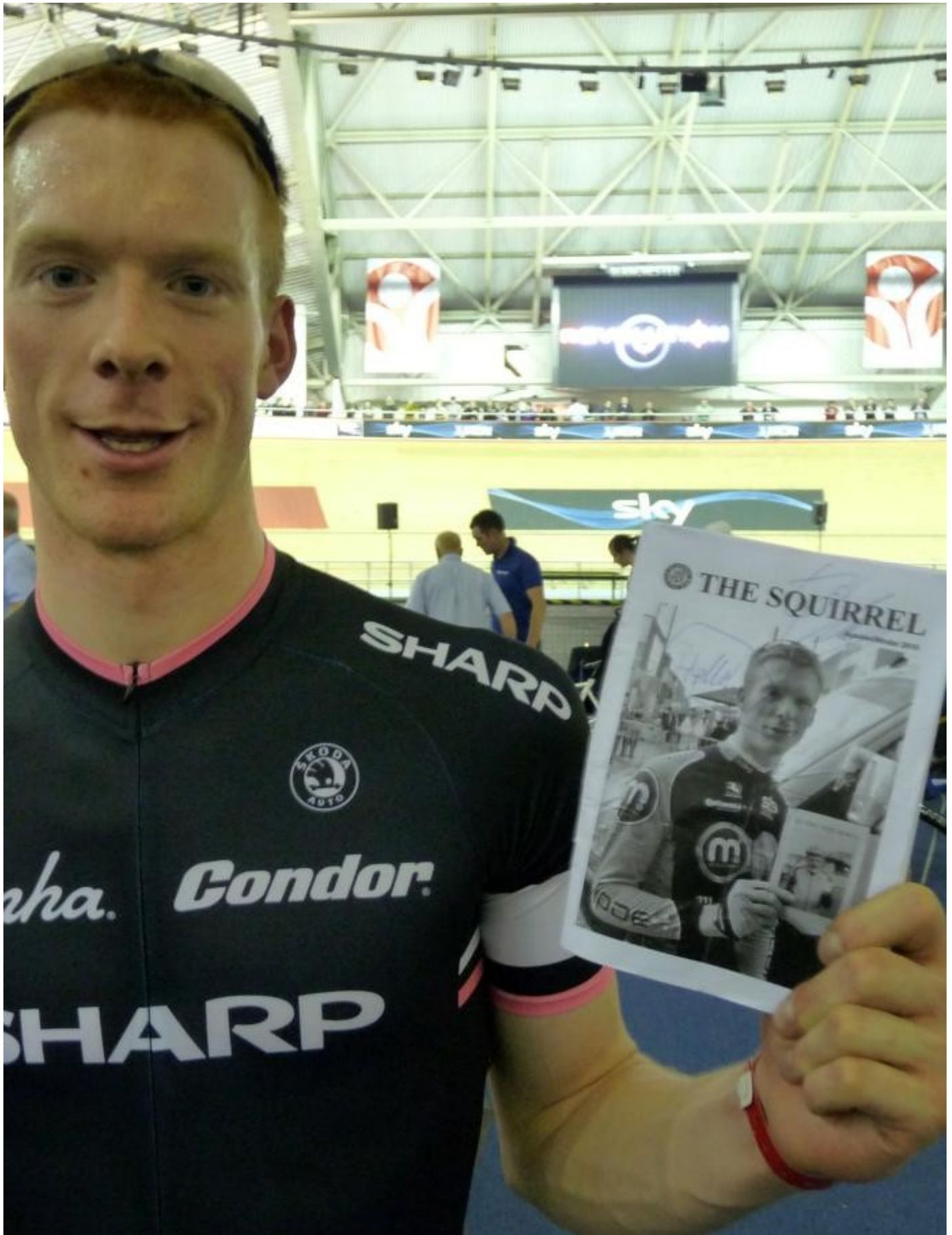




THE SQUIRREL

Summer 2011



From the chair

By Mike McConville

What a great hobby cycling is; out with your friends, fresh cool air, wet sunshine, even hot sunshine from time to time. I end up thinking that I am in a different world when I am out on my bike.

The number of people who turn up at Rackhams on Sunday to enjoy the Cheshire lanes is amazing, and enthusiasm for TT events and official road races has stepped up several gears this year.

We have young and old, male and female taking part in a whole variety of events, and doing amazingly well PBs, “class wins”, and team wins all over the place. I must admit Allan is doing a fantastic job keeping the results up to date on the website. And I found £2 down the back of the sofa the other night and am seriously considering giving it to John Barry on a Wednesday night – he might have to recalibrate his calendar if I dust off those old tri bars.

The only downside to this great pastime we all enjoy is that we have to share the rather poorly maintained roads with other motorists.

I do wish the government would find a way to spend some of the revenue it gets from motorist on maintaining the roads to a decent standard, they manage to achieve this in other parts of Europe.

The government is doing a great job paying for the emergency services, which we seem

to be using far too often. We had a half-day pile-up on the way to Two Mills, which resulted in three of our number going to A&E; a Tourer tried to get down Bate Mill without his bike and ended up in hospital for a few days before heading to the lake district for some much need TLC from his girlfriend while his hip and arm repaired. And then we had the nicest one-armed person I know becoming completely armless for a few weeks while his broken elbow repaired. Best wishes to them all.

Most accidents happen when we are tired and under pressure. I have been known to annoy some of the more experienced riders in the club on a Sunday morning by shouting out to try and slow the pace a little so that all the group members can stay together, especially as we navigate the various hazards on the roads.

The people on the front should always take care not to stretch the elastic as we go through junctions etc, should point out hazards and always slow a little at the top of a hill to allow the group to reform (that’s code for wait for me).

I have just convinced myself that I should continue to advise caution on a Sunday morning, as the consequences of not doing so are too scary to think about. I want to enjoy myself on a Sunday morning not keep A&E busy.

Ride on.

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Meet your clubmates... Darren Buckley

Darren Buckley, professional photographer, young dad, ace cycling leader and organiser, good clubmate.

When and where were you born?

Southfields Maternity Home, Bowden, July 1968.

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

Started with some friends in 1984 and Joined Seamons in 1985

What was your first race?

My first open was a 25 mile TT on an old course with a dead turn in Congleton. It started just near Monks Heath traffic lights, went to Chelford roundabout, up to Congleton and back again. It even had a right turn in it. I did a 1.09.30 I think.

What was your first win?

I haven't won a race but my first trophy was Seamons first year rider and I recorded an average of 25.51 over ten full tens.

Which performance do you rate as your best?

Manchester to Blackpool 14 weeks after brain surgery. Spent most of the time waiting for a friend who, although fit, couldn't go that fast as his bottom bracket worked loose en route. Think we did 4.5 to 5hrs.

What is your favourite meal?

My Dad's Steak, with red wine sauce and baked potatoes. Ask Tim Seddon about Dad's Steaks.

What were you like at school?

Not very fit and a bit behind the other kids as I had leukaemia in junior school and missed quite a lot of school.

What kind of books do you read?

I'm not a big book reader, mostly I've read cyclists' biographies.

What kind of music do you enjoy?

Pretty easy-going, can listen to most things. My main CDs are pretty 80s based: Ultra-



Darren, on the other end of the camera

vox, The Jam, Pink Floyd, Dire Straits.

And your favourite type of TV program?

Sorry I'm a pretty big fan of CSI and NCIS. But during July it is always TdeF.

Which newspaper do you read?

Cycling Weekly

What is your ideal holiday destination?

Cyprus: we had our honeymoon there after watching the Tour start in London.

Do you have any hobbies (apart from cycling)?

Fishing and hiking, not much time these days

Who would play you in a film of your life?

Kath says Brad Pitt. Who's he?

What is your greatest fear?

Being dropped by the half-day! Well, also having another brain tumour rates pretty high too.

Continued overleaf...

It is about the bike

By Ed Baldwin

Like many, I enjoy our Wednesday night evening 8.75 TT. I am not trying to win it but use it as a measure of my own performance and as a good top-end speed training aid.

Near the start of the season on a very pleasant sunny evening I recorded a PB of 22:00. I was very pleased with this, I always use a road bike as that is all I have right now and it doesn't make any real difference anyway...I'm old school.

One Wednesday, a dull wet and windy evening, I had forgotten my light; of all nights this was the night I really needed it.

I spotted my friend Roy Myers in the car park returning with his bike.

"I'm not doing it Ed, the weather is too poor, it's no good for me," he said.

