

# The West Surrey Cyclist



**January – March  
2014**

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## WHAT WE ARE

CTC is the national cycling charity. It campaigns for both road and off-road cyclists. Membership includes third-party insurance, legal claims advice, travel and technical guidance, on and off-road route information, and a bi-monthly national magazine. It has 70,000 members and affiliates and is the oldest and largest cycling body in the UK. It has a network of local groups of which CTC West Surrey is one.

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**CTC West Surrey website:** <http://ctcwestsurrey.org.uk/>

**CTC West Surrey history & archives website:**

<http://homepage.ntlworld.com/chris.jeggo/wsdahist/histarch.html>

## WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

*The recent news from London of six cyclists killed in a fortnight in accidents involving lorries and buses was very sobering and a reminder of the danger that long vehicles pose: if a car overtakes and then pulls in too soon, we find ourselves squeezed towards the kerb, but if a long vehicle does it, we can finish up with nowhere to go but under the rear wheels.*

*I always try to remember to ride sufficiently far out from the kerb that I am leaving room to compensate for the misjudgement, or even recklessness, of overtaking drivers. For the same reason I also tend to stop pedalling or even brake slightly when being overtaken by a long vehicle.*

*Riders in a large group, especially those at the front, are even more at risk from an overtaking long vehicle as it will require a lengthy stretch of road to clear the entire group. The chances of a misjudgement by the driver are increased, as indeed is the likelihood of recklessness caused by impatience if the vehicle has been stuck behind the riders for a while.*

*Breaking a large group up into smaller groups makes it easier for drivers to overtake, thus reducing the likelihood of impatience and recklessness. So the next time one of your fellow riders has the forethought to hang back to split an overly large group, don't ruin the plan by overtaking and tagging onto the group ahead, unless of course you want to save the expense of employing a hit-man against the leader.*

# COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR

## By Louise Gagnon, Chair CTC West Surrey

The days may be getting shorter but our Club's rides and activities programme is as vibrant as ever. And as your new Chair I am sincerely impressed by the sheer amount of initiative and contribution displayed by so many of our members.

It is with great enthusiasm that just a few weeks ago Hilary Stevenson took over from David Wood and Angela Byrne as Group Leader of the All Day Intermediates. Along with other members, I too wish to echo the sterling work done over the years by David and Angela in coordinating and leading these very popular all day rides, the concept itself being the brainchild of our former President, Chris Jeggo.

David has not rested on his laurels for very long however as in early November he had already teamed up with Mark Waters in launching the CTC West Surrey website re-design project. Three further collaborators (John Child, Chris Jeggo and me) were soon recruited and now this project, headed by Mark Waters, our Webmaster, is in full swing.

Across the Club many great ideas and initiatives are also coming to the fore on how to make our rides programmes more varied, such as Chris Jeggo teaming up with Rico Signore's Sunday morning Woking rides. Likewise, two of our Group Leaders, Clive Richardson and Liz Palethorpe, have approached our Committee with ideas to improve our group riding safety (read more about it in the Rides Secretary's notes).

Subsequent to my address to the AGM (see Club's Blog, New Chair's Message Nov 13, <http://www.ctcwestsurrey.org.uk>), I have received an abundance of very supportive comments from a great many of you regarding our Club's focus on adapting to the cycling environment of the 21st Century. Clearly, this requires that we change our ways a little and I am conscious that this may be unsettling for some. Fortunately, a very large majority of you, even amongst the hesitant, do recognise that this adaptation is overdue and cannot be postponed any longer. Already reports from the field are that riders and Ride Leaders are progressing in leaps and bounds in implementing our new Group Riding Guidelines.

Not surprisingly, many ingenious and very practical ways of making "the guidelines" work for us are daily being tested and implemented. Some of

you have already aired concerns that this very positive drive may inadvertently introduce incoherence across the club over time, and potentially engender some confusion for riders who routinely ride with 3 or 4 different groups. This has been recognised by the Committee and we have foreseen a need for Ride Leaders and Back Markers to meet at the 4 month guidelines implementation mark to share their best “tricks of the trade” on how they are making this work. To this end the Committee has asked two vastly experienced Ride Leaders, Brian Ross and Liz Palethorpe, to run a 2 hour Ride Leader/Back Marker Best Practice Workshop and they have kindly agreed to do so. The date set is for the morning of Saturday 8 March 2014, so please mark your diaries!

In closing, allow me to wish you and your family the very best for the Holiday Season, along with safe and delightfully enjoyable cycling throughout the Winter.

## **LEADERS' AND BACK MARKERS' WORKSHOP**

The Committee has asked us to lead biannual meetings to address the day-to-day, practical concerns that can occur when trying to run safe and enjoyable group rides. The first will be held at The Bird in Hand, Mayford on Saturday 8 March, starting at 10.15 am.

