

“The West Surrey Cyclist” - January - March 2012

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Cover photo - 1970s 'curly' Hetchins racing bike. Can you find another 'curly' inside?

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

You know Christmas Day is under way when you see the first child ride past on a new bike - often followed by a father shouting 'Slow down!'. Where I grew up the road ran downhill, so very often the child was out of sight before the father hove into view. I never actually had a bike for Christmas as a child, but when my sister and I were nearly five we had a child's tricycle each and I remember vividly sitting on my blue trike in the spare bedroom, in pyjamas, slippers and dressing gown, madly pedalling backwards! Those trikes introduced us to a lifelong fascination with life on wheels, until at university I finally acquired my first bike. Since then bikes and I have done without each other at various stages of my life, but I think now that lifelong addiction has taken hold and this time it's incurable.

So, congratulations to any of you who get a new bike from Santa this Christmas and may you always outdistance those who try to hold you back!

CTC WEST SURREY 2012

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WHAT WE ARE

CTC is the national organisation for all cyclists in the UK and Ireland. 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 the CTC West Surrey group is one. It campaigns for both road and offroad cyclists. Membership includes third-party insurance, legal claims advice, travel and technical guidance, on and offroad route information, and a bi-monthly national magazine.

CTC headquarters: Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford GU2 9JX. Phone 0844 736 8450.

CTC website: www.ctc.org.uk

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

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

DON'T JUST SIT THERE, WRITE SOMETHING!

**All contributions are welcomed by the Editor. Please send them to Claire Hooper:
claire_hooper2003@yahoo.co.uk**

RIDE LEADERS

SUNDAY RIDERS Clive Richardson 01428 724390.

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

NOTES FROM THE AGM

Claire Hooper

A total of 23 people attended AGM at the Bird in Hand, Mayford Green, Woking on October 29th, including CTC councillors. Some also stayed for lunch.

The Secretary reported that his concerns about Adrian Lawson, the full-time Group Liaison Officer, leaving CTC had been groundless; Julie Rand had provided a good service despite being part-time.

In his annual report, the Secretary highlighted that the various ride groups had been well attended, although the Sunday groups needed new riders. Some rides had been cancelled due to ice, but he hoped that people would be more cautious over this winter, since several riders had still come off.

The remaining club shirts were being sold by sealed-bid auction at the end of the AGM.

Due to changes at CTC HQ, every member is now entitled to attend any group's AGM.

Copies of the audited accounts had not been printed for the meeting, but the originals were available for viewing. The net surplus for the year was about £700, with the increase in capitation allowance being counteracted by a slight reduction in profit on the Tour of the Hills.

The Secretary proposed that the postcode areas GU11, GU14 and GU30 be added to the Group's membership area. This motion was accepted.

A motion was proposed to award the Benstead Cup only to members who had helped with marshalling or organising events. It was finally decided to suspend the Benstead Cup until the Group membership has more interest in competitions.

It was also decided that the Bernard Howell Trophy should be re-allocated, but the reallocation had not been decided at the time. See below for more information.

The award for Wooden Crank was unanimously awarded to Richard Ellis for his novel approach to combining the sports of swimming and cycling.

Nick Davison suggested that more members might wear the club shirt if it were more modern. Using an online supplier would avoid the need for a club member to process orders.

Tim Bar asked if the magazine would be made available by email. This is the intention.

Mark Waters plans to update the website when he leaves the employ of the CTC (November).

Chris Jeggo remarked that he had not been Archivist for a year now. All important documents are now with the Surrey History Centre and the committee must re-house the final box of items.

BERNARD HOWELL TROPHY

By Roger Philo

THE winner of the Bernard Howell Trophy will be the West Surrey member who is highest placed in the CTC Tourist competition. As this competition runs from the beginning of March to the end of October each year and our AGM is usually on the last Saturday of October, we won't know the winner at the time of the AGM.

SURREY CYCLE MAPS

By Claire Hooper

I don't know about you, but I have treasured these maps since they were made available FREE OF CHARGE at Woking library and at cycle shops around Surrey, and nabbed as many copies as I could find before they ran out. I'm pleased to report that they are now available again (in the library at least, I haven't noticed them in bike shops) but alas, they are free no more. They now cost £2 per map! So they are even more like gold dust than before. Not only that, but Woking library is in temporary (smaller) quarters until sometime in Spring 2012 so, in the meantime, I've resorted to holding my original collection together with sticky tape.

