

AWheel

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REGISTERED GO-RIDE CLUB



BRITISH
CYCLING

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Front Cover: Dave Fellows enviously eyeing up Harry Reynold's E-Bike
© Chris Bodremon

Rear Cover: Old Sols Luncheon

Editor's Corner



Welcome to a full edition of AWheels which opens up with why cyclocross is the best way to start your cycling career? Gary RP believes the evidence is strong, see what you think. If Gary's CX article sparks your interest the WMCCL starts soon.

With stories of long distance rides in America, Europe and a 100 mile TT and I'm sure you own adventure juices will start running and plenty of time for planning before next summer.

As it's our 90th year and for those that didn't enjoy this year's Annual Awards Dinner I've added in a couple of the pen portraits, which were placed on the tables, of memorable and influential SCC members with more to come in the next edition.

So whether you are just returning from holiday or are just contemplating those cheaper breaks (Ed has school aged children!) enjoy the rest of the summer as we roll into autumn, I'll be back with you in November.

Safe Riding!

Rocky

P.s. Don't forget to check out our social media pages on Facebook and WhatsApp to see the latest news and action from our competitive riders.



Send copy to: editor@solihullcc.org.uk

The Best Start for Cycling Success?

What have the following current stars of World cycling got in common:

- Marianne Vos
- Peter Sagan
- Julian Alaphilippe
- Mathieu van der Poel
- Wout van Aert?



It's the same thing that four stage winners in this year's Tour de France share: **Cyclocross World Championship medals**. Mike Teunissen can be added to Sagan, Alaphilippe and van Aert in that select club. And let's not forget our own Tom Pidcock, current U23 cyclocross world champion and recent winner of the Tour of Alsace, who seems to be following in their footsteps.

So, is cyclocross the best way to start your cycling career? The evidence is strong.

It's not hard to see why. At elite level, cyclocross requires supreme bike handling skills and fitness. Although races last for only an hour or so, that time is spent at the racer's limit. They are going as fast as they can. And it's not the steady kind of threshold effort required in a time-trial. Nor is there the chance to catch your breath during a lull in the racing.

The effort required to be competitive is more like a criterium or track race – a repeated set of accelerations – except with the added challenge of staying upright on tricky off-road surfaces. Cross-country (XC) mountain bike racing is probably the closest in terms of effort and bike handling, which is why Mathieu van der Poel, as well as winning Amstel Gold on the road, is the newly crowned European XC mountain bike champion.

It's no wonder top cyclocross riders quickly become competitive in other racing disciplines. But at the other end of the spectrum, cyclocross is very accessible for the beginner. It's easy to get started with very few rules and prerequisites. Most races can be entered on the day without a racing license and on a wide range of bikes. You can have a good race – and great fun – even if you are toward the back of the field.

Whether you want to be a future cycling superstar, or just want to ride your bike as well as you can, cyclocross could be for you. Why not give it a try?

You can do that at Tudor Grange Park, where we run coached sessions on Tuesday evenings from September through until Christmas. And if you fancy trying a race, then you can turn up to any of the following

West Midlands Cyclo-Cross League (WMCCL) events this Autumn:

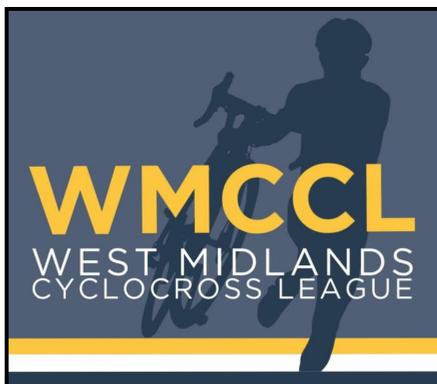
1. 8th September Shrewsbury
2. 15th September Redditch
3. 6th October Henley-in-Arden
4. 13th October Fillongley Organised by Solihull CC
5. 20th October Newport, Shropshire
6. 27th October Top Barn, near Holt Heath
7. 3rd November Blackwell Court, near Barnt Green
8. 10th November Malvern
9. 17th November Baggeridge
10. 1st December Cob House, near Martley
11. 22nd December Wolverhampton.

Two further events are likely to be added to the WMCCL calendar in November and December. Further details can be found on the British Cycling website and

Club Cyclocross Event

On Sunday 13th October, the club will be hosting Round 4 of the WMCCL at the Heart of England Conference and Events Centre near Fillongley (CV7 8DX). If you can help, please let us know. The more people we get, the less time each person has to devote to helping, and the more time they get to enjoy the great racing. Even if you can only spare a couple of hours, your help will be greatly appreciated. We have a reputation for putting on one of the best cyclocross events of the season. Please help us to keep up that tradition and contact Gary Rowing-Parker or Keith Jones with your availability.

Gary Rowing-Parker



RTTC Classic Series - Rounds 4 – 6

- 12/5/19 10am Dumfries CC - WS25/01
- 26/5/19 9am Border City Wheelers - L143x2
- 09/06/19 10am RTTC West DC – U603B

So hopefully by now you've read my previous article on the first three rounds of the CTT's Sigma Sports Classic Time Trial Series, for those that haven't, I'm going to fill you in; in brief. Went to Dorset - Raced 24 miles through a traffic jam. Went to Worcester – Ticked off the only time trial to do before you die. Went to the Peaks – Rode my best TT for ages in perfect weather.

Since the 3rd round in the Peaks, a lot has happened in between then & the National Circuit Championships, Round 6, that is completely independent of the Classic Series. The Day after the Buxton Mountain TT, I went to Inkberrow & got my first ever Open TT win! I carried that good form into Royal Suttons Club 25 10 days later & set the course record on the K26/25m – Catherine De Barnes, Meriden, Balsall Common, 52.38. Then on the Sunday following, I raced in a 4up TTT with Keith Reynolds & two others (not Solihull), much fun was had! Not so sure Keith would say the same! Then it was a week to prepare for the 4th round of the Series.



© VeloVeritas

Obviously Dumfries is quite far away, four & a half hours drive away as it happens. Not one for being sensible I decided to drive up on the morning of the event, when perhaps I should have found a B&B for the night. The course was not as hilly as I was expecting, in fact, truth be told I was very underwhelmed by the lack of hills, but I guess in Scotland they are more sensible & build roads round the obstacles rather than across them. The course was a little over 25 miles & was affectionately known as the Little Lap O' Loch Ken. The roads were heavy & there were a few sharp bends but nothing to write home about. However the weather once again was amazing! 25 degrees & not a cloud in the sky – this

made the journey all worthwhile as the Loch was beautiful under the sunlight. My good run of form seemed to continue as I got my highest finishing position yet, 4th. I was very pleased with my result, but not so pleased that they only handed out prizes to 3rd. Now for the 4.5 hour drive home straight past the place I'm coming back to in 2 weeks for the 5th round.

The day after, I filled the Hill void that Scotland had left me with & I took a trip to North Yorkshire. With my bike of course, for 4 days & a little bit of training. I arrived back on the Thursday afternoon & set a PB, by 27 seconds, on the first Solihull Club 10 of the year, 20.24. I then travelled to the super fast South Wales 25 course on the Sunday & set a Club all time best (not properly confirmed, but I'll take it anyway!) 48.17. Then on Tuesday it was the final preparation event for the Classic Series, Royal Suttons Hilly 23, I was on for beating Stuart Dangerfield's 12 year old Course Record until I got a puncture with 4 miles to go. So I rolled in & lost 90 seconds – but I'll try again next year.

