

The West Surrey Cyclist



**October – December
2013**

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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:

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

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

Welcome to issue 112 of The West Surrey Cyclist.

When I took over as editor ('temporary' of course!) I inherited a couple of boxes of old magazines. For several months they sat disregarded in my spare bedroom, but earlier this year I sorted through them. In the process of winnowing out the chaff – twenty copies of just one issue seemed an excessive number to keep – I discovered that early issues had been numbered, so I tried to work out the current issue number. This wasn't a trivial task as not only are there gaps in the collection of back issues but also the naming of issues has undergone some changes in the past (for example there were 'New Year 1988', 'Spring 1988', 'Summer 1988', 'Autumn 1988' and 'Winter 1988' issues, but only four of them were really in 1988). In the end I realised I was attempting to reinvent the wheel so just looked at the History & Archives website.

There's nothing very exciting about this being the 112th issue of the club magazine, but it does mean that October to December 2010 was the 100th. It was also Geoff Smith's final issue as editor. It's hard to believe that this was happenstance, but if Geoff deliberately timed his retirement after 11 years in the post to coincide with such a significant issue, he hid the fact very well. Perhaps whoever is editor in 2023 might notice that April to June will merit celebration as the 150th issue of The West Surrey Cyclist. I doubt that even I can stretch 'temporary' to cover 11 years.

The boxes that I inherited also contained a miscellany of magazines from various other DAs because at one time we used to trade with many of them. Both these and the duplicate back issues of our own magazine will find their way into the recycling bin at the end of this year unless anyone contacts me to ask for them. Conversely if anyone is planning on throwing out any old issues of The West Surrey Cyclist from 1987, 1990, 1993 or 1997-2008, please contact me before doing so as currently there are some gaps in the editor's collection of back issues.

LETTER COLUMN

Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100



A good third of the inaugural Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 miles event on 4th August was in the CTC West Surrey patch. As far as I know, three of our active group members took part. Peter Hackman hurtled round in 5hr 4min 44sec. I and Debbie Smith were more leisurely in 7hr 47min 56sec and 8hr 12min 55sec respectively.

The picture shows Debbie and me and our bikes at the palatial finish.

It is surprising there were just the three of us who took part as far as I know. Of course it was (a) "expensive". (b) hugely bothersome in terms of applying, deadlines, attending registration at ExCel in the run-up to the day; and (c) enjoyment very much weather dependent. Was it worth it? - Yes. Do it again? - Not with all of the above to bother about. But do it once on closed roads through much of our patch? Definitely.

Geoff Smith

I'm sure I'm not alone in finding Peter's performance very impressive. I'm hoping we'll have an article from him about the event next issue. I suggest everyone should ask him if he's written it yet whenever they see him.

Although such an event doesn't appeal to me, I'm surprised that only three of our members took part. It could be though that others registered but failed to get past the ballot for places. Will the situation be different next year? Certainly people have been discussing the possibility of taking part, but having opened on 12th August registration closed on 10th September after 80,000 riders had already applied, so only those that got their skates on were able to register. Based on this year's performance only those with rocket-powered skates will beat Peter if he gets through the ballot.

Cordless cycle computers

Your comments about the effect of electrical noise on cordless cycle computers reminded me of an occasion when mine reported that I was doing 72 mph. On looking up I discovered that I was stood under an overhead power cable. It did wonders for my average speed for the day!

Nigel Le Neve Foster

I had overlooked the possibility that overhead power cables could affect cordless cycle computers. Perhaps I should switch to using one: my average speeds were rather disappointing during much of the summer.

The famous 'mile eater'

I thought some of your readers might like news of the famous 'mile eater' Russ Mantle. I came upon Russ along the A31 when returning from a train assisted ride to Alton. Russ was on his way home after completing a 5 week tour in the West Country where he added more than 1,250 miles to his total of more than 800,000 miles gathered over 60 years.

Russ was a very active member of the club over many years and won many cups. All this information is available on the internet but it would be great Russ if you could update us with your latest mileage and position in the 300,000 miles club.

Chapeau.

Bob McLeod

P.S. I saw Russ again about a week later and asked about his accumulated mileage. It stands at 920,000 miles.

NEW GROUP RIDING GUIDELINES

By John Murdoch, Rides Secretary

Completion of the rides list for the next quarter, published as usual elsewhere in this magazine (and also on the website, <http://www.ctcwestsurrey.org.uk/>) is a very useful reminder of the variety of group rides that we offer our members. These rides are generally very well supported, which is a clear indication that, whilst many of us are enthusiastic “solo” cyclists, there is something particularly enjoyable about riding in a group. In essence, it is the camaraderie and, quite simply, having fun.

