

The West Surrey Cyclist



**January – March
2013**

Price £4 (four issues delivered)
Individual copies: £1.20



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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 history & archives website:

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WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

It's customary at this time of year for editors of cycling magazines to extol the delights of cycling on crisp, clear winter days or to claim that there is no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing. Given my well deserved reputation as a fair-weather cyclist, I would be greeted with howls of derision were I to do so. Instead I shall wish those of you foolhardy enough to go out cycling during the winter months an absence of icy roads. I hope that you will display appropriate caution if my wish is not fulfilled.

Some cyclists don't have to give up their cycle shorts during the winter. No, I'm not thinking of Don Gray, but rather those that I see on Gran Canaria during my walking holidays. It's probably too hilly for my liking, but last issue's article about the Massif Central suggests that some of you are less sane than me and would appreciate the mountains. Or how about Lanzarote? Your former editor, Geoff Smith, speaks fondly of it. Having never been there, I've no idea how hilly it is, so cannot comment on what level of mental derangement, if any, is needed to appreciate its delights.

(I do hope no one was expecting serious editorials from me!)

DON'T JUST SIT THERE, WRITE SOMETHING!

All contributions are welcomed by the editor. Please send them to editor@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk.

WINTER RIDING

By John Murdoch

Whilst it is the intention to maintain the full ride programme through the winter, there may be occasions when the ride leader deems it too dangerous to be out cycling e.g. black ice, and the ride will then be cancelled, perhaps at short notice. If you are any doubt it may be sensible to contact the ride leader. For the Midweek Wayfarers, the form of communication for such cancellations is by e-mail to those registered with the Yahoo mail group. Any such e-mail may be sent out late Tuesday, or possibly early Wednesday am, so it would be wise to look at your e-mails if you are in doubt about whether a ride will go ahead. If you wish to be added to the mailing list, please advise John Murdoch (see p2 for email address). Of course, ride leaders reserve the right to cancel rides at the very last minute, after riders have gathered, if it is deemed too dangerous to continue.

Another point to note is that whilst most groups aim to finish rides in the light, even in winter, there may well be delays (punctures etc) which mean that night riding is inevitable. Therefore, each rider should allow for this by ensuring that they have working lights, and spare batteries.

MY FIRST SPORTIVE

By Phil Hamilton

HAVING previously been “caught up” in Sportive Events (which were using the roads I was riding), I decided that it was time that I participated in one – not least to assess my capabilities compared to other riders, but also to get a feel for how they are run and the way riders behave on them.

The easy option was to seek a local event, and the Evans 'RideIt' out of Chobham fitted the bill very nicely. The choice of distance (35 miles) was determined by my lack of over-winter riding following my accident, and the fact that a friend had opted for that distance.

Despite the brightening sky, the frost was still on the fields as we left the start, and I had to wonder at the wisdom of those who had decided to ride in shorts and short sleeved tops – but questioning one rider elicited that, whilst he regretted the decision for most of the ride, he had nowhere to stow excess clothing on his racer, and his pockets were full of essentials

(eg tubes, tools, energy bars and gels) already!

Finding myself at the head of the bunch I could only assume that, in my excitement, I had started off far too quickly. Sure enough, when I decided to slow slightly there was a constant stream of riders passing me – most of whom pulled in so sharply that I felt threatened that one was going to 'take' my front wheel; and none of whom acknowledge my presence with a greeting. (Not the type of riding to which I am accustomed.)

I suffered a scary moment of *deja vu* near Valley End on a narrow downhill lane, with a pronounced camber, when I was forced towards the edge of the road by an overtaking cyclist who had spotted the plate glass sheets mixed in with the plasterboard which some inconsiderate person had dumped in the road. (I really thought my metalwork was going to be tested!)

My friend and I remained in contact until we were held up by traffic lights in Bisley, and became part of a large bunch of cyclists waiting to turn right off the main road. Heading towards the Rifle Ranges, the riding standard of this group was very poor and I slowed to 'fall off the back'. Unbeknown to me, my friend accelerated to clear the group, so my back tracking after about 2 miles to locate him was to no avail, and I completed the remainder of the ride on my own.

My time for the distance was a few minutes over three hours – not great, but I am unfit, and did stop to assist three people with puncture repairs. One of whom admitted that he was 'rubbish at punctures' and was getting no assistance from his friends, who were taking the stop as an excuse to eat: and another who had a spare tube and levers – but no pump!

So, am I in the market for a “Sportive” bike and would I do another Sportive ride?

Bikewise – you can enter on any bike, although most people use a racing or a 'sportive' (slightly more relaxed riding position) bike. For a given fitness level, best times will be achieved on a 'fast' bike but don't make a special purchase until you have decided that this is the type of event in which you will regularly participate.

Regarding the ride itself -

Registration was very easy and facilities were good:

Whilst I would not have chosen some parts of the route, it was well

thought out considering the 500+ participants, and the signage was easy to follow.