Only 3.5 hours blast up the M6 this time for the 5th round. Hosted By Border City Wheelers on a course just west of Penrith; not quite in the Lake District. The weather on this day was in stark contrast to the Previous rounds - It was Tipping it down! The course again underwhelmed me. There were no significant climbs to speak of, even though over the 26 miles it gained over 800m of elevation; more per mile than any of the other courses. It just didn't feel hilly, but on the day I was prepared to put it down to my recent run of good form that the hills felt flat. The rain & wind did prove challenging on the narrow & sometimes treacherous roads. You'd be up so high before you knew it & a cross wind would want to send you off the road. I was going well



on the first lap, but my visor had started to steam up, so I removed it & stuffed it into my skinsuit. My good form was going to come crashing down about 6 miles later, Just like I did as I tried to discard my visor at the start of the second lap. The wind was so strong I knew I had to give it some welly & unfortunately I threw my visor so hard I threw myself off the bike & into the path of an oncoming car!! Good thing though that the only casualty was a hole in my skinsuit. This was probably the stupidest moment of my life, why didn't I

just leave my visor in my skinsuit?? It wasn't slowing me down! I cruised round the second lap as it was uncomfortable to ride hard, Signed out & went home, Swiftly.

The Run of bad luck starting with the puncture on the Tuesday continued after the 5th round fall into the next weekend, when I dropped my chain on the fastest part of the course, on the Royal Sutton 10. I'm so sure I was a sure in for the win there. Then on the Thursday following, at the club 10, in order to make the committee meeting I signed on as number 1. Problem was I beat the finish time keeper to the finish, so I didn't get an official time!

Which brings me to the conclusion of the Article. Sunday was the Final round of the Classic Series, which also incorporated the National Circuit Championships. Personal morale was low I think I had started my season too early, peaked too early & I did not feel good. I still gave it my all however you'll be pleased to hear. The course was a Two Lapper, 39 miles in total over pretty flat terrain. The field was star studded. I was the minute man for the all time competition record holder at 10,25,50 & 100 miles! All I wanted to do was hold him off for as long as possible, this lasted approximately 5 miles. However much fun was had by me when I drafted behind him for another 5! Naughty I know but I wasn't going to win anything. I got a real boost at mile 16, when on the only significant climb, there was a Hill Climb talisman – a man ringing a bell holding aloft a scarf with some very improper words stitched into it, they are too vulgar to print, but made me chuckle to myself & look forward to hill climb season even more. I rode as hard as could for the next 23 miles & that was it, Classic Series Complete!

Overall in the series I finished 4th. Which I think is actually quite a good result. As a spectator on the podium placings overall, I found it very interesting as the competition was wide open leading into the final round. Phil Williams, Aintree CC, needed to win the last round with Adam Wild, GS Metro at least 4 places below him. However Phil could only manage 2nd whilst Adam was 4th. That meant that Adam took the series by a single point! Hopefully one day I can be good enough to take the series for myself & Solihull CC.

But for now its Hill Climb Time!

Dave Fellows

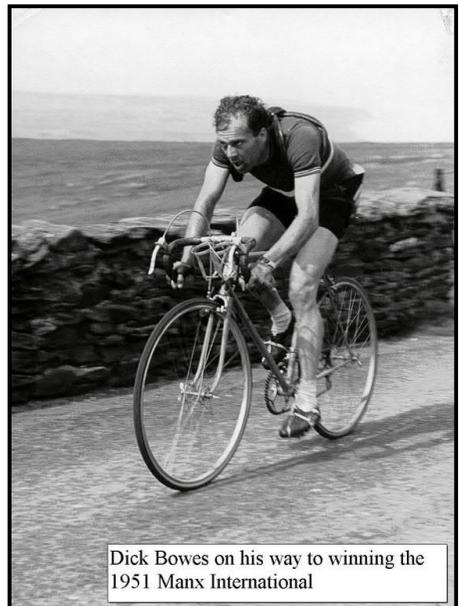


90th Year Look Back - Dick Bowes

Dick's name might not be known to our younger members but after joining the club in the 1940s he developed into being a top international racing man in the 1950s and inspiring many other club members, such as Harry Reynolds, to set their sights high. Indeed Dick became a great mentor to young Harry who quickly stepped up to the mark. Dick contributed to club life in many ways, always playing his part by helping at events and indeed filling numerous club appointments. He won the first Manx International Road Race in 1952, represented Great Britain at numerous World Championships and was an Olympian in both the London and Helsinki Olympics in 1948 and 1952. The night before the Olympic Road Race in London, several members of the club rode through the night to support the two riders (Bob Maitland and Dick himself) we had in the race (not forgetting Tommy Godwin riding track elsewhere) and because of a shortage of equipment for the British team, the laid out their spare tubs and spanners in the pits to help the British riders. Our Members were disappointed that on the day Dick was listed as a reserve but he went on to make up for this disappointment with further international honours and of course the next Olympics.

Dick's racing achievements are too numerous to count but in addition to his success in the Isle of Man he was 7th in the World Amateur Road Race Championships and won the first ever open road race organised by the National Cycling Union when he won in spectacular style, catching the race winning brake in the final run in and outsprinting them for victory.

What makes Dick special was not only his superb international racing career but also how he stayed loyal to the club during a period of tremendous change in competitive cycling. He was the racing man that everyone looked up to and because of him we had many members coming through in the 1950's and 1960's who wanted to, and did, emulate him in international events.



Dick Bowes on his way to winning the 1951 Manx International

100 mile Time Trial

SCCA & WCTTA (starting near Market Drayton, Shropshire)

Sunday 14th July 2019

Course D100/2A

Club entrants:-

- Sarah McNaney 5.43.42
- Penny Wilkin 5.17.26

Early in July a friend asked if I fancied riding 100 miles with her. Why not I thought. I've done the distance many a time so I said yes. It was then that the details about the 100 miles started to emerge. Apparently I wouldn't actually be cycling 'with' her, just on the same course. Oh and it might be a race. Oh and it's a time trial. The words 'time trial' have always scared me so I reluctantly agreed (having been bribed with cake!) and entered. I knew I was going to be last as although I consider myself a competent cyclist, I am not used to racing. In fact I haven't really done a time trial unless you count a few laps of Mallory Park that I did one sunny evening but that felt more like 'playing' than competing.

The course seemed ok on paper so we set off with a few other friends for our camp site and promptly set up the tents and settled in for the night. The alarms going off at 4am were a bit of a shock but at least the light was just starting to come up. With the bikes all ready in the car, we set off to HQ and signed on. Nerves were definitely kicking in (for me). Some of the bikes and kit on show meant this was serious business so I tried to look like I knew what I was doing. We had to cycle to the start which was just over 5 miles away. This seemed quite cruel but it actually loosened up the legs quite nicely.



