

The West Surrey Cyclist



**October – December
2014**

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WEST SURREY CTC 2014

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WHAT WE ARE

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

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Phone 0844 736 8450.

CTC website: www.ctc.org.uk

West Surrey CTC website: <http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sat 13th September: Cycle Jumble, Ripley Village Hall, 09:00.

Friday 26th to Sunday 28th September: The Cycle Show, NEC, Birmingham. See www.cycleshow.co.uk.

Saturday 15th November: AGM, Jack Phillips Pub (Wetherspoons), High Street, Godalming, 10:00.

Thursday 1st January 2015: New Year's Day at Seale Craft Centre. From 10:30.

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

Saturday 28th February 2015: The annual dinner will return to the Mill at Elstead in 2015 – provided there are no floods this year! Please make a note in your diary now; full details of the menu and booking arrangements will appear in the next issue of *The West Surrey Cyclist*, and will also be published on the website.

Sunday 2nd August 2014: Registration for the ballot for places for next year's Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 is nominally open until 5th January, but will close once 100,000 registrations are received. See <http://www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk/> for details.



The West Surrey CTC magazine, *The West Surrey Cyclist*, is produced every quarter. Subscribers to the magazine also receive the rides list.

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 (editor@westsurreyctc.co.uk) to be added to the distribution list.

The magazine and rides lists are also available on our website:

<http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/the-club/magazine/>

<http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/rides-and-events/ride-lists-downloads/>

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

We can look back on this summer as having been a particularly good one for cycling. Even I, fair-weather cyclist that I am, have missed relatively few Wednesday and Sunday rides due to rain. If it hadn't been for a fortnight or so in the middle of August, I would be hard put to remember any significant spell of bad weather since the start of June, and for once the good weather did not become too oppressively hot, unlike last year.

September has started well. As I type this, the forecast is for this ideal cycling weather to continue for nearly another week. Let us hope not only that the forecast is correct but also that there is even more to come. Fine weather at this time of the year provides me with the most enjoyable cycling: not only does the gradual appearance of autumnal colours in the trees make the Surrey countryside even more beautiful than usual, but also I'm past the annual struggle to regain cycle fitness, something that detracts somewhat from my enjoyment of fine weather in spring.

It won't be long, however, until the evenings close in enough that carrying lights on rides will be a sensible precaution. Come the end of October my recreational cycling will end for the winter and I'll be able to 'look forward' to next spring's struggle to regain fitness. Most of you are made of sterner stuff. I hope you can look forward to a winter that is as mild, though preferably nowhere near as wet, as the last.

LETTER COLUMN

Magazine front cover

Following the excellent letter in the current edition of *Cycle*, written by Ted King, could I appeal for the Winged Wheel to appear on the front of our magazine?

Keep up the good work.

Paul Holmes

I would have no objection to including the winged wheel on the front cover of the magazine provided an approved version of it was available from HQ, though some rearrangement of the existing contents would be required to make room for it. Does anyone else, especially the committee, have any opinions on the subject?

EAT “NORMAL FOOD” IN THE RIGHT SEQUENCE: IT CAN REALLY BOOST YOUR PERFORMANCE!

By Louise Gagnon

No one likes to “hit the wall” during a day ride or a gruelling event like the Tour Of the Hills or the Elstead Audax. Fortunately, with a little bit of help from the latest data on sports nutrition, you too can extract the maximum of endurance power and further turbocharge your recovery from every bit of food and liquid you ingest. And no need to resort to expensive gels and power bars; normal everyday food will easily do the job.

The secret is in sequencing, that is eating the right food at the right time. The first three rows of the attached matrix beautifully summarises in a mere few words what you should eat and drink and when. For example, when you stop for lunch on a day ride involving lots of hills (i.e. column 2 “During event”), beer and sandwiches will not be your best allies. Rather, go for a large pint of any sugary drink, either Coke, Ginger Ale, J2O, and throw in a bit of salt (no worries – you won’t taste it unless you add a load). Drink this as soon as you can – then have your beer if you like. Next, as you wait for your BLT sandwich, which may take 15 minutes in the average pub - possibly 60 minutes at some of our local haunts - have a nibble of dried apricots, raisins, or a dozen Jelly Babies or wine gums. Why so much sugar – also called simple carbohydrates? Because that’s what will “recharge” your muscle the quickest. Proteins, such as ham, eggs, cheese etc. and complex carbohydrates such as bread, rice or noodles will also do the trick... if you don’t mind waiting 4 to 6 hours.

