



THE SQUIRREL

Christmas 2011



Editor's piece

By John Carberry

Welcome to your bumper Christmas and New Year edition of the Squirrel.

Inside your copy there is everything from tales of triumph on the road to John o' Groats, to the exploits of the night-riders' raid on Blackpool and the tribulations of a weekend in the wettest place in England. And that's before you bump into Sean Kelly, find out about some new Audax challenges, take a trip on the Bike Bus or learn about previous club greats.

I've read it all already and really enjoyed it and I'm sure you will too.

At the annual meeting I gave a flavour of what goes on behind the production scenes to make our club magazine and I repeat here the thank you to everyone who has supported the mag with their contributions. It's only as good as we make it.

Thanks to Ian Udall who does more than his share of the hard work by compiling and designing the Squirrel. It's him who makes it look as good as it does.

And I can't leave out thanks for the dynamic distribution duo of Reg (mostly) and Gordo. Not only do they make sure we get a copy, they do so wherever possible without spending money on postage.

Thanks too to Alan Blackburn who ensures we retain an international readership by posting the magazine online.

In the past year – and not including the edition in your hands now – your magazine has contained nearly 100 separate articles in around as many pages, with over 150-odd photographs and contributions from more than 30 authors.

In the year, we've vicariously enjoyed five foreign trips and various weekends away. We've learned how to get around various cities by bike, had the chance to laugh with – not at – our club-mates and bid a loving farewell to others. We've read about the exploits of our racing lads and lasses, marking their success and their dramas, found out where all the best cafes are and told each other about all the important dates for our annual calendars.

Every time I start the process of producing another magazine I tell myself how proud I am to be its editor. And every time I forget how big a job it is!

The magazine is the place where we share all that makes the Seamons what we are. A great club with a great spirit.

Thanks again to everyone who contributes to the magazine. If you've not had a go yourself, try it, you might like it.

If you've got photographs, memories, holidays, tips, even recipes or knitting patterns, drop me a line. If it's something the club needs to know about, I'll find it a home.

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Meet your clubmates... Mike McConville

He's a familiar face to us all but what lies behind Chairman Mike McConville's gavel? Read on for some top training tips, details of his first outing as a competitive sportsman and why language classes might have got in the way of some French freebies.

When and where were you born?

Withington hospital Manchester 11:40pm
11/11/1957

When did you start cycling and what was your first club?

I started cycling in 1987 for Trafford MV Rugby Club as they were doing a sponsored bike ride on a 16-seater from Chester RUFC to MVRFC in Sale.

What was your first race, and first win?

Egg and spoon race at St Vincent's reception class 1963. I didn't win that race either.

Which performance do you rate as your best?

National 24 hour, July 2007. I managed to do 320 miles in a ride time of 22hr 15min

What is your favourite meal?

Tornado Rossini.

What kind of music do you enjoy?

Swing, Nat King Cole is my favourite

And your favourite type of TV programme?

Any sitcom or light entertainment that is liable to make me chuckle

Which newspaper do you read?

Sports page of any newspaper

What is your ideal holiday destination?

Beth has said I like anywhere hot with a pool and near a beach.

Do you have any hobbies?

Love going to the theatre to watch the musicals

Who would play you in a film of your life?

Martin Clunes, as Doc Martin he tells it straight, and as Gary (Men Behaving Badly)



Chairman Mike

he reminds me of bits of my younger years. My bottom double would be Jeffrey Morgan just for Beth

What is your favourite training ride?

Taking a train ride to Dewsbury to do the real ale train trail

What is your most unpleasant characteristic?

Having a stern look that is sometime misread by others

Which characteristic do you most dislike in others?

Arrogance, deceit, and people who only ever hint at what they mean without actually saying it. I can never understand these people.

What was your most embarrassing moment?

While spending the weekend of my 50th birthday in Paris I only ever said "bonjour" to the French, regardless of the situation, the time of day, or the question. I did get quite a few funny looks and free gifts

16. Four words to describe yourself

Honest, loyal, reliable, sociable (hiccups on Friday night)

Six on the beach

By Jeanette Barker

In June, a link was uploaded to Facebook about the inaugural Manchester to Blackpool night ride which was to take place overnight on Saturday 17 September.

Rather rashly (in retrospect) a hardy group of six Seamons cyclists: Darren Buckley, John Menzies, Paul Barber, Chris Nash, Neil Rothwell and I - decided to sign up.

The logistics (how to get six tired cyclists and their bikes back from Blackpool in the morning) were all sorted admirably thanks to help from Rob Gibson. Late Saturday afternoon, Darren, Neil and Rob drove to Blackpool, two cars with cycle carriers were left there and Rob drove Darren and Neil back to Altrincham.

At 7 o'clock we all assembled at our house and had a meal together (lots of pasta and NO alcohol)! We then chilled out watching a stage of the Tour of Britain, that had been recorded earlier, and then it was time to leave the house at midnight.

The weather had been iffy all day, so warm clothes and waterproofs were the order of the day (or rather night)! And, OMG, you should have seen the number of lights we had between us...we looked like the Hale version of Blackpool illuminations as we set off! Numerous front and rear lights (of course), flashing lights on arm and ankle bands, reflectors everywhere and some of us even had reflectors on our pedals! Did you EVEN know that the law requires amber reflectors on pedals when riding at night?

Prior to the event, and after we had all paid our entry fee, the organisers sent information and emails telling us that we MUST comply with the law and if we didn't have BS standard lights and all requisite reflectors, we would not be allowed to set off. There were times when we seriously considered not bothering doing the ride as

none of our modern efficient lights comply with the out-dated British Standards and clipless pedals do not have amber reflectors!

In the end, having researched and determined that NOBODY has ever been "done" for not having amber reflectors on their pedals; begging/stealing or borrowing a few "cage things with reflectors" (technical term) that sit around the pedal – and assuming that our lights exceeded British Standards – we were ready for the ride. Interestingly, at the start, no official even glanced at our bikes to see if we were compliant!

We set off from Hale at midnight and cycled through Altrincham, Sale and Trafford Park to get to the start at the Trafford Centre. It started to pour with rain just after Sale – so we were soaked before we even started!

Neil nearly didn't even get to the start as his wheel went into railway tracks, which ran diagonally across one of the roads near Trafford Park, and it was amazing that he recovered and didn't come off!

It was quite surreal to see hundreds of soaking wet cyclists in waterproofs, their bikes complete with flashing front and rear lights, assembled on the marble floor of Barton Square in the Trafford Centre at 1 o'clock in the morning!

We were set off in batches from 1 o'clock and it continued to rain extremely heavily, on and off, for most of the night. I would say it was raining for just over half the time, so not perfect riding conditions but we coped.

The first 10 to 15 miles were more challenging than the rest of the route because there were so many cyclists around (and not all were very experienced, so we had to take great care) but after a while the numbers of cyclists thinned out as we overtook the slower ones and we cycled as a pack



and managed to keep up a good speed. Almost the entire route was street-lit, although there was a short section without lights. We did have to concentrate much more cycling in the dark but I think that helped to stop any of us from feeling sleepy!

The route was mainly along A-roads, but overnight there was very little traffic about and we didn't come across any incidences of bad drivers, thank goodness. We did have an amusing experience waiting at traffic lights in Preston, though. A taxi drew up alongside us and an extremely drunk, but very "posh" young woman in the back wound down the window and asked if we were taking part in the Tour de France!

We got lost twice (but only briefly) as there was a distinct lack of direction signs and/or marshals in places. On one occasion, we noticed numerous cyclists coming in the opposite direction followed by a car with a marshal leaning out of the window shouting: "Turn round, turn round!"

The second time, we were all zooming along when we noticed (after a while) that Paul was no longer with us. We retraced

our steps to find him mending a rear wheel puncture (not easy in the dark when it's cold, pouring with rain and cold!)

While we were all hanging around, a marshal drove past telling us (and numerous others who were cycling past) that we were no longer on the correct route. I do wonder how many cyclists got lost that night.

We stopped twice at the refreshment stops, where hot drinks and bananas were provided, but we didn't loiter as we were so wet and it was cold when we weren't actually cycling. We had cycled at a good pace all night, and were constantly overtaking other cyclists, but we really speeded up once we got to Lytham St Annes.