Within a few moments of arriving I was off (being slow has its advantages in that I don't hang around at the start for long!). The course had a weird out and back section before joining the main course of four laps around some pretty villages. Well I think they were pretty as I was busy concentrating on the job in hand of course. The first 20 plus miles was the worst as the roads were full of pot holes which needed to be avoided. Luckily at 6

in the morning there wasn't too much traffic to get in our way and I was then quite pleased to start on the 'lap' section as these roads were far more suited to cyclists. The roads were mainly 'A' roads but were plenty wide enough to take us and any traffic so we didn't have any hold ups to mention. Although I nearly took a lady out with a gammy leg and a dog in one of the villages as she approached a zebra crossing.....she decided to cross after I'd gone past (wise move). There was one small incline leading up to a mini-roundabout which we had to do 4 times and I'm convinced that it got steeper each time round! Everybody seemed to go past me, last place appeared to be a done-deal until about mile 80.....I passed someone!!!!!! I could have punched the air with delight. I don't think the chap I passed was too happy but he took it in good spirits. Then a friend from Coventry was in the distance and had started to struggle and I soon caught him and allowed him to draft off me for the last 8 miles or so which got him a PB. I have my uses!. The only person I didn't see on the course until the last 2 miles was Penny. Due to her speediness, she started a lot later than me. (we had wished each other luck first thing though)



The finish came round and I was so pleased to see the chequered flag. This was not actually a flag but a large cardboard cut-out of one that a marshal was energetically pointing at so I knew to slow down and stop the garmin (important job this!). Then I had to cycle the 5 miles back to HQ where the promise of food and coffee had kept me going for the last 10 miles. Coffee I had. But the food tray had been demolished and all I managed to save was one small piece of ginger cake. It was homemade and lovely all the same.

So.....my first Time Trial was done. However, even doing the event had been in doubt right up and till 24 hours beforehand. I'd taken a tumble on Wednesday evening and although I was checked over at hospital and no bones were broken, I had suffered numerous cuts and bruises, the worst being a big gash to my chin which needed attention. However, my hips, jaw and left shoulder that took the impact of the fall were incredibly stiff so sitting on a bike was a challenge in itself. But us cyclists are a strong breed and a bit of scrape was going to deter me.

All in all.....I think I enjoyed the experience. I may even consider another one but not just yet!

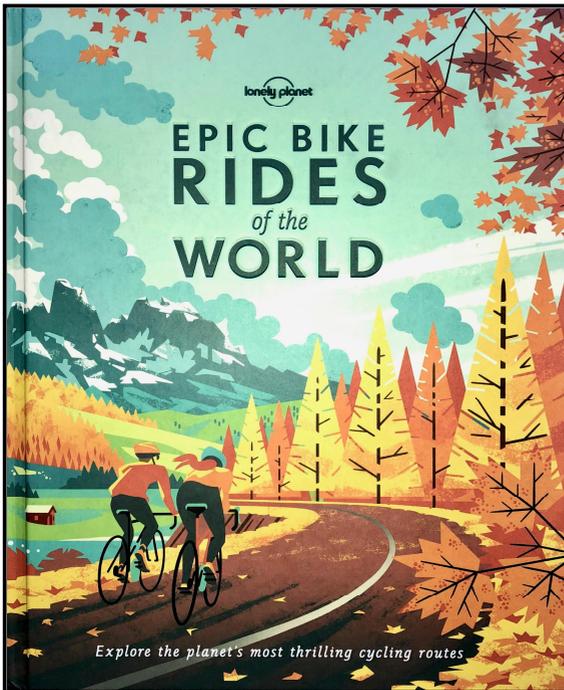
Sarah McNaney

North America's Pacific Coast: Seattle to San Francisco

In 2014 I rode from Los Angeles to Boston with two Brits, one Australian and eight Americans. That tour was a serious challenge to my cycling abilities both physical and mental. Fortuitously, the group gelled together well, offering each other support and encouragement when needed. We got on well both socially as well as on the road and the group has kept in touch ever since.

A couple of years ago two of the group (husband and wife) came to England to ride LEJOG and we met up for a meal as they came through the Midlands. The American custom when visiting is to bring a gift. They gave me...

As the title suggests, the book is brimming with countless write ups of epic bike rides from crossing the Gobi Desert to riding Africa 'end to end' and many others that were way outside my pay league but my attention was caught on page 62 by -



Lonely Planet:
Epic Bike Rides of The World.

North America's Pacific Coast

'With the shimmering Pacific horizon to your right and an endless ribbon of blacktop ahead, this ride traces the dramatic western edge of N. America'

I thought why not? So, last September I rode the Pacific Coast. Silly me; I should have paid heed to one or two warnings before I booked my flight!

The opening paragraph of that ride begins - 'For cyclists who live to ride, this is a once in a lifetime trip, the challenge is no joke. The jagged western edge has plenty of long tough climbs and lonely stretches of blacktop that demand tenacity and self-sufficiency'

Somewhat OTT you might think but buried deep in the script was also this,

‘The complete trip from Seattle to San Francisco can be done in 15 days for a powerhouse rider with very little gear’.

I do not ride with very little gear unless home is within walking/taxi distance and as for ‘powerhouse rider’... dream on!

What follows is a brief summary of my ride but first, the practicalities and vital statistics.

The Big Statistic - How far?

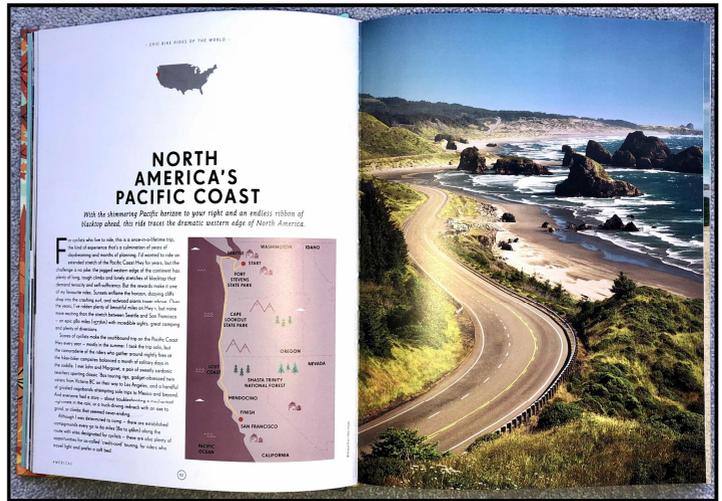
I rode 977 miles leaving Seattle at 9am on Sunday 9 September and arriving at the North Abutment of the Golden Gate bridge at 10am on Saturday 22 September; a total of 13 days and a couple of hours.

My average speed was 12.86mph, the highest mileage of any day was 92, the lowest mileage was 60, excluding the last couple of hours to the Golden Gate. I had 5 wet (at some point) days and 4 days where sunscreen was required. My beer consumption was, for me anyway, conservative. I am not going to say how much on the grounds it will incriminate me! I did not have a rest day. My weight loss - nil.

I had NO punctures nil, none, ziltch, zero, 0.

Getting There and Back

I flew with Virgin Atlantic from Heathrow to Seattle and back to Heathrow from San Francisco. As the outbound flight time was an awkward one to accommodate by bus, I drove to Heathrow by car which was then driven back home by my wife but I returned home with National Express to Birmingham Airport bus stop. My bike travelled as part of my checked baggage allowance at no extra cost. I use a Sci Con Aerotech hardshell suitcase for this purpose. I couriered the suitcase from Seattle to a friend’s home near San Francisco using <https://www.bikeflights.com/ship> The service was all online and efficient. The cost was very reasonable.