The attached matrix has been validated by NHS nutritionist Luke Morris, CTC member and frequent participant at the Tour of the Hills and Elstead audax. Even more telling are the rave reviews received by many Tour of the Hills cyclists, some of whom saw a notable improvement in their performance – and specially recovery, that is one’s ability to either cycle again hard the next day or to simply be able to come down a flight of stairs without grimacing!

Have a read of the matrix and give it a try on your next ride. And do please let me know how you got on. But don’t come to me if your mates pinch your Jelly Babies - those are always best eaten under the cover of darkness or as you take an exceedingly long time to lock up your bike, outside, alone at last, with your intact stock of Jelly Babies.

Tour of the Hills 18 Aug 2013 – Nutrition Advice and Menu

30 min Pre-Event (1)

Med GI (sugar) Low Protein
 “Easy on the sugar!”

Hydrate (drink!)

- Pre-event energy bars/drinks
- Whole wheat Cheerios - no milk *
- Strong coffee or strong tea *
- Bananas *
- ½ whole wheat bagel + natural peanut butter (no butter)

During Event (2)

High GI + Fluids Low Protein
 “Graze on carbs”

Hydration Critical – add salt/electrolytes

- Coke Carbo Mix * (2/1 Coke /Water + salt)
- Jam butty (no butter) *
- Nutella butty (no butter) *
- Mashed banana butty (no butter) *
- Sugary/caffeine drinks *
- Rice Pudding + peaches /syrup *
- Tour of Hills Carbo bar
- Strong Coffee + sugar *
- Bananas *
- Soreen Cakes *
- Fruit cake *
- Granola bar *
- Flapjack + 1 tbsp jelly/Nutella *
- Jelly babies
- Raisins / dried fruits
- Energy bars or gels, Red Bull

15-30 min Post Event (3)

Very High GI Low protein
“The secret is in the sugar!”

Muscle repair= max sugar

.... within **30 min max**

Hydrate!

- Coke Recovery Mix *
- Tour of Hills Recovery Bar *
- White bread jam butty *
- White bread Nutella butty *
- White bread mashed bananas + sugar mix butty *
- Choco Recovery Mix (2/1 chocolate milk/2% milk)
- Sweet cereals + low fat milk *
- Peaches in peach syrup
- Sweet biscuits *
- Commercial recovery drinks/gels
- Jelly babies

30 min and more Post Event (4)

Med-High GI Med Protein
 “Chill out and enjoy”

Hydrate!

- Eggs salad sandwich *
- Ham & Cheese sandwich *
- Bananas *
- Quiche *
- Cheerios with milk *
- Cheese *
- Flapjacks *
- Rice pudding + peaches *
- Jam & Nutella butties *
- Bananas *
- Beans on toast (rainy day) *

*Menu items provided

Brief period of accelerated glycogen storage: don't miss it!

Flood your system with sugars!

30 min max. (45 minutes is too late).

AN OLD-TIME CYCLIST REMINISCENCES

Ron Bowyer interviewed by Chris Jeggo

A COUPLE of emails from local cycling contacts had me on the phone arranging a visit (23rd May) to Ron Bowyer (97) who has lived in Woking all his life. Here is a précis of what he told me.

"We used to do cycle racing. My brother used to do lots of road riding. I used to do more track, grass track. We used to get out on the Bath Road for a 25 mile race every Sunday. It used to be quite a crowd, starting at 6 o'clock in the morning, on the other side of Reading, at Pangbourne Lane. The traffic wasn't so bad then. They used to have 100 miles, 50 and 25 miles; I didn't go above 25 miles.

"My club was the Charlotteville. I also belonged to the Reading Wheelers. They had a track, a banked track, surfaced with brick dust, in Palmer Park. Is it still there?

"This was before the war. I had a Leader frame for years; after that it was all Claud Butler. Everybody was getting Claud Butlers. They had a factory at Wandsworth."

Ron then mentioned the grass track championship of Surrey and went on to show me a good sized silver cup engraved 'Reading Wheelers Cycling Club, Track Championship, presented by the Evening Gazette, 1936' and then a smaller cup 'Reading Wheelers, Track Champion, 1938, R Bowyer'.

