

West Surrey Cycling Club

Annual Report 2023

Definition

West Surrey CC is the local member group of Cycling UK covering the postcode areas GU1-10, 12, 15-16 and 18-27, KT7-8, 10-16 and 24, and RG45. Total members in these areas in April 2023 was 1346(1286 in April 2022).

Organisation

The committee consisted of the four ex-officio posts of Chair (Derek Ridyard), Rides Secretary (Phil Gasson), Secretary (Nick Davison) and Treasurer (Keith Stainer), plus three additional members, John Child (Website Organiser), Alison Warren (Publicity), Neil McIntyre (New Rider Coordinator) and Angela Byrne. Our President is Elizabeth Palethorpe. Phil Gasson and Angela Byrne will be standing down at the AGM.

The committee met on four occasions (June, August and October in 2022, and February in 2023). The August meeting was convened to redefine the speed ranges for the ride groups and to discuss the introduction of a new G5 group at the top of our average speed guide range.

Following comments at the 2022 AGM, a revised constitution was prepared by the committee and has been submitted for adoption at the 2023 AGM.

Events

The Tour of the Hills Audax was held on 7 August, the 40th occasion on which the club has staged this event. Rider numbers were lower than in previous years but the event still yielded both a good cash surplus and excellent publicity for the club. The 2023 event has been booked for Sunday 6 August.

The Elstead Audaxes were not held in 2022 due to lack of volunteers and low entries within 3 weeks of the event, and we have reluctantly decided not to run this event in 2023. However, we plan to form an events team that will resurrect these rides in future years and promote them alongside the Tour of the Hills.

Rides Secretary's Report

Another busy year has flashed by and happily our rides were far less affected by Covid restrictions. Records drawn from the club's activities on Spond reveal the following impressive stats for the calendar year 2022:

- The club staged over 400 rides
- There were 145 active club riders
- In total, just over 3,000 individual rides were recorded

This report gives us the opportunity to thank all Group Leaders who organise their group rides, and all our Ride Leaders who support them by volunteering to lead countless rides, every week, rain or shine, throughout Surrey and adjacent counties. Our club could not function without their enthusiastic and hard-working support.

The club is currently in good order and our organisation much improved. We now have six weekend ride groups and 7 weekday groups (mostly on Wednesdays) catering for all levels of cycling. Most groups get good attendance. A few sometimes struggle for numbers but it is hoped this will improve over the next year.

Our club has fully embraced use of the *Spond* app and most rides are now publicised this way which has improved the organising of rides.

In June Laurie Mutch and Phil Gasson organised a Ride Leader Workshop which was attended by 23 ride leaders from throughout the club. Discussions were very fruitful and many recommendations were made for the future, e.g. updating grade descriptions, advice on riding in a group, simplifying guest registrations for new riders, etc. Some proposals have yet to be fully implemented, but we expect this to move forward in the near future. Several ride leaders have since reviewed and completed the new CUK Ride Leader Training Course which became available online from January 2023.

A few other events worthy of a mention:

- In June, a mixed G3 and G4 group enjoyed a very hot cycle holiday in the Correze region of France, and a G4 group dealt with equally hot conditions on their trip to the Voges.
- September. A successful G2/G3 lunchtime BBQ in Pirbright raising £620 for McMillan Cancer Care.
- March 2023, good turnout from our club members for the Phil Hampton Memorial Ride in support of The Cyclists Defence Fund.
- March 2023, the first club dinner for 3 years was held at the Mill in Elstead. This attracted more than 50 club members and partners, and proved a great success.

During the past year we also registered 5 new Ride Leaders namely, Charles Tonkin, Michael Buckeridge, Andy Ramsay, Bill Pollard and Sue Johnson. We thank them and hope they are enjoying their new role.

Finally, as many of you will already know Phil Gasson is not seeking re-election as Rides Secretary at the forthcoming AGM. Having fulfilled this role for five and a half years Phil feels it is now time to move on, though he does intend for the time being to remain the Group Leader for the G3 midweek riders and has kindly offered to support the new Rides Secretary if required.