"Great," I thought, straight in with..."Can I borrow your light?"

"No problem, Ed, in fact why dont you borrow the bike and see what you do?"

I accepted Roy's very kind offer; he has a low profile Cervelo TT bike with a Campag disc wheel. We adjusted the saddle and he plonked his aero helmet on my head and I was off.

Not being too comfortable with the set-up as this was my very first time on one of

these bikes, and taking the wet roundabout very gingerly at about 3mph, I recorded a new PB of 21:56 and came tenth on the night.

Old School? I'm saving up for a new TT bike right now!



Ed's 'carbon footprint' is about to get bigger...

Meet your clubmates...

How would you describe yourself in a Lonely Hearts column?

Lonely flat tyre needs a nice lady with a repair kit and pump

What is your favourite training ride?

20-mile circuit starting on the sprint bridge and out to Ashley, Tatton straight, Knutsford A50 to Seven Sisters Lane, Ollerton crossroads and back past Frozen Mop to Ashley, finish on top of the railway bridge.

First did this with Julian Smyth and his dad Mike back in 1985 I had never gone round bends so fast in my life.

What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

Very awkward if pushed too hard, so don't push me!

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?

I really don't like awkward people; they are a nightmare to budge when they decide they don't want to do something.

Bristol tips with Peakey

By Gordon Peake

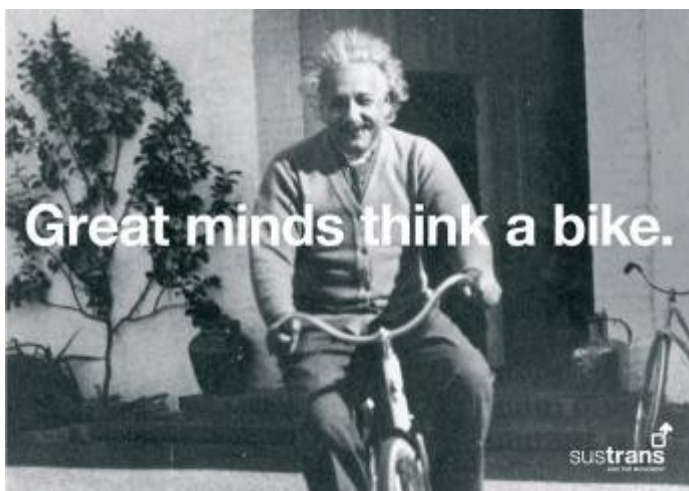
The rumour I'd gone to Glastonbury was vaguely true.

I was delivering my much-loved but 30-year-old caravan for my two sons to "enjoy some comforts" in-between trudging the inevitable mud. With any luck they would trash it, which would give me the final push to replace it.

Meanwhile I was to spend six days with my twin grandsons and their mum Sara in Bristol.

The bike, of course, got packed "just in case" I wasn't required at playgroup one day.

So it was on Saturday, while the Bristol young mothers gathered to communally picnic in the park, I stole off to explore the Bristol to Bath trail, Sustrans Route No4!



A Sustrans rep who tried to sign me up to direct debit, informed me it was actually Sustrans' first trail, despite now being reduced to No4.

The inaugural Sustrans two miles is here! Route 4 now starts in London and ends in St David's, Pembroke. Well I won't be doing most of that today!

This part follows (mostly) a disused railway track and for the whole 16 miles is three metres wide of stunningly good tarmac. Handy, if like me you like to gander the surrounding countryside.



From the very centre of Bristol it worms out, north easterly, through the suburbs with numerous access places, all well tarmac-surfaced entrances and sign-posted. Puts the Trans Pennine to shame.

It was fairly early but already warm and humid. Crossing the outer ring road bridges, the terrain opens up. On one side hills and on the other views across the Bristol rooftops.

The surroundings keep improving as you enter the Avon Valley Country Park, where the railway obviously crossed the river several times on its way to Bath. Each bridge giving you time to take in the river views from some height. For a couple of miles you are joined by a well-preserved stretch of full-size railway with a much-loved steam train puffing up and down purely to entertain the overall-clad anoraks. A couple of stations with ye olde paraphernalia, including a handy looking cafe.

Suddenly along the trail lie some huge statues. The one I liked, was an inebriate Roman, flat on his back with a carafe of "red". This, along with some extremely pleasant country residences of Cotswold stone signalled the outskirts of Bath.

The trail takes you quickly into the heart of the city; a relatively tiny city! Having explored a couple of times in recent years

Continued overleaf...

Bristol tips...

and well worth a visit, especially the actual Roman Baths, I declined to linger today. So I dropped onto to the river path and vaguely back the way I came. It soon rejoins the trail.

I'd spotted, and planned to take lunch at a riverside pub a mile or so outside Bath. However it looked very busy with a cider and burger festival in full swing. I pressed on to the station cafe at Britton – the hub of the "Avon Valley Railway".



After Panini and tea I set off while chatting on the phone to Karen (my good lady) back in Timperley. You can do the phone thing quite safely on flat, tarmacked "off road" trails!

I ploughed on in a world of my own oblivious of the fact I was nearly back in Bath. The same busy pub brought me to a halt and realisation. Shock actually! I can't remember committing such a navigational blunder like that before – and on a linear railway trail. Oops! So with some extra miles on the clock I re approached the Bristol outskirts.

Time to take a leak before entering civilisation! A Springwatch moment as my performance was not appreciated by a very healthy slow worm trying to escape the sudden warm downpour. Another first! That's peeing on, not seeing, a slow worm. If you're ever down these parts with your

bike I can recommend this excursion. It's ideal for a relaxing pootle with not a single pot-hole to worry about and ideal for youngsters. You can keep your head up and being on a railway track you can't go wrong. (Ok – I can!)

Watch out for the Sustrans reps with clipboards and forget your bank details. I think a donation is admirable but subscription is £60 per year. Am I tight or what?

Next time it's the Avon Valley circular route; some 80 miles around the rolling countryside of Somerset and Bristol. It's really good having grandchildren! The caravan, by the way, arrived back in perfect condition, if full of Glastonbury mud; but that soon cleaned off. The lads were a bit more jaded, but they also soon scrubbed up. "You'd love Glastonbury Dad". No, no, never again – been there, done that years ago, thanks. 1970: Byrds, Colosseum, Country Joe, Jefferson Airplane, Led Zeppelin (the latest band), John Mayall, Pink Floyd, Santana, Steppenwolf, Johnny Winter, Frank Zappa, Moody Blues, Donovan etc etc and no Beyonce (thank god), and only one stage. It's got its own website? It rained then I remember, just before we got sunburnt. Some things never change!

sustrans

For more information on **sustrans** and the National Cycle Network see their website:

www.sustrans.org.uk

"Sustrans provides creative, innovative and practical solutions to the transport challenges affecting us all. By working with communities, local authorities and many other organisations, we create change by putting people at the heart of activities, enabling many more people to travel in ways that benefit their health and the environment" - which is Modern Corporate for "we build cycle routes".

Llangollen or bust

By Martin Wiggan

When you're trying to write about the annual Llangollen run, where does one start? Invariably, there's the course to consider – the distance, terrain; there's the weather and what to wear. But the biggest, most limiting factor constraining anyone with any dreams of taking the trophy will always in my lifetime be the question of whether

Robin will be riding.

That drives me to train harder than ever in the middle of winter.

Yeah, you have to ride 50-odd miles in February all

the way to Llangollen. Yeah, it could snow. Yeah you could crash. It's all irrelevant; to win you have to beat Rob! That's it. Simple.

What to say about the man who's won this event more years than I've been out of nappies? If this event matters to you, and as a Seamon's Roadman/woman, it should, then this club tradition is the fiercest fought of all events in the calendar.

This year was only my fourth time of riding (note I avoid the word 'competing' – I have only truly 'competed' twice), I have been third, totally dropped, and second in the last five years, the latest one being beaten to second by Robin.

To finish "best of the rest" last year was OK and to a degree pleasing, but it can't be OK again this year can it? In the words of Keith Stacey: "Why race for second place?"

So this year, in my mind, second was nothing; to me second was no longer a victory.

Second was losing.

So: "no pressure, then, Martin," I told myself, and as the weeks building up to the race came and went, others added to that pressure.

Rumour and grapevine told me that Rob was training. That, and he kept giving me a right kicking on the Saturday morning

chain-gangs and Sunday club runs.

