

January 2018



THE SQUIRREL

The magazine of the Seamons Cycling Club



A REVIEW OF 2017



REVIEW OF 2017

Welcome to another occasional edition of The Squirrel. In view of the amazing year that 2017 was for the club I have decided to devote most of this issue to a review of the year.

Membership stands at a record high of about 230 and boy have some of our members travelled, and others have recorded some superb time trial results and we again have a member who likes getting covered in mud!

The year started with Keith Bailey achieving his long held ambition to live the life of a professional by taking a three month sabbatical and renting a villa in Spain to do nothing but ride his bike.

The first Sunday in March saw the Half Day Section ride to Llangollen in probably the worst rain ever. But nothing could stop Robin Haigh from getting there first for the twenty-something time.

In Los Angeles Great Britain Paracyclist and Seamons member, John Gildea becomes the track Scratch Race World Champion.

In May a dozen or so members were off to sunny Majorca and John Hammond has penned a report for this mag. Also in May it was The Tour of the Berwyns and although the club doesn't organise this any more plenty of our members took part.

It seems that some members just can't get enough of long distance riding. Not content with doing at least one 200 kilometre ride every month of the year Mike Kilburn decided, with a small group of others, to ride 500 miles around the North Coast of Scotland.

In July Jane Prowse became the first Seamons lady to enter a 24 hour time trial, setting a new club benchmark for others to chase.

In August we were treated to a Summer Social at the Rope and Anchor in Dunham. Over eighty members enjoyed an afternoon of eating, drinking and chatting entertained by a bevy of Seamons musicians.

September saw another group heading for The Alps, this time for a Tour De Mont Blanc, and a very ambitious timetable they set themselves.

Not to be outdone, at the end of October Richard Goddard and his wife set off for a cycling holiday in Central America.

And in December whilst most of us were starting to take it easy one of our members revelled in getting covered in mud and waxing lyrical about it.

December also had its festive delights with another fine party organised by Maria Rothwell. We did think about putting the picture of Mike Brooks in his winning costume on the front cover but you may understand, when you see the picture elsewhere in this issue, why we decided not to!

Notwithstanding all of the above our racing members collectively had a fantastic record breaking season, Chris Siepen again shining in the TLI masters Road Race.

AND Tom Turton and Ellie Reynolds tie the knot.

Thank you to all those who provided articles for this edition of The Squirrel I hope you like it.

My warmest thanks go to Steve Stoddart who pieces together all the bits of paper, articles and photos I send him and turns them into what you are reading. Thanks again Steve.

Keith Stacey



MEET YOUR CLUBMATES - ADE HUGHES

When and where were you born?

I was born in 1967 in Crumpsall Hospital in North Manchester.

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

Like most kids in the 70s I cycled everywhere and I always had a bike from an early age. In the 80s I stopped and briefly started again on a mountain bike in the early 90s when I did some commuting to work and weekend rides around East Lancashire. I changed job to one that required travelling, then my daughters were born, and the bike went in the loft and was then sold.

At the start of 2009 I started working in central Manchester and I bought a bike to commute on. I did some weekend rides, the Manchester 100 and then a friend asked if I'd like to do Land's End to John O'Groats. I joined North Cheshire Clarion at that time to help get some miles in and started doing Audaxes. Eventually I got into time trialling because of the Kilton mid-week races run by Seamons.

What was your first race? And your first win?

My first race was a 10 mile TLI time trial in September 2010 which I did on my road bike, complete with bottles and saddle bag! It took me 28 minutes and 42 seconds and I hated every minute of it!

My first win was at the Kilton in 2014. My first (and only) open win was in July 2016 at the Birkenhead NE 25 mile TT

Which performance do you rate as your best?

Probably the BDCA 100 last year. I'd done the 12hr a fortnight earlier and wasn't sure whether I would have the legs to do a fast time so I was delighted with 3 hours and 38 minutes, even though it was horrible for the last 20 miles!

What is your favourite meal?

Although I like spicy food my favourite meal is a really nice steak, mushrooms and thick chips.



What were you like at school?

I was always the smallest in the class from when I started until the age of 15, although I was always sporty. I was pretty well behaved and liked to do well.

What kind of books do you read?

I really like sports biographies but I also like 20th century history.

What kind of music do you enjoy?

All sorts really. Lots of 80's stuff and more modern indie bands that my daughters have got me into.

And your favourite type of TV programme?

I like comedies and BBC documentaries.

Which newspaper do you read?

I don't – I get my news from the BBC news website.

What is your ideal holiday destination?

I used to like Turkey but I'm not so sure now given the political situation there. Cyprus is another favourite. In summary, somewhere very warm with good food!

Do you have any hobbies?

Mainly cycling these days but I also like photography and I play video games from time to time.

Who would play you in a film of your life?



MEET YOUR CLUBMATES cont

Dec (from Ant and Dec) or Jim Parsons (Sheldon from the Big Bang Theory).

What is your greatest fear?

Heights.

How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts column?

Geek. And a trier.

What is your favourite training ride?

Into the Forest of Bowland – Barley, Sabden, Clitheroe etc.

What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

I am quite shy and reserved which sometimes comes across as disinterested or aloof.

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?

Arrogance.



Who would you most like to have met and why?

Rik Mayall – a comic hero of mine.

Four words to describe yourself.

Quiet. Determined. Focused. Obsessive.

AN OBITUARY TO ROY CROMACK

by John Pardoe

It has just come to my notice that Roy passed away recently. He was one of the principal Guests at our Golden Jubilee Anniversary Dinner in 1999, and presented our awards.



Jim Boydell and Roy.

Roy was the first rider to top 500 miles in a 24 hour time trial in 1969, recording 507 miles. Although a novice at the distance he was one of the top riders in the country, including being a National Track Champion, Olympic Team Trial rider in Mexico, and National 12 hour Champion.

achievement, before it was finally updated by another former Seamons Guest of Honour, Andy Wilkinson, with 525 miles. Andy now holds the record with 541 miles. Our sincere condolences to Roy's family.



Carol and Roy.

He was to hold the "24" record for another 28 years, a tremendous



Wilkie and Roy.



SEAMONS IN MALLORCA 2017

by John Hammond

Every year there is a contingent from the club that sets off to Mallorca dating back to the time when Reg and Bob Richardson were out in the late 60's.

This year it was a group of over 20 club members; with thanks to Nigel for managing the critical mass that caused the whole event to happen.

The fun started at Manchester Airport when security confiscated half of Ashley's tool kit, which were classed as offensive weapons, and also Phil narrowly escaped having his sandwiches taken off him, after the cheese was found not to be C4.

There followed seven days with no accidents, no rain (it has been known to snow in the hills at this time of year), just sunny days, cycling in the day and a couple of beers in the evening.



Trips like this tend to follow a pattern, if it worked the year before do it again this year. So as usual the first half day of riding was either to Formentor lighthouse or 'the Caves'.

Geography lesson:

Formentor Lighthouse is an active lighthouse located on high cliffs at the tip of Cap de Formentor, well worth a visit. For the Caves check <http://www.covesdecampanet.com>, near to the ancient town of Campanet. Here (it says in the

brochure) you can watch the world go slowly by from a cafe terrace.

With Phil still in recovery mode we formed a group that missed the two days in the hills, the first to Port de Sa Colobra, and the second to Port de Soller and back through Bunyola (by far the hardest day).

Otherwise the whole group essentially cycled together (apart from Rick doing some super mileage).

The first full day to Porreres was lead by Jeanette and was a good mix of 'B' roads and the cycle/green lanes, a fairly flat 75 miles through some



very picturesque farmland and with the inevitable final sprint down the coast road into Port de Pollensa.

Day three for my sins was one of my routes to Santa Maria via Alaro, which after the short climb into Alaro was followed by a ten mile descent to Santa Maria and lunch. The return journey was on one of the green lanes commonly known as the 'pipe road', not sure why, which returns through



SEAMONS IN MALLORCA 2017 cont

Llubi and Muro and afternoon tea and cakes.

Another trip worth a mention was to Petra, from which the short climb to the hilltop hermitage on Puig de Bonany

check: www.seemallorca.com/sights/religious/ermita-de-bonany-petra, where the views from the terrace at the top, covering almost the entire plain, are superb.

Apparently there are a number of such Puigs dotted around the central plain, which form part their own cycle challenge.

The only rest day (before the hard day in the hills) was down to the bay of Cala de St Vincenc a wonderful sun trap, with the sea in the bay displaying the full spectrum between green and blue.

Its my third year now that I've gone on this holiday, and each year my knowledge of the green cycle

lanes improves, which is the key to getting around and enjoying the delights of the central plain. As a starting point I'd recommend the 10 euro map from 'Pro Cycle Hire Cafe' opposite the hotel (Pollensa Park), it has most of these lanes marked well worth the investment.

So another good 'Seamons in Mallorca' week, good company, good cycling, good weather.



