line again. Likewise my helmet which had somehow screwed round my head during the acrobatics. After a couple of minutes to recover

from the shock, I managed to ride out of the tunnel into daylight to inspect the rest of the damage which mostly comprised gouges out of my right knee and elbow with blood trickling out of the liberal coating of black gunge. This looked like a recipe for infection, so I washed the cuts out using my water bottle as best I could and applied a couple of antiseptic wipes that I always carry in reserve.

Soon after my temporary first aid fix, Mandy turned up in the van and phoned ahead to Ride Leader Stuart to expect me to arrive **somewhat battered at Val d'Isere, but basically in one piece.** Once I arrived at the hotel Ray escorted me to the room we shared, where he had thankfully, already delivered our luggage. I was soon wrapped in a couple of blankets, shivering a bit from delayed shock, whilst Dr. D did a star job in cleaning out my cuts with antiseptic using a stiff, new toothbrush (not too painful) and then brushing in more antiseptic to prevent infection (rather more painful). I was then presented with a prescription from the good Doctor for liberal quantities of red wine, to be taken internally, by both patient and Doctor. This obviously worked as I was able to ride without problems the next day and my wounds have now healed up a treat.

Day 4 Val d'Isere to Valloire (108k, 2100m)

The weather had been fine up to this point, but ominous black clouds were now gathering over the 2764m (9000ft) summit of the Col d'Iseran. By the time we got to the Col, a raging storm had blown in with low temperatures, mist and lashing rain. Mandy had rigged a tarpaulin sheet over the back of the van which gave us some limited shelter from the storm as we put on every available stitch of spare clothing. We then endured a really challenging descent for 20k into the rain and mist until we eventually reached the sanctu-

ary of the cafe at Bonneval-sur-Arc. In the cafe we all shivered and shook with the cold from the descent and took on board several hot drinks to try and get warm again.

Fortunately the storm relented after this point, so we gradually warmed up along the road to Bessans and then the long main road descent to St-Michel-de-Maurienne at the foot of the Col du Telegraphe (1556m). I was not looking forward to this col as I have bad memories of suffering here in 2003 whilst riding the Marmotte in extreme heat, and have always believed this to be my worst ever col experience. However, the temperature was cooler today and I found the Telegraphe a reasonable climb on this occasion.

This col is very popular with cyclists so the local authorities have erected large notices at several points advising cars to give the riders 1.5m clearance for safety. So you can imagine how pleased I was, especially in the light of my crash the day before, when a car raced up behind me and passed so close that the wind whistled between my brake lever and his wing mirror. I was so shocked that I was unable to send a universal greeting to the idiot driver.

There is a short, rapid descent from the Col du Telegraphe into Valloire and our hotel for the night. As I entered Valloire at the bottom of this hill, a car pulled out of a garage straight in front of me without looking and proceeded down the main street erratically at 20kph whilst crashing and banging in and out of low gears. After today's incidents, I needed my medical prescription for shaky nerves as well as the grazes!

To read of Dave's further exploits on the Route des Grandes Alpes please hold tight for next Spring's Squirrel.

York rally

By John Craig

During the arranging of the weekend it was decided that on the Friday there was going to be two rides. One longer ride and one short, the short ride was down the Trans Pennine trail to Riccall. The longer ride was setting off from the racecourse at 10:00 whilst the short ride was setting off at 12:00.

As Sheila (my wife) and I had decided to take the easier option Friday morning I loaded the bikes on the roof off the car and we were off. At setting off it was a light showery drizzle but mild and no wind, little did we know how much this was going to change. As we got onto the M60 the drizzle eased off and things were looking good until we started to climb up the Pennines and the rain started to land and then the wind started to whistle on the bikes on the roof. I can remember thinking that it's a good job that we brought our old bikes as the whistle turn to a howl. We landed at York Racecourse to find that Roger and Pete Coles had arrived and were sheltering in Roger's van. As we ate our lunch greetings were passed through closed windows as no one was brave enough to open a window as the rain was coming down like stair-rods at this stage. After sitting for about an hour, the rain eased off and it was decided that we should make a move. Due to the weather one of the suggestions was to walk into the city. This was even considered by Pete Coles and, **if you know Pete, you'll know that Pete does not do walking and it is normally his last resort.** After some deliberating, it was decided that we would stick with the original plan. We set off down the Trans Pennine Trail, which is fully tarmacked as the trail goes around York.

On this stretch of the Trans Pennine trail there are models of the planets of the solar system at various points. The scale of the

model planets is 575,872,239:1. So every 100 metres along the track corresponds to more than 57 million kilometres in space. On this scale the speed of light is 1.16 mph, so you can walk at 3 times the speed of light and easily cycle at 10 times the speed of light. As you are travelling faster than the speed of light every journey down the cycle track ends before it begins and every time you travel you become a little younger. The planets end with Pluto at Riccall, which was our destination.

On our way back the wind began to get stronger and was quite strong in the exposed areas. At this point our minds were focused on getting back to the racecourse to set up base camp. On arrival back at the our vehicles John Carberry and John Hammond had arrived back from the their ride and were a bit dryer from their last report. After the booking-in and finding our pitches, it was time to set up Camp Seamons.

