



# THE SQUIRREL

Autumn 2012



# Editorial

By John Carberry

By now, every member will have been sent their formal invitation to the club's annual meeting.

November 9 should be more than a just a date in the diary, it is an opportunity to be part of the club we've all joined.

Newer members might not have been to an annual meeting before, they might feel it's not for the likes of them, or that it isn't important.

**They'd be wrong.**

Seamons is not an organisation, it is a club. This means we are each responsible for its well-being.

The good health of the club is not only measured by good numbers on Sunday runs, it is sustained by all aspects of the club's activities and pulling on the jersey is only one way to signal you are a member.

Take something as relatively simple as the hill climb. On the face of it, that is just a start

line, a finish line, a stopwatch and a bunch of riders who want to thrash each other.

But what made that day a good day for the club? There were people who organised it – set the date, told you about the date, made sure there were timekeepers, that the competition was managed, that there was a start sheet. There were supporters too, at the start, on the hill, at the finish. We were all photographed for posterity. And then we had the chance to all have a lunch together. This was organised – we knew how much we were going to pay, what we were going to have to eat.

All these small things combine to create something that is greater than the sum of their parts. None of them happened by accident, they were all the result of a commitment to contribute.

Make your contribution to the club – take part in the annual meeting.



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# Meet your clubmates... David Hoyle

*This time the spotlight falls on Dave Hoyle, a self-confessed "lying git", with a penchant for Canadian rock, winding up illustrious thinkers and eating gooseberries. He's too busy to watch telly, doesn't like towns and cities and gets grumpy when he's tired. Read on to find out the truth about our club secretary.*

When and where were you born?

My mum always says that I was born under a gooseberry bush but I'm not sure I believe that one.

I was born on May 6, 1966, in Doncaster, where I lived for around nine months before moving to Wales. I don't remember anything about Doncaster, which is probably a good thing.

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

I started cycling aged around six and have always ridden, though not as much as today. **I've never been a member of a club before joining Seamons.**

What was your first race, and first win?

**I should be so lucky...**

Which performance do you rate as your best?

See above.

What is your favourite meal?

Probably breakfast – Cornflakes!  
**"Gooseberry anything" is also one of my favourites.**

What were you like at school?

I went to a small school in mid-Wales. My hair was rather longer than today and I was a bit thinner. Also, I was good at science and rugby, which is probably why my knees are a bit dodgy today.

What kind of books do you read?

I try and read very broadly but include lots of



*David Hoyle takes a break from fell walking, perched on some Canadian rock...*

sci-fi (Iain M. Banks, Philip K Dick) and a bit of general fiction. I also read quite a lot of **technical stuff for work. I'm currently bogged down near the start of Ulysses, which I'm told is a classic as long as it is read with an Irish accent. Time will tell on that one.**

What kind of music do you enjoy?

A large mixture – I still enjoy rock music from my younger days (Rush, Zeppelin, Journey, etc.) **I'm quite into Tori Amos and Emiliana Torrini at present.** I still like a lot of classical music, with my favourites being anything by Vaughan Williams.

And your favourite type of TV programme?

I only ever watch recorded TV and not much of that. During the week I rarely watch anything. I do watch telly when ironing and quite like Top Gear, Time Team and Have I Got News for You.

Which newspaper do you read?

FT and the Sunday Times occasionally.

What is your ideal holiday destination?

The south west of England

## Meet your clubmates...

and Wales are superb – full of history and beaches to play on. All of the west coast of Britain is brilliant. I also like mountains and **moors wherever they are. I'm not a great one** for cities and towns, although I did love Rome and much of Italy.

Do you have any hobbies?

Yes. Cycling, hill walking.

Who would play you in a film of your life?

Nobody

What is your greatest fear?

**I don't really do fear** – I am scared of heights a bit which used to make rock climbing tricky.

How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts column?

Ha ha! – This is something I would not do. If I had to it would be: **"Tall, slim, handsome, rich, GSoH, lying git..."**

What is your favourite training ride?

Home to Styal, Wilmslow, Alderley Edge, Birtles Lane, Reedsmere, Bate Mill, Ollerton, Knutsford, Tatton, Ashley, home. This is just over 40 miles from my house and is rather pleasant.

I really enjoy a short, brutal, mountain bike route in mid-Wales through a forest (to 52.618197798346785, -3.928125046721931) – the return from this is a 1,400ft decent on forest track, which is superb.

What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

Dunno – probably getting very grumpy when **I'm tired.**

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?

Answering **"Who me?"** to every question...

Who would you most like to have met and why?

I think some of the classics – Darwin would have been good to wind up – **"Do you really think this evolution idea of yours is really going to help people get along? Would it not be better if we all pretended that God simply made us?"**

What was your most embarrassing moment?

Persuading my son to push my brother-in-law into a pond... **It really did not go down well to say the least!**

Four words to describe yourself.

**Tall, handsome, slim, GSoH...**



# Marmotte

By Allan Blackburn

After a few years of struggling with motivation for time trialling, I needed a different challenge for 2012. I considered a few options and decided that achieving a gold standard in the Marmotte would be my main cycling objective for the year.

For those who are not familiar with the Marmotte it is essentially a sportive event held in the heart of the French Alps over 174km and includes the climbs of the Col du Glandon, Col du Telegraph, Col du Galibier and finishes at **the top of Alpe d'Huez. A total of 5,180 metres of climbing.**

The long-term training plan was straightforward enough: long and hilly winter rides, my usual Majorca training camp in March, then a few sportives in the spring culminating with the Tour of Wessex in June, a three-day sportive over 300-plus miles with 7,292 metres of climbing. Oh... and lose 1.5 stone in weight.

Things went well and by early July I was **feeling fit. I'm never going to be a great climber but I'd hit my target weight and all** the training in the hills meant I was climbing as well as I could have hoped for.

The week of the Marmotte finally came round and my training partner and friend, Damian, and I headed for France and our hotel at the top of Alpe d'Huez on the Wednesday before the ride. The next couple of days were spent acclimatising to the altitude and spinning the legs on a couple of easy rides. Then came the big day.

The Marmotte is an early start (7am in Bourg d'Oisans) which means a 5am alarm call for an early breakfast. I'm not good at eating at that time of the morning but I forced down what I could, then Damian and I agreed to meet in the lobby of the hotel at 6:15 to ride down Alpe d'Huez to the start (it was now 6:00).



*"Allez, allez" - the shriek of the marmotte*

I went back up to my room where all I needed to do was put some air in my tyres and stuff my pockets with enough gels, etc for the first leg of the ride. I attached the track pump and started pumping. My heart sank when I realised there was only about 40psi in my front wheel. I must have a slow puncture!

I momentarily thought about riding on it in the hope it would get me round before going flat. Obviously, a monumentally stupid idea, and one which was very quickly overhauled **by the realisation that I'd have to change the tube.**

What made it worse was that I only had the standard two spare tubes in my saddlebag. **I'd figured that if I'd punctured during the first two days I'd just buy another tube. I hadn't considered this scenario. I did not need this...ten minutes to get down to the lobby ready to ride the Marmotte and here I am with a flat and with the prospect of riding the Marmotte with only one spare tube.** There was no option though and I quickly removed the wheel and set to work changing the tube. Not a great start to the day!

## Marmotte...



*Bourg d'Oisans; 7,000 riders mass at the start*

A quick descent of Alpe d'Huez and before long we were lined up in the massive throng of riders waiting to cross the start line and get on with the ride. Patience is required here as there are around 7,000 starters. They let riders through the start line in a controlled way and the backlog through the narrow streets of Bourg d'Oisans is just immense. By about 7:20, though, we'd reached the start line. "Good luck mate. Have a good ride." With that we were on our way.

The first few miles are flat. I'd decided beforehand that I wouldn't push too hard down here and instead use it as a warm-up. The best laid plans of mice and men and all that... A small, fast group flew past and I jumped on the back. By the time I reached the first climb I'd averaged 22mph!

There are no closed roads for the Marmotte but at that time in the morning and on those roads there is very little traffic if any at all. At the start of the Glandon climb you could look up at the road ahead as it climbs and the whole road is one big mass of riders as far as you can see.