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SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 WITH DARRYL, SIMON, TOM AND MIKE

Scotland's North Coast 500 by Darryl, Simon, Tom and Mike. June 10-18th 2017

It was during a Belgium Blond infused session at a bar in Altrincham that Darryl & I hatched a plan. We had recently completed the round the year 200k Audax UK challenge & now wanted something else without straying into hardcore territory. It had to be a weeklong trip, be self-sufficient on the bike preferably without paniers within a day's drive of home. Scotland was the natural choice due to its scenery and ruggedness but where? NC 500 was a route that came to mind which we modified to avoid the busy A9 from Thurso back to Inverness. Detail was filled in and accommodation arranged -not easy as this was few and far between in those remote highlands especially during peak season.

Tom and Simon were then also invited to make a more robust team. Plan was to start and finish in Inverness going clockwise and hopefully with the prevailing wind. Packing had to be minimal but at same time last us a week on the bike and us cope with Scotland's finest weather, Oh and everything had to go in & on one car to Inverness.

Pedal Day 1 Inverness to Lochcarron 60 miles 1962 ft of ascent. This on paper was to be the easiest day - a warm up.

Saying goodbye to our B&B hosts for the week after a full Scottish breakfast and leaving the car on their drive. We set with the sun was shining & ominously we got lost crossing the canal out of



First Cafe Stop - Tarvie



Day 1 - All set to go

Inverness having assured everyone that this whole week was an easy navigation!



Fortunately, thereafter the route could have been memorised as junctions were few and far between and the signposts were informative. Scenery immediately out of Inverness was spectacular. a taste of things to come- nearly always mountain, loch or sea or all 3 interspaced with an occasional forest to block the view.

The first stop was Tarvie Café -a chance for coffee and cake and recap, this was consumed whilst standing and chatting to both a motorbike rider also starting his NC journey and also a classic car owner coming the other way and finishing his NC journey. We felt invigorated continuing west. Lunch was at Ledgowan Lodge Hotel a lonely large dark

imposing hotel set back from the road. It was noted that there were no cars parked and on initial appearances looked deserted and foreboding. Eventually staff were found, and surprisingly fresh sandwiches were made with tea and consumed with relish. Leaving the hotel, the weather had turned for the worse, the sky was dark and the drizzle was penetrating. Thereafter the road transitioned to single track and even though an A road was a taste of how quiet the roads were to become. The Locharron Hotel was a welcome sight, as although we hadn't covered a great distance today, we were wet through and glad of a chance to dry out. Having washed our kit we were soon in the warm hotel bar overlooking a great view of the loch admittedly through drizzle recounting that day's journey.

Pedal Day 2 Lochcarron to Gairloch 77 miles with 6700 feet of climbing including - Bealach na Ba -"the big one" -arguably one of the UK's



SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

toughest climbs-stats: 2053 feet & 20-25% gradients towards the top.

Words by Simon: When Mike first mentioned about riding the North Coast 500 in North West Scotland, I signed up straight away, thinking of beautiful remote moorland and windswept coastline. Then I remembered that Scotland is renowned for its hills, so I thought I better check the profile on Ride With GPS. - 35000ft in 6 days was not too bad - until I saw a big spike on



Day 2. A bit more investigation revealed Bealach-na-Ba the infamous pass linking Applecross village to the main coast road. At 2000 ft height gain, it might not be a mighty Alpine Col, but anything labelled as the "Toughest and Wildest Climb in Britain" (Simon Warren's 100 Greatest Cycling Climbs) was enough to get my climbing confidence wobbling.

After some words of assurance from Mike and Tom, about "it wasn't too bad last year" and "the view is worth it from the top", Mike sent me a photo of the climb as inspiration. It looked stunning with the pass climbing up the left side of the glen with waterfalls cascading down the right hand side, before eventually switch backing over the summit. I loaded the picture as my phone's home screen to inspire me into my training regime.



difficult part to the 6-day ride - the Bealach-na-Ba pass or the coast road further north where the wind would blow straight in off the North Sea and the road followed the cliff edge up and down. For me it was the unknown of climbing the pass and would I be able to make it up carrying the panniers. The Anticipation continued to rise.

Once we had departed from Inverness, the first day was spent trying not to expend too much energy whilst transitioning across Scotland to Lochcarron, our first overnight destination. Typically, the Scottish weather rolled in over the afternoon, with strong winds and rain persisting overnight.

Day 2 started gloomy with low level cloud, but no rain, so sprits were high as we left the B&B. Initially cycling along the edge of Loch Carron, we turned inland over the Ardarroch peninsula to Loch Kishorn and the foot of the Bealach-na-Bla.



As we came out of forest onto the Loch side, we could see the land raising up in front, but the top of the pass was hidden by the low hanging cloud - so no panoramic photos today!! That did not matter because the excitement of tackling the climb lay ahead.

After taking some photos by the warning sign at the foot of the single-track road, it was time to start the hard work. We started out together but soon settled into our own rhythm and speed as



SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

the road wound its way up the lower slopes towards the mist covered upper glen. As the road entered the upper glen, the view across the lower part of the pass opened up. Even with the cloud swallowing the upper half, the view was magnificent with the walls of the glen rearing up from the moor into scree slopes. Up ahead you could trace the road climbing steadily with the glen side into the cloud.

The occasional cyclist flew past us coming down the hill, shouting hello and words of warning about the weather ahead. Therefore, there was nothing to do but to grind out the rhythm and wish you had a 32 on the back like Mike.

Halfway up I could see Tom and Mike disappear into the cloud ahead, whilst Darryl was just behind, pacing ourselves slowing along the length of the glen towards the head of the valley and over the pass.

Once we entered the cloud, the weather closed in with the wind blowing into our face and the steady drizzle turning into heavy rain. When I came around one corner, I literally stopped dead with the strength of the wind blowing down the glen. At least one advantage of the harsh weather was, it stopped me worrying about the final few switch backs and the 20% gradient.

One of the memories' that sticks with me was the look on the van driver's face as he passed me coming down the road, you could see he was thinking "what are you doing?". By now, Darryl had passed me and was encouraging me to keep going, pacing me over the summit and down towards Applecross. We came across Mike and Tom patiently waiting for us, in the lee of rocky outcrop, before setting off together on the descent down towards the village. The

lower we got, the better the visibility, so we were able to make good progress. Unfortunately, it did not get any warmer, so we were quickly looking for a suitable place to stop and warm up. Luckily, we came across a café just outside the village, where we were able to grab a hot drink and use the hot air hand dryer to dry out wet kit.

Despite the weather, I still really enjoyed the challenge of climbing this infamous pass and from then on none of the other climbs really seemed to be that difficult. Would I do it again - Absolutely, but in better weather to be able to take a photo from the top!!

I remember vividly that café stop in Applecross - The café was brand new and their toilet hand dryers were just perfect for drying and warming us up, I do remember it was 6 degrees outside (according to garmin) in the middle of summer and being soaking wet with effects of wind chill from the descent the cafe was like entering heaven. The remaining ride to Gairloch via Shieldaig was thankfully a lot easier still wet but very scenic with sea or loch to focus on for the majority of it.



Pedal Day 3 Gairloch to Acmelvich 88miles 6800 ft climbing. "The day of the Mechanical"

Today we were doing the hilliest part of the tour. Fortunately, we had dry clothes (having persuaded the hotel laundry to let us use their facilities after the previous wet day) as today was forecast to be wet most the day with rolling terrain and a fairly large hill in the middle. Our first stop was at Maggie's Tearoom - a great place to get out of the drizzle/ midgets and warm up. The proprietor was very welcoming despite our dishevelled appearance dripping all over her perfect cosy café. As I recall we noticed that Darryl was having trouble with his gears and consequently struggling on the climbs -after



SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

stopping several times we came to a diagnosis of a broken jockey wheel. Darryl by now could not change gear and bravely carried on in his big ring- soon the mechanical was such that the chain struggled to stay on no matter what gear Darryl was in. This was a disaster -not a contingency we had a proper plan for (who carries spare jockey wheels!) we were miles from anywhere with no phone signal, all Darryl

could do was soldier on to Ullapool with the vague hope of finding a bike shop as this was the major town for the area. Having made enquiries at various establishments it was ascertained that the only bike shop North of Inverness had closed as wasn't viable anymore and Darryl had to return to Inverness for a repair. The buses were infrequent, and one was leaving in an hour, so we wished Darryl good luck, said goodbye and continued on



our way to our nights' accommodation. This was to be a YHA on the Beach at Acmevich.

Pedal day 4 Acmevich to Durness 59 miles 5500ft climbing.

We awoke at the YHA having had a goodnight's sleep which came as a pleasant surprise as this was shared accommodation. We were now in Gaelic country and was once the stronghold of the

Clan Mackay. Along the way we passed isolated crofts and hamlets with outward appearances taking us back in time. Although this was a short leg following the coastline it was my toughest due to the absence of flat bits. It was very lumpy terrain with surprisingly steep bits and also narrow potholed single-track roads with the occasional car passing place. This was remote country fantastic on the eye with so much to take in. Lunch

was just past Unapool at Kylesku Hotel, our table had a wonderful view of the loch and although prices definitely weren't Seramons, it was worth it-again a place to bring the wife. Setting off up the hill café legs had set in, but very quickly came across a spectacular curved bridge over the loch – very picturesque. It was a shame that we were on a mission getting from A to B as it this was a place for exploring and staying a while. Tonight's venue was the Smoocave Hotel named after a nearby sea cave that apparently is spectacular and noisy. The Hotel proprietors were very friendly obliging and set us up very comfortably that night having fed us a great steak supper. In the morning before setting off we got a nice potted history of the areas involvement in WW2.

