

# THE SQUIRREL

Spring 2017

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Ed gets 'cross'

Tour de Mont Blanc

Meet your President

Cycling in Indochina

Nice to (be) home

Memories of 'H'

World Masters

Three Way Split





## FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to another occasional edition of The Squirrel.

This is the first edition I have edited for many years and I am most grateful to Steve for doing the hard work of actually putting the pages into some sort of order and for organising the printing. Thanks also to the many people who have contributed articles and/or snippets that make the magazine what it is.

There has been discussion in the Club Committee about whether we should continue with a magazine given the use that is now made of social media but sometimes it is interesting to read in more detail about what other members have been up to, so for the foreseeable future we will keep the mag going but it does rely on your input.

What does stand out is the breadth of cycling that our members enjoy, as you will read; nowhere is now too far away or remote for a cycling holiday even though Majorca and The Alps still top the list.

You will hopefully be reading this at about the same time as the Club celebrates yet another Annual Dinner. This time organised by Maria



Keith in 'freewheel mode'

Rothwell who I am sure will put her own slant on proceedings! For those of you that have never attended The Dinner I can only say that you don't know what you are missing. It's quite a shock seeing your club mates dressed up for a change and I don't think Rapha yet make dinner jackets or ball gowns. It's a time to celebrate the achievements of your fellow riders and to look forward to the season ahead.

Keith Stacey

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Front cover: Andrew Smith winning the 2016 Hill Climb with a Club record time of 2 minutes 25 seconds; this image and others in this issue courtesy of John Pardoe.



## MEET YOUR CLUBMATES... John Spearman

### When and where were you born?

Gateshead, 1972.

### What kind of work do you do?

I've worked in Telecoms for around 20 years working mostly on datacentre and network design for large corporates.

### When did you start cycling and which was your first club?

Not that long ago, maybe 7 or 8 or years, Seamons CC is my first club.

### What is your favourite training/touring ride?

I'm not fussy, anywhere in the Pyrenees will do! I usually keep 'proper' training rides short and fairly intense, usually Artists Lane, Pexhill, Gawsworth, Siddington sort of way, out and back in 2 hours. If I've got more time, it would be The Peaks with a few mates, out via the Brickworks, Windgather, Goyt with a stop at Peak View is always a favourite.

### What was your first race? win?

Road racing mainly TLIs, much prefer proper road courses than crits or circuits. Really like the Audlem series and done alright in terms of results but it's a struggle to make it to the start line midweek given the distance.

### Which performance do you rate as your best?

My best race is not one where I got a result, but I got in a few breaks, kept getting brought back and eventually got away on my own - I got caught a mile or two before the finish so ended up nowhere on results but felt I'd really attacked and raced well. I managed a 1.57 for my first 50m TT last year and that felt like a good ride.

### What is your favourite meal?

Filet steak, which my wife cooks better than any restaurant.

### What were you like at school?

Never in the house, always out on my bike and well into my music - it feels like a different world the way kids are so diligent these days

### What kind of books do you read?

Crime thrillers or autobiographies.

### Which Newspaper do you read?

Never have read a newspaper regularly - I find social media far more up-to-the-minute with more debate and trying to unearth the real facts than mainstream media these days.



### What kind of music do you enjoy?

Depends on my mood, I'll usually go for dance/electronic but still dig out the old school rock and punk, I'll even listen to a bit of rap if I'm on the turbo.

### What are your favourite TV programmes?

There's too much drudgery on these days, so it's usually a case of trying to find something lighthearted or a comedy if we can find one. Some of the period dramas are watchable on a Sunday night, Bake Off was okay, Sherlock, that sort of thing.

### What is your ideal holiday destination?

France or Italy.

### Do you have any other hobbies?

Not really much time for anything else.

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

Head Office (AKA the wife) says I'm a drama queen, so anyone at the Garrick could play me in a film!

### How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts Column?

Married with bike.

### What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

I'm selfish but not deliberately so, I just don't notice what's going on around me.

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

Negativity.



## CAFÉ CORNER

### A few ideas for your 2017 rides:

Stonyford Nurseries will give you a good welcome, and there is a lovely garden to sit in on a nice day. You will find it off the main Chester road, A556, after the lights at Blakemere, go straight over for about half a mile and the road is to the right. Or you can make a nice run of it along the Whitegate Way or via Cuddington, and approach it from the opposite direction

Hopley House is open again! It is a handy refuelling spot on the way back from Cheshire, or a short winter ride.

Stapeley House on the A51 out of Nantwich, going towards Dagfields is a great mid-week run with good food and a good welcome, but it is not open weekends.

The Moorings, Anderton, next to the boat lift café, is worth a visit if Anderton is closed or full. It's a bit twee but good welcome, only small group. There is also a pub nearby.

The Weaver Vale Garden Centre, Northwich, is a handy one for a short winter run, bottom of the hill past the Anderton Boat Lift, left at the lights over the canal, right at the next lights, Winnington.

Market Drayton has two or three cafes, Morrisons with lots of room and good prices, the Theatre café also has lots of room and is very cheap, but closed Sundays. Secure bike parking round the back. Run by volunteers with everything homemade. Nice welcome. Also Wetherspoons can be recommended. I believe there is a good Wetherspoons in Sandbach as well.



The Overwater Marina, between Nantwich and Audlem, on the canal near Coole Pilate, serves good food, if a bit slow.

### Scotland:

For those of you contemplating the North-West 500 – 500 miles round the North West coast of Scotland, we can recommend a few cafes – stop at them all, there ARE only a few!

Lochcarron is a good place to refuel before the climb of the famous Bealach-na-Ba. The views are stunning and the climb is very testing, especially in wind and rain, ie normal conditions! Swoop down to Applecross to an excellent and very friendly pub for a good hot meal. That will set you up for the undulating coast road to Shieldaig. The views across the sea to Skye are unforgettable.

It is worth deviating for a mile to Torriddon, and a cosy, welcoming café/post office, next to the Hostel. Then gradually up a pleasant single track road – passing places only – to Kinlochewe. You will find a great café on the left as you approach the village.

You are now on the only road North, with Loch Maree on your right. After Gairloch it is worth carrying on to Poolewe. Turn left as you enter Poolewe to the café and hotel – good food in both. Poolewe has a lot of history going back to the war and the Russian convoys in the Arctic Sea. Just out of the village going North you will pass the famous Inverewe Gardens.

Cafes now become scarce, but the scenery is continues on p12



## CLUB AGM NOVEMBER 2016

by the Editor

The Club Annual general Meeting was handled superbly by our Chairman Nigel, who gave an excellent report on the Club's activities and achievements during the year.

John Hammond produced a first class report on the state of the Club's finances and seemed quite upset that the surplus this year was only £690 against last years surplus of £1,045! Remarkably nobody raised any queries of the accounts. That must be a first. The Chairman invited Members to put forward ideas for spending some of our reserves so please form an orderly queue.

Most office holders are remaining in their posts but John Spearman stepped down as Road Race Secretary and Karen Poplewell stepped down after several years doing an excellent job as Social Secretary, for which she was warmly thanked.

Maria Rothwell has taken over Karen's roll but at the time of writing this we still need a Road Race Secretary (any volunteers?). Also we need another co-ordinator for the Club 10s again does anyone want to step in?

The most interesting feature of the night was the election of President. This election takes place every two years and in this club it is purely an honorary roll and is usually filled by someone who has given service to the Club over a number of years. For the first time in many years this year we had three nominations, John Pardoe, Keith Bailey and John Coles. All fulfilling the criteria and then

some. The voting was very close with John Coles being declared President for the next two years. Congratulations John.

There were only two items that needed debate and these were, firstly to clarify the definition of a junior for the purpose of our Racing Rules and it was agreed that from now on a Junior shall be defined as a rider aged from 16 to 17 starting from 1st January in the year they turn 16 and ending on 31st December in the year they turn 18.

The other Item was to allow Members to add TLI Cycling to their choice of insurers (along with Cycling England {formerly CTC}, BC and LVRC). Members will know that to be a Member of the Club they have to have membership of one of these organisations who provide the Member with third Party Liability Insurance. However they all offer different levels of cover so it is important to check what each organisation offers before making a decision and paying your subscription. For example some of these organisations do not offer Third Party cover for commuting. (It is also worth remembering that it's much cheaper to join Cycling England through the Club but you won't get a magazine). Members were also reminded that as soon as their membership of one of these organisations expires they are no longer a Member of this club.

Thanks to Reg as usual for brewing the tea and Jane McDowell for providing the delicious coffee cake.

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# SO MUCH MORE THAN JUST CLUB RUNS

The main reason most of us join the Seamons is to take part in Sunday clubruns but the club offers so much more.