However, that fun would soon disappear if accidents occurred, which is a very clear reminder that it is essential that we ride safely in a group, with due regard for other road users, and in accordance with the Highway Code.

This simple yet important requirement has led to the drafting and piloting of new Group Riding Guidelines, which draw heavily on the expertise and experience of CTC centrally and other local groups, but is very much a West Surrey document. My very grateful thanks to Louise Gagnon for taking the initiative with this, and for drafting the initial document.

It will be available very shortly on the website (<http://www.ctcwestsurrey.org.uk/>), and your comments, which should be directed to me, would be much appreciated. In due course, once a final document has been agreed, a short version will be prepared as an aide-mémoire.

Please remember that the continuation of our hugely enjoyable group rides is reliant on ride leaders stepping forward and taking the responsibility (often an underestimated degree of responsibility) of ride leadership. But simply riding in a group, rather than just solo, brings additional responsibilities to all – to listen to the ride leader, to act responsibly, and with due regard for the safety of all your friends in the group.

Therefore, please ensure that you read the new guidelines, but most importantly, act in accordance with them. In that way, we can continue to have “safe fun” – which is not an advert for another type of product, but an appropriate desire for all of us when cycling.

RIDING AROUND

With Geoff Smith

The comic hero or bit-player falling off his bike is a staple gag of many a film or TV comedy, guaranteed for a laugh and even more laughs if he launches over the bars and ends up in a ditch.

No laughter, of course, if it happens to you. Yet, if you think about it, we have plenty of laughs through riding or even falling off.

In Woking, I fell off after stopping too suddenly outside a shop. To be precise, my daughter, riding behind me, crashed into me causing this ol' boy to take a tumble. Laughter all round from my daughter, the shopkeeper, and me.

On a winter ride with an always-helpful companion, we chanced upon some black ice, hidden on a small descent. We wobbled a bit, got through it OK, and jointly ground to a halt still upright, to catch our collective breath.

My pal, considerate as ever, thought he ought to warn fellow riders coming up behind, or down in this circumstance, of the surface danger. He will forgive me for saying that he possesses a booming voice.

“Ice!” he roared in warning to the next cyclist approaching the short descent. Whereupon the hapless rider jumped out of his skin in shock and promptly fell off. Once again, huge laughs all round – apart, I confess, from the stricken rider.

On a sublime summer Sunday ride, another friend and I approached a deserted village square. It had a fine church, an old-world pub, red telephone box, and a village shop (closed, but don't let that spoil the picture).

All was quiet, all was calm, until, that is, we pair on our bikes encroached on the scene. It was precisely high noon. The church bells rang out the hour and a little old lady with three miniature dogs on leads appeared from nowhere. Startled by us pair of cyclists, the dogs started jumping and yapping. The leads got caught up in the lady's legs as the congregation emerged from the church, and, basically, all hell was let loose, all because of us. We dropped out of the square and literally collapsed in laughter.

Did I then fall off my bike? – Of course.

TWO SCOTTISH CYCLE TOURS

By Margaret Le Neve Foster

We looked at our Lonely Planet “Cycling Britain” for an inspiring cycling holiday and were enticed by the West Scotland route “an island-hopping adventure, one of the most exciting and visually dazzling cycle routes in the British Isles” and the Highlands Circuit “a lonely single track high road loop around deep lochs, remote glens and the ancient rounded mountains of Britain’s most celebrated wilderness”. Which one to choose? Too difficult, so we chose both, and set off in late April, pre midges and supposedly in one of the drier times.

We drove to Ardrossan, a dour port west of Glasgow, abandoned our car and in no time our adventure had started. The Caledonian MacBrayne ferries are delightful, criss-crossing to the islands in all sorts of directions and combinations, big ones, little ones, middling ones and every one a character. Day one was straight to the Isle of Arran, then the following days took us to Kintyre, Knapdale, Lochgilphead, Loch Awe with nesting ospreys, Oban, Isles of Mull and Iona, Ardnamurchan, Moidart, Sound of Arisaig and finally to Lochailort, a railway halt not far from Mallaig. Then it was time to transfer to the Highland Circuit route and what better way than to go on the West Highland Railway which runs from Mallaig to Fort William and onto Glasgow, described as one of the best railway journeys in the world, going along the wonderful 21-arched Glenfinnan viaduct. At Lochailort, the train doesn’t stop unless requested, so we had to put our thumbs out and wave to get it to stop, a Railway Children moment. The journey was stupendous and not only did we have the most amazing scenery but also caught glimpses of red deer on Rannoch Moor. What a privilege.