The Bike and Bags

I ride an Enigma Esprit Ti with added brazings for a rear rack. The cassette for this trip was 13-29 married to a 44- 30 chainset. The tyres were Continental GP4000s II 700x25 with Michelin tubes. The wheels are Record 36 spoke with Mavic Open pro rims. I fitted a flint catcher to the rear wheel. The rear lights were 2 x 60 lumen flashing Moon Shield lights and last but by no means least I thankfully sat on a Brooks Colt leather saddle. I carried all my



worldly goods in two Karrimor 15L Universal panniers which weigh about 4kg each. If anyone is interested in my packing list I will email a copy. I carried two locks and two pumps.

The Route

I used two maps; Adventure Cycling Association Map 2 Pacific Coast: Astoria, OR to Crescent City, CA and Map 3 Crescent City to San Francisco and a book, Bicycling the Pacific Coast by Vicky Spring, to plot the route on <https://ridewithgps.com/help/planning> The website produces the route as a TCX file which I then loaded onto my Garmin Touring Edge. I carried the maps as back up and also a hard copy route list of each day.

Washington State:

Seattle SeaTac airport to Shelton (65 miles), Shelton to South Bend (65 miles), South Bend to Manzanita via Astoria bridge and Lewis and Clark trail (92 miles)

Oregon state:

Manzanita to Lincoln City (78 miles), Lincoln City to Florence (82 miles), Florence to Bandon (76 miles), Bandon, Bandon to Gold Beach (60 miles), Gold Beach to Crescent City (60 miles)

California State:

Crescent City to Eureka (86 miles), Eureka to Gabberville via the Avenue of Giants (80 miles), Gabberville to Fort Bragg (72 miles), Fort Bragg to Salt Point (82 miles), Salt Point to San Rafeal (85 miles), San Rafeal to downtown San Francisco via the Golden Gate bridge (24 miles)

Accommodation

I prebooked motels at each night stop. If you wish to camp there are numerous hiker/biker State run campsites in State parks along the route. I understand they are of a high standard ie hot showers etc, especially in Oregon and are a nominal cost around \$5. In Oregon they do not turn you away on a bike even if the site is displaying as full. The motels I stayed at were of a mediocre standard. With our current exchange rate, and because I was travelling solo, they were expensive as you pay for the room irrespective of the number of guests.

The Ride

Washington State

The first two days consisted of a ride to the coast through rural inland Washington. It was lumpy, busy on the main roads but very quiet on the minor roads and I had plotted a route that kept me on the latter. The road surface was good with no potholes. The driving was 'OK' as long as I stayed the verge side of the hard shoulder white line.



It wasn't scenic and it was wet. There are lots of trees although the Americans are making a valiant effort to cut down as many as possible. I arrived at the Astoria bridge across the Columbia River at midday on the third day. It is 4.5 miles long, narrow with a very narrow debris strewn shoulder and a 10% climb over the shipping lane.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Astoria-Megler_Bridge. Suffice to say it was one of life's cycling experiences but I arrived in one piece in Oregon state.

Oregon

Oregon state coast is 380 + miles of ocean views, long beaches, sand dunes, wave eroded rock sea stacks and rugged headlands. Unfortunately, this glorious scenery attracts its fair share of tourist traffic especially the American truck sized equivalent of the camper van, towing the runabout car. I travelled after the supposed holiday season had ended but there was still enough traffic to occasionally make riding unpleasant. On the plus side the roads are wide enough and there was a hard shoulder, for most of the way at



least, so I wasn't riding out in the traffic lane.

I followed the Lewis and Clark trail [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_and_Clark_Expedition_inland)

[Lewis_and_Clark_Expedition_inland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lewis_and_Clark_Expedition_inland) from Astoria to the coast and I first saw the Pacific Ocean at Seaside! (no pun intended) I was now on the coastal Highway 1. It took me 6 days to ride to the California border and these were superb

scenic days especially when I routed off Highway 1 either inland or along the cliffs. It is a rugged coast with a West of Ireland feel. There are rock eroded sea stacks, massive sand dunes, miles of wild beaches, turbulent rivers and trees and more trees. Overall an enjoyable experience and my kind of interesting geography.

California

I crossed into California a few miles north of Crescent City. The couple of days traversing Crescent City and Eureka were the most urban part of the ride and in places, because of traffic, it wasn't enjoyable but once through that and on the road to the Avenue of Giants the world changed.

I was blessed, I don't know by who, but someone was on my side when I rode through the Avenue of Giants. The California coast is renowned for persistent wet fog throughout the year and particularly in these dense forests. My 'guardian angel' somehow managed to conjure up a gloriously warm day accompanied by a deep blue sky with an absence of



wind and, as if by magic, all the cars and RV trucks had disappeared. I rode through this forest of huge gigantic ancient trees in awe. I was in the presence of something that had lived in a different universe to me and was older than time. The experience was akin to something spiritual.

The Avenue of Giants brought me to the south fork of the Snake River and, while the main road was on one side, I had the lane on the other side all to myself for one glorious day of riding. I then climbed the only major col of the trip called Leggett's Hill and found myself on a very different coastline.

It is described in the Pacific Coast book as follows: 'lonely stretches of narrow single carriageway etched into cliffs overlooking the turbulent ocean. The climbs are steep, the riding demanding, the countryside beautiful and the views outstanding - the best riding of the entire coast but is nearly almost shrouded in wet fog especially in the morning. This section is recommended for cyclists who are in good shape'

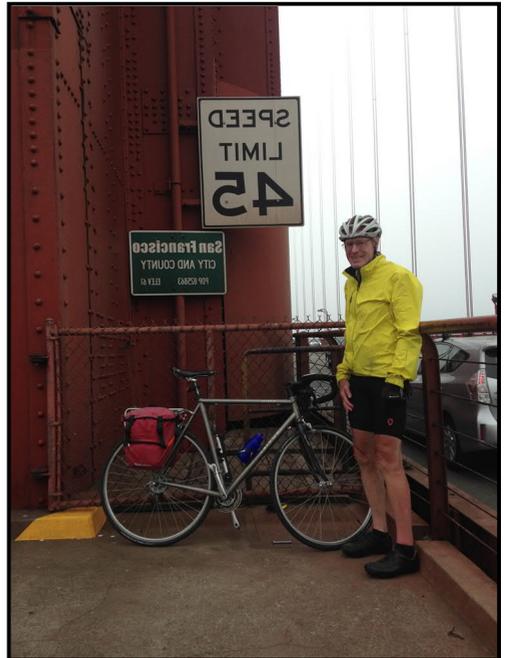
'Good shape'; that disqualified me then except that my 'guardian angel' stayed with me all the way to San Francisco. For the next 5 days I had glorious sunshine and a light tailwind with little traffic.

My luck with the weather ran out as I approached the bridge but, once across and into the affluent bayside downtown of San Francisco, the sun made an appearance once again.

I stayed with a couple of the XC USA 2014 riders in El Dorado Springs (of Folsom Prison fame) for a couple of days before heading off home from San Francisco airport.

