

THE SQUIRREL



CHRISTMAS 2003

EDITORIAL

One of the unplanned benefits of 'losing' a month in July, which pushed the last Squirrel back, is that I get to produce a Christmas issue of the magazine and am able to use a seasonal Patterson that I've had for some time. I hope you like it. Not only that, there's a seasonal piece about Cheshire folk written a century and a half ago, a couple of appropriate cartoons and that traditional staple - a quiz. Do have a go and get your answers to the editor by the end of January. All the correct answers of those attending the Dinner will all go into a hat and the first out gets his or her ticket for free.

It just remains for me to thank all of those contributors who have kept the pages of the magazine so lively, to wish all of you a peaceful Christmas and New Year and indulge in a wish; that all members get behind our push to make the Dinner a great success.

All the very best

Jim Boydell

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President's Piece

I've really enjoyed my first season as your President. My first Club event was the Club Christmas Hot-pot. As I sped forth to meet the Club in John Carberry's garage, dressed in a tall black hat, black bin bag cape flapping in the rain, and my large hooked nose - it was false, I tell you! - I was confident no-one would recognize me. I saw a cyclist coming towards me. "Hello Carol," he said. I cast a spell upon him immediately, then hurried on to do my duties.

My second event was the M&D Lunch, a convivial occasion attended by a fair contingent from the Seamons to support our winners. Next event: Club Dinner. That was a grand occasion, as always, and I felt very proud to be on the top table, and to be in such good company as Graham Trunkolini - or was it Bored Trunkman?

The M&D "100" was once again impeccably organized by Jim Boydell, with bags of support from the Seamons, both marshalling, serving teas, doing the results, and even riding! Another event when the Seamons did us proud.

The highlight of my Presidential year was undoubtedly the Tour de France stage up the Alpe d'Huez. No less than fifteen Seamons members at the Bourg d'Oisans campsite. It was a very proud moment indeed to have the honour of leading the bunch out of the campsite and up the first part of the climb. I wasn't at the front long, but I savoured those few moments. Other proud moments have been cyclists from other clubs saying things like, "Haven't you got a great website" - thanks to Steve Booth, or "Your club's done well," - with team wins, PB's, Steve's "100" record, Paul's '10' & '30' and Phil Holden's great "12".

So thank you, Seamons, for making ours a club to be proud of. Have a happy Christmas and a safe and rewarding New Year.

Carol Pardoe

Cover: "Greetings" by Frank Patterson sums up what we would all like for Christmas. 'The Squirrel' is the magazine of the Seamons Cycling Club. Editor—Jim Boydell, 44Winchester Drive, Stockport, SK4 2NU. ☎ 0161 442 6370 or e-mail Jim.Boydell@btinternet.com. Club website at www.seamons.org.uk from where the on-line version of this magazine is available in PDF format.

BITS AND BITS

There was nothing magical about this 'Mystery Tour'. In fact it wasn't supposed to be a mystery tour at all; that was to be the following week. Still, in the touring section anything can happen, very often does and this was to be no exception. In a way it was also a triumph of reality over the sort of delusion that creeps up on you with advancing years. You know the sort of thing - 'The older I get, the better I was'.

Well, as Capn' Wilkie found out, he wasn't. Some time before he'd been on a clubrun to Appley Bridge led by Johnny Coles and had convinced himself that he could remember the way. Now, anyone who goes on runs led by the inimitable JC knows that it will contain more twists and turns than Hercule Poirot can work out let alone Wilky. A tour of the lovelier towns of south Lancashire followed as the hapless group groped their way through the increasingly rain sodden urban environment. It may have done wonders for L S Lowry but as a clubrun it was less than a success. Finally (and with the pubs already well open) the group stumbled in to A.... Ashton in Makerfield. And that is where they stayed for the first - and probably last time.

Sometimes you just can't win! As John Hurley found out on the run to Parkgate. Some places object to wearing of cycling shoes on their treasured floors (though stilettoes aren't a problem?) but John incurred the wrath of an indignant manageress when he removed his on entering the lunchtime pub. "Would you put them back on please as the sight of your feet might put other customers off their food." Were they webbed? Seven toes on each foot? Covered in bunions? Nope; just your ordinary everyday feet covered in socks. So next visit to Parkgate a lot more feet will come into play as the section vote with them and find another hostelry.

Sat at a sunny lunchtime spot outside the café at Meerbrook on a lovely autumn day, things couldn't have been pleasanter (except for the price of a round of toast that is) when somebody mentioned that

they had got 99.98 miles in on the previous week's outing. There was absolute incredulity from most of those present, not that such a high mileage had been recorded but that nobody, but nobody, records 99.98 miles. Ever. I've been known to ride round the block a few times to creep over the magic '0' into the next deca-mile. Johnny Pardoe has been known to ride up and down his bike shed to get the magic missing bit in when the weather's bad. And that's only twelve feet long!

The club hill climb is known for its myriad opportunities to take a different sort of rise out of those who have been brave enough to compete. From encouragement through banter to downright cheek and insult, all forms of roadside utterings have been traded over the years. This year was no exception as Roger Haines found out. Weaving all over the road as he made his way up the climb a spectator was heard to shout "Stop swaying about like that or you'll never make it to the top." Roger's reply was in the vernacular form "B**ll**cks." An unwise repost it transpired as the spectator had something in reserve, "Actually it was your upper body I was referring to."

A club member in the Guinness Book of Records ? Can it be true? There will be those who think that their drinking and eating exploits on the 'Engine & Tender' weekends should have qualified them years ago but this is the genuine thing and may well be appearing in a Waterstone's near you. Ian Dunning's name may not appear individually but it should be fun trying to spot him if a photo of the attempt to get as many people on Old Ordinaries (penny farthings to you and me) supporting each other is accepted. According to Ian this delicate operation requires two people sitting astride their machines to link an arm as then another and another join up. The only support allowed is from one already in the line with no outside help at all. Eventually there were 131 such riders balancing in a line, all no doubt hoping that nobody sneezed. We await confirmation and maybe even a picture.

You can almost see the tabloid headlines can't you? SHOCK, HORROR! Man awarded Lady's prize at Ladies' Dinner. Well maybe not nowadays with 'trans-gender persons' making a mockery of ladies' sport. On this occasion though it was all 'up and above board' and the prize was the much-coveted Most Meritorious Trophy at the Manchester & District Ladies Association Dinner.

The man was Johnny Pardoe - none other - and the trophy was awarded to him for his meritorious services to the Ladies. Over the years he has mounted them from behind, from the side, face on - all photos on cardboard for the Ladies Archive, of course! That evening he had them all on the dance floor at the same time - for a photo, he said...

Eddy Robinson turned up at the clubroom on yet another bike. "How many's that?" I asked. "About six." came the reply. About? Most of us know exactly how many we've got but I suppose in Eddy's case, where he acquires numerous bits and pieces from various sources, the number that are made up into actual rideable machines doesn't equate necessarily to the potential steeds. It turns out that this one is an ex-postie's bike (probably from one who has now opted to walk rather than wear the compulsory helmet) lovingly hand painted in shiny black enamel. There was yet another surprise in store. As Eddy sipped his tea he announced that he had bought a turbo. "Been on it five times already." Eddy said with some pride. "You know you don't have to wear a cape and overtrousers, don't you?" came a voice from the kitchen. It's a cruel world.

Our Guest of Honour - Gethin Butler

After many years of trying to pin Gethin Butler down to be our Guest of Honour - the Preston Wheelers Dinner always seemed to clash with ours - JP finally signed him up at a weak moment. He doesn't have many of those so it wasn't easy! It was after the Circuit of the Dales. We'd been out on the course on the tandem trike, shouting the riders up all those awful hills, and we said: "Let's get him!"

Coming from good stock - his grandfather, Stan, being a former 24 hour National Champion in 1950 with 458 miles, and his Dad, Keith, a former top road man and current organizer of the very successful Surrey League - Gethin is most definitely one of the greatest long distance cyclists of all time. Here are some of his major successes:

- 12 hour Champion: 1992: 276 miles,
 1997: 286 miles,
 1999: 297 miles

- 24 hour Champion: 2000: 509 miles,
 2001: 485 miles,
 2003: 471 miles

- BBAR Champion: 1994 and 1995

- Anfield "100" 2 wins
- Circuit of the Dales 7 wins

- RRA Records:
- Liverpool - Edinburgh: 8 hrs 31 mins 27 secs
 - 24 Hour: 509 miles set in 2001, from Land's End to Beattock, as part of the End-to-End record
 - Land's End to John O'Groats set in 2001 in a time of 1 day 20 hrs 4 mins 20 secs
 - 1,000 mile record: 2 days 7 hrs 53 mins 7 secs.
 - AUDAX
 - Paris-Brest-Paris: fastest British rider this year covering the 1200 km in 49 hours
 - Plus qualifying rides: 200km, 400km, 600km.

- Personal Best Rides: 10: 19.04
 25: 47.57
 50: 1.40.04
 100:3.28.33
 "12":297 miles
 "24" 509 miles

Feel tired just reading about his achievements? Come and meet the man himself on February 14th at the Annual Dinner.

Editor's note: I had the chance to exchange a few words with Gethin at Siddington during the M&DTTA '100'. No, he wasn't riding he was looking after three Preston Wheelers team mates who had opted to ride the event. A nice gesture this from such a high profile rider. His view of the course - raised eyebrows and a single word "tough". Maybe it should be marketed as a SPOCO event and he'd ride it next year.

Meet your Clubmates

A chance meeting at a café in 1989 and the conversation that followed introduced this month's first clubmate to the club in a most unusual fashion. The conversation included reference to that year's trip to the Alps to see the Tour and, with little experience of cycling, he said "Great, can I come?" He came up to the club to meet those going and set about getting some miles in. It's probably an understatement that the 10 days spent in the Alps was a revelation but to his credit he stuck it out and got stronger as the days went by. A light was ignited and now **Dave Matthews** is one of our most consistent Audax riders and promoter of the Club's 'Tour of the Berwyns'.

When and where were you born? Northenden in September 1944

When did you start cycling and what was your first club? Other than cycling 10 miles each day to and from school at Cheadle Hulme, joined Seamons (my only club) in 1989

What was your first race? Geneva to Grenoble in July 1989 on the way to the Tour de France -- finishing well last.

What was your first win? The early season Tourist Trial from Eureka Café round Worlds End in April 2000 while training for the Alps---amazingly holding off Port Sunlight for a couple of minutes

Which Performances do you rate as your best? Fleet Moss 200K in 9hr 20 min in 1989; completing the Dalesman 200K in 1988 and the "Marmotte" Cols in July 2003

What is your favourite meal? Spaghetti Bolognese

What were you like at school? Liked Science & maths; loved sport

What kind of books do you read? Sport & adventure books, biographies and workshop manuals

What kind of music do you enjoy? Modern jazz, tuneful pop music and most classical

What are your favourite TV programmes? Football, Cycling, motor sport, documentaries

Which Newspaper do you read? Daily Telegraph

What is your ideal holiday destination? Anywhere with lots of hills, quiet roads and few people (except when it's Tour time)

Do you have any hobbies? Other than cycling---car mechanics, furniture making and washing up

Who would play you in film of your life? Clint Eastwood (I wish)

What is your greatest fear? Anything bad happening to my family or personally being confined indoors

How would you describe yourself in lonely hearts ad? Lonely heart needs yours; lets move on

What is your favourite training ride? Oscroft-Eureka Café-Halkyns-Ruthin-Lavister-Oscroft

What is your most unpleasant characteristic? Preferring slow hilly rides to fast flat rides

What characteristic do you most dislike in others? A combination of ignorance compounded by arrogance

Who would you most like to have met and why? Francesco Moser to understand how such a big guy could race through the mountains

What was your most embarrassing moment? Being picked up by the broom wagon near the top of the Croix de Fer during the 1988 Etape du Tour

Four words to describe yourself? Where's the next horizon?



CAFÉ NEWS

If you're thinking of going up to Paddock Farm then be aware that they now serve Sunday Roast Dinners and most of the tables inside are booked from 12.00 noon onwards. The tearoom is open until January 1st 2004 and then closes for its annual break. Opening hours are 0900 - 1600 (closed Tuesdays). Over the Christmas period they are closed on Dec 23/24/25th and open 26th through to Jan 1st inclusive. If you want to book Sunday lunch (they look great value at a fiver!) then phone 01538 300345.

Beware the café at Dagfields. Some members were in there and were told they would be charged for the usual 'more hot water'.

DINNER TICKETS

Everybody should be aware that tickets are now on sale but here is a reminder....

Date :- St Valentine's Night; Feb 14th 2004

Venue :- The Cresta Court

Tickets :- Still priced at £21.00 as last year

Guest of Honour :- National 24 hr Champion, former BBAR and fastest ever British finisher in the Paris - Brest - Paris randonnée - Gethin Butler

Dancing :- to the live 70's/80's band 'The Brotherhood of Glam'.

We need a good turnout at this event to ensure that we break even so please do your best to sell some tickets and most of all - be there yourself to applaud your clubmates as they collect their awards.