Awards

The club dinner in March provided an opportunity to make the following awards for notable club achievements:

- The Golden Crank award was made to Phil Gasson, as a thank-you and recognition for his hard work as Rides Secretary.
- The George Aylesbury Tankard was awarded to Mark Slater for most midweek rides.
- The Bill Inder Trophy was awarded (again) to Clive Richardson for his exceptional and unwavering support of the club's Sunday rides.
- The Keith Parfitt Memorial Trophy was awarded to Brian Ross in recognition of having led more club rides than any other member in 2022.
- Finally, the Wooden Crank was picked up by Don Gray, for leading a small G4 Wednesday group on a ride where no fewer than 10 punctures were sustained!

We also had more than 100 entries for the WSCC "lockdown years" photo competition, which were displayed at the dinner and subsequently on the website. The winner was Matt Carolan for his image of club members returning from a Sunday ride on the Isle of Wight ferry.

Former members

It is our sad duty to report the passing of some former club members over the last year:

- John Whatmore died Feb 2022. He was our club secretary before Chris Jeggo, and when he retired he worked at CTC HQ to draft two books for them which can still be purchased today.
- Richard Ellis died late 2022. Fondly remembered for his award of the Wooden Crank for falling in the Wey Navigation.
- Anke Blackburn, who for several years lead G1 rides from Woking, passed away towards the end of last summer. Her funeral was attended by club members who knew her.

Russ Mantle, the club's 'million mile man', has suffered from ill health this year. He is currently in residence at Lavendar Lodge Nursing home in Farnborough, and we wish him all the best.

New Riders Report

Since the 2022 AGM, we have been approached by a further 55 interested cyclists and 28 of these have joined us by taking out CUK membership. This has provided a healthy injection of new blood into the club. New members have been spread fairly evenly across the groups, with G2s and G3s being the largest in number. Our catchment area continues to expand, and perhaps shift slightly southwards. Nevertheless, Guildford, Godalming and Farnham are the most frequently referenced home locations.

2022 showed a surge of interest in the first three months, followed by a smaller peak in the summer months. The start of 2023 has been much quieter, closer to the situation in 2021. Feedback from new joiners has shown people like the club's balanced social and athletic ambitions. Spond is also mentioned as a very convenient way of engaging with club activities. Word of mouth continues to be an important means of attracting new members, although the primary route is through online searches and details provided in the club website.

Website and Publicity

The website continues to be central to all the club's activities and communications and members are encouraged to submit items to be published. Members who are signed up continue to receive additional communication by email as well as email notifications of new Blog or Latest news postings.

Club members are members of Cycling UK and enjoy access to many benefits. The club website provides a direct link directly to the benefits section on the Cycling UK website.

The club continues to use Spond to publicise and organise rides. At present there are 160 members signed up to use Spond with a further 24 guests or prospective members.

The Spond Groups have now been reorganised and renamed so as to make it much clearer for new members to identify the rides most suited to them. The website has had several pages updated to reflect these changes and guidance notes for Spond users have been posted.

The RideWithGPS club membership has been in place for almost a year and now hosts a fairly comprehensive rides database which Ride Leaders can contribute to, and borrow from when planning routes. Guidance notes for users has been posted on the website.

WhatsApp continues to be widely used by the club for general communication. The club Facebook page has been changed so posts are made by WSCC (previously the page was set up as a 'public' page and there was no moderation as to who could post onto it). A club Instagram account has also been set up. Both social media accounts have regular posts and can be accessed via the club website as well as directly through Facebook and Instagram. We hope this will continue to help to promote our club and attract new riders who are vital for our future.

There is a West Surrey Cycling Club club on Strava, which can be accessed directly from Strava.

Finally, another order for the club kit has been placed (April 2023), with delivery due for mid May 2023. The kit remains popular with members. Its bright colours and prominent club logo allows club riders to stay safe and be seen, and continues to promote the club with 'free publicity'.