Lasting about 2 hours, it will be a mixture of informal and more structured discussion, giving everyone a fair chance to offer their ideas and opinions. The aims are:

- to swap experiences, good and bad.
- to discuss what best to do in emergency situations leaders and back markers could, but will hopefully never have to, face.
- to tell the Committee what we think on matters of policy relating to group rides.
- to enjoy a free drink in the bar afterwards.

Reminders to come will be sent out at the end of January. Please put the date in your diary if you lead rides or 'mark the back'. In the meantime, and including everybody who rides, please let us have your thoughts on what the workshop should address to help make cycling with West Surrey CTC as agreeable and secure as possible.

Brian Ross (07733 268543), Liz Palethorpe (01252 792187).

# CANALOPHOBIA – ALIVE & WELL

**By Dave Williamson**

John David's article in the October - December copy of *The West Surrey Cyclist* about canalophobia struck a chord with me although maybe not for the obvious reasons as I will explain. Before I go any further though I must just clarify that I am not the same Dave Williamson that John refers to who got baptised in a canal in another area. In my case my canal riding activities are based on our own local waterway, I refer of course to The Basingstoke Canal which is my daily route to and from work.

Now no one can deny that since the good surface was put down (when Woking became a government sponsored cycle town) this is a fantastic cycling facility. It is brilliant for avoiding all the vehicle-clogged roads leading into Woking. There have been times though when I have to confess that I've mixed it with the traffic rather than cycle along the towpath. The trouble is not only the risk of taking a dive into the water but also the problems caused by other users. Meandering pedestrians, obstinate fishermen, dog walkers with long trailing leads or worse no leads, drunks, druggies, gangs of teenagers – it's a war out there. The risk of falling in is probably uppermost in most peoples' minds though. Personally, I know of at least seven who have taken the plunge. I had to fish one out recently – I heard a splash, turned to look, and saw a cyclist swimming for the bank. I went back and hauled him out, then helped him fish his bike out which was right under so it IS deep. A work colleague's bike wheel caught a tree root and he went in when it was dark. He was unwell for weeks afterwards.

When I tell people of these incidents they often then come out with their own. It seems that Arthur's Bridge is an accident black spot which is actually where my victim fell in. For the uninitiated, this 18th century pack-horse bridge in recent times was strengthened to take traffic in and out of Horsell before being bypassed when Lockfield Drive was built. This involved encasing it in concrete, meaning that a lot of headroom was lost. I've heard of two others who tried to cycle under but forgot about things sticking out of their rucksacks and the inevitable happened. The official solution has been to open up the hedge either side of the bridge so that cyclists can go around it rather than under. In recent months a bicycle symbol has at last been painted on the pavement meaning that you can now officially do this.

As I said though, the other path users are just as much a danger. I now find it necessary to ring my bell to warn people walking towards me as they don't look where they are going but walk along head down texting or selecting tracks on their IPOD. This is a real problem – the music is no longer 'out there' but 'in ear' so walkers are no longer aware of what's going on around them. I've been overtaken by motorbikes, and obstructed several times by drunks and gangs of school kids. Strangely, the only problem I've never met are horses as they are banned (come to think of it, so are motorbikes). This is ironic as the towpath was built so that horses could tow the canal barges. But, I regret to say that one of the worse set of offenders are red-meat, hairy-chested cyclists who seem to be out to break their personal best times no matter who gets in their way. 'Please Cycle Considerately' signs abound but they may as well be written in Swahili as far as this lot are concerned. They plunge full tilt and unannounced into groups of walkers or under bridges all of which have blind approaches. Many times I have been taken unawares by a cyclist suddenly overtaking without any warning. I was told by a CTC official that you don't need a bell because we've all got MK 1 vocal cords. My experience is that MK 1 vocal cords don't get used very much if at all.

So, as I use the canal tow path on a daily basis, I have constructed a top ten list of rules - for myself if for no other purpose.

1. Cycle considerately. If someone moves aside to let you pass, thank them.
2. Announce your presence – fit a bell and use it. A bell means a bicycle is coming and nothing else on earth. Walkers have often thanked me for ringing mine.
3. Pass groups - especially teenagers - on the non-water side. It is better to end up in the bushes than take a dive.
4. Regard all walkers as being deaf to the World who might make a sudden move that you haven't bargained for.
5. Regard all dogs as stupid and potentially dangerous and likely to make sudden moves as in 4 above as they catch exciting smells in the undergrowth.
6. Duck under bridges and remember about things sticking out of rucksacks.
7. Keep a regular lookout behind for rude, ignorant cyclists for whom

other people don't exist.