It was really enjoyable zooming along the wide and empty roads on the edge of the coast in Lytham and into Blackpool itself. The illuminations had been switched on for us, so it was a marvellous experience cycling along the promenade to the finish.

We had cycled a total of 63.6 miles in 3 hours 57 minutes (moving time) at an average speed of 16.1 mph with a maximum speed of 29.6mph and, despite the dreadful weather, we all really enjoyed the challenge.

Audax update

By Dave Matthews

The world of Audaxing is moving with the times and next year your cycling adventure can begin the moment you look at Audax UK's website www.audax.uk.net.

For the first time you will be able to use PayPal to submit your entry fee and route sheets will be available online. There are also plans to make the relevant routes available for bike GPS systems.

So, if you're excuse for not getting out more has always been that Audax is too old-fashioned, think again.

Super-Audaxer Dave Matthews is recommending to club mates the following rides in 2012.

Sunday, July 29, as part of the Welsh festival of cycling, there are three rides to whet your appetite, all starting from Ruthin Rugby Club and organised by Vicky Payne, abetted by Dave:

- The Clwydian – 200k with approx 3,000m climbing
- The Clwyd Gate – 148k with approx 2,500m climbing
- The Clwyd Vale – 60k with approx 500m climbing

In September, Dave is responsible for three leg-looseners, all leaving Old Ma's Tea Room at Tattenhall on Sunday, September 18:

- Pistyll Packing Momma – 200k with 3,000m climbing (feedback after the first edition in 2011 was: "Just about the most impressive 200k I have done..." macthebike)
- Momma's Mountain Views – 138k with 2,000m climbing
- Momma's Leafy Lanes – 50k

By which time you'll be ready for three more Matthews Mashers, all leaving Corwen on Saturday, October 20:

- The Barmouth Bash – 200k and all brand new
- The Brenig Bach – 100k with 2,000m climbing (restoration of a 90s classic; very scenic)
- The Bala Mini-Bash – 60k with 1,000m climbing

All details and entry forms can be found at www.audax.uk.net

Give 'em a go! You never know, you might like them.

Where are we?



The touring section's mystery run in October ends up.... where?

Answers on a postcard. Obviously, Tourists need not reply. Although, looking below, they didn't seem too sure where they were themselves!



The wettest place in England

By Gordon Peake

2011 saw a continuation of successful Seamons weekends away, each having an individual ambiance.

Six in all, that I know of. Four regulars include: Cerrigydrudion, which comes early in the year and is dictated by the traditional Llangollen event; CTC York rally/cycle show always falls on midsummer's weekend, while Bishop's Castle has purposely coincided with the autumn Michaelmas

fair. Montgomery, organised by Robin Haigh, is the end-of-season December celebration.

Between these four semi-permanent fixtures, extra spring and autumn weekends have proved popular in recent years allowing time to visit "different destinations" dependent on requests or individual recommendations based on experiences etc. This year a May weekend took us to Wrenbury, granted, not far! But it allowed exploration outside the perimeter of a normal Sunday run to Market Drayton, infinity and beyond.

Late October saw a "blind booking" of Hinning House (above) in the remotest bit of Duddon Valley in The Lake District.

October may not be the ideal time to visit a spot about five miles from England's recognised wettest place, Seathwaite (average 124 inches per year – that's more than 3 metres!) however, October allows many hostels to be booked solely for your party's occupation, which can be ideal.

Booking without seeing is also a gamble but choice is usually dependent on location. Once inside it's not really important what the surroundings are like. You're out



and about during daylight anyway. On this occasion the location was stunning and also very remote. We've yet to experience a "holiday from hell" scenario, quite the opposite. Thanks to Andy and Sue for finding this one.

So it was that 20 Seamons put their names on the club notice board and duly set off on the Friday the 28th, in beautiful sunshine, passing trees at their autumnal best.

Leaving the M6 at Kendal, for the first time I tried to let a sat nav control my destiny. Whilst at every opportunity it tried to direct me north towards Windermere, I held firm to the southerly way towards Broughton in Furness.

After "recalculating" itself for the tenth time and now nearing Broughton I eventually relented to its whim, knowing it could no longer insist on Windermere. Half a mile before Duddon Bridge (my intended turn) it sent us right into a narrow lane. This soon deteriorated into a grass-down-the-middle job, while traversing cattle grids, several gates and straight through a farm yard awash with cow muck. Ninety degree bends on a six foot wide trackway with hand-written direction signs propped on walls.

Continued overleaf...

The wettest place...

Eventually it spat us out at a different Seathwaite, on the valley road I'd originally planned as the route. I just thanked fate I hadn't got the caravan attached or stumbled across banjo playing locals! I swore to revert to scanning a map and using scribbled directions on "the back of an envelope". A method that has proved infallible for years! The sat nav can stay in the box till I'm lost, or more precisely "diverted", then lost, in London. That's the reason it was purchased by my good lady, to prevent me going demented around the capital. It's proved invaluable by eliminating any diversions – so far! Is there a way of dictating a route, not just preferences, to these machines?

We arrived in time for a quick two-wheel explore along the Duddon Valley. The Lake District was wonderfully bathed in sunshine and pleasant enough to prompt some poetry – a

Wordsworth moment! "I wondered lonely as a..." "recalculating". No, I can't take poetry very seriously! Not without a tune.

However, stumbling across the Newfield Inn, quite unintentionally of course, commenced a pleasant end to the day. Of course we were only doing a recce to see if we could all eat there. We'd struggle to fit in, never mind eat. Even Dave Barker who declared: "I'll go a bit further," soon reappeared to share our cordials!

Saturday dawned to a totally different picture. It appeared the hostel had been built about ten feet below the clouds.

The rain delayed departure while we consumed another cup of tea. Then a further half-hour while the stream outside, which had been the road, calmed down. Inside it was tropically warm as no one had got the hang of the heating controls yet.

We set off during a two-minute break in the weather, along and up the valley to Wrynose Pass. While grim, the scenery in the murk was quite exhilarating in its raw untamed state. And when I say "up", I mean "UP"! Eleven chevrons in two kilometres.

Hardnott Pass



The climb up to Wrynose/Hardnott Pass is a "warm up" in the class of "stinker". The re-group at the summit took a little longer than normal and conversation inevitable turned to gears, or lack of an extra one! It was during this respite Paul Barber noticed Janette had one cog to go. The offer to wait while she had another go in the lowest gear was politely declined. The descent to Little Langdale on smooth, wet tarmac proved just as unnerving, as with maximum pull on the levers, the rims warmed up and you inevitable accelerate. A flashback to careering off Long Mynd came to mind and four letter poetry!

You know you're in trouble when you start weighing up alternative bale-out spots between the boulders. Thinks: "Is the bike insured for this and just where is the nearest A & E"? All safely down!

The weather had improved to a cloudy drizzle as we got some warm-up miles on the main road into Coniston. On arrival, we immediately doubled the "outdoor" population. Most other visitors were already ensconced in the Black Bull, despite it only being five past 12.

The hospitality wasn't going to be a rush job today. "It's got to blow over," we thought as we monitored the procession of hooded cagoules passing the window. Time for puddings and another coffee. Chance a half of Bluebird Bitter?

Seamons gear always attracts an approach from interested bystanders. This time it was Noel Mills' daughter saying hello. Noel, of course, was a committee member and club chairman for many years.

Sunday was dry, although everywhere was awash with yesterday's downpour.

A choice of three walks or two rides evolved over breakfast. Another tarmac run to the seaside, Wasdale and back over Hardnott. Or, for those with appropriate bikes, an off-roader over the Old Man of Coniston. An overdue revival of some "proper" playing out!

Led out by Neil Rothwell – or was he being led? – the tarmac brigade returned later than expected, with John Carberry declaring it: "The toughest ride ever"! A measure of the unforgiving terrain or John finally feeling the encroaching years?

The terrain had also forced one early retirement as the punishment of Saturday had left John Hammond doing metal to



The club that's eats together...

metal on the brakes. Perseverance in such circumstances and terrain would be foolish if not suicidal! Common sense prevailed and the bike got swapped for a good map read.

The isolation of Hinning House meant, as predicted, the "in-house" catering contingency plan was instigated. Once again Karen Peake did us proud.

Also pleasing was a return to a broader mix from across the Seamons "sections" joining the hardcore of weekend away regulars.