Pedal day 5 Durness to JOG 91 miles with 6100 feet of ascent.

Today we were doing the top of Scotland that straight bit west to East on the map and we were to meet Darryl again having heard he had his bike fixed and we were to meet up in Thurso. We set off following the coastal sea lochs trying to dodge the short brisk showers sometimes with the wind on one side of the Loch and then against going along the other side. This was picturesque country and made a note to self -must bring Bay up here one day. The road was mainly rolling with hefty ascents rollicking descents and a view to die for at every



SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

turn. Overall, I might say this was my favourite leg of the journey taking into account weather, terrain and scenery. This however was debated later on! For those that are interested scan the QR code to relive the ride. Again, signs of human habitation were few and far between and in fact I particularly recall a genuine road sign ominously saying "to the unknown" which was pointing to inland wilderness. It was along here that 20 miles passed us by before finding a place for comfort break due to the lack of anything to hide behind as the vegetation was just low heather with no trees ditches or buildings. Eventually I came across a lone deserted building -what a relief- as thoughts of Tom Doumoulin the previous month came to mind. Around mid afternoon the recognisable shape of the nuclear reactor at Dounray came into view and with text updates we were relieved to find that Darryl was timing his arrival at Thurso perfectly. We had previously been warned that 3000 workers changed shifts at this time and all were going home with us to Thurso. Fortunately we seemed to miss that exodus. After a joint recap of our separate adventures and bacon butties at Tesco's we made our way to JOG. This leg of the day was flat but against the wind, fortunately Darryl was chomping at the bit and so led the way! We were soon to arrive at JOG and so took the customary photos of a very tacky seaside area. The best bit for me was seeing some of the Orkney Isles not realising that they were so close. A few minutes later a heavy rainstorm came in which cut our visit short and so headed for the B&B for the night.

Darryl's account of his few days misadventure:

Ullapool to Inverness 13 June. And back to the start... We separated at Tesco following a sandwich stop and a final decision on what to

do. My chain would no longer stay on the jockey wheel whenever I needed a low gear and the next leg took us further away from any solution. I had tried a mobile number of a cycle repair person as a tip off from the last café but no response. I also visited the location of the only listed bike shop in Ullapool – closed and now a motorbike repair shop. Out of options I free wheeled down the hill and to the coach station by the port.

An hour or so later I was heading back to Inverness. This gave me a chance to ring our original B&B to ask for a room, they were full, but they offered a cheap alternative down the road (imagine staying with someone's Gran) Thanks to Sustrans the highland buses will accept bikes for free. They supply a huge plastic bag which covers the bike to avoid oil contamination. The bikes then go under the bus with the rest of the luggage. It was too late to find a bike shop so, once in Inverness and having settled in my room, I headed out for an evening in the pub to watch France beat England with some unsympathetic Scots.



Inverness 14 June Next morning I was the first customer at Highland Bikes (recommended). Despite busy mechanics and a full repair shop the Manager offered to take a look having heard my sob story. He made annoyingly quick work of changing the jockey wheel and checked over the gears. I was good to go. However, the lads were now in the very North West of Scotland and there were no bus options back until they neared Thurso. I therefore took the training advice of British Cycling experts and decided to call it a rest day. I took a leisurely walk along the River, enjoying the warm day. Lunch was in the bike themed/workshop Velocity Café



SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

(recommended) where I heard from the others who were also taking a break. We roughly agreed a plan for the following day. And despite feeling a bit guilty I ended the day in the pub.

Inverness to Thurso and on to John o Groats

Thursday morning I was up early and in time for the midday bus to Thurso. There was nothing earlier. No really. It's a long bus ride at 3hrs 30 but this gave me time for a good look at the A9 which I am glad we avoided by bike. Mike had sent me a link to his Garmin so I could track their progress. Unbelievably I arrived around 10 minutes before the others and we met in town with no fuss other than the sharing of our separate adventures. I may have been guilty of exaggerating my hardship. It was great to be back together and with the encouraging words of 'Get on the front, you lazy b@\$&*d!' we headed off to John o Groats.

Pedal Day 6 JOG to Crask Inn - in Tom's words: a 100 miles day!

After a small discussion (cough, cough) we decide to ride to include a visit to Dunnet Head, which is the Northernly point on the British mainland. This would also make the day a 100 miler, which I feel every long distance tour should have.

The ride to Dunnet Head involves a detour of around 15+ miles with a slight uphill at the end, but gives good photo opportunities and the "been there" kudos. Back on the route we stopped at the Thurso Tesco for supplies and a visit to Cafe for food as we thought the next

eating spot would be a long way off, ie the end, in around 70 miles. Continuing along the coast road we made the turn into the Halladale valley and decide to stop on a bridge for our picnic lunch, yum, yum... and there must make been cake for pud somewhere...



The Halladale valley is very remote and picturesque, however nearing the train station at Fornisnard we noticed graffiti along the lines of "say no the RSPB nature reserve" which we found a little odd. As the station was open and used by the RSPB we decided to pop in a for a reasonably priced instant coffee and chat with the warden, who informed us that the graffiti was placed by a local farmer who isn't

keen on them (the RSPB) being in the area. Slightly warmed by the drinks we went outside to continue riding only to find it starting to rain, a quick about turn to go back inside to don wet weather gear then say goodbye again to the warden. Oh its lovely cycling in the rain especially when the wind picks up. This explains the lack of pictures for this part of the route but it really was stunning countryside. Once we had made it to the top of the first hill there was a good descent down to Syre (avoiding the timber lorry coming the other way eeeekkk). I was feeling peckish here and remembered I had a bacon sandwich from the morning, ok time to drop back and munch. I think we were all starting to find it a long day around here





SCOTLAND'S NORTH COAST 500 cont

especially as another hill loomed.

After the next hill and descent, we followed the road around Loch Naver and then turned towards Altnaharra where, yep, another hill and probably the biggest of the day, suffice to say this bit was tough especially as someone wanted to race, mmmm. And then, finally The Crask Inn, a very special place with its copper stained blue grout and beer and more beer and warmth. Oh and scary shouting person in the middle of the night, but I'll let Mike tell you about her!

It was with some relief having not seen a building for possibly 25 plus miles, light fading and the storm worsening that the pace quickened up the hill to our accommodation for the night at the Crask Inn. We were cold, wet-through and the site of the welcoming bar was most agreeable. The proprietor a church minister no less, took our order for a pint of Black Isle Blonde a packet of crisps in front of a proper fire. Several pints later we were "told" by Neil to get ready for dinner a communal affair with a loan cyclist that we passed on the way and a group of 3 Italian tourists sharing the table.



The other cyclist had to sleep outside in a tent as no room inside - he didn't book -we didn't envy him! During the night I awakened (I think?) to the

sound of a barking dog together with a woman outside loudly f'ing and Jeffing presumably to the minister, demanding that that she should be let in -after what seemed like 5 mins this stopped only to return a while later. Was I dreaming? At breakfast I sheepishly mention this, and a few recalled the dog barking but no woman's voice. Make of this what you will all I might say is the minister was married -in fact I made the booking with her a few months



previously, so she did exist but why wasn't she heard by anyone else as they heard the dogs barking?

Pedal day 7 Crask Inn to Inverness. 66 miles 2400 ft - Homeward Leg

After the previous night I felt a little subdued and mainly hung to the back of our group possibly freewheeling downhill the first 20 miles or so trying to make sense of the last night. After all I was a trained scientist and this supernatural could only be a figment of imagination not helped by beer and fatigue? We arrived at Lairg "the crossroads of the north and soon after cross the Bonar Bridge to then to overcome a steep climb called the "Struie" - The end was in sight and following the Cromarty Firth another climb out of Dingwall and the back lanes to cross the magnificent Kessock Bridge and Moray Firth we had gone full circle back to Inverness.

A quick ride up to Inverness castle for a group photo and mutual congratulation marked the end of tour. That evening we landed in a rustic bar selling the same Crask Inn brew (Black Isle Brewery) of the previous night- needless to say a fair few pints were consumed - personally more than I have had since I was a student together with the customary doner kebab.



CYCLING IN INDOCHINA OCT/NOV 2017 by Richard Goddard

Corinne and I flew to Managua, the capital of Nicaragua and transferred to Granada by the shore of Lake Nicaragua. We had a day exploring this relatively basic "tourist town" before we met the rest of our group who arrived the following day. There were ten in the group, 4 singles and 3 couples, aged from mid 30s to 60 and whose occupations ranged from chicken farmer to rocket scientist. The support team comprised a Costa Rican leader, called Roberto, trainee leader, Nicaraguan bike mechanic/guide and bus driver. The extended group bonded and we had a great time together cycling and socialising.