There was a modicum of order to all this – in general the slower riders kept to the right with the faster ones passing on the left. Getting into a rhythm wasn't as difficult as I'd feared. I took the approach that I was the

most important rider on the road. No "after you mate" or giving way to other riders moving for the same gap. The race head was on and any free tarmac was mine.

For my age group the gold standard was 8:39 or quicker. I'd calculated beforehand what I thought I could do based on previous rides on the same mountains. The rough plan looked like this:

Top of Glandon:	2:30
(Glandon descent not timed)	
Bottom of Telegraph:	3:30
Bottom of Galibier:	4:30
Top of Galibier:	6:00
Bottom of Alpe d'Huez:	7:00
Top of Alpe d'Huez:	8:30

I'd allowed for slowing down time. It was going to be tight but gold seemed just about achievable if I have a good day with no big issues.

I felt really good on the Glandon climb and made good progress. All that training was paying off and I was riding well and passing a lot more riders than were coming past me. On the last section after the lake there was a marmotte stood upright on a rock up to the left of us calling out that unmistakable marmotte shriek. It just stood there looking down on all these riders like a Frenchman stood at the side of the road shouting "Alez, Alez" to the passing swarm. A surreal moment in the day.

I made the top of the Glandon in 1:55, way ahead of schedule and I was delighted.

The Glandon descent is neutralised for safety reasons. You pass over a timing mat at the top where your timing stops and another at the bottom of the descent where the timing starts again. This means you can chill out for a while at the top which is also the location of the first feed station. It was just gone 9am by this stage but the sun was out and despite the altitude it was already getting warm.

I was soon on my way and once down the

**Glandon descent there's a flattish section of** about 15 miles before the start of the Telegraph climb. It was during this section I first started feeling the effects of the fatigue. I didn't have my usual 'flat speed' and struggled to hang on to groups I would normally have stayed with.

By the start of the Telegraph climb I noticed that the ratio of riders passing me v me passing riders had changed significantly from what it had been on the Glandon. I was obviously slowing – and what was more worrying was that it indicated my pacing strategy was inferior to that of a lot of my fellow riders.

**Intelligent pacing was something I'd thought** would be a feather in my cap for the ride but the reality was that a lot of other riders had done a better job than I.

The Telegraph climb was the low point of the day for me. I was really struggling to make progress and was being passed by loads of riders. I was cramping too so had that to manage. I felt drained and was no longer controlling the ride as I had on the Glandon. I started to think about the rest of the day.

**I still had Galibier and Alpe d'Huez yet and** here I was struggling to find a reasonable pace on the Telegraph. I eventually made it to the top though and took the short descent down to Valloire where I knew the French Cycling Holidays support van would be with food and drinks.

I got to the van shattered and had to sit down for a while. There was lots of food on offer **but I struggled to eat anything. I'd been taking** a gel every half hour for the entire ride and coupled with the energy drinks my stomach was starting to complain.

I just sat there trying to focus on the task ahead but my head was still spinning and I was struggling to think straight. A combination of the heat and the effort so far coupled with the thought of what lay ahead was interfering with my ability to cope. I was also aware that I didn't want to sit for too long as

the clock was ticking. After about 5 minutes I thanked the support crew, changed my bottles and was on my way again.



*Climbing*

The Galibier is quite a daunting climb by anyone's standards. **Even with fresh legs it constitutes** a not insignificant challenge but with the state I was in it was mammoth.

I set out along the initial gentle ascent heading out of Valloire. Lots of support at the side of the roads here. As I climbed I was aware of a considerable lack of power in my legs compared to earlier in the day. I was locked-in to a certain speed and if I tried to increase it my legs would complain bitterly and just not respond. As I approached the end of this gentle section and hit the climb proper I passed the 13km to the top sign. I gritted my teeth and dug in. At this point I was still about 20 minutes up on my plan so was still on target for **gold but realised that the 1:30 I'd allowed for** climbing Galibier was going to be a big ask at the speed I was going.

I started to reanalyse the rest of my plan. **The 1:00 I'd allowed for the descent from the top of Galibier to the bottom of Alpe d'Huez was a guesstimate . I've done it before but never** really timed it. My head was spinning trying to calculate my margin of error for climbing Galibier, then whether I'd allowed enough for Galibier-to-Alpe d'Huez, and whether I'd allowed enough for the d'Huez climb? To make matters worse I'd screwed up on my stop-

### Marmotte...

watch on the Garmin so was having to knock off about 13 minutes from that too. I decided the gold still looked achievable but was going to be very tight.

I carried on up the climb. I was getting really tired now and the sun was beating down. Every pedal stroke was hurting. My stomach was churning from all the energy food and drink. To make matters worse I was being passed continuously now as I plodded along in my locked-in speed. Finally though I reached the top – phew! It had taken me 1:40 – **a lot longer than I'd planned. I didn't stop at the food station at the top of the Galibier as I still had a lot of drink from an earlier refill halfway up. I just got my wind jacket on and set off down the massive 30-plus mile of mainly descent to the bottom of Alpe d'Huez.**

By the time I reached the bottom I realised **I'd not allowed enough time for the Galibier-Alpe d'Huez section, which had actually taken me about 1:20. This, along with the time I'd lost on the Galibier, meant I now had only 1:20 to climb Alpe d'Huez in order to stay inside gold standard time. Surely that's not possible? It takes me about 1:05-1:10 with fresh legs.**

I was so annoyed to think that I was only going to be about ten minutes outside gold standard time. Why did it have to be so close? I told myself I'd keep pushing on anyway just in case – **I'll reassess halfway up.**

**I didn't stop at the final main feed stop at the bottom of Alpe d'Huez. It was very busy with queues for water etc and I just didn't have time for that. I knew there'd be water stops on the climb.**

As I climbed I was timing myself closely. I'd been on the mountain for 20 minutes when I looked over to the right down to Bourg d'Oisans. **I've actually climbed quite a way here – I'm already quite high up. Hang on – I've got**

an hour left to do this. My best time for climbing the whole mountain is about 1:01. If someone was starting at the bottom now doing the same speed I did when I did the 1:01 would they catch me before the top? I looked down again – I had a massive head start. **I don't think they would – I can actually do this – I can still get gold! With that I lifted the pace with a surge of adrenaline running through my veins.**

The next 40 minutes were very tough. I had to keep the pace relatively high but the effort made for miserable riding. As the clock counted down I started to worry again that **I didn't have enough time. I hadn't reached Huez village yet and the time was ticking away – down to about 25 minutes to go.**

Once you hit Huez you get your first real glimpse of the top of the alp but it still looks miles away from that point. I eventually hit Huez and struggled on through and out the other side. Then I looked down at my clock – 20 minutes left. Just as I did so I looked up **and saw the 4km to finish sign. That's too far – I've failed. I'm going to be so close but I've failed after everything. I couldn't believe it.**

I started doing the calculations... 4k in 20 minutes, that's 12kph... that's about 7.5mph. **All the way up Alpe d'Huez I'd been doing about 6mph, sometimes maybe 7mph.**

**There's no way I can lift that pace now. I've come so close but I've failed. What's worse is that I'm probably going to be literally a few minutes out. How sickening! I was completely gutted.**

I cycled on, dejected, then thought about it again and gave myself a little talking to... Are you going to give up now with only 4k to go? Why not at least try. You came here for gold. **It'll take a massive effort but you may still get it. Just try.**

**I decided I'd go for it. I took one big mouthful of water and heaved down on the pedal with everything I had left. My leg screamed out in**



pain as I did so. Then the other leg – same reaction. The speed went up and I was suddenly doing 7-8 mph. **It can be done. It's going to hurt but I can get gold if I can just put up with this for another 20 minutes.** I pressed on and sure enough I passed the 3km marker with about 15 minutes left on my clock.

As I got further and further up I could feel a **sense of panic starting to rise. What if I didn't make it after all this?** The timing was rough at best and what if my calculations are **slightly out? Or what if the km markers aren't quite in the right place?** With the panic my speed increased even more and by the time I rode through the bars and shops in the initial stretch at the top I was doing well over 10mph.