For 2012, who knows? One idea of an Olympic week camp on the outskirts of London has been tempered by talk of £30 per person per night, and I'm told they're booked up! (All unconfirmed!) So, any ideas? Any weekend "leaders" want to volunteer? With a checklist we can provide, it's not difficult. Another suggestion – a mid-summer's eve all-night ride, including a couple of the dark hours picnicking on Llandudno beach? (Something similar happened spontaneously this year I believe). Is it time to repeat the Cheshire Cycle Way two-day, with a car-assist start giving the option of an overnight back home? (How tight we are!)

The future's bright – the future's yellow, blue and white! That rhymes! I am a poet?

Paying tribute to the treasurer

By Johnny Pardoe

Life member and vice-president, Johnny Coles stood down at the AGM after serving as our Treasurer for the last 11 years, not to mention his years as treasurer in the 60s, and his time as runs secretary.

I feel the club owes Johnny a great debt of gratitude for his outstanding services to the club.

He joined the Seamons in 1953, and, although he rode many time trials, including 12-hour events, road racing was his first love.

He is a former club road race champion, in 1958, 1959, 1960 and 1963, and still holds the Buxton-and-back record.

Johnny is an inveterate tourist and explorer, and many of us remember his very devious mystery tours.

He is still a regular every week riding with the touring section – when he is not off round the world with Barbara on one of his walking/climbing adventures. China, the Himalayas, Iceland, South America – you name it, he's been there. They have just returned from South Africa, and Johnny will no doubt be entertaining us with one of his slide shows one of these winter nights at club.

Johnny must have covered more miles than anyone on beans on toast and a glass of water – the only cyclist I know who doesn't drink tea. How many times in the cafe have we said: "Hurry up John, your water's going cold!"

May he continue to enjoy his cycling with the Seamons for many years to come. On behalf of the Club, thank you Johnny.

Top to bottom right: *Johnny Coles on Peaslow Hill in 1953 ; On a mini bike at a club annual dinner in the 1960's ; The famous ice cream shot that graced the cover of the Squirrel in Spring 2010.*



The accidental cyclist

A crash course in cycle safety

By "Tumblehome"

Man who falls of bike is inept.

Man who falls off tricycle is inebriated.

- The Squirrel, December 1960

Every cyclist has fallen off a bike; in this all cyclists are equal. It's just that some of us are more equal than others.

1. The Novice: 1974: My cycling career started appropriately enough. Riding a GPO red* bike with the stabilisers removed and under paternal assurance that the saddle would remain safely within reach, the ride probably lasted 30 seconds. It was an important lesson in parental fallibility.

[*Frank the postman built everyone's bikes. No one at GPO HQ questioned the volume of paint a village with one post box got through; it was the '70's.]

After that there were the usual childhood scrapes; the gravel slides, the tow-path near-misses, the Hill Lane braking competition with a handy garden hedge at the bottom... Oh, the smell of privet close up.

2. The 'Oscar Wilde': Summer 1987 - The road home out of Rugby is sodium orange-lit as far as the railway and then drops under the line and up into the now defunct Imperial Wireless Station. Built to boom out to Australia (and, incidentally, Mars), it was cleared of human habitation in the 1920's, allegedly because of the transmitters' habit of electrocuting sheep. Devoid of lights (barring the odd flaming sheep), on a cloudless night you are suddenly presented with the heavens laid out like a planetarium. It was all very impressive; slightly too impressive on a bicycle.

"We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."

[Technically, it was a ditch]

3. The Broadside: November 1989 – York's evening rush-hour was dark and wet, and



the city was grid-locked as usual. The traffic lights up ahead had changed and the cars started to ripple into motion.

I had a clear cycle lane ahead of me, and the bike was as much ballasted as illuminated by a pair of chunky EverReady's, fore and aft. However, I had failed to notice the exchange of nodded pleasantries between a queued driver and a driver waiting to pull out; and unfortunately, in exchanging pleasantries, they had failed to notice me. The car's bumper lurched forward and caught the bike side on, folding both wheels over and catapulting me down into the road surface; shoulder first, closely followed by my (un-helmeted) head.

After this my recollections are a bit of a muffled blur. In the time it took me to get back on my feet a police officer had appeared from somewhere, looking fairly cross (it was raining). The driver of the car had got out and was looking rather worried. I was suddenly very, very tired, not entirely stable and trying to suppress a more manifest form of nausea. The PC said something at length, but quite what it was I couldn't say. When she had finished saying

Continued overleaf...

The accidental cyclist...

whatever it was she was saying, I was permitted to heft the bike on to my shoulder and meander off down the way I'd come, following a (potentially fatal) instinct for home and bed. The irony was that the car was leaving the hospital.

The bike, with new wheels, soldiered on for a few more years, although it was always a little flighty on descents...

4.The Midget: September 1993 – there is nothing quite as joyous as riding a brand new bike. There's something in the gleam of paint untouched by rain or grit or oil and the high, ringing tone of the frame as you ride; and the ability to descend without corkscrewing was a revelation.

The reverie lasted approximately 20 miles.

A clear bright autumnal Sunday morning, it was about perfect for a ride to check the set-up and to have the bike and the Hampshire lanes to myself. Well, almost to myself. A wide, straight road with nothing else on it; you would have thought the MG nosing slowly out of a drive couldn't fail to miss me; and it didn't. I can't say that I threw myself under the bike, but it did come off without a scratch. The same can't be said of me.

5.The Panda: Spring 1994 – In a queue waiting to turn right, Southampton's morning traffic was all stop-go stop-go. The trick is to get your "stop's" and "go's" timed to match the car in front. The Fiat in front of me started for a gap, but then reconsidered and opted for a "stop". I'd just heaved my bodyweight down to accelerate hard in a resolute "go". I bounced off the back.

6.Sic Transit: Summer 1996 – A Reading bus lane in the afternoon rush hour with traffic queuing down the right hand lane; a stationary Transit van; a Peugeot waiting to turn across the queue. The front wheel was a write-off. The address was a fake. So it goes...

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7.The Shoreditch Builder: Summer 1998 – London's Shoreditch one-way system was designed for "Ben Hur". You have to slip two lanes to the right to make the main circuit and then back across three lanes to the left to make the exit. On a bike, you either travel at the prevailing traffic speed or are forced off towards the Old Street roundabout, which was even worse. I never quite worked out how the unicycling commuter (in tweed) managed to come out of it alive. You develop a sprint and a nascent sixth sense about drivers' un-indicated intentions.

Oddly, for this accident I was stationary. I'd made it to the lights at the entry to Shoreditch first, no under/over-taking, all fair and square. The builder's van behind me didn't much like it. So nothing to do, but... the van lurched forward, the bumper rose and in coming to a halt, bit down again on my back wheel. The intent was to nudge. The effect was to pin the bike to the ground, resolutely upright. Getting off, it was obvious it wasn't going to budge easily. It was all very, very funny to the driver and his mates, at least until the lights changed. Not that I was in any especial hurry to haul the bike out. Surprisingly, the back wheel was no further out of true than usual.

8.The Courier: Summer 1998 – a bad day at work and a shooting in a strip joint (largely unrelated incidents). I was minded to work off some steam and oh, was I up for sprinting with the traffic. Except Shoreditch was gridlocked due to all the blue tape and flashing lights, even the exit road was choked to a stand still. But there was the bus lane, and a stationary Transit... Déjà vu?

A motorbike courier turned across the queue for an alleyway. I was at full pelt, running into the side of the motorbike, throwing him over, and me over my handlebars and his. Somersaulting / rolling

between two iron bollards, I landed flat on my back in a gymnastic feat years of PE had failed to coax out of me. The courier sped off. My bike's front wheel was 'pringled' and forced back behind the down-tube, which had buckled with the impact. I had a slightly bruised pointy finger. Lucky. Stupid. Stupidly lucky.