The Highland Circuit started at Killin, east of Crianlarich and we cycled around Loch Tay, Loch Rannoch, Loch Tummel to Pitlochry and then back to Killin where we had moved our car after the train journey, ready for a prompt departure home.

Memories of the West Scotland route are of amazing scenery, ever changing, adorable lambs, lonely castles and farmsteads, gorse in full bloom. At times it felt like sensory overload as one perfect scene followed another. The Highland Circuit was easier to absorb and live with. The scenery was softer, less wild, with tall trees and green more in evidence

rather than the varying shades of brown. The roads were surprisingly quieter, with fewer cars and large vehicles passing us. Abiding memories of this section were the snow-covered peaks reflected in the lochs and peace.

We met few other cyclists. Notable was an American about our age who was on his first trip ever outside the USA. He had just completed



Sustrans Route 7 beside Loch Tay

circumnavigating Ireland via the coast roads and was taking a ferry to Barra in the Outer Hebrides where he planned to make his way up the islands, then to Orkney, Norway and Iceland before returning to Colorado. Camping all the way! It made our efforts seem very feeble.

We enjoyed meeting people running the B&Bs and cafés and were surprised at the number of semi-retirees there were from England. They told us they chose to live there away from the crowds and to be able to go for walks in beautiful places with no-one else in sight. Although we enjoyed their company, we felt cheered by our last two B&Bs, run by Scottish couples in their thirties. This did feel a more authentic experience and it was good to see younger people choosing the B&B way of life.

If this has any appeal for you, do do it. It is a truly beautiful part of the world and we are lucky to have it relatively near. Cycling brings you close to nature and what better nature is there than this. Go for it.

HAUTE SAVOIE

By John Murdoch

For the second year running, a group of West Surrey riders (Peter Hackman, Don Gray, John Findlay, Bob McLeod, Geoff Smith jnr, and Nick Davison), plus a “guest rider” from the flat lands of Norfolk (Robin King), ventured out to France for a week’s cycling and carbo loading. This year, after the previous “toe in the water”, a more adventurous trip was arranged, partly based on the beautiful location of Annecy, and taking in some classic climbs in the Haute Savoie region. For some strange reason, the group entrusted me to organise the basics such as hotels and route, on the feeble premise that if I could (usually) lead a group successfully in the Surrey lanes, then France would be more of the same, provided we remembered to ride on the right.



Climbing Gorge du Guiers Mort
(photo by Peter Hackman)

We were again indebted to the wonderful support provided by Ian Young, who transported our bags from hotel to hotel, and was also on hand to provide practical support when needed, such as when John suffered an explosive front wheel blow out, both inner and outer, on a fast descent; a new tyre was soon supplied.

We took in climbs such as the Col du Granier, Mont Revard, Col de la Forclaz, Col du Semnoz, and Grand Colombier, and records showed that in 7 days we climbed over 42,000ft. One highlight was certainly when we were having a look at the route for this year’s L’Etape, which Don has subsequently ridden, and on the descent of Mont Revard we noticed the Sky team cars, followed soon after by the entire Tour de France Sky team who were clearly receiving this key stage. We stopped at the next village to refuel (this descending can be so tough), and saw the team also taking a break (albeit not gorging on the cakes, as we were), so we were able to

have a quick word with Chris Froome and others; we neglected to pass on any tips, but Chris still managed to win the Tour.

The final section of the entire tour ended with an epic 10 mile descent back into Nantua, all top gear and line astern; very similar to the Sky team, just that even downhill we were probably averaging 10 mph less than them when on a flat team trial.

A WEDNESDAY RIDE WITH A DIFFERENT TWIST

By Louise Gagnon

“I can’t believe we packed so much in 46 hours!” These were the words of Don Gray, an avid war buff and world travelled cyclist from our CTC West Surrey, as our ferry docked back into Portsmouth in July 2013.

To be sure, our journey to France following into the footsteps of our WW2 forefathers had started in a much different way to theirs. Since no enemy action was awaiting us on the other shore, we took our time and had a leisurely and copious breakfast on board the very comfortable *Mont St Michel* ferry. There were six of us: Keith Ricketts, Don Gray, Carol Moore, Barry Rolfe, Rob Lane (CTC Reading) and myself. Excited like a bunch of kids off on a school trip, we had been busy chatting away for about 90 minutes when Barry Rolfe came to get us. Our seasoned yachtsman had already done a full walkabout of our large ship and was proud to report that he had found an ideal location where I could conduct a D-Day briefing.