The McAllisters (Malc, Paul and Mark) were already on site and putting up their awning. By now the wind had gathered strength so tent pitching was going to be interesting. The McAllisters had a three-man fight on against the elements with their awning, they were making steady progress and winning the fight. John Hammond decided to pitch his **tent using the sanctuary of John Carberry's van and Pete Coles did the same with Roger's van, let's hope that the wind direction does not change!!** Once we had pitched, our attention was drawn to the McAllisters, where there was a very brave fight continuing. Before we could get over to their pitch to render assistance, all of a sudden there was one stronger gust of wind and, with a shout from Malcolm, the fight was lost; the awning was flattened to the ground. Now Camp Seamons



was set up it was now time to organise food before the organised Friday evening pub ride. When we came back from collecting the food the McAllsitters' awning was nowhere to be seen. Whilst we were away a funeral had taken place, with Paul and Mark carrying the now deceased awning and Malc following behind video recording the proceedings as the awning was lowered into the skip; apparently it was a very solemn occasion. It was gone but not forgotten.

We later learned that the organisers had a meeting at 13:00 to decide whether to cancel the event and a decision was made at 15:00 for the event to go ahead.

At this point there was still no sign of Gordon (who was the other booked member of the party). After a brief exchange of texts, it was established that he was still at home as it was too windy across the M62 to bring his caravan across. So there is a way of keeping caravans off the road!!

Time was now rapidly approaching for the Friday evening traditional pub run John Carberry, Pete Coles, John Hammond, Roger, Sheila and myself, equipped for the elements, rode over to the meeting point. Instead of the usual 20 to 30 bikes there was just us, checking our watches to see if we were late but

this was not the case as we were unusually early. After a few minutes another rider turned up and then one other (yet another John and Pete). In the history of the event no-one can ever remember the evening ride with the numbers in single figures. So the Seamon's posse set off with an extra John and Pete in tow. A tour of two of the local ale houses were visited before retiring for bed. During the evening tour the weather had been kind was the mildest it has been all day. During the night the weather closed back in again, with the wind speed increasing and heavy rain. As Sheila's and my tent was pitched without any protection, we could hear this quite clearly but, despite the weather, we all a good night's sleep.

Still no sign of Gordon due to the wind, Wind 2 – Caravan 0.

After breakfast, we watched various vehicles being towed onto site. This included a police van with four police mountain bikes on the back. It got itself firmly planted and had to be towed out. It was time to do the first run around the trade stands to check for initial bargains. John Hammond had a list of items that he was after whilst the rest of us were just on the bargain look out. John Carberry found his role as shopping advisor to John

York Rally...

Hammond. There were various offers available including on trader's sign "The Village Bike – Lady's Specific Clothing marked at half price". Do people read these signs after they have printed it out? Needless to say Sheila did not buy anything here. We reconvened at the coffee stall to sample the coffee and a comparison of bargains was made during which our editor had some unusual advice on how to fit the lid on his coffee cup ...[Ed.]... (I'm leaving it up to the editor whether the advice is suitable for print using his editorial rights. If you are reading this, I'm assuming that he has not... [Ed.]). Sheila had purchase a waterproof jacket which was an extremely good price and which everyone seemed impressed with, so impressed that one member of our group announced he would buy one. **On checking the traders' stock it was found the special deal was only on the women's specific sizes. The men's fit jackets were twice the price.** Not to let this get in the way of a bargain, a size 16 was purchased. This was much to the amusement of my wife **Sheila as Sheila's was a smaller size. Pete Devine** then made an appearance (who was staying in local accommodation), very pleased with his purchase of a pair of Seamons longs in full livery. After an inspection to see if there were any problems with the item, of which none was found, Pete proudly announced that he purchased them for £25 (Tim, please note). This is the second time this bargain has been found: John Carberry got himself a pair a couple of years ago. In the afternoon there were the options of a ride or a trip into the City Centre, with all of us meeting up in the centre later on. York is a very cycling-friendly city and has a well-structured cycle network. Whilst riding into the centre, we could see ahead what ap-

peared to be ducks swimming in the cycle path. As we got further down the cycleway, it just disappeared into the river. Overnight the river had burst its banks and flooded the surrounding area. After a quick diversion onto the cycle path on the other side of the river, we arrived in the centre. Shortly after, Roger and Pete joined us, John Carberry and John Hammond went out for a quick ride, to join us later. After a short while, we received a text from the two John's to say that they had stumbled into an ale house just outside the city, so we went out to join them and then back to base. On the way out of the city, the river level had raised by a few more feet. Even though we had not had anymore rain, the water was still coming down from the hills from the rain last night.

Whilst laying in our tent in the morning I heard what sounded like someone breaking into a vehicle so I got up to investigate. Only to find at 7 a.m. in the morning it was Roger trying to break in to his own van. Apparently he left his van for a call of nature and the door closed behind him. For reasons of national security obviously we cannot publish how Roger broke into his van but with the aid of a pole rescued from the skip from the McAllister's tent and piece of wire cut from the dynamo of his bike, he was back in his van. By the marks on the paintwork on Roger's van, it is not the first time Roger has been caught short.

Whist we were having breakfast there was a vast array of vehicles being towed around the site, as heavier vehicles were just sinking into the now very soft ground. The police cyclists, **having learned from yesterday's sinking in the van**, decided to leave the van back at the station and cycle onto site on their mountain bikes with a bit more success. After breakfast it was time to ride down to the Minster for the annual cycle from the

Minster back to the race-course in full club kit. On our way to the Minster an even bigger diversion was needed as the river had now burst its banks on both sides. Whilst on a bridge deciding on our re-route, instead of the familiar "Do you know Johnny Pardoe?", which we often get when we are away from home this time, it was "Do you know Keith Stacy?". It's one of the things that has never



ceased to amaze me that since I've been a member of the club, that no matter how far we are away from home, someone knows one of the established members of the club and always remembers the club for the right reasons. After a quick diversion we arrived at the Minster only to find that the diversion was not quick enough and the other cyclists had left. With a cry from a bystander "they went that way," we were off and after a very short distance we found ourselves on the back of the long procession of cyclist with a steward and police cyclist behind us with the other police cyclist closing the major road junctions for us to pass though safely. After another diversion from the usual route we were back at the race-course.