A good tour, not a classic because of the occasional intensity of traffic but balanced out by some memorable riding.

Geoff Sales



Ed Says: "Look out for the next edition where Geoff recounts his trip on Hokkaido Island, Japan during May & June 2017"

The Most Popular Bike in the World

If I asked you to name the best selling bicycle ever, what would your answer be? Trek? Specialized? Giant? All excellent products, and all best sellers. But it's none of these. How about Raleigh? Ah, now you're getting warm – sort of: I'll explain later. No, the best selling bike of all time is “The Flying Pigeon”.

I can almost hear the snorts of derision from here. But it's true – the best selling bike ever is one you've probably never heard of, never ridden or never even seen, because it's Chinese. Since 1950 the three models of Flying Pigeon – the PA-02, the PA-06 and the PB-13 – have sold in excess of 500 million units. This makes it not only the best selling bike, but also the best selling wheeled vehicle of any kind.

By way of contrast, the next best-selling wheeled vehicle is another bike, this time a motor bike, the Honda Super Cub, which in 2014 had passed the 87 million mark. Similarly, Toyota – which claims to be the world's largest manufacturer of motor vehicles – has produced about 250 million vehicles to date.

The Flying Pigeon bicycle was, until 1998, made in the Changho Works factory in Tianjin, a town in North East China. The works were originally built in 1936 by a Japanese businessman and produced “Anchor” bicycles, later changed to “Victory” and then renamed “Zhongzi”. The factory was taken over by the new Communist regime in 1949. In a visit to the works in April that year China's then Vice President Liu Shaoqi decided that it would become the first bicycle manufacturer in Chairman Mao's ‘New China’. The workers were ordered to build strong, durable, light and beautiful bikes for the new era, and on 5 July 1950 the first Flying Pigeon was produced. The design was based on the already successful 1932-designed English Raleigh Roadster and has remained unchanged to this day.

The name “Flying Pigeon” was chosen as an aspirational symbol of peace during the Korean War, with the logo being a stylized dove above the initials FG (in Pinyin Chinese, Flying Pigeon is *Fei Ge*). The confusion of ‘dove’ with ‘pigeon’ was probably an error in translation, but the name stuck. Over the years the logo has been subtly updated and modernised and the initials are now shown as FP.

The bike was an instant success – not surprising as it was virtually the only form of mechanized transport in China for several decades. Not only that, the FP was the only government-approved form of personal transport and

regarded as one of the three “must haves” of every Chinese citizen, alongside a watch and a sewing machine. Even in the 1970s, the then national leader Deng Xiaoping famously defined Chinese prosperity as “a Flying Pigeon in every household”.

Today, however, with China’s booming economy and increasing personal prosperity, the motor car is rapidly overtaking the bicycle as the vehicle of choice. The statistics are amazing. In 1985 private car ownership was effectively zero. By 1995 there were about 1million cars and in 2000, when I first visited China, this had risen to 8million. Come 2005 this figure had almost doubled to 15million. Today there are about 180million private cars, concentrated mainly in cities and large towns, but by 2020 it is projected that there will be 200million. Bear in mind, though, that the population of China is something like 1.6billion, so that works out at just 130 cars per 1,000 people. By contrast, for every 1,000 people in the UK there are just under 480 cars.

China still has some way to go to catch up with us! It is therefore not surprising that it is estimated there are still about half-a-billion Flying Pigeons in daily use in China. In other words, just about all the FPs ever made are still working! It is no wonder that the Chinese nation came to be known as “*zixingche wang guo*” – the Kingdom of Bicycles.

Until 1998 FPs were more or less hand-made; then the Changho Works were shut down and operations relocated to an industrial estate on the outskirts of Tianjin. Today it employs around 600 workers and produces a comprehensive range of bikes using modern automated equipment, turning out about 800,000 units per annum. As well as the classic Flying Pigeon, the company boasts a range of more than 40 models covering all cycling disciplines, from a basic shopper retailing for the equivalent of about £55 to a full carbon 22-speed Shimano 105-equipped full-on racer (price on application). The website shows commuter bikes, folding bikes, children’s bikes, mountain and BMX bikes – even electric bikes.

So, that’s a potted history of the Flying Pigeon; what about the bike itself? Does it meet Mr Shaoqi’s specifications? The classic model is the horizontal top tube PA-02. It is of all-steel construction and comes in one size only – 22”; the wheels are 28” shod with 1½” tyres; transmission is single-speed 42 x 20 freewheel, giving a gear of 58.8 inches; brakes are of the steel push-rod variety; the saddle is spring-mounted leather, copied from the Brookes saddle on the Raleigh Roadster; included as standard are a fully enclosed chain case, a bike stand and a rear rack; it can be ordered with an optional dynamo lighting set; the complete bike weighs about 20kg; you can have any colour you like as long as it’s black.

The PA-06 has a larger 24” frame, featuring a double top tube in order to stiffen the frame. There is a legend that this model was designed to carry pigs – probably untrue!

The PB-13 is the women’s model using a step-through frame, but otherwise identical to the PA-02.

Given all that, the bike is certainly strong and durable. It is by no means light according the criteria that you and I would use, but it is probably no heavier than other similar bikes. Is it beautiful? Well, beauty is in the eye of the beholder; personally, I rather like its traditional “retro” look. I think Mr S would have been happy.

My daughter Helen, who has lived in Shanghai for the last three years, is certainly happy with her PB-13 which her husband bought for her on *Tao Bao*, the Chinese equivalent of eBay, for about £30. It is difficult to say how old it is. The badge on the head tube is the older “FG” version, but the brakes are cable-operated; it has straight handlebars and a rubber saddle. I don’t know if these differences were later upgrades by a previous owner, or if they were factory variations on the standard production items. Anyway, it’s in good condition, so on a recent visit in 2018 I persuaded her to let me borrow it. I found the bike to be quite pleasant and easy to ride, helped no doubt by the pan-flat terrain of Shanghai.

Now, I know what you’re asking – “can I buy a Flying Pigeon in the UK?” If you’re looking for a new one unfortunately the answer seems to be “No”. I haven’t been able to trace a retailer here, but I did manage to find one on a Spanish website, costing €440. I would guess that delivery to the UK would add at least 25% to that sum. I looked on eBay recently for a used one and found a PB-13 advertised for £199.

For the moment, bikes – and FPs in particular – are still very popular in China, especially in rural areas, but as I pointed out earlier the infernal combustion engine is rapidly taking over. In a country obsessed with status and ‘face’ it is not considered cool to ride a bike. I have seen some interest in sporting and leisure cycling during my visits, but not that much. More pertinent is the effect of cars on the environment, as there is already severe pollution in many Chinese cities. In 2016 I spent almost a month in Shanghai and didn’t see the sky once; just a depressing all-pervading horizon-to-horizon dirty grey smog. There is a popular Shanghainese saying: “Dogs bark when they see the sun” - indicating that this is a very rare occurrence! Later that year I experienced similar conditions in Calcutta, India.

Not that this problem is confined to the so-called emerging markets. Pollution in the UK can sometimes be just as bad as in China. This is borne

out by the relentless rise in respiratory disease, most worryingly that of childhood asthma.