"I used to ride tandem with Charles, my elder brother. The other brothers were smokers and not very interested. We used to go to the Herne Hill track every night for training. The track at Brighton was slightly banked. We used to go round it so fast on the tandem, leaning over and unable to stop pedalling, that we scraped the pedals on the concrete. My brother said, 'When it gets dark we'll be able to see the sparks.'

"The Reading track was banked but the surface was brick dust so you had to be very careful. A fellow fell and was taken to hospital and died three weeks later. There was something in the sand they put on the track; it was mostly brick dust.

"At Gravesend there was a small grass track. One lad went over the bank, over the crowd which was about three people deep. There was a baby in a pram and his bike just caught the pram and tipped it over - it didn't do any

damage. On grass tracks you always got these 'waves' on the corners; they were slippery when wet, muddy, risky.

"We put the bikes on the back of the car to get to the tracks and road races. All the racers used fixed wheels. We used to ride from Guildford to Horsham and back to train. We went to the Good Friday meetings at Herne Hill. It used to be quite good.

"Vic Jenner was in the Charlotteville. He organised the first race at Brooklands. There were joins, gaps, in the track. There used to be wood in the gaps but it had gone rotten. The last time I rode on it, I think it was a 50 mile ride for us, it was breaking up, there were gaps, it was dangerous, actually."

CJ: Do you still have a bike? "No, they were all sold, they were worth a lot of money. Claud Butler bikes were nice." *CJ: What tandems did you have?* "We had a Claud Butler; it was very light and fast. Before that we had a Holdsworth which was heavier. I've seen some good old days, cycling. I used to enjoy racing on a tandem."

Ron then showed me some medals: a gold medal 'Club Path Championship, Charlotteville Cycling Club, 1940' and some Reading Wheelers and Charlotteville CC 25-mile time trial medals showing times from 1h 3m to 1h 7m, all dated 1930-something.

Post-interview research

Reading Wheelers amalgamated with another Reading club, Bon Amis CC, in 1974, to become Reading CC, which continues to flourish (Reading CC website). The Reading track, Palmer Park Velodrome, is still very much in operation. It was built at the turn of the 20th century and originally surfaced with loose red shale, which meant riders often slid sideways on the bankings. In 1955 it was given a good asphalt surface, refurbished 2002-3 (Wikipedia).

Leader frames, built by Ted Woodall, are mentioned on the Classic Lightweights website at:

<http://www.classiclightweights.co.uk/builders/jensen-cycles-builders.html>

There is also a description of a Leader Cycles 'Leo Star' bicycle there:

<http://www.classiclightweights.co.uk/bikes/leader-rb.html>

Herne Hill Velodrome (built 1891) has had its highs (e.g. London 1948 Olympics) and lows - more recent general deterioration due to uncertainty over its future. However, in the last couple of years that has all changed. The track has been resurfaced and funds secured for building a new pavilion (the old one having been boarded up for some years for safety reasons). The legendary Good Friday Track Meets live on as the 'Super Series'.

Preston Park Velodrome in Brighton is the oldest cycle track in the country (built 1877). Its original surface was cinders, tarmac being laid in 1936. Although the popularity of the track declined in the 1970's and 1980's, a new league was formed in 2000 which has gone from strength to strength.

I found a reference to a grass track in Gravesend in the June 2010 newsletter of the Gravesend CC:

http://www.gravesendcc.org.uk/newsletters/GCC_Jun_2010.pdf

The obituary of James Goodall (1917-2010) states "James also rode grass track and for this he just stripped down the road bike. The track was at the RPM ground." I have discussed this with a couple of Gravesend CC members, who remember grass track racing at more than one sports ground during the 1950s, but not a banked track.

STONEHENGE, DANEBURY, ELSTEAD AUDAXES

By Nick Davison

Yet another sunny day was experienced for these events held on the 18th May, which this year were based at the village hall in Elstead; kitchen facilities were much improved and hopefully resulted in a better service. Also, it was much more comfortable whilst waiting until 10pm for the last riders on the Stonehenge route.

As well as the appearance at the finish of wild and very fierce animals we were treated to a bit of culture...Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata. The first time I've seen a pianist wearing cleated shoes!! The heroism prize went to the rider who managed to ride back from Alresford with only one pedal crank in a very reasonable time.