Before we packed up Camp Seamons there was one quick run around the trade section to pick up any remaining bargains (as there are always some last minute reductions) and John Hammond still has some items that we wanted. John set off with his personal shopping assistant by his side. Final round of shopping done, it was time to pack up Camp Seamons. A member of the group, as he was loading his belongings into John Carberry's

van, was seen emerging from his tent with a fancy plastic box with "PlayMate" written down the side of it and his track pump in his other hand. He claimed it was a keep cool box.

It was a good weekend had by all. Despite the rain we all managed to avoid getting wet, with the exception of the two Johns who on Friday morning got a soaking, and we all managed to get in a higher than average mileage for a York Rally.

Photos: *Camp Seamons (previous page); The Ouse lives up to its name to inundate the riverside cycle routes (above); the King's Straith in the centre disappears under the flood waters (below)*



Northern Road Records Association

Inside the NRRRA

By Johnny Pardoe

Johnny Pardoe is the last club member to have set a record with the Northern Road Records Association - and that was 47 years ago. He set it with Jimmy Shuttleworth of the Stretford Wheelers on a tandem trike. They covered 246 miles to claim the 12 hour record. The record remains unbroken. Here he looks back at the history of the NRRRA and the records any one of us could try and break.

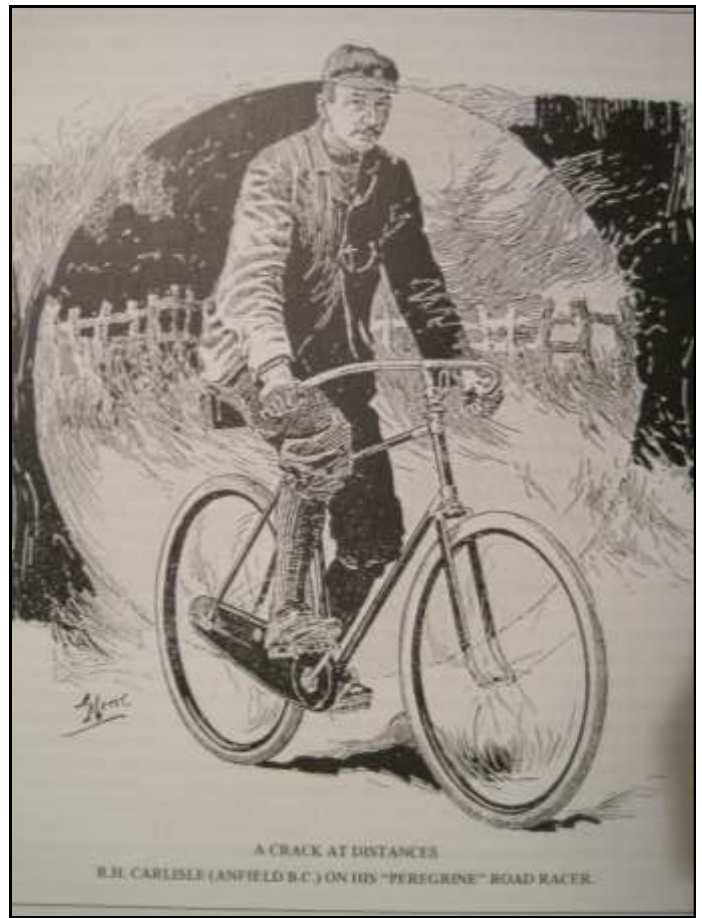


Following my report at the AGM I thought I would endeavour to explain the origin and purpose of the N.R.R.A.

The Association was formed in 1890, the objective being to establish a standard for records over set distances and Place to Place records over Northern roads, and to hallmark claims with absolute authority. Remember, this was long before the R.T.T.C. (now the C.T.T.) was formed in 1937.

In its early days the bicycle was the fastest vehicle on the road, and as a result cyclists were not always welcome by the Authorities (sound familiar?). But slowly respect was earned due to the correct behaviour of those early pioneer riders.

In May 1891, using a course starting at Rainhill and running through Warrington and along London road – now the A50 – to Arclid and back, using human pacers, possibly up to 5 tandems (that must have been some sight), R.H. Carlisle set up a 50 mile time of 2.54.10. Just to bring you up to date, on the 4th November 1990, the late Pete Longbottom, riding for the Manchester Wheelers, recorded a **record breaking time for a straight out “50”** of 1.30.14! using a course starting at Bowes Moor (av. Speed 33mph.)



In 1961 Delegates of the South Lancashire RC proposed that women’s record claims should be recognized, and this was agreed. Irene Southart set up the very first record with 2.14.56 for 50 miles, a very creditable time, bearing in mind she was also setting up the Manchester-Carlisle record at the time.

The Association’s records, which YOU can go for, are detailed below:

- 10 miles straight out
- 25 “ “ “
- 50 “ “ “
- 100 “ “ “
- 12 hours “ “
- 24 hours “ “
- Manchester – Carlisle
- Lancaster – York and back
- York – Berwick on Tweed
- Liverpool – Lincoln and back
- Birkenhead – Ludlow and back



Photos: RH Carlisle of Anfield Bicycle Club set the first 50-mile paced bicycle record on 9th May 1891 in 2:54:10 (left); Johnny Pardoe and Jimmy Shuttleworth put their marker down on 11th July 1965 (above).