MY FIRST BIRTHDAY RIDES - AUGUST 2011

By Phil Hamilton

DETERMINED to regain my fitness after so many months without regular riding, in February this year I decided to set myself a target and booked to go to the CTC Birthday Rides in Suffolk. I then set about going out as regularly as I could with the Sunday Intermediates and the Mid-week riders.

Apart from fitness, logistics loomed large in my mind: primarily, should I ride or train and ride the c.150 miles to the venue in Framlingham. Riding would necessitate an overnight stay and a suitable hostel was located at the 100 mile mark - but would I be fit enough to get there with my pannier laden bike? Conversely, the train could be a nightmare and costly. I decided a late decision would be advisable, and concentrated on riding as much as I could.

By mid-July I decided that fitness levels were not sufficiently high to embark on the ride and booked my train ticket from Liverpool St to Ipswich, with the assurance that I had also reserved a space for my bike on that train. Woking to Waterloo would not be a problem and Waterloo to Liverpool St should be an easy ride (according to GoogleMap!).

The Sunday forecast was good and I set out in good time to make all my connections. All the lifts worked (I didn't fancy lifting the laden bike up the stairs!), London traffic was light, and I arrived in Ipswich for a sunny ride to Framlingham, where I was warmly welcomed by the Suffolk CTC Group volunteers. Registration was a doddle and I was soon settled into my room, and explored the College, the grounds and the village to get my bearings for the week ahead.

I met up with some of the West Surrey Group, checked out the rides on offer, but couldn't make a decision, and then joined the queue for dinner. What a blow-out - if the food continues like this it will need long rides every day to burn it off!!

Monday morning dawned sunny and, after a good breakfast, I joined a group of riders from Hull to do "Ride No 6", approximately 60 miles going out to Southwold on the coast - an ideal lunch stop.

Shortly after that lunch, a moment's inattention had me off the bike and the group calling for an ambulance. Diagnosed as having fractured my pelvis with the crack passing through the cup (in which the ball of the femur sits), I spent the rest of my 'holiday' in Ipswich Hospital before being transferred to Addenbrookes Hospital, Cambridge for an operation to "pin" the pelvis back together.

Recovery is going well, and my aim is to be back on the bike not later than March 2012.

Many thanks for all the good wishes you have sent me.

NEW CLUB SHIRTS

As you know, the last of the club shirts were auctioned off at this year's AGM. We are now trying to decide on a design for the new shirts and would welcome suggestions. Does anyone know if the current design has any significance? Do we want different colours? Should the oak leaf be included as the symbol of Surrey? Please tell us what you do or don't want before someone else decides for you! Send your suggestions to claire_hooper2003@yahoo.co.uk.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF A NEW RIDE

By Roger Philo

At the finish of last year's 50 mile reliability ride I had a request for a 35 mile ride, so in 2012 I'm proposing to run such a ride from Farncombe on the route shown on the next page. As Pyrford is the more popular start, I'd like to run one from there as well, but this is more difficult. A 35 mile route from Pyrford to Holmbury St Mary that goes via the coffee shop in Kirdford, which the 50 routes from both starts and the 35 from Farncombe use, is impossible, so another coffee stop would be needed.

Starting from Pyrford a route of about 35 miles could be: follow the existing 50 mile route to Alfold Crossways, then down to Loxwood, left on to Spy Lane, left at the T on to Loxwood Road, then past the end of Drungewick Lane to pick up the existing 50 mile route. The only coffee stop on this route is Costa's on Cranleigh High Street, although Nottcutt's would only involve a small diversion. If you would like such a ride to be organised, please let me know your preference for the coffee stop.

TAIWAN

By Chris Jeggo

THE Portugese called Taiwan '*Isla Formosa*' - 'Beautiful Island'. Its Austronesian aboriginal people constitute a few percent of the population; the majority are of various Chinese origins resulting from several waves of immigration from about 1400 onwards. After Japanese occupation (1894-1945) the island became part of the Republic of China (ROC) under Chiang Kai-Shek, with Chairman Mao soon to lead his revolution. Mao's forces never invaded Taiwan, which therefore still calls itself the ROC, as distinct from the People's Republic of China, 100 miles away across the Taiwan Strait. Most nations, including Britain, now recognise the PRC and therefore have more informal diplomatic relations with the ROC.