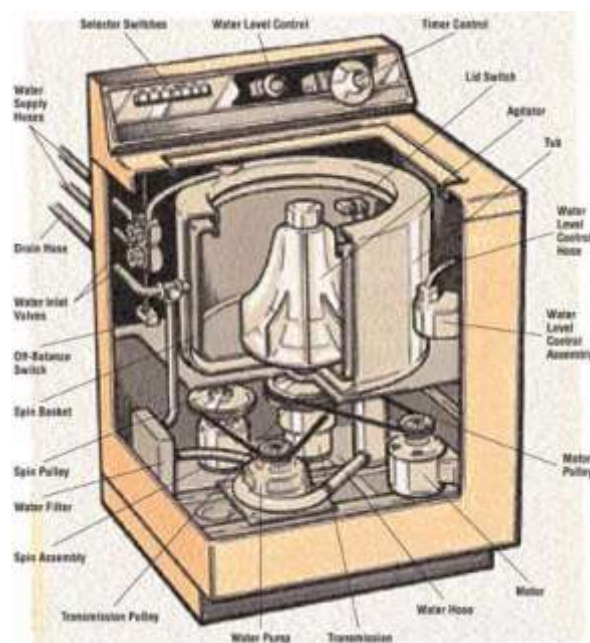
9.A Bike Sandwich: On entering Shoreditch: buses to the left of you, buses to the right of you, and a closing gap ahead; it is advisable to charge for the daylight as though a minicab is at your heels.

10. "Welcome to Hackney - Please Drive-By Carefully": Winter 1998 – The lights changed and the evening traffic shot forwards, leaving me standing as my initial sprint plateaued and the lights changed behind me. Suddenly I was in a scene from "Day of the Triffids", but without the killer plants. So, on reflection, nothing like "Day of the Triffids". Except it was Hackney, so it did have the air of a civilization in collapse, but I digress...

The street was suddenly clear of traffic. The problem was that, with no other traffic around, the cars on the side roads saw their various opportunities. One after another, like lemmings, or sheep; but big, one-tonne steel myopic sheep. The fourth car hit. He was very good about it; offered a lift home, which in London is practically an offer of undying friendship (or a prelude to a mugging).

11.The Slalom: Summer 1999 – it is not just cars that have the habit of springing out on you. Having been left behind by a pulse of traffic heading off from lights in central Stoke Newington, the pedestrians on both sides of the three-lane one-way High Street saw their chance to make it across. Individually it would have been possible to alter course to accommodate, but when twenty-plus step out from both sides it becomes the kind of problem normally reserved for computer games (think more 'Frogger' than

'Assassin's Creed', even in Hackney). The woman carrying the ironing board had practically stepped out of the script of an Ealing Comedy... Time to brake hard and wait for a bus to tail.



12.The 'Barnes Wallace': Summer 1999 – My Sunday "country" route out through Epping Forest took in the four lane Tottenham Hale gyratory (best done early or by tailing a bus) and then Walthamstow, a brief bit of A-road with some trees on both sides (the "Forest"), before negotiating a cyclist-mincing M25 junction, the North Circular Road and back through Tottenham Hale.

The Transit (spot the pattern?) on the Walthamstow garage forecourt could see a gap. OK, there was a bike in it, but I didn't count. It accelerated out, in a graceful arc worthy of a Lancaster over the Mohne, to slide seamlessly into the forest-bound traffic. The (unlatched) sliding side door was thrown out, back and open. The washing machine's tenuous grip on the steel deck failed to hold; it was "bombs away".

It is really surprising how far white goods can bounce when they get a wiggle on.

13.The Smallest Room: Winter 2001 – sometimes, even in the one place where you'd think you're at your safest, a cycling accident is still possible.

Continued overleaf....

The accidental cyclist...

The bathroom was the one room in the small London flat where winter turbo training was possible. The kitchen was in use and the rest of the flat was carpeted. Being indoors it got hot, especially in the later half of the sets. So in a cool down period it was natural to want to push the sash window up a bit more for the air. Unfortunately, I was at full stretch to reach over and the sash wasn't budging, so something had to give. The tyre skid mark up the wall took a lot of explaining.

14. Middlewich: Club-run Winter 2004 - coming back through Middlewich a van (Transit?) was attempting to pull out, the riders at the front shouted a warning and the van slammed to a halt. The group passed and behind us the van pulled out. Hard to know what happened next, but sitting at the right-hand rear position my rear wheel locked as the mudguard wrapped back on itself. This coincided with the van starting a "Close Encounter" overtaking manoeuvre. Hard to believe, but the only rational explanation I could find was that I'd just been buzzed...

15. "My left foot*": May 2005 – the second lap of my first Duks 50 coming down Gough's Lane. A car was parked halfway down on the far side and, as I approached, a Volvo hauling an animal trailer drew to a halt, as required. But this was merely a feint, and it started to pull out again. Fortunately I was off my tri-bars and managed to pull hard on the brakes. The force of the braking was enough to push my weight forwards, leading to the bike balancing on the front wheel momentarily before dropping back. I had come to a dead stop in the narrow gap between the driver's front wing and the kerb, with my left foot down to keep myself upright; a very close shave.

Having avoided a collision by inches I thought I'd got away with it, but the Volvo

decided to move off as soon as I was static, possibly to avoid the polemic I'd started to prepare and about 'effing right of way, the Highway Code, etc, etc. The car (just) cleared me without incident. With its wider wheel-base, the trailer tyres didn't. More comic than painful, but my race was over.

16. Ashton: Summer 2004, Ashton-under-Lyne – waiting at a roundabout in the evening. Bright, dry weather, I was sitting in the middle of the lane waiting for a gap to sprint into. A gap appeared, I tensed to go, but it closed as I watched. The car behind me ran into the back of me. "Sorry, I thought you'd gone..." I couldn't really argue (see 5).

17. "Rear Window": club run 2006-ish – I was on the front, and the half-day were heading down Boothbank Lane towards the M56 on the homeward leg of a Sunday run. We were moving at a fair pace, but not fast enough for the Range Rover that overtook us on the descent. Unfortunately a horse required him to brake rapidly at the bottom, forcing the group to a rapid halt.

The rider to my left came to a halt between the car and the verge. Not able to see whether the cause was a tractor, car or duck, I opted for the back of the Range Rover. I'd shed most of my momentum, so it wasn't too hard a landing, but I was thrown face-first into a momentary 'gurn' against the rear window before sliding down off it.

Despite invitations to come out and check his rear bumper, the driver seemed content to take the word of the sixteen-or-so cyclists that surrounded the car.

18. "U-Turn if you want to": July 2010 - a perfect summer morning; dry roads, warm weather, a slight tail wind and the open road ahead; twenty-five miles per hour or twelve yards per second (11m/s if you're metric), a lot can happen in a second.

The Clio was parked on the other side of the road, facing towards me or away (the

reports differed). However, with about 5-10 yards to go, the Clio sprang into motion and executed the start of a three-point turn across my path, using a driveway on my side of the road to nose into. I managed to yet a shouted “no” out and attempted a swerve around the front. I was hoping the Clio would brake and leave enough of a gap for me to negotiate the car and mount the verge.

It wasn't to be. I hit the passenger-side front wing. Tearing the car's front fascia off probably took a lot of momentum, but what was left was enough to propel me up and over the car without touching it further, landing helmet first on the pavement a couple of yards on the far side.

The lady was for turning.

How should I conclude this litany of cycling woe? I could leave them as a simple set of episodes to fill page space and raise a smirk of bike-handling superiority. However, in laying them out I might hope that I



have bounced off bonnets so you don't have to.

In most cases I'm comfortable that I had right of way. The law (if not the Law) was on my side; but that is cold comfort in the split second after impact and before the pain starts.

Some of these were down to bad luck, but I made my own luck (or rather, made it better or worse) by how I rode.

I've learnt the hard way that you need to look and listen closely to guess driver's intentions; to work out your exit route as situations arise; to stare at drivers to make them see you; to use speed judiciously (there's a time & a place); and to learn from your near-misses (to work out where you could have helped yourself).

So far, I've been lucky. But so far, it's just been luck. It only takes one car, or bike, or washing machine...

Diary dates

Don't forget, once Christmas is out of the way it's time to start planning your next season.

The trip to Cerrig is being organised again for those who prefer a more leisurely approach to arriving in Llangollen. Speak to John Carberry for more details about what's involved in enjoying the roads of Wales.

Different sorts of bikes might be involved at the annual dinner but it's still a chance to be sociable with your clubmates.

Dust down your DJ, party frock or Hawaiian shirt for February 11.

This year, tickets for under-18s are half price at £12.50. Sally Cowan and Karen Popplewell are ticket-sellers in chief but section “leaders” are invited to help spread the word – and the sales.