Charles C and Nigel H had me down as to best of the rest for the race at that time, and I wanted, desperately,



Llangollen fans... who will be first over the line in 2011?

to win more than ever.

So how do you set about beating him?

Well it's not like a club run and it ain't like a road race.

You can't attack and form alliances and a breakaway; it's through-and-off until you get dropped.

You have to be fit too as in its own way, like a time-trial, it's a race of truth. There is nowhere to hide on the hard-shoulder of the A483 from Chester with 35 miles of pain already in the legs, a three-quarter headwind and no room to echelon; you might as well be on your own.

In the irreverent word of Roy Myers on a four-up time trial: "It is every man for himself;" unless you're Robin.

Robin is a marked man. He hasn't a chance of being let go by the group, but he knows it and doesn't try, unless it's to try to slip away quietly with a couple of others.

Continued overleaf...

Llangollen or bust...

But it's never an all-out attack, it's attrition. Maybe three or four simply slip away off the front because the others behind are no longer strong enough to even suck a wheel.

This year I had proven my fitness already in front of the half-dayers. The chain-gangs organised by Robin (what a great success, Rob, by the way – thanks), were a place to train, to feign fitness or weakness.

But with three weeks to go, I had given it away: I was fit, no two ways about it. For that time of year at least. It was just a case of sustaining the fitness and not getting over-excited beforehand.

If you're like me, when you have invested yourself in mid-winter training, getting ill with 3 kids in school is a permanent anxiety before Llangollen.

I eat/sleep/breathe the day in March weeks, no, months beforehand.

By the day, I had all but convinced myself that I had a sore throat and a virus; and I still don't know if I had, or whether I had just been telling myself the wrong thing – letting the excitement and pressure get to me.

And so onto the ride. You know Robin's taking it seriously. He just looks different at Rackham's. He's edgy, full of spark; concentrated though, not flippant. On the other hand, I stay quiet for periods, with little humorous outbursts, (reassuring who?) seeking to hide the nerves. It doesn't work.

For those who are involved, you can taste it already, the pain of 30 miles through-and-off – the anxiety is there for everyone. As we ride down the road, the A56 turns into the A556 and we get close to Chester, with approximately six miles to go before the left turn off to the Wrexham junction, the chain-ganging commences.

At first it's bitty, kicked-off with a very quick descent. Soon it get's controlled, serious,



Keith, Martin & Karen at the cafe...

smooth (unless you're riding behind Basil – who is all power and gusto and whether in front or behind him in the chain, you end up doing far too many little sprints in order to stay with the group. Don't get me started on that Baz).

It's like a calm descends on the group... whirr, whirr, whirr.

Fortunately it's a nice day. The wind isn't too bad, and it's sunny. I have managed to get a quick farmer's fence stop in at some red traffic lights, so any natural stops can wait till the café now (great timing from Keith Bailey – thanks for spotting the opportunity big man).

There's never been a group as big in the initial stages and latter stages of the charge.

There has been an amazing resurgence in the club at all levels. New members have driven the faster half-day riders to up their game, the youth coming through is challenging the older riders. Whatever the rea-

son, we'll be looking back on these days in years to come as the one of the club's purple patches; or, to coin a cycling phrase, the club is pinging!

And so I am sitting, chain-ganging with 12 of my clubmates – all relatively faster than usual at this time of year, all sitting there, quiet, waiting for Marford. “Bloody Marford” was how Karen Popplewell described her anxieties about the climb beforehand. She has a point.

It was only four years ago when Adam Rycroft turned green and was sick at the top and received the ever-coveted Hammering award for his ability to vomit so profusely as a result of not being able to gauge his fitness levels. If I am not mistaken, he hasn't ridden Llangollen since that year.

So, Marford Rise. If you don't know it, it's the first pain point. It's about a kilometre (if that) of 6-7 per cent. And at 20mph it can seriously eat into your chances of survival. Ian Holmes validated this suspicion early on on the climb. One beer too many, ya Lordship? There wasn't an outright attack this year, though Robin put in a dig at the front initially, followed by myself and Robin again over the top.

Driving on the pace over the top we counted the riders remaining. We were inevitably less, but still at least seven strong. From memory, in the group after Marford were: Basil, Charles, Dan M, Keith, Robin, Ammon, Paul and me. If I have missed anyone off this list, please feel free to harrang me on Sunday. A very solid group of riders, and not one rider without the guts to compete hard.

The ensuing battle on the A483 was equal to the predictions of carnage. By the junc-

tion off the bypass, my legs were shot. Only bluff and reputation (if that's anything at all) would save me from being dropped.

Over the lumps that followed Robin was crazy, attacking, yelling: “Come on Bradley”. (Recently I have become ‘Wiggo’ but before that I was named Bradley, after the same near namesake).



Seamons members muster for the camera at Llangollen

Survival over the two lumps prior to the run-in is vital. If you hang on here, then you can sit in until the sprint. Hanging on to the wheel when every fibre of your body is fighting and telling you to stop is crucial – it's survival!

You haven't come all this way to get dropped now, eh?

You bite the handlebars, lift the back-wheel off the ground through the power pushed through the drive-train. The bike leaps and bends under you as you try to stay with Robin.

Argh! The bunch gets strung out, it's likely that there might only be three or four us for the run in, but as a testimony to the race, we all manage to survive the attack.

The race to the finish is on. My mind switches from survival to winning.

How can I win this thing? I am in the mix, that's job done. I have to conserve, get

Continued overleaf....

Llangollen or bust...

the wheel of Rob, but spot the finish five seconds before him. I have thought about this for weeks.

My theory of how to beat Robin in a sprint from a small group of riders is weak. I figure the only way is to get up to my own full speed before he notices I am sprinting. For this to be effective, I also need to be alongside him at full speed when he notices and starts his charge. If I don't do this, then I lose.

So how slim are my chances? Yet here I am, after months of winter rides, turbo sessions and weights, early nights and enforced nights off the beers, hanging my hopes on the slimmest of chances. Why? And that's how Rob won this time. He did enough to beat the pack. He knows just how to do this.

It comes with class, knowledge, confidence and the need to win. Never have I seen

Robin not know how to beat everyone in a sprint. Not one that matters to him anyhow.

I sprinted after Dan kicked it off, but Rob spotted it at the same time, got ahead of me and that was it, done. My hopes of going earlier just didn't happen. I didn't have it to beat him. As Robin has said to me more than once, there are no alliances for Llangollen, the best man always wins. He certainly does!

I am proud of my second place. It's not winning, but to make Robin compete for the victory is enough for me. To have pushed him, you have to be pretty good. Maybe next year eh?

The ride home was simply sublime. A tailwind all the way home, through Delamere in glorious sunshine, finished off by the obligatory sprint into Hale won again by... ah, you know.

All photographs courtesy of Johnny Pardoe



HANDY RE-USABLE ROBIN HAIGH VICTORY PHOTO



jp

Ride Big Momma

With Dave Matthews

Puntastic audax action promised for anyone who wants to ride Big Momma.

Three brand new rides, organised by Seamons member David Matthews, are on offer on September 18.

Those seeking a challenge should assemble at Old Ma's Coffee Shop near Tattenhall, approximately 10k SE of Chester.

Pistyll Packing Momma (206km) heads out to Chirk and then visits Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall, which at 240ft is one of the wonders of North Wales. The route then continues through wonderful scenery to Lake Vyrnwy and Bala before returning to Cheshire via The Shelf and Hope Mountain. The standard of this ride is comparable to the Tour of the Berwyns.

Momma's Mountain Views (134km) follows the same route to Chirk before heading over to Llangollen past Chirk Castle. Next comes the Panorama before an ascent of the Old Horseshoe Pass to Ponderosa Cafe at the summit. From here the ride rejoins the Pistyll Packer above The Shelf

near Llanarmon-yn-Ial, and shares the same finish.

Momma's Leafy Lanes (50k) gives a pleasant, undulating ride through the local lanes. Designed as an Audax taster and/or a scenic and not-too-demanding excursion into the countryside.

Old Ma's has plenty of free car parking available for those who need it.

It would be great to have some Seamons riders along to support the event.

Further information and entry details available at www.audax.uk.net or from David Matthews by phone or email at dmanu@fsmail.net.

Tour of the Berwyns

An intrepid 51 riders completed the Berwyns audax events back in May.

Most took on the 200km full Berwyns, with the balance enjoying the shorter, but nonetheless challenging and rewarding Panorama course.