Our son Will has lived in the capital, Taipei, for about five years, teaching English, and we made our third visit, the longest so far, in October and November, aiming for the period between the summer heat and the winter rain. Will recently returned to cycling and asked us to bring his Dawes Horizon that had been gathering cobwebs since he decided that it was not 'cool' for schoolboys to cycle. So I had the use of this capable touring machine for the duration.

Will had arranged with a couple of cycling friends for me to join them on a trip during the second weekend of our stay. The plan was to ride south down the east coast from Hualien train station then cross the coastal mountain ridge and return via the parallel rift valley. At the last minute we changed our plan because they were forecasting rain to the east of the high central mountain range but sunshine to the west. However, I know that this would make a superb tour, deserving rather more than the short weekend that has to be fitted into busy work schedules, because Will, Lynette and I covered this ground by car during our first visit to Taiwan. Apart from flat river delta areas around the three major cities of Ilan (Yilan), Hualien and Taitung, Taiwan's east coast is sparsely populated and very scenic because the mountains come right down to the sea. It is also of cultural interest because most of the aboriginal tribes live here or in the mountains. Furthermore, a short distance north of Hualien is the spectacular Taroko Gorge that should be included in any tour of Taiwan.

There is a coastal plain on the west side of Taiwan, containing most of the population, most of the cities, most of the industry, most of the freeways and major highways, conventional railways and the High Speed Railway (HSR). The latter whisked us from a rainy Taipei to a sunny Chiayi, almost exactly on the Tropic of Cancer.

The first few level miles were on straight, ribbon-developed roads, past a Giant cycle store where we were able to replace a pair of worn out brake blocks. Such spares are very reasonably priced, especially so when you consider that the price includes fitting. Will says that Taiwanese cycle shops do not charge for labour. There is a down-side to this; if you want your bike serviced expect to pay for replacement of

items that are not worn out, because that is how the shops make their money.

As we headed east, crossing various north-south highways and a railway, the buildings thinned out and the mountains ahead could be seen more clearly through the faint but ever present haze of industrial pollution. After a tasty lunch in a small village café we continued through more undulating countryside filled with lush tropical vegetation and crops in between villages that were now distinctly rural.

Where the roads tilted seriously upwards we turned right to climb to Guanziling, a hot spring resort with the Ming-dynasty-era Biyun Temple and the Water Fire Grotto where spring water and natural gas emerge at the same point. Past these tourist attractions the traffic was even lighter, and the day's best cycling began after a short climb took us over the day's high point at 540m. A 'corniche' road took us generally south on the flank of a ridge; it did not stray far from contouring so the undulations were not excessive. In between the fertile small holdings and plantations around villages we were riding amongst lush shrubs, small trees and bamboo thickets. The one constant feature of the ever changing scenery was the view west over the plain below. As the ridge gradually got lower so did the road; likewise the sun and the temperature. It was delightful.

Eventually a short tunnel took us through the ridge. We whizzed into the next valley and cycled up it as far as Tsengwen Youth Hostel. A nearby restaurant provided an interesting dinner, including 'Little Birds' and Bee-larvae Omelette, which tasted slightly nutty with a hint of honey.

After a traditional Chinese breakfast we cycled up the valley to Tsengwen Reservoir and followed its southern shores. The peace was disturbed only by a loudspeaker van travelling at much our speed, canvassing votes in a forthcoming election, all a bit odd because there were hardly any residents to listen. This road climbed up to meet Route 3 which, although a national highway, was very quiet here in this sparsely populated, hilly area because all the through traffic is on Freeway 3 down on the western plain.

After lunch came the next scenic highlight, Mount Tsao Moon World (see http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/gogo/goen_44.htm). Highway 171 meanders through this strange scenery with its bare, severely rain-eroded slopes of a soft grey rock. The view of the "Grand Canyon" is worth the 500m detour from the through route, which eventually leaves the stream and climbs steeply to Hill 308 and a spectacular ridge road leading south.

A direct route took us down to Tainan HSR station for a sushi meal and the journey back to Taipei. There are some photographs of this trip at <http://www.facebook.com/album.php?aid=261194&id=629501597&l=4a079cab20>.