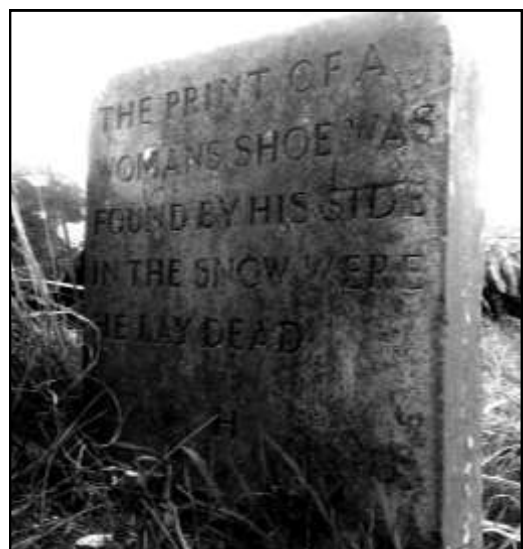
These records may be attacked on bicycle or tandem, tricycle or tandem tricycle, male or female or mixed on tandem. Sadly over the years interest in record breeding has waned, possibly because of lack of interest, cost, and volume of traffic.

There is a very interesting book detailing the history of the N.R.R.A. still available from "H" – Harold Nelson. If any interested member is interested in finding out more about this fascinating branch of our sport, or better still, having a go! then contact Johnnie Pardoe.

Where is it?

Where in Cheshire can you see this wayside landmark?

Answer on page 39.



UCI World Masters

By John Verbickas

Another throwaway remark to me earlier in the year, "fancy having a go at the Worlds Masters?" It was being held in Manchester so there were no travel worries. Not having raced at any level on the track, I did not think a lot about it. Later, I was asked again by my mates from the track, so I thought that I would agree but could change my mind if needed. You have to have a BC racing licence and be accredited.



I asked my mate George Brown from Stretford Wheelers what should I try my hand at. He said that I was no good at sprinting (he says it as it is) so I should have a go at the Scratch and Points. I entered both; not cheap at £35.00 per race and £35 for drug testing. As it came closer to the event, we started **training a bit harder on our "Structured, Quality Training" (SQT) sessions at the velodrome, twice a week even (seriously tough).** In our SQT sessions we ride a maximum of 88-inch gear but in racing you can ride whatever you can manage. My mentor George suggested I should go for a 90-inch gear, so another trip to the shop: a 50-tooth big chain ring, £50; a new chain, £15; all fitted with three weeks to go.

It was then down to the SQT, hoping that the coach would not notice. No problems, everybody was using bigger gearing, a blind eye **was turned to it (who says size doesn't matter?)** The new gearing was a lot harder to turn and slow down.

Two weeks before the championships I went to watch a Monday night track league, it looked a bit quick, mmm, mmm.

Saturday 6th October: signing in and collect-

ing my badge and race information, number 375. I would be racing on Wednesday and Friday. There were 437 riders from 20 countries.

On Sunday, I went to watch and see what it was all about. My badge got me into the well of the track, the area was penned off, with about 6-8 people, turbos, rollers, helpers, mechanics, masseurs, chairs, cycle bags and boxes, the big screen up, music, announcers. It looked rather serious. I went home feeling rather down, what had I let myself into?

On Monday night I went down again to watch our girls. Two silver medals for Brenda Tate, she was a track Champion years ago.

Wednesday 10th October: the Men's 65-69 Scratch Race; the big day, this was it. Action plan: took turbo, spare bike for the turbo, all my kit (Seamons, of course). There were not enough riders for heats, so we were to go straight into the final in the evening.

There was enough room in the pen for me with my mates from Manchester Vets, so I set up the turbo. Getting rather nervous, I called to have my bike weighed and measured, and for it to be checked that my number was on the correct way up. I only managed 10 minutes warm up on the track as they only al-

lowed 40 on the track at a time. Looking the part, with a Seamons skin suit on, this was it. We were called to centre of track for a final check, 23 riders from 7 countries. We were then called to the track side and then led out onto the track; it was too late to change my mind.

Scratch race; 20 laps, totalling 5 km. We were lined up on the rail, and rode to the start line. The gun goes off. Like startled rabbits, we spin our legs. After 2 laps, I could not believe **how fast it felt (no computer). It wasn't that** this fast in our SQT. It was mayhem: bikes, bodies, shouting, cursing.

It was over so quickly. Out of breath, I came **back into the pen. 'Well done,' congratulations from my mates. I didn't know where I** had finished, but not last. The result came up on the big screen: 20 laps, 5km, average speed 45.252km/h (28.7mph) and I had finished in 16th place, beating 7 riders (Wow!) in the worlds masters final.

The event was won by Lance Ravenhill (GBR), with Graziano Pantostic (ITA) second, Willi Moore (GBR) third and Geoff Cooke (GBR) fourth. I went home feeling good, a result!

Friday 12th October: Men's 65-69 Points race. Forty laps (a total of 10km) with sprints every 10 laps. The rider with the most points wins and only the first four riders get points. The preparation was the same as on Wednesday: bike weighed and checked, a warm-up on the track and then on to the turbo. I worked up a right sweat, nerves and more nerves. We were called to track, 22 riders this time. The gun goes off. We go. Not too bad I think. After three laps Enriques Moyano from Argentina hits the front and mayhem starts. I managed to hold on thinking that after 10 laps it will slow down. So it did, but on **lap 14 the same guy goes again. "B*\$\$*ks!"** I thought. On lap 16 a touch of wheels in front

of me and a crash. A guy goes over the bars and lands on the concrete with another. I shot up the track, causing panic behind me. As I came round the track, two riders were face down on the blue concrete. Feeling shocked and hearing the gun go, I thought the race was called off and rode off the track with a few others, but the marshall had only neutralised the race. Other riders just went round the track slowly while medics attended the two fallen riders. It was neutralised for 18 minutes then re-started. I was asked by a marshall if I wanted to rejoin but I declined. I had enough scares for I night.