A briefing? Nothing fancy, just some dead easy to understand tactical and strategic bits and bobs so all could easily follow the context of this hugely significant event in history. To the tune of the popular war-era song “Let’s stick together” crackling from the tablet speaker, out came a cloth map with an outline of the British coast and the D-Day beaches.



No worries Don: these are just miniature replica tanks

Soon we were all immersed back into the 1940s, the WW2 aficionados in the audience pitching in highly relevant comments and asking many questions in the process. Carol did smile with amusement as I pulled out small scale replica plastic tanks from my saddle bags; little did she know that minutes later she was to become well versed in the Panther vs Sherman tanks tactical capabilities. (You may even ask her why some Sherman tanks were equipped with “skirts” when you see her next!). We laughed a lot, talked a lot and what I had planned to be a 30 minute briefing turned out to last a good hour and a half. Where did the time go?!

What could have been a long crossing proved to be a breeze and soon the shores of Ouistreham, France (the D-Day SWORD beach in 1944), were in sight. The ship’s staff were kind enough to let us get ahead of the cars and it is *à vélo* that we proceeded to follow every mile of the 1944 advance of the combined British and Canadian Forces up to Caen and Verrières Ridge, briefly stopping at seven sites of military interest over the next two days.

I was fortunate in that, having covered these grounds in much detail during my Canadian Army Staff College days, it was easy to animate each site



Those German 88s anti-tank guns could pick off anything from atop Verrières Ridge

briefing with many riveting details. Everything from why German 88 anti-tank guns were sited the way they were in relation to the terrain, to the close air support provided by Allied Typhoon aircraft as they tried to weaken the 12th SS Panzer Division *Hitlerjugend*'s ferocious resolve was thus intensely relived by our small group.

What really struck a chord with everyone proved to be the real life tales knitted together of six real life individuals (German, British, Canadian and French) who had been in the thick of it in 1944, at times even fighting **each other**. Goose bumps and all sorts of emotions awaited the group at every stop; assuredly, this was no mere group of yawning tourists on a battlefield

tour bus outing. Riding our bikes into the wind and 30°C heat over nearly 80 miles of mildly undulating Normandy terrain, we smelled and sensed the bloody Allied advance, all the while picturing in our minds what it must have been for warfighters on both sides and for the French population caught in the middle.

As we rode, I am sure many of us “heard” the bullets whizzing past us at waist level in the Normandy wheat fields and “felt” what that young British tank gunner must have felt as he fumbled for the trigger of his 76 mm gun having just spotted a massive German Tiger tank appear in his gun sight...

And so it was filled with a very intense and rich sense of true cycle touring camaraderie and companionship that late on the evening of Day 2 we cycled the last few miles back to the ferry. Six riders, their minds still resonating with vivid war tales, their bellies full of exquisite French food, their skin tanned by the blistering Normandy sunshine, suitably dressed in bright Hi Viz colours (French law *oblige* at night), quietly making their way to the welcoming lights of an awaiting ship homebound for England. Such “ultra-compact battlefield cycle touring” is just one of the many great riding options available with CTC West Surrey.



True cycle touring camaraderie: can't beat it!

Such “ultra-compact battlefield cycle touring” is just one of the many great riding options available with CTC West Surrey.

Don't miss out on the 2014 version of this two-day trip, this time with a possibility to extend to three days to take in the sights of beautiful Caen. I am currently planning to conduct two tours: one for riders averaging 10-12 MPH (24-26 June 2014) and one for more sedate riders averaging 8-10 MPH (15-17 July 2014). Please advise me if you are interested. I will advertise the trip and take firm bookings in Spring 2014. Note that you need to be able to ride at the above average pace carrying your own luggage – for tips, ask Barry; he knows how to pack extremely light! All set? Alright then, see you on the ferry!

TWO LADIES OF A CERTAIN AGE: C2C

By Carol Moore and Liz Palethorpe

The train from Reading was running late so we missed our connection at Wolverhampton – was this a bad omen? Eventually we arrived at Whitehaven on a beautiful evening; so we rode round the harbour and then, of course, up a steep hill to our B & B.