In the final k now – under the tunnel and around to the right and a sharp incline. People screaming everywhere, shouting encouragement and support. I looked down again – 18mph now and still climbing – how is this possible? Where am I getting 18mph from now? I looked at the clock – less than a minute to go for gold based on my own head-mash of calculations. I hit the brow of the hill. The finish line is literally 200-300 metres

**ahead but there's a problem. We're in a funnelled area now with barely enough room for bikes to pass each other and having crested the brow most riders were sat up and coasting in – their effort completed. I couldn't – I had to ride all the way to the line. I weaved left and right avoiding slowing riders and... "beep" as my timer chip was acknowledged by the timing mat. I looked down at the clock. Have I done it? I didn't know. It was so close that I couldn't be sure because of the allowance for errors in my calculations.**

I got off the bike and made my way over to the queue for certificates. It was a long queue with about a ten-minute wait until I made it to the front.

**"Nombre?"**

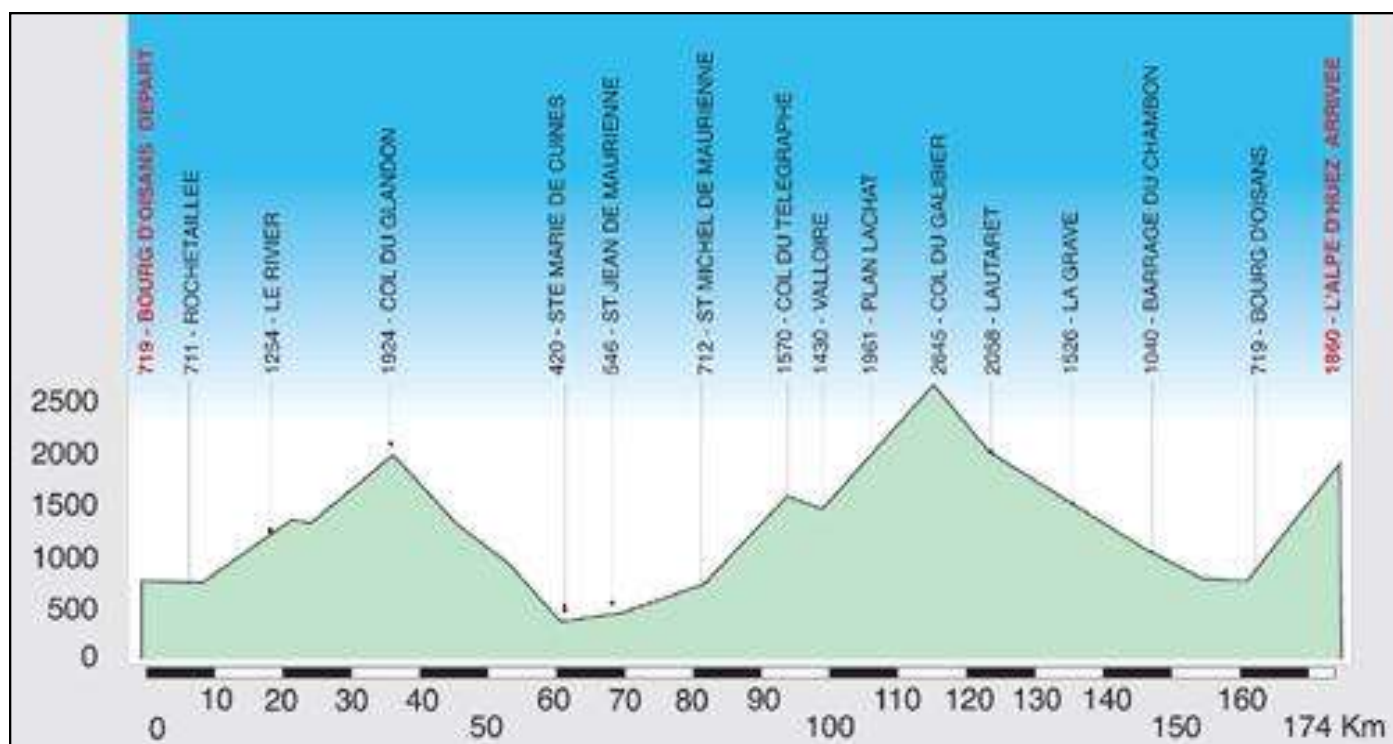
**"Trois trois zéro neuf, monsieur."**

He types it into the computer and the printer whirrs into action. He lifts the certificate out of the printer tray and hands it to me....

**BREVET D OR... (I'd done it!!)**

I'd done 8:37:56 – sixty-four seconds inside gold standard time. I texted Damian, my training partner who had yet to finish:

**"I'll be in the bar when you get in. Drinking Amstel Gold."**



# Side-to-side/end-to-end

By Gordon Peake

[Cheshire that is!]

## The Concept

The slightly barmy idea of riding the Cheshire Cycleway (CCW), every inch, in two days, as a group, was first done in 2003. On completion we vowed to repeat on an annual basis. Common sense prevailed and it was 2008 before it got a second outing.

Four years on – memory fades the aches and pains, and during one of the many wet Sunday de-briefs the topic raised its head again. *John Hurley (2)* and I are now blaming each other!

The date was set, and then moved to suit candidates. At the time a clash with the Olympic road race was unforeseen.

The CCW might not be as exciting as the Alps or End to Ending, but it has a homely, familiar charm, sprinkled with new bits.

Unfamiliar lanes going east-west and vice versa, never used on club runs, and similarly the back lanes, railway tracks and canal banks around the Wirral. Parts of Cheshire rarely, if ever explored.

Arranged so that the overnight is spent at home enables a lightweight approach. No spare dry clothes to lug around – not even your overshoes (mistake!). Summer daylight hours – so no time pressure.

## Modus Operandi

*Saturday:* Drive to Tilston (near Malpas) where we had arranged overnight car parking at the ever-friendly Carden Arms. 9.30am start – ride the CCW anti-clockwise Malpas/Alsager/Macc Forest/Bollington/Alderley Edge etc to Ashley. Then Home! (Minimal cost/maximum pleasure!) Approximately 100 miles.

*Sunday:* Rackhams at 9am – continue from Ashley across to the Wirral/Parkgate/

Chester/Tilston. Drive back. Approximately 80 miles.

## Navigation

Navigation along the unfamiliar lanes is simplified by GPS gadgetry done on a PC in advance. My thanks to Pete Coles for the background work and *John Craig (3)* for converting the info on the run into “lefts and rights”. John’s habit of mixing up his lefts and rights, particularly when tired, results in cautious cornering and comments of: “Your left – or the rest of the world’s John?” It keeps you alert!

## Start

An hour’s drive from Altrincham and we gather up in Tilston. Me, on time, with a flask of tea and a slice of toast, of course. With *Reg Blease (4)* and *John Carberry (5)* making up the five we deliberate the finer detail.

Conditions are cool, cloudy but dry, and sunny spells looking likely. Ideal! We decide to leave the overshoes in the cars. Possibly, **the only mistake of the weekend.** “Avante!” Bang on schedule.

Basically we travel east on unfamiliar lanes across south Cheshire. The area has a charm enhanced today by the rest of the world being glued to the TV and suddenly taking an interest in cycling. **The Olympics!** Cycling’s new-found popularity after ‘Le Tour’ success is predicted to last about a month.

**My “early night” plan in preparation for the ride had got lost as I’d become transfixed by the wonderful opening ceremony. It vetoed my trip to the club and kept me up till gone midnight waiting for Team GB and the fireworks? At last I’d caught ‘Olympic Fever’! Wasn’t it just superb?**

The morning was interspersed by some very light showers and hot sunny spells. Lunch was taken at the White Lion at Barthomley (Alsager). Always a welcome and great food. Spirits were up! By late afternoon, after much mile-crunching, we pass Gawsorth going away from, rather than towards home.

Next a 20 mile diversion in the hills!

The Pennines in front as we leave Sutton and ascend past the Hanging Gate to then lose all that height and drop into the Allgreave end of Wildboarclough. It's gone chilly and drizzly as the legs start to feel heavy on the slow rise along the valley bottom.