8. Don't try to cycle along the canal after dark without lights. You'd be surprised how many do.

9. Regard all fishermen as miserable 'bs' who are quite likely to block the path with their gear or haul in a 30 foot carp pole without thinking and put it through your spokes.

10. Don't fall in.

## **REPORT DANGEROUS AND DISCOURTEOUS DRIVERS**

**By Pat Daffarn**

Most drivers are courteous to cyclists, but it's the few who unintentionally or intentionally cause problems that prevent many others cycling on roads.

Surrey Cycling Strategy and the Guildford Borough Plan being developed both promote increased cycling, but it will be some time before we see improvements.

So what can we do now? One simple way is to **report bad and discourteous drivers**. A letter or visit from the Police can go a long way to improving drivers' awareness. "Knowing there will be consequences if I am reported again has definitely made a difference to my driving" is a quote from a driver who received a warning letter from Crackdown in Sussex.

To make it easy, Police forces in England, Wales and Scotland have set up the non-emergency 24 hour 101 telephone numbers to report incidents that are less urgent than 999. The Police have also set up online reporting systems in conjunction with the County Councils and area road-watch organisations.

If we provide the police with accurate information from multiple individuals, not in or on the same vehicle, the police can take action. This can range from a letter or a knock on the door to court appearance and prosecution with 9 penalty points without serious injury having to happen. See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P7VTkJ72yzo> for an example.

So, put 101 in your mobile, take pictures and video, and **report bad and**



## **discourteous drivers at:**

[www.drivesmartsurrey.org.uk](http://www.drivesmartsurrey.org.uk) for Surrey Police and Surrey County Council.

<http://www.met.police.uk/roadsafelondon/> for London.

[www.operationcrackdown.org](http://www.operationcrackdown.org) for Sussex, which also has <http://www.sussexsaferoads.gov.uk/operation-crackdown.html>.

There is our own CTC <http://www.roadjustice.org.uk/report> but as reported in CycleClips 14th June 2013, some police forces will not accept 3rd party reports.

West Surrey CTC experience of using DriveSmartSurrey is mixed, it is quick to enter online, the police are quick to respond and confirm the facts. The need for multiple independent reports and perhaps supporting photographs is apparent. It only takes a few minutes, **so report bad and discourteous drivers.**

Cyclists need to support and work with the police if we want to improve our lot. Providing accurate and concise reports, supported by photographs and video where possible, from multiple witnesses will enable police and crown prosecution to use their time efficiently. As this link shows, even where police command has positive intentions, the chain of command and/or interpretation can be less favourable; we have some way to go. <http://www.ctc.org.uk/news/metropolitan-police-traffic-head-talks-directly-to-ctc-about-cyclist-fines>.

## **RIDES SECRETARY NOTES**

### **By John Murdoch**

This month there are a few important matters to bring to members' attention.

1. Those of you who were able to attend the AGM will have heard me talk of the commitment of the committee to the new riding guidelines which, after consultation, are now fully "operational". I wrote about them in the previous issue of the West Surrey Cyclist, but it may be worth reiterating a few of the key points that I made at the AGM regarding why the guidelines are so important:

- We are all aware of what appears to be increasing anti cycling sentiment in Surrey, some of it justified no doubt, and the very last thing we would wish to do is to leave ourselves open to criticism. But more than that, we should always be considerate and courteous so that if another road user encounters us on a ride, any comments they might subsequently make will be positive rather than negative. In other words, we should be exemplars of good cycling practice, and always do our best to put cyclists in the best possible light. This behaviour must become instinctive, but in the short term it will require focus on our behalf.
- We should acknowledge that riding in a group is very different to solo riding, there are different dangers and different considerations regarding interaction with other road users. Moreover, the implications of getting it wrong are generally more severe in a group. You are not just responsible for your own safety, but for the safety of all the other riders in the group. It is not just the ride leader who is responsible, despite their overall role, but all riders, as how we each ride impacts on others.
- Surrey roads have changed so much over the years, they are certainly busier, their physical condition is deteriorating, and almost certainly there is more inconsiderate and aggressive driving. Our actions as riders must reflect that reality. The aim of the ride leader, and of riders generally, must be to avoid “danger situations”, including setting the conditions for such situations, and in that way diminish the number of incidents that we have; safe at all times.

2. Having read the above, you will realise that the aim is to have no accidents on group rides. However, by way of insurance, we recognise the need for ride leaders to have basic “first responder” capability. Liz Palethorpe has very sensibly suggested that the time is right for a further training session to be organised (the last one was a year or two back, now), and it is therefore intended to arrange this for early in the New Year.