Day 1 Whitehaven to Keswick

Full of anticipation we found the old railway track, Sustrans Route 71 and pedalling along met the Sustrans Ranger who told us about the red squirrels in the area although we didn't see any. Wow – this is easy – is it going to be like this all the way? Coffee at a caravan park and the start of the long, steep and spectacular climb over Winlatter Pass, 1300 ft, breathtaking scenery, lakes in the distance, peaks to be climbed and fields of buttercups. Late afternoon we arrived in Keswick. Carol decided she needed a new tyre, we didn't want to have any punctures and luck was with us: the first bike shop we came to had the right tyre and fitted it for her there and then. Into our CTC registered B&B – the proprietor we nicknamed Mrs Doom and Gloom. I'm not sure whether she didn't like us or didn't like cyclists as she predicted for the week twenty mph head winds, heavy rain and extremely cold for time of year – how wrong?

Day 2 Keswick to Alston

Cycling through beautiful undulating country to Greystoke Castle, former home of Lord Greystoke on which the legend of Tarzan is based. Here was the cyclists café, called the Cyclist Barn. What a welcome – sitting in a beautiful garden we had lunch of home-made soup and yummy cakes. We had to tear ourselves away, on to Penrith and then THE CLIMB to the highest café in England – Hartside 1093 ft. Unfortunately the cloud and mist came down and by the time we reached the top the café had closed for the day. It was downhill all the way, 5 miles to Alston for the night. A brandy was needed to revive us from the cold.

Day 3 Alston to Stanhope

This was our favourite day, cycling over the North Pennines, so wild and remote with curlews flying overhead. Up and over Black Hill to Allenshead, the highest village in England, for hot chocolate and scones – absolutely delicious. Then not our longest but steepest climb – will our

legs ever recover – to Parkhead. The disused railway station now a B&B standing all alone on top of the moor, just magic.



Day 4 Stanhope to Tynemouth

Now with the wind behind us along The Waskerley Way with the reservoirs in sight and then the Derwent Walk and back to civilisation. Lunch in Newcastle and then on to Tynemouth – we have DONE IT. We had the wind with us most of the way, no rain and not too cold so...

Mrs Doom and Gloom from Keswick, you were wrong.

SPITFIRE OVER SINGLETON

By Nick Davison

Heading up from Bosham on the way back over the Downs to Cocking on our club Sunday ride we called in at the village hall in Singleton for tea and cake. It was a gorgeous sunny day so we sat outside and had just finished our first round when a plane roared overhead. Peter shouted "It's a Spitfire in D day colours" and Clive and I rushed out clear of a tree and watched as it performed a stunning display right over us. Apparently the plane is owned by a local man who was diving down low over his property over the hillside. He is a great enthusiast and is now restoring a two-seater Spitfire.

Tea and cake will be available next year for the whole of August on Sundays there - not sure about a repeat air display!

REALITY CHECK IN FRANCE

By John Pletts

I've been many times to my wife's parents' home in the Loire Valley, often at Christmas now as they can no longer travel.

This Easter my father-in-law has bought me a second hand racing bike which means that I can get out and make daily excursions to interesting places like Fontevraud and Bauge. The roads are a revelation and so little traffic.

On Saturday I contact the local cycling club, le Club Vélo des Rosiers, who explain that they meet at 8.30am on the village square and there is a choice of 60 and 90km rides before lunch.

When I arrive at 8.25 the group has already formed: they are all wearing black cycling shorts and the club tops, and their bikes look good, putting my Decathlon model in the shade.

This village is on the north bank of the Loire which is flat. I am asked whether I know the area, all the places mentioned are north of the Loire so I am confident we will be on flat terrain. However the route will actually be 75km today as we have to check over the route which is being used for a big public cycling event in 2 weeks' time.

I am one of about 15 riders, but when we leave the village square we immediately turn left across the suspension bridge to the hilly country south of the Loire. I am OK at first, keeping up with the 25 km per hour average speed but as we go up and down more hills and through little farmyards I am struggling to keep up. When the front part of the group takes a wrong turning I am pleased as it gives me the chance to move up the order while they catch up.

The members of the club are 80% retired and (on this outing) 100% male, and very fit. Much like some of us they cycle every Wednesday and Sunday, whatever the weather. I am just beginning to think that a break for coffee would be congenial: this is when I learn that there is no coffee stop, but a short 'bar break' at Ambillou-Chateau. It is explained that there is an option of cutting the ride shorter by going straight back to les Rosiers in about 10 km.

When the turning comes up I have no hesitation in turning left for home

and a rapid ride back for a hot chocolate in a café. I feel very pleased with my excursion and the welcome given to me, but I am told that I need a better bike next time if I want to keep up.