Despite the organiser's literature stating that "the event is not a race", many (or should that be 'most'?) riders were out to get a good time, and appeared to give little consideration to others:

It was obvious from the profuse thanks I received that no rider expected anyone to stop and help them (but that is not the CTC way!):

I was happy to be able to ride the route after so long off the bike, and was only adversely affected when other riders came too close.

All told, I missed the camaraderie of a CTC group ride or an Audax event, and would not travel a long way to participate in another Sportive. Neither are the 'attractions' of the goodie-bag/free feed stations/way marked route sufficient to tempt me to enter these rides regularly. However, I did enjoy the experience and am contemplating entering other 'locally based' rides (see www.evanscycles.com/ride-it/find-a-ride for details). (Maybe I'll see you there.)

LETTER COLUMN

I do not often take the trouble to write to this excellent magazine but the treatment that I received on a recent ride was such that I feel I must record it. I do not wish to name the leader as he might be embarrassed, so I shall refer to him as P (P by name, P by former profession).

I think that you were away on holiday for this ride, as was John Murdoch, so he had to delegate to another leader. It was already an unusual day as the sun was shining and it was quite warm. Ten of us set off from the garden centre at West Horsley heading south with a following breeze. I can't fault our leader. He stopped at every hill top for us to regroup although the last person up never got to have a rest like the earlier arrivals did - this is of course standard practice in most cycle groups.

Strangely sometime after 1pm, two of us found ourselves quite alone on the road. I tried to think of an explanation for this unexpected occurrence. It was not as though we were particularly slow. We hadn't made a pit stop or had a mechanical. Like magic, after turning a corner the others had just vanished. Surely they hadn't left us behind thinking that we were a disgrace to the group! - Chris and I were the only ones with mud guards!

Suddenly, everything was clear to me. I had told P at the start that I was going to buy the beers at lunch time, today's ride being the nearest to my birthday. At the garden centre P had obviously noticed my contribution to a charity near to his heart and so must be trying to thank me.

His plan was so simple; by ensuring that I arrived late at the pub everyone would have already ordered their food and drink and so would naturally not be able to cope with a full pint and so just settle for a half; it all worked perfectly. Naturally not wishing to give the game away on arrival at the pub I played along and pretended to be really upset about having been left behind and my phone call ignored; Anne confirmed it had rung. P, sticking to his plan, had simply ignored it, saying it would be of no importance. The others, not being in the know of P's fiendish plan to deprive them of free drink, were very supportive of him. They claimed that if I had chatted and laughed while cycling along like Anne then they would have noticed me missing if it had suddenly gone quite.

John, if you should read this, I did buy you a full pint but as you weren't there I had to drink it myself - it was 'Summer Ale' and very tasty - you would have enjoyed it.

In case anyone is wondering how we eventually found the pub I can say that I only had to ask a passer-by if he knew of a local pub with 'bats' in it, and we were immediately put on the right road for 'Bax Castle' .

I am very grateful to P for saving my cash and so feel quite bad that I do have one criticism. I am so used to being drafted along that awful road past Losely House to Compton by our regular leader, that it was quite a shock to find myself all alone with a headwind. I suppose P could argue that as he lives in Guildford (oops!) he wouldn't go home that way.

Even now there is still one tiny doubt nagging at me. I'm just not sure that it was P who mentioned to me that we were going to Bax Castle. If not.....

Anonymous

It's just as well that you hadn't mentioned your intention to buy the drinks to the other riders. Otherwise they might have done their duty and looked out for the welfare of the rider behind rather than leaving the leader to do all the hard work, in which case you wouldn't have been dropped and would have finished up much the poorer.

HOW FAR? HOW FAST? HOW HILLY?

By Dane Maslen

When I was a boy, my first bicycle had a mechanical odometer (I believe it might have been called a Cyclometer). Each time the front wheel rotated, a little peg attached to a spoke engaged with a cog on the odometer, thereby counting the number of wheel rotations and hence measuring the distance travelled, though one had to get off the bike to peer closely at the numbers on the dials. The odometer came preset for a particular wheel size, so the accuracy was poor as it was impossible to allow for different tyre profiles.

Nearly 30 years were to pass before I next had an odometer, this time a Cateye cycle computer. The basic principle was still the same, i.e. wheel rotations were counted, but the implementation was electronic - a magnet and sensor instead of a peg and cog - and speed as well as distance could be displayed, the display being on the handlebars rather than the forks. Furthermore the cycle computer could be calibrated for a wide range of wheel sizes by setting an appropriate value for the wheel circumference.