Entries were down this year: with 76 (93) entered and 58 (73) finished with last year's numbers in brackets. However, this still provided a modest

profit for the club funds.

On the same day there was a sportive event at Haslemere which attracted nearly 800 riders, which may have impacted on the event. The routes this year were tweaked to reduce the interference from the Watercress Festival in Alresford and make the return to Elstead common for all routes.

Holding the event in May does mean that to avoid the Surrey League races at Elstead as well as the bank holidays there is no room for avoiding this festival. I understand that the audaxes were originally held in early June many years ago and it may be worth reverting to this next year. Also, for London riders there are no trains to Godalming to enable starting the Stonehenge or Danebury on time: perhaps a Saturday start would overcome this problem.

My sincere thanks to Peter Hackman for his sterling efforts on the catering and Bob McLeod for his help on the day.

West Surrey CTC Newsletter No. 35 - Sep/Oct 1983

Ed: It had been my intention for some time to include snippets from past issues of the West Surrey Cyclist. Six months ago I prepared an extract from the very first issue but had to pull it at the last minute to make room for something else. Having subsequently mislaid it, I was pleased to receive this and the following item, both from the newsletter that preceded the West Surrey Cyclist, from a contributor who wishes to remain anonymous lest anyone, probably primarily his wife, think that he has nothing better to do than trawl through the archives. The second item shows that some concerns are not new. Indeed a perusal of past issues of the magazine would reveal that the topic crops up at frequent intervals.

West Surrey's 'TOUR OF THE HILLS' 7th August - within the 121 starters there were riders from as far afield as Bath and Macclesfield, and many more came down from London.

They all seemed to enjoy themselves, praising especially the West Surrey members who gave their time to man the check points, act as marshals and provide refreshments. A lot of new friendships were made, even amongst West Surrey members - a considerable number of the 27 who wrote "West Surrey" as their DA were out with us for the first time.

West Surrey CTC Newsletter No. 34 - Jul/Aug 1983

Group riding is very different to riding alone, when you have only your own safety to worry about. In a group a sudden swerve or braking can result in injuries and damaged bikes for several of your friends. For your own safety, and that of your friends, don't waver about, keep alert for warnings of potholes and obstructions and pass on the warnings to those behind you. Don't overtake other riders without good reason and always look behind you before doing so. Don't ride in the middle of the road and be prepared to 'single out' to allow a car to pass. Don't charge past your Runs Leader; he has been good enough to plan the route and accept the responsibility of getting you to your destination and back again - he deserves some respect. Finally, take pride in your ability to ride in close company as a safe and responsible member of a group - for your sake, the safety of your friends, and the good name of the CTC.

ARDECHE TOUR

By Nick Davison

It was third time lucky with a hot and sunny week for the fast riders led by John Murdoch including Don Gray, John Findlay, Nick Davison, William Lowries, Martin Vinson and Robin King from Norfolk. Ian Young once again did a superb job of supporting us during the week and even managed



at least ten geocaches a day with a few cuts and bruises to show for it.

The area has many river valleys with steep wooded sides but it was the River Ardèche Gorge which provided the scenic highlight of the week as well as the longest [140km] and hottest day.

We were greeted with a temperature of 35°C on the first day based at Privas which gave us a feel for the rest of the week; the climb to the Col de Justice had a special meaning. That was the only day where some of the descents were on rather rough roads at times; a very rare occurrence. The second day took in part of the Monte Carlo Rally route along a beautiful river valley with some beautiful scenery from the cols en route to Antraigues, where we stayed in an old silk factory on a river bank. The loft style rooms were provided with balconies and kitchens so that we were able to cook for two nights thanks to chefs de Tour, Don and Robin.

The Burzet loop on Tuesday provided a long 19km climb at 5% to the Rochers des Baux summit with stunning views before a long swooping descent back into Burzet. The next day was another long climb up to the Col de la Croix de Bauzon with views of the road snaking its way up the valley sides. Another col and then an incredible descent over 39km with a few humps on the way to our hotel in Sanilhac which had such a commanding position over the valleys that it entailed a climb of 400m to get there each day. This hotel has a dining terrace which had fantastic views as far as Mont Ventoux; the food and wine was exceptional too.