Every Thursday throughout the year there is a club ride which leaves at 9.30am from the Ashley Road/ Arthog Road crossroads in Hale (commonly known as OBW which stands for The Old Bleeding Wolf, a pub that once stood at the crossroads and which has now been converted to flats). One ride is at Tempo 2 pace so any rider comfortable with the 50 mile group, Tempo or Half day should find it OK. The ride is usually about 50 miles with a café stop (of course!) getting back for lunch.

The other ride is at Touring section pace with a lunch stop, getting back mid afternoon.

From January until the end of the racing season there is a Saturday morning training ride which also leaves from the OBW at 9.30am. The pace is steady up to the south side of Knutsford when the pace changes to race speed with riders going "through and off". This is excellent training for racing as it helps riders to learn to ride "in line" and is effective interval training. Any rider who gets dropped can turn around and start riding back along the A50 until the chaingang catches up again as they will turn around at Arclid and head back.

Fancy trying your hand (or legs) at racing? The Club Wednesday evening 10 mile time trial is the place to

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Club members (sometimes referred to as 'shirkers'!) enjoyed the Tour of Britain in Tatton Park and afterwards at the Greyhound in Ashley for a quiet drink, well it would be rude not to!

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start. No need for fancy equipment, it's just you against the elements. If you get hooked you may wish to splash out on some specialist time trialing equipment later. The events start in April and continue until August. Early events start at 7pm moving to 7.30pm as the days get longer. The start is on the A50 in the big lay-by opposite the Bears Paw pub between Mere and the M6 roundabout.

If you want to ride more time trials events are held every Saturday and Sunday from March to October and sometimes mid-week as well. Contact any committee member for more information.

Fancy yourself as a Tour de France Rider? Well maybe not just yet but if you would like to try your hand at bunched racing (often called 'massed start racing' or 'road racing') again there are events throughout the year for men, women, juniors and juveniles.

Two or three times a year the club hires the Manchester Velodrome with a coach so you can try emulating Wiggins or Trott. Look out for the notices on our Facebook page.

Want to try a different kind of ride or some new roads? Then why not join one of the 50 mile group car-assisted rides or head out with the group to Llangollen to see the finish of the half day group annual thrash. Then there is the York Rally 18/19th June when a posse of Seamons riders make the pilgrimage into Yorkshire.

Any good at table tennis, darts, table football or if you just want a chat, maybe followed by a pint? Why not pop along to the clubroom on a Friday night from 8pm.

As I said, so much more than just club runs!

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Sunday December 18th 2016: Fancy Dress run to Plumley Village Hall - the theme was 'Icons of the 20th century'.





## I DON'T GET ANGRY, I JUST GET CROSS

by Ed Baldwin

Going for a run one afternoon at the end of August, my mind casually thinking through some road racing plans for the next year, I suddenly had an idea that bulldozed its way through all other thoughts..."Do Cyclocross NOW!"

The more I thought about it, the more excited I got, I picked up my pace and couldn't wait to get home.

From that moment on I became a Cyclocrosser. I got home and showered, then straight onto the computer.

I researched where to race, bikes, tyres, wheels, pedals, shoes, training methods, bike handling. It was a whole new world. The more I found out, the more I got excited.

Cyclocross, even has its own version of Eddy Merckx in the great Sven Nys - I had goosebumps. How can I have missed or rather dismissed something so perfect, so complete and so exciting?

Within ten days I had a bike, shoes, half a clue, a race planned, league membership and a huge sackful of enthusiasm.

On the eleventh day, I had my first Race at Houghton Tower near Preston. Deep down I had the feeling I would do really well, after all I was the Cross Country champ throughout senior school. Who has that in their palmarès?

At the start line I was a little bewildered "are all these people in the same race?" I asked as I was surrounded by over 150 riders. Cyclocross doesn't have the same limits to numbers as road racing I found out.

Starting from near the back when the whistle went my heart was racing yet I was only going at a snail's pace as we all queued going round the first

narrow bend.

"Drat," I'd read about this in my new training manual. Essential Tip - Start from the front, sprint all out for the first few hundred yards to avoid queuing on the first bend. Here I was in that very situation. I could redeem my mistake. Cleverly to gain back some ground I threw my bike over my shoulder running past as many queuing people as I could. Not so cleverly because at the same time making a huge withdrawal from the Bank of Reserves.



I couldn't shake off this rider, she beat me, but we could still shake hands.

The Bank of Reserves manager immediately contacted my lungs demanding their oxygen back but with massive interest. Unfortunately, my current personal fitness credit scoring as it stood, I couldn't even meet the first few repayments on time. The rest of the race took place being ever

increasingly in the red the whole way round.

It was a hard, hard, race but it was everything I imagined it would be and much more.

The setting of Houghton Tower was perfect. The course took us through woods, around the tower grounds and even through part of the historical building itself. Here visitors sat casually drinking tea on comfy chairs whilst crossers sat on the very edges of their life riding through.

All around the course are supporters ringing cowbells, cheering favourite riders on and anyone who looks like they might not know who they are anymore. One aspect I particularly remember, drones following you, waiting at the exit of woods, hovering like a soulless android soldier waiting to dispatch you as you exit. It all added to the thrill. The race ended for me somewhere back in the



## I DON'T GET ANGRY, I JUST GET CROSS cont

field, beaten by people of all shapes and sizes on every type of bike. (OK smart Alec, nobody was on a TT bike).

My next race took place on top of Landgate Quarry in Rossendale, a beautiful setting. A twenty minute walk up a hill in the middle of moorland where suddenly from nowhere a self supporting cyclocross village appeared at the top. A beautiful sunny day and another large gathering as many riders were preparing for The Three Peaks of Yorkshire CX the following week.

I had learned many lessons about cyclocross racing at Hoghton so I managed to jostle to half way up the starting runway for a better start. I felt good and my enthusiasm was at its peak, this would be a good race. On the first descent to get further up the field my enthusiasm took me straight into a Liverpool Century rider, himself pulling out to overtake a slow wobbler. Unknowingly, this get together resulted in a cracked rib and by the time my bike was rideable again I was in last position. This race was not meant to be, or was it? I had several other crashes, luckily I survived them all. One of the crashes tore my shorts wide open revealing to everyone an early super moon. Every cloud as they say... my super moon gave me a new fan club to cheer me on at future races. I finished this race right at the back end, again learning as I go.

The rest of my races, mainly on painkillers, were all completed at maximum effort but with a lot less risk taking. I have learned, enjoy the race, I'm not going to win this year, this is simply a huge learning curve.



The races start from the age that anyone can ride a bike.

The races all take place on interesting courses around the North West from Westmoorland Showground in Kendal to Otterspool Park in Merseyside with the last race of the season in South Park, Macclesfield on the 27th December... so I hope to see you having a go.

Some great advantages that cyclocross has over most other cycling events are that they are off road, safe, spectator friendly, well run, camaraderie inviting, family based atmosphere including events for everyone. In my own

particular category, vets & women, I race against people who represent everyone. There are people who have only recently started cycling to commute and there are those people who want to get properly fit for the first time, one chap is chipping away at reducing his over 20 stone weight. There are runners, there are professionals and there are people over the age of seventy five and everyone else in-between! They are all people with their own reasons for racing, giving it their all for fifty minutes, rewarded by an immense feeling of pride, achievement, surviving and beating the person behind them.

Something else I found out, handmade bobble hats in team colours are essential.

To find out more look up [nwcca.org.uk](http://nwcca.org.uk) ... your new life awaits.

Edward Baldwin - Cyclocross Extraordinaire to be.



## TOUR DE MONT BLANC 23 - 28 SEPTEMBER 2016

by Jeanette Barber

### Day 0 – Arrival and ride to Plaine Joux – 21.5 miles, 3455 feet

Early Friday morning, twelve Seamons cyclists assembled at Manchester airport each with a bike box. We flew to Geneva and located our transport for the onward journey to Servoz (near to Chamonix). After a fair old battle fitting all the bike boxes into the back of the minibus, we set off...then somebody wondered out loud why there was one empty seat in a 12 seater minibus. Perhaps it was a 13 seater or worse could someone be missing! After a great deal of scratching heads and re-counting, the cry went up “WHERE’S SCOTT”? Our patient driver managed to turn back just before the motorway and after 20 minutes we were back at the airport and Scott with his bike box was found and loaded onto the minibus. Oh how we laughed!

Once in Servoz, we met up with Steve, Mark and Amanda (our absolutely magnificent, invaluable director sportive/driver of the broom wagon). Amanda had a splendid picnic lunch waiting for us in the sunny garden. Before lunch everybody was busy assembling bikes (well I didn’t, but then what are husbands for?). After lunch we set off (12 men and me) on our warm-up ride from Servoz to a little café at Plaine Joux. I was apprehensive even before this ride as if I had found this one hard there was no hope for the next four days! It was actually a really enjoyable ride although the broom wagon was required for Steve before he even got to the café as he had a problem with his rear mech. Quick journey to the nearest bike shop and he was sorted ready for Day 1.