Surely it is now time for governments the world over to start promoting the environmental and health benefits of cycling as a means of personal transport – not to mention the sheer joy of it. And, most importantly, to provide the necessary infrastructure to make this possible. Children who enjoy a safe and pleasant bike ride to school would probably carry the cycling habit into their adult lives.

Perhaps a “Flying Pigeon” (of whatever make) in every household could yet prove to be the saviour of a planet that is slowly but surely being choked to death by its own inhabitants. Just a thought!



The photograph shows Malcolm demonstrating his daughter’s Flying Pigeon, whilst also posing for the “wear a Solihull jersey in an exotic location” feature. And they say men can’t multi-task!

Appreciated by Malcolm Smith

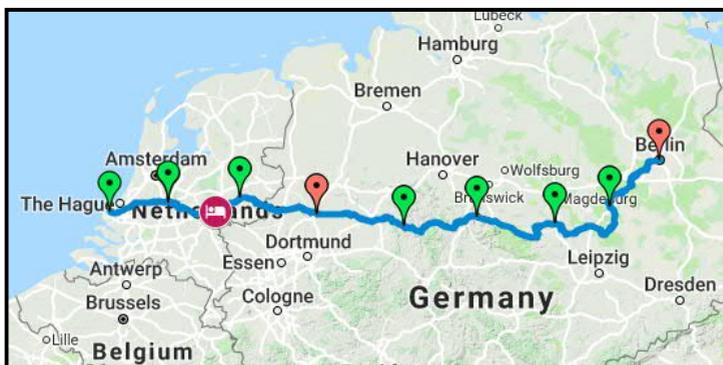
Berlin or Bust - a cycle-touring trip through Holland and Germany

This article complements the blog written by Tony Packowski during a recent trip, which describes our daily exploits and experiences as we went along.

You can find the blog at <https://4sprungteknik.travel.blog/>. What follows is further detail on the background and planning as well as giving a general overview of the journey.

As some AWheel readers may already know, Tony, Bernie Wareing and I took a couple of weeks or so to cycle back from Santander, Spain to St. Malo on the Channel coast, on a self-supported touring trip in June last year. So enjoyable was the experience that almost as soon as we got back, we started to kick around ideas for a similar trip in 2019. With the same degree of spontaneity as last time, we pretty quickly decided that we'd follow another Eurovelo route, this time EV2, which is also known as *The Capitals Route*. Although there are a couple of variants with different start and end points, we chose a section of the version that starts in Dublin and passes through Cardiff, London, The Hague, Berlin, Warsaw and ends in Moscow – hence the *Capitals* nomenclature.

The current nineteen Eurovelo routes have been mostly created by joining together sections of national cycle paths such as those of Sustrans in the UK, or the Dutch 'Fiets' network. Whilst they criss-cross the continent and in



The Dutch and German section of EV2

most cases are fully developed, many of the more remote and less-travelled sections are still 'under construction', so to speak. However, the central 600 mile Dutch and German part we settled on – from the Hook of Holland to Berlin - is both well established and fully documented. For example, the German section is in most part based on the popular and consistently signposted *Radweg R1*.



EuroVelo 2

Capitals Route

So it was that “Berlin or Bust” 2019 came about, albeit with an extra rider. Following earlier chats about our 2018 exploits, Colin Eagle expressed an interest in joining us if we ever planned another trip - hence “*The 3 Muscatourers*” became “*4 Sprung Tecknic*”!



4 Sprung Tecknicand a friend

As cycle-touring was a new experience for us, our 2018 trip took much more preparation in terms of acquiring additional kit, panniers, bits and bobs and, in the case of two of us, an excuse to buy a new touring bike. This time we felt much more prepared but still took the precaution of completing a fully-loaded, 50 mile ‘shake-down’ ride over the Lickies and Clent hills a week or so before we set off. Our approach to accommodation also remained the same in that we would try to find somewhere to stay each night as we went along. But whereas travelling north up the west coast of France through popular tourist areas yielded a good choice of accommodation options in the frequent towns and villages, it was clear from a look at the route map of Eurovelo 2, things would be more challenging given the lack of any significant conurbations, particularly in the more rural areas and the stretch further east towards Berlin. It was for this reason that we put together a very detailed spreadsheet listing all the towns and villages along the route and the distances (and heights) between them - taking information from the route guide (only available in German), as well as building a custom Google map identifying all the possible places to stay that I could find on-line before we set-off. As in 2018 we did book a hostel in Utrecht for our first night - always best to know where you’re going to sleep at the end of Day 1.

We also knew accommodation in Arnhem was going to be limited because of a major youth football tournament, so Tony miraculously managed to find us an airbnb for our second night.



After that we used the spreadsheet to dynamically adjust our ‘target destination’ for the next day’s ride, based on an un-challenging 55 miles or so away. Of course, towns with likely places to stay don’t necessary occur at precisely the right distance, so the spreadsheet was useful when taking in to

Accommodation in Vernigerode

account the necessity of a choosing somewhere closer or pushing on a bit, or where achieving a reasonable mileage could also be affected by the weather on the day or the terrain.

In the event we (Tony mainly) were able to find suitable hotels, hostels, and airbnbs by phoning ahead, which allowed us to keep pretty much to the planned route and achieve our intended daily distance - with just one exception. The Eurovelo 2 route crosses the Dutch-German border near Zwillbrock, east of Arnhem, before passing through the Nordrhein-Westfalen province, the city of Munster and then skirts the northern edge of the Harz Mountains. Towards the eastern side of Sachsen-Anhalt region, beyond Rosslau-Dessau, the route passes though a fairly sparsely populated, forested area with only one or two small towns, before heading north-east towards Potsdam and Berlin. Our plan at this point of the journey left us aiming for the town Bad-Belzig, but with everywhere – all four places – fully booked and with no other villages a viable distance anywhere near, we had to deviated from the normal EV2 route and instead headed north to the much larger town of Brandenburg. The place we (definitely Tony) did find to stay was ‘interesting’ to say the least – but at least it was cheap!



A rather interesting airbnb in Brandenburg!

As I mentioned above, the pan-European, Eurovelo routes are based on joined-up national networks. A feature of local cycle paths is that they can tend to ‘wander around’ a bit in places. This is great if you want to explore a local area for a day, but not so good if your aim is to get from A to B in a reasonable time. For this reason I spent quite some time creating a ‘simplified’ EV2 route, particularly the section in Holland and some parts of rural Germany, the idea being to strike a balance between enjoying the character of the route, whilst at the same time making good progress without covering unnecessary miles.

All in all the 600 mile trip took us eleven, mostly dry cycling days to complete, topped and tailed by a night on the ferry between Harwich and the Hook of Holland, a day sight-seeing in Berlin and a return train journey back to Holland.

It’s also worth echoing some of the comments in the blog: everyone we came across or met on the journey was friendly and helpful – from the hostel manager in Horn-Bad Meinburg who rewarded us we a free beer on arrival, the many polite people who put up with my limited German, to the dedicated

‘Fahrradhelfer’ at Berlin Hauptbahnhof whose job it was to help cyclists on and off trains with their bikes and bags. I could also go on endlessly about the phenomenal difference in the quality and extent of cycling infrastructure in Holland and Germany - such as the free, manned, 24 hour underground cycle storage in Utrecht - but then I would really encourage you to experience it yourself if you haven’t cycled in these countries already.