We were allocated good quality mountain bikes and set out on a warm up ride through Granada towards the shore of Lake Nicaragua which was mainly off road. Nicaragua is relatively undeveloped and most of the cycling was on dirt or block roads. There was plenty of wildlife to keep us reaching for the camera. Later in the day we boarded the team minibus and headed for a trip highlight to the Masaya Volcano Park although when we were waiting for the park to open for the evening viewing of molten lava bubbling away in the depths of the huge crater, the skies were looking ominous. The heavens opened accompanied by spectacular thunder and lightning, so we had to abandon our sightseeing which was disappointing but we drove back to our hotel entertained by the colossal storm raging around us flooding the roads.

Day 3 and we caught a ferry to Ometepe Island with its twin volcanoes in the middle of Lake Nicaragua where we got on our bikes for an undulating ride to a swimming hole and then to our hotel on the lake shore with a stunning sunset.



The locals still use horse and cart and we passed one unfortunate dead animal being dealt with by the vultures.

The following day we rode back to the ferry, crossing to the mainland, where we set off along La Chocolate dirt road to the Pacific coast passing through small villages that see no tourism apart from the Exodus biking groups. On reaching the coast we threw off our sweaty bike kit and went for a dip in the sea (only seeing the crocodile warning signs when we were getting dressed...!)

Day 5 we cycled a particularly challenging dirt road towards the Costa Rican border negotiating river crossings and muddy sections. I arrived at a tent by the road side and was surrounded by teenagers with machine guns who turned out to be an army unit out looking for smugglers. Corinne appeared a bit later looking rather wet and bedraggled as she had fallen off in a river and been completely submerged. We then cycled to the border arriving very muddy, hot and sweaty. We abandoned our muddy bikes, bus, mechanic and driver, crossed the border on foot and were met by a Costa Rican mechanic, Paul, driver, Nene, and shiny clean bikes and bus.

Day 6 started with a rafting trip down the Tenario river in Costa Rica surrounded by crocodiles, iguanas, monkeys and a wide range of birds. We then cycled downhill from the mountains back down to the Pan American Highway and on to the hilly region around Lake Arenal staying the night in a yoga retreat. Costa Rica is much more developed than Nicaragua and the roads were mainly paved.

Day 7 was a challenging ride along the lake with spectacular views and lots of hills through rainforest to La Fortuna the adventure capital of



CYCLING IN INDOCHINA OCT/NOV 2017 cont

Costa Rica, (a bit like a more basic version of Queenstown, New Zealand).

On day 8 half the Group went horse riding and zip wiring while the rest of us did a circular ride from La Fortuna stopping at a roadside fruit stall where we had the most delicious pineapple straight from the field along with other weird and exotic fruit I had never seen before. Corinne, who was cycling with the leader spotted sloths and toucans.

We set off from La Fortuna on Day 9 through rolling agricultural terrain, sugar cane and pineapple plantations and rural villages to Aguas Zarcas where there were numerous Iguanas laying sunning themselves in the bushes by the roadside. We then transferred by our mini bus to the Caribbean coast, passing endless container depots where they transfer goods though Costa Rica to avoid the high costs incurred by ships passing through the Panama Canal. After being entertained over lunch by a reggae band we then got back on our bikes for a ride along the coast passing sloths hanging from the trees and black sand beaches full of locals on a day out. Entertainment that night was a BBQ surrounded by tiny tree frogs with live music from a particularly bad Jimi Hendrix tribute act.

Day 10 and we were riding through an indigenous area when we stopped at a shack to see chocolate being made which was so concentrated it did not melt in the heat. It was then on through vast banana plantations to the Panama border where a border guard insisted on checking every bike serial number even though the same cycling team leaders pass through every two weeks or so. We were warned not to joke with the border officials as they took their jobs very seriously.



On day 11 we had a free day on the Bocas del Toro Islands off the Panama Caribbean coast and spent the day on a small boat snorkelling, looking at wildlife including dolphins and visiting palm shaded white sand beaches. We had a fantastic ride through the jungle the morning of

Day 12, including a stop at a local indigenous school where we chatted in Spanish to kids who had never heard of Manchester United, something we had not experienced anywhere else in the world. We then transferred through the mountains and got on our bikes to ride to the Pacific coast again. On the way it started raining so hard I

could barely see the front of my bike surfing through the rivers the road had become.

On day 13 we rode through a fairly challenging remote and hilly section of rural Panama followed by a long transfer to Panama City to our hotel overlooking Miraflores locks on the Canal. Our final day riding was along the Canal followed by a trip to the visitors' centre which was full of American cruise ship passengers which brought us back to earth after our trip through the remote areas of Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama.

Corinne and I then flew the next day to Quito in Ecuador and on to the Galapagos Islands for a few days to see the wild life both above and beneath the sea which was both spectacular and memorable.

Our Cycling trip was booked through Exodus who organise bike and walking trips all over the world. We have found bikes to be a great way to experience the culture and geography of countries off the beaten tourist tracks. On this trip we travelled over 1,200 miles, a third of which was by bike.



MERSEY ROADS CLUB NATIONAL 24 HOUR CHAMPIONSHIPS 2017 (& 1957) by Jane Prowse

OK so let's start with facts and figures 85 riders started.

I finished in 46th position (only 50 finished due to foul weather). I rode a total of 311 miles, possibly due to taking the wrong exit on the very first roundabout (funny that, the only club 10 I have ridden, I took the wrong exit off the roundabout!) and trying to find somewhere to wee, its ok for you boys but I had to find a quiet side road to hide down!

My Dad, in 1957, the exact same weekend and same event raced his trike, finishing first in his category, completed a total of 392.57 miles also in foul conditions.

Why?

Well some time ago I said I fancied seeing if I could ride for 24 hours. After doing my first 300k Audax Rick reminded me of what I had said and then told me if I wanted to ride the 24hr time trial that I was probably fairly well trained up for it. Oh and I had to submit the entry in the next two days. So I thought no harm in signing up I could always chicken out!

After signing up for it I told my Dad. I knew he had come first in the trikes 24 hour but I didn't know it was actually the same event but exactly 60 years on! (OK, so no pressure to do it now then!)

So what does one need to compete in a National 24hr TT? Apparently a bike and a helmet, luckily Rick offered to support me.

So the day arrives and I'm feeling quite excited 2 bikes loaded, enough food and drinks to feed me for a month (no gels just real food). Pretty much all my cycling gear so I can decide when I get there.

Off we set in Rick's little yellow camper, as we get closer the nerves start to kick in and I tell myself

all I have to do is ride my bike.

We arrive at the start only to find, posh support vehicles laden with very fancy bikes, funny helmets and sticky out handlebars. Jerseys hanging up, energy bars, gels etc some in those little bags to be handed to the riders.

OK now I just wanted to go straight past and head home. But my dad is so proud, how can I let him down?



My dad on his trike.

Heading to register we bump into Johnny Pardoe, how lovely to see a familiar face and looking very dapper out of his cycling gear. Johnny knows my Dad and raced with him when they were youngsters!

Most Memorable bits?

Advice

Martin Wiggan's advice.

Break it into sections - race the first bit, ease off overnight and treat it as PJ time.

Then race the last bit.... mmmmm my Dad kept talking about racing?

As those of you who I have ridden with have heard me say, I'm not fast but I can go all day!!

(No sniggering at the back please! - Ed.)

Telling off

As we lined to start. I was told that I needed to move my number from the top of my back down to my pockets. As once I was in race (that word again) position it wouldn't be visible.

The start times

How chuffed to be 1 minute behind Steve Abraham, what a lovely guy he is. He rode 63 miles to get to the start. Oh and I did overtake him,,,,, he was on his drops eating at the time!



NATIONAL 24 HOUR cont

Insects

Yes within the first 10 minutes I had an insect inside my jersey and had been bitten twice, no time to try the vinegar.

Rain and lorries

The ride started and finished in the sun, but we had torrential rain on a number of occasions and drizzle for most of the night. Unlike Audaxes where the route is mainly nice, quiet roads. TTs are on A roads with great big lorries thundering past night and day.

The first section I was going well averaging 17 miles an hour. This started to drop off when it went dark and was raining, I had a problem with my lights, so it was all slowing me down.

Dig-in

People kept shouting 'dig-in'? And keep smiling. I did try to smile and thank all the marshalls and supporters.

Rick was amazing keeping me stocked up with food and sorting any problems I had. But unlike some supporters he wasn't driving up and down the route passing me stuff. I had to plan what I needed a whole loop before I needed it. Then ride to his van at Prees Heath.

I found it hard to eat as I felt sick for a lot of it. Rick made me carry 2 water bottles all the time, that was just extra weight, when others were drinking then tossing their bottles!



The day begins.