David Hoyle was the well-deserved recipient of the Lantern Rouge on Day 0.

### Day 1 – Courmayeur to Aussois (Petit St Bernard, L’Iseran) – 88.0 miles, 10938 feet

An early breakfast and then all of us, plus our assembled bikes, were transported by minibus through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Courmayeur in Italy. As soon as we left the tunnel, we put on all our warm clothes (Amanda carried all our clothes, food, water etc. in the broom wagon) and mounted the bikes and we were off, instantly descending (hence warm clothing required), it was amazing how cold it was on all

the long descents! Of course it wasn’t downhill all day – Oh no! At the bottom of our first descent all warm clothes were removed and then in shorts and short sleeved jerseys in glorious weather with clear blue skies we were off climbing the Petit St Bernard. It was absolutely fantastic. I arrived at the café at the top not too long after everyone else (Paul stayed with me on the first day), but by the time

I’d ordered my coffee it was definitely “2 minutes riders”. So after an extremely quick coffee it was outside to the car to put on warm clothes again ready for the descent. I’m not the fastest descender and everyone had several minutes start on me. Amanda was patiently waiting for us at the bottom.

Then I began to climb L’Iseran. Within half a mile my front light fell off and I braked hard, without warning Paul who was right on my wheel. Wheels touched, Paul hit the deck and we very nearly needed a divorce lawyer! After he had straightened his saddle, nursed his wounds (they weren’t bad) and stopped complaining, we set off again (Paul keeping a good distance behind me). We eventually caught up with the others where they had stopped for lunch in a very picturesque spot overlooking a lake. In a





## TOUR DE MONT BLANC cont

very short time we were off again – yet again I was last to set off. It all got a bit much for me, constantly chasing everyone so 14 km from the highest point, I succumbed to the broom wagon. Paul was then able to whiz up the hill and even overtook a few of the others. It was bitterly cold in the wind at the top, so as soon as everyone arrived and put their warm clothes on, we continued. It was a very long and fast descent with a sneaky little climb for the final 5 km or so to our hotel. This was the longest day with the most climbing and a few were struggling towards the end. Ashley was last up the Iseran so a worthy winner of the Lantern Rouge.

### Day 2 – Aussois to Les Deux Alpes (Telegraphe, Galibier, Les Deux Alpes) – 64 miles, 12424 feet

Nice long descent to start the day and we had glorious weather again, blue skies and sunshine and, again, superb views. We stopped at the bottom of the Telegraphe and took off all the warm clothes ready to put into the car. I decided, as did Ashley, that we would not wait for Amanda but start the climb to get a bit of a head start. I was really enjoying the climbing this day, no pressure just climbing on my own at my own pace. So glad I had changed my rear cassette to an 11-32. Nobody overtook me for ages and I reached the café at the top of the Telegraphe at roughly the same time as everyone else bar two. Once Amanda arrived in the car, we realised that



they had offered to wait with all the kit, as they are both fast climbers, and let everyone set off but Amanda didn't see them, so drove to the top. She went back down, collected the kit and they then set off. We didn't wait for them to arrive but descended the Telegraphe and climbed the Galibier. This worked really well for me because Mark only overtook me about 6 km from the top and Paul just before the top so again I was able to enjoy the climbing and the scenery without thinking I was last. It was my turn to get the Lantern Rouge as I was the last one to arrive at our hotel in Les Deux Alpes, just ahead of David Hoyle (mind you, he cycled a greater distance than everyone else – he seemed to enjoy zig-zagging across the road a lot as he got more tired!)

### Day 3 – Les Deux Alpes to Saint Jean-de-Maurienne (Alpe d'Huez, Croix de Fer, Glandon, Les Lacets de Montvernier) –

71.7 miles, 14273 feet

What a spectacular view this morning. We were in bright sunshine above the clouds, it was really amazing. As we were so high, we started with a long descent and part of it was on a really rough road with lots of loose gravel. I was scared, well terrified actually - I hated it and was blubbering!! Needless to say, I was consequently the last person to reach the bottom! Over the entire four days, there was only one climb that could be missed out – Alpe d'Huez – and David and I decided to take the low road to the bottom of the Croix de Fer whereas all the rest did the Alpe first. They all waited at the top for Ashley to arrive and after a considerable time went off in the car to find him, apparently he had arrived a while after the rest and got lost up there! David and I began to climb the Croix de Fer before everyone else and actually the timing was perfect as we



neither Paul or Mark or any of our warm clothes were there. Apparently



# TOUR DE MONT BLANC cont

got to the top just a few seconds before Mark arrived and over the next 30 minutes everybody else arrived. We were all surprised how hard this climb was, it was the steepest climb of the tour, there was even a 16% section Those who did both climbs said that Alpe d'Huez was much easier. Ashley kept Amanda company in the Broom wagon up to Croix de Fer. After Croix de Fer, it was a short descent and even shorter climb (a few hundred metres at the most), to the Glandon and then an absolutely superb and very long descent all the way into the Valley, near La Chambre. I loved every single second of that descent and I was not at the back - amazing. After another coffee stop at the bottom it was a flat ride into St Jean de Maurienne. Paul, Mark, Rob and Richard had not had enough climbing for one day, so added an extra loop to include Les Lacets de Montvernier - mad! The recipient of the Lantern Rouge was John Whitelegge.



along the valley which was good as we all stayed in a peleton. Just before the final climb, the weather changed and we had the only rain of the week. It was heavy rain so we all got soaked but it wasn't cold and within an hour the sun was out again. There were some tired legs by the time we arrived back in Servoz, but David Hoyle excelled by winning the Lantern Rouge for a second time.

## Day 5 – Rest day and departure (into Switzerland)

On our final day all sensible people got the bus into Chamonix, ambled round the shops and had a leisurely lunch. The idiots (Paul, Tom, Rob, Nigel Kelly and David) went out for a bike ride. David had a sensible short ride to Chamonix and back, the others cycled over another Col and into Switzerland.

The cyclists were Steve Coomber, Paul Barber, Nigel Harrop, Nigel Kelly, Scott Gardiner, David Hoyle, John Whitelegge, Ashley Cress, Mike Kilburn, Tom Towers, Robert Taylor, Mark Ellis and me. The most important person on the trip was our wonderful Director Sportif, Amanda Coomber, who looked after our every need. She transported all our clothes, food and water and



## Day 4 - Saint Jean-de-Maurienne to Servoz (Madeleine) – 83.4 miles, 12646 ft

After visiting the local pharmacy for Compeed blister plasters required for

sore patches on bottoms (Scott and me), we cycled to La Chambre and then climbed the Madeleine. Again we had lovely sunny weather. This was my favourite climb and descent of the four days. I really enjoyed it. After a sunny picnic at the bottom, we then had a lengthy flat ride





# TOUR DE MONT BLANC cont

even the odd tired cyclist. She shopped for us and provided fantastic lunches every day. She was always cheerful. A true star.

It was a real challenge for me, but I loved (almost) every minute of it. The company was great and it was supremely well organised by Steve and Amanda.



continued from p4

Drumbeg is the next recommended café stop, on the right, a craft shop with the café in a sheltered garden with lots of blankets, and a very insistent cat. You can get some home-made sandwiches to take with you over the next few climbs.

Scourie has a hotel and a great café next to the campsite, open after Easter. After more remote and rugged scenery, you will eventually come to Durness. Don't miss the



Chocolate café on the lefts you arrive. We had blizzards here (it was April) and a freezing Arctic wind blowing in off the sea.

A bit further along the coast, now going East, you come to Tongue. An excellent Hostel and the post office does good hot drinks and snacks. There is also a hotel. I will have to leave you in mid air now as we turned south in Tongue. Happy travels!

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# MEET YOUR PRESIDENT

by Johnny Pardoe

Our recently elected President, Johnny Coles, known as "JC", joined the club in 1953. During his long membership he has held various committee posts, including Touring Section leader where he led many of us astray on his "Mystery Tours", and two terms as Treasurer.

Although Johnny's main interest has always been touring, both in this country and abroad, he was no slouch when it came to racing. He was the Club Road Race Champion in 1958-60, and 1963. He still holds the Buxton and back record.

From my experience JC has always been a fearless master descender, frightening me and other club members to death on numerous occasions. He could also turn a nifty pedal when it came to climbing, once recording a sub 20 minute ride up the Cat and Fiddle climb.

JC is also a very accomplished photographer – F.R.P.S. in fact.

Congratulations John, enjoy your term in office.

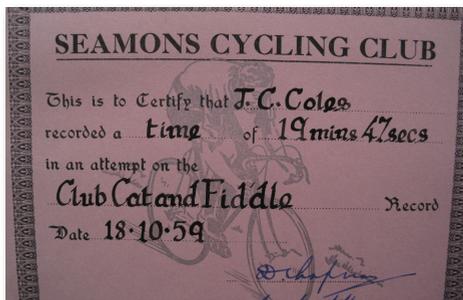
## RETIRING PRESIDENT, REG BLEASE

In the Seamons we are extremely proud and privileged to still have a Founder Member actively involved in club life.