The rest of my cycling this trip was in and around Taipei, which has five main rivers flowing through it. All originate in the surrounding mountains and flood after heavy rains, so they have flood plains bounded by dykes or walls. Much of this land has been converted to linear parks with sports facilities and riverside cycleways, which are highly recommended. They are well surfaced, the scenery between the flood dykes is attractive (and the city generally looks better when viewed from the riverside), and they are traffic-free and peaceful. Well, they are free of most traffic but at weekends when whole families, with children too young to have learnt cycling discipline, take to them then you have to go at the speed of the crowd and keep your fingers on the brake levers. At the less busy times they can be quicker than a more direct route using city streets because you never have to stop for a red light. A very useful map of Taipei is the free "Taipei City Cycling Map" (1:34200 scale), available in English, showing most streets, the Metro lines and stations and most tourist attractions.

One short afternoon ride with Will took us through areas of mangroves to Guandu where there is a fine temple complex dedicated to Matzu, goddess of the sea. With more time available we could have gone on to Danshui, the attractions of which include Danshui Old Street, Spanish-built Fort Domingo, a former British consular residence and Fuyou Temple.

Another good excursion is via Xindian, the southernmost part of Taipei, to Wulai, a hot spring resort

where the pedestrianised main street is full of souvenir shops and assorted eateries. Continuing up the gorge a narrow, delightful road takes you to Wulai waterfall and then the excellent scenery continues as you leave the tourists behind. The next item of note is the police checkpoint. I had been told that I had to have photo ID (passport), sign a form and pay a nominal fee. However, the guard spoke no English and gestured to show stuff falling on my head. I believe the purpose of the formalities is to absolve the authorities of any liability should a landslide obliterate you, so I guess his gesture referred to rocks rather than the rain that was falling. He waved me through to this quiet, very scenic road to Fushan, which is about as far as you can go on a road bike.

Also to the south of Taipei are Sanxia and Yingge which can be visited during a circular half or full day ride. Sanxia's attractions are Old Street (single storey brick-built shops about 100 years old - and considerably restored) and a fine temple. Yingge used to be the centre of the Taiwanese ceramics industry. As Yingge once undercut Stoke-on-Trent, so China has now undercut Yingge, but there are a few kilns left to remind you of Staffordshire, and the Ceramics Museum is worth a visit.

Mention of ceramics leads me to the National Palace Museum in Taipei. When Chiang Kai-Shek fled from the mainland he took with him as much national treasure as he could. The museum's vast collection is far too large to display all at once. The most highly prized articles are on permanent display while the remainder are rotated every few months.

Other attractions of the capital are temples (Longshan, Baoan, Confucius etc), Taipei 101 (the world's tallest building 2004-2010 with spectacular views, especially around sunset), Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall and its grounds, night markets and eating out. Will tried hard to ensure that we never ate the same food twice and nearly succeeded - during a visit lasting a month! You can eat well on a budget and dine sumptuously for less than typical Surrey prices.

Other good bike rides were into the Yangmingshan mountains, a national park to the north of the city, and south-east towards Pinglin, a tea-growing district. One memorable experience was having dead skin nibbled from our feet by small fish in a pool in a hot spring resort - a tickling that took some getting used to! And there's still loads left to see on our next visit.

ADVICE ABOUT RIDING IN GROUPS

From the CTC

RIDING close to other cyclists takes practice. Relax and enjoy the company but always allow for others in front and behind.

THE best way to learn is to follow the example of those around you, especially experienced riders. In particular try to pick up the pedalling rhythm by using the same gears as them.

GROUP riding pattern is normally in pairs. This is sociable and keeps the group together. Single file is courteous and safer on some roads.

THE Highway Code specifically allows cyclists to ride two abreast. Usually the leader decides when to move to single file because of traffic or passing walkers or horses. Offroad, make allowance for walkers. Ask how your group usually moves from double to single file.

AVOID sudden movements and horseplay, look and let others know before you change speed or direction. Group riding is safe if simple rules are followed. The most common cause of accidents is sudden stopping. Always take time to stop; the whole group will stop with you anyway. If you are at the back let someone know you are stopping.

EVERYONE lets the others know of hazards, changes in riding pattern, cars coming by. Learn the calls and signals for your group and pass them right along the group, especially warning from the rear. Only front riders see hazards clearly so they must warn those behind in plenty of time.