Sometimes riders compare the distance of a ride, only to discover that their cycle computers have produced somewhat discrepant results. This is most often caused by poor calibration. Manuals for cycle computers usually give a table of wheel circumferences for various tyre sizes, but this is only a rough guide. It's an improvement on the situation for the Cyclometer as different tyre profiles are allowed for, but it still overlooks variation between different manufacturers' tyres. Furthermore there can be a significant difference, 0.5-1.0% depending on just how conscientious one is about maintaining the requisite pressure, between a recently inflated tyre and one that is in need of pumping up. Ride with a slow puncture and you'll find that you're over-recording distance by as much as 2%.

To get more accurate distance measurements from a cycle computer one needs to calibrate it accurately for the tyre in use. Unfortunately this isn't trivial to achieve. If one simply pushes the bike in a straight line and then measures the distance it travelled during a complete rotation of the wheel, the circumference will be overstated because when the bike is loaded, the tyre will get flattened slightly at the bottom. This was the technique I used with my first Cateye and several years later I came to the conclusion that I'd set the circumference about 1.5% too high as a result (though there might have been other contributory factors). That had meant, of course,

that the cycle computer had also been overestimating my speed by the same amount. I'm considerably more than 1.5% slower now than when I used to cycle to work 15-20 years ago, so unfortunately I can't claim that all the slow-down is due to having corrected the miscalibration of my cycle computer.

For the last 5-6 years I've had a Suunto watch that uses air pressure to measure altitude. At the end of a day's ride it tells me the total ascent and descent. There are numerous reasons why these figures are not truly accurate, but at least I've been able to know roughly how hilly each ride has been in addition to how far and how fast I've ridden.

Earlier this year I finally bought a modern GPS. Not only can it calculate ride length, average speed and total ascent and descent, it can also record the trip. The resulting track can then be displayed on a PC or by a suitable website (e.g. ridewithgps.com) and the statistics recalculated for the whole ride or for selected segments. And at last the measurement of distance is freed from the need to know the circumference of my rear wheel.

While it's tempting to assume that the results produced by my GPS must be superior to those produced by my cycle computer and Suunto watch, it turns out that there are some caveats. Consider the results of the following experiment. I put my GPS on a chair in the garden for an hour or so and then looked to see what it had reported for that 'trip':

Distance moved: 15 metres

Moving time: 9 seconds

Average moving speed: 6 km/h

Maximum speed: 2.6 km/h

If you're not puzzled by those figures, you're not paying attention! It's not the 9 seconds moving or the 15 metres moved that are the issue (in fact I was surprised the GPS measured so little false movement), it's that the average speed exceeds the maximum speed. This idiocy has happened because detecting motion, measuring distance moved and calculating instantaneous speed are not as trivial for a GPS as one might naïvely think.

As another example consider a recent ride for which the GPS measured a distance of 126.6km at the time. When that ride's recorded track is analysed by various programs and websites, the reported distance is 126.3km, 126.43km or 126.21km. Admittedly these are very small discrepancies, much smaller than might arise from a poorly calibrated cycle computer, but it might surprise you that they should exist at all.

The very first time I used my new GPS, I discovered that its calculation of average moving speed was suspect because it was prone to overestimate how long I had been in motion. While stood around at the start of a ride, I watched as my average moving speed slowly dropped as the GPS detected false movement and hence incremented the time I'd been in motion. This miscalculation is sufficiently great that a well calibrated cycle computer is likely to give a better estimate of average moving speed.

The coup de grâce for blind faith in the GPS comes from ascent and descent totals. The following figures are all for a single ride. As above the first set was measured by the GPS at the time, while the others come from the analysis of the recorded track by various programs and websites:

Ascent/m	1042	1549	1213	1312
Descent/m	1098	1552	1216	1312

You don't have to be Einstein to realise that something is seriously wrong here.

Since getting my GPS, a Garmin Oregon 450t, I've been trying to identify its strengths and weaknesses so as to understand why it gets some things wrong. I think I'm getting to grips with it, though sometimes I'm having to make educated guesses. Or possibly uneducated ones. I'm proposing to write a series of articles for the magazine, but as many of you will have no interest in the subject, I shall attempt to keep each article fairly short.

L'EROICA

By Nick Davison

Marion and I spent four weeks cycle touring last Autumn, starting in the Camargue of Southern France, Corsica and finally Tuscany. Our arrival in Sienna coincided with our middle son, Laurie, flying out to join me for the Eroica Gran Fondo, which was based in the small town of Gaiole in the Chianti wine growing region. We had booked the event with La Fuga, who also provided the authentic pre -1980 bikes required for the event.

The day before the event we had some practice on the bianchi strada or white roads, which weave their way through the vineyards. About half of the route was on these roads which put a premium on low gears and good brakes as well as tough tyres; unfortunately, these are rather lacking on the

age of these bikes making the 75km route seem much longer. There was also a 135 and a 205 km route.

We registered in the afternoon at Gaiole and found ourselves in the middle of a cycle fair; there were stalls selling complete authentic old bikes, all the components and even wool clothing. What caught my eye was a stand selling new and old wooden rim wheels, which were really exquisite. Our hosts from La Fuga spent some time looking for lower gear cassettes and learning the intricacies of screw-on five speed blocks.