Reg joined the club in 1948 – 68 years ago! What a record.

Reg, a Life Member, was brother-in-law to the late Bob Richardson, married to Bob's sister Vera, who is also still a club member, along with son Gareth. At the recent AGM Reg retired as President, handing over the position to another long-standing member, Johnny Coles, or JC as we know him.

In the club magazine of 1950 "Potted pin-ups" featured Reg as Reg "Fleas": "easily distinguished by the white collar he wears on Saturday nights."



This strong silent type is addicted to shooting sidelong glances at pretty girls, and decorating. The latter he has to do to make a living. Reg rides with good style. A good clubman, he is essentially one of the boys. That is why he wears trousers." I feel the Club owes Reg a great debt of gratitude for his many years of service to the Club. He still rides with style.



Photos: 1953 Hill Climb, Ford crossing, Lairigh Grue, Scotland.



## RICK AND JANE - NICE TO HOME

by Jane Prowse

### FACTS AND FIGURES

OK so when Keith asked me to write an article about my amazing adventure I started wondering which bits you would all be interested in, (it was much easier just talking to the ladies at the WI. They just wanted to hear the fun, the scary, the practical and the highlights).

I guess facts and figures might be top of the Seamon's readers list.

We flew to Nice where we built the bikes in the airport, getting changed in the loos and just cycled out of the door!

In total we cycled 1024.1 miles Around 99 hours of cycling time 95,000 feet of climbing.

Raised just over £2000 pounds for 'kidneys for life' (a big thank you to all who sponsored us).

We cycled onto the ferry at Zeebrugge, we were on the last minute and pretty much the last to board (due to hunting for wine for our night on the boat). Once we landed in Hull, we cycled straight off the ferry much to my surprise! Our last ride took in Holme Moss, I'm not sure why we didn't have our photo taken at the top!

Then I thought about my most FAQs.

#### Why?

My love of cycling started around 5 years ago.

I joined Seamon's just over 2 years ago.

Chatting on a Sunday ride I said I had done: Coast to coast, Manc 100 and great Manc a couple of times but whoever I was riding with asked what next... just beating your times?

I thought about it and wanted something that would truly challenge me. I just didn't know what.

Then Rick invited me on a trip, travelling light... now there's a challenge!.. no hairdryer, only 2 pairs of knickers and no bikinis! Carrying everything I needed for 2 weeks myself! The last time I had slummed it was in the venture scouts!

How many times did I have to get off and push? Not once, although I did stop for breaks and sometimes was pedalling only just fast enough to



stay upright, often running out of gears

#### One of the funny bits:

We would dry wet cloths by attaching them to the saddlebag, arriving at one stop I noticed that a pair of knickers had at some point flown off the bike, I hope not landing on someone's windscreen!

#### Scary bits:

1) Coming down from Galibier in a thunderstorm was by far the scariest. There was snow at the top and the thunder and lightning were right overhead, wet, freezing cold, shaking and in tears I knew I had to just keep going. And to top it all I was wearing nearly all the clothes I had with me.

2) During one of Ricks many hunter-gatherer moments. When he would leave me standing outside the shop with the bikes. I noticed a group of rowdy guys walking down the road. Suddenly one of them started to run towards the

bikes, he grabbed mine and started to get on it. All I could think was that everything was on my bike, passport, money, phone and clothes. I shouted in





# RICK AND JANE - NICE TO HOME cont

English at him and had decided if he tried to ride off I would just have to give him a hard sideways shove. His mates were laughing and he jumped off the bike, said something in French and proceeded to try to climb the nearest lamp post.

Rick sauntered out of the shop totally oblivious to my scary encounter.

3) Sometimes, somewhere in the Alps, we would be riding on narrow roads with no wall, fence or barriers between us and a sheer drop, when I got really scared I would ride on the wrong side of the road stopping when the odd car came the other way.

### The hardest bits:

After a long hard day, before we could even think about food, we had to wash clothes and hang them to dry, then unpack and sort the bikes.

Sometimes we had to cycle for hours before finding toilets or places to buy food. (the first time I braved a pee in a field, I was bitten by a horsefly on my a... arm!, which resulted in a very painful swelling for 3 days).

### How many punctures or mechanicals?

Can you believe we carried 3 inner tubes each and only had to use one of them. Rick needed to replace brake pads at the top of one of the climbs.

### The best bits:

The scenery, the wildlife, listening to the cuckoos and marmots. The roads, the views, sometimes not seeing a soul for hours, the sense of achievement. 15 days of nothing to do but ride my bike, I could sing out loud with no one hearing me, lose myself in my thoughts, and dream of roast dinners and coffee and walnut cake.

### Other bits that stick in my mind:

At Manchester airport, our bikes packed in cardboard boxes were too big to go around long the zigzag queue, so the lovely lady let us queue-jump straight to the front.



Going through security I couldn't find my phone, by the time I knew I didn't have it we were at the point of no return. After a frantic 5am call to my daughter and speaking to staff to see if we could get it if she brought it, she called Rick's phone and said that the airline staff had found it and would get it to me before the flight ( a n d ; no, Dave Antrabus I wasn't panicking that I couldn't record the ride on Strava, I was worried that I

might get lost or stranded somewhere in the Alps!!)

### Rick:

Rick had truly spent hours/days, planning this amazing route... getting in as many climbs as he felt he could get away with and booking accommodation, he found some Chambre d'hotes, which he just thought were a kind of B&B, well those of you who know more French than us, probably know that it means room in a house.

These were an experience in themselves, and another bunch of memories, especially as our French really is very limited.

Most nights we would arrive with a bottle of red and white wine that we would drink before bed. On one occasion, as Rick put his bag down all you could hear was the clanking of the bottles, we felt like naughty school kids, smuggling alcohol in to our rooms!

During the trip it wasn't so much the physical aspects of riding the bike but the mental fatigue and mixture of emotions, I have to say it was the hardest, most amazing thing I have ever done.

I would like to thank Rick for his planning, drive and mostly his patience.

### So what next?

Well at the time of writing this, Scotland was our next adventure and another story, and we have some early plans for something exciting in 2017.





## CYCLING IN INDOCHINA - OCT/NOV 2015 by Richard Goddard

Corinne and I started with a 5 day tour of Laos where we visited numerous temples, cruised on the Mekong river, looked round the markets (quite scary seeing the live produce, rat anyone?) sampled the local food (excluding the snake and toads), visited the prosthetics museum resulting from the landmine injuries in the most bombed country in the world (Wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were to become a theme of our visit) and a supposed tourist highlight of a rather dull bridge built by the Australians over the Mekong to Thailand.

We then flew back to Bangkok to meet up with our cycling group after an evening watching a lady-boy show and a day trip on the infamous death railway crossing the Bridge over the River Kwai. There were eighteen people in the group ranging from early twenties to the oldest at 73, plus our Thai leader for the tour, "Is" (no relation). We started by driving through the Bangkok rush hour out to the Khao Yai National Park where we met up with the Thai cycling guides and were allocated brand new Specialized mountain bikes with disc brakes. We had three days cycling in Thailand through scenic small villages, past monasteries and paddy fields on mostly flat roads. We were allowed to cycle at our own pace as the roads were relatively quiet which led to a bit of competition at the front to establish the pecking order. (A bit like cycling with Tempo 1 down the Tatton mile back to Hale.) We had stops to regroup and refuel with lots of water, snacks including fried banana, fresh mango/pineapple/banana, tapioca sweets and sticky rice. The Thai lunches and dinners were all excellent and dirt cheap in the basic local, roadside restaurants.

On cycling day four we arrived at the busy Cambodian border and said farewell to our Thai cycling guides and bikes and crossed over on foot, where we then transferred by coach to Siem Reap. In the afternoon we met our Cambodian cycling guides and picked up identical Specialized mountain bikes. We were briefed that we should cycle as a group as the roads are very busy and the Cambodians drive mainly on the right, with the emphasis on mainly. It was a fairly daunting experience until you understood the

driving etiquette. Drivers only look forward, even when starting and will pull out in front of you expecting you to avoid them. If you left a two foot gap it would immediately be filled with six scooters and a Tuk Tuk. The group would suddenly shoot out from the side of the road to avoid the oncoming scooter, TuK Tuk or even car



driving on the "wrong" side of the road. Hand signals were essential and the guides tried to shepherd us through the mayhem although the only near miss I saw was with an English guy on a scooter. We cycled for three days to various Angkor temples through fascinating landscapes. On day 8 we transferred by bus to busy Phnom Penh stopping on the way at a local market where the locals sold fried Tarantula spider. We managed to resist after being told they had been sitting in the sun all day. In Phnom Peng we continued the war theme by visiting the Killing Fields and the Genocide museum from the terrible years in the 70s when the Khmer Rouge inflicted their regime on the country.