The race was won by Lancs Ravenhill (GBR), with Steffan Hansen (DEN) second, Briat Michel (FRA) third, and Lequere Marcel (FRA) fourth. Seven riders abandoned the race.

I heard the following week that one rider was OK, battered and bruised, but the other had broken his neck and was still in hospital. However, he would be going home to London in a few days and would be OK. Good news.

I was disappointed that I did not finish the race, but felt that I had done the right thing as I might have caused further issues later in the race in my mind set.

On looking back, it was a great experience for an old codger like me. Never having raced on the boards at any level and coming in to race at World-level: the friendship of people from all over the world; support from my friends on the track; words of advice from my peers; a great feeling; a medal presentation; National Anthems being played and all the rest that goes on at a major Sporting Event. And I was not watching it on TV or from the stand; I was participating. I have the Shirt and the memories.

Who is up for it next?

Montgomery madness

By Johnny Pardoe

It's hard to believe that 13 years have passed since Robin and his merry men first invaded the peaceful former county town of Montgomeryshire, overlooked by the ramparts of the castle, built in 1224, but now sadly in ruins.

This year Robin was joined by a cast of 26, including 3 ladies, 2 Juniors, and 2 guest riders, Alan Kemp of the Weaver Valley, and **Andy, Karen's boyfriend.**

Day 1: The social section comprising of JP, Sally Cowan, Tim Deakin, Nigel Harrop, Phil Holden and Mike Brooks set off on our now traditional run to the Stiperstones Inn, high up in the Shropshirehills. We were welcomed by a roaring log fire, good food, hospitality, and Marmalade the cat, clearly miffed that we were on his seat.

Sally was heard to say more than once, "I'm really enjoying this run, I've never seen so much of Wales, it's usually eyeballs out chasing mud flaps". We were actually in Shropshire, but you get the drift.

We left the warmth of the pub to climb over The Bog, where we were treated to superb views over Caer Caradoc, the Long Mynd and beyond. After the steep hair-raising descent down to Ratlinghope, we enjoyed a brisk run **down the valley to Bishop's Castle, with just a gentle hint of half-wheeling – I won't mention who!** Coffee and cake at Yarborough House set us up for the scenic run back to base, comfortably before dark.

Meanwhile the "A" team, comprising Robin, Keith Bailey, Chris Siepen, Alan Kemp, Andy Robinson and Karen, Ian Holmes, Ed Blum, Sean Davenport, Jack Robinson, Dan Mathers, Charles Carraz, Bobblehat Rob Taylor, Eamon Mallon, John Spearman (alias Mr. Pencil), Martin Wiggan, Sam Rowlands and Dan

Snape were also bound for Stiperstones, but for them, a return visit to the hallowed slopes of Long Mountain as a gentle warm-up. **The steep gradient didn't seem to affect Sean and Jack** who simply romped up with consummate ease – the joys of youth!

A slight navigational hiccup split the bunch, resulting in the Seamons being somewhat split all over Shropshire. Nothing new there then.

Three groups arrived at Stiperstones from three different directions, having negotiated seriously flooded bridleways, roads that were described as river beds, the odd puncture or two, and a bull as a bonus. It was long after dark when they all arrived safely back after a memorable day.

After a great meal at the very comfortable Dragon Hotel, we adjourned to the local to socialize, as only the Seamons can. Great camaraderie, pool, and just a little liquid refreshment to quench the thirst.

Later when we returned to the Dragon, we were serenaded by Roger Haines and Phil Holden on ukuleles! giving us their own **particular rendition of "The pub with no beer"** and other delights from the George Formby era.

Day 2: After some deliberation, the "A" team finally set off for Presteigne, via Abermule and the Kerry ridge. They all survived a typical Montgomery day, covering some 66 hard and hilly miles, hardly touching any main roads, and suffering many punctures before and after lunch. Keith Bailey gracefully slid off on a patch of ice, and Jack Robinson parted company with his bike, bruising his arm, but both were able to carry on and **enjoy "a brilliant ride". Somehow Chris Siepen became detached from the bunch, and**



was not re-united till after lunch. By the way, welcome back to the Club, Chris.

Meanwhile the social section, now joined by Dan Snape, Ian Holmes, Karen and Andy enjoyed a leisurely 10.30 am start. Our route also took in the long climb of Kerry ridge from Abermule. Phil Holden broke his chain, which gave some of us time to plod on to the summit at our own pace – thanks, Phil.

The long and fast descent to Clun can only be described as brilliant. Lunch was enjoyed by a roaring log fire at the Sun Inn, where we were already planning our next cafe stop, and hopefully carrot cake for Sally.

Climbing our of Clun Karen was having problems with gears, which resulted in only two **working properly, but it didn't seem to slow her down!** Tim then broke his chain – such power in those legs! remarkable really, considering he is still recovering from major hip surgery, and hadn't ridden on the road since June. Well done, Tim.

Afternoon tea was taken at the Poppy House

in Bishops Castle, but disaster, no carrot cake. Sally was gutted. Two days without carrot cake, resulting in an ever so slight sulk.