3. Another excellent idea regarding safety has been received from Clive Richardson, and following this we will be sourcing foil blankets and mini first aid kits to be issued to all regular ride leaders. It will be made clear that the foil blankets are not to be used to cover up Bob McLeod, if he again turns up for a ride inadequately attired.

# COLS OF THE SOUTHERN ALPS

**By William Lowries**

I cycled in the Pyrenees 5 years ago for a friend's 50th birthday celebration, and the plan was to cycle Geneva to Nice for my 60th which was in 2013. Sadly the same friends were unable to come owing to work commitments so I booked a tour in September with Saddle Skedaddle tours. I flew to Geneva where we were met and transported to the start of the tour at Alpe D'Huez.

The tour managed to include the best and worst of the Alps really. On the very first day, within probably one minute of setting out from the hotel, my back wheel had a puncture. The tour leader stopped and we noticed that the tyre was infected with what looked like swarf – tiny curls of steel which had gone into the tyre and caused multiple punctures. It turned out that both my tyres were affected, and out of 12 riders, 8 had punctures. It seems that there had been building work carried out near the hotel and there was a carpet of this swarf (from drilling most probably) which many of us had picked up. This caused an annoying delay, especially so because it was raining, which is of course always the best and most pleasant time to be fixing punctures. Fortunately it did no damage to the outer tyres & there were few other punctures on the trip.

During that day we climbed the famous Alpe D'Huez. This is a Hors category climb (i.e. outside categorisation) of 13.8k with average gradient of 8% and max gradient of 13%. Total height gain is 1141m. It has been the scene of many famous dramas in the Tour de France, and Pantani still holds the record for quickest climb – 38 mins in 1997, although Nairo Quintana's time of 45 mins in this year's Tour is probably a more realistic time for a "clean" rider. This clean rider made it up all 21 hairpins in 1 hour 18 mins and was pretty chuffed with that!

Trouble is, once you stop climbing, if it's wet, you get very cold, and the descents, which should be such joy, become scary and pretty miserable. You are shaking with cold so can hardly grip the bars let alone the brakes, and if you can apply them, they don't work too efficiently because they and the rims are wet. This was the case coming down from Alpe d'Huez, Col de la Croix de Fer, and Galibier the next day. But we all got down safely.



View from the Col d'Allos

After that the weather improved and got better each day, and we had no more rain. We still continued our climbs of major cols, d'Izoard, Vars, Pra-Loup, and my favourite, Col d'Allos. This is quite a gentle average gradient of 5.2%, maximum 10%, but you are climbing for 21k, gaining 1117m in the process. It's a climb where the first 8k is the toughest, with gradients of 8-9% up through trees. After this the climb changes as the road pops out on the side of a gorge, and the gradient eases enabling you to enjoy the ever changing views. As it was now dry, the descents could be enjoyed to the full, although the brakes did occasionally need to be applied to get round the hairpins!

Over all, it was a great trip. About 350 miles covered, but that is almost irrelevant compared with the climbs – over 12,000m in 6 days. Our group was also remarkably well matched. There was seldom more than about 20 minutes difference between the quickest and slowest rides in reaching the col summits.

I thoroughly recommend Saddle Skedaddle Tours. The 3 leaders were all strong cyclists, with lots of experience of the area and practical knowledge of cycling, fitness, food intake and general wellbeing. The tour bus was always available for emergencies and to supply more water, snacks, and access to one's extra clothing. The hotels were all good quality.

The ride finished in Nice from where we flew back to the UK.

# RIDING THE WEST COAST OF IRELAND, NORTH TO SOUTH (ALMOST!) - PART 1

**By Paul Gillingham**

It was reading Eric Newby's 'Round Ireland in Low Gear' 20-odd years ago that was the catalyst. His description of the exotic-sounding McGillycuddy's Reeks, the limestone pavements of the Burren and the pre-20th century Aran Islands sounded wonderful and I made up my mind to cycle there one day. More recently, Edward Enfield's whimsical 'Freewheeling through Ireland' was equally inspiring; the father of comedian Harry, he is a man after my own heart who enjoys solo cycle-camping.

The opportunity to explore western Ireland north to south by bike came this September. My wife and I had spent two weeks in Northern Ireland visiting her relatives and I had cheekily loaded the bike onto the car. She had to return to Surrey after two weeks, leaving me with no option but to cycle from northern Donegal to Cobh (formerly Queenstown) in the south, a ride of 700 miles over three weeks.

The ride began badly. I started with a loop around the boulder-strewn boggy landscape of The Rosses in heavy mist battling a headwind, then headed south-east to Donegal town and on to the Northern Ireland border at Pettigo. In the first three days I had bottles thrown at me from passing cars, not once, but twice! The first was a beer bottle, which smashed on the road just ahead, the second a mere plastic one. I'd earlier marvelled at the gigantic stone boulder beside the road at Crolly which had "Brits Out" spray-painted on it, so was feeling very unwelcome in Ireland and almost ready to give up.