ALWAYS assist other group members if possible. One purpose of group cycling is to learn more about cycling, while less experienced riders will have support if they have problems. The whole group should support all riders. Experienced riders should not overdo the advice!

THE group always re-forms if it splits, due to hills, road junctions etc. Even groups of similar abilities easily get separated, climbing at different speeds, or while crossing junctions. It is usual to find a place to stop safely, away from traffic. On a hill it is usual to wait at the top if it is safe.

LONDON TO PARIS 1939 VINTAGE

(OR, WAS THERE A SPY ON MY TOUR?)

By Eddie Kendall (late of Weybridge Wheelers)

THE year: 1939. The ride: London to Paris and back!

War clouds were gathering but most young men at the time were putting this at the back of their minds, hoping it would never come. So after weeks of planning John and I set off bright and early from London in mid-August, excited at our first trip abroad, saddlebags loaded, a few pounds in our pockets and the necessary French Youth Hostel Handbooks (Auberges Laïque and A. de la Jeunesse). John was riding a Rensch, a popular good-class lightweight at that time, whilst my mount was a Hetchins 'curly' which needless to say evoked some curious glances in France!

The ride to Dover was uneventful and we booked into the YHA ready for an early start the following morning when we boarded the Townsend ferry for Calais - yes, Townsend ferries were running then but the few cars bound for France were loaded on deck by a crane, as were the bikes. We looked on with some trepidation as we saw our mounts dangling some fifty feet above our heads swinging inboard to be dumped on deck. The ferry moved away from the dock; the tour we had planned was now a reality and we gazed eagerly for our first sight of a foreign land. What would Calais be like? I had thought it might be something like Brighton, but France seemed dirty and down-at-heel. But it was new to us and foreign and we loved it as we rattled along the pavé, remembering to 'tenez à droite'. We had naturally decided on a route to coincide with the Hostels, so we made our way along the coast road passing through Wimereux making for Berck Plage, where we spent our first night.

Very few of the French hostels did cooked meals and some of the self-catering arrangements were practically non-existent, so we normally ate out at restaurants which were very cheap, and learned to load up with French bread, cheese and fruit for daily lunches which, when washed down with the local rough red wine, almost invariably found us taking a siesta early afternoon due to the intoxicating effects of the 'vin rouge' to which we were not at all accustomed!

After Berck we struck inland to follow as far as possible the course of the Seine, arriving at Rouen St. Sever Hostel on 15th August, where it appeared we were to be given VIP treatment. Whether the concierge had not seen an English cyclist for some time we didn't know, but we were ushered into a fairly large room with a huge double bed - brass knobs and all! This was indeed luxury - but then we saw several items of ladies' clothing on the bed - unmentionables in those days. Suddenly the door opened and in burst two delightful young mademoiselles. Now you may well wonder what our reactions were, but we both decided to do the honourable thing and back out. The concierge luckily made an appearance and we tried to explain in our 'school French' that, as the room appeared to be booked, we would sleep

elsewhere. But no, he would not listen to the suggestion and volubly turned on the two girls telling them les Anglais had a right to the room and they could not stay. However the girls had something to say and would not budge. A real slanging match then ensued, which eventually ended when we managed to get a word in and insisted that they kept the room.

As far as I can remember it was on the road from Rouen to Mantes that we met up with a lone cyclist - his name I cannot recall, but he said he came from North London and was just touring without any particular plan; as we recalled later, he seemed a bit of a mystery and never said much about himself. At the time we did not think much about this but it all seemed to add up later on. Anyway, he stayed with us at the Mantes Hostel and the following morning asked if we would mind if he joined, say, up to Paris. This was agreed and we made an early start to get to Paris the next day. I well remember my first sight of the Eiffel Tower when we were a few kilometres from the centre of Paris. It spurred us on as we were taking a 'bit of a parcel' at the time. In the outskirts we managed to find the hostel Auberge Kellerman near the Porte d'Italie - the most up-to-date of its kind in France we were told, and it lived up to expectations - a real showpiece with reception area, large dining hall and rows of neat dormitories divided into cubicles. All nationalities seemed to be staying there, including plenty of Germans. We made friends with two Belgian lads from Antwerp and toured Paris both by Metro and on the bikes, having a 'burn up' down the Champs Elysées and taking pace behind the buses.