M&DTTA NEWS

The traditional Christmas '25' and Fancy dress event (the fancy dress is over about 12 miles) takes place on **Sunday December 21st**. Why not put those fancy dress costumes to good use by entering? Entries must be on an official form (see Jim Boydell) and be in by **Tuesday, Dec 9th**. The cyclists' Carol Service takes place at Chelford Church later that day.

Tickets for the M&DTTA prize presentation hot-pot (**Sunday, Jan 25th, 2004**) are available (but limited) from Jim Boydell, price £12.00. Come and support your prize winning clubmates.

CTC NEWS

As some of you will know, Manchester DA have been looking at a venue in the Peak District for the Birthday Rides in August 2004. Several of the DA representatives and members went on a visit to Thornbridge Outdoor Centre, Great Longstone, in October. The result of the visit was that the venue has been booked for the Birthday Rides. Manchester DA will be hosting the event, which will be held from **Saturday 31st July to Friday 6th August 2004**.

The committee would like to ask whether any of the sections have members who would be prepared to volunteer to help with the event; either in the preparations, or at the event itself. It is not necessary to be available for the whole week, or to be on the committee. Please let me know if you think you may be able to help in any way. (John Thorogood has already volunteered to assist on this. Are there any other members willing to help on this most prestigious event?)

TOURIST TROPHY 2003

The disappearance of Andy Wright has left the field clear for Dave Matthews. Dave picked up points in the the Hilly Flintshire and the Holmes Chapel - Hawkstone Audax. The also-rans have enjoyed an interesting variety of events: the 100 mile Polka-Dot Charity Ride in the Peak; an excursion to Diggle for the Beard Cup; the Cheshire Cycleway 2-day; and the Fleet Moss Audax, which Peter Bell managed this year without the sweat of going over Fleet Moss (he did the 153 Km version).

All that now remains is the Montgomery week-end and the Winter Solstice Audax, so don't worry, Dave. With a four point cushion there's no need to flog yourself round south Shropshire and Powys with the Robin Haigh/Keith Bailey mafia. Leading positions at the end of November..... Dave Matthews 14 points; Andy Wright 10; Roger Haines 9; Keith Wilkinson 9; Gordon Peake 8½; Dave Barker 8; John Pardoe 8.

EARLY SEASON 2004

Jan 4th 180/102 km, Wood Lane, Poynton

Jan 25th 204/160 km, Cheadle

Feb 21st 200/120 km, North West Passage

Feb 29th 202/150 km, Cheadle

Mar 7th Llangollen, Club Audax ...plus

week-ends, car-assisted, off-roads and 50 in 4.

CHRISTMAS QUIZ

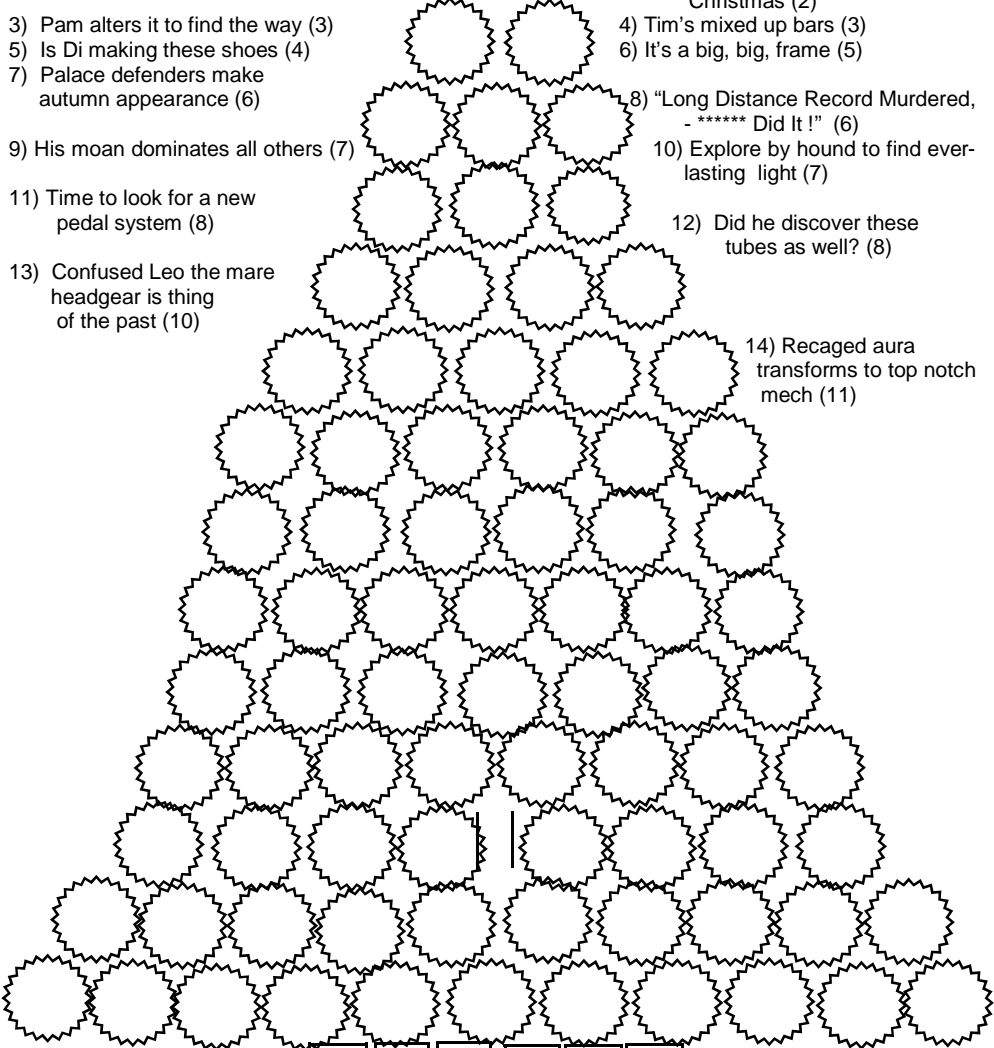
Cryptic clues and anagrams to solve for this festive teaser. All correct answers received before the Dinner go in a hat and the

first out gets their ticket free....



- 1) The ring that seals (1)
- 2) Remodelled federation older than Christmas (2)
- 3) Pam alters it to find the way (3)
- 4) Tim's mixed up bars (3)
- 5) Is Di making these shoes (4)
- 6) It's a big, big, frame (5)
- 7) Palace defenders make autumn appearance (6)
- 8) "Long Distance Record Murdered, - ***** Did It!" (6)
- 9) His moan dominates all others (7)
- 10) Explore by hound to find everlasting light (7)
- 11) Time to look for a new pedal system (8)
- 12) Did he discover these tubes as well? (8)
- 13) Confused Leo the mare headgear is thing of the past (10)

- 14) Recaged aura transforms to top notch mech (11)



- 15) Scottish pussy says yes to mile count (6)
- 16) Puff into balloon - and die the death (6)

- 17) Groupset's refrain (6)

Letters

Hi Jim,

I am now settled with my family back in the North East. Can you please print my address and phone number in 'The Squirrel' so people know where I am? Thanks

Mike Little
14 Cade Hill Rd
Stocksfield
Northumberland NE43 7PS
Tel - 01661 843752
Internet - littlems@uk.ibm.com

Plus people who know me may be interested in the following:

As a recent member of Seamons, just thought you might like to know my race at this year's UK Ironman didn't quite go according to plan: I had a great swim and was going well on the bike. At about 45 miles in the bike I was actually taken out by a fellow competitor. I was in about 25th position out of 1600 competitors and on course to qualify for the World Ironman Champs. in Hawaii where I have competed previously.

I crashed at in excess of 50mph and broke my collar bone in 8 places, my shoulder blade in 4 places and 2 broken ribs plus multiple cuts and bruises. I spent the rest of my holiday in Dorset in hospital. A little bit of good news is that I have just found out I do not need an operation to pin my shoulder. Looks like I am off to Ironman Lanzarote again next year to try and qualify for Hawaii 2004!

Regards **Mike Little**

Hi Jim,

My hill-climb season was nothing short of disastrous but you can spill the beans in the Squirrel if you must. On 'The Rake' my cause was lost before it had begun. I wasn't able to get a new sprocket in time, so thought I'd try and muddle through on my 39x16, knowing that the climb was steady until the Rake, I hoped I could just grind up the last bit. However the Rake was a bit more severe than I remembered and I knew I was in trouble. I hit it and came to a virtual stand-

still as I pedalled at 10 rpm to the commentator's accurate surmising of 'he seems a little over-gearred'. He blatantly ran out of things to say as it was taking me an eternity. I wanted to climb off but the crowd was at it's thickest here so whilst feeling a bit of a wally I trundled on to finish in 3:02 for 19th, but potentially I could have done much better. I'll know for next time as I guess you only know the right ratio in the fixed gear game if you've done the race before. Some other riders seemed a bit over geared too - the winner Jim Henderson said he was on a 57" whilst I was pushing just under 65". Ooops.

The National was even worse. I had only had chance to drive up the course previously but thought a 39x17 (61") would do the trick. obviously there were steep sections but I thought I could at least get up it. Wrong! The start was on such a steep slope that I could hardly get going and eventually climbed off halfway. I could see the climb snaking up and I could barely turn the gear over. A spectator came running down to offer a push and I didn't realise at first that it was Carol. And that of course meant John was there complete with camcorder to boot. So much as I would like to cover this one up, the evidence is there for all to see. No doubt you will.

It seems the 'barometer' to fixed-wheel riding in these events is to find out what the National Champion, Jim Henderson, is riding - although he never lets on until after he's won! On the National course he was on a 54" and had practiced it 7 times. The rule has to be 'don't go above Jim' Just shows the need for dry runs on fixed and to play it safe and be under-gearred if any. The club's own championship event confused me because I got up on 39x15, but it seems that open event courses are a bit meaner. One day I'll get it right. Hopefully next year's National is local so I can get a better practice in.

Paul Smith

Hi Jim,

Could I take a bit of space in the magazine to warn members of some potential hazards with currently available equipment. (contd next page)

The Gospel The Snake & The Devil

Cateye Astrale new model---whereas the Cateye 6000 and original Astrale picked up rear wheel miles etc, the latest model is for front wheel drive only. So, no good for turbo trainers. Don't get conned like me. I've had to repair an old broken Astrale to use on my trainer by soldering in a sensor from a working Mitty into the rear wheel sensor of the Astrale (type E). Not recommended and very lucky that it worked.

Look pedals---some of the new models have a rising ramp at the extreme of arc movement. Before I realised this I strained ankle ligaments such that I insisted on Dave Barker stopping with me for an extra rest at Audlem on the 100 in 8. Watch out for this as it could cause real problems by lifting your foot out of the level plane and cause considerable ankle and knee damage. Deeside cycles accepted my complaint and gave me full value on the original pedals as I replaced them for a (more expensive) pair without the ramp.

David Matthews



CLAIM TIME

Gained a club standard? Club record? The time trial secretary would like details of all riders' fastest times for the year as soon as possible with any claims. Details of existing standards are in the handbook. Please help him to get it right for the prize presentation by sending your details to Steve Davis, 9 Constance Rd, Partington, M31 4GJ. You can e-mail him at his new address stevebikesit@btinternet.com

The mini N W Passage from Rochdale last February was my first Audax event in 2003. It was memorable for two incidents. Firstly the diminutive lady driving a huge 4X4 through Burnley across all the traffic oblivious to the other cars and bikes as she focussed on the mobile phone held to one ear; secondly being led 3 miles off route near the finish by the locals---all of it being up hill. The traditional pie and mushy peas provided at the finish went down as well as ever and the touring year was on its way.

Attracted by the £1-00 entry fee, Margaret and I took a trip down to Chepstow to visit friends and catch the "Gospel Pass Brevet". This is a really stiff test so early in the season. The start was very scenic in the icy cold Castle car park and then it was off through the Forest of Dean, grafting along the Golden Valley and on to Hay on Wye. Here the fun starts with the ascent of the Gospel Pass which is big, remote and occasionally 1 in 6. Once over the top there is a long descent to Abergavenny and then one more big climb over to Chepstow. The latter climb was laid on to give great views of the Avon bridges but unfortunately these were obscured by the icy mist that had remained in the valleys. Still, it was nice to get an extra 1000ft of hill climbing practice!

The next day I rode the Radway Green Audax from Marple which was nice and flat, so my legs just about made the finish.

Being a West Cheshire resident, I was able to ride a shorter Llangollen thrash than most of the club. This allowed some energy to be conserved for the next event, the Long Mynd 2000m from Picklescot some 2 weeks later. The purpose of this ride is to find enough different roads over the Long Mynd so that you can ascend 2000m in 100K. This did not seem to be a problem---finding lots of steep roads that is. At one point the road was so steep that I had to grab a passer-by for safety as my front wheel

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rose about 2 feet in the air and threatened to throw me off the bike as I avoided him.

April ended with the scenic Audax "Three Lakes" of Bala, Quellyn and Vyrnwy from Corwen. This is one of my favourite rides and is a good indicator of form, depending on how wrecked you are at the finish. This year the omens were good as I finished in reasonable shape for once.

