

Time-Trialling For Beginners

Cycle racing can take many forms but the simplest and easiest way to start is to take part in a Time-Trial.

There is a full calendar of events, from spring to autumn but cycling clubs up and down the country run mid-week races and this is the best place to start.

A Time-Trial is ridden alone and riders must not take shelter from other cyclists or other vehicles on the road.

For a newcomer to the sport the big advantage is that no special equipment is needed.

Any kind of bicycle can be used the only stipulations are that (a) it must be roadworthy and (b) for Seamons events at least it should have a flashing rear light that is clearly visible. We also recommend the wearing of a helmet.

Time trials are run over a set course that is usually well marshalled (although the onus is on the rider to know which way to go). Distances vary, most events are over 10, 25, 50 or 100 miles although there are also events that last for 12 or 24 hours.

Seamons CC hold time trials every Wednesday from April to August over a straight out and back course of 8.75mls (it's this distance because we cannot do a full 10 miles and turn at a safe place.)

Riders meet at High Legh Village Hall on the A50 about 2 miles west of the A556 Mere Corner. Events start at 7pm in April and 7.15 or 7.30 for the rest of the summer.

Competitors set off at one minute intervals and their aim is to complete the course in the shortest possible time. Riders like to compare their times with others and with the times they themselves have done in earlier events. Remember a rider must not take shelter from any other rider or vehicle.

Riders who are under 18 must show a signed "Parental Consent" form to the event organiser. Copies of this form can be obtained from the Club Time Trial Secretary

Courses vary, some courses are known to be quicker than others, and aerodynamic equipment helps riders go faster but this is not needed for a newcomer.

Time-Trialling The Next Step

Time Trialling in England and Wales is controlled by Cycling Time-trials (cycling time trials.org.uk)

This is a non-profit making company run by cyclists for cyclists. It has only two paid employees and decisions about the running of the organisation are taken democratically at both local and national levels.

For organisation the country is divided into districts. We are in the Manchester District and we border the Liverpool, Midland and North Districts. Each District has its own Committee, the main functions of which are to sort out the calendar of events and to deal with the administration of the sport.

Events fall into three main categories, Open Events, Association Events and Club Events.

All districts have a local "Association" who run events and local competitions for riders in their district. Seams are in the Manchester and District Time-Trial Association. (<http://www.manchesterctt.org.uk>)Members of the Association committee are elected annually from amongst the member clubs at an AGM.

Club Events.

As the name implies these events are run by individual clubs on courses which are convenient for their riders. The events are generally open to all riders whether or not they are in the promoting club but preference will be given to members of the promoting club if there are too many riders. These events are usually run on a "turn up and ride" basis. All riders must sign on at the headquarters and Junior and Juvenile riders (under 18) are required to bring with them a "Parental Consent" form (available from the club Time-Trial secretary) before they will be permitted to ride. Entry fee to Seams events is £2 for seniors and £1 for Juniors/ Juveniles (the club has to pay a levy of £1 per rider to Cycling Time Trials which is how that organisation is funded).

Association Events

Manchester and District promote a series of events during the racing season (usually from March to October but sometimes longer) and a Christmas 10 mile event.. These events are entered in the same way as open events (see below) but awards are made primarily to riders in clubs who are affiliated to that Association and there are many prizes and trophies available to win. These are presented at the Associations Annual Luncheon in January.

Open Events

The sports governing body, Cycling Time Trials (CTT) publishes a Handbook each year, which gives details of all of the Open and Association events throughout the year. Copies of the Handbook can be ordered through the club time trial secretary or direct from Cycling Time Trials.

The Handbook also sets out the Rules that govern the sport and gives details of past champions and record holders. Continued....

How to enter an Open or Association Event

Open and Association events can only be entered by using an approved Entry Form. These are available from the Club Time Trial Secretary or can be downloaded from the CTT website .(<http://www.ctt.org.uk>).

The form asks for your name, address and Club and also asks you to give details of your best and most recent performances in time trials (if any). The Entry Form must be completed and signed and sent with the appropriate entry fee to the promoting

secretary whose name appears in the Handbook. Younger riders also need to have the parental consent part of the form signed by a parent or guardian.

The Entry Form must reach the Organising Secretary of the event before the Closing Date. This is usually two weeks before the date of the event but can be a longer period, especially in the case of National Championships. Events with non-standard closing dates are listed in the Handbook under "Special Conditions".

As events are limited to a maximum of 120 or 150 riders (sometimes fewer) preference is usually given to the fastest riders. This is not usually a problem in the Manchester District except for events on courses to the extreme south of our District that have proven to be "Fast courses".

Some events are restricted to various categories of riders e.g. Ladies, Juveniles or Tricycles and other events have special conditions attached to them. For example in Veterans events riders must wear an approved crash helmet.

Once entered you can look forward to receiving your Start Sheet. This will tell you your time of start and number and also give advice as to the course and any special hazards you must look out for. It will also state what prizes are available to be won. The Start Sheet may also tell you what Handicap you have been awarded (see below) and /or tell you (if you are over 40) what your Age Standard is (see below).

On the day you should turn up in good time at the event headquarters to sign on and collect your number and allow sufficient time to ride to the event start (which may be two or three miles from the headquarters).

After the event return your number to the headquarters where your time will usually be displayed on a Result Board, enjoy a cup of tea, discuss your ride with your fellow Club members and return home to await the Result Sheet which can take up to a month to arrive.

Handicap

Event organisers often offer a range of prizes based on a handicap system. If so against each riders name on the Start Sheet will appear a number of minutes and seconds e.g. 3.30. This is calculated based on the time on the Entry Form of you and the fastest rider to enter the event. Lets assume the fastest rider in the 25 mile time trial you have entered has a previous best time of 1hour exactly and you have a previous best time of 1hr 3minutes and 30 seconds. You may then have a Handicap of 3and a half minutes whereas the faster rider will be on scratch (i.e. will have a nil handicap). On the day if you complete the course in 1hour and 2 minutes your handicap time will be 58minutes and 30 seconds (1hr 2 min less 3min 30 sec). If the faster rider covers the course in 59 minutes you will have beaten him "on handicap" as his Handicap time will be 59 minutes.

Over 40 Age Standards

In Time trialling over 40's are referred to as Veterans and if you wish you may join the Veterans Time Trial Association (VTTA).

The Vets (as they are affectionally known) have devised a variation of the Handicap that gives older riders a chance to win prizes.

A table of times has been drawn up of the time that a rider may be expected to achieve for a given age and distance. For example a rider aged 65 has a Standard Time for 25 miles of 1hr 19min 30 sec whilst a 40 year old would have a Standard Time of 1hr 6min 0sec.

On the day of the event if the 40 year old covers the course in say 1 hour exactly he will have a "Plus" of 6 minutes. If the 65 year old covers the course in 1hr and 10 minutes he will have a "plus" of 9min 30 seconds and in this example will win "On Standard".

There are different Standards for Men and Women