A shorter rest day ride was planned before the big ride along the Corniche road at the side of the Ardèche Gorge on Friday. On the return we passed through many vineyards and as the heat rose to 37°C we encountered melted road tar on a steep climb and resulted in us raiding a supermarket for cold water and bananas for the final ascent to the hotel. The final day was capped off with a long ascent to Col du Benas at 800m led by the baby of the group, Martin, followed by a superb fast descent along smooth winding roads with superb views of the distant hills and valley ahead down to Privas.

We covered 700km and climbed about 1700m on average per day. Apart from three punctures no technical problems arose, although our youngest member learnt to use two pairs of shorts to protect his derrière.

John's meticulous planning and leadership provided us with a fantastic and memorable week.

A TOUR OF WESTERN SCOTLAND AND THE OUTER HEBRIDES (part 2)

By Paul Gillingham

Scotland's Caledonian Macbrayne (CalMac) ferries have long been a lifeline for the otherwise remote islands of the Outer Hebrides and a godsend for cyclists and other travellers. They make getting there and back from the mainland easy and with a CalMac Hopscotch ticket you get a discount on all the five ferry crossings which make the journey possible.

I was booked on the 8.30am six-hour crossing from Oban to Castlebay on the island of Barra, calling briefly at the islands of Coll and Tiree, where a large group of bird-watchers disembarked to study migrant birds on their way to the Arctic breeding grounds.

It was a gorgeous April afternoon, sunny and warm, when the ferry docked at Castlebay. My first stop was the Dunard Hostel, a large house facing Kisimul Castle in its spectacular setting in the middle of the bay where I planned to spend the night. Nobody was in, but the door of the hostel was open and in the hall a sign saying 'Welcome traveller, make yourself at home' which immediately spoke of a world far removed from the mainland.

After a short boat trip to visit the castle I decided to set off on a 16-mile round trip to Watersay, the most southerly inhabited island of the Western Isles, joined to Barra by a causeway only built in 1991. This was a stunning ride along a single track road hugging the coastline with the occasional sheep and cattle the only traffic. To the left, lying in rocks, was an amazing sight : the wreckage of an aeroplane. A memorial beside the scattered fuselage and wings – entirely free of graffiti - was to the nine members of an RAF Catalina Flying Boat (3 died, 6 survived) that crashed here just before D-Day in May 1944.



It was a strange experience to clamber over this bizarre wreckage so close to the road amidst the beauty of this stunning island. Further along I came to two bays of azure blue sea lapping against beaches of pure white shell-sand. I parked the bike and hiked to the west beach where there was another memorial close by, this one to a ship, the Annie Jane, which had sunk offshore in September 1853, drowning 350 men, women and children on board. These were forced to emigrate to Canada, evicted from their crofts in the brutal Highland Clearances of the 17-18th centuries. A prime example of the dark side of paradise.

A major player in the Highland Clearances, incidentally, was the son of King George II, William (aka 'Butcher') Duke of Cumberland, who practised ethnic cleansing against the Scots after defeating Bonnie Prince Charlie's Jacobites at the battle of Culloden in 1745. We cyclists have to be grateful to him, though, when we head for Savill Gardens in Windsor Great Park. It was he who landscaped the Park and created Virginia Water using his soldiers from Culloden. His grateful father erected the nearby Obelisk in his memory.

Back at the Castlebay hostel I spent the evening with the one other guest, Sam from London, who was cycling from Lewis (Butt of) to Lewes (Sussex). A lovely fellow, he was about to start a new job as Innovator for Google, which seemed to me a contradiction in terms. But, as he said, even innovators need innovation. An evening with him was a reminder that hostels are so much friendlier places to stay in than hotels.



Next morning was another gorgeous sunny day as I set off around the west coast of Barra for the ferry to Eriskay. Before doing this I had a mission to

complete: find the grave of the writer Compton Mackenzie. This involved a detour past Barra airport, the only airport in the world where planes land and take-off on the beach. While cycling past the control tower a Flybe Otter plane appeared overhead and landed on the shell-white sand. This was a stroke of luck as flights are suspended twice a day at high tide.

Beyond the airport is the hamlet of Eolaigearraidh and there in the churchyard I found the simple grave of Compton Mackenzie, 1883-1972. Now largely forgotten, he was a major writer of over 100 books and co-founder of the Scottish National Party in 1928. His novels include 'Monarch of the Glen', later a TV series, and 'Whisky Galore', a famous Ealing Comedy film made in Barra in 1949. The story was based on the sinking of a cargo ship off the adjoining island of Eriskay in 1941 within view of Mackenzie's home. Its cargo included 28,000 bottles of whisky which the locals – deprived of most things during the War – managed to thief and consume. I must here declare an interest in the film as the actress Catherine Lacey, who played the wife of the Home Guard boss who ruled the island, was a former resident of my previous house in Guildford. It was this that really prompted my desire to cycle the Outer Hebrides.