The finish

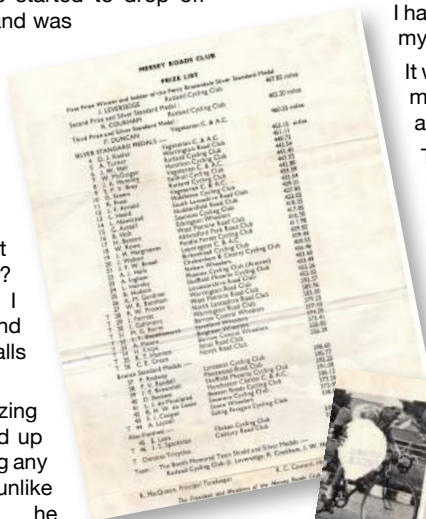
Although there is a finish line you actually finish at the marshalls after you have completed 24 hours. At that point I still had to ride to the end.

My dad was there along with others to see me finish, what a fab sight. I tried to get

off the bike but walking wasn't an option. We sat and watched some of the others finishing, I had to be lifted out of the chair and ride my bike to the van.

It was an amazing experience for which my poor muscles suffered for weeks after.

To my Dad and anyone who has competed a 24 hour and actually raced it, you are just amazing!



The start sheet from 1957. Regular time triallists will notice that start sheets looked very similar to this until about 15 years ago!



YORK RALLY

by John Carberry

The York Rally is like stepping into a time machine. Not because you are surrounded by vintage bikes, riders, and gear, but because it's an annual opportunity to be reminded about what it used to be like to ride a bike.

On these glorious, wistful weekends I am transported back to the time when I didn't know why I rode a bike but I knew that I enjoyed everything about it.

Was it the sounds, the smells, the wind on skin, the thrill of the downhill or the challenge of the climb? New places discovered, familiar haunts revisited? I had no idea, except that I loved all the freedom of thought, movement and place it gave me.

And when I'm at the York Rally, all that innocent enjoyment returns. Of course, now there is added beer. But we'll get to that.

The rally is three years older than the club and I don't doubt there will still be attendees who first made their pilgrimage in those formative days.

While the rally has changed in the 15-plus years I've been going, it still retains that essential folksy, all-a-b-o-u-t-t-h-e-b-i-k-e atmosphere. You can

also see it still has a touch of that immediate post-war austerity too – cold-water washing in the morning anyone? That's probably why cycling's latest generation, accustomed to handlebar shifters, technical clothing, wifi, central heating and comfy beds, aren't always so keen to give it a go.

To be fair, even the regular attendees from the club have got softer in our old age. We used to ride out and back. Now we drive. We used to make it a proper four-day epic, now it's back to something more manageable. I used to go in a tent (after initially staying in the Holiday Inn next door) but now have a camper.

Seamons jerseys are a regular feature at the rally

but in recent years the club's attendance could look like something of a die-hards' convention; long-in-the-tooth refuseniks who just don't want to move on and accept that racing around fields, looking at knackered bike parts – and bidding to buy them – or searching for ill-fitting 'bargains' is a bit, well, crap.

Except it isn't true.

The whole rally offer is very care-worn – even with the addition of heated showers, a beer tent, proper catering and decent coffee. But it's still an absolute charmer and totally worth the investment of a weekend.

If you fancy a sportive ride to test yourself, they've got one. Prefer a tough-nut audax? They've got one. Want a cheap, fantastic family weekend where the kids can let loose in grasstrack racing,

get their faces painted or experience their first camp? This is for you.

Ever been on a club run with about 50 people in it? Now's your chance. (Pro-tip: stay near the front A) to avoid a 25mph sprint to get back on whenever you cross a junction and B) so you don't have to queue behind everyone at the cafe.)

You can read all about these and other events

and activities on the rally's website – www.yorkrally.org – but that won't really convey the experience.

When was the last time you pootled out on a midsummer's evening in this country on a traffic-free ride in the company of about 30 others? York is surrounded by bike lanes and cycle tracks. It really is how the world could be with a bit of forethought, investment and commitment. Many of those from the rally field lead behind houses, across fields, past sculptures, marinas and solar system models to pubs. Indeed, the Seamons have been going to the rally that long now, we've even had to lead some of the evening pub rides. When did you last join about 200 others to sing





YORK RALLY cont

Country Roads at the top of your voice, accompanied by a live band who actually love the backing you're giving them?

Ever been on a mass bike ride that isn't a sportive? The rally still has its traditional Sunday morning ritual of a massed ride back from a church service – you don't have to be Christian, or to believe, you just need a bike! All those ringing, pinging bike bells and friendly waving from pedestrians and drivers (no, really) will warm you up right through to your cycling soul.

Ever wanted to ask someone whatever possessed them to buy a recumbent? Or a tandem recumbent? Or a tandem trike recumbent? York Rally's the place. Seen those super-sleek, record-breaking bikes – the ones with the fairings that tend to race round outdoor tracks? Well, there's often plenty at the rally. You can even have a go if you ask nicely. Want to buy an old Post Office bike and help charity? Need an upgrade on your shopping/pub bike? There's options galore at the Rally.



John Hammond, Peter Coles and Roger Haines.

Need someone with a portable angle-grinder to unlock your bikes in the morning because the lock's stop working. York Rally's got that covered.

Ever wanted to watch someone break into their own campervan at about 7.30am because they got up for a wee and locked themselves out? York

Rally will provide that memory if you're sited anywhere near Roger Haines.

Imagine going camping for a weekend and the weather is so bad, they're towing people ONTO the field. Start your rally tradition in 2018 and you're bound to see that

at some point.

Want to watch someone produce the ingredients for a beef stew – and the equipment to cook it – from a saddlebag? Talk to Ian from Coventry. He'll even share his dinner.

This year's rally is on the weekend of June 23 and 24. Don't forget to put 'Seamons CC' on your booking form – and that way we'll all be together (for beef stew, van-breaking and singalongs).

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CYCLING FACTS

by the Editor

In the early days of the Tour de France riders had the choice of two or maybe three gears but to change gear they had to undo the nuts on the rear wheel and move the chain onto a different sprocket and then tighten up the nuts again. In November 1927 Tullio Campagnolo was in a race in the Italian Alps in the snow when he punctured. His hands were so cold that he could not undo the wing nuts that held his wheel in place. Although in the lead he was forced to abandon

Up until the 1960's riders had a choice of only 6 sprockets and these were held together and



Early 5 speed freewheel

screwed onto the rear hub as one and it was referred to as a Block. Seven sprocket freewheels were introduced in the 1980's and the advent of the cassette hub, (where each sprocket is fitted on to a 'freehub' separately enabled the introduction of the 8, 9, 10 and then 11 and soon 12* sprocket hubs that we use today.



A 'SRAM' 12 speed cassette.



An early quick release rear hub.

the race and he vowed to find a better way to secure the wheel to the frame. Thus by 1930 Campagnolo had invented the quick release mechanism that we see on nearly all bikes today.

We all know that aerodynamics play a very important part in cycling but did you know that the fastest time set by a bicycle on the flat is 83.13 mph set by a Dutchman, Sebastian Bowier in 2013 riding a recumbent bike with a full fairing. He was lying so flat that he had to use a camera to see where he was going and it took him a full 5 miles to get up to top speed.



In the early Tours riders had to not only repair their bikes themselves but had to finish the race carrying every bit of equipment and clothing that they started with. In 1921 the rear wheel of a Belgian rider, Leon Scieur, broke so many spokes that it went out of shape and he could not fix it. He therefore had to use a spare wheel but in accordance with the rules he had to take his broken wheel with him. He fashioned a sling from some handlebar tape and carried the wheel on his back for the remaining 186 to the finish of the stage. He ended up with a star shaped scar on his back that remained until the end of his life.



To top that the fastest unpaced speed is 138 mph down the side of a mountain in the snow!

In the early days of racing on the roads of Britain complaints were made to the authorities that cycle races were becoming a danger to the public. The governing cycling body at that time, the National Cyclist Union (NCU) decided that races should only be held on enclosed roads or on cycle tracks. The other cycling body The Road Time-Trials Council (RTTC - now CTT) who organised time trials decided to do things

* Currently only developed for MTB use by SRAM, but Shimano and Campagnolo are rumoured to be looking into the feasibility of use for road bikes.



CYCLING FACTS cont

differently. They opted to hold events early in the morning (6am starts were normal), riders had to ride solo and be dressed in head to foot in black as to be not conspicuous. Courses were given code names (like the ones we use today i.e: J2/9) and start sheets were headed "Private and Confidential".



Ian Cammish and Mick Storey.

Another rule from the 1930s that continued until the late 1960s was that amateur and professional riders could not compete in the same events, and of course the Olympic Games was an amateur event (except we all know that competitors from the communist countries were often full time athletes often working in the army).

This also meant that riders were not allowed to carry any form of advertising. Some riders were even disqualified from events because the name of the manufacturer of their bicycle frame was visible on published photographs. Manufacturers got round this by making their frames differently. Some using odd angles, some using curly tubing or extra short or extra long fork rakes.

Aerodynamics play the biggest part in the effort required to ride a bicycle and the effort increases exponentially with the speed of the rider. Of course riders have known this for years but how to reduce the drag?



Australian Phil Anderson sporting the reverse cap style.