Our overnight stops along the way:

• Utrecht (NL)	50 miles
• Arnhem (NL)	46
• Stadtlohn	55
• Warendorf	55
• Horn-Bad Meinberg	55
• Bad Gandersheim	68
• Wernigerode	45
• Nachterstedt/Seeland	40
• Dessau-Rosslau	62
• Brandenburg	52
• Berlin	60

Detailed day routes can be found on the blog pages at <https://4sprungtechnik.travel.blog/>

Overall thoughts on Eurovelo 2? A diverse and varied landscape – from rolling, open farmland, dense forests, to the challenging climbs around the Harz Mountains – enhanced by attractive cities, towns and villages. Welcoming people and a really pleasurable network of cycle paths and marked ways, plus the historic German capital city to explore at the end or you may choose to carry on to Moscow!

Some useful links:

Eurovelo <https://cyclingeurope.org/european-routes>

Biroto (European multi-day bicycle touring routes) <https://www.biroto.eu/en/>

German Youth Hostel Org <https://www.jugendherberge.de/en/>

Custom Google Map – EV2 Accommodation <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1eG49zGernDwvs3eQco8YIU9RzIzCka7E&usp=sharing>



Ride Complete

Rick Parfitt

Lottery 2-up 10-mile Time Trial

On Friday 12 July 2017, 32 riders turned up to the start of the K36/10 TT course near Hockley Heath to take part in a Lottery 2-up Time Trial. Lottery time trials were popular with the club in the early 2000s and to help celebrated the club's 90th anniversary I thought it would be a good idea to resurrect the competition. Additionally, I thought it would be a good chance for us to remember Tony Satterthwaite who was tragically killed whilst out on his bike last December. Tony was a regular on the Sunday A run and also a regular in the club Time Trials.



The event was open to Solihull CC riders plus invited guests which included some of Tony's friends. 23 SCC riders attended plus about 10 SCC members who helped with signing on, marshalling, time keeping etc. We had a fine evening of weather, which probably helped with the numbers and no body managed to get lost,

although I do believe Ben Mountford had to be told he'd left his partner, Colin Williamson, well behind.

Lottery 2-up explained – Basically, everyone that turned up signed on in the usual way, then all the names were put into a hat (which Conor Jones eventually won – the hat that is). Names were then drawn from the hat, and the first pair drawn were number one on the start sheet, the second pair drawn were number two and so on. The event was a great success, with the winning pair of riders, Kit Buchanan and Paul Astin winning a £50 Thwaites food voucher courtesy of the Bulls Head Public House and Solihull cycling club.



Winning Duo

After the Time Trial, everyone decamped to the Bulls Head for a drink or two. Also in attendance were Tony's wife, Wendy, together with Tony's Parents and children and some of their friends.

Wendy helped in handing out the prizes to the winners and other prizes were given out in a lottery kind of way, ie if number 5 was picked out of the hat, then the team coming 5th won a prize.

Entry fees and donations meant that we raised £200 for the brake charity (www.brake.org.uk) which Tony supported.

Results were as follows

1, Kit Buchanan and Paul Astin	23.22
2, Eddy Priddy and Steve Mountford	24.49
3, Mal Dickerson and Colin Yeomans	25.16
4, Dave Abosch and Martin Ryan	25.25
4, Time May and Maz Ulmicalns	25.25
6, Steve Nelson and Conar Jones	25.49
7, Mike Harrison and Aaron Hemesley	26.02
8, Phil Hitchmough and Graham Garnett	26.25
9, Ben Mountford and Colin Williamson	26.33
10, Oliver Tandy and Debbie Bradley	26.37
11, Chris Ainge and Lee Forrest	27.03
12, Christian Bodremon and Paul Broyd-	27.08
13, Richard Burt and Joe Socci	27.21
14, Dave Fellow and Mark Tandy	27.46
15, Will Grey and Keith Jones	28.08
16, Pete King and Mike Pridmore-Wood	29.22



Paul thinking he may need to race

I did say that it would be a one-off event, but due to the success of the time trial, perhaps it is something we can try again and make it a regular club event in order to remember Tony.

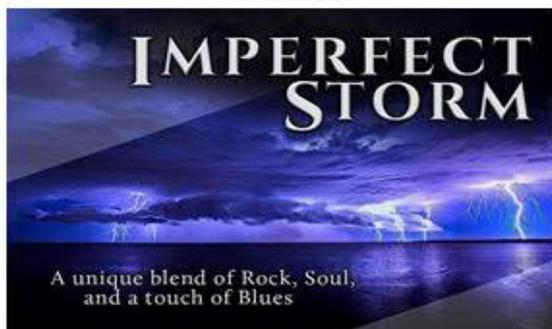
Paul Mann



Post Race Gathering at the Bulls Head

Charity Music Fundraising Night

FEATURING



And



SATURDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER

At Shirley British Legion, B90 3BQ

Doors 7pm / Late Bar

Free parking Asda Parkgate 3pm-8am

£9.50 Adults

£7.50 Children

Purchase from Shirley British Legion (0121 744 1631)

RAISING FUNDS FOR SOLIHULL WHEELS FOR ALL

Charity number: 1181993



In Conjunction with Shirley Lions, Acocks Green Lions, Solihull Lions Beer & Cider Festival

Supported by Shirley British Legion



90th Year Look Back - Eric Walker

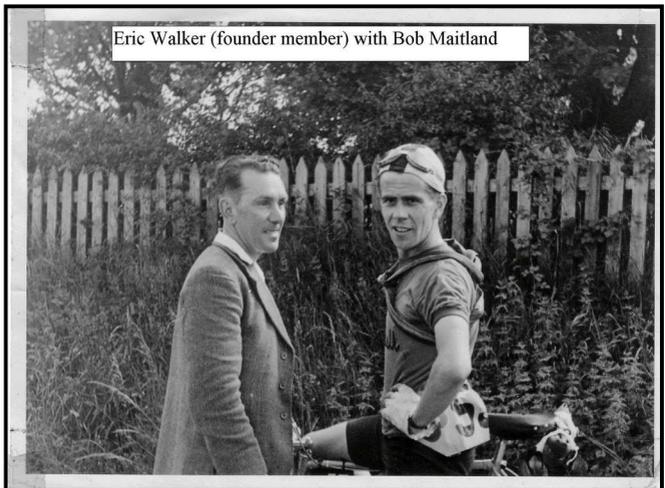
Eric was one of the founding members of our club, being involved right from the very beginning back in 1929. He was not only popular but had the knack of making things happen, cajoling others into various tasks that helped the club grow.

Eric filled many of the club's appointments over the years but his service to the club especially impressive during the war years when he coordinated the sending of parcels and letters to our club members on active service all over the world. By then the club had established the Hobo Run, the Annual Dinner, Club Magazine and regular club runs and despite all the adversity of the war years, Eric was one of the key members that made sure the club survived and prospered

Eric farmed in Catherine de Barnes and Walker's Farm became a key part of the club life for many years, especially where Bicycle Polo was concerned as this was an incredibly popular aspect of club life then.

Eric and his colleagues in the club at the time, went through so many hardships to develop and maintain the ethos of the club and all its varied activities during the most desperate war years; it is well worth our while nowadays ensuring we don't let the club traditions slip into disuse.