But first impressions can be totally misleading! From that point on I found the drivers absolutely courteous, the people super-friendly and the roads, even the tiniest ones, extremely safe and pothole-free.

In fact things began to look up in Pettigo when I first met nice, friendly people. 2013 is the year of 'The Gathering' when the Irish diaspora is encouraged to return to the homeland. Reaching the town I passed a sign saying "Pettigo welcomes the Flood family" and further on a big group standing around a statue to local republicans shot by the Black & Tans in 1922. I stopped to ask a friendly-looking white-haired lady what was going

on. She said she lives in Sussex and explained that the Floods had come from all over the world for the weekend gathering. Patrick Flood, her relative, was a name on the statue and she blamed Churchill, who set up the B & T's, for his murder! She then pointed out to me two plaques up the road, one commemorating Banjo Patterson, who wrote 'Waltzing Matilda', the other to Moya Doherty, co-founder of Riverdance, both with connections to Pettigo.

The only other serious problem, initially, was the weather. From Eniskillen in Fermanagh to Sligo town and then along the north coast of Co Sligo towards Ballina and Westport it was blowing a gale from the south-west and I was, of course, heading south-west! Average speed was down to 4 mph on the flat and things were looking desperate.

It was thus a nice respite to stop at the super campsite in the grounds of Westport House, one of Ireland's great historic houses. I spent a morning visiting the house and the next day headed off early for the 60-mile return ride along the traffic-free Greenway Cycle Route to Achill Island. This was a well-marked, well-surfaced path along part of an old railway, passing fabulous scenery through forest and bog, with the sea on one side and mountains on the other. I crossed the bridge to Achill Island and parked the bike to have lunch. Then disaster! The pannier with food, jacket & waterproofs and, most importantly, my daily medication wasn't on the bike. It had jumped off, presumably while bumping over the many cattle grids en route. In a panic I rode back the way I'd come, expecting to find it hanging on a post, but no sign! It had gone!

This really was a calamity, as it meant getting back home immediately to renew the medication, not to mention buying a new pannier and jacket to get me there. Back at the campsite I mentioned the loss to a fellow camper who immediately called the local Garda (police) to report it. As he said, 'They won't take a feckin' blind bit of notice if it's just gear, but they will because of the medication'. It was a glimmer of hope!

Next morning, I checked out at the campsite office and happened to mention my plight to a young guy who was a carpenter doing a job at Westport House. He immediately phoned a pal who runs the bike hire shop in Newport, which was on yesterday's route. "Go to the Garda office in Westport, it's there", he said. I just couldn't believe it, but I went to the police station and there it was. Someone must have handed it in to the bike hire shop, who then handed it to the Newport police, who'd transferred it

to their colleagues in Westport. A miracle!

In a state of euphoria I wandered around the lovely town of Westport. This part of Ireland is in the Gaeltecht, where all road signs are in Gaelic and people still speak the language, although I hadn't yet heard it. In the high street there were two young mums chatting away in an incomprehensible language, so I gingerly approached them and asked if they were indeed speaking Gaelic. "No, sir, Polish!" was the reply. Oops!



Beyond Westport rises the huge cone of Croagh Patrick, Ireland's sacred mountain where St Patrick spent the 40 days of Lent praying that Ireland be free of snakes. On the last Sunday in July thousands climb it as an act of penance, many of them barefoot. It was raining as I arrived, so I only managed to climb the steps at the base of the mountain to pay my respects at the statue of St Patrick and then crossed the road to the national monument to Ireland's Great Famine. It's a grotesque statue of a coffin ship, with the rigging made up of skeletons of the dead and dying who failed to make it to America.

Emigration is such a key factor in the Irish consciousness. Whenever I stopped to ask directions the reply would always be 'How are ya?', never 'Hello' or 'Hi' and a long chat would ensue about where I came from and where they had previously lived, be it New York, London or Auckland. I spoke to one friendly old gentleman who had worked on a building site in Golders Green in the 50's and 60's, but who didn't seem too impressed with the English. As we were chatting a lady drove up beside us. Pointing to her he virtually spat as he said "That bitch there was born in England AND she worked in the British Civil Service". It was his daughter!

Throughout the ride I picked up mixed feelings about Britain. On the one hand people often said they admired the British for sticking with sterling and keeping out of the euro. On the other, they felt the British had failed them in the Great Famine and were no fans of Churchill. But public enemy no 1 seemed to be Oliver Cromwell and I could well understand why.

Cycling through the countryside you would often see lovely old churches or monasteries in ruins, thanks to Cromwell. Strangely, though, the graveyards attached to them were very much ‘alive’ with new graves up to the present so tightly packed together that you couldn’t walk between them.