Among the finishers were ten Seamons members.

Organiser Dave Barker thanks all of the participants and helpers who made the event possible.

If you've not had a go at either, put May 19 2012 in your diary as Dave's promoting it again next year.



Audax—take the road less travelled

Tour of the trough

By Ed Baldwin

A quiet pint in the OMT for Ed Baldwin and Tim Seddon ended up with a club run to the Trough of Bowland.

Asked about his ideal club run, Ed reminisced about the days of his youth and his old stomping ground in the Trough.

A plan was hatched.

Said Ed: "In a Kevin Costner "build it and they will come" style I got the map out, picked a few of my favourite roads and climbs, had a reconnoitre trip with Matt Wright, timed the proposed route, checked



out the quality of the cafe stops and promoted my proposed club run as best as I could.

"The day itself was a day thoroughly enjoyed by everyone. The weather gave us a typical, blustery, coastal wind and intermittent showers, but the fantastic scenery, fresh air and lack of traffic helped to give us a Seamons day out to remember."



Welcome to the club

Experiences of a new club cyclist

By Jeanette Barber

Having spent many years tootling around on my hybrid, I became the proud owner of my first road bike just over two years ago. Paul had been trying to persuade me for years to be brave enough to use a road bike but I was too scared.

I was cycling most Sunday mornings, 20-30 miles (with panniers carrying spare clothing and tool kit etc) while Paul cycled on his lightweight road bike and I was finding it VERY hard work to keep with him!

Anyway, to cut a long story short, I was injured whilst training for the 2009 London Marathon and thought I wouldn't be able to run it, so Paul persuaded me to get a road bike to cheer myself up! It only took me one or two rides to realise that I did like riding a road bike and gradually my confidence grew and the mileage increased. I cycled the Manchester 100 later on that year.

Then in summer last year (during bike week), we saw a notice in the local paper saying come along to Rackhams at 9am Sunday and cycle with the Seamon's CC social group. So we turned up.

I was full of trepidation, I really didn't think I was a good enough cyclist to ride out with a club and thought that I was far too old to be joining a club run for the first time! Strangely enough, we were the only two newcomers who had responded to the newspaper article on that day.

It was a great ride, approximately 30 miles to the Wizard café and back. Paul and I were made so very welcome by Darren and the others in the group. I had no trouble cycling at the pace of the group and I had my first experience of riding in a pack.

After one more Sunday ride we both joined the Club and we haven't looked back since. Darren has been so encouraging as a group leader, he has given me all sorts of



tips and helped my cycling confidence no end. I was so scared of cornering or going downhill without braking initially and (although still not 100 per cent confident) I have got better; although at times I'm sure Darren and the rest of the group despaired that I would ever improve!

Every time I corner now I can hear Darren telling me (a) how much research goes into tyre design so they grip when the bike leans and (b) if I don't improve I will cause mayhem in a peloton!

By September, I had even bought and started to use clipless pedals (I cannot believe now that I ever didn't want to use them)!

Our weekends are now planned, if at all possible, so that we can cycle on a Sun-

Welcome to the club...

day with the club and I have hardly missed any (riding all through the cold winter months). I really love my Sunday rides.

The Social group is so friendly, we have all got faster and faster and now we even have our longer rides once a month which are great. I have also cycled several Thursdays with the Tourists, and even the faster group a couple of times, and have always been encouraged and made to feel very welcome.

I went to a Seamons track night only as a spectator, but have since tried taster sessions and have (almost) overcome my fear of fixed wheels, no brakes and 42° slopes! So hopefully I will take part in a Seamons session.

Paul and I go to the club nights when we can, we went to the annual dinner dance and it has been a real pleasure getting to know other club members.

It seemed to take forever, but at last I am the owner of Seamons's club kit and I am really excited to be able to wear it, because I really do feel part of an absolutely brilliant cycling club.

I think I am becoming addicted to cycling. Before writing this, I have cycled every day for the last nine days, I've cycled the Llangollen Panorama audax, numerous Wednesday night 10s, done the club 25-mile TT and even been out with the Tempo group on a Sunday.

I am definitely an addicted cyclist now! Thank you to everyone in the club.



Ron Spencer

Obituary

Cycling friends remembered Ron Spencer and paid tribute to the popular shop owner and former 12-hour national champion, following his death in July.

Cycling Weekly reported: Spencer was national 12-hour champion in 1963 and second in the BBAR that year. Thirty years later, he was still clocking fast standards against the clock.

He was a long-time frame maker and mainstay of the trade scene with his shop Ron Spencer Cycles, which doubled up as a meeting place for his long-time club.

The news of his sudden death, aged 69, shocked friends and clubmates. "Ron went out for 90 miles by himself on Monday, which makes you think there was no underlying health problem," said Warrington RC member Darrell Webster.

"He anchored the club as a president and



Ron Spencer [R] in the inaugural Johnny Helms 2up

had a genuine love for the sport. His enthusiasm and willingness to get involved was the mark of him as a man. Nothing was too much effort for Ron."

Up to his death, Spencer had been actively involved in his work, riding and the club, notably helping to organise last year's inaugural Johnny Helms Memorial TT.

Café corner

Updates from Café Queen

Cafe Queen has donned her cycling costume once more to do the difficult research that is necessary for you to find the perfect cake stop.

This time, she's been out to Delamere, Macclesfield Forest and Acton Bridge.

First up: the Eddisbury Fruit Farm at the bottom of the Yeld. "You can cut through the track from Delamere Station cafe via the Linmere visitor centre and along the Sandstone Trail, less than a mile.

"It is directly on the corner. They are very welcoming and do all kinds of filling snacks – lovely sausages! – and cakes, most food locally sourced and home cooked. Good prices. Open Wednesday to Sunday. They also sell every kind of fruit juice you could imagine, and cases of local cider, but you'd need a big pannier!"

There is room for large groups and there are picnic tables outside. Cafe Queen recommends ringing in advance if you're taking lots of friends: 01829 751188

Nearer to home is Davenport's Garden Centre on the A49 south of Dones Green,

same side, near the swing bridge at Acton.

Cafe Queen reports: "It's fairly small, set with white lace table cloths, silver cutlery and rather nice antique chess sets on some of the tables, and Solitaire. I thought this might indicate a long wait, but it wasn't too bad. And you can buy some plants at the same time!"

If you're out in Macc Forest, you can try Nice Nosh, a snack van at the back of the ranger's hut, just before the climb of Standing Stone.

"He is there weekends and bank holidays. He was there the day of the Royal Wedding and had plenty of custom from walkers and cyclists, taking advantage of the quiet roads. I nearly lay down in the middle of the A50, I was so excited to see it with NOT A SINGLE CAR!

"All home-prepared food, even his own rhubarb! I had hot rhubarb sponge and custard, £2. His Stilton and mushroom oatcakes are good. It's a great "rescue" stop on your way home from the hills."

Thanks Cafe Queen.



Crikey—trikey!

Photograph courtesy of Johnnie Pardoe



Club spirit

By Gordon Peake

Why do we ride as a club?

A simple question with more answers than members. All answers are relevant and correct, no doubt. *Espirit De Corps*? Faith in the collective benefit?

One reason to ride in a group is the obvious of back-up when things go wrong, as things inevitably do from time to time. It's sod's law things will go wrong when you're out of sight or trying to get back on!

The favorite individual interruption of course is the puncture. Not necessarily requiring the whole group's attention, but a short wait by all costs nothing, and certainly a "hang on" by at least one pal, just in case the pump decides not to work or the spare tube's a dud is a good idea.

However – how often is it assumed the person missing knows the way or, "he'll have gone the *usual way*"?

It's just as naughty to decide to "plough your own furrow" without telling at least one of the group before splitting. Of course, you can do what you like, you're a grown up! – just tell someone your going!

The importance of collective care and consideration was dramatically re-affirmed on a Touring section run.

The day had been fraught with heavy downpours and indecisions, about short sheltering stops which had eventually led one to go off the front, but at least we'd seen him go.

We'd already waited (in vain) for one who had, without a word "ploughed his own furrow" – we assumed!

Turning to Bate Mill at "Prostate Corner" (a popular gate stop. Ed), Chris Thompson (our man in black) had need to stop. I acknowledged his verbal and we potted on carefully down the wet tarmac drop to Bate Mill.