We all owe a lot to Eric.



A Cautionary Tale from a Sunday Ride

THIRTY SECONDS

He rolled his BMW coupe to a standstill outside the front door. She came bouncing out, then turned back.

“Thirty seconds. Just forgotten something.”

Outside again, she clicked her front door shut and slid into the passenger’s seat. He checked his mirror and then gunned the Beamer down the straight.

Inside my head a switch flicks as I see the 20 percent sign. I knock up a gear and start to spin from the back of the group. One, two, three riders go backwards. Up front another rider moves out and the pair work towards the lead rider.

The two in front are coming back but they are also closing on the leader - all this happening in seconds. Can I get past them before they skirt the front rider? How close is the bend?

I am three abreast passing on the outside. The road is narrow. I am in acute listening mode. Should I stop the effort?

Keep going. Some other urge has taken over. Close onto the front rider, two abreast, take the right-hander. Top the rise, onto the straight. Relax.

“Is that for your Strava?”

“If I had Strava I might have been tempted!”

The BMW coupe barrelled towards the descent doing around 70mph.

We were all a bit shocked.

Rewind.

“Thirty seconds. Just forgotten something.”

“Don’t bother, just jump in.”

Richard Burt

Cryptic and Easy Crossword

Answers to the last edition's Cryptic and Easy Crossword

Across

3. toecap - t (the start) + anagram (about) of police
8. see 14 down
9. see 11 down
12. valve – first five letters of valverdi (Alejandro's)
13. splitlink – LI (roman numeral for 51) + nk split
15. hub – found in **rhubarb**
17. saddlerail – anagram (could be) of riddle, alas
18. rearhanger – Spooner was renowned for switching initial letters : listen – forest keeper = hear ranger. With Spoonerism it becomes rear hanger
19. cotterpin – anagram (accident) of crept into

Down

1. presta – type of valve (12ac) – start of **pro rider exhibits superior training and**
2. cable – Vince Cable the MP – cable can be inner or outer
4. crank – crazy person and a device that changes lateral motion into circular
5. powertap – anagram (maybe) of pop and water
6. axle – found in middle of the hub (15ac) and Eddy Merckx' son Axel (heard)
7. headset – Aheadset is a type of headset, headset can also be earphones
10. clincher – settles an argument and sounds like tire (it will lose interest) = tyre
11. and 9 across quick release – anagram (maybe) of queer lice ask
14. and 8 ac. - ball bearings – found in headset (7d), Alan **Ball** was sent off in 1974 World Cup qualifier + anagram (recycled) of banger is
16. valvecap – covers valve (12ac) – **Valverde** missing RED letters + hat (cap)

Club Runs

Saturday

A run from Dorridge Station at 9:00am

B run from The Railway Inn Dorridge 9:00am

Apple pie run from Dorridge Village Hall at 9:00am

All these rides have a coffee stop at Studley Garden Centre Mappleborough Green

Sunday

DATE	A RUN	B RUN	C RUN	D RUN	E RUN
11-Aug	Ullesthorpe	Malvern	Long Marston	Draycote	Charlcote
18-Aug	Stourport	Ebrington	Crowle	Alrewas	Alcester
25-Aug	Whitchford	Hammerwich	Napton	M Hussingtree	Middleton
01-Sep	Battlefields	Barby	Long Marston	Wickhamford	Clifford Chambers
08-Sep	Evesham	Whitchford	Wickhamford	Clifford Chambers	Jinny Ring
15-Sep	Toddington	Ullesthorpe	Jinny Ring	Kinver	Wellesbourne
22-Sep	Lighthorne	Wolverley	Oxhill	Evesham	Dunnington
29-Sep	M Hussingtree	Wickhamford	Battlefields	Chaddesley Corbet	Stratford
06-Oct	Newton Regis	Moir	Wickhamford	Ebrington	Astwood Bank
13-Oct	Club Cyclocross				
20-Oct	Wickhamford	Onley	Long Marston	Wellesbourne	Clifford Chambers
27-Oct	Draycote	Blakedown	Clifford Chambers	Middleton Hall	Shottery
03-Nov	Kinver	Shipston	Jinny Ring	Stratford	Blackhills
Rides start from Clock Tower Solihull					
All runs start at 9:00. <u>Throughout the year</u>					
Beginners F Run also available - Contact Alan Thomson 01216808322 or alt492@hotmail.com					

Tuesday

		B Run					
DATE	A Run	Coffee Stop	(*)	Pub Stop	C Run		
13-Aug	Mickleton	Stourport O Seven		Feckenham	Astwood Bank		
20-Aug	Stourport O Seven	Wickhamford		Barton	Hatton Craft		
27-Aug	Churchfields	Willoughby	P	Long Itchington	Snitterfield		
03-Sep	Wickhamford	Chipping Campden		Bretforton	Stoneleigh		
10-Sep	Shipston On Stour	Chaddesley Corbet		Flyford Flavel	Blackhills		
17-Sep	Hoar Park	Churchfields		Broom	Kenilworth		
24-Sep	Ilmington	Battlefields	E	Shustoke	Hatton Locks		
01-Oct	Evesham	Mickleton		Ardens Grafton	Alcester		
08-Oct	Kinver	Dunsmore	P	Hampton Lucy	Stratford		
15-Oct	Long Itchington	Fladbury		Barton	Blackhills		
22-Oct	Norton GC	Shipston On Stour		Aston Cantlow	Stoneleigh		
29-Oct	Draycote Water	Evesham Ferry		Long Marston	Hatton Craft		
05-Nov	M Hussingtree	Ilmington		Broom	Astwood Bank		
Runs info Dave Stephenson 01564 776064, davidjks@icloud.com							
B Run is an all day ride with coffee & lunch, starts Reservoir pub at 9:15 am							
A Run is faster with coffee stop, starts from Reservoir pub at 9:15							
(*) Runs marked P start Punchbowl, E start from Eastcote X roads @ 9:15							

Thursday

DATE	A RUN	B RUN	C RUN	D RUN
15-Aug	Dunnington	Wellsbourne TC	Hunningham	Snitterfield
22-Aug	Wellesbourne	Dunnington	Stratford	Wooten Wawen
29-Aug	Dunnington	Charlcote	Alcester	Wellesbourne
05-Sep	Wellesbourne	Astwood Bank	Kingsbury	Shottery
12-Sep	Dunnington	Clifford Chambers	Dunnington	Alcester
19-Sep	Wellesbourne	Stratford	Clifford Chambers	Charlcote
26-Sep	Dunnington	Wellesbourne	Lighthorne	Middleton
03-Oct	Wellesbourne	Hunningham	Stratford	Hatton Locks
10-Oct	Dunnington	Dunnington	Wellesbourne	Kenilworth
17-Oct	Wellesbourne	Stratford	Dunnington	Stratford
24-Oct	Dunnington	Astwood Bank	Long Itchington	Alcester
31-Oct	Wellesbourne	Clifford Chambers	Wooten Wawen	Stoneleigh
07-Nov	Dunnington	Blackhills	Kenilworth	Hunningham

Runs Co-Ordinator Dick Law 01926 427200

A Run starts Dynamic Rides Hockley Heath at 9:15

B,C and D run start from Punchbowl at 10:00 am

Main Club Contact Details

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