Whisky raised from the wreck of the *SS Politician* was used in the blending of the 480 bottles of *Whisky Galore Atlantic Gold*

While sitting on the stone wall of the graveyard eating a sandwich a party of schoolkids arrived to look at the grave. I started chatting to their teacher when she suddenly stopped in mid sentence and said 'Listen to that.' It was the call of the chough which she said only arrives on its migrating route at the end of April and is 'very rare indeed.' Next along came a motor home with Fred and Christine in their 70's from Fleetwood who I'd met on the ferry; Christine made me coffee and a sandwich!

Due to the detour and nice conversations I'd missed the 11.15 ferry to Eriskay and as the next one wasn't until 15.45 decided to do a circuit of

Barra. It was interesting to experience the difference between the east and west coasts. The east was rocky and hilly, while the west was fairly flat and edged with white shell-sand beaches.

The ferry trip across the Sound of Barra took 40 minutes and just beyond the ferry terminal I passed the beach where Bonnie Prince Charlie landed in 1745 to start his Jacobite uprising. Eriskay island is only 2.5 miles long but the climb to its only settlement was long. There I sought out the pub 'Am Politician' named after the ship at the centre of the Whisky Galore saga. It was an unexpectedly ugly modern building from the 1980's, but the landlady/owner, Morag McKinnon, was delightful and brought out three bottles containing the actual whisky from the sunken ship.

Linking Eriskay and S Uist is a causeway with signs warning of otters crossing, though I



didn't see any, and I was soon on my way along the flat, straight single-track road, mountains to the right, bog land to the left and beyond the ocean. At Daliburgh I booked into the bunkhouse and next morning headed north along the narrow,

but empty A865 through S Uist.

Along the roadside were occasional 'Ave Maria' shrines, a reminder that this was the Catholic part of the Hebrides and, to the left, a cairn and the remains of a black house marking where Flora Macdonald, who saved Bonnie Prince Charlie by smuggling him 'Over the Sea to Skye', was born and raised.

At Kildonan I visited the excellent folk museum, listening to the stories of Alasdair the caretaker, who returned after years working in England to South Uist, where 'you leave your front door and car unlocked'. The museum houses the work of the great Hebridean folk-song collector Margaret Fay Shaw, an intrepid American who in the 1920's cycled from Oxford to Skye via the length of the Outer Hebrides (before the islands were joined by CalMac and causeways) and died 10 years ago aged 101.

As Alasdair said, ‘God made a mistake with the Uists. He should have put the mountains in the west, not the east, and so protected us from the



On the causeway from South Uist to Benbecula

Atlantic gales.’ God, though, was on my side as the weather was good and I made good time doing a loop around the machair grasslands and lochs of flat-lying Benbecula.

Then it was on to North Uist and another immaculate bunkhouse on a farm in Carinish where I was again the only guest and had the place to myself.

God was even more benevolent next morning as it was gloriously sunny and windless. Detours off the traffic-free A865 took me to Trinity Temple, a medieval monastery, and then a tough climb to St Kilda’s viewpoint; in spite of a wonky telescope I could just make out the remote St Kilda 40 miles westward and the Cuillins of Skye to the east.

It's amazing who you meet in the most unlikely places. On another detour to visit an RSPB reserve who should I meet in their motor home for the third time but Fred and Christine, who provided me with tea, cake and a sandwich. The kindness of strangers!

SPORTIVE OR NOT SPORTIVE

By Arthur Twiggs

I don’t normally bother with commercial sportive rides, mainly because they are quite expensive and also I am not in the league of being able to post ride times of 15+ mph etc. for any length of time. However, the Southern Sportive “joker” has intrigued me for some time so I committed myself to the relatively high cost and entered it.