Easter (and we've not even had Christmas yet) will see a couple of sociable events on offer with a Good Friday run around Mobberley and then something equally gentle TBC and organised by the touring section on the Monday.

Easter Sunday will see the touring section's 50 in 4 run, which might appeal to newer riders who want to sample a longer distance or different company.

And much further ahead, but one with an early lead-in time, is the York cycle rally. The Seamons are usually well represented by the touring section but everyone's welcome.

There's always a great atmosphere and plenty to do on and off the field, with or without your bike. You just need a tent and sense of adventure/humour. June 23/24 for your diary but see John Carberry for booking arrangements.

What goes up

By Johnny Pardoe

One could say that this year's racing season finished on a high, high above Macclesfield on Withenshaw Hill, on a warm, dry October day. What a stark contrast to last year's soaking!

With a record entry of 35, including six former champions, four ladies and four juniors on the card, the stage was set for an intriguing battle.

Roger Haines kept the flag flying for the Touring section, while Joanna Blakeley just pipped Karen Popplewell by one second in the Ladies section.

Former Champion Tim Seddon tied with Rob Taylor and Ian Holmes for 10th place, while 1981 Champion Eamon Mallon – one of our “come-back kids” – tied for 5th place with last year's Champion Martin Wiggan. Other former champions, Ian Udall and Paul McAllister took 7th and 13th places.

Then came our flying Juniors: Sean Davenport in 4th place, Joe Lockett 3rd, and Jack Robinson steaming up to take 2nd place, only three seconds separating them. All three are showing great promise, and will undoubtedly be a force to be reckoned with in the not too distant future.

Then it was the turn of another former champion, Charles Carraz. This year a clear winner, eight seconds clear of the field in 2mins 42. Charles was heard to say: “I really wanted that.” A worthy champion indeed.

Then it was downhill all the way to compete for one of the most coveted of all the club trophies: the Freewheel. But not till Darren Buckley had rounded up the troops for possibly the largest traditional group photo ever at the top of the hill.

Founder Member Reg Blease led the free-wheel charge, stylishly cruising down the hill astride his gleaming Colnago, forcing



Charles about to become King of the Hill

Carol Pardoe to speedily relocate the chequered board much further up the other side than anticipated.

A stream of blue and yellow was then fired from the top of the hill one by one by Tim Seddon, while various photographers were poised to capture the action and varying styles.

Sally Cowan was clearly well chuffed at beating Karen Popplewell at last! Secretary Dave Hoyle relished his glory briefly, only to be overtaken by Keith Stacey, and then our Editor John Carberry, and finally by Tim Seddon, who had clearly been carbo-loading for some time beforehand, who swept over the line to take the trophy. More downhill to lunch at the Ryles Arms, which coped admirably to serve more than



50 members, and thankfully this year no need for the "mop" attendant.

A big thank you to all involved in the organisation of this very special and social club fixture; one of the few chances to get all the various sections together. And thank you Keith Bailey, Hill Climb Champion in 1992, for putting up the big prize.

Joanna Blakeley shows gritted determination

HILL CLIMB RESULTS

1	Charles Carraz	2:42
2	Jack Robinson	2:50 J
3	Joe Lockett	2:52 J
4	Sean Davenport	2:53 J
5	Martin Wiggan	2:56
=	Eamon Mallon	2:56
7	Ian Udall	3:05
8	Dave Williams	3:16
9	Phil Bridges	3:17
10	Rob Taylor	3:26
=	Ian Holmes	3:26
=	Tim Seddon	3:26
13	Paul McAllister	3:27
14	Warren Frost	3:28
15	Andy Swain	3:30
16	John Menzies	3:40
17	Joanna Blakeley	3:51 L
18	Karen Popplewell	3:52 L
19	Richard Goddard	3:54
20	Henk-Jan Zweers	3:55
21	Paul Barber	3:59
=	Rob Morton	3:59
23	Roy Myers	4:05
24	David Hoyle	4:12
25	Roger Haines	4:14
26	Liz Mtheson	4:15 L
27	Paul Lomas	4:20
28	Neil Rothwell	4:21
29	Chris Nash	4:33
30	Dan O'Hara	4:39 J
31	Jeanette Barber	4:50 L
32	Rob Gibson	5:43



Bob Richardson Memorial Run

By Johnny Pardoe

What a really impressive turn-out for Bob's run. A sea of blue and yellow on the banks of the River Dee, when 43-plus members descended on an unsuspecting Chester.



Most of the various sections were happy to be serenaded by the 1960s singalong music in the Blue Moon cafe while the half day section apparently found the best toast in Cheshire further downstream.

Meanwhile the touring section, which included Bob's brother-in-law and founder member, Reg Blease, were more than happy sedately lunching in the pub, where else?

Photographer JP was getting perilously closer to the river trying to fit in the ever larger groups – he is seriously considering taking swimming lessons as a precaution. Chairman Mike was almost beheaded by a very long boat being returned to the boat house. I won't mention helmets, Mike, but read on...

Carol meanwhile took full advantage of her occasional meetings with new member, Flying Dutchman Henk – he's been making a habit of flying down hills but not attached to his bike. Carol is trying to learn Dutch, and this week's lesson was the Dutch for "tailwind" = achter wind op de rug (?).

The tourists gather for the camera

No visit to Chester is complete without a visit to the Bike Factory just round the corner for a quick drool over the expensive machinery and clothing on display.

This resulted in a serious dent in the Pardoe's budget following the purchase of a waterproof for Carol's daughter, and a helmet – yes, a helmet – for JP!

The assistant tried to tempt JP into a pair of Rudy Projects that would make him look "cool". "A nice stocking filler," he said. "I suppose that would be around £120," said Carol jokingly. "Yes". Oh.

After a thorough inspection of some really top class machines I decided £4,000 plus was a little over my budget to update my retro Dave Lloyd, circa 1975.

As Martin Wiggan quite rightly stated in his excellent and graphic report on that other Seamons fixture steeped in club tradition – the Llangollen – the club is "pinging" at the moment.

Bob would have been justly proud.

See you Friday.



The Half-day group (above)



The Tempo group's two halves (above & below)



Bob Richardson

For those members who never knew Bob, he was a founder member of the club way back in 1948.

His original membership card (Member No.3) is on display in the club archive.

Bob was a true club-man and was actively involved with the club all his life, serving on the committee in various capacities, and was a former chairman and president.

He enjoyed all aspects of club life, including racing, weekends away, and thoroughly enjoyed the social side of his chosen past-time, and was passionate about the touring section.

Chester was one of Bob's favourite runs, and it was decided to make the Chester run an annual fixture in his memory.



National 12 hour championship

By Johnny Pardoe

In this year's event the Seamons enjoyed considerable success with six starters and finishers, including for the first time in the club's history, two ladies.

Robin Haigh finished in 9th place overall with a creditable 259 miles, and he also took 2nd place in the Veteran's TTA championship with a plus of 57 miles.

The club also took the team award in the veterans' section, made up of Robin, Phil Holden with 214 miles, and first-timer John Verbickas, with 212 miles.

Robin also took a medal for winning the 50-59 age group.

Back-up to the vets was provided by Malc McAllister.

Sally Cowan, riding her first 12-hour, set a new ladies' club record with 215 miles, only to have it snatched away at the end of the event when Karen Popplewell, also riding her first 12, came in with 236 miles.

This gives Karen the Manchester and District TTA Edith Massey trophy for fastest Manchester District lady.

Great first-time achievements from the girls. Karen and Sally backing up Robin to secure the Fastest Team from the Manchester District, and 2nd team prize in the open event won by the Port Sunlight Wheelers. The forthcoming M&DTTA lunch (last Sunday in January) could be quite a do!

Postscript. The event was won by Andy Bason, with a remarkable 302 miles. This would have been good enough to take Andy Wilkinson's record, but, unknown to him at the time, Geoff Jones of the Chippenham Wheelers recorded 305 miles in the Breckland 12, and Geoff finished half an hour before Andy did. What a cruel sport! The fastest lady on the day was former Seamons annual dinner guest of honour, Lynne Taylor, with 252 miles.



Karen Popplewell on to win the "Edith Massey"



John Verbickas - 12-hour first timer...

Three gentlemen near Girona

By John Hammond

Another foreign holiday for Seamons riders. This time it's Rosas at the top of Spain. John Hammond takes us on the journey.