Before our evening meal that night at the Dragon, Strictly Come Uno was played, with Phil controlling affairs as only Phil can. We were joined by Founder member Reg Herbert, who was clearly very impressed that our membership has now reached the dizzy heights of 185, and rising. He was heard to remark, **“Nothing's changed, the Seamons are still as mad as ever – just like in our day.”**

The live band down at the pub made for a great night out, with the Seamons keeping the flag flying, dancing and singing the night away into the wee small hours. Mr.Pencil let it slip that it was his 40th birthday, so a nice moment followed when the band struck up, **and the whole pub sang “Happy Birthday”.** I wonder if he knows he can now race as a Vet? Before turning in Sam decided he would sample the complimentary sherry as a night cap, but he spilt it all over his pillow, and so

Montgomery madness...

was forced to inhale strong sherry fumes all night. It was suggested that if the pillow slip was still damp he could clean his bike with it!

Day 3: There were not many takers for Day 3, with many deciding to take an early bath. Martin was seen sitting in the hotel foyer with a bag of ice on his knee. Nothing to do **with cycling, he said, just last night's dancing** that did it. Yes, Martin, if you say so. Jack was resting his bruised arm. What was left of the "A" team lunched at Church Stretton. Some may wish to draw a veil over Dan Mather's navigational skills on this occasion. The proposed route detailed the crossing of a very narrow footbridge. What the map didn't show was the extremely steep and slippery slope leading down to the bridge, or the even steeper climb up the other side. A real test of riding ability – or not, which I was told was the case. I am in no doubt that Dan really enjoyed himself, going by the glint in his eye when relaying the story to the author. Ed Blum was clearly in a hurry to honour a date in Chester, and was kindly (!) directed over the Burway, being told this was the shortest route. The Burway (Long Mynd) is seriously steep, and was the setting for the National Hill Climb Championship some years ago. More punctures resulted in Alan Kemp having to buy a new tyre. It seems the local farmers had chosen this weekend to manicure their precious hedges.

A little bird tells me that Ed Blum, Sam and Mr. Pencil recently visited the Lake District to take in the climbs of Hardknott and Wrynose. Now that is serious preparation for Montgomery.

I also heard that after one or two mechanicals Sean Davenport is now appointed Ed Blum's personal technical advisor.

Over the years we have survived floods, ice,

fog, snow, gales and even minus 8 degrees one year. This year it was as perfect as you could get at this time of year. Yes, frosty starts, but followed by clear, sunny days, Shropshire and the Welsh Borders at their very best. It appears that whatever the weather we always come back for more, to enjoy what has now become a well established club tradition set in stone.

Again, many thanks to Robin for stitching it **all together. You've got time to book for next year. See you there!**



Photos: Navigation, paper versus tech (above); Robin leads the group out of the Dragon Hotel (below); Montgomery madness! (previous page)



Diary dates

January

Multiple gold medal-winning cyclist Sarah Storey has been confirmed as our guest of honour for the club dinner, due to take place on January 26.

Sarah won Britain's first gold at this year's Paralympics before going on to secure three more. And this after a previous gold medal-winning career as a swimmer.

Tickets are already on sale from organisers Karen Popplewell and Sally Cowan, priced £25 for adults and £12.50 for under-18s.

Catch either of them at the club or OMT on a Friday, Rackhams on a Sunday or post them cheques made out to Seamons Cycling Club at their addresses in the handbook. Please make sure you include details of any guests attending and dietary requirements.

The dinner is earlier in the year this time – on January 26 – **and we'll be in the larger room of the Cresta Court Hotel, Altrincham**, giving even more of us a chance to be **inspired by Sarah's story (sorry about that)** and join in with one of the social highlights of the club calendar.

The dress code is black tie if you wish but smart will suffice.

March

After the indulgence of Christmas, New Year – and now the early club dinner – getting on the bike will be a welcome relief.

One training target to focus on will be the Llangollen run on March 3. For those that really like it tough, there are plans to hire the bunkhouse at nearby Cerrigydrudion for the whole of that weekend.

See the half-day section for details of the former and the touring section for details about the latter.

April/May

A weekend away to Arnside is being talked up as a possible at the end of April/start of May.

This would likely be a hostel weekend with day-rides over the few days.

The plan's still being formulated by the touring section so watch this space.

May

Still in May – May 18 – the Seamons-promoted Berwyns and Panorama Audax events are due to take place.

Dave Barker organises this on behalf of the club and they take place under Audax rules, rather than sportive.

If you've never done either ride – one's 120-odd miles, the other 80-plus – you'll understand why they're Audax-regulated!

Fabulous rides both, they are a treat for the eyes and a test for the legs and a great opportunity to show your club colours.

Dave will circulate more details nearer the time.

Meanwhile, the late May bank holiday **Monday may seem a long way off but it's not if you're organising a treasure hunt.**

This is a social/family day which in the past has involved a steady trundle of not many miles to end up somewhere handy for getting back to Altrincham.

Bikes, fun and food are all that's really involved. Pencils – and rubbers – are provided. Watch this space!

June

For the really serious diary planners, don't forget that June will see the York rally weekend.

This rally has nothing to do with Mark II Es-

Cafe corner

By Cafe Queen

Having completed her state visit to France, Café Queen returns to her realm to pass on more gems, starting with those provided by her extensive network of lieutenants.

Her first tip-off is 'The Greedy Pig' at Kelsall. "A small cafe near the Co-op in the middle of Kelsall, run by a cyclist. I'm looking forward to trying it out."

Slightly closer to the seat of regal authority is 'Norton Priory' at Appleton. "Recommended by the Stretford Wheelers, no more details yet."

At the southern end of her dominion is 'Sally's' in Sandbach. "Another one I'm looking forward to sampling, near the market apparently."

Alsager Hall Farm shop and cafe has also been recommended to her majesty. "Take the B5077 to Crewe from Alsager, past Radnor Bank, ST7 2UB. I haven't found it yet!"