We started just after dawn the next morning from the town square with 4000 other riders. Riders in the 205k event had already started in the dark and we saw their lights as we drove into the town. Laurie approached the start of the 135k event in the town square and brevet cards were stamped by the official only after inspection of the bikes. I noticed a tandem roll up at the end of this start and a big argument ensued culminating in the riders' race number being torn off the bike: it was an alloy frame with modern gears! My start went smoothly and our first white road involved a steep climb through a wood with candles placed on both sides of the road. At the top we had a magnificent view across the Tuscan hills with the sun just rising. These views were a feature of the whole ride which meant many short steep climbs and descents mostly on the white roads, which were quite rough in places. There were enthusiastic crowds cheering us on in many of the villages.

Our first designated 'rest stop' was in a small town where we found a very long stall laid out with incredible food – many local delicacies of panforte, grapes, bread coated in olive oil, salami and even hot rabbit stew. Water was hard to find behind the plethora of local wine and the local spirit, vino santo. There was a great atmosphere amongst the riders and many offers of help if you had a problem. Motorbikes with mechanics were available to help out. One Italian bike club passed us resplendent in their smart jerseys and joking about the English – my English companion soon silenced them with "Cavendish Campionissimo!" Many riders were on very old bikes often fixed wheel dressed in authentic clothing with tyres and tubes around their shoulders. All the roads on the route were open to normal traffic but the locals just waved and let us pass. I wore my helmet but most riders wore traditional cycling caps or the old 'hair net' helmets.

We finished after five and half hours in 32 degrees and received a stamp on our brevet card and a large panforte cake. We sat in the beer tent in Gaiole

and watched the other competitors roll in with bands playing and horns blaring. Laurie came in later having learnt to change a tubular tyre for the first time; he was helped by a Texan in our group, who had trained with Lance Armstrong. It was a very memorable event with such a good atmosphere – perhaps there should be one in Britain?

THE DANUBE DELTA (part 4)

By Derek Tanner

Ed: Previous parts of the article appeared in the April-June 2011, July-September 2011 and April-June 2012 issues.

Arriving in Turnu Magarele, there is a huge roundabout, with a high kerb. I sat there numb to the elbows from the buffeting (even through the front suspension). The church was over the road and to the touring cyclist offered the chance of a cool sit down. A wedding party emerged as we got to the door and they wouldn't let us in. But our "guardian angel" had not deserted us, from there we could see the hotel. The man who parked our bikes could speak Spanish, life was beginning to look good after all. The wedding party had commandeered the restaurant for the night so we had to eat outside, but at least they had an English translation of the menu, even though most of it was "off"

We had omelette for breakfast and the bikes delivered to the front door. There was a continuous 20km long strip of houses as we left town. A head wind had come up. We were now getting tired of the novelty of cycling around horse carts, their droppings, pot holes big enough to have to change gear to get out and the occasional low flying lorry, we had to stop for lunch at 11.30 after only 30km. Another 30km got us to Zimnicea, where we sat drinking beer for 2 hours on the terrace of the 3 star hotel, before we found out that they had no rooms. Fortunately the 4 star hotel next door did. Emerging for dinner a wedding party had taken over the restaurant again and so we ate our chicken and potatoes that night on the rooftop terrace.

Next morning peering down the potholes that we were cycling around, it looks like they have laid 6 inches of tarmac on top of cobbles. After 60km into Giugui, the bikes and bodies are now feeling severely hammered. We were OK once we broke off the bypass diversion and got into town. The first hotel was full. I had to run the gauntlet of about 30 workers sat on the

steps of the next, by the old river crossing and wondered if it was being demolished.

But there was a reception desk, the woman took my passport and money, told us where to put the bikes and gave us a key. In its heyday, this was probably a masterpiece of the great socialist system. But to describe it today as tired would be a compliment. We needed a break so we booked for 2 nights, but neither of us were comfortable here.

Taking a day off we caught the bus across “Friendship Bridge”. Built in 1952 and 4km long it is still the last on the Danube. Back in Bulgaria, the town of Russe is well pedestrianised around its huge town square and contains many monuments to its liberation from the Turks in 1877.

It was an easy ride out of town following the wide dual carriageway for 12km towards Bucharest, before turning off to climb back onto the plateau from where we got views over the villages, perched on the edge, down over the fertile flood plain. The roads had improved and the head wind was just picking up as we entered Oltenita having cleared 80km by 2pm. We were hoping for a hotel because it was another 70km to the next one in our guide book. Once again we missed a trick in not interpreting what looked like a builders yard as the main street being renovated and pedestrianised. Asking around we started to home in on the hotel and found ourselves standing in front of a metal door in a whitewashed wall. Enquiring in the corner shop next door, in response to Anne’s gestures “that she wanted to go to bed” the girl seemed to reply that it was OK. Not convinced, we needed to eat in case we had to start the next 70km. But when we emerged from the Pizza restaurant down the road, the girl showed us the door was now open. It lead straight onto a set of metal stairs up to another door. Ringing the bell at the top I went through the now familiar ritual of handing over money and passport in return for a key and being pointed to a room.