A succession of climbs and descents across the Cat & Fiddle road to Lamaload Reservoir and eventually into Bollington. You are taken up diversionary climbs in Bollington and **Prestbury you'd normally naturally avoid. By now they've become mountains. Where next?** Up Alderley Edge – just for the hell of it!

**Up till now we'd only caught a light drizzle.** Suddenly at Hare Hill the heavens opened – big style! With no handy shelter we hid under trees which provided no useful shelter. For 20 minutes it lashed it down, turning the Wizard road and Artists Lane into lakes and rivers.

Thoroughly soaked (and minus overshoes – it is July!) we followed the little blue 70 signs through Mobberley and got home just before 8pm. 100 miles in the Bank! Showered and fed, I promptly slept in the chair till bed time, missing the road race highlights. I believe Johnny Foreigner won anyway! Hey ho...



*Five go mad in Cheshire - with lashings of beer?*

## Day Two

We re-gather amongst the yellow and blue throng at Rackhams and head for the Greyhound at Ashley (the half-way point) to continue our pilgrimage. Now in good company of some 20 Seamons, a welcome distraction from the long, long day ahead.

However, by Acton Bridge, and hardly out of the neutralised zone, the 'lightweights' were peeling off for full breakfasts at Dones Green. For the people recuperating from serious medical traumas, the shorter runs are acceptable – but what about all the others? Hardly worth creating the laundry!

Now down to nine, Reg recollecting the halcyon days of only "one" club section that stayed out all day, stopping for saddlebag sandwiches and a pint when the pubs opened at 7pm, and someone usually produced a ball for a kick about, and often needing lights to get home. No rushing back to Twitter and Tweet in those days!

The day warmed up as we headed a further 20 miles towards the Wirral and lunch at the Bunbury Arms in Stoak. Three more peeled



## Side to side...

off to Elvis's cafe, leaving Pete Coles to plough a lonely furrow back after lunch.

Stoak village – an oasis cut off by motorways. Here we have a fleeting encounter with Sheila Craig doing the CCW via train assist and in more sensible chunks. (But that's another story as you will see!) Lunch here was the weekend highlight for Mr Carberry. It's a bit pricey for us cyclists but well worth the extra. John doesn't do 'cheap', more 'expensive foreign'!

I'd purposely lost track of the mileage but memory told me we still had a long way to pedal. Plates cleaned and off we go!

The pace is hindered somewhat by frost-damaged tarmac along the Shropshire Union Canal towpath into Ellesmere Port. EP, not an obvious target for a bike ride but interesting and quickly passed through.

From 1,410 feet yesterday we are now at sea level. Via Hooton we pass the last house into another world of Wirral countryside. Quite delightful off the main roads. Onto the Wirral Way – a superb disused railway track, now a tunnel of sandstone and greenery, running from the Mersey to the Dee side of the Wirral

*All aboard: ice cream & photo at Parkgate*

at Neston and Parkgate. Sea level again!

As usual, Parkgate is bathed in sunshine and drenched in day-trippers venturing all of 50 yards from the car. We indulge in an ice cream and photo stop. I discover John actually does do cheap(ish)! He claimed 'out of money' and cadged, no, not a cone, but an up-market tub and wooden spoon!

It's now 4pm and no time to lose. Quiet lanes lead us through Burton village (very quaint and up-market) and on via Two Mills to Capenhurst. The once foreboding nuclear labs are now hidden by mature greenery.

Late afternoon and your back to within a mile from the lunch stop, but it's three hours later and we pick up the same canal, but this time going south towards, and eventually east through, Chester. By now the 15 foot inclines next to the canal locks feel like mountains and we were, of course, going up.

In Christleton village the church bells sound wonderful calling the faithful. It tells us it's early evening and time to grind out the miles, towards Tattenhall and Beeston Castle. 25 miles to go despite Tilston only being 12 miles away in a straight line. The sun shone but it stayed cool. Ideal really.

# Cheshire two-day

By Sheila Craig



It all went to plan (but not necessarily the first one!)

After a lot of hoo-ing and hah-ing, five members of the touring section finally decided that they would cycle the Cheshire Cycleway (a mere 176 miles) over two days.

Determined not to be left completely behind whilst the lads went out on their adventure, I set about finding a way in which I could take part at my own pace as I am not fit enough or strong enough to keep up with them. I found that there is more than one way to skin a cat, especially a Cheshire Cycleway cat!

A first glance at the route showed a section as optional! Even better when that optional section happens to be the hardest part of the route, heading off over the Macclesfield hills to Wildboarclough. After taking a nano-second to decide, that section was deleted; which now left a route of approximately 150

miles – still too much for me in two days but possible in three!

The lads were taking their cars to a halfway point at Tilston which is fine for a two-day ride but doesn't work for three days. An alternative 'assist' needed to be found.

I studied the route again to see if there were any points which could be accessed easily by train and eventually settled on Chester, Crewe and Northwich, with each station being roughly 50 miles apart on the CCW route. This was going well.

Now for the timing – if I were to set off on Friday, I could complete the Chester-Crewe route which would put me ahead of the lads on the Saturday/Sunday runs and complete the tour at the same time. The plan was formed!

Too good to be true? Absolutely! A phone call from my daughter requesting emergency child care for two, sick, 10-month-olds put

## Side to side...

The final crunch up Burwardsley, Harthill and Bickerton hills are a reminder why you never plan on constantly losing height just to regain it around the corner! But we are on the CCW and I suspect some of the route was worked out on a map in a comfy office. There are a couple of occasions on the route where you wonder if the designer had thought it out fully, from an onsite 'family friendly' perspective. Trading some main road usage to avoid an extra right turn onto the same road further along? I don't know! There are only a couple of 'dodgy' bits.

The final miles include views across the Dee and Mersey estuaries and in the distance, the distinctive cathedral(s) skyline of Liverpool are just reward. Whilst it was pleasant and clear we could have done with a setting sun

in the west to finish things off.

With an inch of fluid left in the bottle and just enough strength left for a silly sprint for the Tilston sign (I was caught half asleep!) we kick up the hill into the village and cruise the final hundred yards back to the Carden Arms and the cars. Time 6.30pm. Mission well and truly accomplished.

Stats: Just short of 200 miles. 16 hours in the saddle. (Why does it always feel like more?) Average speed, 13.5 mph. Sea level to 1,410 feet. Nine chevrons. Roller coaster route in places and stunning views. Bits of Cheshire you've never seen.

A collective decision was made not to repeat this mini-marathon until we have forgotten the discomfort, which was surprisingly mild. Unanimous decision – every four years like the Olympics!



## Cheshire Two-Day...

paid to that masterplan!

Plan B – set off on Saturday and complete the Crewe-Northwich section; Sunday do the Northwich-Chester section and then complete the remaining section sometime later.

So, Saturday arrives and off I tootle on the train to Crewe, manage to navigate my way out of the town centre and onto the route – so far so good. In fact all did go well until I went on the Henbury bypass section. After painstakingly making my way to the top of the hill at Vardentown I mis-slotted and instead of heading for the Wizard I ended up at the bottom of the hill heading for Pexhill! Gutted and no strength left to re-climb the hill, I re-joined the route at the bridge over the new bypass near Nether Alderley.

So disheartened was I that I gave up the route for the day at Ashley and headed home. Plan B was now in tatters as I realised 45 miles was quite far enough and I would not be able to make up the extra mileage to Northwich on Sunday.

Plan C – Move the designated start on Sunday to Mouldsworth as that would get rid of some of the lumpy bits and reduce the mileage to 40.



For some reason, every time I go to Mouldsworth I end up soaked to the skin and that day was no exception! Not the best of starts but head down and carry on!

I arrived at Stoak, which was where the lads were due to have lunch, and found that they were about 10 miles away so I decided to wait so I could cheer them on – **I hadn't seen**

a soul the previous day so I wanted confirmation that they really were doing this route as well!

After about 40 minutes they appeared – looking in good spirits and I left them to have their lunch.