At the next turn I called to the back: "Are we all up?" referring to Chris. "Aye," came a response. Luckily, a mile on, we caught the off-the-front man, wrestling a new inner tube, causing us all to stop. A suitable punishment some thought!

As we hung on, showing the usual sympathy, I noticed Chris wasn't actually with us yet. I knew he was very familiar with the route. He must have punctured? After a lengthy wait I reluctantly volunteered to go back – just in case.

As I mentioned, the weather didn't encourage a re-trace of at least a mile, but Chris isn't one to deviate or dally unnecessarily. It didn't feel right. I told the others to plough on. Dropping back into Bate Mill I was joined by John Hurley who didn't know why but he'd decided to follow me. I'm glad he did!

We spotted a small crowd on the opposite side of the valley on the second bend. Ominous thoughts! Chris was on the deck – going nowhere but hospital.

By the time we arrived he was going into shock and I hope he felt some reassurance now we had reappeared. During the endless wait for the ambulance the first gent on the scene asked how come we knew Chris, and if we were "together" how come we weren't around for 20 minutes or so?

The very helpful gent, was quite right to...

be puzzled. He seemed reasonably satisfied with my brief explanation of pee stop protocol.

With the merely scuffed bike suitably housed in another very helpful local's shed, John & I eventually waved to the ambulance and set off home, cold to the bone, in a thunderstorm.

However, we were both relieved we'd bothered to back track. Imagine if it was you – Billy Nomates in that sort of situation!

Chris, it turned out, had a broken hip and elbow and after a short stay in hospital and a convalescent trip to the Lake District for

some TLC is back at home, although not yet back in the bunch.

A reminder to us all that club riding brings a collective responsibility to care, communicate, and never assume. Keep an eye on each other in between the pot-holes. There are lots of reasons we set off together – there are far more good reasons to stay together! Imagine finding out the next day you'd abandoned a club mate in similar circumstances?

We don't need unworkable rules to interpret – just good club collective consciousness!

Out & about



Rob Morton and Dave Barker ride out (above L), Dave, Malc McAllister & Reg Blease on the new Dutton Lock bridge (R). Roger Haines and Andy Burns at 'Camp Seamons' (below L). Sally Cowan approaches the Panorama Cafe during the Tour of the Berwyns (below R).



Road racing report

By Nigel Harrop

The 2011 road racing season has got off to a tremendous start with possibly more Seamons riders than ever lining up in the peloton.

As of May, in the club RR Championship, no-one has scored any points in British Cycling events so there is everything to play for in that competition. If this is still the case at the end of the season then it is points achieved within the rider's age category (six for a win down to one for sixth place) in TLI cycling events that will determine the outcome.

Competition in the Veterans RR Champs, where both TLI cycling and LVRC (League of Veteran Racing Cyclists) races are included, is fierce. At the time of writing, Ian Holmes is the competition leader with 22pts, followed by Robin Haigh and Nigel Harrop with 16 each and Ashley Cress with 4. This is only a provisional tally so don't complain just yet!

As ever a points table does not tell the full story and there have been many notable individual achievements.

Ed Baldwin marked a return to road racing by competing successfully in a very competitive criterium series at Salt Ayre, Lancaster.

Karen Popplewell chose to endure a baptism of fire by entering the British Cycling National Women's RR series event on Acton Bridge as her first competitive road race. She went on to be an incredibly impressive finisher in a greatly reduced world-class bunch. Both Karen and Sally Cowan are currently flying the club flag for the women in the Cheshire Series events at Lower Withington.

Ashley Cress got his defence of the Vets Club RR championship off to a good start by achieving a third place in his category at the Manchester Wheelers criterium on the

new closed circuit in Stalybridge.

Very impressively, both Robin Haigh and Ian Holmes achieved LVRC national ranking points in the first round of the competition at Audlem, with Robin finishing second and Ian third in their respective categories. Ian has already achieved three category wins this season and among several notable rides Robin finished four in the gruelling three-day Tour of the Abberleys.

Pressing them both hard, Nigel Harrop has achieved two category wins, including an outright win in a recent Cheshire series 60+ event, and a number of other minor placings.

So, a great start to the season and I look forward to reporting on further successes later in the year and hopefully including some impressive results from our many talented junior riders.



Above, Karen Popplewell's fan club wait on the climb at Acton Bridge— 7 times! Well done Karen, in the front bunch every time, and winner in her category.



Striker, listen, and you listen close: flying a plane is no different than riding a bicycle, just a lot harder to put baseball cards in the spokes.

- Airplane

Testing times

By Ed Baldwin

This year's open TT season got off to a really rocking start – looking at the start sheets of events this year it seems that Seamons are putting out a full squad everywhere you look.

We have the seniors, vets, ladies and junior categories covered with a plethora of riders and abilities and the really exciting bit is that we have more budding competitors getting practice in via the Wednesday Time Trials.

I hope I don't miss any star performances out in this brief report and if I do I sincerely apologise.

I was impressed with Jeanette Barber's Wednesday club 10. She posted a very respectable time of 25:34. Jeanette (LV) only started cycling 18 months ago, well done you.

Many others seem to have made significant improvements to their Wednesday times from last year proving that a little dedication and training pays off. I notice Matt Wright has knocked a solid minute off his times last year and junior rider Joe Lockett one and a half minutes.

Not to be outdone by the boys, Karen Popplewell has stripped two minutes off her times to prove she is a force to be reckoned with. More about Karen's exploits later.

There is a whole host of riders improving by around 30 seconds, which by any standing deserves a heap of praise.

At the end of May there was a scrap for first place in the club's 10 series, with only one point separating two of the club's heavy-weight time trial contenders – Paul McAllister (147 points) and Charles Carraz (146 points), with Nigel Harrop third (118 points).

In March, Paul McAllister won the M&DTTA "medium gear" 10 with a 24:13 on the J2/3



Sally Cowan powering into Swineyard Lane

and Joe Lockett was the third junior in the 10 with a 26:40.

In another early season event, Dan Mathers, Roy Myers and Basil LeRoux claimed the team first prize in the Altrincham Ravens CC 25 on the J2/9. Basil frustratingly missed out on going under the hour by 5 seconds in this event.

Into April and, new to competition riding, Karen Popplewell took the position of first lady and first novice lady in the first Open that she had completed: Withington Wheelers' 25. A respectable 01:04:37 on the J2/9 saw to that.

Always wanting to grab a headline she dramatically crashed in the first open event she took part in the week before.

Karen's then followed up this success with two course records. First she bazooka'd the Seamons ladies club 50 record on the J5/12 at the Manchester Wheelers 50, beating the previous record (held by Louise Eden) by 3 minutes 39 seconds, setting a new time of 02:06:08.

Then it was in June and the South Penn-

Testing times...

-ine RC Open 25 on the A25/11, Karen broke the club's 25 record with an under-the-hour time of 59:38. We had hardly finished congratulating her when the Warrior Princess struck again on 2nd July at the Belper BC Open 25 again on the A25/11 with an awe-inspiring 58:43.

If that isn't enough for any rider in one year, Karen set a new ladies record in the M&DTTA 100 with 04:35:25 in July. She's breaking more records than a DJ's clumsy assistant.

Then during July there more club records to fall. At the Kent Valley RC 10 on the L1015 course, she clocked 22.23. In the VTТА event on J4/11 she set a new record at 30 miles of 01:26:20. At the M&D 100 on J2/18 she set a new record of 4.35.25. Congratulations Karen!

Taking encouragement from Karen's result (not the crash), Sally Cowan battled her way to seeing off the competition and taking no prisoners in the VTТА 10 (Mc&NW) on the J2/1 with a 28:06 to claim first lady. If the club carries on like this we will see more first ladies than the White House.

Mike Brooks and Phil Holden – now there's a likely duo – surprised us in a few ways so far this year. In the Glossop Kinder Velo two-up 25, they were the fastest 60+ riders with a 01:08:37 well done, but the real surprise to me is that they are over 60.

Sandi Leach and Simon Williams recorded a 01:06:26 taking the "fastest tandem prize" obviously Sandi doing all the work.

In May, Dan Mathers bagged a fantastic fourth place and his best 50 time in the very cold, wet and windy Dukinfield CC 50 with a big-up massive 01:57:51

Ladies? Kaz Poppo once again: first lady 02:15:08 congrats.

In the Cleveleys RC 10 super-fly junior Joe



Lockett finally showed his dad who's boss with a magnificent 23:19 against Graham's respectable 24:17.