Alas, the few days passed all too quickly and we had to get going for the return ride to Calais, needless to say still with our mysterious friend. En route we visited Compiègne and saw the famous railway carriage where the First World War Armistice had been signed, then rode through to Albert and scenes of the 1914/18 battlefields. The weather turned sour - continuous rain. We rode on caped up, much to the amusement of some of the young French populace, who had obviously never seen a billowing yellow oilskin, as we were followed by shouts of laughter through most villages. It was just after we left Abbeville, raining as usual, and climbed steadily out of the town, when John and I noticed that our mysterious friend was 'off the back'. "Ease up and wait" said John, "he can't be far behind." Ten minutes went by, still no sign of him. "He's probably punctured, let's go back." So back we went. Now the road was practically deserted, the afternoon was wet, and it appeared that there were no side turnings where our friend could have 'gone off-course'. We rode nearly back to Abbeville without success and it was getting into late afternoon, so we decided to push on hoping to see him later on. At least he knew our route, first to the hotel at Cucq and then on to Calais.

When we finally reached Calais, the whole town was in uproar and we read the large notices on walls and in café windows: "MOBILISATION" - ALL RESERVISTS CALLED UP. The Calais taxis were loaded with men, taking them to the local barracks. Grim faces in the café talked about 'la Guerre'. "No need to panic," I said unconvincingly, "we'll get home." "Let's go down to the docks and see the position." Well, we did not realise there were so many tourists with the same idea on that Friday evening. "Sorry," we were told. "No more boats tonight, come back tomorrow morning"! we found the hostel, which was locked and deserted, but the concierge appeared and reluctantly let us in, seeming to have lost all interest, and we did not blame him with the threat of war so imminent.

Saturday morning early down to the docks "Impossible today," we were told, "come again tomorrow." Sunday dawned and we were hopefully told to leave the bikes for checking by the Customs and to return after lunch. Well, we took the saddlebags off and thought that at last we were making progress and should be in Dover that evening. What with not being able to get on the boat and the state of emergency and our finances running quite low, we were to say the least not too happy. However, the concierge luckily had left the hostel unlocked and we were free to come and go, so at least we had a roof over our heads. We never paid the overnight charges as we never saw the concierge. Our mystery friend also had not appeared but we had other things to worry about: if war was suddenly declared all hell would be let loose and dear old England would be a long way off!!

Well, back to the hotel that afternoon in quite high spirits only to find that the sailing had been cancelled with promises of a passage tomorrow - Monday. "Right," we said, "let's get the bikes back for a start."

John and I had been doing a bit of thinking, and had noticed that after examining the machines the French Customs gave a boarding pass and the owners took the bikes to the men loading the cranes. So we thought - if we just went straight to the loaders with our bikes, they would assume we had been through Customs, and we hoped they would not ask to see the pass. In any case we had noticed the chaos and confusion and it was worth a try as we had nothing to lose. So we made some excuse that we needed our machines, which were duly handed over, then rode back to the hostel for yet another night. On the Monday morning we mingled with the crowds and duly walked straight to the loaders and made some remark in bad French about being careful with the machines. As soon as we saw them swinging above our heads towards the deck of the ferry we made a bee-line for the gangway where, amazingly, nobody asked us for a boarding pass. Eventually we slowly slid out of Calais harbour with sighs of relief.

During our tour, John and I had resolved to visit France again the following year and perhaps go further south. Alas, a week or so after the holiday war was declared. I did get back to France - this time without the bike. A Tour de Normandy to be precise, commencing D-Day 6th June 1944, all fares and expenses paid by HM Forces!

Lastly, our mystery friend. Who was he? Why did we never see him again? We were long enough in Calais and he knew that we would stay at a hostel. Rightly or wrongly, we wondered whether he could be a spy or fifth columnist. What a perfect cover, joining up on the road with two English touring cyclists!!

This marvellous story was sent to me by Eddie's friend, John Fasey - Ed.

If you have any memorable rides that you'd like to tell us about, send your accounts to Claire Hooper: claire_hooper2003@yahoo.co.uk

RIDING AROUND

By roving reporter Geoff Smith

THERE is nothing to beat a really lovely ride, says our editor Claire. I am not so sure about that but will accept the sentiments behind it in the confines of this august journal. Claire invited readers to describe their favourites, so here follows my memorable ride contribution...