I have ridden with Southern Sportive in their original guise of Trailbreak

for many years when they organised commercial off road rides, including my all-time favourite “Navigator” rides. Back in the early noughties, they organised annual Navigator competitions around the south east of England, and for several years a bunch of us “oldies” i.e. super-vets, competed quite seriously. I knew most of them personally and was quite near the lead for a short space of time, but if you missed an event, you were knocked back in the points league. Trailbreak moved into the more lucrative sportive market, but they still organise regular off-ride trail rides for their old long term customers like me.

However, back to the Joker, the stated aim being to ride from Salisbury to Shaftsbury and back by the most foolish route imaginable. This ride has four Jokers and two fool’s choices. Quite simply, the jokers are additional loops that you can do to add mileage to your ride, and the fool’s choices are short off-road sections that provide a short cut from the available road sections to avoid a big climb or long road loop. Most of the jokers involved an extra loop with an additional stiff climb, something to be avoided by myself, although two of them were potential options to gain extra points.

The day of the event, which started at the Salisbury race course, was cold and wet with a strong wind which I would not have got out of bed for had I not paid for the event in advance. However, the rain was not as heavy as forecast throughout the day, although the wind was, and it was the typical head wind that follows you round the whole course throughout the day. The route out towards Shaftsbury followed the river Ebbles valley through the murk and rain and I’m sure that this would be a beautiful ride in better weather conditions. In order to comply with the ride specifications, we had to undertake a nasty loop onto the Cranbourne Chase involving a climb of 120m and some narrow gravel-strewn lanes. For the hardy riders, there was an option to include another loop over the Downs to the Nadder valley and back again with an ascent of nearly 200m. The next decision was a fool’s choice at the top of Monk’s Down at 260m, as to whether to follow the road down to Ludwell and back up again or to cut across the top of the hill on the bridle way. Those who know me will know which option I chose, but it was not easy with visibility at less than 100m and a howling gale. At the top of the ridge was the half way check point where the short route competitors separated from the hardy, long route riders. The hardy riders did a lot more ups and downs into and out of Shaftsbury, thereby gaining lots more points and credo’s. As a humble novice, I headed back from the

checkpoint, but in order to continue to comply with the ride specifications we had to execute several long loops to the south of the Downs. Having fought continuously against the wind during our westerly advances, it now seemed that it was a southerly wind, so our efforts to the south were thwarted as well, and it seemed to be a hard pedal just to get down off Cranbourne Chase. Much of the route now back to Salisbury was up and down the Downs, into and out of the wind. The final joker and fool's choice were a no-brainer really depending on what sort of bike you were riding. The joker was to ride an additional loop climbing 130m with a fool's choice of following about a mile of off road in order to avoid going back down and riding back up to the race course again. The weather did try to brighten up during the afternoon which was quite pleasant through the villages of Farnham, Sixpenny Handley, Tidpit and Martin.

The results list showed that less than 20% of riders achieved a ride time in the 13.28 mph or better category which is posted as a minimum, but it does show that that you can have a go even if you don't have a bum's up, light weight racer.

THE MYSTERY OF HARTLEY MAUDITT

By Bob McLeod

This short article is the result of a plea from Dane - so said Louise at Seale this morning - to save him writing yet another baffling GPS article. I had plenty of time while grinding slowly up the very steep but charming old lane from Oakhanger to Hartley Mauditt with the 'fast' group to ponder the request.

If you have ever passed the 12th century church of St Leonard's at the top of the hill you may have wondered why it is quite large yet stands all alone. I'm one of those who had only a vague idea. I've done a little research and found at least three suggestions.

The most likely is due to imparking. That was the habit of rich gentry in the 18th century of just removing what they considered unsightly. Objects like people's houses would be demolished so that they could lay out their splendid parks. NT properties may never seem the same again.

A more amusing one concerns Lord and Lady Stowell. He loved the city and she the country. The only way he could get her to leave the house was

by demolishing it. It worked but led to the decline and abandonment of the village. She only returned when she was buried in the cemetery.

Yet another report is that the manor was simply demolished and the fittings sold off to pay debts. The staircase is reputedly in Alton town hall.

As we cycled past I noticed that the church roof is being repaired so it is probably closed to visitors at the moment. The next time we pass that way I will suggest a short stop, even if it is only to look in the churchyard or to admire the pond. A word of warning; the area is haunted, a coach and horses crashed into the pond and can be seen struggling out if the conditions are right.

Apologies if you had wanted more technical stuff on a GPS.