One of the early ways was to simply wear a cloth cycling cap (sometimes worn back to front). Another way

was to wear a silk jersey (popular with track cyclists). (In fact our Seamons vests were made out of a silky material in the 1960's with the club name embroidered on the back).

When Francesco Moser decided to go for the hour record in 1984 he knew he had a fight on his hands. The record had been held by the great Eddy Merckx since 1972 with a distance of 49.341 km (30.7 miles) and was thought to be unbeatable.

This was to be Moser's swansong. He chose to go for the record at the track in Mexico City and



Moser's bike.

the bike he used was unlike anything tried before. The frame used oval tubing to be more aerodynamic, the front wheel was smaller than the back wheel which in turn had been pushed forward.

The bike had disc wheels front and rear, he wore a full-length skin suit, a cover over his helmet and the track was even painted with a low-friction coating! The result? A massive beating of the old mark by 1.72km (0.95mile) with a distance of 51.151km (31.7miles). A new era of riders chasing aerodynamics had begun.



Moser.



HAVE FAITH IN THE CROSS

by Ed Baldwin

The start to the cyclocross season this year was to be a very different one compared to last year.

Gone now was the fresh and enthusiastic innocence of the unmuddied newbie rider who had been protected by the pardon given to all first season crossers. I knew excuses of any kind would no longer be lent any sympathetic ears and I wanted to race and perform at a higher level now to gain a personal satisfaction.

The grand Tudor setting of Hoghton Tower was chosen again to open the season but this time it had changed it's from its fun course and smiley, happy setting of last year to now, one of treachery and gloom. Weeks of constant rain had saturated the ground and had made any dips in the terrain turn into a pond of mud like quicksand. Looking out for that beautiful view over the horizon, well, there wasn't one today, just threatening nefarious looking clouds and yes... I did have my excuses.

The week before the event a bizarre accident had happened. One morning whilst out testing my cyclocross bike the frame snapped completely after hitting a rut in a field, meaning... I had no bike.

With a stressful week of inflexible commitments I also had no time, not for bike building and not for training either. Sleep was lost, a bike did get built and I learnt an awful lot about hydraulic brakes. Staying up until 3 am most nights, I eventually got the job done but used up my stamina and also my resolve had almost gone. I was in no fit state to race. The bike hadn't had one single test but I had confidence in my own mechanical skills...I had no choice.

I got to the venue with time to warm up and try the bike, not that I could do anything about it anyway but thankfully all was ok.

The race started in it's usual fast paced way and I knew straight away that I was struggling. My

daughter Valentina and her boyfriend Chris had driven over to support me, it was great to see them but this wasn't a day where I wanted witnesses, it was already hell.

A cyclocross race always sets off with a sprint as there is usually a bottle neck to get through and you must get through this before everyone else so you don't lose any time just standing there. Unfortunately, today, I wasn't going to get to the bottleneck before the crowd. The queue to get through the bottleneck was reminiscent of a night club loo queue, blokes in a certain scenario that bonded them slightly politely making jokes (that even I groaned at) as we all waited to get over a narrow fence style. I got through, with no style, and happily pushed on leaving the gags



Chipping CX. Ed's idea of a dirty weekend!

behind.

Holding my own now for a while I was beginning to really feel it, it was hard, too hard. Why was it so hard? Last year I had come into it from nothing. This year I had a full season of road racing, training and some time trials in my legs, I had beat a few people in races, I was half a stone lighter, I had carbon wheels with tubs on like the winners. It wasn't just hard now, mentally I was beginning to blow and yet again I was being passed by the "Bash Street Kids" at the back. "I hate this... I don't, yes I do, sorry, I love it but just not right now, this will end soon, but when? Why do I like doing this? Who said I like it?" I was racing whilst my brain had a fight with itself.

I also felt like a bit of an idiot. Being involved in a sales environment of one sort or another most of my life, you would think that I know quite a lot about being sold to. My super "mud shedding" "super grippy" tyres that internet research made me think I needed and had then dreamed about all last year were now mine. They weighed about 30kg each, looking like massive tractor innertubes



HAVE FAITH IN THE CROSS cont

made of clay and had the sure footedness of ice skates. There is actually no miracle answer to this problem, you need two bikes, a portable power washer and a good (gullible) mate to stand there in the pits like a drowned rat whilst holding your spare bike...another purchase I can and will do without.

That romance of racing through the Hoghton Tower building last year whilst people looked on and drank their tea had for me this year turned into a tunnel of shame. Each lap I looked down and away, I didn't want to be seen as one of the stragglers.

I had a word with myself and then some people recognised me from another club and cheered me on big style, I started to feel much better. I heard the bell in the distance and felt lifted. "Here's the tunnel" I thought to myself knowing the start of the last lap is just round the corner - one more lap of this [rubbish] and I'll be done.

But then disaster... "[For crying out loud!]"... I shouted internally for fear of being disqualified.

My rear wheel had come off in the bloody tunnel. I hadn't tightened my rear skewer enough and not checked them either, schoolboy error. Through huge embarrassment, rather than adrenaline from the race I fixed the wheel problem in record time only losing one place. I did my lap and finished 83rd out of 86 finishers. Worse than last year. I was destroyed and close to tears.

After a bit of chit chat with a few people I started to feel a tiny bit better, I got in the car, poured a large coffee for the journey home and started on my cold toast with ginger marmalade and "recovery cakes". It tasted good, real good. Smiling to myself I felt better immediately and happy that I had achieved something... I had not given up, this

is what makes me happy. I was satisfied with the day. I'm lucky, I'm in good health and can do something about it I thought to myself.

There isn't room in The Squirrel to tell the story of every race but trust me, every cyclocross race brings a great and different story along with it to all of those who take part.

The next race on the calendar- Northwich was another rainy muddy affair. The difference here was that the year before it had been the only wet and muddy course of the whole season, I

expected it there and I embraced it. 70th out of 102 much better. "Come on Eddy!"

What's next? Chipping, a new course promoted by the Chipping Rotary Club. An absolute mud bath, even hippos would have found it too muddy but not me, I felt like Rambo (middle aged of course). I loved it, 49th from only 75 sodden survivors, my best result ever, and I had raced it. Not only that my car was the only one that didn't need to be towed out of the car park by the tractor. Coffee and toast in hand cloud nine was my chariot home.

The rest of the season has been like this. Bebbington Oval, my rear tyre rolled off at the far end of the course and

I was unable to finish, it had been taped on and not glued (as I was told) - no problem, it was still a day out. On to the next race.

H o r w i c h
Humdinger -
59th of 96
survivors. A
good race and
percentage wise
probably my



Bebbington Oval. Tubular tyres have their benefits but they must be stuck on properly to benefit properly.





HAVE FAITH IN THE CROSS cont

best. A great race with everything in it and some great supporters who know how to give the riders a real lift. I crashed on a descent sliding down on my shoulders with my legs in the air like I was doing yoga - for what seemed like an age - and all in front of a group of disaster seekers "Oooh! Look at that one, ya all right?" They gasped. But on days like this that sort of thing only seems to enhance the cross experience. Jason Kenny rode the senior event that day on a new bike made for him by Brian Rourke, Jason made me feel great as he placed 50th from 54 finishers looking very rosy cheeked and well puffed out. I'm doing ok, and I've never been in the Olympics.

Ulverston, again loved it, a beautiful place with the course on the Leven Estuary. I placed 52nd from 72. This is likely to have been my best personal performance of the season for other reasons. Early on in the race I tangled with the course layout tape and had a severe mechanical, putting me more than thirty seconds behind the last man. I chased hard and felt the warmth inside from catching and slaying the weaker riders. The course really suited me and I felt like I was now a real cyclocross rider.

Next up, Haigh Hall Mega Cross, Wigan. This was some course. The setting was ideal with Christmas markets on the grounds of a beautiful country manor and plenty of outdoor activities for the children and the young at heart. The course organisation was by Roy Hunt who is a multi time cyclocross and mountain bike national champion.

Roy has a cycle business and has played a large part in introducing disc brakes to cycling now on the bikes of today. Since then there has been no stopping him.

Roy laid the course out with his son Lewis, they must have been sniggering like Dastardly and Muttley setting that one up, it was ruthless. I managed to stay upright and ran at least half of it. I finished placing 66th from 93 finishers which wasn't bad considering that it probably wasn't my ideal kind of course, but great fun nonetheless and

I was happy.

We raced again the next day on the same course with a few tweaks. It was "non league" and had a few star riders taking part, it was going to be fast.

I got there in plenty of time but I missed the start due to an uncertainty of the start line position and an interesting conversation round the corner from it whilst warming up. I went back to where the start line was and asked some spectators if they had seen anyone yet. I was told that everyone had already gone as it had been a quick start, then an official shouted to me "just Go, Go, Go!". I went. Someone then shouted over the tannoy "aren't you Mike Baldwin's son?" I then got that heckle every lap.