Alan Chorley scored high on the board in this Fylde Coast Event with 22:07. Well done to him.

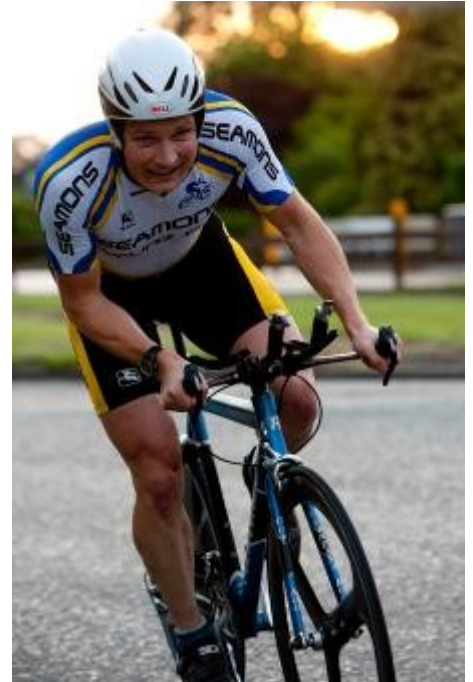


STOP PRESS

Karen Popplewell set yet another new women's record in the BDCA 50 on the A50/6 achieving a time of 2:02:21.

Club 25 championship

Photos by Darren Buckley



Above: Harry Streuli about to exit Seven Sisters (L), while Charles Carraz (M), and Martin Wiggan (R) round Chelford in the final dash for the timekeeper. Below right: John Rowlinson shows his mettle.



Joanna Blakely (left & above) exhausted but elated at the finish.



Thirty three members rode the championship 25, more than have ridden for many years, with five riders beating the hour.

Champions (right), left to right:

Joe Lockett, Junior champion; **Martin Wiggan**, 2nd in Men's event; **Robin Haigh**, both Men's Champion and 1st on Vets standard; **Dan Mathers**, 3rd Men's event; **Karen Popplewell**, Women's Champion; **Nigel Harrop**, Bob Richardson Handicap champion.



Sea to sea the hard way

By Dave Matthews



Riding from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mediterranean Sea across the spine of the Pyrenees, crossing the legendary cols of the Tour de France, must be one of the most perfect lines and inspiring challenges in cycling.

The best known traverse is the “Raid Pyrennean” which allows 100 hours (four days, four hours) to make the crossing in either direction. Distance is 720km (450miles) with at least 11,000m (36,000ft) ascent over the prescribed climbs.

The route across the Pyrenees also lends itself to a terrific cyclotourist experience which generally takes a couple of weeks to complete, carrying panniers as ballast.

My personal introduction to the Pyrenean cols came when I stayed with a small group of other (previously unknown) cyclists at the cycling holiday centre Pyractif near Bagnères-De- Luchon, in late September 2009. This holiday was arranged to celebrate my

new freedom from work as I had recently become a state pensioner.

The visit gave me the opportunity to ride local cols such as the Peyresourde and also gave me a taste of supported riding (ie all my heavy, warm gear for the descent was taken to the col summit in a van, to save effort on the ascent). While very much enjoying the experience of riding in a group, I soon came to realise that although I could still get up the cols it took me a fair bit longer than the other, younger and fitter riders. My long held wish to attempt the “Raid” was looking somewhat over-ambitious in the light of this experience. Holiday hosts Pyractif organise a range of Pyrenean cycling experiences, among them a supported “Raid Pyrennean” and two alternatives. I immediately dispensed with any thoughts of the “pro-strength extra-hard traverse”! But I thought I might have a chance of completing the more relaxed five-

and-a-half day coast to coast raid.

The description in the Pyractif brochure says: "The classic C2C just relaxes the pace a little and takes you on a pure riders' route rather than the prescribed itinerary and checkpoints of the Raid. The stages remain challenging and all the most iconic climbs such as Tourmalet, Aubisque Aspin etc still feature."

After some considerable thought, and no little trepidation, I asked Chris Balfour, Pyractif ride leader, if he thought the C2C was a possibility for me. Chris replied that it would be no problem as he staggers the leaving times of the various groups each day to accommodate the speeds of different riders.

This technique allows for all the riders to summit the cols and finish the day's ride at similar times. His method of organising ride times had worked well on my first visit, so based on this experience and putting my trust in Chris, I signed up to ride the C2C in June 2011.

Training for the C2C started in January and five months later I arrived in France a few days prior to the main ride in order to acclimatise. During the first couple of days I rode the Hospice de France 1,385m (very steep at 12 per cent-plus for the last 4km) in poor weather and next day the Col du Portillon 1,320m from Spain to France in improving conditions.

We drove east to Biarritz to meet the other riders---making up a group of 20 from variously England, Scotland, Canada, New Zealand and Australia. Next morning we all cycled to a beach 5km SW of Biarritz and the start of five-and-a-half days hard riding.

Day 1 Biarritz to Gurmencon (160km; 1,900m height gain; main col the Osquich 500m+). The group set off from the beach at a frantic pace as the headbangers established the international pecking order at the

front. The more sedate riders stayed in touch as well as their breathing and legs allowed. Weather was good all day as we progressed along beautiful country roads giving tantalising glimpses of the big mountains ahead. By the time we reached the small town of Gurmencon, the capability of different riders within the bunch was well established.

As I was riding more slowly than most of the group, it became clear that the best way for me to get through each day's journey was to start early, meet the assembled group at pre-designated cols or cafe stops and then leave early to gain some extra riding time. This is a recipe for getting very tired due to the limited recovery time available at each stop, but it did keep me in touch with the other riders at key points on the route.

Chris had prepared detailed maps showing the key villages, cols and food stops on the route for each day. These maps enabled me to follow the route just like an Audax event back home, whenever I became separated from the other riders.

Day 2 Gurmencon to Argeles-Gazost (95km; 1,850m height gain; main cols Aubisque 1,709m and Suolor 1,474m).

This day normally includes the Col de Marie Blanche (1,035m) on the C2C tour, but the col is not on the official Raid. Consequently, I decided to circumvent this col by riding through the woods on the south side and make up some time on the faster riders in our group. This made for a beautiful ride over a couple of minor cols which allowed me to get a head start over the other riders onto the Col d'Aubisque (1,709m).

This col is a monster rising up 1,200m above Lauruns with a maximum gradient of 10 per cent. The weather remained dry and not too hot as I gradually paced myself up to the summit cafe. Chris's staggered start system was working well as I arrived...

C2C the hard way...

at the summit before most of the group rode in.

From the summit of the Aubisque there is a descent onto a superb balcony road which arrives at the Col du Soulor after 10km of stunning views and a short final climb.

From the Soulor I enjoyed a 20k descent to our hotel in Argeles-Gazost for a much deserved shower, beer, meal and sleep.

Descending the Tourmalet on Day Three



Day 3 Argeles-Gazost to Bertren (130k; 2,000m height gain; main cols Tourmalet 2,115 and Aspin 1,755m). This day felt like the “big one” crossing two of the most iconic cols in Tour history. A couple of the English lads had really suffered on the Aubisque the previous day, so they joined me for an early start. The road from Argeles-Gazost rises gently for 18km to Luz St Sauveur from where the col rises over a further 18km and 1,450m ascent with a maximum gradient of 9.5 per cent. I just ground away at the pedals, enjoyed some great views, until eventually I finished the climb over two hours later up some really steep bends to the summit cafe.

There was little time to dwell at the chilly summit as we put on warm jackets for the long 17km descent to Ste Marie de Campan. I was getting really hungry by this time and the local cafe in Ste Marie looked very inviting. However, our itinerary required a sharp right turn and a further 8km of gentle ascent to the lunch stop at Payolle in the shadow of the Col d’Aspin. I reached the cafe just in time before the dreaded bonk arrived.

The ride up to the cafe was enlivened by spotting Fabian Cancellara and Leopard Trek team car speeding down towards Campan whilst he was training for the Tour. After a very brief lunch stop, we wound up the hairpins to the summit of the Col d’Aspin. This was one of the few occasions when I had company all the way as Dave (not me – another much younger version) was still suffering from his efforts on the Aubisque the previous day and was in no mood for speed. Once over the Aubisque we had a super descent to Arreau, then rode along the delightful D26 to stay overnight at Pyractif HQ in Bertren. Towards the last 10km of this ride the weather, which had been dry up to this point, started to look ominous and then rained on us for a while as we passed the heritage monastery of St Bertrand-de Comminges close to the finish. Not a good omen for the next day!