The route south from Louisburg passed through the stunning Doo Lough Pass, then along Killary Lough, the only fjord in Ireland, to Kylemore Lake, with the white

castellated towers of the Gothic Kylemore Abbey reflected shimmering in the waters. The Abbey was built in the 1860’s by an English businessman as a honeymoon present for his new bride, who died shortly afterwards. It is now a convent school run by Benedictine nuns, but parts are open to the public including its Victorian walled garden.



Doo Lough Pass

but parts are open to the public including its Victorian walled garden.

After a night in Clifden I was now in the wonderful barren landscape of Connemara, with its bleak bogland dotted with lakes and stark mountains, the Twelve Bens. This was the most stunning scenery I have ever cycled through, I thought. For miles along the Bog Road there wasn’t a soul, animal or human, the wind was now with me and the sky was cloudless and blue.

## **PRUDENTIAL RIDELONDON-SURREY 100**

**By Peter Hackman**

Waving goodbye to Christine, I cycled off from our hotel through the deserted streets in the half light of early dawn. Approaching the Olympic Park I encountered an increasing number of cyclists until there were



literally thousands of us gathered outside the starting areas.

Watching a laundry bag containing my belongings being loaded with thousands of others onto a fleet of lorries was followed by waiting patiently within the departure pens before an undramatic departure onto the A12. Both carriageways were being used so it was remarkably uncrowded. Soon we were riding through quiet deserted streets: no traffic and crashing every red light. Tee-hee!

I latched onto quicker groups until either I bailed out or they eventually broke up, due mostly to encountering an obstacle. In Richmond Park (where I'd been the week before) I realised that my heart rate was rather higher than planned so I backed off.

Suddenly I was on familiar roads as we ploughed on through Ripley. The country lanes were crowded with cyclists as we entered the Surrey Hills. Most riders were sensible but it only needed a few thoughtless ones to hinder those who wished to overtake.

In Westcott I suddenly saw Mark Heal marshalling, ringing a large bell! When possible I thanked the marshals as I passed. However they usually had anxious eyes fixed on cyclists bearing down on them!!

In every town there were many more spectators than I had expected, waving and cheering. There were many groups of cheerleaders from involved charities. If I waved back, the cheers and applause increased.

The crowds increased along Whitehall. Then as we swung through Trafalgar Sq I was conscious of a loud noise which seemed to increase as we passed under Admiralty Arch. I wouldn't argue with the term "wall of noise". It was unbelievable. I made a rather pathetic attempt to sprint. The noise seemed to increase. I just prayed that my legs would hold out.

Suddenly it was over. I drifted to a halt and just waited, both to get my breath back and to absorb the atmosphere.

More lasting memories:

- The waxing moon and Jupiter rising over a railway bridge in the early morning light.
- Waving crowds, some sitting on chairs with picnics.
- Two police motor cyclists climbing Leith Hill causing chaos despite them taking the greatest of care!

- The one and only protester, dressed in a boiler suit and flat cap, just outside Dorking.
- Descending Putney Hill at over 30mph...faster than one would ever be able to in a car!!!

## RIDING AROUND

### With Geoff Smith

The copious literature associated with the RideLondon-Surrey 100 miles event last August did include a piece of advice worthy of sharing with you. It's about drinking and, for a change, not the alcoholic liquids of which some of my readers uncharitably think I am obsessed. It is about drinking water, about which I venture to say many of my fellow riders **are** obsessed.

The point made by the Prudential Ride-London Medical Director (Dr Sanjay Sharma) is: "THINK BEFORE YOU DRINK. You need to replace some of the fluid lost in sweat otherwise your body becomes dehydrated and less efficient. However, DRINK WHEN YOU FEEL THE NEED and DO NOT drink water excessively before, during, or after the sportive as you may develop hyponatraemia... a serious medical condition where sodium levels in the bloodstream are diluted.

"After the finish you can only rehydrate (replace lost fluids) gradually over the next 24 to 48 hours. Do not drink large volumes of fluid after finishing: listen to your thirst and drink accordingly.

"Eat some salty food as well as spacing out your drinks. This way you will not get hyponatraemia and will still replace the water, salt, and glycogen lost in riding the sportive." (The capitals are the doctor's.)

Here's another more prosaic piece of advice from me: Stuff some toilet paper in your pocket before setting off on one of these mass-participation events. Those portable loos are usually plentiful and well-sited. But they too often fall short in the paper department. For the record, I was and will always be suitably armed (and your Editor assures me the same always applies to him).