Anne had been studying the route plan again and suggested that we attempt to get back across the river by the end of the day, thereby reducing the final countryside leg to 135 km the day after. The road surfaces were OK and the wind had dropped. After 80km we were at the ferry terminal just after 2pm. It only took 2 lorries and as much else as could be crammed around them. We got talking to a local on the ferry. He popped up again as we cleared the border crossing into Bulgaria and lead us to the 5 star hotel in town. Checking the prices, we decided to look elsewhere. After more than

an hour we had to admit there was nowhere, but we had established that there were no obvious restaurants either. We had achieved our objective for the day and needed to embark on some serious carbo-loading for the do or die leg to Constanta. So the credit card came out. I got longed for chance to instruct the immaculately dressed porter “to garage the bikes and bring the bags up to the room”, and we tucked in - firstly into the restaurant menu, then into the biggest bed I have ever known. The room even had an electric kettle- the one and only of the whole 7 week tour.

We were first to breakfast next day. Back over the border, where the 2 officials (one from Bulgaria, one from Rumania) made great play of standing six inches apart and studying our passports before handing it to the other. Eventually they waived us in our preferred direction and almost immediately we were on cobbles, soon climbing, with some wonderful early morning views, as are guide book had warned. The map was right, each little village featured a killer climb on cobbles. Stopping only for a photo of the Kloster Dervent and the renovated vineyards proudly displaying signs proclaiming EU funding it was 6pm as we crossed the Danube canal with another 35km to go. Back on dual carriageway now Anne took the lead raising the cruising speed for the next 20km. Reaching the outskirts of Constanta we had to slow. It was getting dark, trolleybuses were appearing from nowhere into our path, 2 foot square manhole covers were missing, it was starting to rain. The diesel covering the damaged surface in the bus lanes made using them a certain fall. Road works which introduced what should have been contraflow did not help as we struggled carefully with the busses into the centre looking for a hotel. The first was full, so was the second, by this time I had the guide book out, open to the hotel list for the town. There were 8. Two were closed. Of the 4 left, Hotel Maria, the closest had rooms. “Near the railway station, it should only take 15 minutes to cycle back the way we had come” - We were told. It was exactly 8pm when we checked in, quickly establishing that the nearest restaurant was next door. The only ones there, it was chicken and potatoes again.

I’ve got “nappy rash” Cycling’s off!. Anne's very quiet today, the conditions are beginning to tell! So followed a days sightseeing around the second city of Rumania. Home of Jason and the Argonauts, Romulus and Remus, lunch on the beach, visit cathedral, and casino where there is a succession of wedding parties queuing up for their photos. We did a

terrible thing and resorted to “Pizza Express” for dinner, a bottle of wine and a tub of ice cream from a side stall on the walk back.

It started raining as we pulled away from the hotel next morning. Being Sunday we could pick our path on the slippery roads. Unfortunately we picked up a local cyclist who wanted to impress us by persisting in catching us up by jumping the lights and then pulling in front to demonstrate his skills. He had gone by the time we got to the “Mamaia Tourist Resort”. Built on a sand bar 8km long and 400m wide, it is wall to wall hotels and parking spaces. Our guide book warned us that this could be the most dangerous bit of the 1600km ride. Luckily we were out of season and the place was deserted. We then turned onto the worlds worst bit of cycle track, After 200m even Anne preferred to cycle in the road.

Past the oil refinery and we could feel that we were approaching the “Danube Delta” Low rolling hills, views across large shallow lagoons, many with reeds growing as if in fields. We took a detour to the Roman town of Cetate Histria before passing through Baia where we had a choice of hotels. Too good an opportunity to pass by, we chose what looked like the quietest and took an apartment at a bargain price. By the time we discovered there was no hot water we were almost too late for dinner. It was chicken and potatoes again.

We had not gone far up the busy main road next morning before we stopped to chat to a lone German cyclist going the other way, after swapping some useful notes we cut off on a side road to stay near the sea. After 17km we arrived at the smart little village of Jurilovca where they had just laid main drainage down the middle of the main street. There was a TI with internet access, so we popped in. Speaking to the boy on the desk he told us that our route passed through a US military training area, “The Americans have bombed the road” We could not go through. Our planned overnight stop was 25km if we went on or 35km back via the main road that we had been so pleased to leave. The scenery ahead looked good, we were sure that we would be turned back sooner rather than later if it really was no go. A few bits of broken road were not going to stop us after what we had been through in the last 5 weeks. It was 16 km to known good road, The miles clocked up, the scenery was excellent. At 12 km it was apparent that we were about to cycle across in front of the targets on a firing range. The road was really broken now and we were on a steep incline into a valley. There were look out posts but nobody was there. Just as we thought