Long-serving readers will be aware it will be the climb of the Port de Bales in the Pyrenees, done by me firstly in 1989 when it was little more than a track and now done for the seventh time this autumn just past. While not saying it always gets better, the point is it is always different. That's what makes it special.

To me, it is a privilege in my cycling to have that one ride as a singular expression of the joys of cycling, a benchmark if you will, although that is not to say other days a wheel do not occasionally approach it on a transient basis from time to time. No, the Port de Bales and its ever-changing scenic and weather conditions is always there as the pinnacle of satisfaction in my cycling life.

It is now, of course, a resurfaced and realigned climb of the Tour de France. In 2010, the second time it was part of the race, it attained legendary status when potential winner Andy Schleck lost his chain during a gear change and arguably lost the Tour as a result. Footage of the incident, with rival Alberto Contador powering past, has become an internet hit and was listed in *Cycle Sport* (August 2011) as "Chaingate" - one of the magazine's 100 greatest moments in Tour history.

Ah yes, the old track with logs across it and "Route Barrée" signs every kilometre or so, has long gone, together with the downright dangerous non-defined first five kilometres of the descent on the southern side. Give it a whirl if you are in the area, starting at Mauléon-Barousse on the northern side and ending with a swoop into Bagnères-de-Luchon, the finest town - indeed, the "Queen" - of the entire Pyrenees.

What joy will be in your heart when you arrive. Or maybe it is only me who feels that way. Schleck? - Probably not.

I SHARED hotel rooms on this moving-on tour with an old pal and after a few days could not avoid noticing an unpleasant after-ride musty pong. Surely it wasn't my pal; could it be down to me? Indeed it was. The culprits were my cycling shoes.

But still I wondered how this could have happened. My delicate and refined pedal extremities are not given to whiffing, never have been if I say so myself. Having deliberated, I concluded it must have something to do with me using these shoes in all riding conditions for considerably more than two years. My solution was to dump them in a bucket of hot suds for a couple of hours, although I gather putting them in the freezer has some sort of deadly effect on the odorous microbes lurking unseen around the insoles. And there was I ready to blame the French.



WELL done to *Cycling Weekly* for attracting “nearly 1,000” riders in October on its first sportive around the Surrey Hills. Similarly to Wessex CTC for pulling in the usual around 800 for their New Forest 100km Gridiron on the same day. Just goes to show the power of advertising.

CLOSER to home, I was disconcerted to note at a pub lunch stop on a West Surrey Midweek Wayfarers ride that I was the only one of nine in the group partaking of alcoholic refreshment. This, dear readers, has never before happened to me in all my years of cycling. Thankfully, when I suggested at the Midweekers quirky “agm” that perhaps we ought to consider some non-pub lunch stops the idea was turned down flat. Phew! - That's all right then.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED!

Would anyone be interested in running a Tricyclathon (hill climb/pace judging/freewheeling)? It needs several volunteers, e.g. one to stand at each end. They would then count as competition events, together with the Summer Navigator. A new trophy will be allocated if we can arrange the competition.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

New Year's Day at Seale Craft Centre from 10.30 onwards. Leave Mayford Green 9.45 or Godalming at 9.30. Remember – all proceeds go to charity, so really indulge yourself!

April 1st: April Fools Day! Bicycle Icycle, 70 km, start 9.30 Godalming (Mark Waters 01483-414307 or 07732-520819).

APRIL 15th: 50 mile reliability ride, start 8am to 9am from Pyrford Common car park or Meadow car park, Godalming (Roger Philo 01483 233381)

MAY 13th: Stonehenge 200 (207km) start 8am, Danebury 150 (150km)) start 8.30am, Elstead 100km, start from Elstead Youth Centre, (Nick Davison 01428 642013, Peter Hackman 01483 573633, Bob MacLeod)

JUNE 24th Summer Navigator, duration about 4 hours, Warren Pond car park (912458) near Puttenham Common, 10am-11am start (Arthur Twiggs 01252 891877).

JULY 15th: 100 mile and 75 mile rides (option of a led ride or use route sheets). Pirbright Hall car park, 8.00am start. £2 (Roger Philo 01483 233381)

AUGUST 19th: Tour of the Hills 110 km, start 09.50am, Shere Village Hall (Don Gray 01483 810028).

To find details of all these events go to: <http://www.westsurreyctda.org.uk/> and click on DA Events.

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