This meant I had a one-hour start over them and would probably see them again later in the day when they caught me up, by when I should be nearing Chester, but I am proud to say, they never caught me up (Is this what is known as the team pursuit? Heard the term but not sure...have I just thrown a gauntlet down?)

Sitting on the train back from Chester, feeling pleased with my efforts at completing half the route, I came up with Plan D – leave the two remaining sections until next time the lads do the CCW and I will complete the route at the same time as they do and celebrate accordingly.

Well done to the five of you who completed the whole route – it certainly was a challenge and I am very proud of each and every one of you!



## Cheshire Cycleway Regional Route 70

The Cheshire Cycleway was devised by Bob Clift on behalf of Cheshire County Council. In his memory Chester & North Wales CTC hold an annual Bob Clift 100-mile CCW ride every June.

[www.cheshirecycleway.co.uk](http://www.cheshirecycleway.co.uk)



# Five into twelve

By Johnny Pardoe

Seamons fielded five riders in this year's 12 hour championship, four of whom completed the event.

Martin Wiggan, in his first 12 hour event, came out on top with 237 miles, and as a result is this year's Club BAR winner.

A real day-long battle ensued for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> between seasoned 12 hour rider Steve Stoddart, who finished with 231 miles, and novice Andy Swain (230 miles).

After his epic, wet, solo End to End Andy was clearly enjoying not having his wet panniers on any more, and enjoying the treat of food and drink being handed up at regular intervals by Dave Barker and Sally.

Phil Holden battled on all day to finish with a very creditable 210 miles.

Seamons took the 2<sup>nd</sup> team prize, and the event was won by Mark Turnbull, recording 286 miles.



*Martin Wiggan (above) stops for a banana at Espley island, assisted by Charles Carraz.*

Martin Wiggan	237.53mi	19.79mph
Steve Stoddart	231.58mi	19.30mph
Andrew Swain	230.01mi	19.17mph
Phil Holden	210.91mi	17.58mph

*Andy Swain (R) and Steve Stoddart (L) battle it out for 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> place in a tightly fought contest.*



# Le coin café

Updates from Café Queen

Cafe Queen has been travelling even farther afield than her usual UK-based routes this time and has some recommendations from, steady there, across the Channel.

But before embarking for her personal Tour de France, she took in Haslington. “We discovered a great little cafe in Haslington, just beyond Wheelock. It is the Bakery, in the main street. Good food, good prices, but only room for small groups.”

Quite a bit farther south is Bourg d’Oisans and such is Cafe Queen’s dedication to the cause, she has even filed reports from her holidays.

Here is her regal despatch:

“Besides the classic climbs try a dead-end climb, these are very rewarding, in particular the climb to Villard Reymond, and you can **always do the Col d’Ornon first if you are col-bagging.** The cafe-bar serves very generous portions of everything, great omelettes, chips, salad, patisseries, and stunning scenery. The walk up the track at the back is well worth the effort; you are on a dizzy ridge, looking straight across the valley to Alpe d’Huez, and beyond.

“Further up the main road towards Briançon, stop in La Grave to admire the 4,000ft glacier – La Meije. The cafe in the main street serves enormous bowls of coffee with free biscuits, and the Equipe newspaper – this year they even went out to get it for me as it hadn’t been delivered!

“Keep going up the Lauteret and stop for omelette and chips at the top, before turning left up the Galibier. There is a bar near the top, but we didn’t linger as a big black cloud chased us back down to the Lauteret.

“A hundred or so kilometres further south you come to Barcelonnette, over the Col de

Vars – another good cafe at the summit. We slept in the van overnight here, and were woken at midnight by voices and bright lights. There was a group of skate-boarders setting off down the mountain, with the car lighting their way!

“The Col de Bonette – highest mountain pass in Europe at 2,800m – used to have a shed at the top which served super omelettes and giant pieces of home-made chocolate brownie. Sadly it was swept away in an avalanche, but there is a cafe-bar half way up – La Halte – a bit expensive.

“The Col d’Allos is “réservé aux cyclistes” on Friday mornings, so that is a must. Just imagine closing the Cat and Fiddle once a week for cyclists! The Refuge is very welcoming, the homemade brown bread takes about an hour to munch through, but it keeps you going all afternoon! The patron treated us to free drinks – “les fidèles” – we’ve been going there for nearly 20 years now.

“The Col de la Cayolle, a long climb of 27 km up to 2,500m, but with beautiful scenery all the way, also has a refuge at the top where you can eat and sleep, but we like to call at the bar half way back down in Fours St.Laurent. Jean-Pierre always remembers us, and this year he greeted us with, “comme d’habitude?” ie “your usual?”

“The highlight of our cafe visits is Fouillouse, a hamlet up an incredibly steep but short climb, at 1,800m. It is a dead end, the track continuing up to a refuge on the Chambeyron, near the Italian border. The café-bar is run by an old mountain guide, and at last he has realized we are English, and not Dutch. He shouted out when we arrived: “Les Anglais sont arrivés”!







La Grave; Johnny has a coffee moment  
Ventoux; bon appétit

“Madame makes a beautiful raspberry tart. She calls our ride the “pèlerinage à la tarte aux framboises”. Monsieur likes to tell us stories about the wolves in the mountains. He blames the Italians for sending them over. “You know how we can tell that? Because the wolves howl in a different language!”

“Back down in the valley, in Barcelonnette, the best cafe-bar is “L’Univers”, in the main square. We went every day to watch the Tour on their TV. They even kept a quiet corner for us, and treated us to free drinks – again! Their plat du jour is excellent value at 11 euros for 2 courses plus coffee.

“On to Provence and the Ventoux. After baking heat – 37 degrees – and a stiff climb that gets harder each year (twice for JP this year...) the cafe at the top is very welcome, big portions of chips, big salade composée, big omelette, basket of bread, and a big carafe of cold water.



Fouillouse; Madame & l’Anglaise

“Our final favourite bar is just 20 km south west of Calais. It is an “estaminet”, a traditional inn that caters for cyclists and walkers. Madame is very friendly, and so are the locals, they all shook our hands.

“And so back to England. Fish and chips in Dover.

“I must mention the most recent, very interesting cafe that we were taken to by long-standing Seamons member, Mike Smyth. You will find his name in the club’s record books for trike and tandem trike.



“Mike used to run the post office in Ros-therne. He and Josie now live in Horncastle. The cafe is Bardney Junction, on the disused railway line from Boston to Lincoln. The station cafe is full of memorabilia, and still has the penny slot toilets. You remember those? On the counter is a bowl of old pennies, so no excuse. Good prices, and a good welcome.

“Bon appétit!”

Merci beaucoup, votre Altesse.

# Mildenhall rally

By Carol Pardoe



If you want a fun cycling weekend with your family, or yourself! go to the Mildenhall rally. It is held every year – about 20 years now – not far from Cambridge, on the Suffolk/ Norfolk border.

We all camp on the school playing fields, and the school hall serves refreshments all weekend, supported by the fish 'n chip van and the burger bar.

There are nice lanes to ride out on, with various village halls laying on morning coffee and afternoon tea, as it is the August Bank Holiday weekend. You can choose from a 100k, 200k or 300k Audax if you are feeling energetic. Or just sit by the track-side and watch top-class racing all weekend.

This is where it all started for Victoria Pendleton. Her dad Max still organizes the races. The Bristow Devil is the one where the last-but-one rider is out – everyone suddenly starts slowing down to be last, or charging off to stay at the front.

The hoop race has hoops thrown down round the track and when the whistle blows you have to race for a hoop. One is taken out

each lap. This is sometimes done in pairs. On the whistle, riders fly round looking for a hoop then, suddenly stop and try and hotch their wheel into it, while their partner is doing the same, and maybe other pairs also trying to get in the same hoop. Skill! And a lot of falling over.

My grandchildren, aged seven and nine, entered everything: cyclo-cross, sprint, sack race, obstacle race, and even the “Giraffe run”. “Giraffe run?” I said. “No, silly Nana, ‘duathlon!’” Everyone got a medal, and there was some very hotly contested racing, even in the three-to-five-year-olds. One little tot refused to stop at the finish line and carried on to do a whole lap, while mum tried vainly to catch him.