Having limbered up in the mountains of France, Café Queen has been out and about herself to pay a royal visit to not one, but two 'Christine's Cafés.

The first is at Hoofield, "Not far from Huxley, keep going on the Huxley road, it is on the right, a farm with an interesting knick-knack

50p shop in the barn: cheap bulbs, plants, woolly gloves and hats, pet food, reading glasses etc. Take a big saddle-bag!"

The other "Christine's cafe" is to be found on the same road as Elvis's, less than a mile further on, "The Cheshire Emporium: big yard full of stone, gravel, plant pots, statues, and a cosy tea shop inside the antiques building. Friendly and nice food. Not for big groups. You could take your Mum. " Or, indeed, your Ma'am.

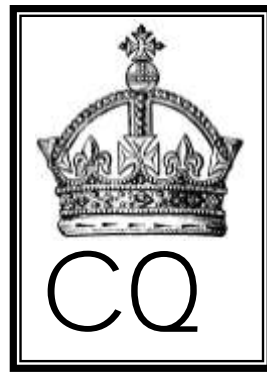
"Don't forget the Haslington Bakery," Café Queen admonishes. "Good food, good prices, good welcome.

Small groups. Keep going through the village from Wheelock way."

Finally, the bounty of Café Queen's benign sway over all matters culinary receives a (mixed) metaphorical glaze cherry with the 'De-caffe' at Dalbeatty.

"Should you be in Dumfries and Galloway: great egg and chips, nice ride over the hills at the back, then along the coast road." And if this prospect was not getting you thumbing through a road atlas, there is added inducement: "Red squirrels."

Thank you, Café Queen,



Diary dates...

corts or chanting in large groups but everything to do with enjoying some time with friends and family.

This is a camping weekend and is part of the national cycle show organised by the CTC.

Seamons jerseys have been a familiar site at the rally for years and have even been known to organise rides. Scary but true.

The dates have been confirmed by the CTC as June 22-23 and if you visit their website you

can read more about it.

The touring section, naturally, will start rounding up names and money from about April to secure a discrete section of York Racecourse we can call home for the weekend.

See John or Gordo in the touring section for more details.

Shorts & longs

By John Carberry

Who says the touring section is full of old fuddy-duddies?

So much have members embraced the new, there has been an outbreak of titanium in the bunch.

Pete's Airborne and Gordo's Van Nicholas set the trend. Now John Hurley has trumped his titanium-railed saddle with an actual bike to go underneath it – a fancy Sabbath no less. And then it turns out Coles senior has also had a touch of the vapours and is awaiting delivery of a Van Nicholas in the next few weeks. (There is no truth to the rumour that **he's been able to buy it from saving up his lunchtime drinks money for all those years!**)

When you factor in the various crash-damaged joints and bones that have been replaced by titanium, the once exotic metal almost seems somewhat old hat.

Still on the wow of the new, runs dictator Pete has been cutting a dash these past few rain-soaked runs.

Not only has he splashed out on a new rain jacket – and not one bought from York this time – **he's got one that has a style to it.**

Keen followers of cycling fashion will know **all about Rapha's success in redefining the new cool in bikewear** – and in readjusting the boundaries of expense of said items.

While Pete's new jacket is not from Rapha, it does have a very natty diagonal zip. I could have been mistaken but I think there was a rather proud glint in Pete's eye when he showed off his jacket for the first time, knowing how much he'd paid for it and how much it might look like something more expensive. **A recent run to Jodrell Bank didn't cover the tourers in glory.**

Spread all over Cheshire by the time they'd

reached Ashley, it was time for a regroup.

Pete catches back on to explain that he was having trouble with his GPS. Cruel jibes ensued along the lines of: surely you can find your way to Jodrell Bank without a sat nav!

Helpful Gareth points out that if he switched it off and put it in his pocket, the fact it wasn't working properly wouldn't bother him.

A muttering Pete ignored all this and carried on fiddling about until half the bunch got bored and rode off.

"GPS?" remarked Craigie: "It stands for Grumpy Pete Syndrome." Give that man his own show!

Where is it?



Answers on p.39

First time rider

By Paul Lomas

Some of you may remember a story in Cycling Weekly about a large overweight Irish truck driver, who for various reasons got on a bike. I think it was for family reasons but he ended up shedding a lot of weight and just enjoyed riding. He set up his own team and turned professional, a story Hollywood would be proud of. **Now, I'm a truck driver but my story is not like his, I'm not fat for a truck driver but I am a bit fat for a cyclist, but -hey- we're not all perfect.**

Let me take you back to when I was a kid. I **grew up in Salford in the 1970's and like** most kids I had a bike or two, but that was it, they were just bikes, a way of getting a round with my mates. I soon got to an age when it **wasn't the done thing to be seen on a bike,** we just hanged around the chippy or street corners and I never thought I would ride a bike again. How times would change.