PROBLEMS GETTING SPARE PARTS ABROAD

By Nick Davison

It was a cool but bright morning and there were five of us spinning steadily up the long ascent through the forest to the Montagne du Semnoz on our 8-day cycling trip in the Haute Savoie. French workmen were busy adding a surface dressing in preparation for stage 19 of the Tour and the Etape. We had just reached the turn-off to Quintal, which had large areas of loose grit around, when my pedals stopped turning. I looked down and saw that my rear derailleur had wrapped itself round the cassette of my Specialized Roubaix. It soon became apparent that a stone had landed on the chain as it entered the lower jockey wheel and jammed the mechanism which then revolved around the cassette with the pedal stroke.

After much fettling and cursing, I reluctantly left the group to freewheel down to Annecy and try and get it fixed – it could have happened later when I would have had a lot of walking to do! I tried a cycle hire shop on the edge of the lake which had a very good mechanic who worked on it straight away. He managed to bend the metal into shape to make the bike rideable, albeit a bit lumpy, and gave the address of the Specialized dealer. The tourist info was nearby and I was soon on my way out of town to the biggest retail park ever seen. After much riding around in circles and testing my French in the shops I made it to the cycle dealer, who looked at it and said he had no spare hanger or derailleur; come back in two days! I searched around the shop and found a Shimano 105 derailleur for 30 teeth and got hold of a younger guy, who was more agreeable to start immediately. He thought that the hanger was serviceable but a screw had fallen out, which he replaced. Fortunately, the new derailleur worked fine with my 32 tooth cassette and finally I was ready to go.

I climbed the 1500m to the Grande Columbier two days later without any problems but was always careful to steer clear of grit.

The moral of the story is take a spare derailleur hanger and screws, and if you have an unusual set-up take a spare derailleur.

OFF ROAD AND OFF COURSE

By Dave Williamson

Coming as I do from humble peasant origins, I haven't walked the path of fame in life. I have though had a few brief brushes with that most fickle of mistresses: I've had a cutting read out on Radio 4's *News Quiz*, I once made a bed up for Pam Ayres and I was dragged kicking and screaming as crowd filler onto *This Is Your Life* in the days when it was presented by Shamus Android. He wrote and thanked everyone in green ink. One to add to these achievements is having a query printed and answered in the CTC *Cycle* magazine - the full colour bi-monthly organ of said organisation. This was not easy and took several attempts. I wanted legal advice on a cycling matter and who better to do this than the CTC experts I thought.

I should state here and now that although I own a mountain bike, I soon discovered after buying it that 'mountain biking' and I are not good bedfellows: if I break a leg or something at my age they simply get out the humane killer. I do, however, find these bikes handy tools for scouting out walks for my walking club. To this end I was exploring around Christmas Pie and came across a home-made sign on a footpath that ran through someone's garden. It made a statement about only walkers using the path, taking a dog if it was kept under control, pushing a pram or pushchair if the path allowed but ended with 'You Must Not Push, Carry Or Use A Bicycle On A Footpath'. I can understand the 'Use' part but surely pushing or carrying are allowed aren't they? At the very least I needed to know.

By a spooky coincidence, *Walk* magazine - the equivalent organ of the Ramblers' Association - ran a similar letter about a month later.

So, what can be gleaned from the various printed responses?

Firstly, a footpath is not a pavement. You can get a fixed penalty fine for cycling on the pavement. Unfortunately, the law about cycles on footpaths turns out to be a grey area which is untested in law. From the advice given, it would seem that pushing, carrying or riding a bicycle on a footpath could indeed be considered a civil trespass against the landowner. This it seems is not the same as a criminal offence. In any case, the whole matter can be affected by local bylaws. Confused? I certainly am. It's about as clear as mud - the mud caking my mountain bike which puts me off even more from using it in anger. Is there a solicitor in the house?

PURE BIKE GREASE, A REVIEW

By Dane Maslen

In summer 2012 my front hub needed regreasing. I stripped it down, cleaned it and the ball bearings thoroughly, and then discovered I was out of lithium grease. I dashed out to Halfords, just 5 minutes away, in the hope of getting some there. Alas there was none (well, not in the cycle section anyway). The sensible thing would have been to continue a further 15 minutes to Evans, but my keenness to finish the job and reassemble the bike induced me to buy the Pure Bike Grease that was available.