**There were also mums and dads’ races.** Thomas and Anna persuaded me to have a go on the Watt Bike. Ooh, pain.

Anyway, that set the over-65 years category going, but during the day my name got wiped off the board, so I was persuaded to go back the next day for revenge. The same for my daughter. I am proud to say we both won our categories in the end.



*Photos clockwise from above left:  
The Mildenhall trike run, with Johnny bidding his time for eventual sprint glory.  
The more relaxed family run proves to be mercifully giraffe-free.  
Carol sets the benchmark on the Watt bike.*



In the evening there was roller racing in the hall, on the stage, very noisy and very furious. Or, for a slightly quieter time, you could go to the quiz night.

John and I went out on the trike runs: 12 of us steaming down the very quiet main road to Prickwillow for coffee, but those Norfolk lanes have no hedges, just a dyke either side, and the wind blows hard. We had a brilliant sprint back; I was saved by meeting my family and doing a U-turn to join them on a more gentle ride. John carried on, neatly tucked in, then did a well-timed surge to dance through and take the final sprint. Yeah!

**Then there's the jumble sale:** some of you know about my wonderful arm-warmers-that-were-leg-warmers, £2. And the long-sleeved Helly Hansen vest, £1. Things that excite people...

The trade tents have lots of retro gear, bells, pumps, tyres, track mitts, and some classy women's clothing, but all too small for me. Anna was really pleased with her shocking pink track mitts, and wore them to bed.

We are already planning next year. See you there!

# Shorts & longs

By John Carberry

The tourers' epic two-day adventure around the Cheshire Cycleway clearly took its toll out of the participants judging by the topic of conversation on the second day.

This 190-plus mile tour of a reputedly flat county included some real knee-cracking climbs around the back of Macclesfield. Fortunately, they came mostly at the end of the first day so it kept our speed down a bit, otherwise we might have tried to go at them too hard and caused untold damage to our thoroughbred bodies.

There was also the added bonus of a watery cool-down, courtesy of the rain, as we inched ever-nearer home; saved us spinning those few extra miles around the block just to make sure the lactic was well out of our systems for the following day. Indeed, we had plenty of time to discuss just how lucky we'd been as we sheltered from a downpour under trees near the top of the Wizard. Well, I say "discuss"; we did have to shout a bit to hear each other above the din of the hammering rain.

The following day, regrouped at Rackhams, we exchanged updates on our physical condition. Turns out only Craigie and yours truly did not include an unexpected snooze in their post-ride recovery regime.

Various theories for why this might be were kicked about until we worked out why that was – we are both the babies of the bunch. There's a lot to be said for being in your mid-40s it seems.

Roger's fear of the rain is as pathological as it is legendary among his touring section mates.

Surprisingly for such a rebel, he has many rules in his life: don't eat tuna, don't eat chicken, don't go swimming in case you encounter some very small fish, do try beetroot juice but don't be alarmed by the consequences, you mustn't ride faster than 12mph

on a club run. One of his most important maxims is that it's back to bed if you see more than two spots of rain on the bin lid by the back door.

So you can only imagine everyone's surprise when he appeared at the end of the August bank holiday Monday treasure hunt, a day so rain-filled even the X's on the treasure maps had dribbled into Y's. Still, there he was, supporting the social side of the club, having ridden all the way out to



the Railway at Mobberley – on his pub bike. As the tales of derring-do from the day were recounted among those who'd taken part in the treasure hunt, Roger seemed to get increasingly edgy. Facing the window, he could see just how bad the weather was turning. And it was already pretty bad to start with.

Too late now for him to change his mind. No point wishing he'd chosen a better bike for cutting through a windy, rainy day.

And then he realises – there's a train station next door.

Before he can say: "There's no such thing as pear cider", he's gone. Armed with the knowledge of when the next train is, the crafty bugger is off like a shot, waiting with his bike on the platform. You can see just how pleased with himself he is from the photograph we took.

The tradition of tourers accidentally leaving



their bottles behind somewhere for them to be retrieved a long time later is still being kept alive.

None of us waiting at the Lymm turn on the ten course could work out whose bottle Gordo had picked up. It was none of the regulars. For about three weeks Gordo was diligently trying to repatriate the forlorn bottle, asking the marshals on duty if it was theirs he'd found. No takers.

A couple of weeks later Gordo's away. Up pops Malc, still in a bad mood about the demise of his tent at the York rally. What's made the loss worse, he says, looking down at the ground, is that he'd left a bottle at the turn "the other week" and couldn't see it there now.

Quite why he thought it would still be there after a good month's time had passed is probably Reg's fault – he once left a bottle behind somewhere near Bolton while waiting for the Tour of Britain to pass. About a year or so later, he's back in the same area and remembers his lost bottle. Never one to waste the pennies, Reg is off the bike and kicking through the grass at the spot where he'd been waiting all those months before – and he finds the bloomin' thing!

Finally, Gordo and Malc are at the turn at the same time a couple of weeks later and the bottle is returned to its owner. Hurray!

Less than month passes. Malc's out on the Bob Richie run. We stop for a breather on the way back before continuing. What's left where Malc was just sat? His bottle. The same bottle he's only just got back, I believe. He realises he's missing it at the next comfort stop. Luckily for all of us, Gordo's there to give him it straight back this time.



**Photos:** Far left; *the secret of lactate-tolerant touring.* This page; *the tourists' spot of road-side bother makes for a photo opportunity on a very rare dry day.*

# Dave goes wild in Wales - again

By Dave Matthews

What a great ride which took place in ideal sunny and dry weather conditions, providing a brief, dry interlude during one of the wettest summers on record. As I sit here the day after (August bank holiday Monday), recovering from the effort, the rain is bucketing down once again – but who cares after such a fulfilling day out in the glorious Welsh mountains?

**This year's challenge repeats a route of some ten years ago**, riding out over the Hirnant Pass from Bala to Lake Vyrnwy and on to the first control at Llanerfyl village hall. The route then turns east to follow some very lumpy roads to Machynlleth, where there is no control but an opportunity to grab some much-needed lunch. After this brief respite the route turns north to follow a small back road to Corris and then the mountain road west to Aberangell and Dinas Mawddwy. The Bwlch y Groes looms above this control and provides a challenging route back to the finish in Bala after a total of 83 miles and 7,000ft of climbing.

There were six of us Chester Easy Riders at the 8.15 start in Bala – the Geneva-Nice team (Martin Donaldson, David Matthews, Dave Pipe and Ray Stigter) putting all that alpine fitness to good use, along with Lowri Evans and Dave Hill who employed locally-gained Welsh-mountain-fitness to get the two of them round the demanding course.

The following account relies mostly on my own experiences as we rode at our own pace and only coincided on the road as circumstances and pace allowed. The mountain goat team of Martin and Ray disappeared into the distance beyond Lake Vyrnwy never to be seen again. I believe they finished two hours ahead of the rest of us in the speedy



*Dave takes on a big ticket ascent*

time of eight hours.

Since riding this course some ten years ago, a couple of handy books have been written by Simon Warren which document and grade **200 climbs in Britain's hills**. **Three climbs** from the books are included in this ride which gives some idea of the overall challenge. The hills between the listed climbs often seemed just as severe as we linked up the well known, "big ticket" ascents.

First up was the Hirnant (grade 7/10) which provided an ideal warm up. Not too steep at first, but rising to a 15 per cent gradient for a brief section near the top. The descent was fairly tricky as the road through the trees was damp in places. There was also a fair amount of gravel which caused at least one

rider to crash out.

Once down at Lake Vyrnwy, whilst I was still in touch with Ray, we had a real blast riding with bunches of cyclists along the level, lake-side road to Llanwddyn. Beyond this point I left my comfort zone of well-known roads to climb through a series of steep narrow lanes to eventually emerge onto the A458 at Llangadfan. A short distance after this the first control at Llanerfyl village hall was reached. There were long queues of cyclists here which caused a wait of 15 minutes or so to get through to the electronic control check and subsequently grab a snack. Whilst waiting in the queue I met up with fellow Seamons rider Stuart Kay, last met on the Costa Blanca in April, so the queue time passed quickly for us as we caught up with the club news.