This was a slightly embarrassing start, not just because I had totally missed it but because now it looked like I was in the lead. Oh gawd, people were cheering, I felt such a fraud. Thankfully before long the real race leader Nick Craig, a British cyclocross legend caught me up and then so did a few more

to ease my pains of embarrassment. Still, I wasn't last, I bagged a few stragglers, had a routine crash into a tree and placed 22nd from only 27 survivors.

Unfortunately, the next few races got cancelled leaving a big break until the next race on the 17th of December weakening my focus. As as I'm writing this for The Squirrel things have changed slightly and the

diagnosis isn't looking good. I am suffering from the very early onset of "Pyusminus Exessus" and showing visible symptoms of "Krimasskacus Toomuchas" meaning that I am not moving as fast and showing visible signs of the bloated cheeks and a swollen tummy that is common with this.

The next race within reach of our beloved Seamons CC is the Macclesfield Supercross on Saturday 30th December at South Park. I'll be there, I suspect not quite the diet version but I'll be smiling.



Chipping CX was a very muddy affair indeed.



TOUR DE MONT BLANC 2017

by John Whitelegge

The 4th edition of the TDMB began in earnest and with some trepidation on the 17th September '17

The tour was scheduled to take 4 days, riding 343 miles and ascending 47,500 feet.

We were set to ride some iconic alpine cols seen regularly in the TDF.

The tour is organised By Steve and Amanda Coomber. Steve plans all aspects of the route and Amanda is our DS and boss on the road.



Amanda drives the van, transports our gear and distributes all of our dietary needs during the day. Amanda supports us superbly and ensures the equal distribution of mars bars. There were twelve riders this year Tom Towers, Kevin Mills, John Whitelegge, Nigel Kelly, Richard Harris, David Hoyle, Paul Barber, Mike Kilburn, Robert Taylor, James Sayer, Mark Ellis and Steve Coomber.

Day one was a cold and drizzly start and the



weather was predicted to worsen as the day progressed. We were to ride 91 miles and climb 11,738 feet. The first climb the col de Joux Plaine was ridden in fairly decent weather with Mark, Paul and Richard on the front and Dave Hoyle and myself doing the difficult job of setting the pace

from the back. I hadn't appreciated what a class act Dave is. The second climb the Col de la Colombiere became darker, colder and wetter the higher we rose. At the top, hail, sleet and driving rain was there to greet us all. What followed was one of the worst descents of my life, even with five layers protecting me. We rode into Thones like the proverbial drowned rats and we were all glad to hit the shower and have some dinner.

We had a late start to day 2 as we waited for the driving rain to stop. As a consequence we

approached the first climb of the col de Trene much later than expected. We were hoping to stop in Annecy for coffee and a quick tour but time was against us. The main climb of the day Semnoz begins at lake Annecy and goes straight up. Fortunately, Dave and I were setting the pace again and we made up time. The weather although drizzly was much kinder than Sunday. We cycled through some fantastic countryside on the road to Albertville and arrived at the lovely town of Beaufort for our overnight stay after 80 miles and 9,000 feet of climbing. Our only mishap today was a mechanical for Nigel Kelly's Cannondale crank.

Day three was the tours Queen stage. We were due to climb three major cols totalling 16,000 feet and over 100 miles. From Beaufort we immediately ascended one of my favourite cols, the Cornet de Roseland. There is a beautiful lake close to the top and the vista takes your breath away, although the 34/29 I was in came a close second. There was snow on top of the Roseland so the decent was again spoiled as we had to take extreme care due to snow and ice.



The second ascent, the Petit St. Bernard was more



TOUR DE MONT BLANC 2017 cont

forgiving as it only varies between 5 and 6 percent.

We were travelling through France and crossing into Italy and Switzerland. We rode to Aosta for the start of the climb of the Grand St Bernard. There was concern that all of the group would not get to the summit of the GSB prior to darkness. We also knew that the weather was closing in and the summit could be closed to traffic. There was a gallant and successful ride by Mark, Paul, Tom, Rob and Mike who all got to the top in freezing conditions, fog and snow. The rest of us arrived in the broom waggon.



to ourselves.

The last day was 82 miles and 10,000 feet of climbing and as we approached the last col I'm sure we all had the same feeling of achievement but some sadness that the tour was nearly finished.

The company, scenery, food and superb organisation had once again surpassed anything the weather or bad luck presented us with.

Everyone who took part this year exceeded the tour mileage of 343 miles and the ascent of 47,458 feet.



We stayed the evening in a monastery that was more akin to a four star hotel. Our only mechanical was to change a sprocket to Richard's wheel. Steve's Campagnolo wheel saved the day.

Day four was the ride back to Servoz and would take in the Col les Rouses, Col de Forclaz and Montent. The snow and ice at the top of the GSB made it far too dangerous to descend from the monastery and we were all ferried 5 miles down the mountain prior to mounting up. We then had a superb descent on a great road with very little traffic.

The weather for the last day was superb with sun and very little wind, at last we were cycling in summer gear. The Col de Forclaz is a steep climb ruined by HGV's lowers down. However after several miles we had the road and the baking sun



All that is apart from Nigel, who had to have a Cannondale crank repair and had to sit out several days.

He was justifiably awarded the Lantern Rouge! And advised to buy Campagnolo in future.

Thanks again to Steve and Amanda

Bring on 2018

Chapeau everyone.



CAFE CORNER

by Carol Pardoe

We would like to award top marks to Malkins Bank for being open on Boxing Day, and for their excellent half price Senior Special. I was a bit disappointed he didn't ask to see proof of my age, especially as I've just got another bus pass with my photo on it. The veg lasagne with salad was very filling - £2.50. If you are really tired they do a great B&B in those glamping pods out the back, with heating and bathroom, £49 for two.

Fancy a bit of smooth rough stuff? Try the Pickle Jar on the Weaver tow-path (good surface), heading towards Northwich from the blue bridge, which you go under off the A556. Great welcome from the Senior citizens who live there – a big sort of community home with massage and beauty parlour. We're thinking of booking a place!

Further afield the Garden Centre at Holt, border of Wales, has plenty of room and big choice of food, plus loads of browsing if you're not in a hurry.

The Cranford café in Knutsford (01565 633203) may be a bit near, but handy on a miserable day, plenty of room and very accommodating to groups – we took a group of 20 there, and phoned up on the morning. It's right on the roundabout, next to the big pub, opposite the posh car showroom – now no cars...

Grasslands is everyone's favourite, but while they are closed till February you can go to Tree Tops just round the corner on the A50 – another garden centre. Plenty of room, ring up beforehand (01565 722450) if you are a big group (more than 10).

One I passed the other day on the tow-path from Middlewich, looked nice, heading towards Byley, Maggie Finn's tea-room. They cater for the boats but welcome walkers and cyclists, everything home-made and locally sourced. Very friendly, he insisted on taking me round the garden to show me his vine. He gave me his number: 07802 722070.

In warmer climes, if you are in Bourg d'Oisans and heading out to do the Croix de Fer, don't miss the cyclists' hotel: "Douce Montagne". Run by a Dutch family who all speak perfect English. They had a massive pot of pasta permanently on the go for cyclists calling/falling in after the Marmotte etc. We rode straight past thinking it looked too posh for us, but hunger conquers all, so we went back and entered through the garden – full of bike racks, good sign! Then she asked how I liked my coffee, another good sign!

In even warmer climes – Provence, 35 degrees – our rides always seemed to end up in the tiny village of Aurel, (not far from our campsite) where the bar is on the opposite side of the road from the hotel. It was the chips that did it. We obviously needed the salt. And the cold water from the fountain opposite with a stone trough, just right for me to dip my hot feet in.

By contrast you may prefer the frozen north, the west coast of Scotland. This year we explored a few more islands, one of which near Oban – Lismore. We took the tiny ferry from Port Appin, but we had to wait a while, and the North wind was bitter across the sea. We sheltered by the hotel near the slipway, then a lady inside beckoned us in, "Och, come on in out of the wind and warm yersel by the fire". Tea and several home-made scones later the ferry arrived and off we bounced across the rough sea. We went back a few times, just to sit by the fire.

Nearly forgot, the new improved Walk Mill, now with a big conservatory with a nice view of the fields, and with comfy sofas – you could be there for some time!

I think there's something for all tastes here...



Malkins Bank





FRENCH MILLENNIUM 4 - 2017

by Dave Matthews

Rather than being yet another travelogue, this article relates a few anecdotes from my recent 4th unsupported, 1000+km solo ride through France.

I am fortunate to have friends who live in Montmaurin south of Toulouse and close to the Pyrenees, which gives me a welcoming destination for these rides prior to flying back to the UK. My previous long rides through France have been firstly Manche-Med (extended audax) from Caen to Gruissson followed by a return through the Pyrenees to Montmaurin in 2014. This was followed by Roscoff-Montmaurin via Nantes and the Charente in 2015. Last year I completed the Great French diagonal riding St Malo-Nantes-Nice in 2 stages (split due to terrible weather in June) at Audax tourist standard... a demanding course which marked my retirement from difficult Audax events after 28 years participation.