Pure Bike Grease is made from natural and renewable sources. Despite my own green credentials I am suspicious of such products as I have encountered many that aren't up to the job they are supposedly design for: a plant-based suntan cream that gave a result similar to covering oneself with Mazola particularly springs to mind. This is a pity as it tarnishes the reputation of those that do work well (I once tried a hand cleaner that was, if I recall correctly, based on hemp and found that it worked as well as products like Swarfega). How would Pure Bike Grease shape up?

When I opened the tub, my suspicions seemed to be justified: the grease was much thinner than lithium grease and I doubted that it would lubricate the hub well. Having applied it and reassembled the hub, I did, however, have to admit that the wheel was running smoothly. But would it last?

Earlier this summer I got the answer to that question when it became apparent that my front hub needed regreasing again after a much shorter interval than I have been accustomed to in the past. This time I went to Evans and bought some lithium grease before setting to work. I was expecting to find that the thin Pure Bike Grease had largely disappeared from the hub. What I instead found was that much of it had turned into a very viscous mess, so viscous in fact that cleaning the hub and the ball bearings proved very time consuming.

While I cannot exclude the possibility that the Pure Bike Grease was adversely affected by chemical residues from the previous lithium grease or the cleaning of the hub, I have come to the conclusion that it's not a product that I would wish to use again (and indeed I've found an adverse review of it on the internet), so the remainder of the tub that I bought from Halfords is now lubricating a rubbish tip somewhere.

COME ON IN, THE WATER'S LOVELY!

By John David of CTC South Bucks

Reprinted from the March 2013 edition of The Beech Leaf by kind permission of the editor and the author.

Is there such an affliction as canalophobia? If so, I've caught it. Symptoms: I go cold and shivery at the mention of canal paths (brrrr!) and then come out in a rash that means I am totally unable to steer my bike to within 100 metres of a towpath. Why? Because I'm obsessed with the worry of falling, either into the canal proper or into water adjacent to or on the other side of canal paths. Mind, once upon a time I used to grit my teeth and get on with riding them. But I've never been adroit about dealing with dangers which lurk all around when we quit the familiar surface of tarmac, comforting even allowing for the glut of potholes with which we have to cope.

This isn't to say that I shy away from rough stuff at all times, nor always from towpaths. It's just that, as the years pass, there is an increasing sense of self-preservation which warns me there are an awful lot of pratfalls around in some circumstances, and towpaths provide many of these circumstances.

Canalophobia was my self-diagnosis after I broke a hip when I fell on ice and after the surgeon, discharging me, said sagely but none-too-practically: "Be careful not to fall off your bike again". What an invitation to calamity!

Sure enough, soon after, when trundling along the Grand Union with a group, I veered to the left, went into some uncut grass which disguised a traverse foot-deep gulley, and stopped abruptly. I made a soft landing, but this came just a fortnight after the medic's stricture. What more was to come?

It wasn't long. I was at the tail of a group of Midweekers on the canal path near Bulbourne, following just behind Dave Williamson. Now Dave is a big bloke on a bike with big handlebars. Ducking under the bridge parapet, he made it but his 'bars scraped on the interior wall and his bike was suddenly jerked to the left. Poor Dave was jettisoned into the water head first, describing a perfect parabola before sinking into the murky depths. His bike slid in too, slowly.

Don't let anyone tell you our local canals are only 4ft deep. Dave's head emerged, covered in green slime. At more than 6ft tall he was standing

there up to his neck, blowing like a whale. He struggled to the edge where I was standing and held out his hands to be rescued. No sooner had he gripped my hands than I realised he was too heavy and I was about to be pulled in myself. I shook myself free and for the first time in my life bellowed "Help!" and meant it. Luckily the last man in the fast-disappearing group heard me and luckily again it was Alan Williams, a burly bloke capable of hauling Dave from the depths.

That sight of a fellow cyclist describing a graceful Tom Daley dive will remain etched in my memory for ever. So will the sight of Mick Cole, some years ago, bouncing up and down, his bottom just inches from the surface, and caught fast in a canal-side bush that he somehow tumbled into. Funny, but a reminder that canals are not mere tranquil waterways but place stacked full of hazards for the unwary bicyclist.

I could go on. We were using a stretch of a canal near Leamington Spa. Not all towpaths are maintained as well as those of the Grand Union. Poorly maintained stretches are likely to hide dangers in all seasons - in winter slippery damp clay bits; sometimes with an adverse camber are worrisome. There's a stretch of the Wendover Arm which threatens to slide you in for this reason.

In summer, weed growth, left untrimmed, can obscure almost all the track you're riding on, on top of stinging bare legs. This time, for miles, there was around six inches of towpath visible, with 3ft of nettles and brambles on one side and a drop of a few feet into the canal the other. How glad I was to reach a solid, reassuring piece of roadway.