*Ed: Yes, whether cycling, walking or cross-country skiing, an emergency supply of toilet paper is one item that I always carry.*

# FARNHAM GROUP OFF-ROAD RIDE

**By Arthur Twiggs**

Our local coordinator persuaded me to organise an off-road ride again for July but it made its way into the CTC West Surrey rides list with the caveat that road bikes wouldn't be suitable, so I decided to plan something a bit more adventurous than the ramble around Caesar's Camp which I had led before. There was quite a bit of interest from local riders beforehand but unfortunately two potential participants were away and there was a clash with a birthday ride being organised to celebrate William Cobbett – whoever he was! Nevertheless I had a possible route in mind that I hadn't tried myself, although I knew parts of it from other rides including rides organised by Trail Break in the area. Thanks to our brilliant summer this year, I was able to reconnoitre the whole route two weeks before the event and did not need to change any of it.

Five of us turned up on the day suitably equipped with mountain bikes and we set off across the A31 into South Farnham passing our local coordinator on another mission in the opposite direction, and into Alice Holt forest. Not the easy route around the west side this time, but the east side of the forest which has a lot of ups and downs, but we still met lots of adventurous day visitors with their kids on bikes. Out through the south end of the forest into the Abbots Wood Enclosure and on to the Shipwrights Way where the tracks were much more sparsely populated. Giant cracks traversed some of the tracks, not as a result of earthquake, but of desiccation caused by the long period of dry weather. We popped across the road into Cradle Lane which was wonderfully dry and magic after earlier slogs through thick mud here in the winter. We splashed through the steam at the bottom which was only a trickle today. Morning coffee at the Headley Park Hotel – why not, we are not in a hurry - deep discussions about the vagaries and foibles of associated offspring and acquaintances.

Next we followed the bridle paths through the woods and fields to Headley. After the initial gates to open and close, the ride through the woods is almost ethereal until we come to the soft sand of the rest of the tracks to the river. The soft sand tracks are one of the few off-road surfaces that are better when they are wet. We came down to the River Wey via more gates and an overgrown track and a sharp s-bend above a steep drop to the ancient crossing of the river on an old stone bridge. I have often

encountered other people (ramblers) here, but it really is a magical spot evocative of times 200 years ago.

The climb back out of the valley was particularly trying with brambles and nettles because the local authority does not see fit to maintain this particular bridle way. We negotiated our way through the back roads and tracks of Headley and Arford into the bottom of Ludshott Common and up through the woods and common to the ridge above Waggoners Wells – again really good riding in these dry conditions. Warnings were made about the steep descent to Waggoners Wells to the other riders but we all made it down safely and cooled our wheels in the stream at the bottom. As there were only a few of us, we followed the ancient BOAT which no longer exists through Hunters Moon rather than the public bridle way which goes over the ridge. This option traverses lots of roots and narrow paths beside deep bogs so needs care and attention. We followed the bridle way up the hill to the centre of Grayshott and lunch at the Fox and Pelican.

After lunch we followed the main road up to the Devil's Punch Bowl and down the dedicated cycle path/BOAT down the north side. After a bit "J" suggested we ride down on the old A3 which we did, and which made a change from the highly populated BOAT. It also afforded better views of the country to the North completely unobscured by trees, so something to be cherished for a limited period of time.

As the group was experienced, I decided to follow the old green sands way rather than the easy route down the old A3. However, on reflection this track really is quite dangerous on account of the loose stones and rocks on most of the descent. I would probably avoid this with a bigger group and follow the new routes down to Thursley. However as it was a small group I chose to dip into the stream valley between Pitlands Farm and Ridgeway Farm in order to reach the Thursley to Elstead road. This is one of my favourite spots away from absolutely everything and so peaceful – even on the occasion when a group of scrambler motor cyclists crashed through the stream when I was resting on the bridge. This is after all a BOAT too.

It was still an off-road ride so we slid down to the Churt - Elstead road and dropped down to the track through Houndown and then the track over the ridge onto Hankley Common. It was still tricky with soft sand most of the way but progress could be made on firmer sand at the side of the official tracks. We came out in Tilford and followed the track beside the river to Farnham which was also in a good state because of the good weather.

# MINI FIRST AID KITS FOR RIDE LEADERS

By Louise Gagnon

- To be issued free of charge to all regular Ride Leaders in December 2013 (see Rides Secretary's Notes).
- Funded by revenues from Club events (Tour of the Hills, etc.)
- Fits in the back pocket of a cycling jersey
- Half the weight of a spare tube (only 66 g or 2.4 oz)
- Contains a foil blanket and the essentials for cuts and grazes, such as plasters, gauze dressing and antiseptic wipes.



The foil blanket is a key piece of equipment for an injured person awaiting ambulance evacuation. Waterproof and windproof, it reduces body heat loss (reflects 90% of the body heat) and helps prevent shock. It also makes the casualty more visible as the blanket's metallic surface appearance reflects light.