The age old question when planning a cycling holiday: "Do I take my own bike or hire one out there?" was answered in part by the decision to take the European Bike Express. With its trailer nearly the size of the coach, it offered a journey through France (stopping for drop-offs/pick-ups all the way down), to Rosas a town situated on the Mediterranean coast in the very north-east of Spain.

There were three of us, and it soon became apparent it was a case of Hear no Evil, See no Evil, Speak no Evil.

When we woke on the coach after the overnight trip through France, I rubbed my eyes and asked Mike Brooks if he'd managed to get any sleep. Mike (Hear no Evil), replied: "Sweets? No but I've got some cereal bars."

Jim Grace (Speak no Evil), spent most of the week confusing the both of us with his own inimitable style of speed-speaking, and of repeating something more slowly and louder when not understood by the locals (with sometimes hilarious results).

Myself, with the sight in only one eye was clearly See no Evil!

Rosas, which dates back to 776BC, now has its share of hotels dominating the long sandy beach to the west of the old town, and it was in one of these hotels that we were staying; spending most evenings in the bar looking out across the Bay of Rosas, with the fishing boats bobbing on the calm Mediterranean.

Maps of the Catalonian region of Spain, we discovered by chance, are published by the Institute Cartographic of Catalonia (ICC), and an OS-quality 1:50,000 map of the area (donated kindly by a departing cyclists

area (donated kindly by a departing cyclists on our arrival) provided all the detail necessary to plan the routes for the week.

With only two main routes in and out of Rosas, to the west and north, we decided for our first day out, to head west and then south. This took us out through the predominantly flat agricultural coastal plain, planted mainly with olives and grapes.

A morning café stop in the coastal town of L'Escala, and then through Torroella de Montgri to L'Estartit for lunch. It was here that I was expecting to practice the few words of Spanish I had learned to order lunch, only to be greeted by a waitress with a strong Glaswegian accent: "Would that be cups or mugs?" she said; which, together with JOC's Restaurant clearly visible on entering the town, lead me to believe the Scots had arrived.

While on the subject of language, it became apparent that what was spoken and used here in Catalonia is Catalan, and Mike was finding that it wasn't quite the Spanish he had learned. Apparently, Catalan is the co-official language of the Spanish autonomous communities of Catalonia. The implication of this was that I could just about get by in most places using French, which suited me fine.

Day two, and in complete contrast, the route took us over the hills immediately to the northeast of Rosas, through the Parc Natural del Cap de Creus.

The road winds up to 1,000ft and back down to the unspoilt fishing village of Cadaques (this is the only road in/out). The village (called the jewel of the Costa Brava) is famous for being the birthplace of Salvador Dali and where he spent most of his years; here there is a museum dedicated to him. We didn't stop to go into the museum but went back up the pass and down to the

Continue overleaf...

Three gentlemen...

north then along the gorgeous coastal road to Llanca.

It's clear that there is heavy investment in the roads here. There are new dual carriageway bypasses being built, and yet on these roads and down to the majority of the minor B-roads, there are adequate and respected cycle lanes and drivers who seem to appreciate the cyclist. It was a similar story when we travelled northwest to Boadella into the foothills of the Pyrenees. For about 12 miles the small back road to Boadella was beautifully smooth, brand new tarmac, a far cry from the potholes of the Cheshire lanes.

The whole week was cloudless and 30 deg C (although there was a mini-heatwave in England at the time) and this was September/October, but apparently this isn't always the case for this region. There are the Tramuntana winds, similar to the mistral but accelerating as they pass between the Pyrenees and the Massif Central, which

lead to very strong winds from the northwest for up to 60 days a year (we were lucky).

The daily format was similar to the Javea holiday I went on earlier in the year: a morning coffee stop, a lunch stop, and a tea stop. It was very much a cycling holiday and not a training camp (although there was always the optional time trial before the evening meal on a the 10 mile straight flat road north of Rosas).

There's a lot to see and plenty of variety offered to the cyclist in this area of Spain. The coastal plain, with its well-surfaced roads offers fast time trial-type roads, but the opportunity every four or five miles to turn off into a village and get a taste of the real Spain. There is easy access to the hills of the Cap de Creus, and the more demanding foothills of the Pyrenees.

We only just scratched at the surface of what was on offer in the week we were there. We didn't manage to get to Girona this time, maybe next trip.

It was a great holiday with great company.

MDLCA delegate's report

By Carol Pardoe

The Manchester & District Ladies Association was formed in 1949 to promote ladies' racing, as in those days women weren't allowed to race, so the ladies formed their own Association.

We still have a role to play today 60 years on as ladies like racing with other ladies, and beginners build up more confidence not being outclassed by generally faster men, who as Sally knows, annoyingly pass you and shout "dig in!" when you ARE digging in! Also the ladies have more chance of winning something.

The ladies promoted their usual six events this year, and the invitation events were well supported by the men. If a lady doesn't

invite you we team you up with a spare lady, if we have one. It could be a nice surprise. Or not.

We have had our usual weekends away, Saturday rides with as many as 12 of us, and the now annual Beginners and more Experienced Women's weekend in June.

It is my particular pleasure this year, after six years as president of the Manchester Ladies, to have witnessed a great Seasons ladies team racing in our events, Sally and Karen being our BAR team winners, the 50 team winners, and Karen finishing a great first season as our Manchester ladies Best All rounder. Well done you girls.

End to end

By John Verbickas

It's a classic trek for tourers and the route of choice for super-long record-breaking rides: Land's End to John o' Groats.

This summer saw John Verbickas take on the challenge of the ride across Britain in a 10-day tour that started with every athlete's food of choice: fish and chips. Here's his diary.

It all started at the velodrome in early spring when my pal came up to me after a hard sprint session and asked if I fancied riding Land's End to John o' Groats. Love to!

The plan was for four people to ride: me, Dave Burke, his nephew James (21) and his pal Jamie (20). Ann, Dave's girlfriend would be driver and back-up.

Salford City Reds were to lend us an old minibus with some seats taken out for the bikes. After riding the Tour of the Berwyns and the Polka Dot Challenge, plus our normal club rides, I was ready.

Sunday, July 3: We meet at Dave's house in Worsley and pack all the gear into the minibus. We set off for Hayle, 345 miles away and have a good run down, changing every couple of hours.

The van is old but we made such good time going down we decided that we would go to Land's End and do a sneaky ride back to Hayle, where Darren Buckley and his family were enjoying a holiday.

We meet up at Land's End and do the official sign-in at the hotel. After our photocall, Darren cycled with us to Hayle via St Ives and fish and chips on the harbour wall.

28 miles, 2 hrs 10 mins in the saddle. Blue skies and warm. We stay at the Premier Inn.

Monday, July 4: Blue skies, warm. Hayle to Oakhampton via Truro, St Austell and Tavistock.

We meet up again with Darren at St Austell,



John & Darren Buckley begin...

he was waiting at the top of a long hill (I wonder why). After a Cornish pasty in town fills us to the brim, we set off again. There are very long drags but very fast downs and the moors were beautiful.

We had a good day in the sun and arrive at the Travelodge where Katherine had arrived to collect Darren. Darren says he's enjoyed his ride with us.

85 miles, 6 hrs 33mins in the saddle.

Tuesday, July 5: Oakhampton to Bristol via Taunton and Bridgewater.

It's a wet start to the day but dry later. It's a long hard ride through heavy traffic and we have a puncture as well. We arrive at our destination – Bridgwater Farm, Dundry, Bristol – via Cheddar Gorge. The B&B offers great digs.

104 miles, 7hrs 9mins in saddle.

Wednesday, July 6: Bristol to Ludlow via Hereford.

Cloudy but warm it is nightmare getting out of Bristol through heavy traffic and steep hills. The Severn Bridge was very windy and we were glad to get over it in one piece. More punctures today and I had become the repair man.

Continued overleaf...

End to end...

We arrived at our stop for the night, Ludlow Travelodge in pouring rain.

93 miles, 6hrs 32 mins in saddle.

Thursday, July 7: Ludlow to Manchester.

Windy and wet, this turned out to be our scariest day of the trip; on the A49 a Jaguar car came toward us on the wrong side of the road with the driver on the phone. He only saw us at the last moment. A real brown underpants experience.

We stopped at the Raven cafe at Preese Island to stock up and then on to High Legh where Jim Grace came out to meet us. It was great to see another Seamons rider!