We then cycled to the quieter Vietnam border where we met our Vietnamese cycling guides and older but well maintained mountain bikes. We cycled for three days around the scenic villages in



# CYCLING IN INDOCHINA - OCT/NOV 2015 cont

the Mekong delta where life takes place on the narrow lanes. You could look into the houses as you passed by which were basic with hammocks to sleep in, a cooking area, a piece of furniture surrounded by family pictures with a flat screen TV on top and a scooter parked in the middle of the room. It appears that communism has not prevented the acquisition of material goods. Everybody was also on their mobile phones just like home.

We then transferred to Ho Chi Minh City which has a population of 14m with 7m scooters. Crossing the road was daunting. When the green man lit up you launched yourself into the road hoping that the wave of scooters ignoring the red light would drive round you and any relief when you got to the pavement was short lived as you then had to avoid

the numerous scooters taking a shortcut. After a day visiting the Cu Chi Tunnels used by the Viet Cong during the Vietnam (or American) war and the War museum we said goodbye to the Group and were driven to the coast for a well deserved 5 day's



rest on the beach. Cycling was a fantastic way to see the three different countries, experiencing the culture and way of life close up. The food was great and we had good company with the group. A very memorable trip. Next instalment - Cycling the Kerala coast in Southern India.

## LITTLE KNOWN CYCLING FACTS (OR FICTION)

In the early days of The Tour climbs were not categorised but the organisers decided to award a jersey to the best climber but how were the points going to be allocated?

The solution came to them when they were reconnoitring the course for the following year's event.

They were driving a Citroen Light 15 (the sort of car Maigret the French policeman used to drive). It had a four speed gearbox and they decided that if they had to change down to third gear it would be a 3rd Category climb, if they had to change down to second gear it would be a 2nd Category climb and if they had to change down to first gear it would be a 1st Category climb but if they had to get out and push it would be an Hors Category climb! So now you know!

Which is the most popular bike in the world? Trek? Giant? Raleigh? No no no. It's The Flying Pigeon made in China which has reputedly sold over half a billion models!



The Flying Pigeon with its distinctive double top tube

Our Club President, John Coles still holds the Buxton and Back place to place record with a time of 2 hours 27 minutes and 58 seconds, done in 1959.

John Pardoe was Tricycle best All Rounder in 1965 with rides of 2 hours 13 minutes for 50 miles, 4hrs 41 minutes for 100 miles and 230 miles for 12 hours. In the same year he also rode 432 miles in 24 hours. All on three wheels!

The club has a bit of a history of matchmaking. Starting with Reg Blease who married the late Bob Richardson's sister Vera and more recently with Neil Rothwell marrying Maria, Ed Baldwin marrying Sue and Tom Turton is marrying Elle Reynolds next year. Long may it continue!

Some of you will be aware that a new World Hour record was set by 100 year old Robert Marchand at 26.940 km with an outside temperature of 8C.\*

The UCI have responded that a new category "Masters for over 105" which will allow for the use of a freewheel and brakes, even though the attempt can be made on a velodrome. Please form an orderly queue.

**\*STOP PRESS...** Robert Marchand who held the 100 year age record made history at the Saint Quentin velodrome, when at the age of 105 he completed 22.5km (14 miles!) on January 4th 2017.



# MEMORIES OF 'H', THE LATE HAROLD NELSON, BEM

by John Pardoe

As far as I can remember I started going to Harold's around 1963, because, I was told, it was the thing to do.

In those days it was far from scientific, and you had the choice of a session on a set of ancient rollers on a bike which was way past its best, going rusty from the non-stop sweating it had been subjected to over many years, to say nothing of the slimy handlebars.

Alternatively you were encouraged to throw a few weights around and practise squats – oh dear! I never did take to them – horrible! I seemed to manage quite well without that additional torture.

"H" used to shut you in the roller room with the instruction, "ride like hell for half an hour, and I'll come and tell you when time's up". He did – eventually – usually after 40 minutes, or even longer. I can still remember the odour from that room and of course the permanent pool of sweat that accumulated beneath the bike.

If he was in a good mood you could be treated to a massage followed by a pint of hot sweet tea, and even a biscuit or two. As I say, nothing scientific, just hard graft.

You were issued with a training book (I've still got

mine), and sort of instructed to get the miles in and record everything in the book.

In those halcyon days we rode everywhere on a bike, to and from work, Easter tours, summer tours, ride out to and back from events, and clubruns of always in excess of 100 miles.

So looking back in my training book mileages of 250 – 300 miles per week on a regular basis were the norm. We all lived on wheels week in week out, which of course kept Harold a very happy man.

It was about this time that I started to concentrate on long distance events, mainly on three wheels.

At the time Harold was secretary of the Northern Road Records Association (NRRA) and he had decided that the tandem tricycle 12 hour record of 229 miles was well overdue for updating. 1965 was to be the year. At that stage the riders he had chosen for this epic had not been informed.

In 1965 a party from the Seamons had ridden down to Shrewsbury for the Mid-Shropshire Wheelers Dinner, staying at the Youth Hostel (this was the norm in those days). Incidentally I was on the tandem trike with my late



'H' and Keith Stacey





## MEMORIES OF 'H' cont

first wife, Lynn.

There we were all enjoying a leisurely breakfast the following morning and really looking forward to our ride home. In marched Harold – remember this was 8.30am on a Sunday morning, 60 miles south of Sale. As I say, in marched Harold accompanied by a tricyclist, Jimmy Shuttleworth of the Stretford Wheelers.

“Right lads, you are going for the NRRR 12 hour record in July, and you start training today.” No ifs or buts. Jim and I were to ride home via Llangollen as a test ride, while Lynn got a lift home somehow (not sure how). That was “H”, you didn’t argue. Unknown to us Harold had already been in touch with master organisers Tommy and Peter Barlow, who had masterminded a cunning plan and come up with a specially designed course.

The record attempt would start at midnight, yes, midnight, just south of Middlewich.

The idea was that we would benefit from the calm of the night, then be blown back on a strengthening prevailing south westerly wind from the far south west reaches of the course at Chirk.

How wrong can you be? The British weather had other ideas. It blew a gale from the south-east and lashed it down with rain for 8 hours.

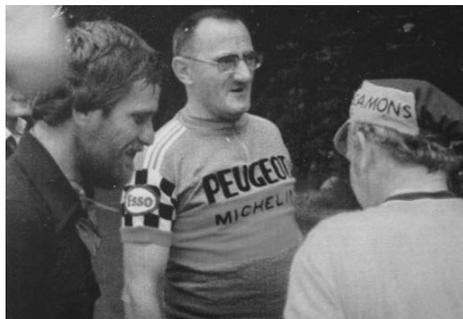
However Harold got his wish and we got the record with 246 miles. Worst of all we endured a thoroughly miserable ride and I ruined a brand new pair of white socks! (see photo)

The one thing I remember about “H” and his Establishment team, if they were looking after you in any long distance event, everything was taken care of and all you had to do was ride. So with that kind of assistance you gave 100per cent plus.

I also remember that Harold was adamant you were not to take cold drinks, hence hot soup, rice pudding, tea, coffee and the odd butty, if you could get it down.

There is no doubt that “H” was an impeccable organizer and left nothing to chance.

In 1965 Keith Stacey needed a fast “50” to secure top place in the British Best All Rounder competition. He had entered the final counting event on the super-fast Boroughbridge



JP, 'H' and Bob Hill

course in Yorkshire.

Not taking any chances Harold mustered up as many spare bikes as possible to be lined up along the course. Just in case. As it turned out Keith had no problems and went on to secure top spot in the B.B.A.R.

What an honour for Keith, the Club and, of course, Harold and his Establishment team.

For many years “H” organised a very sophisticated feed station for the Mersey Roads 24 hour, somewhere around Hodnet, an absolute oasis for riders during a very long, dark night.

“H” also organised his very own unique annual Establishment Dinner, where you could rub shoulders with the Who’s Who in cycling at that time (Paul Sherwen, Tour de France rider and commentator, John Herety, manager of JLT, to name but two).

In the year 2,000 he organised a special lunch to commemorate 100 years of the N.R.R.A. What a unique occasion it was, with a great gathering of the surviving record-breakers and officials to reminisce over their past glories.

It is true to say that “H” gave his life to cycling, and he was justly rewarded for his services to the sport with the British Empire Medal, which he proudly wore for the rest of his life.

There is no doubt that “H” was a one-off, the like of which we will never meet again. On behalf of all who knew him, thank you Harold for being “H”, never to be forgotten.