The Seamons "Tour of the Berwyns" in late May was blessed by fabulous weather once again. As the organiser I was given special dispensation to chicken out and avoid the hills by going directly to Chirk from Holt. 2 weeks later no such forgiveness as I rode the new "Snake Pass" Audax in similar hot conditions. This is a very interesting route for an ex - rock climber as it visits all the significant gritstone climbing edges of the Peak District from Stanage via Burbage to the Roches. General opinion of riders who had also done "Tour of the Berwyns" 2 week's earlier is that the two rides are of similar difficulty as far as the Roches at 100 miles. The finish over Gun Hill and then Wincle however appears to make the "Snake" harder overall. To add weight to this opinion, the "Snake" route is expected to have ½ AAA point next year for its climbing value.

Late June was time for the "Shropshire Highland Challenge". This is organised as a mini "Wild Wales" with a different very scenic (and hilly) route each year. The weather was superb this year with a seemingly never-ending link of wonderful Shropshire lanes. Let's hope the organisers can avoid a date clash with the York Rally in future years so that other club members can give it a try.

July is Tour month and tales of Seamons' exploits are to be told elsewhere in the Squirrel.

Back home, my first event was Don Black's Saddleworth to Trawden 113k. This should have been plain sailing with all my Alpine fitness. Be warned! If you see a cyclist in ordinary clothes and shoes riding a bike of uncertain vintage with huge panniers on the back ascending 1 in 4 hills with ease, this may be Don Black. He organises Audax events from Saddleworth that assume everyone else can saunter up steep northern hills all day as nonchalantly as he can. Suffice to say

that I am eternally grateful I had not entered the 200k event as I might still be out there.

Alpine conditioning was almost essential for the Mid-week hilly Audax events from Marple this year due to the incredibly hot conditions. Memories of the tarmac on Holmfirth shimmering in the heat haze and later suffering near heat stroke and dehydration on Mam Nic will long remain---I thought it snowed there at least 12 months of the year!

Next came the only wet ride of the year; the Four Counties 100 mile Tourist Trial from Kinnerton near Chester. Peter Bell and Alex Young also entered, so I had club company this time. Just after the start the sky went pitch black and the heavens opened. It was so wet there was no point trying to shelter---we just kept on riding through the deluge.

At Overton one of the Seamons team decided that whereas dehydration was a problem in 2002, this was taking the remedy to ridiculous extremes and rode back to Kinnerton. The two other clubmen, along with a couple of Port Sunlight lads, carried on and eventually the rain stopped as we reached the halfway point at Llanymynech. On the return Alex Young came into his own, leading out at a constant 22mph into a headwind on an undulating course. With some help from the Port Sunlight lads and very little from me, we got back in a time of just over 7 hours total---beating some of the declared "100 in 7" riders. Well done Alex---it was a great lead out.

In early October I rode another mini "Wild Wales"; the Flintshire on-road challenge from Mold. This is a small section of a much wider event that mostly caters for Mountain bikes off-road---the old Delyn challenge. The on-road route heads over to Bala via Llandegla and Corwen using some really scenic, quiet lanes. Every now and then the Mountain bikes disgorge on to the road in front of you and a roadies vs the mountain men race ensues. Narrow tyres do help! The return route is very hilly over the Denbigh moors and Clwyd hills and was a fight into the teeth of a strong headwind before arriving in Mold to claim a free yellow T shirt. (Truly "been there-done that" territory).

Next week was a flat(ish) Audax ride from Holmes Chapel to Hawkstone Park in Shropshire and back. At the half way point, the Italian owner of the café insisted that our mixed group stayed for "the consummation". I think he meant the food? Riding back was reminiscent of the Four Counties as we got a chain-gang going into the headwind. This time the pace was more reasonable and we returned in good style to free food at organiser Rob Kilby's local pub.

For many years I have noticed in the Audax calendar the enticing "back to back" end of season hilly rides in Devon (Saturday) and Cornwall (Sunday) taking place in late October. At last I got the opportunity to go south to ride them this year.

The ride through Devon starts at Honiton and heads north to the sea port of Watchet near Minehead. This year the start was fine but icy cold as we struggled to warm up on the local 1 in 6 hills. Eventually the sun came up as we rode the rural switch back for 60k to Watchet. The return was along beautiful lanes through Exmoor which still seems to belong to the Lorna Doone era and then finally a killer hill rising above Wellington. Just as you think its all over and you can take no more---you go round a bend and the hill rises out of sight and ever steeper! At least it's mostly down hill to Honiton after that.

A short drive down the A38 took me to Bovey Tracey and then up hill for 5 miles to stay at Manaton where the "Dartmoor Devil" finished the next day. The Dartmoor Devil, run under Audax rules, is very popular---entries had been stopped at 120 with about 40 in reserve. The start for me on Sunday was to freewheel down to Bovey Tracey in very cold weather and sign on at the Riverside Inn. At 09:00 everyone rode out into the village and then onward to the Dartmoor lanes.

I had expected a similar ride to the day before in Devon, but this turned out much harder. Some of the hills were so steep, narrow, gritty and greasy that it was impossible to ride up. Walking up in Look cleats was no joke either. Quite often on the hills we would meet a tractor and occasionally a car as well. This gave the opportunity for a short rest as any form of progress became impossible due to vehicles wedged right across the road. We went through Widdecombe twice.

This is where Uncle Tom Cobbley's grey mare failed to make it up the hill once! Once we emerged from the lanes, Dartmoor was traversed to Princetown and back on good roads. This part was exhilarating and the Dartmoor ponies at the side of the road were picturesque. Eventually the route descended to Manaton and a welcome pint. Stats for this ride are 108K, 2300m of climbing; total time 7 h 40min.

So there is my Touring year 2003 from the Gospel via the Snake to the Devil. All were good hard rides in their own way but for difficulty beyond expectations, the Devil gets it.

Story by David Matthews

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

It's that time of year when we need to make sure our records are up to date so, if you've moved house (or are about to move), have changed your phone number or e-mail address could you please let the secretary know as soon as you can. This will ensure that next year's handbook is as accurate as possible. Thanks for your co-operation.

It was good to see Malc McAllister out at the hill-climb championship and walking with just a stick rather than crutches. Bob Richardson had kindly offered to pick him up and had been rewarded by also picking up a large piece of metal in his car tyre that caused a flat. At least it wasn't raining.

Steve Davis, time trial secretary has a new e-mail address. He is **stevebikesit@btinternet.com**

Welcome to the following new members who have joined in the last couple of months. We hope you enjoy your time with us and are able to contribute to our clublife.

John Stockdale, 35 Brookfield Avenue, Timperley
Mark and Christine Adshead: Hefferston Grange Drive, Weaverham
John Barry, 64 Arderne Rd. Timperley
Edward Zoefitg, 45 St. Andrews Court, Queen's Rd. Hale



Lying Down on the Job

As part of Roger's expanding social season calendar, a visit was arranged to the Windcheetah factory on Norman Road in Broadheath. Bob Dixon, the owner and driving force, met us and showed us the stages in the production of these unique recumbents. Since we were last there a few years ago at his previous site in Sale the percentage of 'in-house' production has greatly increased. Computer controlled milling machines and other state of the art techniques are used to fabricate most components on site, the hubs being particularly impressive. Latest models are incorporating carbon fibre with some reduction in finished weight. The ubiquitous Shimano provide the transmission (Dura Ace on the top model no less) whilst the joystick steering control, braking and gear shifting is once again an in-house product.

Bob's had a trying time since September 11th as most of his production goes to North America and Germany. The day after the twin towers tragedy virtually all his American orders were cancelled due, it would appear, to a huge sense of guilt. All orders are generated by word of mouth and the internet and with no dealer network he's just had to wait for the orders to start climbing back up. In the meantime his workforce has shrunk but it's his proud boast that he never had to lay anybody off. What is remarkable is that such a small company is able to survive in this way as purchasers pay by credit card purely on trust and wait for the machine to turn up. Even Bob scratches his head at this as we're not talking peanuts here with machines varying in price between £2,000 and £3,000.

Those who had met Bob before were well aware of his tie up with Andy Wilkinson, ex BBAR, National record holder at distances from 50 miles to 24 hours, and National Champion. Andy is always looking for a challenge and is still the fastest human powered rider from Lands End to John O'Groats tucked inside a fairing covered version of the Windcheetah trike. His time of 1 day 17 hrs 4 mins 22 secs is almost exactly 3 hours faster than the current RRA record held by our guest of honour this year, Gethin Butler. On that trip he caused havoc descending towards Princess Street in Edinburgh at a speed well in excess of the limit during the rush hour and later he had a similar impact in the Isle of Man. Just before one of the road races, in which there was to be a rolling road closure, he wanted to have a go at the record for the TT circuit. Andy and Bob reckoned that with a 15 minute start there would be no problem. The officials disagreed. "Listen" said Bob, "the problem won't be the bunch catching Andy, but Andy catching the motorcycle outriders." And so it proved. Within fifteen miles Andy had overhauled the advance warning vehicles and was heading towards Ramsey at a rate of knots that had not been anticipated when the racing line through the town had been decided. All the town's OAP's had been guaranteed front row seats to witness the excitement of the bunch descending and leaning into the corner at about 35 mph. What hadn't been planned for was a trike coming into the same corner at over 50 mph. Andy made it, just, but it is not recorded whether those spectators at the front suddenly discovered they were incontinent. All in a day's

work for Wilko as his recorded speed of over 70 mph down Creg Na Baa testified. If nothing else it proved testament to the stability of the machine and its speed potential also. His time for the 37¼ miles - 1 hour 16 minutes. With such stimulating stories fresh in our minds we were all invited to have a go in the demo machine. Roger was first off (we thought he wasn't coming back) to be followed by Dave Barker and several others. It's a strange sensation flying along so close to the floor and the feeling of speed is palpable. If you want to try it out for yourself than give Bob a call. Any Seamons member can borrow the machine for a prolonged run so if you fancy a day with a difference then you know what to do. bob@windcheetah.co.uk or 0161 928 5575



Roger gets the lowdown

BEST CLUBMAN

With only two month's points to go it looks like a two horse race between a resurgent Phil Holden and the defending champ, Roger Haines. Here are the top twelve....

1 Phil Holden	212	2 Roger Haines	204
3 Keith Stacey	194	4 Reg Blease	190
4=Dave Barker	190	6 John Coles	165
7 Jim Boydell	159	8 Peter Coles	153
9 Dave McLroy	142	10 Tim Seddon	131
11 Eddy Robinson	125	11=Andy Wright	125

MARY BARKER

It is with great sadness that we have to report the death of Mary Barker, wife of Dave, after a long period of ill health. Mary had had a series of illnesses and setbacks since a kidney transplant many years ago and throughout the period since had borne the many reversals with great courage and dignity. Another transplant was a possibility and each of her children had offered to be screened for a match. Mary refused as she believed it would be too great a sacrifice to ask.

A granddaughter, Hannah, brought much joy in the last few years and throughout this period the love and support of her family was a great comfort. Mary passed away in Manchester Royal Infirmary in early October and after interment at an eco-friendly burial site in Mobberley there was a memorial service held at Trinity Methodist church in Sale Moor.

Our sincere condolences go to husband Dave and children John, Kate and Richard.

GEORGE LONGSTAFF.

It is with sorrow we announce the untimely death of George Longstaff. He was a regular visitor and a former Guest of Honour at our Annual Dinner.

George passed away piloting his tandem tricycle, stoked by his wife, Beverley, on Sunday October 5th, while leading a Longstaff Owners' Club run.

A life-long all-round cyclist, he was a well-known, exceptionally talented and forward-thinking engineer. The bicycles, tandems and tricycles he designed and built have a well-deserved reputation for quality and will remain a long-lasting legacy of his workmanship.

One of the aspects of his work that gave him most pleasure was the challenge of designing or adapting machines for the physically disabled.

George will be sadly missed, not only in the world of cycling and by his colleagues at work, but by his wife Beverley and family, to whom we extend our sincere condolences.

Johnny Pardoe

Tough at the Top



Another gloriously bright, if chilly, October morning saw the various sections of the club congregate at the bottom of Withenshaw Lane to participate/witness the annual lung-burning sensation known as the club hill-climb. As usual the gathered masses fell into several categories.

First, the 'committed championship contenders' who talked of gearing and even rode up the hill to 'practice' before they actually had to do so.

Second, the 'definitely going to have a go' - but not until it's absolutely necessary section. They don't care about gears as long as they've got enough at the bottom end.

Third, the 'if he's riding then I will' group. The trick here is to tell any member of this group that "he is" and the rest all falls into place.

Fourth, the 'I'm on a stripped down bike and could be talked into it as long as I can get my excuses in first' group. These excuses range from a cold, severe flu, to 'the budgie's not very well' category. Oh, not forgetting the 'I've got a broken leg', but Malc McAllister really was excused on this basis.

Eventually seventeen faced the timekeeper as their names were called. Well, except Gareth Blease that is but more of that later. Of these seventeen just sixteen would be eligible for the championship. Matt Crampton rides for a velodrome based club and is part of the GB development squad but rides with the club as a 2nd

claim member and his 2 mins 45 secs would not count in the final analysis. With three-times champion Mark Bailey (now at university), Paul McAllister (ridden an Open event and the club's tracknight the day before) and Chris Siepen (now in another club) all absent the way was open for some new names on the medals. Whose would they be?