Eastern view from the Col d’Aspin



Day 4 Over half way!!! Bertren to Tarascon (130km; 1,300m height gained; main col, Col de Port 1,250m). The usual route heads out over the Col de Portet d'Aspet 1,069m to St Girons after 60km. However, as I had ridden this col previously, I opted to take a flanking route to the north along the Garonne river. This ride was uneventful except for the heavy rainstorm that caused me to shelter in a barn for 15 minutes.

Amazingly, this storm avoided the other riders in the mountains who all arrived dry at our al fresco picnic site by the river in St Girons.

From St Girons the route heads out west through Massat to climb the Col de Port for 12km and 620m with a maximum gradient of 8 per cent. The drizzle and mist had closed in by now leaving a memory of endless slopes and hairpins to the summit. Once over the col, it was a relief to cape up and descend 18km to our hotel in Tarascon.

Day 5 Tarascon to Prades (120km; 2,100m height gain; Main cols, Route des Corniches, Col de Marmare 613m and Col de Jau 1,506m) A fabulous ride today, so much better than the normal "Raid" route.

We climbed out of Tarascon up to the Route de Corniches which gives great views down to Ax-les Thermes in the valley far below. The route then leads up the Col de Marmare when the weather started to turn. As the rain came on, the temperature suddenly dropped and we shivered our way over the summit and down to a cafe stop at Belcaire.

The cafe provided a much needed safe haven from the ever-worsening conditions. The owner and the locals looked bemused as 20 bedraggled cyclists stripped off sodden gear, put on as much extra underclothing as available from the support van and then put the sodden clothing back on top. We were too cold to care how we looked

and fortunately there is a high level of tolerance for cyclists in France which meant the cafe owner didn't look too concerned about the dripping wet chairs and floor we left in our wake.

The weather gradually improved after Belcaire as we descended for 35km through a series of dramatic gorges to the small town of Axat. This town marks the start of our last big climb: 22km and 1,100m ascent with a maximum gradient of 9 per cent up the Col de Jau. There are more steep gorges after Axat before a left turn leads you back up into the mist, rain and cold for a long, long way.

I had my only accident of the trip on this col when my Look pedal refused to release as I slowed for a brief stop on a steep part of the climb. As a consequence I fell off backwards still attached to the bike, banging my backside and elbow. It transpired later that a small piece of grit had jammed in the pedal release mechanism, causing me to crash.

Fortunately my injuries were painful rather than serious, so I remounted and continued on my way up to the summit. The weather on the col was horrendous with strong winds, driving rain and a really low temperature. I moved straight onto the 26km descent to Prades to escape from the awful conditions as soon as possible.

The descent of the Col de Jau gives an escape route from the big mountains towards the Mediterranean sea and warmer climate. As I descended the slopes, the weather gradually improved until the final 10km of descent, with great views into spectacular gorges on the right, was completed in bright sunshine. As I came to the hotel in Prades at the end of this long descent, I finally allowed myself to think: "I might actually achieve this ride. Wow!"

Continued overleaf...

C2C the hard way...

Day 6 Prades to Argele sur Mer (70km; 200m height gain; NO COLS!) The sun came out and it was a party-mood ride to the sea. We stopped for a cafe break in Thuir where a sign fell out of a tree on Chris's head and we cured Charlie's knee pains with ice from a wine bucket.

The pace increased after the cafe, as you might expect. In one of the small villages a lady stepped backwards into the narrow main road from an alleyway whilst talking to someone – right into my front wheel. Very nearly a crash as she apologised profusely for not looking.

As I entered the outskirts of Argele sur Mer there was a loud bang from my 24-spoke rear wheel as a spoke pulled itself out of the rim. Thank goodness that didn't happen earlier!

At last, there was the beach at Port Argeles, the Mediterranean and Chris and Helen from Pyractif waiting with a glass of champagne to celebrate. What could I do but walk into the sea in my cycling kit quaffing champagne at the end of an incredible adventure.



Many thanks to Pyractif for their excellent support and organisation – and to the other 19 cyclists in our group for their constant good humour, mutual support and companionship.

Postscript; we spent the next night at the

walled city of Carcassone where we had just a few beers and an excellent celebration dinner before going our separate ways. I still had a few days to spend with Pyractif before returning home to UK.

First thing was to buy new wheels as I didn't fancy Pyrennean descents on dodgy spokes. The next Sunday, two days after the C2C, I rode up the Pla-d'adet (1,680m, 16km; height gain 870m; maximum gradient 10 per cent from the base at St Lary-Soulan) starting from the village of Sarrancolin 20km to the south.

This ride was memorable for the heat; temperature was 41C at the base of the col and rose to 47C (117F) during the climb. There was no shade until some trees gave limited shelter 4km from the summit. I managed the ascent by stopping every 2km to cool off and by diving into the cool water pools at the village of Soulan half-way up.

When I got back to St Lary-Soulan, with the temperature still in the mid 30s and virtually no food or water left, I was alarmed to find that all cafes, shops and garages had shut as it was now Sunday afternoon. I still had 50km to ride back to Pyractif base at Bertren which was almost inconceivable without more food & water.

As I descended the valley I was getting ever more concerned over my return ride as every possible food outlet was shut.

Finally, my last chance for sustenance turned up trumps as the cafe in Sarrancolin had remained open. I consumed a stale sandwich (no, don't apologise) and filled my water bottle before returning once again on the D26 to Bertren after one of my hottest and deeply tiring rides ever. But for the resilience built up over the C2C, I believe this ride would have been impossible for me in such difficult conditions.

Back in the UK, I am hoping to use this new level of fitness on some good, hilly rides – once I have got the tiredness out of my system.

Los amigos ride again (again)

By Dave Barker



I suppose you might blame it on our unimaginative parents – how else could you wind up with a Spanish-bound party of five consisting of three Johns and two Daves? But there we were: J1, Carberry who has lost count of the number of Costa Blanca holidays he has organised; J2, Hurley, back for a second year of pain and suffering; J3, Hammond who had obviously heard tales of pain and suffering and was starting to have second thoughts well before take-off (he needn't have worried, he was the star of the week); D1, Matthews, a Javea novice but he had stayed down the coast at Altea, where he had accumulated some handy local knowledge, like the whereabouts of a secluded harbour-side bar in Moraira; and D2, Barker, on his fourth trip (and the best yet, weather-wise and cycling-wise).

We were staying in a villa on the edge of Javea, a port on the east coast of Spain, about half-way between the top (French border) and the bottom (Gibraltar), in the province of Valencia. On the coast, sandy beaches (Benidorm etc) are interspersed between spectacular rocky headlands (eg

San Antonio between Javea and Denia).

The coastal plain varies somewhat in width and then you are into the mountains. From the villa we looked north to the Montgo, a 750m giant just 5km from the sea, and there were several 1,100m peaks within easy striking distance, and climbs which got us close to 800m.

You quickly learn that being in Valencia is just as important as being in Spain. Signs and notices appear in Castilian Spanish and in Valencian (closely related to Catalan). So we were staying in Javea (Castilian)/Xabia (Valencian) and one of our favourite rides took us to Jalon/Xalo. During the Franco dictatorship Valencian had been brutally suppressed but over the last 40 years it has been revived and is now spoken by a majority in the province. Our friend, the retired bike-shop owner is now taking lessons in Valencian, a language he had been forbidden to speak at home in the 40s and 50s for fear of vicious reprisals.

There are also reminders of the Moorish occupation of Spain, particularly in the...

Los amigos...

place-names. A ride that takes you through Benigembla, Beniarbeig and Benidoleig suggests, if anything, the Scottish highlands and something Celtic; the last thing such names conjure up is rural Spain; but Ben is an Arabic prefix. The most recent invasion has been perpetrated by the Brits and you discover that the latest production at Calpe's Casa de Cultura is HMS Pinafore performed by the local Gilbert

and Sullivan Society. When we dropped into a bar in Parcent on the Sunday afternoon of Paris-Roubaix, we found the bar-owner was from Bath and the only other occupant was from Stockport. This made it quite easy to get the channel changed from football to cycling.

The format had been well-established well before D2 came on the scene. This is a cycling holiday, not a training camp. We always have a coffee stop, a lunch stop and a tea stop. Collectively we have now accumulated unrivalled expertise on the best bars and the best bocadillos (French stick sandwiches) on the Costa Blanca. 'Blanco y negro' (two varieties of sausage/black pudding) emerged as a new favourite this time; and at the Bar Daniel in Pego there were 73 kinds of bocadillo to choose from.