we had it behind us we met two Swiss cyclists repairing their second puncture of the day. Their plan was to cycle into the Middle East by routing through Turkey. Back on tarmac a final hilly 9km brought us to Babadag. This time the hotel really was closed for refurbishment. A local on a moped attempted to come to our aid but in the end we had to agree that there was nowhere for us. We had only done 47km. but it had been hard and it was already 5.30pm and dark in just over an hour. Not for the first time this tour we sat down and ate our emergency rations. We were going to have to fast cruise on the main road for the next 37km to the next known hotel. Going well until the road left the railway, we had only swapped lead twice, but it was getting dark and it was adrenalin that pushed us the last 10km up over the ridge and back down the hairpins, not knowing whether to hope that the next overtaking lorry would be the last. It started raining as we came to the inevitable drain cover-less steep busy racetrack into town. Then suddenly there was a hotel at the side of the road. We checked in at exactly 7pm. It was chicken and potatoes for dinner again.

It was day 35, we were unexpectedly at Tulcea, the main town on the delta. Overnight the weather had broken and the road outside was running a six inch deep river. Had the weather broken ? We had been warned of this. We did not get back on the bikes again until day 41, by which time we had played serious tourist by public and private transport around the Northern delta. We also had bought a ticket from a bus company that would carry us and our bikes back to London. All that remained was to explore the area that we had bypassed on our way up. So we headed back South to Murighiol, a scenic if hilly 75km route, rented, for two nights, a roadside wooden hut in the grounds of a café and hired a boatman to take us out into the area that was once Tchetchskus private hunting reserve. Day 43 we got on the bus with 48 migrant workers and a couple our age visiting their grandchildren for the first time in the UK. Day 46 was Sunday and saw us having lunch in the Red Lion, Chobham. We had covered 2200km and were, much to the surprise of the neighbours, about to arrive home 2 weeks earlier than planned.

BLOG TALK

By Mark Waters

A blog is a useful means of communicating items which could equally be of interest to some, or of relevance to all. It's a tool for people to use, so please feel free to use it. If you have something to share, please email it to me and I'll put it up on the West Surrey CTC blog. It might be information about a forthcoming programme you've heard about or news about an upcoming event, some photographs from your last ride (or some you've just found from 1975), or a communication from a local organisation which you think others might be interested in. Have a look at our blog now, if you haven't already, to get an idea of what's there already.

Whether you send something or not, I shall hope to continue to put stuff up at regular intervals and I hope you'll take a look at it every now and again. Your computer can be set to advise you when a new item is put up. If you don't know how to do this, email me and I'll tell you how to do it.

Here is the link: <http://westsurreyctc.blogspot.co.uk/>

TOUR OF THE HILLS 2012

By Don Gray

This year's event was definitely the best that I've been involved with. Entries were well up on previous years, perhaps due to our success in the Olympics and the cycling fever that is sweeping Britain!

I received 128 entries; only 11 by post, 15 on-the-day and the rest entering electronically via PayPal. Technology eh!!!

There were the customary no-shows, and a few didn't finish the ride, so we ended up with 93 tired, but happy finishers. The first riders finished in less than 4h30, and the last in around 7h30. Praise for the Event, the marshals and the catering was universal amongst the finishers and I have since received many more emails from entrants confirming this. Even some who found the ride too tough and packed contacted me to say how much they appreciated all the effort that went into making the day such a success. I hesitate to single out any individual helper as you all did such sterling work encouraging and assisting the entrants but riders were very grateful

for the jelly babies on offer at one control, and for the offers to have their water bottles filled at the lunch stop at the Hall.

I'd like to pass on to all those of you who were involved the gratitude of the riders for making the TotH such a memorable event. Some have ridden it for over twenty years, and one every year since 1988! Without the marshals, assistance at the hall and the caterers the ride just could not happen, so many thanks from me as well! It really is a 'top drawer' event and deserves continued success.



Riders awaiting the start (photo by Dane Maslen)

As many of you will be aware, I'm standing down as organiser of the TotH now, so we need a team to take the event forward to continued success. I've spent a lot of time this year ensuring that the event is as computer friendly as possible, with contact details, labels, route sheets and gps tracks readily available for entrants. I've electronic contact details of all those who have entered, or enquired about the event over the past three years, and advertising contacts to cast the net for entrants far and wide. A Face Book page is up and running. The event does need a fair bit of input, and I'd suggest that a small group of three or four would ensure that no single organiser was overloaded (like I was!) and enthusiasm for this excellent event is not diminished. Someone will have to be the 'figurehead', but others will have separate tasks (marshals, catering, accounts and advertising spring to mind). I aim to be available to assist, but not to run the event. I might even ride it if I'm around...