I've got on to this subject now because my wife Wendy had a watery experience canal-side recently when out with the Chiltern Hills group. As a cowardly cyclist suffering from canalophobia, I opted out when a towpath section was suggested, preferring to go round by road. Wendy is made of sterner stuff.

I headed for the pre-planned picnic spot and waited. And waited. And waited. I knew I would be quicker, so had ridden at leisurely pace. But this was ridiculous. After an hour I knew something was amiss. No switched-on mobile phones, but after another 20 minutes they appeared. I suspected a pact not to tell husband, but streaks of mud down her side, wet shorts and soaking hair were a giveaway.

It emerged she was riding along a ridge which required her to drop down a

muddy edge. She slid, tried to put her left foot down, but discovered that what she assumed was grass was, in fact, tall reeds. And below the reed was water, not as deep as the canal proper but enough to provide a quick wallow for her, head to foot.

No personal or bike damage, but as she squelched home I reflected that canals, while traffic-free and flat riding, can be threatening at all times and my canalophobia may be no bad thing.

Ed: One Sunday in May I met up with the editor of The Beech Leaf at Aldermaston Wharf, the intended lunch stop of a ride he was leading. It was, however, closed so we rode alongside the Kennet & Avon Canal for a few miles to an alternative. As we progressed, thankfully without incident, I couldn't help recalling the words of this article. I suspect that it will also have struck a chord with some former winners of the Wooden Crank.

CTC WEST SURREY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM will be at 10.30 am on Saturday 2nd November at The Jack Phillips Pub (Wetherspoons) in the High Street, Godalming. The meeting will be held in a private room. Tea and coffee will be available from 10.00 – to ensure a prompt start to the meeting please arrive by 10.15 if you want tea or coffee. Parking is available behind the High Street in the Council car park which requires pre-payment. We hope that as many members as possible will come to the AGM and then stay for a pub lunch afterwards.

Motions for consideration at the AGM must be submitted to the secretary at least two weeks in advance, as should nominations - using the form opposite - for chairman, secretary, treasurer and rides' secretary (all ex-officio members of the committee), other committee members and auditor. Nominations for the honorary posts of president and vice-presidents can be made either in advance or at the meeting.

In addition to electing officials and considering formal motions the AGM gives members the opportunity to make and discuss suggestions, e.g. about our publications, our social, rides' and events' programmes, and how to attract younger participants. Bring along some good ideas!

Contact the secretary, Nick Davison, on email: nickandmarion.davison@hotmail.co.uk or by post: The Bield, Mill Copse Road, Fernhurst, West Sussex, GU27 3DN.

Nomination Form
Annual General Meeting of CTC West Surrey Group

I, _____

proposer's name _____ *member number* _____ *proposer's signature* _____

seconded by

_____ *member number* _____ *seconder's signature* _____

nominate

_____ *nominee's name* _____ *member number* _____

to be submitted for election as

Chairman / Secretary / Treasurer / Rides' Secretary / Committee Member / Auditor / President / Vice-President (circle as appropriate)
of CTC West Surrey Group.

I agree to my nomination as set out above _____ *nominee's signature* _____ *date* _____

The CTC West Surrey Group Local Rules require this form to be completed and submitted to the Group Secretary at least two weeks before the date of the Annual General Meeting

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 14th September: Cycle Jumble, Ripley Village Hall, 09:00.

Saturday 21st September: Tour of Britain, penultimate stage, Epsom to Guildford. See <http://thetour.co.uk/tourofbritain/277.php#.Ubompc7fu5k>.

Friday 27th to Sunday 29th September: The Cycle Show, NEC, Birmingham. See www.cycleshow.co.uk.

Saturday 2nd November: AGM, Jack Phillips Pub (Wetherspoons), High Street, Godalming, 10:30. Please arrive by 10:15 if you want tea or coffee.

Wednesday 1st January 2014: New Year's Day at Seale Craft Centre. From 10:30.

Remember – all proceeds go to Farnham Hospice, so eat lots of cake!

Sunday 10th August 2014: Registration for next year's Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 has already closed. Applicants will find out in February whether they have a place.

Deadline for next issue November 30th. 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 (give readers some inspiration for next summer as they shiver their way through winter), anecdotes about events on club rides, letters (serious or humorous) 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: Woking Midweek Wayfarers Intermediates on the ferry across Chichester Harbour to Itchenor on 19th June (photo by Dane Maslen).