In March this year I was fitted with a pacemaker to correct secondary heart block (pulse rate dropping to 29bpm.) So this ride, 11 weeks after the operation, was as much a test of my new electric heart as a cycling holiday.

A route was mapped out using an iterative combination of google maps and booking.com that gave a schedule of 11.5 days to cover the 1100+ km to Montmaurin. Daily distances varied between 80k and 130k with some tough climbing days in prospect in the Massif Central. Provided I felt strong enough after this ride, there was a follow up plan to attempt to ride the 13km;1000m ascent to the famous Tour de France summit finish at Luz Ardiden.

My outward route from Chester was via British Rail to Portsmouth and then ferry to Caen/ Ouistreham. First dodgy moment of the trip was when the train got halted some 10 miles from Portsmouth as some idiot had thrown a brick at it. It was an unnerving time whilst other trains swept past our stationary one as I had only allowed a short time to connect from train to ship at the port. Fortunately, the train started up again after a 15 minute delay. Once in Portsmouth there was a huge rainstorm soaking me during the 4km ride to the ferry. The guy at Security was not too pleased at having to frisk a soaking wet cyclist... my first experience of getting through security with a pacemaker.

Next morning I was late getting down to my bike---just as the upper car deck was lowered down on huge hydraulic rams. Readers of horror stories can understand my feelings as I rushed to the safety of the lifts to avoid being crushed alive.

The date was now June 6 2017... 73 years exactly after D day. Unlike my last visit to the nearby Pegasus Bridge in 2014 when David Cameron was there with a huge crowd of be-medalled old soldiers, there was no sign at all of any celebrations. It will be interesting to see what happens at the 75th anniversary in 2019 with the few remaining Vets.

Beyond the Pegasus bridge my route headed out SE through commuter country, in indifferent weather, to eventually cross the Loire 3.5 days later at

Montrichard, some 30k east of Tours.

There is a long, steep climb onto a large plateau south of the Loire. Shortly after arrival on the plateau, a black animal about 3ft long sauntered confidently across the road just in front of me. I now believe this was my first ever sighting of a pine martin.

A couple of days later, now in continual hot sunshine, I reached the hamlet of Sarzay near La Chatre, gateway to the Massif Central. Having spent a fruitless, frustrating hour looking for my accommodation, well assisted by misdirecting locals, I eventually found the Chambre d'hote tucked away down a minor road. Hostess Fabienne had good English as she had once worked in Chester for a couple of months prior to spending 7 years in London.

My little house in the grounds of Fabienne's cottage was rural to say the least with its medieval furniture, micro shower and earth toilet. Evening meal was served at the local inn some 2km distant and it was no real surprise when Fabienne, prior to giving me a lift. asked me to move a bird's nest from the passenger seat of her rather cluttered old car.

Two nights later I was staying in a beautiful chateau near Neuvic where one could enjoy gourmet dining... these contrasts and surprises are very much part of the trip experience.

The next few days were very hot and hard work as I rode through the hilly Massif Central, partly on the official Manche-Med route through the Dordogne Gorge.





FRENCH MILLENNIUM 4 - 2017 cont

Five days later I reached Rabastens on the Tarn river. My accommodation in a Chambre d'hote was easy to find down a side street, but surrounded by very noisy road works. 10 minutes after arrival I still couldn't gain entry and was getting rather irritated due to my tiredness, the heat and the noise. Just as I was trying to arrange an alternative place to stay on the smartphone, the door opened and the situation was rescued.

Next day was another boiling hot one, riding to Noe south of Toulouse. My accommodation here was in a Logis hotel, always excellent, which gave me encouragement as I sweated up the last steep hills to the village. Imagine my annoyance when I found the rather decrepit hotel was locked up with a notice behind the glass entrance door giving a phone number to ring to gain entry. Locked out again! So it was another annoying delay as I waited 10 minutes in the burning sun for the hotel to be opened up.

Next day was the final half day ride to Montmaurin through gorgeous, totally remote countryside in beautiful hot weather. My only concern was lack of any possibility to get more water through 60k of travel. In late morning I caught my first glimpse of the snow capped Pyrenees in the distance and

knew I had almost made it. Beyond this welcome sighting of the Pyrenees, I chanced upon a restaurant at a remote road junction to replenish my water supplies. Well refreshed, but struggling for 4km along newly gravelled and tarred roads (life is never simple), I eventually reached the final hill climb to Montmaurin and my friends' welcome--after 1,128km and approximately 8,000m of climbing.

Next evening there was a 60th birthday party for Andre, one of the ex-pats living in the village. This gathering enabled me to renew acquaintances with the local Dutch and English people that I had met on previous visits, whilst also celebrating my safe arrival.

The weather in Montmaurin was getting hotter and hotter... as high as 35 degrees. Too hot for hill climbing during the day so I drove 60k to Luz one evening in order to get a really early start up Luz Aridden the next morning. Following breakfast at 06:30 in the semi-dark hotel entrance hall, I started up the climb at 07:15. Riding steadily and pausing only for photographs, I arrived at the ski station summit 2h 28m later... proof to me that my new heart pacemaker had passed all necessary tests... oh and I unretired from Audax rides in August this year thanks to a brainstorm, the Pacemaker and low gears.



This week I have been mostly on the turbo.

by Lomas





CHESTER AND N. WALES CTC/ AUDAX RIDES INTO THE BERWYNS - SATURDAY MAY 19 2017

by Dave Matthews



These well regarded, classic rides are based on Willington Hall Country House hotel near Kelsall, Chester and visit the beautiful Berwyn hills above Llangollen. Note that routes revised in 2017 are retained for 2018 following positive feedback from riders.

Tour of the Berwyns

200k

The West Cheshire/ N. Wales classic audax ride which has been followed for at least 30 years with just a few variations. Once out of Cheshire, the route visits Prospect Tea Rooms above the Llangollen Panorama. After descending the Panorama, the River Dee is then followed to Corwen. From here the central, key section climbs the Milltir Gerrig Pass, descends to Llangynog and then follows the hill road from Llanrheadr-Y-M back over the hills to Chirk. Finally there is a flat run back through Cheshire lanes to the hotel. An exhilarating ride in outstanding scenery.

Panorama Prospect

130k

A shorter version of the above, which misses the key, mountain section of the 200k route by descending early from the Panorama to the Aqueduct and hence Chirk. A new ride which now avoids the killer hill through Vivod (used previously by the now defunct Llangollen Panorama) to give a more even standard throughout.

Full details of these good value rides, low cost entry, entry forms, route sheets etc are available at www.ukweb.net. Plenty of free car parking at the start/finish.

Entries online using paypal or through the mail now available until closing date 15/05/18.

CLUB RECORDS BROKEN DURING 2017

ARRIL: Alan Chorley starts this record breaking year with an All Age Veterans record of 51:34 in the BDCA event on course A2.5/11 breaking his own previous record of 51:40.

MAY: Ade Hughes, Alan Chorley and Chris Siepen set a new club 25 mile team record of 2:36:25 in the Stone Wheelers event on J5/8.

JULY: Ade Hughes takes the club vets record on standard for 100 miles with a plus of 58:36 in the M&DTTA 100 on J4/8 beating Dan Mathers plus of 57:42 set in 2014.

JULY: Club records in abundance in the BDCA 50 on the A 50/6 course.

Alan Chorley sets a new club and all-age vets record of 1:44:02 and sets a new vets standard record with a plus of 34:16. (the previous 50 record was 1:47:32 by Alan Hegg's way back in 1978).

Combining forces Ade Hughes, Alan Chorley and Chris Siepen set a new 50 team record of 5:18:46 massively beating the 2014 record of 5:40:01 set by Chris Siepen Dan Mathers and Andy Whitehead.

JULY: Jane Prowse is the First Lady member to complete a 24 hour time trial and in so doing sets a record of 306.25 miles in The Mersey Roads Club event on D24HR. This distance also becomes the club ladies all age veterans record.

AUGUST: Ade Hughes continues his record breaking ways and sets a new vets standard record for 12 hours of plus 67.98 miles beating Robin Haigh's record set in 2011 of plus 65.17.

In the same 12 hour event, Ade, Martin Wigan and Dan Mathers set a new club team record of 771.46 miles beating the record set in 1966 of 758.5 miles by Keith Stacey, Jim Boydell and Dave Smith.

AUGUST: Alan Chorley travels to South Wales to race and becomes the first Seamons ride to cover 25 miles at over 30mph setting a new club record of 49:46. The previous record of 51:25 was set in 2012 by Charles Carraz. Alan also beat his own vets all age record and set a new vets standard record for the distance with a plus of 17.29 beating the previous record of plus 16.32 set by the late Bev Chapman in 1995.

SEPTEMBER: Ade Hughes gets the triple in the BDCA 100 on the A100/4 course. His time of 3:38:52 is a new club record beating Steve Davis's record of 3:47:26 set in 2003.

In doing so he sets a club all age vets record and a vets standard record with a plus of 1:17:44 beating the previous record of plus 58.36.

Alan Chorley also broke the club all age vets record with a time of 3:46:13 and also beat the previous record on standard with a plus of 1:6:19.