It is proving difficult to recruit marshals, caterers and helpers for the event and, while it may be possible to reduce the number of manned checkpoints

by using ‘information’ controls, the event will still need plenty of club members involved to ensure the event runs smoothly. This year we really were short of helpers and I needed to co-opt friends who are not cyclists at all to assist, including my 85 year old Dad! I do hope we can do better next year...

So could I ask for a small team of volunteers to take this event onwards and upwards – it really is a very well respected, and eagerly awaited event.

Once again, many thanks to all of you who helped me so much in this year’s, and previous TotH’s.

SUMMER NAVIGATOR RESULTS

By Arthur Twiggs

This turned out to be another bright June day like last year, and although it was cloudy, the rain stayed off. I persuaded the Farnham easy riders to come along as a change from their usual third Sunday ride which resulted in quite a good turnout for this sort of event. As it was not in the DA calendar, the riders set off in their own groups and enjoyed the ride in various degrees of seriousness as can be seen from the results. It is understood that one group stopped for morning coffee at one of their rider’s house which happened to be on the route! While the riders were away, I set off on my mountain bike to fill in the gaps of my knowledge of all of the bridle paths on Puttenham Common, Shackleford and the Cut Mill areas. I came across several “Duke of Edinburgh” groups at various stages of their route in their huge packs and all-weather gear, none of whom appeared to be enjoying it!

There was a maximum of 1370 points which I didn’t expect anyone to achieve in the time allowed, so Mark’s performance demonstrated a skilful, tactical response to the challenge, particularly his overall timing for the ride - getting back in exactly four hours. It was good to note that one or more riders considered it worth the effort to try and visit 19 of the 20 check points, indicating that the locations and allocations of points for each location were reasonable. There was discussion/contention over only one check point as well – number 15, but as it was clear that those involved had visited the location, they were all given the full points.

Any feedback on whether it should be repeated next year will be welcome.

Name	Start	Finish	Points	Penalties	Total
Mark Heal	10.05	14.05	1040	0	1040
Roger Philo	10.12	14.02	600	0	600
John Wilkins	10.12	13.54	430	0	430
Celia Wilkins	10.12	13.54	430	0	430
Sue Shaw	10.12	13.54	430	0	430
Hazel Steventon	10.12	13.54	430	0	430
Basia Pietrusiewicz	10.12	13.54	430	0	430
Hugh McKee	10.28	14.19	855	0	855
Liz Palethorpe	10.28	14.19	855	0	855
Carole Moore	10.28	14.19	855	0	855
Mark Aldridge	10.12	???			

checkpoint	“Hugh”	Mark Heal	Roger Philo	Easyriders
1			70	70
2			70	70
3			40	40
4				
5			50	50
6		30	30	30
7	20	20	20	20
8	30		30	30
9		50		50
10	40	40	40	40
11	30		30	30
12	80	80	80	
13	60	60	60	
14	45 *	90		
15	80	80	80	
16	90	90		
17		120		
18	110	110		
19	150	150		
20	120	120		
Total	855	1040	600	430

***only half of the question was answered**

100-MILE RELIABILITY RIDE 2012

By Dane Maslen

Roger Philo organised the 75- and 100-mile Reliability Rides on 15th July but has suggested that I am in a better position to write the report as I rode one of the events. Isn't the magazine editor supposed to bully the event organiser into writing something, not vice versa?

Unlike 2011, and indeed unlike much of this year's so-called summer, the rides were accompanied by fine weather. Though cooler than might have been expected for the time of year the conditions were good for cycling. As such it was perhaps disappointing that only 12 riders started, not hugely more than in 2011's wet weather (I of course wasn't one on that occasion), though a distinct improvement on the very low numbers that the events attracted before the option of riding with a leader was introduced,

The split between the two events was very uneven: the 75-mile ride had just two riders, Anne and Peter Hawker. They stayed together for the whole route and finished with identical times. This is not unduly surprising as they were on a tandem.

The 100-mile ride saw eight West Surrey members (Anne Etherington, Mark Heal, Chris Juden, Bob McLeod, Clive Richardson, Geoff Smith, Jonathan Waters and myself) plus John Beer and Steve Kish set off soon after 8 o'clock as a single group led by Clive. The initial pace was fairly brisk but after a couple of hours the group suffered its first puncture near Froxfield and thereafter I found the pace more comfortable. Maybe that was because John Beer had pressed on alone, reducing the group to nine.

Our first refreshment stop, the supermarket in Clanfield, was fairly leisurely for some and fairly hectic for others: two riders had recently acquired slow punctures to deal with. The previous year's event had been plagued by punctures and it seemed that this year was going to continue the tradition, probably because of the grit washed from the fields onto the country lanes by the recent heavy rain.

Chris Juden's knee had been giving him trouble for much of the morning. Soon after leaving Clanfield he came to the conclusion that it was going to continue to do so, so he headed for home. Then there were eight.