On to digs which were our own homes.

105 miles, 6 hours 31 mins in saddle.

Friday, July 8: A rest day as rugby league reporter Dave has to cover a match. I had a massage at the Body Clinic, Hale. I wash all my kit. Great.

Thought of the first week: We worked well as a team; two young lads and two old farts taking turns on the front, mostly riding in single file as roads were very busy, waiting on hills (mainly for me), and Ann backing us up with the mini-bus and carrying all the gear, making us brews and then riding out to meet us on her bike at the end of some days.

Saturday, July 9: Manchester to Penrith via Preston and Kendal.

Dave's friend joined us for part of the day. Having rested up and with clean kit on, we were in high spirits but soon came down as four punctures and a dead battery on the mini-bus brought us back to earth.

Shap did me in; I thought it would never end. We arrived at the Penrith Travelodge after a hard day on the road.

101 miles, 6 hours 42 mins in the saddle.

Sunday, July 10: Penrith to New Lanark via Lockerbie and Moffat.

Showers and windy, this turned out to be the hardest day so far. A bad road surface for mile after mile felt as if we were getting hammered from the head down and from the feet up! Sore shoulders, hands and feet. We were glad to reach our digs at New Lanark YH; it was out of this world. A world heritage centre with a great meal at night and a breakfast to die for.

102 miles, 7hrs 13 mins in saddle.

Monday July 11: New Lanark to Crianlarich via Glasgow and Loch Lomond.

We have a dry start to the day but there's rain later. And we start with a puncture.

The Loch was dark and brooding, the road was poor and then: "Them". The midges. They were out in force. Up your nose, in your ears, your mouth. Nothing seemed to keep the off. Leg-warmers, arm-warmers, sprays. Take it like a man is the only solution that works.

We stay at the Crianlarich YH.

92 miles, 6hrs 20 mins in saddle.

Tuesday, July 12: Crianlarich to Fort Augustus via Fort William, with Ben Nevis in the distance.

Dark and windy today we were rolling along on good roads. It was too good to last. Three punctures and James' chain jammed. Bugger. Glad to get to our digs: Morag's Lodge YH.

85 miles, 5hrs 48 mins in the saddle.

Wednesday July 13: Fort Augustus to Dornoch via Muir of Ord and Loch Ness (no sighting of the monster).

We start with sun and decent roads but suffer yet another puncture. I'm getting fed up with all these repairs. There's a big attack by our Scottish midges but we find some peace at last as the wind changes direction. For the first time on the trip we were riding into a headwind and it was hard work. We had been so lucky to have had the wind behind us so far, but 30 miles into

the wind? We stay overnight at Trentham Hotel.

76 miles, 5 hours 33 mins in saddle.

Thursday, July 14: Dornoch to John o' Groats.

The sun was out, the wind had gone back to a southerly, we were on a high and rolling along. No punctures, hardly any midges and no mechanicals but three very hard hills. We even manage a little sightseeing: Broara Ranger and Wick Academy football grounds.

And then it's over the last hill and John o' Groats.

That night we stayed at the small youth hostel.

79 miles, 5 hrs 28 mins in saddle.

Friday July 15: Home

It's wet all day and we're feeling down as our adventure has come to an end. But we're still talking to each other and have bonded into a great little unit. It takes 14 hours to get home.

In total we had ridden 950 miles, more or less, over ten days (I haven't counted the first Sunday or the layover in Manchester). We averaged 14.7mph. The Bianchi did not let me down; no punctures or mechanicals, not even a sore backside or other areas.

The trip was a tick on my bucket list and was well organised by Dave and Ann. Many thanks to James and Jamie. (Did I mention Ann? She did most of the driving, feeding us, packing up, unpacking, sorting the van out, riding out to meet up with us when she could. Always a happy face and words of wisdom and comfort. Everybody

needs an Ann!)

I would also like to thank the Seamons for their support financial and otherwise. Sally for putting my messages on Facebook (I don't know how), Darren and Katherine; Jim Grace for taking time to meet up and have a brew, the Bike Shack in Altrincham and most of all family and friends for their support.

Technical details: This tour was brought to you courtesy of pedal power and a Bianchi 1885 Special Edition model. Aluminium frame with carbon forks, equipped with a Campag 52/39 chainset, Fulcrum 7 wheels and that most important Adamo racing saddle.

To End: The Christie benefited with a £950 to carry on their work for "A future without Cancer".

-

John Verbickas (below) at John O'Groats; just a six mile pedalo ride from Orkney.



End to end inspiration

By Johnny Pardoe

I have been an official RRA Observer (Road Records Observer) since 1958 when I witnessed Reg Randall breaking the single bicycle record of two days and one hour.

I was on a tricycle tour of northern Scotland with Nick Welch and, arriving at the John o'Groats Hotel we came across this weary, bedraggled little man slumped in a camp-chair, surrounded by his helpers, spare wheels, bottles, buckets and sponges.

When I realised what this little man had achieved I was immediately hooked on long distance record-breaking, and have witnessed nearly every End-to-End record attempt since.

That record, and subsequent record breakers, have had a profound effect on me, and was one of the reasons that inspired me to have a go myself – not as a record, I hasten to add! – although I did complete it in a week. It was Carol's "treat" to me to celebrate my 60th birthday.

Whether you ride at record speed or take your time, all those who have ridden it will tell you it is an unforgettable experience, magical and rewarding and tremendously satisfying.

Don't think about it too long – just do it!

The end to end that never ends

By Johnny Pardoe

John Verbickas now joins an increasing list of previous End-to-Enders in the Seamons: Stuart Kay, Dave Matthews, John Thorogood, John Carberry, Carol Pardoe (Altrincham Ravens at the time) with ten of her schoolchildren, aged 12-17, Johnny Pardoe, Dan Mathers on a tandem, and not forgetting the late George Arstall. He rode down to Land's End, did the ride to John o'Groats, then rode back home again in time for work after his annual fortnight's holiday.

Quite a few of the Seamons turned out to cheer on Olympic rower James Cracknell and Jerone Walters, making a bid to beat the tandem End-to-End record of 2 days 2 hours, set by Swinden and Withers in 1966, when the course was 873 miles; 31 miles longer than today, before the bridges over estuaries.

Cracknell and Walters passed through Cheshire on the Saturday evening, after setting off from Land's End at 3am.

They were one hour and 40 minutes down on their schedule at this stage.

JP, in his capacity as official observer, and Carol cheered them through Holmes Chapel, and more Seamons members turned out in Knutsford and at the Kilton on the A50 to give further encouragement to the riders on their long trek north.

They were eventually advised to abandon the attempt when the riders were clearly suffering from fatigue and sleep deprivation. They still had the notorious climbs of Helmsdale and Berriedale ahead, in the dark, and were fast running out of time.

A brave attempt – and not the first – to fail to beat an incredible record set up some forty-five years ago.



George Arstall

From the archive

By Johnny Pardoe

George was one of the hard men of the club, he never owned a car and so clocked up huge annual mileages in excess of 18,000 miles per year.

He was the club's first End to Ender back in the 50s, and toured extensively at home and on the continent, including, I remember, a tour of the Dolomites with me, Johnny Coles, Jim Boydell and the late Malc Judge.

On the racing front he was a well respected leading local rider at all distances up to and including 24 hours, which he rode five times. He was also a formidable climber.

George rode a ruby red and black Theo Parsons road/track bike with lovely chrome forks, a bike I drooled over in my younger days. It was another 26 years before I owned a bike with chrome forks, which I still love riding to this day.

George donated a trophy to the club, a trophy that all BAR aspirants compete for every year in the club.

I doubt whether his club championship records will ever be beaten:

- 7 times club president
- 5 times 24 hour Champion
- 3 times 10 mile champion
- 7 times 12 hour champion
- Holder of Chester and back record
- 5 times 25 mile champion
- twice 50 mile champion (2.39.21 in 1955)
- 6 times 100 mile champion
- 6 times club champion
- Llangollen thrash winner many times
- 6 times club BAR champion

George Arstall (above right) riding fixed in a club 25 championship circa 1966.



Wobbling around Europe

If your appetite for reading about other cyclist's adventures is not sated by the wonderful Squirrel, Neil Walton may be your hero.

He's just returned from an extended European tour and blogged about his exploits as he trundled around.