Jim Shuttleworth and JP



## ROAD TO THE TOP (NEARLY) - WORLD MASTERS 2015

by John Verbikas

It all started in February 2015, when talking to the guys at a track session, I was asked if I would fancy giving the team pursuit a go at the coming World Masters being held in Manchester in October. They needed a squad of at least six riders, I hadn't given it a thought but the seed was sown. I thought about the team that had ridden the previous year and thought that with training I might manage to hold on for 3000 metres.

I had to think about upgrading my bike to make it fit for purpose, I needed two discs, front and rear and tri bars (expensive this racing I thought).

I had a plan to start training, on the road and in the gym and on a Watt bike with Roy Myers – so the training commenced.

Friday March 13th was the big day (yes... Friday the 13th!), my first outing on the track with my double discs and tri bars, certainly looked the part. We warmed up on the wide expanse of the bottom of the track, when the riders who were doing a SQT session came off the track we went up - six of us. The other five were all experienced at this, around we went gathering speed, I couldn't control the bike, the tri bars or wheels, as we came to the change overs I was all over the place, this was no fun. I had made a major mistake and disaster was round the next bend, I had changed the bike too much. We finished our first effort and I came to a stop hanging over the bike, it was a nightmare, lots of serious thinking before the next session. I rode round on my own just to get the feel. I had spent a lot of money on the equipment and I wasn't going to let it beat me! For the following session it was no better so I changed the front disc for a five spoke, not much better but starting to improve and was able to control the bike. I had a front wheel built that suited me, spokes and all and things started to improve, I even went to a 92 inch gear.

The plan was to ride the Nationals as individuals in June, 500 metres time trial and pursuit, Pauline Atkinson was also going to do the Nationals, the scratch and points race.

Friday May 1st we hired the track early to practise starting out of a gate, seems easy on the TV, up the track, down the track I couldn't go straight, talk about stress!



We did get a break as we went to Majorca for a week with Seamons, sun, good rides and friendship - just what the doctor ordered but we did have a couple of fallers.

Back home the training was at least two twice a week on the track with extra sessions if we could book the track. Things were coming together but then the Nationals didn't work out for Pauline or me; Pauline was involved in a small bump in her car resulting in damage to her neck, and I flew to the States as my brother in law had sadly died.

When I came home I had missed three weeks training and wondered whether it was worth carrying on; would I get in the team or just make a mess of things? After a long, hard look at myself I decided that I would give it a go, try for the team pursuit and do the time trial and individual pursuit. So with my bike with its new front wheel, Adama racing saddle, tri bars and rear disc I started my training again, sweat, pain and the rest.

Pauline needed an operation on her spine so could not ride, she joined our squad as trainer, lap marker, timekeeper and looked after us in general, we needed all the help we could get, I was still time



## ROAD TO THE TOP cont

trials on the road and missing out on club runs as I would only go for 20 minutes or so and then turn back.

The sessions on the track got harder as we were going faster, changing on the bends quicker, lining up for the finish line, and even managed a few straight starts from the gates, we also had a lot of help from two para olympians in John Butterworth and Colin Lynch helping us with speed and effort and Pauline shouting the efforts. Hell on wheels. We had targets to match.

We were being assessed on our speed over the 3000 meters on each lap, then, with not long to go till the event, I was told that I was in the team as rider number 4, being the man who would bring the team home, three to count.

I was stunned that I was in, so all the hard work on the Watt bike, track sessions, gym and time trialling had paid off but then I started to stress about letting the team down.

Racing at the World Masters does not come cheap, it cost £140 for the three rides plus the expense of upgrading your bike and extra track sessions.

Sunday the October 4th 2-15 – the big day at last, car loaded we were off, we were housed in pens in the centre of the track, looking around in awe as everybody seemed to be up for it, turbos, rollers, lots of racing chatter going on behind us; what was I doing here? GB skin suits on we certainly looked the part.

Our heat was announced, I was man four high on the track, 'man 1' was in the starting gate, 'man 2 and 3' were also being held, off went the gun and away we went - all the training seem to be working as we got away well and in order, Pauline 'walking

the line' for us, letting us know if we were up or down on schedule, my mouth was dry, taking a lap each on the front, and then changing high on the bend, lap board counting down quickly and suddenly it was all over - 4 minutes and 12 seconds - that was faster than they had ridden previously; knackered but happy at what we had done and I hadn't let the team down! We then had to wait for the other teams to ride. We were surprised that we were the second fastest ride and would ride again in the evening for Gold or Silver, what a long wait it proved to be!

Late in the evening we started it all over again, stress levels - wow, I broke part of my tooth I was so anxious!

We lined up on opposite sides of the track, high on the track for me, the gun went off and away we went, but man 2 slid down the track, man 3 went round him, I was left in no man's land. Disaster. By the time we recovered the line it was too late, the other team caught us on lap 8 and it was all over.

We were gutted that we had not ridden to our abilities but then realised that we had won a silver medal in the World Masters 3000 metres pursuit team and felt a lot happier. It felt good to stand on the podium to receive our silver medals and flowers, it was an experience I would never forget and never thought that I would have.

All the hours of hard work, pain, and worry had paid off, we were a very tight group of riders, coaches helpers and friends – I would like to thank them all, without them we could not do it.

I finished 9th in the individual pursuit and 13th in the time trial so it shows that a club rider who sets his mind to do something; with hard work they can achieve their dreams.

From the pre-carbon, pre-11 speed days.

Some members may have no problem identifying this 'long-standing (or should that be seated!)' club member. Sorry there are no prizes for guessing his identity!



From the post-carbon days.

Anyone recognise this 'tat'... and for extra 'points' know where the picture was taken? (Clue: above these knees he's not got a kilton!)





## THREE WAY SPLIT - ROSCOFF TO NICE 1441K

by Dave Matthews

### AUDAX UK "PERMANENT" RIDE

In 2014 I successfully completed an extended "Manche-Med" Audax UK permanent ride, from Ouistreham to Gruissan (nr Narbonne). Once at the Med, I then cycled back through the Pyrenees to my friends' house at Montmaurin some 60km SW of Toulouse. The ride measured 1600km overall and gave me a taste for long, solo, unsupported rides in France. The knowledge and confidence gained on this ride set me planning to follow the more difficult (due to big hill ranges after Montlucon) 1441km "Great French Diagonal" in 2015.

This latter route starts at Roscoff in Brittany, crosses the Loire at Ancenis (big bridge), then continues through the Auvergne to cross the Rhone south of Valence (small bridge). The course then follows remote hill roads from Crest to traverse the north side of Mt Ventoux, the Verdon Gorges and then visits the remote hill village of Greolieres above Nice. From here a 45km descent leads through the scenic Gorges du Loup to the finish.

As in 2014, my arrival at the Med was to be followed by a return route northwest through the Pyrenees to stay with my friends at Montmaurin once more - giving a total distance of approximately 2000km. The ride was to be solo, unsupported again, which brings its own special challenges and rewards to a non-french speaker in a big, lonely land.

The whole ride, Roscoff-Montmaurin, was planned to take 3 weeks (allowing for a rest day at Nice and a pause at Tarascon to climb in the Pyrenees sans luggage). Unfortunately, as with many of the best laid plans, I was thwarted a couple of weeks before the start. Whilst attempting to re-train too quickly after a springtime bout of flu, I damaged the soleus muscles in both my calves. This injury needed at least 4 weeks to clear up which put the whole schedule out of joint.

So the plans were revised to take advantage of

Organiser Simon Jones' rule that allows this perm to be ridden at Tourist standard (14 days max) in



1, 2 or 3 stages over 3 years. The original departure date was put forward for a couple of weeks while the injury cleared up. I then planned to complete the first 320km of the route to the Loire at Ancenis - before turning south towards my friends' house. This strategy would allow me to arrive in Montmaurin on the original planned date, albeit by a route reduced to 1000km due to my late start.

The remaining 1121km to Nice would have to wait until 2016.

#### June 12-15 (midday) 2015 Roscoff to Ancenis 320km Mostly flat

So after the enforced delay, and hoping to regain fitness on the ride, I embarked on the train journey from Chester to Plymouth, followed by overnight ferry to Roscoff. Next morning I managed to oversleep on the ferry and scrambled to leave with groups of other cyclists.

The weather in Roscoff was wet, miserable and misty and the route ahead less than obvious. Fortunately one of the English cycling groups leaving the ferry was headed for my first stop at Morlaix (22km) and invited me to latch on as they knew the way. I just about managed to hold on to their wheels in my unfit state, weighed down by a



## THREE WAY SPLIT cont

rack full of luggage.

After a soggy coffee at Morlaix, but grateful for the company, I reluctantly headed off on my own into the wet mist and a fairly long first hill. Eventually the gradient relented and the ensuing descent led me to lunch in the favoured audax cafe known as a bus shelter.

Fortunately the weather cleared up pm, so I had a pleasant ride to stay overnight at a chateau (which had seen better days) at Perret near Silfiac.