Roger Haines led the touring section challenge with a highly respectable 3.43 before being ousted by the most 'senior' competitor. Alex young continues to astound and his 3.15 was an 8 second improvement on last year. As the riders finished most were about this margin up on previous rides indicating that the breeze, such as it was, was benign. Maybe a club record was in the offing? One thing was certain however; the top three would have a different look. With those who finished in 2nd to 5th spots not competing this year it was wide open. Matt Crampton's dad, Nick, was eligible and his 3.03 showed serious intent but with times faster than last year it probably wouldn't be quite good enough for a place. Newcomer John Stockdale showed promise on the early part but faded a little to finish in 3.10. Then Colin Levy revved over the line and his 2.54 had the hallmarks of a podium place but with Keith Bailey, Robin Haigh and defending Champion Paul Smith to come anything could happen. Keith was up first and his 2.57 was just not quite good enough as the rasping lungs testified. Then

many-times champion Robin with absolutely no competitive outings this year seemed as though he might have the measure of them but faded over the last 50 metres. When you fade on a hill climb then whole seconds are lost very quickly and Robin's final 2.58 would see him out of the medals.

So it was that Paul Smith was left to put the whole thing in perspective. On a bike specially designed to get maximum air into the lungs (wide, flat bars) and stripped down to the bare essentials (single fixed wheel) he romped up a hill he knows so well in 2 mins 30 secs to take a whopping 24 seconds off the previous best that day and retain his championship. Subsequent examination of the records indicates that this a new record for the hill by about 8 seconds so well done Paul and congratulations.

Paradoxically, this success served Paul ill in his attempts in a couple of open events. We choose our tests up hills steep enough to find a worthy champion but not that steep that it puts off all but the most committed. Open events are in a different category altogether and it pays to investigate them before competing. Paul found this out to his cost as you can read elsewhere in his own words. Oh, nearly forgot - Gareth's 5.37. How could someone who rides fixed wheel week in, week out (often dropping most other riders on the climbs); who'd ridden up the hill in practice to get his gearing right manage to finish in last spot? Well, a late start provides the answer. Our practice of synchronising watches on the hour and then allowing five minutes for the finish timekeeper to ride up the hill, recover and get out the watch before starting the first rider, number 1, seems to have confused poor Gareth whose time included a 1 min 30sec penalty. Better luck next time Gareth.

The Full Result

1	Paul Smith	2 m 30 s
2	Colin Levy	2 54
3	Keith Bailey	2 57
4	Robin Haigh	2 58
5	Nick Crampton	3 03
6	John Stockdale	3 10
7	Alex Young	3 15
8	Simon Williams	3 30
9	Roger Haines	3 43
10	Roy Myers	3 50

11	Allan Blackburn	3 56
12	Nigel Harrop	4 01
13	Peter Yeoman	4 48
14	Mike McConville	4 52
15	Siân Grainger	5 20
16	Gareth Blease	5 37

Once again the majority of those attending opted for the freewheel down to the Ryles Arms and over 40 members sat down to an excellent meal before splitting up into the various sections for the ride home. Thanks to all those who took part, supported and organised the event, particularly timekeepers, Steve Booth and Roy Vernon.

Story & pictures by Jim Boydell





As Others Saw Us



One of the most interesting houses I have visited was the home of Nathaniel Hawthorne in Salem, New England. Hawthorne is the well known author of 'The Scarlet letter' and 'Tanglewood Tales' amongst others. What I was unaware of was the fact that for a time in the mid 1800's he was the American Consul for Liverpool and lived in Rock Park, Rock Ferry on the Wirral. Writing in his journal he described some peculiar English customs and an unflattering aspect of the locals behaviour at times of festivity.....

December 26th, 1856

"On Christmas Eve and yesterday there were little branches of mis(t)letoe hanging in several parts of our house, in the kitchen, the parlour and the smoking room - suspended from the gas fittings. The maids of the house did their utmost to entrap the gentlemen boarders, young and old, under these privileged places, and there to kiss them, after which they were expected to pay a shilling. It is very queer, being customarily so respectful, that they should assume this licence now, absolutely trying to pull the gentlemen into the kitchen by main force, and kissing the harder and more abundantly, the more they were resisted. A little rosy-cheeked Scotch lass - at other times very modest - was the most active in this business. I doubt whether any gentleman but myself escaped. I heard old Mr Smith parleying with the maids last evening and pleading his age; but he seems to have met with no mercy, for there was a sound of prodigious smacking, immediately afterwards. Julian was assaulted, and fought most vigorously, but was outrageously kissed - receiving some scratches, moreover, in the conflict. The mis(t)letoe has white wax-looking berries and dull green leaves with a parasitical stem.

Early in the morning of Christmas day, long before daylight, I heard music in the street, and a woman's voice, powerful and melodious, singing a Christmas hymn. Before bedtime I presume one half of England, at a moderate calculation, was the worse for liquor. They are still a nation of beastly eaters and beastly drinkers; this tendency manifests itself at holiday time, though for the rest of the year, it may be decently re-

pressed. Their market-houses, at this season, show the national taste for heavy feeding; carcasses of prize oxen, immensely fat and bulky, fat sheep, with their woolly heads and tails still on, and stars and other devices ingeniously wrought upon the quarters; fat pigs adorned with flowers, like corpses of virgins, hares, wild fowl, geese, ducks and turkies (sic); and green boughs and banners suspended about the stalls - and a great deal of dirt and griminess on the stone floor, and on the persons of the crowd..."

So, not much change there then.

continued from facing page

MORE SHORTS

After missing last year's Beard Hill Climb, Roger pedalled for glory in the 2003 edition. And it was a double podium finish for the Finchley Road Flyers. Roger managed a creditable Silver in the Tourist section for the men and Sian secured a Bronze in the ladies' section. Meanwhile, Peter Yeoman showed that time away from Rackhams' doesn't seem to have any effect on his hill-climbing abilities when he completed a trio of entries for the Seamons Tourers.

This edition's bargain-hunter prize goes to Wilkie - a cycling jersey at £4.99 and a pair of gloves at £2.99. Not mail-order, these little babies. No. They're from Aldi. "They're great," says Keith. "Oh, but don't get them wet, they run like mad. They've turned the handlebar tape a weird pink colour," he adds.

I think I'll be keeping my £7.98.

And finally. Riders on the Hot Pot run are invited to take a detour which proved popular last year - around to 3, Bracken Way, Knutsford. Gail Carberry has again volunteered to ply us with seasonal fayre in the form of mulled wine, Christmas cake and other festive treats. Unlike last year, she's asked us to stick to a reasonable start time. Don't get there before 10.45am, or you'll be on the end of a brush sweeping out the leaves from the garage!

TOURING SHORTS & LOLLONGS

The Matlock run was set to be a far more enjoyable prospect this year – and it wasn't just that we weren't going to Matlock. Having realised that even Frodo Baggins needed a change of underwear at the thought of getting there and back on a bike, Wilkie the Wise sacked it in favour of Llangollen. And then, joy of joys, we sacked Llangollen in favour of Tilston in lovely, flat Cheshire. Obviously, the Grand Wizard is getting mellower in his old age. It must be more than a year since we've heard: "No, we're not going there, we have to go to the published destination."

Further proof of his increasing faint-heartedness came on the run to Chelmorton. The traditional re-group at the top of the Cat and Fiddle has become something of a barrier to further progress now the pub serves morning coffee. The tourers are hard to get out of the pub at the best of times, but stick them on top of a hill in the freezing cold when they can claim they've done a ride already, and it's nearly lunchtime, and your odds on getting them out before the bar shuts have got to be evens at best. And so it was. Wilkie claimed he wasn't feeling too good. Half the group stayed with him to show, erm, solidarity, the remainder remembered the other reason they had come out dressed in Lycra and continued on to the published destination. Good for them. Interesting to note that Wilkie had made a full recovery by the time we stopped at the Bull's Head in Mobberley on the way back.

Tradition can be a good thing though. A straight forward trip to Appley Bridge turned into the Mystery Tour from Hell for the Tourers. The mistake? A LEFT turn outside Rackhams'. The result of this rare break with tradition saw the rain-soaked and road-grimed riders end up in Ashton in Makerfield. Not quite the published destination either. But at least there was a beer festival on at a Wetherspoons (ie cheap) pub. One of the ales on offer was Dogs B*ll*cks. More than could be said for the ride.

For once the Tourers showed some rare organisational ability and unity. It was a select group of ten which headed for Hartington, the symmetry and fluency of the peloton a sight to turn the heads of any pedestrian or motorist. Sweeping along, bikes and riders in perfect harmony, the bunch turns down the Tourers' favourite – an "interesting" lane. And interesting it turned out too. Five of the riders suffered punctures – all at the same time. Gordon Peake should have a job in PR. Looking on the bright side, he noted: "At least it saves time, getting five punctures all at once."

Bad luck seems to be trailing one John Hurley. Twice Mr H has fallen off his bike. More embarrassing than serious, the spills do have a common factor (other than gravity and clipless pedals.) Turning up the cobbles of Swiss Hill he is advised by Wilkie to get his gear down in time to tackle the setts. Too late. Down he goes. Next time his following the wheels of a certain runs leader. Wilk's gears start jumping on the rise out of Davenham so he comes to an unexpected stop. Well, it wasn't as unexpected for him as it was for John. Crunch. Down he goes.
I bet he wishes he could just get a puncture when everyone else does.

One person who definitely won't want a puncture is Eddie, not now he's got a new bike. Having sampled the delights of Orbea's sports bikes, Eddie's only gone and bought another new machine from them. This time it's a tourer, complete with aluminium frame. "He's getting a new bike every three months," noted one Tourer. Saves cleaning them I suppose.

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Saturday 9th August 2003

Didsbury to Piccadilly 5 miles

Penzance to Land's End 25 miles

We set off from flat at 8.20 a.m. for Piccadilly and tootled in to city centre for train down to Penzance. We only tested the tandem out last night and everything was sweet. We soon realised our tandem was going to attract much attention over the next fortnight – at least 3 people approached us whilst sitting outside Costa Coffee. Train left late but we made it down to Penzance by about 6.30 p.m. having met many interesting passengers. One 'blind' lady who had a lot to say about everything let her increasingly smelly dog virtually die of thirst on her way down



to Bridgwater. Dan wound up some little boys telling them tall stories about our imminent adventure which they took in at total face value. We sat opposite a fresh young couple from Ludlow onwards who were going to camp for the week and do a little research on the side on Hepburn. Anyway, we checked in to the lovely Abbey Hotel (if Ali thought this standard of accommodation was going to be kept up for the holiday she was mistaken....however we really enjoyed it!) and then headed for Land's End to accomplish this part of the ride and so that we could begin northwards the next day.

This was it!! We had a few steep inclines and got more comments from the many wandering holidaymakers. Land's End proved to be somewhat disappointing in that it was so commercial – a bit of an amusement park really. It was also cold and misty so we didn't hang around long after we had taken the necessary photos. We took the A30 back to Penzance, showered and changed and then went out for a gorgeous meal at Curry Corner. Abbey Hotel was rather antique and had lots of great books in the drawing room which led outside to a twee garden. Dan found a book of poems, one of which he thought apt for the start of our journey....so here it is:

Warm are the still and lucky miles
White shores of longing stretch away
A light of recognition fills
The whole great day and bright

The tiny world of lovers' arms
Silence invades the breathing wood
Where drowsy limbs a treasure keep
Now greenly falls the learned shade
Across the sleeping brows
And stirs their secret to a smile
Returned! Returned! The last are borne
On seas of shipwreck home at last
See! In a fire of praising burns
The dry dumb past and we
Our life-day long shall pass no more
W.H. Auden

Sunday 10th August

Penzance – Princetown, Dartmoor 95 miles

After a posh breakfast we left the Abbey Hotel around 9.30 and headed on lanes through Godolphin Cross, Nancegollan and Porkellis and then got on to the A39 through Truro to stop at a pub in Probus for lunch. After fish and chips we stayed on the A390 through St Austell and Lostwithiel and reached Liskeard for a much needed break. We had done 30 miles in the hot sun and decided from now on to take little stops more often. We had another brief stop in Callington, then after crossing the border into Devon at Gunnislake and setting the speed record of 46.5 mph (oh my goodness, but little did I know what was still to come!) as we descended towards the river Tamar, we had another brief stop in Tavistock where we made a call to the Plume of Feathers.

Despite the beauty of Dartmoor and the ponies being rather cute our final push to Princetown was a tough one. Dan nearly bonked and needed half a bag of fruit pastilles to make the last 4 miles or so whilst my backside began to hurt like it never had done before. We came into Princetown past the prison and The Plume of Feathers was a very welcome sight. It turned out to be an absolute winner. We were the only people in the bunkhouse (£14 for the pair of us including supplied sleeping bags!) and after showering and washing our kit we went down to the bar for tea. My knees ached in bed that night but this (nor anything else) did not prevent me from sleeping my head off completely for the duration of the holiday.