On arrival at Finchdean we realised that Mark Heal was missing from the group. Several of us, myself included, thought that he was ahead of us.

Somewhat reluctantly Clive was convinced by us and we continued. As time, and distance, passed it became obvious that we had been wrong. While the sight of Mark hurtling past me on the descent towards the village had seared itself into my memory, I had apparently been oblivious to overtaking him again on the subsequent slight ascent. Mark had in fact been behind us and had suffered yet another puncture. After a total of (I believe) three punctures Mark did eventually make it to the tearoom in Midhurst, but by then the rest of us had had our tea and left. Having more than exhausted his supply of spare tubes, Mark wisely chose to head for Haslemere and get a train home. Then there were seven.

One more puncture, mine near Ebernoe, saw the group further reduced to six when Geoff decided to continue alone. Evidently the attractions of a beer at Pirbright Golf Club were greater than the prospects of waiting for me at the top of every ascent.

The remainder of the ride passed without further incident (I promised Clive I wouldn't mention his attempt to lead us astray soon after Milford) so the considerably reduced group of six reached the finish at about 17:40. Together with John and Geoff that made eight finishers out of ten starters.

I find the fate that befell Mark particularly embarrassing as I was one of those that incorrectly believed him to have been in front of us. It shows what happens if riders do not pay proper attention to where others are. It is of course easier to notice that a group of four or five is missing a rider than it is to do so for a larger group. Perhaps that is another reason, in addition to making it easier for traffic to overtake us, why on club rides we should break up into groups of four or five rather than ride as a huge gaggle.

MEMBERS' DINNER - 9TH FEBRUARY 2013

At the AGM in November, it was suggested that we should resurrect the Club Dinner, to provide a social occasion for members and partners. The idea was supported, and it has therefore been arranged for the New Year as follows:

Date: Saturday 9th February
Venue: The Mill at Elstead
Time: 19.30
Cost: £20 per head for a 3 course meal, £15 for two courses

Menu choices:

Starter:

- Confit Duck pâté, onion jam & toast
- Leek & potato soup, country bloomer
- The Mill prawn & crayfish cocktail
- Black pudding hash, soft poached egg & hollandaise

Main Course:

- Pan seared breast of chicken, thyme potato cake, creamy mushroom reduction
- Roast topside of beef, goose fat roasties & chasseur sauce
- Loin of pork, grain mustard mash & creamy cider sauce
- Roast fillet of salmon, pumpkin & sage potatoes
- Root vegetable & goats cheese pie, tomato sauce (v)

Dessert:

- Chocolate profiteroles, hot chocolate sauce
- Braeburn apple crumble & custard
- Vanilla cheesecake, red berries
- Sticky toffee pudding & vanilla pod ice cream

Entertainment: It is hoped that Chris Juden will be able to attend and give a short cycling related slide show and talk, although this has yet to be confirmed at the time of going to press; please check the website for any updates.

Action required: It is essential to book in advance; menu choices must be made and £5 per head deposit paid by 1st February at the latest.

Please advise your menu choices to John Murdoch (01276-681131 or johnmatsouthview@btinternet.com); £5 deposit may be made by cheque (payable to CTC West Surrey Group) and sent to John Murdoch at 4 Park Avenue, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2NQ; alternatively, if you wish to pay by bank transfer/internet banking please contact John Murdoch for account details, and when making payment, give your name as the reference. Balance to be paid by cheque on the night, or in advance by bank transfer/internet banking.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Tuesday 1st January: From 10.30. New Year's Day at Seale Craft Centre. Go direct or from Godalming at 9.30 or from Mayford Green at 9.45. Remember – all proceeds go to Farnham Hospice, so eat lots of cake!

17th-20th January: The London Bike Show, ExCel, London.
See <http://www.thelondonbikeshow.co.uk/>

Saturday 9th February: Members' Dinner, The Mill at Elstead.
See previous page for details.

Saturday 23rd March: The Phil Hampton Memorial Ride.
Check 'Other events' at <http://www.nhampsirectc.org.uk/> for details of venue (note that currently the 2012 events are shown).

4th-6th May: Anne & Derek Tanner are considering organising an event centred on Merthyr Tydfil for rides on the Taff Trail and Brecon Beacons National Park. Please contact them (annederekin-wsda@yahoo.co.uk) if potentially interested.

Deadline for next issue February 17th (note early deadline!). Get your cycling stories in to the editor now: editor@ctcwestsurrey.org.uk

The editor welcomes contributions of all types, e.g. articles about cycling holidays, anecdotes about events on club rides, letters (serious or humorous) to the editor, product reviews etc. Short items are useful for filling the gaps left by longer articles and are very welcome. 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: Leopold König, Jonathan Tiernan-Locke and Nathan Haas at top of Barhatch Lane on 2012 Tour of Britain (photo by Chris Jeggo).