Leaving the control southwards the route follows one of my favourite roads in Wales along the peaceful and remote Nant y Eira valley, protected by its multitude of cattle grids. On this occasion the road had recently been covered in liberal quantities of gravel which slowed things down a bit – but the wheel crunching noise did give warning of a small convoy of 1930s touring cars creeping along behind us.

After this relatively gentle interlude, there were yet more steep, twisty, narrow lanes that eventually led out to “big city”

Machynlleth. It seemed that most of the 500-plus riders had arrived here simultaneously as every cafe and shop was filled to bursting with hungry and thirsty cyclists. After standing in a cafe queue for ten minutes and getting nowhere, I gave up and raided the local Spar shop for water, Eccles cakes and a banana. Not the best meal – but packed full of energy!

The next section turned north for Corris and the Dyfi Forest climb (grade 7/10) with its 17 per cent and 20 per cent gradients over to **Aberangell**. I wasn't looking forward to this climb at all as I had traversed it with Ray some 12 days previously when checking the route sheet for the new 208k (130 mile) **audax “the Barmouth Boulevard”**. The three big lifts through the forest seemed really exhausting a couple of weeks ago after riding a challenging 80 miles prior to the ascent – on this occasion the climb coming after 60 miles of hilly roads seemed more reasonable to both of us.



Beyond Aberangell, a narrow riverside road leads to Dinas Mawddwy where the village hall control point is overshadowed by the looming presence of Bwlch y Groes. After a quick snack, I nervously rode out along the four-mile approach road up the Afon Dyfi valley to

the foot of the pass (the highest tarmacked pass in Wales; grade 10/10) and the start of the real climbing just beyond Llanymawddwy.

The road immediately rises up at 25 per cent and maintains a similar gradient for the next three miles to the summit. Most riders (self included) walked a few sections of the pass to relieve the strain, so congratulations to Ray and Dave Pipe who rode the whole way.

Once on top of the Bwlch y Groes there is an exhilarating descent to Bala Lake followed by a quick blast round the east side to Bala, the final control, a brew and a well earned **commemorative slate**. A great day out and it's all on again for next year.

Many thanks to Organiser Denis Holder for coming out of retirement and once again providing such a consistently great event.

# The fun ten

Photographs courtesy of Johnny Pardoe

The last ten of the season saw the time trial bikes put aside and the start of the serious competition for the most ridiculous get-up for riding a bike.



Holy Fancy Dress Time Trial, Batman!



Submariners? Bird watchers? At least they're prepared for bad weather (above).



Admitting to getting carried away with the prosthetics, it was all going a bit "Holby" for Sally & Amy (above & below). It was hard not to look and wince...



Chairman Mike & Keith Stacey await the starter's orders (above).

Lip-stick, hat & streamlined gladioli - it could only be Karen *à la mode* for 1948 (below).





# Johnny Helms' two-up 25

By Carol Pardoe

Well done Karen Popplewell, in the two-up with Christine Roberts; fastest ladies, and in class company.

This event is held in memory of Johnny Helms, Warrington CC, 63 years as the Cycling Weekly cartoonist, who passed away three years ago.

Each pair consists of a veteran rider where the younger rider must pace the older rider till the last mile. The oldest rider was 84-year-old Dennis Milsom. When asked what his secret was, he replied: "Keep living"!

**Karen's partner, Christine Roberts, is a well-known specialist at long distance, holding the ladies' 24 hour record with 461 miles, and 250 miles for a "12".**

They were up against Lynne Taylor, another **long distance champion, holding the ladies' End-to-End record**, having ridden it three times, once with Andy Wilkinson for the mixed tandem record. Her partner was



*Karen falls back to give Christine Roberts the final mile's run to victory*

Pauline Strong, top road racing girl in the 80s, and a former End-to-End record-holder.

Other well known vets riding were Les West, of Milk Race fame, Tour de France and Giro stage winner Martin Earley, John Woodburn, champion at 12 hour, 24 hour, End-to-End and 1,000 miles.

Also competing was former Seamons CC rider Chris Siepen!

## Testing Times

For some the racing season is over yet we have had three club records broken in the last month.

Riding in the Bridlington CC 10, on course V718, on 11 August, Paul McAllister lowered his own club record set nine years ago to 20.24.

This one did not last so long as on-form Charles Carraz, riding the Team Swift event on the same course on 28 August became the first Seamons rider to go faster than 30mph in an open event when he recorded a time of 19.38.

Such was the day that multiple time trial champion and record-holder Michael Hutchinson won the event with a new national

competition record time of 17.45.

The writing was on the wall for this time, **though, as Charles broke Robin Haigh's 20-year-old club 25 record** when he posted 51.27 in the Derby Mercury event on the A25/11 course on 19 August.

Keith Stacey is currently compiling a list of records set or broken to be included in the next club handbook. This will include records set this year by Sally Cowan for veterans times at most distances, and for the first time will include junior time trial records – some set this year by Sean Davenport. If you are aware of any such records from previous years (and there must be some junior ones) please let him know.

# Club Hillclimb

By Carol Pardoe

Withenshaw Hill was bathed in warm autumn sunshine, after a chilly start in thick mist, which soon cleared as we all arrived; a total of 31 riders (one less than last year), including five juniors, three ladies and three former champions. Roger once again kept the flag flying for the Touring section, just three seconds shy of last year's time.

In the Ladies' section, Joanne Blakeley produced a super ride, improving by 30 seconds and moving up from 17<sup>th</sup> place last year to 12<sup>th</sup> this time. It was good to see Melanie Bailey competing again, finishing second lady to Joanna, third was first-timer Jo Nevin.

Andy Swain lost his chain, but still got the biggest ovation at the top. He is still resting on his laurels after his great ride in the 12 hour, and his unaccompanied End-to-End.

In the Junior section Sean Davenport equalled last year's time with 2.53, Ben Towers recorded 3.22, Alex Menzies 4.00, and Tom Dyer 5.20.

Not only was Jack Robinson the fastest junior, he was also the fastest overall, winning the Johnny Pardoe Trophy, and becoming the Club Hill Climb Champion for 2012, improving on last year's time by nine seconds. Super ride, Jack.

1981 Club Champion – yes, 1981! – come-back kid Eamon Mallon rode strongly, improving on last year's time by two seconds, and coming





equal fifth with another first-timer, Ed Blum, both finishing just behind Adam Rycroft, who sneaked into fourth place with 2.48.

One of the rides of the day was newcomer Sam Rowlands, with 2.43, taking second place and pushing last year's champion, Charles Carraz, down to third with 2.44. Altogether, a great championship, run off in superb conditions.

One interesting statistic: only 11 members from last year's event rode this year, which poses the question, if the other 21 had ridden, then we would have had over 50 riders! And we would have missed lunch!

Even so, there must have been over 60 members on the hill, for what is one of the few occasions in the club year that all the sections get together.

In the freewheel competition, a new name went on what is one of the most coveted club trophies, Paul Lomas, club cartoonist. He joins a long list of elite downhillers, but it was a close-run thing with club secretary Dave Hoyle not far behind, despite carbo-loading on pork pies, followed by our editor, John Carberry, and last year's champion, Tim Seddon.

Many thanks from us all to the organizers of the event and the lunch.

We were sorry to miss the lunch at the Ryles Arms, but we were on a mission to support Karen Popplewell in the Johnny Helms classic two-up TT in Cheshire.

# On the road again

By John Carberry

The beauty of Shropshire was polished to a twinkling gleam by some late-summer sun when Seamons made their annual **trip to Bishop's Castle** in September.

What started off several years ago as a fraternal invitation from the Wigan Wheelers to join them for one of their calendar events has itself become one of our own perennials.



**We've even got our "own" accommodation** now, courtesy of the lovely Wendy at Foxholes campsite. **We're already booked for 2013.**

As well as an opportunity to test our mettle on the fabulous, traffic-free roads of rural Shropshire, the weekend allows our non-cycling family the chance to take in the **wonderful walks on offer. And that's before you** get to town for its packed-to-the-rafters Michaelmas event.