Monday 11th August

Princetown – Street 95 miles

We were mesmerized with the beauty of Dart-

moor as we set off from Princetown. However, 4 miles after starting the derailleur began making very strange noises. We pulled over into a lay-by and Dan had his first mechanical play around with the Specialized allen-key tool kit. The spring mechanism had been over-extending and finally decided to give up the ghost. 45 mins later in the hot sun he had successfully sorted it so we at least had our middle ring and we aimed to head for a cycle shop in Exeter. (Passed the Two Bridges Hotel which looked fantastic!)



We carried on to Moretonhampstead where we arranged accommodation at Street YHA for that evening and got some info on bike shops – and Dan had a cream tea. The stint to Exeter was tough with limited gears but we reached Exeter quayside and left the bike with some very nice guys in a great shop - 'Mud-doc'. Lunch was lovely and a great busking violin player provided entertainment. In fact it was so relaxing I didn't really want to get back on the bike so had a tough stage to Cullompton. The next bit was much better and we stopped in Taunton near the castle for a pub tea – really nice. (Lasagne and burritos). The added incentive of a trip down memory lane to see my old school spurred us on as we took some little Somerset lanes and came in to Street about 8 p.m. Dan did a great shop at the Co-op and then we cycled through the Millfield campus and on to the YHA which was a Swiss style chalet. (The other punters were well impressed with our feat so far!).

There was no room at the YHA so they had sorted us a warden's room out. We had a healthy tea consisting of lots of fruit and crumpets. Another brill day! And guess what....slept our heads off again.

The Squirrel

Tuesday 11th August

Street – Chepstow – 70 miles

Set off about 9.30 and went through Millfield again to have a look at the tennis centre (new since I left!). Saw Adrian Simcox, an old teacher of mine, and had a quick catch up – he was very surprised to see me, which I should really have expected – not every day an ex-pupil calls in to say hello on a bike ride up to John o' Groats, I guess. We then pressed on to Wells, which I was keen to have a little look at. Had a coke on the square near the cathedral which was very nice. From Wells we headed to Cheddar as the rear bottom bracket bearings started getting increasingly louder. So when we saw a Dawes bike dealer in Yatton we decided to stop to check it out. Six hours later and lots of hard work from Tony, the proprietor, and Dan, we had a new bottom bracket fitted and went on our way with no accommodation booked but determined to get over the Severn.

After taking indirect cycle routes and Dan navigating through some rough area of Bristol, we found our way over the old bridge (eventually using the A road as the cycle path was poorly signed and had a tendency to deviate.) We reached Chepstow. After being turned away from several B+Bs and hotels, we bartered in to Hardwick House B+B with Valery for £40. This has to have been the most unfriendly B+B I have ever stayed in, but maybe the bartering at 10p.m.had something to do with it! Despite this we had a gorgeous room on the top floor and the cats didn't bother us! After pampering our saddle-sore bottoms we slept our heads off once again.

Wednesday 12th August

Chepstow – Shrewsbury 110 miles

Left Valery's B+B (no cooked brekkie when you barter apparently!) at about 9a.m. and had a rough hilly start. We had a snack stop in Monmouth and then wended our way though lovely lanes and the Golden Valley (all pretty hilly) to make it to Dorstone after 45 miles for lunch at the Pandy Inn. The beer garden, comfy grass and yummy meal (biggest bowl of chips I have ever seen!) made it tough to start again in the hot sun. However, we went over the toll bridge (7.5p for a tandem?!) and then got on to some A roads and had a good stretch to Leintwardine after Dan's toughest stretch on the roman road.



Revitalised from Bakewell tarts and chocolate milk and a smearing of Sudocrem on our burning bottoms, we pressed on towards Shrewsbury where the thought of staying with Andy and Kate for the evening was too exciting for words. We made excellent progress on A roads whipping up past Craven Arms and Church Stretton and Andy met us about 5 miles south of Shrewsbury on the A49 – I have never been so pleased to see him!!!! We reached their new place which backs on to the river about 8p.m. and went out for tea. Kate did all our washing – fantastic – as we were quite smelly on arrival.

Thursday 13th August

Shrewsbury – Standish 83 miles

Dan went in to Shrewsbury with Andy first thing to try to get someone to repair his crank – yes, we did have a few maintenance problems with the bike but this was to prove our last bike shop stop of the holiday. I had a very pleasant morning sitting by the river with Kate whilst Dan received several calls from the guy at the shop saying they 'had a serious problem, had bent the crank spider' etc. and asking Dan for his advice!?! Anyway, they put it back together and it seemed to be a bit better as it had been tightened. We left Andy and Kate (which was tough!!) and headed north (where else?) where I then had my worst moment of the trip - in Wem. After a joint effort to pull me out of motivation lacking dire straights we continued towards Whitchurch where we had another short stop. A few miles into this stretch the whole of the front crank came out of position and we had to pull over.

'I think we might be calling John' says Dan, contemplating that the whole bike was broken and we wouldn't be able to continue at all. Ali didn't know whether to laugh or cry – literally. How-

ever, Dan the mechanic saved the day with the Specialized allen key yet again, having turned the bike upside down and tightening up the crank shaft on some random Cheshire grass verge with the cars whizzing by.

We then had a lovely stretch through the Cheshire lanes of Peckforton and Tarporley and had a nice little stop at Delamere train station – lemon meringue pie for Dan! The next stage of the day was tricky but Dan expertly navigated us through Runcorn and the outskirts of Liverpool in busy traffic. After a quick stop at a Lidl's for strawberries and energy drinks we reached a Travellodge at Standish which was another welcome sight. Had another Indian take-out which we brought back to our room and then after a call to Auntie Christine arranged to go to Preston for breakfast the next morning.

Friday 14th August

Standish – Grasmere 85 miles

This day was one of our best. Our bottoms had become used to the saddles.....or at least weren't hurting anymore really and we had a gorgeous run through the Lakes. We had an early start to get to Preston for 8.45 but it was lovely to see Auntie Christine, Uncle Jiten and to catch up with Indira and Tim. AC did us a lovely cooked breakfast and kindly made us tuna butties for lunch (mustn't forget to mention the fat rascal either) and we looked at Indi and Tim's interesting engagement party photos from Nigeria.

We set off again at 10.30 and whipped up to Lancaster for lunch which we had on a grassy bank in glorious sunshine – unfortunately Dan got stung but was very brave. After an ice cream we set off again and did another quick 15 miles for a quick stop in Milnthorpe where we man-



aged to find some shade. We got off the A6 and took the most lovely route along lanes and really started to enjoy the Lakes. Great views of the hills around us and we eventually reached the ferry south of Bowness which we took over to Sawrey. At one point the hill was so steep that we lost our revs and Ali couldn't quite get her foot out of the cleats quick enough so fell off, Dan managed not to. We stopped on the other side and basked in the sunshine for half an hour enjoying the beauty of the lake and taking it all in. Dan then found an ace off-road track which went alongside the lake and avoided a serious hill to Wray Castle. We glided through Ambleside and came into Grasmere still enjoying the loveliness of the area. Did a little shop in Grasmere and then stayed at Thorny How YHA – again fantastic – when can we go back?

Saturday 15th August

Grasmere – Thornhill 93 miles

Set off after a restful evening in Grasmere and followed a herd of cows in to the village to the Post Office. Sent a few post cards and then set off, starting with a big pull to Thirlmere. It was tough, but it was worth it as Thirlmere was very very beautiful. We left the nasty A66 and got on to some nice lanes at Troutbeck, edge of Skiddaw Forest and had lovely morning stop at Mungrisdale, where for some reason we were hungry so ate our sandwiches. We pressed on towards the wind turbines and reached Carlisle at 1p.m. Another trip down memory lane here for me as my Nana and Grandad lived here 'til I was 10. We had a Calippo in Bitts Park and then went in to the centre for an enduro-burger lunch – the only McDonalds of the holiday. It was baking in the city centre so we found some shade again and listened to the pipers. Dan got some info on Ayrshire and I sorted out the trains for our eventual return journey and then we set off again at about 3 p.m. We took the A7 out of Carlisle and passed Moorville Drive and made good progress in to Scotland at Gretna where we had a quick photo stop.

We made for Annan for a longer stop where we shared a bench with a comical local and then we had a great run on the B724 (which he had told us went up and down?!) before wending through lanes to Tinwald and reaching Thornhill. We phoned a couple of B+B's when we got there and got the last room at the Tickety-Boo B+B where



we were greeted with a warm welcome. The owner had passed us twice on the road during the day apparently! Had tea at the Buccleugh Inn – yummy chargrilled steak for Ali, beef and beer pie for Dan. One of the friendliest places! Landlord was in the pub too. Went back to the B+B and despite the local boy racers.....we slept our heads off.

Sunday 16th August
Thornhill – Whiting Bay, Arran 75 miles

A little tired, but encouraged that today's mileage would be somewhat less (me, not Dan) we set off after a yummy Scottish breakfast which included Lorn sausage and haggis. We had a lovely route past Drumlanrig Castle on a cycle byway parallel with the A76 scaring many a wildfowl strutting like little John Cleeses and then had a tea-cake stop in Sanquar. We carried on and made it to Cumnock where we sat on a bench and had Cheshire cheese sarnies, swatted wasps and chatted to the Dad of a local lads' footy team. The clouds were looming and we predicted today could be our first day with rain. We took the main road for a while and then B roads for a brew stop at Dundonald Castle which was very pleasant. The next stretch wasn't as busy as we thought it might be and we delighted in reaching the Calmac ferry terminal shack at Ardrossan for a baked potato before our ferry to Brodick at 6 p.m. The trip over afforded fabulous views. Dan also got a book from the shop. He also forced me to speak to some Germans (also on bikes) to satisfy

his nosiness. We reached Brodick and had a nice 6 miles despite the rain past Holy Island to our YHA at Whiting Bay. After showering we went to the only pub where we just managed to get some supper and a Belhaven Beer. Whiting Bay was very pretty, we had a room with sea view and there were loads of birds around.

Monday 17th August
Whiting Bay – Lochranza 35 miles

Having now cycled for 8 days with an average of over 90 miles, this was going to be a kind of day off and pottering around Arran was what we had planned. The bike was left unlocked in the garage at the back of the hostel, which was nice, but a little faded around the edges. Unfortunately the weather was naff despite having woken up to sunshine but we headed off for Blackwaterfoot where the lady in the Dundonald café had told us of a fantastic hotel and pool which the public could use in the afternoon. (At least I wouldn't have carried my swimming costume for nothing I thought, every bit of space and weight in the pannier counts you know.)

We tackled the hills and made a pleasant but worthwhile detour to Kildonan. There was a very nice campsite, hotel and apparent seal population which we will have to check out on another trip. We went on to Kilmory where we had a great tea shop stop and got a Daily Telegraph so I could have a crack at the crossword – this did not happen every day on the holiday so was a bit of a treat!! – small things!

We then went on the Blackwaterfoot. There were 2 shops, one of which was shut for lunch, but we got some gorgeous Arran cheese from the butchers and made sandwiches on a bench in the very cute harbour. The rain came and it was chilly so after finishing lunch in the bus shelter we went in to the hotel where we spent some time arranging our train home – at this point we were told that Scotrail don't allow tandems – great! Anyway, we declined a swim (we had had false visions of David Lloyds and LivingWells and I was dreaming about spas.....) after Dan checked out the pool but in high spirits we set off for Lochranza.

We were blown along 17 miles really and met a chap from Bolton with very heavy looking panniers. Lochranza was very nice – YHA had rules about everything (shoes off at the door etc etc) but it was a good one and was pretty full. There

were deer all over the golf course, 2 inviting hotels, the distillery had laid off its production staff and the PO was running down its stock as the owners were retiring (all this gleaned from Victor Meldrew who ran the campsite and golf course) - but it was a beautiful place.

Tuesday 18th August

Lochranza- Glencoe 103 miles

With yesterday having been a rest day despite 35 odd miles and some chunky hills... we set off with high hopes of reaching Glencoe, and we were both psyched up! We had a quick ferry ride over to Claonaig and then got pedalling for Tarbert where we planned to have breakfast at the ice cream café we had discovered in February on our Islay/Jura holiday. It rained for most of this day so we had our waterproofs on pretty much all day. Anyway, we had a nice stop in the warm ice cream café and Dan got some scrambled eggs on toast.

We set off again just before the rain came down towards Lochgilphead. Here Dan improvised a rear mudguard for me which was perfect. We followed the road alongside the Crinan canal and then took the A816 towards Oban. We kept seeing a group of friendly bikers who waved at us each time they drove past and we got a blast of their music. We had planned to stop at Kilmelford for lunch but on seeing a cosy hotel at Arduaine we popped in there for a jacket potato and got a bit warmer, despite remaining damp. At this point we had about 40miles on the clock and had seen many birds of prey that morning. Spirits were high and we continued along the hilly route to Oban 25 miles further on. We managed to see Linda in the very very busy Oban TIC - another person surprised to see us but very pleased at the same time!! We then got into a great café opposite the TIC and had tea, scones, flapjack and then toasties to fuel us up for our last leg.