The weather continued unsettled for the next couple of days as I rode mainly flat, boring roads to Ancenis. Here I picked up a control stamp at the lunchtime cafe stop, before crossing the Loire on the huge but narrow bridge. Shortly beyond the bridge I turned south towards Toulouse, leaving the route eastward to Nice for another year.

**Jun 9-12 2016 {Chester to St Malo to Ancenis 206km} Mostly flat**

**June 13 (midday) to Jun 17 2016 Ancenis to Bertignat 603km; 3100m ascent**

Having looked at various mechanised travel options for returning to Ancenis via Nantes, the strike prone French air traffic controllers and petrol delivery drivers persuaded me to take the safe arrival option of train to Portsmouth and overnight ferry to St Malo. I then cycled down to Ancenis in two stages of 100k each over rolling hilly terrain.

The weather was generally showery and cool during the day and monsoon like at night. These rainstorms were a feature of the wettest early June in France since records began and regrettably were a foretaste of worse weather to come.

I arrived in Ancenis on a gloomy Sunday night when, in accordance with French tradition, all restaurants are shut. Fortunately, after a long walk into town, I eventually found a Turkish Kebab shop which was doing a roaring trade as the only food outlet around.

My schedule to reconnect with the audax route next morning gave time to admire the wide and very full Loire river, swollen by weeks of heavy rain.

**June 13 Ancenis to Rochefort-sur Loire 95km; mostly flat**

Soon after midday I left the identical cafe that I had arrived at from Roscoff 12 months before and set off on a short 45km half day ride to my hotel at Rochefort-sur Loire.

Navigation should be very simple - cross the river by a very narrow foot/cyclepath (too close to the roaring traffic - scary!) then head east by keeping the river on the left.

Unfortunately, weeks of rain had caused the Loire to flood many of the minor roads - in some places up to 4 metres deep! There were signs at most road junctions denoting "inondee" forcing an inevitable, confusing route east on the few roads still clear of the floods.

Eventually I came to a large bridge which crossed the wide river back north and thus my route then became "keep the river on the right and you can't go wrong".

Some 10km later I arrived at a major road with signs pointing north to Montjean. This didn't make sense as I should have been way beyond Chalonnes at this point. Eventually the awful truth dawned on me that when I had apparently crossed the Loire, in fact I had merely crossed a



swollen parallel river and had been riding in the wrong direction for some time! There was no option but to turn round and retrace until I



## THREE WAY SPLIT cont

eventually arrived at Rochefort after some 80km. My overnight stop here was at the Moulin Geant or giant windmill. This hotel did not pop-up on my phone when I looked for directions. Fortunately I found a local guy with good English who directed me onto the road towards Beaulieu-s-Layon, some 7km distant uphill, explaining that the hotel was just to the right of the road.

I kept on riding uphill looking for the hotel, figuring that a giant windmill was likely to be high up above Rochefort to maximise the available wind and difficult to miss. Eventually I got to Beaulieu with no sign of the hotel and getting rather prickly after my "long, short half day" ride with no end in sight. To cut a long and painful story short, the hotel was eventually located late in the evening. It was back down in Rochefort, hidden along a rough track behind a new housing estate which screened it from view. A few signs would have helped to avoid much frustration, unnecessary climbing and an eventual distance of 95km for my "short, flat 45km" ride!

### **June 14 Rochefort-sur Loire to Sainte-Maure-de-Touraine 119km; 200m ascent**

Morning dawned bright and clear as I followed minor roads around the Loire to Gennes after 37km. Beyond Gennes there is a 15km stretch of fairly major road D751 to the lunch and control stop at Saumur. I was not looking forward to riding amongst all this traffic. However, just outside Gennes, the route was barred for major reconstruction all the way to Saumur. The friendly road crew allowed me through the barriers onto this stretch which gave me a traffic free ride on perfect tarmac to within 2km of Saumur. Merci French Routes! Once in town I reconnected with "Manche-Med" at the same cafe stop used 2 years previously.

After lunch I headed east again feeling very much like a cycling softie as I was accompanied by many leisure riders following the gentle cyclepaths along the river. Once the Loire had been crossed at Candes-St-Martin the leisure groups were left behind and I continued through to my hotel stop 40km further on at Sainte-Maure-



de-Touraine.

The Logis Hostellerie de Cheval Blanc on the Av. General de Gaulle at Candes has all the ambience of a classic old style French Hotel. Bicycle and stage coach parking is in a large complex at the back of the hotel. As I arrived at the Hotel, already wet from a rain shower during the previous 5km, a massive storm opened up which kept me pinned in the garage for a good half hour before I could safely transfer to the hotel entrance some 200m distant.

### **June 13 Ancenis to Rochefort-sur Loire 95km; mostly flat**

Soon after midday I left the identical cafe that I had arrived at from Roscoff 12 months before and set off on a short 45km half day ride to my hotel at Rochefort-sur Loire.

Navigation should be very simple - cross the river by a very narrow foot/cyclepath (too close to the roaring traffic - scary!) then head east by keeping the river on the left.

Unfortunately, weeks of rain had caused the Loire to flood many of the minor roads in some places up to 4 metres deep! There were signs at most road junctions denoting "inondee" forcing an inevitable, confusing route east on the few roads still clear of the floods.

Eventually I came to a large bridge which crossed the wide river back north and thus my route then



## THREE WAY SPLIT cont

became "keep the river on the right and you can't go wrong".

Some 10km later I arrived at a major road with signs pointing north to Montjean. This didn't make sense as I should have been way beyond Chalonnes at this point. Eventually the awful truth dawned on me that when I had apparently crossed the Loire, in fact I had merely crossed a swollen parallel river and had been riding in the wrong direction for some time! There was no option but to turn round and retrace until I eventually arrived at Rochefort after some 80km.

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### **June 15 Sainte-Maure-de Touraine to Mers-sur-Indre 140km; 600m ascent**

Today's route reconnected in part with "Manche-Med" route, riding through the Brenne. This is one of my favourite parts of France - beautiful, wooded narrow roads, flanked by freshwater lakes that are home to many bird species making the only audible noise in this remote area.

The weather stayed fine until Lothiers some 40km from the finish. As I progressed towards the village of Mers-sur-Indre through an increasingly remote and lumpy region, the rain turned from drizzle to pouring. Once again I had trouble locating my overnight stop - this was resolved by





## THREE WAY SPLIT cont

my optimised technique of ringing the establishment and asking, in perfect franglais, to be guided in.

### **June 16 Mers-sur-Indre to Coutansouze 128km; 1000m ascent Washout!**

This is the day I started to lose the plot due to the frequent mega-rainstorms and an ever more painful saddle region caused by continually riding in damp/wet shorts (as the weather prevented me from getting any clothing properly dry).

Breakfast was accompanied by a huge rainstorm crashing down outside. This relented to a normal downpour by 9:30 so I resolved to ride 13km to La Chatre to gauge progress in the difficult conditions.

Once in the town the rain cleared up a little as I negotiated the busy traffic filled roads to escape uphill through the usual out-of-town shopping complex and continued 11km towards St Sever s/Indre.

The first proper hills of the Massif Central now come into play leading to the next control at Montlucon, which is entered following a long descent. Prior to Montlucon I had another long delay near Boussac, attempting to shelter under a few trees whilst another massive rainstorm hammered down for about an hour.

The previous delays for rainstorms caused me to leave Montlucon town centre much later than planned, during the evening rush hour - up a steep climb of 10km to Commeny surrounded by cars and buses. Most unpleasant!

The commuter mayhem extended a further 5km to Colombier where it seemed I would have some clear roads to cover the last 20km to my hotel. Unfortunately the rain had not finished with me yet and another huge storm crashed down for 30 minutes whilst I sheltered in an old shed behind an empty house.

By the time the rain stopped, around 6:30pm, I was feeling wet, tired and very hungry as I struggled up yet another long hill. Beyond La Loge with 10km to go, the sun magically appeared to give a beautiful clear evening. The improvement in the weather coincided with leaving the main road to follow small, remote

narrow roads which eventually, after a final 5km climb, landed me at an immaculate Logis hotel in the middle of nowhere. The time was 8:05 pm and the restaurant closed at 8:30pm - so I had a mad scramble to store bike, unpack, shower, wash clothes and tumble into the dining room for last orders.

### **June 17 Coutansouze to Bertignat (Ambert) 121km; 1300m ascent**

The day started well enough as I climbed up and down through forested roads beyond Coutansouze followed by a pleasant descent to Ebreuil at 20km. The sky was overcast but at least it wasn't raining as I climbed beyond Ebreuil to eventually descend to enjoy "Plat du Jour" in Maringues some 38km later.