I had been a drummer in few bands, ridden a Lambretta for a few years discovered the delights of beer, smoking and fast food, all the usual teenage things whilst slowly getting bigger. Although I played football for a team - **that was my only real exercise and that didn't** last long. As the years drifted by the weight crept on and although I had stopped smoking **I wasn't in the best shape. So when my** brother- in- law asked if I wanted to ride the Manchester to Blackpool charity ride I said **yes. What was I thinking; I hadn't been on a** bike for years. Sixty miles, who was I trying to kid? It was planned over a few beers with his darts team so my thoughts turned to a training plan, there was no way I was going to come last in a pub team. Off to Decathlon **that's me. I knew why cyclists wore those** spandex shorts and about the pad inside **them for comfort but what I didn't know was** that they used a cream to stop chaffing. Bum

glue as my wife calls it. I managed to finish the ride in four hours! My legs were sore for a week and it was very tender when sitting down." Nappy rash, that's what you've got." My

wife would joke. The year after I ditched the old mountain bike I had used and bought myself a road bike. I had the bike, the shorts, the shoes; I thought I really looked the part (to a blind man on a dark night), and I did it all again. Later that year I did the Manchester 100, kilometres that is. I rode around for a few years doing the odd sportive, got a bit thinner and a bit fitter but I was just riding on my own which as you all know can get a bit boring. The good thing was that I entered and finished the Manchester 100 miler which I was well chuffed with and in less than six hours. On my rides I had seen one or two Seamons riders and I began to think about joining a club. I know it sounds silly but the prospect of going along to Rackhams filled me with fear. They would all be young fit and fast I thought, with smart bikes and flat stomachs. How wrong could I have been?

One Saturday in July I was told by my wife to stop messing about and go out with them on Sunday morning, so I did. I had cleaned my bike on Saturday, dug out my best white socks and cleaned my shoes. It felt like a first date, would they like me? Would I like them? **Sod it thought , I'm just going to get on with** it. I rode around to Rackhams and tried to hold my stomach in a bit. I first spoke to Neil



Rothwell, who asked about the kind of cycling I had done before and which ride I wanted to go with. I told him I was just testing the water so to speak and I was looking to go on the social ride just to get a feel for it and see how things pan out. We went to Delamere that day and I knew I could manage the distance so I was quite happy to sit at the back where I got talking with John Hammond, he told me to try the next Tempo run as it was to Poole Marina and that it was flat and a good one to try first. So I did, and it was good. Again I sat at the back and tried to keep out of trouble and hopefully keep up. I did keep up and eventually was ushered up the line until I got on the front near Hale on **the way home. It didn't last long though**, as the sprint for home soon started, but I was buzzing. By the time I got home I was already thinking about getting club kit and a new **bike and I hadn't even put my application form in!**

Since I have been in the club I have been on a lot of the runs even the ones up in the hills, **which to be honest aren't my favourite**, I have been on the front, hung on at the back, been last up the hill and dropped on the way **back, and I've even had a go at time trialing. Don't laugh, it's bad enough with my kids laughing when I tell them I'm a racing cyclist**. They think it is hilarious, especially when they see my times and placings. But I enjoy it even though I have only done three. I hope to do more next year and improve on my past results. Going back to the beginning I only got a bike to try and get fitter and thinner and now I'm looking at time trial bikes "How old are you?" my wife says. Well, I'm 45 but in my head around 25. I just wish I had the energy of a 25 year old. So it's not as good a story as the Irish truck driver but that's how I got into cycling, just did it for a laugh and still having a laugh now.

Club membership

Don't forget folks, January 1 marks the start of the new club year – which means subs are due.

We all have until the end of February to **renew our membership, and who wouldn't want to**, or club rules deem us to have become lapsed members. And if you want to re-join after that, a re-joining fee is due on top of your subs. Ouch.

To make it even easier to stay a member, club treasurer John Hammond has set up a new facility to allow us to pay by standing order.

The instructions are pretty straightforward, **but there is a process which we'll have to follow.**

If you want to take advantage of this easy-pay way, please send an email (not a Facebook message) via your preferred email address to;

john.stewart.hammond@gmail.com

You will also need to include in your request (for reasons that will become clear) the day and month of your birthday eg 20th August.

Once the treasurer has received your request he will reply with all the necessary forms and instructions.

Meanwhile, Squirrel readers can say "hello" to some recently joined members in the bunch:

Terry Crewe
Alexander Jones
James Sayer
Paul Duffill
Maria Grandee

Their subs will see them through until next December!

Where is it? Answers:

P.29 - Rainow; P37 - Ramsbottom (upper)
Macclesfield Forest (lower)



CLUBS RUNS LIST

	Half day	Tempo	Touring	Social
6th Jan	Astbury**	Delamere**	Higher Poynton	Spinney, Allostock
13th Jan	Malkin's Bank	Beeston	Beeston	Dones Green
20th Jan	Beeston	Astbury	Summer Trees	Jodrell Bank
27th Jan	Aquaduct	Aquaduct	Gawsworth	Malkin's Bank*
3rd Feb	Congleton GC	Malkin's Bank	Alsagers Bank	Fairways GC, Sutton
10th Feb	Blaze Farm	Congleton GC	Frodsham	The Wizard, Alderley
17th Feb	Dagfields	Two Mills	Mow Cop	Riverside, Whatcroft
24th Feb	Two Mills	Dagfields	Spen Green	Delamere*
3rd Mar	Llangollen	Llangollen	Cerrig Weekend	Henbury
10th Mar	Tattenhall	Elvis cafe	Aquaduct	Pott Shrigley
17th Mar	Wharf Mill	Chestnut Centre	Common Barn, Rainow	Spinney, Allostock
24th Mar	Buxton	Cat & Fiddle	Bartholmey	Dones Green
31st Mar	Meerbrook	Beeston	Easter 50-in-4	Aquaduct*
7th Apr	Castleton	Meerbrook	Meerbrook***	Jodrell Bank
14th Apr	Dagfields	Malkin's Bank	Delamere	Fairways GC, Sutton
21st Apr			Buxton	The Wizard, Alderley
28th Apr			Chester	Astbury*
5th May			Hope	

* Last Sunday of the month the Social runs are longer and are not advisable for less experienced riders.

** Please note the change from the previous edition of the Squirrel.

*** Ramshaw Rock Lunch

Nuts

By Lomas