The last stretch was very beautiful if a little busy on the road. We did 38 miles without a break (total proof that our saddle soreness was much improved!) as we were keen to get to Glencoe and an evening at the Clachaig Inn. We went through Ballachulish (it has always rained when I have been here) and made it to the YHA at Glencoe which was completely chocker block. - However, it was still a completely welcome site. I got the last bed in my dorm and after showering

we got back on the tandem (to avoid the pesky midges) and whizzed to the Clachaig Inn. After a yummy tea of steak and ale pie, nachos and steak strips, sticky toffee pudding and blackberry and apple crumble, as well as a chat with a couple of lads Dan had met on the Kielder polaris, we cycled back to the YHA (good idea of Dan's to cycle, even if we had already done 103 miles and we could hardly see the road, we did avoid the midges! A great day's cycling and a good distance covered.



Wednesday 19th August

Glencoe - Loch Ness 85 miles

After yesterday's big accomplishment the pressure was off a bit today and we reckoned we had 3 days' cycling left to reach our destination of John o' Groats. By now we had 'eaten up' many a green road map and could hardly believe we had covered so much of Great Britain. However, there were still a couple of hundred miles to go. We left the YHA and headed for Fort William for breakfast in the outdoor shop café.

Breakfast was nice and also cheap but we had cycled through rain from Glencoe (of course, as we went through Ballachulish again) and the café was cold really. Dan had a look downstairs and got a new bargain waterproof and some sunglasses for me - certainly didn't wear them that day - and then we carried on and found the Great Glen Cycle Route which began on a tow-path up to Gairloch. The route was absolutely beautiful - a real gem. Unfortunately the promised café at Gairloch did not appear but never mind, we carried on to Clunes and Laggan on forest trails.

The Squirrel

We stopped for lunch at a café next to the Invergarry Hotel where some local mountain bikers could hardly believe our feats to date. We then had some single track mountain biking to the Bridge of Oich which required a few pushes up hill and on occasion, me to muster up every ounce of courage possible on the downhill bits. (Dan loved it however and needs to take some bloke friends back up there I think!)

From here we sped along another towpath to Fort Augustus which proved to be one of the gems of the holiday, one of our favourite places. Beautiful loch gates, lots of cafes and shops which tempted us to stay a bit longer, despite the rain having cleared. When we got there, there were about 12 boats waiting to go through the loch gates, which was quite a sight to see. We decided to leave the GGCR and took the A82 to Loch Ness YHA which we reached about 7 p.m. The hostel was situated on the shores of Loch Ness which was beautiful but the midges were horrendous! We both managed to get showers just before the announcement that there was no more water.....

We then had a pleasant evening and chatted to another couple doing the End to End who we had also seen at Glencoe. They had arrived just after the 'no more water' announcement and looked shattered. Good job I have a strong pedaller on the front of my bike.

Thursday 20th August

Loch Ness – Helmsdale 85 miles

Set off to Drumnadrochit via Urquart Castle where we had a photo stop but didn't go in. Got some info from Drumnadrochit TIC including a leaflet with all the independent youth hostels and also ferries to Orkney. Left for Beaulieu which was a 15% climb for about 3 miles up to lovely moorland with purple heather. We then broke our speed record by reaching 47.4 mph into Beaulieu where we had lunch in a café. We set off for the Cromarty – Nigg ferry via the Black Isle. This allowed us to avoid the A9. This, together with the 25 mile 'wind-with' stretch all seemed like a good idea, until we reached Cromarty and were met with a sign reading 'Ferry suspended.'

Before any decisions were made we got in to a café for a hot drink and some cake. Dan then



chatted to a firm of painters who gave us a lift back to Tain at 5 o'clock – they must have seen my legs.....This allowed us to sit in tea shops for another couple of hours – so it all ended happily ever after! After our lift with the painters where they pointed out local sights and gave us local knowledge (Al Fayed's castle etc) they waved us off in a lay-by and we had 37 miles to go to reach Helmsdale. We went through some pretty villages, beneath the Earl of Sutherland's statue and past his castle and Skelbo and eventually reached Helmsdale.

We had a fantastic welcome from Dot, temporary hostel warden from Bolton. This hostel was a converted village hall – still looked like one literally. There was one shower, and one male and one female dorm. Dot let us use the tumble dryer for our kit, it would be quite novel to start a day in clean dry kit the next day! Dot had loads of stories for us. One guy had spent a night in a field before virtually knocking down the door of the hostel at 7 a.m. to get a bed. Another guy in Dan's dorm had a fever. There was also a father and daughter (Jemima – must have been about 8 years old and no shy bone in her body) and Dan was given another opportunity to tell her many a tall story about our adventures on the tandem and how my camel-back was really an oxygen tank etc etc

We went for a quick pint in the local pub. It was really windy as we walked back to the hostel, pleased we didn't have to spend the night in a field. On hitting the dorms.....we slept our heads off.

Friday 21st August

Helmsdale – John o' Groats 55 miles

55 miles doesn't seem like a long way, especially when your average has remained above 90 for the last 11 days, however, somehow psychologically the last day is often the most difficult.

Dot and Jemima waved us off and we started our last leg in the sunshine. We cycled up some very steep hills and I wasn't keen on the traffic on the A9 despite the obvious improvements to the road. We then reached Berriedale Braes, a sharp 13% hill where we recorded 50.5 mph. It was a straight hill but I still felt a tad queasy but then somehow giggled all the way up the other side – a mile-long slog up a 13% drag.

We cycled on to Dunbeath – a drab place with a Spar shop and a moth-eaten hotel in need of some TLC. However, the owner was kind enough to make us tea and coffee, which I particularly appreciated having become really cold sitting on a wall outside watching Dan repair our first puncture of the holiday – amazing really. The back wheel remained a bit 'bumpy' due to the stitching going on the side of the tyre, however, I did not let this bother me too much due to Dan assuring me it was not dangerous. (!)

We bumped along to Wick and found a great café near Safeway. We were ravenous and had a fantastic lunch of fish and chips and cheese-burger. The staff were very friendly and Dan left me doing the crossword whilst he went off to buy and fix and new back tyre. When he came back I treated myself to a bar of exfoliating Dove soap and some moisturiser (legs were so dry and weathered; don't know why I didn't buy a comb too as I hadn't had one of those the whole holiday either?) and we set off with 17 miles to go. This was one of the hardest stretches of all due to the wind which was terrific and at times we were blown into the road. We battled on and reached John o' Groats which we had both predicted would be an anti-climax.

It was just fine however, and we settled in the Seaview Hotel bar, got some drinks in and played pool. After tea we chatted to a team of cyclists who were

due to start the journey down to Land's End the next day. They would be supported and hoped to make it in 8 days and to be honest, looked a bit silly in the bright yellow t-shirts....but anyway, I was glad I would not be facing that wind with them tomorrow and could look forward to a day off the bike and be a chilled-out tourist in Orkney.

We went to get some quick photos at the famous white sign and then pedalled along another 3 miles to the John o' Groats YHA – which really isn't in JOG at all. But anyway, it was another welcome sight and we were very happy with our achievement and hopefully it will all sink in soon. The lady who ran the YHA recommended Interlink Express to us. This company returned our tandem from Thurso to Alsager for the princely sum of £20. Thanks to Dan's Dad for ensuring its safe delivery.

On our way over to Thurso to get the train we cycled along the northern coastline to Dunnet Head, the most northerly point of Great Britain, and also to Dunnet Beach, the most northerly surf beach on the British mainland. Given that we had a spare day we took a day trip over to Orkney from John o' Groats.

The trip included visits to Stromness, Skara Brae, the standing stones of Stenness, Kirktown and the Italian Chapel.....all for £30.....and NO CYCLING!!!!!!

A fitting last photo for this account has to be the following which nicely sums up our achievement:





Tour Time

If the Seamons can make a hash of getting a handful of members to Shropshire, what sort of mayhem might result in getting a similar number down to the Alps? Particularly as everybody had their own way of getting there. It had started, as most of these things do, at the clubroom and then in the pub. It was early in the year and the Centenary Tour de France route had been announced. It was to be special, it was to be the biggest free show, it was to have the best publicity caravan ever, it was to have Lance Armstrong going for a straight fifth win and it was going up the Alpe D'Huez. It was in fact irresistible.

The Pardoes, as always, were ahead of the game. Their ferry was booked and they would be off the moment that Carol broke up from school on the evening of July 10th. Alpe D'Huez was on the 13th. Jim & Dee Boydell had the luxury of being able to leave a few days earlier - but not too many. As promoter of the M&D '100' on Sunday the 7th, Jim had to tie all the loose ends up and get a result sheet out before loading up the caravan and leaving on the 9th. These two pairs were the lynch pin on which everyone else was relying. Why? Well, they were the only ones who had booked the pitches on Camping La Piscine

right at the base of the famous (infamous?) climb which was to prove to be the de facto clubroom for nearly a week. Caravan/motorvan awnings would provide basic but adequate accommodation for those independent travellers.

First to reserve a place was Paul Smith who had opted for the European Bike Express. He would travel to Bourg d'Oisans, see the tour, ride over to Italy to visit a mate before returning over the Lautaret and then riding down to Orange to catch the return bus. Then Dave Barker was presented with an unusual gift to celebrate his 60th birthday. Flights to Geneva and back were the novel present from his family and he was eager to book his place in the awning for a few nights. Stuart Kay decided to do a bit of 'father & son bonding' with Philip and would end up pitching their tent on our 'emplacement' after motor-ing down. Dan Mather and Ali would also drive down and pitch on The Pardoe's space. Oh, and would it be OK if their friends, Andy & Kate came too with their tent? No problem, as long as Andy didn't mind wearing a Seamons top and being granted honorary membership. I guess we'd just have to squeeze up a bit more.

Dave & Margaret Matthews had left it a bit late to get accommodation and whereas Dave might have risked an awning experience, Margaret quite rightly insisted on a proper bed. Well, she got one but probably didn't anticipate the vertiginous situation ("proceed halfway up Alpe D'Huez then turn right onto narrow unclassified, unfenced road with tortuous bends and sheer drop of 1000 feet to side. Take rosary beads for passengers and spare underwear for all.")

To complete the ensemble there were two 'maybe there'. Keith Bailey and his family would be in the region and might make it (he didn't) and Keith Stacey was in Annecy and would see us on the day (he did). So the scene was set and it just remained for all the pieces to fall into place. A few days before leaving and the phone rings.

"Hello Jim, Paul Smith."

"Yes Paul."

"When are John and Carol getting down to the Alpe?"

"Probably Saturday."

"Oh. (pause) When are you getting down there?"

"Friday afternoon."

"Oh. (pause) I get down on Thursday."

"Rii-g-g-h-h-t"

"Well, where will I sleep on Thursday night?"

My mind went back to 1962 when on tour and in a similar situation in Zell am See, we'd had to sleep on the floor of a railway station. A couple of nights later on the same tour and Johnny Coles was reduced sleeping under a hedge when he strayed into (then) communist Yugoslavia. Back to the present...

"Probably in a B&B or hotel, Paul."

"Oh, right. Yes. OK. See you down there."

We arrived bang on schedule after an uneventful tow down the autoroutes of France and had barely got the last peg in the awning when a famished, bandana wearing Paul appeared "Hello, where will I be sleeping tonight.....?" The unspoken question hung in the air - "and have you got any food?". Later with a makeshift bed in the corner and a full stomach, Paul seemed content as we sat and watched the sun disappearing behind the mountains. Tomorrow the rest of the group should be down and the day after was Le Tour. We were jolted out of our reverie by the sound of a diesel and the familiar voice of John Pardoe. "Good evening, we de-

ecided to do it all in one go." Taking turns at driving they'd driven to Dover overnight, early morning ferry then straight down to the Alps. Eight hundred miles in 24 hours was probably a good reminder of what long forgotten distance events felt like. Kettle boiled, tea consumed and a last act before turning in. Out came the much travelled 'Squirrel' logo to be hammered into the ground. Good job too as it turned out.

We woke up next morning to find another two tents on the Pardoe's pitch. No trouble identifying who was in one of them as the rather small 'overnight' tent didn't quite accommodate the full length of Dan Mather whose sleeping head stuck out seemingly oblivious to the fact it was within a few inches of the roadway. He and Andy had arrived at 1.00 am to find a campsite with every available pitch taken and the give-away of "look for bikes" no use at all. There were bikes everywhere and washing lines full of lycra too. Only the welcoming 'Squirrel' had identified the Seamons contingent as they erected tents in the dark without disturbing anyone.



Eating turned into a communal affair that morning; find a chair, space at a table and dig in. The kettles never seemed to be off the gas as bikes were assembled and the excitement mounted. With the campsite showing 'complet' signs (all the others were too) the adjacent football pitch had become an overflow site. By midday Saturday that was full too. This is now truly an international spectator sport with organised groups over from Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Canada and all camping on the site. Add the usual mix of Belgians, French, Germans, Basques, Italians and Dutch and you could have

an interesting situation.