Friday saw an early start for the keenest, with John and Sheila Craig, Gordon Peake, Pete Coles and yours truly on site for a 10.30am ride. This turned out to be a tad early for Wendy, especially when she and Mr Wendy are faced with one of their busiest weekends of the year. Oops.

Ruffled feathers smoothed, the riders clip in and head off for Ludlow via the Clun valley. **Sheila's choice of transport for the weekend** is feet so she goes her way for a solo walk.

The big draw for the weekend is the Michael-

mas festival the town hosts every year. Its celebration takes the form of music, street theatre, steam engines, vintage tractors, pipe organs, classic cars, show tents and all the **rest. It's quite a weekend.**

But as the Seamons jerseys make their first appearance in town, the only sign something is afoot is a couple of workmen rigging up a temporary stage at the top of the high street. We whip by and leave the buildings behind, out and onto the first of those lovely Shropshire drags that saps the legs but fills the soul. At the top of the hill we have spectacular command across miles of verdant beauty. **Pete's navigation is up to scratch** and we're soon back in the valley on narrow roads, dodging hedge clippings and grass down the middle of the tarmac.

**It's almost a shame to stop for lunch, but the** increasing drizzle in the air and our auspicious stopping place for a re-group – right outside a pub – are perfectly timed.

Inside, it just gets better: sausage baguettes



**Photos, left to right:** Saturday's riders gather by the River Clun; Reg ponders a pint at the White Horse.

courtesy of the butcher's next door, beer from the brewery at the back of the pub. Now that's eating local, and with zero food miles.

Refreshed, it's time to head for our actual destination, Ludlow. Rolling roads are starting to eat into our reserves from lunch but we soldier on, sustained by the ever-changing vistas under now blue skies.

The point of cycling is never about the destination, it's always about the journey, so our stop in Ludlow is brief. We also realise it is now actually tea-time and we should be quite a few miles nearer home.

Nonetheless, we can't get enough of this county's countryside and we agree to take the hillier way back to BC. The topographical ups and downs are matched by a similar rhythm of fortune – Pete punctures, Gordo gets an anxious call asking if the car blocking the entrance to one of the camping fields is his.

By the time we get back, in dribs and drabs, it's gone 7pm. A relieved Gordo has since confirmed the errant car was not his. Phewee.

Back at the ranch, we're joined by Reg and Vera Blease, Dave Barker and Maryshia, and John Coles and Barbara. Roger Haines can't stand the pace anymore so has elected to come the following day.

Day one is rounded off with some gentle banter and a stroll into town. All is calm before the Michaelmas storm.

There are more groups again on Saturday – walkers, cyclists, readers, pootlers – and we split up to enjoy our chosen pleasure after a brief photocall in the sunshine.

There are more riders today and we head back to the Clun valley for a shorter, reversed loop from the previous day. No Ludlow or Leintwardine this time but we did scope out a potential future hostel weekend in the shape of a converted mill at Clun. And we did our bit for Belgian-British relations by having



a chat with a couple of foreign cycle-tourers. They had hoped to book themselves in the hostel that night but were to be disappointed. I wonder how I would have felt hearing that news but they are completely unfazed and look forward to a different adventure in the afternoon.

The lunch stop is, satisfyingly, the same as the previous day – the White Horse. The sausages and the beer taste even better this time. We are framed in the golden glow of sunshine through the window and our food-time chat meanders, burbles and sparkles like the nearby River Clun.

Back on the bikes, eventually, we spin through the valley before doubling back and heading up into the hills. Pete is short-cutting his way home so we are left to rely on a map and our wits. Within less than half-a-dozen turns we are on a different road than we intended. Ho hum, maybe this is how runs used to be!

We survive the ordeal – mostly thanks to Dave B being such a grown-up – and find our way back to a now bustling BC, with crowds thronging the streets and the Michaelmas excitement at full volume. The bikes are aban-

**Photos, clockwise from left:** *Dave B to plots the route back to BC; Reg steams his way up a Shropshire drag; Riders gather for the camera at Foxholes; Not all the fun's to be had on wheels.*

doned and it's everyone for themselves as we divide up to enjoy a town revelling in its own celebration.

As the evening progresses various of the Seamons family meet up, drift apart, meet again, bump into old friends and make new ones as we are all lost in the sway of BC's gentle seduction.

There's a sing-song in a pub here, a dance in another pub there. A first curry from the favoured street stall, impromptu bagpipe performances, raucous rock, Bhangra beats, steam whistles and sooty traction engines. A second curry. More dancing, more singing, a parade of candlelit lanterns. Evening sunshine slowly gives way to crystal clear magical starlight. It is a night that just keeps on giving.

Sunday, by tradition, involves a run to Leintwardine; a gentle promenade to match a potentially subdued mood. This time we honour that routine, but add a twist. First we take a packed lunch. Seriously. And second, several



Thompson; it's the beret, apparently. Surprisingly, he isn't the famous founder of Fairport Convention but he did once play fiddle with him!

In the pub, friends are reunited and the chatter rolls merrily along as they share memories, laughs and cheery pints.

But for me, Monday and the office have started their Sunday afternoon sneak into my mind, overpowering the antidote that had been working so well since Thursday night.

**There's nothing for it, we'll have to start back. At the finish, we've clocked 110 miles or thereabouts for the weekend, but probably taken a good few months off our ages thanks to the elixir of BC.**

For me the weekend ends with a long sing-song in the van as I head up the A49. The rest **are staying another night and have a day's walkabout to look forward to.** In case I feel left out, they helpfully text me with updates **during the day. Luckily, I'm not annoyed straight away as I can't read the messages until I get out of my meetings.**

**We've checked** – Wendy has us pencilled in for next year.

of the group make an actual arrangement to **meet up with a friend who's moved from Hale and now lives in Leintwardine.**

BC has simmered to a calm, as if in sympathy with its no-doubt-delicate townsfolk slowly **surfacing after the previous day's wild abandon.** We ease back into it too and are soon back on the open road, sandwiches in saddlebags, ready for more, looking like a Patterson picture as we gossip and chunter our way between the high hedges.

Roger makes up for lost time the previous day and takes on a ford. He almost makes it too. There is more of what passes for drama in sleepy-Sunday Shropshire when a huge hay trailer and tractor meet a car coming in the opposite direction. **I'm sure the car driver would have coped much better with her 100-yard reverse if she hadn't been watched by a bunch of old blokes on bikes.**

**We picnic like the world's weirdest family on the green at Leintwardine.** In full view of everyone. Our shame is complete when Gordo asks a passing dog-walker if he is actually Roger





# CLUBS RUNS LIST

	Half day	Tempo	Touring	Social
4th Nov	Paddock Farm	Tattenhall	Mystery run	Henbury
11th Nov	Elvis Cafe	Chestnut Centre	Delamere	Dones Green
18th Nov	Blaze Farm	Aqueduct Centre	Algreave	Jodrell Bank
25th Nov	Congleton GC	Elvis Cafe	Rose Farm	Astbury *
2nd Dec	Montgomery	Astbury	Hayfield	Pott Shrigley
9th Dec	Tattenhall	Malkins Bank	Jodrell Bank	Spinney, Allstock
16th Dec	<b>Carberry's Christmas Grotto &amp; OMT Lunch</b>			
23rd Dec	Astbury	Dagfields	Dones Green	Wizard Cafe, Alderley
20th Dec	Impromptu	Impromptu	Blakemere	Impromptu
6th Jan	Dagfields	Delamere		

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



## Cover:

Roger Haines and the ford near Bishops Castle.

See p.28 for the tourists' week-end in Bishops Castle.

## Inside:

### Club Hillclimb

The competitive year's grand finale sees another classic as 31 riders take to the hills.

See p.26-27



## Nuts

By Lomas

MY SON GOT CAUGHT HAVING A CHEEKY WEE IN THE SWIMMING BATHS YESTERDAY, BUT ALL KIDS DO THAT. NOT OFF THE END OF THE DIVING BOARD THEY DON'T.



OH, YEAH... WE'RE ALL MUSICAL IN OUR HOUSE, EVEN THE SEWING MACHINE IS A SINGER!