The three-stop rule might suggest an ultra-leisurely trip for doddery potterers. In fact with a 9 to 9.30 start, a finish some time between 4.30 and 6 and reasonably disciplined stops, it is possible to stack up some good mileages (80 on one day and 470 for the week in seriously hilly country).

There is a 'no racing' rule which is subject to the whims and fancies of 'le patron' (J1), who wound up as King of the Mountains



and King of the Sprints; indeed he was heard to comment that he had at last found the perfect group to take on holiday – in the absence of Rob Morton, he could hammer all of them.

It was a great time of year (second week of April) for bike-riding. The weather was perfect, initially a bit hot but settling down in the low to mid-20s; we had virtually no rain. The orange trees were in blossom, leaves were appearing on the vines and the olives groves were a mass of grey-green foliage. Javea was a bit less 'dead' than it sometimes seemed in March but was not yet heaving with tourists. The roads, in general, were excellent and the driving was, with a few exceptions, more considerate than we tend to get at home.

So, for a typical day. We get away at 9 and drop into Javea, then there's a tough, hair-pin climb onto the ridge separating Javea from Denia to the north. We detour along a big cul de sac to have a look at the lighthouse at San Antonio with superb views of Javea's bay and the next headland to the south. Then retrace and down into Denia, a larger port from which there is a two-hour ferry crossing to Mallorca.

After several years of trial and error, John has now got Denia sorted (the main land-

marks are the bike shop, the sex shop, the narrow gauge railway line and a down-at-heel industrial estate) and we're soon out on the Pedreguer road inland and towards the mountains. We work out that lunch at the top of the Coll de Rates is going to be bit late so we take on bocadillo reinforcements sat outside our favourite bar in Pedreguer. Then it's a climb over a small pass into the next valley. Here we are well away from the coast with the mountains all around. We start the 8-9km climb of the Coll and are soon spread all over the place. There is a continental team, complete with team bus, training on the climb.

By the time we regroup and get into the German bar at the summit it is 2pm. Lunch is chicken salad in the sun out on the balcony with an unforgettable view of the road snaking up the Coll, the valley, mountains on the other side; in the distance we can just make out the Montgo and, perhaps, the coast.

D1 and J2 decide they'll head back rather than take on the Castell de Castells detour (and get in 64 miles for the day). We're now getting into wilder, more remote and less populated country (albeit, bizarrely, we can just glimpse the tops of a couple of Benidorm tower blocks through a V in the mountains).

For several years there have been big road works which made this section difficult, or impossible, to get through. Now we are enjoying the benefits: a superbly surfaced and beautifully engineered road which, on the evidence we came across, cyclists are taking full advantage of, but motorists either don't know about or are not interested in. Castell to Benigembla is a gorgeous route down a valley with spectacular mountains on either side. It is one of the best roads I have ever ridden and in seven miles we saw one car and one tractor.

Bike-riding bliss.



We have our tea stop in a bar at the entrance to some prehistoric caves near Benidoleig, then head back home through Pedreguer and Jesus Pobre, finishing with 80 fabulous miles on the clock.

A great day and just one day on a great holiday.

Best clubman update

As at the end of June;

1	Sally Cowan	142
2	Phil Holden	139
3	Karen Popplewell	132
=	Dan Snape	132
5	Mike McConville	129
=	John Verbickas	129
7	Reg Blease	128
8	Ed Baldwin	122

So we might need to rechristen Best ClubMAN; and Mike McConville was only away for one week and he's already 13 points off the pace.

Annual general meeting

Don't forget to put Friday, November 11 in your diary for the club's annual meeting.

Secretary Dave Hoyle will be in touch with members formally with the practicalities of getting business onto the agenda, so watch your inbox, the club room noticeboard, website and forum for updates.

As well as discussing any business members want to raise, the annual meeting is where we elect the committee.

Some committee members have already said they are stepping aside to let someone else have a go.

On behalf of the membership, the committee acknowledged and recorded its thanks and appreciation for their contribution and commitment.

In the case of Johnny Coles, vice-president, he's been our treasurer this time for more than a decade.

While all committee posts are available to anyone for election, it is already known there will be vacancies for:

- 1 Club treasurer
- 2 Time trial secretary
- 3 Social secretary

If you think you'd like to offer your name for election but don't know what's involved, speak to any of the current post-holders or committee members.

It's not all tea and cakes but you will be making a valuable and important contribution to the success of the club.

Bishop's big bash

Another Seamons weekend of cycling, walking, eating – and celebrating Michaelmas – beckons.

The weekend of September 16-19 is the date for your diary when you set the sat nav for Bishop's Castle (don't forget the apostrophe!), in the heart of Shropshire.

Bishop's Castle comes alive with entertainment from Friday tea to Sunday night.

While spoken of as a "tourist weekend", there is no reason why anyone can't relax and enjoy themselves here or plough around the miles of country lanes and villages.

You will need a tent or caravan and should book onto the Foxholes campsite, a ten-minute walk to the town centre.

Basic itinerary (and you don't have to do all or any of it) is: arrive for a Friday ride approx 11am. Enjoy Saturday and Sunday as you wish. Depart Sunday or Monday afternoon as suits.

Check out the websites – there are several. Some ride a lot, some walk a lot, some eat a lot, some laugh a lot. Going to press we have about 16 on the list.

www.foxholes-castle.co.uk

www.michaelmasfair.org.uk

For further information contact Gordo on 962-1649, or that John C on 01565 650842

Competitors, marshals & officials gather for the camera after the Championship 25.



Photo round-up of Spring/Summer 2011



Darren Buckley captures Jack Robinson stalking his prey at the Tameside road racing circuit (above)



The mysterious yellow warm object in the sky baffles many, but presents Vera a rare chance for sun-glasses! While the Tourists' exploration of the canal towpaths goes a bit 'Monet'. Below right, Jim Boydell-calls in for a chat on a visit from the deep south. The tourists pose at Llangollen (below left).





CLUBS RUNS LIST

	Half day	Tempo	Touring	Social
4 Sept	Manchester 100	Radway Green	Hope	Pott Shrigley
11 Sept	Chester—Bob Richardson Memorial Run			Plantation
18 Sept	Delamere	Meerbrook	Bishop's Castle W/E	Whatcroft
25 Sept	Meerbrook	Two Mills	Candle Factory	Spinney, Allostock
2 Oct	Club Hill Climb Championship & Lunch			
9 Oct	Congleton GC	Poole Marina	Delamere	Plantation
16 Oct	Summer Trees	Chestnut Centre	Cheddleton	Middlewich
23 Oct	Castleton	Elvis Cafe	Mystery run	Wizard, Alderley Edge
30 Oct	Tattenhall	Cat & Fiddle	Duddon Valley W/E	Delamere***
6 Nov	Blaze Farm	Rose Farm	Barthomley	Dones Green
13 Nov	Elvis Cafe	Blaze Farm	Algreave	Whatcroft
20 Nov	Cat & Fiddle	Delamere	Rose Farm	Spinney, Allostock
27 Nov	Radway Green	Aqueduct	Hayfield	Poole Marina***
4 Dec**		Astbury	Dones Green	Wizard, Alderley Edge
11 Dec	Dagfields	Summer Trees	Tourists' Lunch	Middlewich
18 Dec	Carberry's Christmas Grotto & OMT Lunch			
25 Dec	No run	No run	<i>Impromptu</i>	No run
1 Jan	<i>Impromptu</i>	<i>Impromptu</i>	Blakemere	<i>Impromptu</i>

* After the Hillclimb mudguards are required.

** Montgomery Weekend

*** The last Social run of the month is longer and may not be suitable for less experienced riders



For your diary

11 Sept	Bob Richardson Run
16-19 Sept	Bishop's Castle
18 Sept	Big Momma audax
24 Sept	Seamons Open 25
2 Oct	Hillclimb & freewheel
9 Oct	GP des Gentlemen (2up)
30 Oct	RTTC Hill Climb (Long Hill)
31 Oct	M&DTTA BAR deadline
11 Nov	Annual General Meeting
2-4 Dec	Montgomery Weekend
11 Dec	M&DTTA Fancy Dress 10 Cyclists' Carols (Chelford)
18 Dec	Xmas Grotto / OMT Lunch