By early afternoon Stuart had arrived and pitched up next to our van and within minutes Dave Barker, saddlebag stuffed to the gunwales with yet another bag improbably secured on top of it, swept into view. "Wow" said Dave, "Incredible, fantastic, wow." Obviously his first taste of cycling in the high mountains had been judged a success. More tea arrived as Dave regaled us with details of his lone ride trying, and succeeding, to avoid as many main roads as possible. Dave Matthews and Margaret appeared and just managed to squeeze their car onto the last remaining bit of grass. At this point we had five vehicles, a caravan + awning, motor-van + awning, three tents and nine bikes. All on two pitches which made it quite cozy. The talk was all of tomorrow and to get ourselves up to date Dave Barker and I rode into the town to find a bar with a TV.



There can't be any better way of watching a stage of the tour on TV than propping up an open fronted bar, ice cold beer in hand watching a large widescreen and the temperature nudging 30°. The stage was to Morzine and it was obvious that Armstrong was not the dominant force of earlier years as he struggled to hold the attacks. It was all shaping up to be a mammoth day on Alpe D'Huez.

The day dawned quite warm and promised a roasting day on the mountain. Dave B had al-

ready been into town early and bought a couple of copies of L'Équipe to get us in the mood. We ate breakfast as the steady stream of vehicles headed up the mountain. This had been going on for two days as a mixture of campervans, cars and tour pantechnicons ground their way up adding to the ever present smell of hot clutches and brakes. Departure was set for 11.00 am and with guest Andy in a borrowed Seamons top, the nine riders headed out of the campsite and into the melée of riders, walkers and cars that jostled for road space. We may have left together but it didn't last more than a couple of bends as the sheer volume of foot and wheeled traffic made it everyman for himself.

Arrangements had been made to meet on bend nine if we all got separated as some were happy just to get to there and others wanted to ride all the way up and descend. The last occasion I had ridden to the top was in 1987 so, in the words of JKP, "it had to be done." The experience is like no other and no words can describe the atmosphere. Even the TV cameras can't really catch it as they follow the riders at such a speed. On reaching the top the real fun began. After a couple of photos for the album it was time to return against the flow - and the gendarmes every 50 metres who were trying to stop you. I explored a few side streets in the ski resort as the dodging descent commenced but using our well honed techniques gained over several years of tour watching (dismount when required, walk ten paces, jump back on and ignore any shouts and whistles and never, ever, look back) I was soon on my way to join the others. Most of us made it to the appointed spot and the long wait began. My how the time passes quickly though. By the time we'd eaten, found some shade under the trees (this involved throwing an unoccupied German flag out of the way as it seems they grab their spaces here as well as by the pool side) and had a short siesta whilst listening to Tour Radio, it was nearing time for the publicity caravan to approach.

Before that though there was to be another surprise as Keith Stacey appeared just beneath us walking up the mountain. Keith had ridden up from Vizille in temperatures that were now in the mid thirties and the final kilometres up the Alpe had taken their toll. All his drink had gone and as he slumped at the side of the road he gasped "Flipping Heck" or something very similar.

"Who'll go and get some beers, I'll pay for them" said Keith now partially recovered. What an offer! We knew there was a bar about 500 metres up the hill because that was where all the Dutch were gathered with their orange flags, painted faces and musical instruments. You could hear them from miles away. Keith, in stocking feet, set off with a couple of others on what was probably a 'mission impossible'.

Never underestimate a desperate man. On reaching the bar it was soon obvious that they wouldn't sell beer in bottles. You could pay a lot of money to have one in a glass, 'servis compris' no doubt, but not take away. Keith was not to be put off though and approached a group of the raucous Dutch to do a bit of bartering. Obviously in a benign mood, probably under the influence, they agreed to let some of their precious nectar go. Keith asked for ten, they offered three and finally settled on six. Having done the most difficult negotiation it must have been relatively easy to blag a polythene bag off a bystander and get it filled with ice at the bar. Their triumphant return was greeted by loud cheers all round.

Then, in the distance, the first honking horns were heard and down on the lower bends you could see the caravan making its way through the crowds. It was soon upon us with the usual goodies being thrown out as the improbably modified vehicles and young lovelies swirled past in a sea of colour. We settled down again and waited for the main attraction. Who would be in the lead? Would Armstrong weaken? Tour Radio's excitable voice informed us that a group had escaped with all the 'usual suspects' in it - and David Millar. One of the great things about the bend we were on is that if you get right on the edge you can see the riders as they descend the final yards of the Lautaret and swing onto the Alpe D'Huez climb. You can then see them on at least three other parts of the climb as the road winds its way up the mountain. Sure enough, a group of maybe a dozen was together at the bottom but by the time we saw them again it had split and one rider was just in the lead. Too far away to see the colour of his jersey the question of who was soon answered by a spectator with a radio to his ear. "Mayo".

Within minutes Iban Mayo of the Euskaltel team, orange top open to the waist, swung past at a speed which defies comprehension. A small cav-

alcade of motors and motorbikes accompanied him and it is the speed of these vehicles that really brings home to you just how fast the riders are going. The gap was a good one and the next group was led up by Beloki, Armstrong and Ullrich - but no Millar. He arrived a short time after and then the various groups came through. A big cheer is always reserved for the 'autobus', that group of sprinters and rouleurs who take refuge in large numbers on the mountain stages and the final individual stragglers for whom a helping hand is always welcome when there are no commissaires around.

Too soon it was all over and the next adventure began. With upwards of half a million people on the mountain and all going down the same road, most on foot, riding was always going to be problematic. There aren't many who will walk with a bike, particularly if you have Look cleats, so the ensuing chaos was only to be expected. By the time we'd all reached the campsite, the kettles were on, the wine opened and the après race discussions got underway.



The next morning would offer the last opportunity to see the tour so most were up early enough to get into Bourg D'Oisans to the Tour Village where some stunt riding, signing on and interviews would take place. Lance said a few words, the sprinters seemed to say a lot (presumably to let us know they were still there!) and Millar sneaked up the side steps avoiding the waiting commentator. Then they were off, the peloton weaving its way through the narrow streets of the town before heading for Gap. We in turn were off to the nearest café in the town square. Diversions on the way took us to several shops that had excellent window displays devoted to Le Tour (the Maison de la Presse was particularly impressive) and the bike shop. Over coffee the

afternoon's rides were planned and a booking for the fourteen at a nearby pizzeria arranged for the last evening we would all be together.

Later that evening, full of wine and pizza, we all wandered back towards the campsite, discovering on the way that a bar was showing the highlights of the day's stage to Gap, where Beloki, one of Armstrong's principal challengers, had come off on the wet tar. Armstrong himself had had to take to the fields in a bit of daredevil mountain biking and somehow both he and his lightweight road machine came out of it unscathed. The next day Dave Barker, Paul and Stuart were all to leave and Dave had been persuaded to go back over the Galibier and the Télégraph. This would be no mean feat when you saw the load that Dave was to carry.



Dave's biggest challenge!

It's just thirty miles from the campsite (700m) to the top of the Galibier (2,600m) of which the first three are gently uphill. Then you start the Lautaret which tour riders don't even really consider a genuine col. Believe me it is, especially when you have a load like Dave's on the back. By the time you reach the top of the Lautaret at 2000m after some 25 miles, you know you've done some climbing. Here the road forks and taking the left will raise you another 600 metres in just 5 miles to the summit of the Galibier. Dave's luck was in. Just as we arrived at the fork Stuart Kay appeared. He had parked here on his way

back home so he could ride the last five miles and return to his car. "Would Dave like his bags carried to the top and collect them there?" No contest; with stripped down bikes the three of us set off for the final stretch. This includes the wonderful 'Horrocks Highway' stretch. Back in 1989 Johnny Pardoe took a great picture of the late Geoff Horrocks here, the snow-capped Meige mountain range in the background. Blown up to A3 size this had pride of place on Geoff's wall. Now was our chance for a similar picture each.

The final kilometre of this climb is exactly that, a killer. So much so that a single carriageway tunnel was driven through the mountain for motorised traffic. Cyclists aren't allowed and have to battle the final few bends but the reward is the view from the very top which is sensational. Look to the north and you see the Galibier snaking off into the distance and the Télégraph. On a good day you can see Mont Blanc. To the south are the snow capped mountains of La Meige, the twists and turns of the Galibier naturally leading your eye towards them. Better still it's all downhill for miles and miles. Photos taken, wind proofs on and, in Dave's case, bags as well, we said our goodbyes. Dave set off tentatively down the other side getting used to the weight distribution again and disappeared round a bend out of sight. Johnny and I held our breath until he reappeared and we watched as the receding figure got smaller.

For us there was that wonderful prospect of a thirty mile downhill return, with a stop off for omelette, frites and coffee at the top of the Lautaret. Over the next few days we all broke camp and went our separate ways; Dan & Ali and Andy & Kate headed for home, Johnny and Carol headed up into the mountains and we took off across the Massif Central to meet up with John & Jean Firth in the Lot. The get together had been a huge success and for most it had been the first time they had seen the Tour at close quarters. Would they do it again? The answer to that seemed to be a resounding 'yes' and as soon as the details of the 2004 event were released there was already talk at the club-room of ferry and campsite bookings. Will you be there?

2004 Details: **Start Saturday July 3rd** in Belgium where it stays a few days before heading across northern France to Brittany. A transfer

brings it right back into central France and the Massif Central before it heads for the Pyrenees and two mountain top finishes on Friday and Saturday (July 16th & 17th.) From here it crosses Hérault and Provence before finishing at Villard de Lans in the Alps on Tuesday July 20th. The day after it is a real novelty and possibly the only time it will be done. **The Alpe D'Huez (Wednesday July 21st)** as the ultimate time trial. Now we will really see what the master climbers can do and the potential for major GC upheaval is obvious. The day after sees the Glandon, Madelaine and the Forclaz before the finish at Le Grand Bornand. By then it should all be over but a 60 Km time trial at Besançon (Saturday July 24th) could still cause a final upset before the final stage into Paris the day after.

Already the talk is of a trip to the same campsite next year, with the opportunity to see three stages, so if you are interested get up to the

Finally, Paul Smith sends these sayings, gleaned from a magazine, for you to practice so that you can appear knowledgeable next year.

descendre comme un fer à repasser

lit. 'to cycle (downward) like an iron'
to take a wrong downward turn

être dans la pampa

lit. 'to be in the pampa'
to end up cycling on one's own, lost behind the cars

ne pas passer un pont de chemin de fer

lit. 'unable to cross a railway bridge'
to be terrible at cycling up hills

sucer les roues

lit. 'to suck wheels'
to stay at the rear of the break-away

tenir le gouvernail

lit. 'to be at the helm'
to stay at the rear of the pack

finir sur la jante

lit. 'to end up on the rim'
to be completely knackered at the arrival

pédaler avec les oreilles

lit. 'to pedal with one's ears'
to pedal without technique or style

terminer la course dans l'etc

lit. 'to finish the race in the etc.'
to finish at the bottom of the classification

la voiture balai

lit. 'the broom-car'
the car at the rear of the race that sweeps up

200 in 2

"Explore the Cheshire Cycle way, a 176 mile / 282 km journey through some of our finest scenery." The opening sentence on the excellent Cheshire County Web site. In June 2002 the cycle way was "re launched" and I felt a little guilty as this marked the passage of time when I had still never bothered to actually follow the route. Yes we often find ourselves crossing it, passing along bits of it, and seeing it "going the opposite direction". We (Seamons) use the lanes of Cheshire, as much as anyone I'm sure, but how many have travelled the cycle way itself - every inch?

In my ignorance I had it in my mind that it was still 134 miles, as it originally was. Having tackled the Llangollen run at a pace a little greater than I was used to, then Blackpool and back via Warrington (140 miles), my "Grand Randonneur" spirit led me to suggest doing the Cycle Way in a day. "Don't be daft Gordon it's nearly 200 miles". OK, two days then? The cost of an overnight was resolved by driving out to Tilston (near Malpas not Beeston) then riding anti-clockwise and back home for the night. We'd then set out from Rackhams at 9 am on Sunday to continue back to the cars. The Greyhound at Ashley would be our half way marker. So finally we got organised for Saturday 20th August with an 8 am rendezvous (8.10 for me as I have a reputation to maintain) and 9.15 am at Tilston. The riders would be: - Wilkie, Reg Blease, Pete Devine, John Hurley, John Pardoe and myself (Gordon).

For reasons beyond me, the route has a loop at Tilston, which we decided to get out of the way at the start. So, 20 minutes after you set off you end up back at Tilston. Leaving a villager scratching his scalp in puzzlement we left again, now going South West when logic told me we should be going North East. The route is very well signed with the recognisable white "70" on little blue signs at every junction, barring one or two of course. We cruised all morning in dry weather, interrupted by a well-timed puncture. A raised "Dutch canal bridge" at Wrenbury gave us a banana stop as we zigzagged east across Cheshire before lunch at the "White Lion" at Barthomley. Skirting Alsager and Congleton we reached Gawsworth. John Pardoe having already cycled out to Tilston, broke off for home estimating get-

ting in a ton. The little loop into the hills is actually 20 miles of gruel and toil coming towards the end of the first day. Up and over to Wildboarclough, then north over Cat and Fiddle road past Lamaload to Bollington. Keith was in fine form. Style, Sweat, Silent and Solo. "It's easier this way round" he claimed as we struggled past the "Hanging Gate Inn". Well, maybe for him, but I was getting tired and doubtful about tomorrow. Exiting the hills, you are led up a side road of terraced housing and cobbles in Bollington, which must be a 1 in 4. From here it seemed a long way back for a hot bath and an early night. Never mind, there were a hundred miles in the bag by the time we split at Altrincham.