The route beyond Maringues leads over a couple of lengthy climbs towards a well graded, wooded descent on the D906 through a steep valley which disgorges into the small market town of Ambert. My accommodation was booked in Bertignat some 15km before Ambert. Accordingly I swung off the D906 at Pont de David just before the small village of Vertolaye, crossed the river, and started up a steep climb to the village. Six km, 300m ascent and one hour later I reached Bertignat village in a really tired state - and late evening yet again. The locals in the village square then told me that the hotel I wanted was 5km back down the hill on a different road; just the news I needed! So I descended as directed, but arrived back at the main road at Vertolaye with no sign of any hotel on the way. So I did what I should have done in the first place and phoned the hotel for guidance - which led me to a whole new area of Bertignat. Late again, and the usual rush to get a meal before the dining room shut.

(I now realise that the term Bertignat refers to a hilly region noted for relaxing holidays, with the village at its centre. Future cyclists looking for accommodation beware!)

(to be continued)



## SEAMONS CC - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO AGM

Welcome to the 2016 AGM and thanks for giving up your evening to attend.

It remains an honour to have been the elected Chairman of this great cycling club for the last three and a half years

This year, leading Seamons has been a wholly enjoyable experience, due to the many positive contributions from individual members, representing all sections of our Club, often backed by other willing volunteers including family, friends and other cycling clubs.

Without the support of a hardworking Committee, nothing would be possible.

Standing down this time are John Spearman, Dave Barker and Karen Popplewell, together with Stuart Kay, who is one of our Auditors, and Mike McConville, the Club 10 coordinator. All have given excellent service to the Club over many years and I would like to place on record my Thanks to each one. f them.

Reg Blease's period as Club President also comes to an end tonight. I would like to thank him for his help, support and encouragement over the last two years.

During 2016, 28 members have competed in Open time trials, 35 in at least one Club 10, 7 in road races and 25 in Audax events. Rick Nice and Tom Towers have completed the 200, 300, 400 and 600km challenges, qualifying for Super Randonneur status. Among many other personal successes Ade Hughes won the Birkenhead NE Open 25, and Andy Smith soloed to victory in our own Seamons Evening Road Race. The Club has progressed in many ways during the year, particularly record breaking!

Seamons is, or has been, principally a time trialling club, with many illustrious current and former champions at all levels. So it is even more amazing to report new Club, All-age records, and a Team record, have been set during the year.

Two of our lady members were Silver and Bronze medallists in the Ladies VTTA National 100 Championships.

As well as representing us in races, many competitors usually support other types of Club activity, but, for a club of our size, we have 230+ members, we still struggle for practical support on too many occasions. Examples include marshals for the Open 25 and the Evening RR. The Club 10 depends on the support of North Cheshire Clarion to ensure the success of the season-long competition.

We really have run out of fresh ideas to find practical ways of encouraging more pro-active participation in Club life.

It isn't just a Seamon's issue, it's the way it is for all clubs and voluntary organisations and I know that here I'm talking to the converted!

The challenge is for the Club to increase the contribution by all members to the Club's many activities.

Please do aim to support at least one Club initiative each year.

It has been very rewarding this year to see the club promote an excellent Open 25, the return of the Seamons Evening RR, now on the Siddington Circuit, and all the Club Championships.

Despite the sudden appearance of roadworks, which caused the Club 25 Champs to be postponed, and the first two club 10s to be cancelled, everything went off without a problem. I am grateful to the organisers and supporters of these events, together with all the people who contributed to resolving problems so that others could compete.

When joining or rejoining Seamons CC, we are agreeing that we have read, understood and accepted the guidance on our website. The guidance describes the different Group Rides, the requirement to have up-to-date Third Party Liability Insurance cover from one of the approved providers, and clearly explains how to ride with the Club.

We all have a responsibility to look after one another on the road by riding considerately and safely.

Perhaps one of the biggest and most significant changes any cycling club, especially one of our size, can contemplate is that of updating the Club Kit.

That the change of design, together with a change of supplier, was achieved with 86% support from the Club, is a tribute to the quality of the membership, but especially to the volunteers of the Working Party, managed by Jeanette Barber, our volunteer Kit Coordinator.

I cannot thank enough, on behalf of us all, Jeanette, Mel Bailey, John Spearman, Tom Towers, Simon Woodthorpe, Richard Meadows and Pauline Atkinson for the way in which they managed the design process, liaised with Pactimo, communicated with the Club members and successfully managed the two rounds of voting. Without question the quality is extremely high and, where there has been a problem, Pactimo customer service has replaced any faulty item without delay.

Finally, I'd like to once again express my thanks for the support provided to me, and to all of you, by your elected committee, the Auditors, Delegates, Organisers and other volunteers.

Of course there are many other valuable contributions, and there are many other aspects of the club year also worthy of comment, but we'll save that for the Annual Dinner and Prize Presentation on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> February at the Cresta Court.

So to finish, a big Thank-you to all the year's competitors or participants in racing, touring and social events, in fact anyone who has taken responsibility for anything that has benefitted the Club, its members and cycling, in any way.

**Nigel Harrop** Chairman, 11/11/2016



# CLUB RUNS LIST

	<b>50</b>	<b>TEMPO 2</b>	<b>TEMPO 1</b>	<b>HALE DAY</b>	<b>TOURING</b>
<b>SOCIAL</b>					
22 Jan	Anderson Boat Lift	Rose Farm	Rose Farm	Glebe Farm via Mow Cop	Barthomley
29 Jan	* Asbury GC	Glebe Farm - Asbury	Chapeau Marton	Buxton	Burnby
5 Feb	Henbury	Delamere	Delamere	Dagfields	Glebe Farm
12 Feb	The Spinney	Old Firestation - Tarp	Tilly's Burnby	Aqueduct	Blaze Farm
19 Feb	Dones Green	Aqueduct	Aqueduct	Longnor	Dones Green
26 Feb	* Sutton GC	Rose Farm	Rose Farm	Tattenhall	Marina ?
5 Mar	Goostrey	Congleton GC	Congleton GC	Llangollen	Llangollen
12 Mar	Wharcroft	Elvis's Café	Walk Mill	Burnby	Tattenhall
19 Mar	Jodrell Bank	Buxton via Long Hill	Buxton via Long Hill	Peak View via Goyt	Mow Cop
26 Mar	* Marton	Manley Mere	Manley Mere	Two Mills	Burwardley
2 Apr	Poynton	Meerbrook	Roaches Cate	Meerbrook	Buxton
9 Apr	Grasslands	Rose Farm	Rose Farm	Wheeleck Hall Farm	Buxton
16 Apr	Anderson	Glebe Farm - Asbury	Rose Farm	Wheeleck Hall Farm	Meerbrook
23 Apr	Henbury	Old Firestation - Tarp	Tilly's Burnby	Manley Mere	50 in 4
30 Apr	* Asbury	Blaze Farm	Blaze Farm	Audlem	Poynton
7 May	The Spinney	Aqueduct/Poolle Marina	Dagfields	Audlem	Chester
14 May	Dones Green	Shreghorse Centre	Dagfields	EVIS's Cate	Hope
21 May	The Wizard	Malikin's Bank	Old Ma's Kitchen	Longnor	Wrenbury
28 May	* Sutton	Chestnut Centre	Wheeleck Hall Farm	Poolle Marina	Bakewell
4 Jun	Wharcroft	+ 100k in 8h (Spinney)	Hope back via Buxton	Glebe Farm	Two Mills
11 Jun	Jodrell Bank	Grasslands Nursery Peover	EVIS/Cheshire 100 in 8	Blaze Farm	100 in 8
18 Jun	Poynton	Teggs Nose Country Park	EVIS/Cheshire 100 in 8	Two Mills	Whitmore
25 Jun	* Marton	Minshulls GC, Crewe	Buxton via M/Date	Monyash	Southport
2 Jul	Henbury	+ Tittesworth Reservoir (*)	Audlem	Aqueduct	Roaches
9 Jul	Grasslands	Wharcroft, Riverside Café	Longnor	Manley Mere	Marina
16 Jul	Goostrey	Congleton Garden Centre	Rose Farm	Manley Mere	Wrenbury
23 Jul	Anderson	Delamere Forest	Peak View/Blaze	Buxton	19 Gates
30 Jul	* Chairman's 100k	Caté Chapeau, Marton	Old Firestation, Tarp	Burnby	Tarporely
		Chairman's 100	Chairman's 100	Chairman's 100	Chairman's 100

Notes: All our rides leave from the front of Packham's store in the centre of Altrincham every Sunday where you will have a choice of rides.

All rides are round trips starting and finishing in Altrincham. The above destinations are where the rides stop for a café break.

All above rides leave at 9:00. The best place for you to keep up to speed with the runs destinations is the club website. The site can be refreshed more frequently than the magazine appears. If you don't have access to the club's website, ask a clubmate. \* The last Sunday of each month the Social runs are longer and are not advisable for less experienced riders. + Longer 50 miles ride at the end of each month.

Please note: due to space limitations on this page some locations and the routes to and from café stops have been abbreviated, please refer to the club runs section on the club website for more information.