- Tailor-assembled by Committee members specifically for CTC West Surrey's requirements.
- Limited quantity available for Club members: £3 each. Contact: [chair@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk](mailto:chair@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk)

# SCENES FROM THE TOUR OF THE HILLS

By Derek Tanner



Don Gray marshalling a group at the start



Nutrition advice from Louise

## NOTES FROM THE AGM OF 02/11/2013

*Ed: The following items are extracted with paraphrasing from the draft minutes of the AGM*

There were 44 members present, including CTC councillor Richard Bates.

[From the annual report] Highlights for the year: increased riders in the Woking intermediate group, increased participation in the Club organised Audax rides, and re-introduction of the Club Annual Dinner.

[From the treasurer's report] Apart from the CTC annual grant of £200, income came from the two audax events, particularly the Tour of the Hills, which were organised by club members.

[From discussion of motions received] There was some debate regarding the status and competency for ride leaders and their insurance covered by the CTC: this required clarification.

[Presentation of trophies] The following trophies were awarded (engraved trophies will be presented at the annual dinner):

Bill Inder Trophy to Clive Richardson for the best Sunday attendance.

George Alesbury Tankard to John Findlay for the best Wednesday attendance.

Keith Parfitt Memorial Pot to Roger Philo for organising and helping at events.

Bert Bartholomew Trophy to Bob McLeod for being the oldest rider to complete the 100-mile Reliability Ride.

No nominations were received for the Wooden Crank for the most amusing blunder during the year. (*Ed: No chance of that happening again next year, is there, Bob?*)

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

**By John Murdoch**

I am delighted to confirm that we will again be holding an annual dinner, early in the New Year.

Moreover, the legendary long distance cyclist, CTC member, adventurer, author, cook and mother, Josie Dew, has kindly agreed to be our guest, to regale us with a few stories of her travels, and present a few well deserved and well-chosen awards. At the time of going to press, the only “subject to” is agreeing a convenient date, but the most likely is

**Saturday 25th January**

so I suggest you hold this date.

The venue will again be The Mill at Elstead, who are under new management and have given appropriate assurances regarding food quality, with costs held below £20 for 2 courses and £25 for 3.

Once details are confirmed, being date, menu, and precise cost, the details will be posted on the website. I will need firm bookings in advance, so what you will need to do is:

- Visit the website before January and follow the booking instructions.
- Alternatively, e-mail me at [johnmatsouthview@btinternet.com](mailto:johnmatsouthview@btinternet.com), with a blank e-mail simply with “CTC Dinner” in the title, and once the details are finalised, I will send them to you; for those without internet access, just phone (01276-681131).

Meanwhile, if you wish to look at Josie’s wonderful website, go to [www.josiedew.com/about-me](http://www.josiedew.com/about-me).

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Wednesday 1st January:** From 10:30. New Year's Day at Seale Craft Centre. All proceeds go to Farnham Hospice, so eat lots of cake!

**Sat 25th January (provisional):** Members' Dinner, The Mill at Elstead. See previous page for details.

**13th-16th February:** The London Bike Show, ExCel, London. See <http://www.thelondonbikeshow.co.uk/>

**Sat 8th March:** Leaders' and back markers' workshop, 10:15, The Bird in Hand, Mayford (see article in magazine).

**Sun 16th March:** Bicycle Icycle (70km), 09:30, 4 Quarry Hill, Godalming GU7 2NW. Event details and booking form on the website from February. See <http://ridewithgps.com/routes/1038768> for route. (Mark Waters 01483 414307, [markwaters@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk](mailto:markwaters@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk))

**Sunday 10th August:** Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100. Registration has closed. Applicants will find out in February whether they have a place.

Deadline for next issue February 16<sup>th</sup> (note early deadline!). Get your cycling stories in to the editor now: [editor@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk](mailto:editor@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk)

*The editor welcomes contributions of all types, e.g. articles about cycling holidays, anecdotes about events on club rides (not that Bob McLeod would ever do anything worth commenting on or taking photos of), letters to the editor, product reviews etc. Short items are very welcome: they fill the gaps left by longer articles. If you have photographs that could be used to illustrate your article, feel free to send them too. Whether they are used or not will depend on space constraints. All contributions will be acknowledged when received.*

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR PRINTED COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE AND RIDES LIST IS £4.** Send a cheque payable to 'CTC West Surrey Group' to Phil Hamilton, 165 York Road, Woking GU22 7XS.

**PDF COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE AND RIDES LIST ARE FREE.** Send an email to the editor (see above) to be added to the distribution list.

Front cover: Sunday Riders blackberrying (photo by Peter Hackman).