Sunday 9 am, a full pack of tourists left Rackham's for Ashley to pick up the blue signs. Ros-therne, Budworth, Acton Bridge and Mouldsworth flew by in company. The weather was fine and we made good time to Mickle Trafford where we swung north towards the Wirral for a lunch at Stoak. Never been here before! We can't remember the name of the pub which probably says everything about it. The tourist group split off for home and the CCW gang of five dropped onto the Shropshire Union Canal and headed north into the industrialised backyard of Ellesmere Port. The signage on the canal sections is almost non-existent so we came off at the Waterway Museum and picked up the signs half a mile away at the railway station. A couple of miles of Ellesmere suburbs lead to a track on an old railway line through Wirral fields, and right into the back door of Parkgate. The sun was giving its all as we joined half of Liverpool for an ice cream and rest beside the expanse of the Dee estuary.

Out past Ness Gardens (another puncture!) and the picturesque village of Burton, to the "spooky" Nuclear Labs of Capenhurst. We rejoined the canal about a mile from the lunch stop and followed it to, and then through, Chester. We got to Chester and realised John was missing. You can't get lost on a canal bank so he'd either gone for a dip or punctured. We didn't panic; no energy for panics, so we just sat down in the sun. Re-united it was now 5 p.m with the last stretch in sight. However there are no straight lines on this stretch where you are led along some great lanes to Beeston. A final 'sting-in-the-tail' comes in the shape of Harthill before dropping into a lovely sunset and Tilston by 7pm. Refreshments and de-brief essential as always, we retired to

the Carden Arms. A big 'thank you' to the landlord there for letting us "park and ride".

This proved to be a great weekend away but with all the comforts of home - literally, and 200+ miles on the computers. We plan to repeat it all again next year, only clockwise this time. Join us!

Story by Gordon Peake

CLUB AGM

It is not unusual nowadays for clubs to get low turnouts at what is perceived to be a 'boring' occasion. We were certainly not helped by a lousy evening of driving rain and wind. By any standards though a turnout in the low thirties from a membership of over 120 is hardly inspiring for those officials who put in so much effort throughout the year to make the club what it is. A suggestion in Any Other Business asked for consideration to be given to a Sunday for this meeting. There was no support for this from those attending as almost all there were the Sunday clubrun regulars. Maybe the membership at large think differently but they'll have to get a formal proposition for next year and get down to the clubroom to vote.

All the reports were accepted, even the treasurer's (the closing balance was almost £800 up on last year) and for this fiscal prudence John Coles was elected Vice President! The committee were re-elected as last year with the addition of Gordon Peake filling the vacant 'member' position. Rob Morton and Keith Stacey again stood as auditors.

The major issue for discussion was the CTC requirement to name leaders and organisers to comply with the demands of their insurers. Their insurers are OUR insurers and to make sure that no club member, or the club itself, is subjected to a third party claim it is essential that as many active members as can, sign the forms as soon as possible. Please see our secretary (she's there most Fridays) for access to the necessary form. The only proposition came from Bob Richardson regarding acceptance of members under the age of 16. Whilst the meeting was sympathetic to the reasons, the actual wording was regarded as unworkable. Motion Lost.

Meeting closed at 10.30 - adjourned to OMT

Meet your Clubmates

Our second clubmate came to the club largely as a result of domestic necessity. Living in Lymm he was finding it increasingly difficult to ride with his previous club which often met in the south east of the city. A long ride out to the start might result in just a few riders meeting up. After a few clubruns with the Seamons he joined the ranks and as the years have passed he has got more involved. This year he has taken over the club's website and transformed it into the slick beast you see today. He also took over running the club '10's and on many occasions you could go on the website later that evening to see the result and maybe even a photo. His one plea..."please let me have your results and any news for inclusion..." You know who to contact it's **'Talking Steve' Booth...**

When and Where were you born? December 7th, 1953 in Walton Hospital, Liverpool (next to the prison)

When did you start cycling, and what was your first club? About age 9 or 10, in Ormskirk exploring the local lanes. I joined the South Lancs RC in 1972.

What was your first race? South Lancs. 10, 1972, time was 30.12.

What was your first win? Farnborough and Camberley CC club event in 1973, 1.6.04 for 25 miles.

Which performance do you rate as your best? 22.57 in Haworth and District 10 in 1974.

What is your favourite meal? Indian.

What were you like at school? Good at the beginning, a bit downhill, then steadily improving.

What kind of books do you read? Political biographies (really). Action fiction and computer programming.

What kind of music do you enjoy? Rock.

And your favourite type of TV programmes? Drama, comedy and the news.

Which newspaper do you read? The Guardian.

What is your ideal holiday destination? Anywhere with lots of snow and glaciers on the mountains, and guaranteed good weather. Let me know if you find it.

Do you have any hobbies? Hill walking and computer programming.

Who would play you in a film of your life? Sean Bean - that will keep my wife and daughter happy.

What is your greatest fear? Anything happening to the family - closely followed by the bikes and walking boots.

How would you describe yourself in a lonely hearts ad? Active geek seeks similar.

What is your favourite training ride? Anywhere on the quiet lanes of mid and north Wales (car assisted to the start, of course).

What is your most unpleasant characteristic? Losing things, and blaming my wife Vicky and the children for hiding them. Impatient.

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others? Greed.

Who would you most like to have met, and why? Isambard Kingdom Brunel, to let him know his self-doubt was misplaced, and his future in the list of greats, assured.

What was your most embarrassing moment? A romantic tryst by Loch Coruisk (Isle of Skye) was rudely interrupted by a group of people suddenly appearing over the horizon from nowhere, they had made an unforeseen landing from a boat on a nearby beach.

Four words to describe yourself: Generous, romantic, short-sighted, balding (words supplied by Vicky).





TESTING TIMES



Missing from the last issue of the magazine was the result of West Cheshire TTCA '10' held on July 16th. With both Dave Attwell (26.06) and Vinny Fitzgerald (27.27) both recording good times it's only fair to record Dave's fastest of the year and Vin's 2nd fastest.

ABC Centreville '10' August 2nd

Paul McAllister continued to show his fine form with 22.28 for 8th place. Tim Seddon returned to racing with a promising 23.12 and Roy Myers wasn't far behind with his 23.44

VTTA (M/C&N/W) '25' August 9th

Roy Myers was well below his best with 1.06.33 in this event and it was a surprise to see Richard Potter (or Poteu as the start sheet had it) riding an open time trial. He finished in 1.07.13 but maybe he had the club's road race promotion the next day on his mind.

VTTA Nat Champs '50' August 9th

Phil Holden continued his build up for a crack at the '12' hour with 2.18.45 and Dave Attwell was our only other competitor in 2.32.00

VTTA Nat Champs '10' August 17th

Pete Devereux was our fastest finisher in this with a season's fastest of 24.09. better still his +7.51 saw him take top spot in the 65-69 category. Well done Pete! Dave Attwell (26.21 and +4.09) and Vin Fitzgerald (28.01 and +6.05) completed the Seamons contingent

Seamons CC '25' August 23rd

Continuing our run of good weather for marshals (hot and sunny) but not so good for riders the club attracted 119 competitors for our 'open' promotion. A great pity that Tim Seddon didn't turn up as we stood a good chance of the team win. In the event Paul McAllister again was best Seamons rider with 58.18 and with Dave Bates (1.00.04) and Roy Myers (1.00.29) produced an inside 3-hours team time. Phil Holden (1.06.25),

Dave McIlroy (1.06.34), Dave Attwell (1.11.32) and Vin Fitzgerald (1.17.57) completed our turn-out.

Stretford Whs '25' August 30th

Paul McAllister was our fastest here with 56.58. He was backed up again by Dave Bates whose steady form has seen a glut of sub-hour rides with 58.59 and Roy Myers back to form with 1.00.43.

West Cheshire TTCA '12' Hour August 31st

Only one rider in this but what a ride! Phil Holden's sheer determination has been an inspiration over the last few years as he battled back from that horrendous injury sustained after the 12 hour in 1999. Having completed a personal best of 235 miles in that event he fell at work the next day and shattered his leg. At one point it was thought that amputation was the only option but Phil resisted and gradually got back to walking and then riding. Last Christmas he had an outing in the Fancy Dress '25' and threatened then to ride the twelve hour. That he did and finished with 231 miles is an incredible achievement. Never has anybody deserved the club championship and BAR more than him.

VTTA N Lancs '30' August 31st

Pete Devereux produced a 1.19.09 for a plus of +19.14 and 7th on standard while Dave Attwell got stuck behind a tractor, lost a lot of time and finished with 1.34.26.

VTTA (Brum) 60Km September 6th

Dave Attwell trundled down to the Midlands for this one then trundled round the 37.5 mile course in 1.50.46.

Altrincham Ravens CC '25' September 6th

Not many of our riders are still going but Roy Myers (1.01.17) and Nigel Harrop (1.04.23) kept the flag flying.

VTTA (M/C&N/W) '25' September 10th

Dave Bates was our fastest in this with yet another sub-hour ride in 59.38. Pete Devereux got the better of him where it mattered though taking 6th place on standard with his 1.02.59.

Kent Valley RC '10' September 13th

Our upcoming Guest of Honour (Gethin Butler of the Preston Whs) won this one with a 21.12. That Paul McAllister got within 50 seconds in 21.02 shows that he is holding his form right to the last. Vin Fitzgerald came home in 27.50 as the only other club rider.

ABC Centreville '25' September 13th

Dave Bates took 7th overall and 4th on standard with his 1.00.06 to finish off his season. Roy Myers (1.03.51) and Nigel Harrop (1.04.49) provided back-up.

Rockingham CC '10' September 20th

What a way to finish your season! Once again Paul McAllister lowered the club '10' mile record with 20.32 for 4th place overall. A 30 mph ride is getting tantalisingly close!

Withington Whs '10' September 27th

Paul McAllister finished 4th in 22.30 and Nigel Harrop recorded his fastest of the year in 24.54

Stretford Whs '10' October 4th

Paul McAllister was the 'last one standing' as the club's open event road season ground to a halt. His 22.34 for 3rd place showed that the form which started way back in March never deserted him and in doing so he became the fastest ever Seamons rider in a time trial at 29.221 mph. Congratulations Paul.

Wrexham RC Hill Climb October 12th

This event takes place up the Horseshoe Pass out of Llangollen each year and each year Dave Attwell is the club's sole representative. Obviously a popular event with 85 entries Dave finished with 16 mins 44 secs in an event won by Mark Lovatt (current national champion at the time) in 9 mins 26 secs.



Nigel Harrop has ridden consistently throughout the year, supporting most of the club '10's'. Wonder if he enjoyed his first hill-climb quite as much?

CLUB ROAD RACE

It was really good to see the club active in the road race promotion field again. August 10th was the date and after a blistering week the heavens opened just for the period of the race. This made the surface treacherous, just what you don't want, but there was only one incident. Congratulations to Richard Potter for suggesting then making the necessary arrangements to get this first North-West League event underway. Sixty riders were protected by very professional motor-cycle out-riders doing a rolling road marshals job with Seamons members on every corner. The series is run on a points basis with no individual prizes. Simon Williams had his first outing in a road bunch, lasting just over half way. Keith and Mark Bailey hung on in to the sprint finish being very active in the bunch's attempt to pull back an early break.



CLUBRUNS



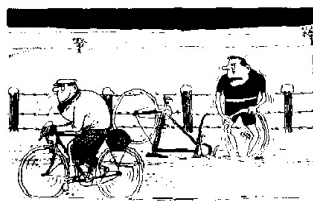
	DATE	HALF-DAY	TOURING SECTION
Dec	7th	Radway Green *	Allgreave
	14th	**CHRISTMAS DINNER	RUN TO HIGH LEGH VILL. HALL**
	21st	Blaze Farm ***	Pott Shrigley ***
	28th	Delamere	Summertrees
Jan	4th	North Rode	Charlesworth
	11th	Glossop	Delamere
	18th	Summertrees	Astbury
	25th	Meerbrook****	Dones Green
Feb	1st	Malkin's Bank	Cat & Fiddle
	8th	Buxton	North Rode
	15th	Astbury *****	Impromptu *****
	22nd	Two Mills	Nantwich
	29th	Beeston	Alsager Bank
Mar	7th	Llangollen Audax *****	Manley
	14th	Meerbrook	Rivington
	21st	Malkin's Bank	Wybunbury
	28th	Summertrees	Meerbrook

* Montgomery Weekend - Contact Robin Haigh.
 ** All sections meet at Rackhams. Touring section leaves at **09.30 am** from this date until further notice. Hot Pot served at 12.00 noon prompt. Fancy Dress theme - 'Cowboys and Indians'.
 *** Christmas '25' and fancy dress **** M&DTTA Dinner at Middlewich
 ***** Day after the Annual Dinner ***** There will be another impromptu run on this day

ASTAUGH



Goodwill or not, Mr Haines, start times are independent of pub closing hours.



Thank you. And a Merry Christmas to you too