Ed: Bob submitted the above article for last issue, but Louise's warning that I might be forced to write another GPS article had had such an effect that I was forced to hold it over. The cupboard's starting to look a bit bare again, so I'd better remind you of the dangers of leaving space for me to witter on about using a GPS...

HOW FAR? - PART 3

By Dane Maslen

As with many other things the quality of the results one gets with a GPS can depend on the care one takes when using it. Let's start at the very beginning. You come out the house, leap on the bike, put the GPS in its holder, switch it on, and pedal off down the road. Right? Wrong! When first switched on, the GPS will calculate its position as soon as it can receive the signals from four satellites, but the accuracy of the calculation will improve as it picks up signals from more satellites. So if you want your track to show you setting off purposefully along the road rather than wandering aimlessly through your neighbours' gardens and living rooms, give the GPS a little while (say 30 seconds or so) to improve its calculation before clearing the track log and setting off.

The next challenge is coffee and lunch stops. Accurate results could be obtained by leaving the GPS on the bike, but whoever stole it from there would probably not care how accurate your track was, so you'd better take it with you instead. Just stuffing it in your pocket is not a good idea

though. For one thing your walk between the bike and the café/pub would be included as part of your track. Worse still, although the GPS shouldn't be able to receive signals and hence calculate positions while indoors, it might manage to do so if you are near a window. Last year I accidentally left my GPS switched on and recording during coffee at Chawton, during which time it registered 0.8 km of movement, thereby introducing a significant error into my ride distance.

How about switching the GPS off for the duration of the stop? When you switch it back on, it will initially calculate positions with relatively poor accuracy. Unlike at the start of the ride you can't get round this by clearing the track log after a short period – you don't want to lose the log of the ride so far, do you? – so you'll probably end up recording a spurious extra few tens of metres as part of the ride. That is, however, still hugely better than the several hundreds of metres that I recorded at Chawton last year. At one time I wondered whether the inaccuracies introduced could be minimised by waiting a few seconds after stopping before switching the GPS off and then waiting 30 seconds or so after switching it back on before resuming cycling, but I was never able to convince myself one way or the other.

I think there is a better solution – I certainly get better results with it than I used to get by switching the GPS off – but it might not work on your model and it might not be advisable for the forgetful rider. It's common for a GPS to have a demo or simulation mode in which it doesn't calculate its position from the satellites but instead pretends to be wherever you tell it to be. With my Garmin Oregon 450t I have found that switching it into demo mode stops it adding track points to the track log until switched back into normal mode. For whatever reason – maybe it does continue to receive satellite data even when in demo mode – the calculation of position does not seem to suffer a period of inaccuracy immediately after the GPS is returned to normal mode.

These days I switch my GPS into demo mode on arrival at a refreshment stop and then switch it back into normal mode on departure. Well, usually I do. It's much easier to overlook that a GPS is still in demo mode, and hence not recording the track, than it is to overlook that it's still switched off. So far I've only goofed once in about 100 stops, but I'm sure that that won't be the last time. If you're forgetful by nature, I don't recommend this solution. And if you're forgetful by nature, the next time you see me frantically fiddling with my GPS after a refreshment stop you'll probably

still be none the wiser about what I'm doing.

An unavoidable source of error occurs whenever you wheel your bike through a pedestrian precinct. It's possible to disconnect a cycle computer temporarily, though I suspect I am one of the few people to bother doing so, but one way or another the GPS is going to include that walk in the calculation of the ride distance. What if you were to try temporarily switching the GPS into demo mode? Well, the trip counter wouldn't record the distance you walked, but subsequent analysis of the track log would unless it could accurately ignore motion at low speed. Unfortunately if you crawl up steep hills at the sort of speed that I get reduced to, that's all too likely to also ignore some of the time that was in fact spent cycling.

It's not just dismounting and walking that causes this problem. Whenever we cross the harbour at Itchenor, the distance travelled on the ferry gets included in subsequent analysis of the track log. I believe that a track can in principle be divided into several discontinuous track segments, something that would get round this problem, but frustratingly I know of no GPS that offers this facility (and, perhaps therefore not surprisingly, no software that would correctly process a track so divided).



Deadline for next issue December 1st. Get your cycling stories in to the editor now: editor@westsurreyctc.co.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.

Front cover: A road sign near Brookwood that your editor finds neither believable nor reassuring when he rides past it (photo by Dane Maslen).