Your editor will try and include some excerpts next time for those who don't regularly tap into the world wide web but in the meantime his traveller's tales are available online at:

<http://wobblywalton.blogspot.com/>

Bits & bits

Dancing on the pedals

At the Seamons Open “25” riders were greeted by the sound of music coming from the HQ in Goostrey Village Hall. Riders in Lycra therefore had a choice of riding or having dance lessons – no takers for the dance lessons!

Big Apple or the hill climb?

Just to prove that the age of romance is not dead we hear through the grapevine that Keith Bailey treated Ann to a cruise on the Queen Mary to New York. Rather extreme measures to avoid riding the club hill climb Keith!



Bridging the gap

On the way out to the Hill Climb Johnny Pardoe spotted Brian Rourke and a rider in a green jersey sitting on a bank near Gaws-worth. He then realized that it was Sean Kelly, no less, who had punctured and Rourke was mending it... JP sped on to Fools Nook just in time to get across the canal bridge before it closed to let a boat through. When the Rourke/Kelly group arrived – it was the Brian Rourke Sportif – to

found the bridge still closed they had no choice but to shoulder their bikes and skip across the bridge. (photo to follow)

The ride raised more than £1,000 for Cystic Fibrosis.

Seamons show the way

There were so many riders in Altrincham at the start of the club run to the hill climb it could have been mistaken for a sportif. How proud the late Bob Hill and Bob Richardson would have been.

The Carberrys may have to extend their garage to accommodate everyone on their way to the Christmas hot-pot run this year. Don't forget: Sunday, December 18.

If looks could kill

It was observed on a Social section outing that Darren has extra powers beyond those bestowed upon a club run leader: he can stop traffic with a glance!

Descending Artists Lane and regrouping to cross the main Alderley Edge road riders were waved across by a car coming from the right. Wow, thank you.

Regrouping at the next main road crossing – the Knutsford-Chelford road – blow me; the car from the right stops again! Then finally at the end of Seven Sisters Lane crossing the A50 – yes! The car to the right stopped again! How does Darren do that?

Just when you think it's all over

So there's Robin Haigh thinking he could relax now at the end of the season, when he gets a call from Chris Siepen of Wills Wheels two days before the classic Johnny Helms Memorial Grand Prix, asking to partner him in the event.

Chris was listed on the start sheet as Seamons CC?!

At such short notice, they did a great ride

Mildenhall

By Carol Pardoe

On August Bank holiday weekend we went to the Mildenhall Cycling Rally again, camping on the field with hundreds of other cyclists.

It is a great weekend with Audax rides, cyclo-cross on the field, top class grass-track racing all weekend, pub quizzes

in the evening, barbecues and a cycle jumble sale – my bargain of the year was a long-sleeved Helly Hansen for a pound! John wasn't impressed when I wore it in bed – it was cold!

There are also trade tents with lots of bargains and good browsing, local WI tea and cake sales in the villages, and organised rides out in the Suffolk countryside.

John and I led a trike run through the Fens. If you think Cheshire's flat, try the Fens. A lot of sky!

On the run to the Prickwillow pumping sta-



tion we came across a unique weather forecasting system outside the cafe. It was a stone on a piece of string tied to a post with the following inscription:

If the stone is wet it is raining

If the stone is dry it is not raining

If the stone is white it is snowing

If the stone has a shadow it is sunny

If the stone is swinging it is windy

If the stone is not visible it is foggy

If the stone has disappeared there has been a tornado.

Bits & bits...

in the circumstances covering the 23-mile course in 53.03 to take 4th fastest. Perhaps we should sign Chris up (again?!). No, I didn't say that.

Our Tour of Britain hell

Nineteen club members were spotted on the notorious Gun Hill on a cool and blustery day, joining hundreds of spectators, there to catch a fleeting glimpse of a host of world class riders – including Thor Hushov, Geraint Thomas and Mark Cavendish.

The Seamons managed morning coffee on the way out, and lunch in Congleton on the way back, with one or two sprints thrown in, and the odd hill climb. Phew!

STOP PRESS: 22nd November

Sally Cowan & Karen Popplewell were presented with the MDLCA team BAR and 50 Shield at the MDLCA Dinner.

Karen Popplewell also took the MDLCA BAR championship.

Something tells me this was just the warm-up. Roll on 2012...

On the treasure trail

By Gail Carberry



I have only ever seen certain sides of the now annual bank holiday treasure hunt.

Some readers may recognise the sort of thing: husband vanishing for a two-hour bike ride ‘to collect clues’ when I thought we had agreed to clear out the garage together.

Or I have seen the end results, when people climb wearily off their bikes in the last pub garden, clasping odd bits of vegetation and photos on their mobile phones as evidence of their treasure.

So this year I thought I would try taking part in the treasure hunt itself and see the other side for myself.

By the time I got to the infamous Rackhams starting point with my bike there was a large group of club members, family and friends all getting sorted out into teams of three. While all the time not actually listening to John C in full-on ‘I’m in charge’ mode, handing out question sheets and giving us all directions out of town to the first clue.

I teamed up with Ros and Pete and we made our way out of Alti. Most of the traffic was sympathetic to the long line of sometimes wobbly cyclists making their way up

the main road and tackling a right turn to get us moving towards Dunham.

It was at this point I realised why I don’t normally bother with this side of the event as the weather turned all bank holiday Monday and it started to pour down. For once I was really pleased I had listened to the advice of The Husband and

had not worn jeans – denim never dries out.

As we settled into the rhythm of the hunt and started to get clues under our belts, most teams had assigned roles to their team members. Someone to be the treasure finder, someone to give directions or someone to fill in the answer sheet.

We were no exception: Peter knew the route and led the way, Ros collected treasure and produced chocolate to keep me motivated and I took photos of a line of geese. We have all got to play to our strengths.

After lunch of curry and beer in Lymm, the teams were spreading out so it was a bit of a shock to bump into Mike Brooks and Peter Coles at St Mary’s Church in Rostherne when we stopped to collect a clue. Who knew that George Duncan was buried there?

From that point it was only a few more clues until we reached the figurative “X” – the Railway in Mobberley – and could finally get off our bikes and eat chocolate and drink beer.

John C was in charge of marking papers this year and as each team staggered for-

Café corner

Updates from Café Queen

Our peripatetic purveyor of cosy corners and snugly nooks has been out on her bike again to bring us all some more recommendations.

Cafe Queen asks if you've tried Minshull's Garden Centre, near Crewe?

"Plenty of space for big groups, good food and good prices," she says. You can find it by the traffic lights very near Leighton Hospital.

"There's a nice lane round the corner on the main road beyond the lights, to escape the main road. It would make a nice short winter ride via Warmingham. Take your panniers – it's also a very good farm shop," adds the gilded one.

Meanwhile, out at Key Green, near Congleton, every second and fourth Wednesday morning in the month, you can enjoy coffee and homemade cakes by the pound at the Methodist Chapel. There's even a book browse corner, so Cafe Queen is recommending more panniers.

"Last time I was there it poured down and the ladies insisted I brought my bike inside.



Then they got a tea towel and proceeded to rub it down! Never mind me!"

Find it just off the A54 heading up towards Congleton, third left after the canal.

A third recommendation this time is Rudyard Lake.

Weekends only, mind, just at the back of the hotel by the edge of the lake.

Her Highness even offers route advice: "Nice big mugs of tea and sausage sandwiches. You can do a nice hilly route from Congleton and drop down, then follow the track alongside the lake to bring you out on the Leek-Macc road."

Nearer home, we're encouraged to remember Jodrell Bank.

"Nice and local, lots of space." (Groan) "Cyclist friendly, with a bike shed! And, of course, the telescope."

The final tip this time is for old stalwart Summertrees.

"New and improved, lots of room for big groups. Friendly efficient service with a nice downhill after," she says.

On the treasure trail...

ward with their answer papers to be marked and their treasure to be checked, grumbling about the final distance covered (25 miles for the record. Come on! For a family-friendly day out?) those that were already marked and halfway down their first pint pointed out that Dave Barker's grandson Sam had easily managed it...and wanted to cycle home again.

Finally, after a controversial decision on the date the houses at Bucklow Hill were built, Gordo and John Craig were declared the winners. The Best Effort award went to

Sam and Dave, while the family prize was won by the Lyons and the Buckleys.

By that time I for one was saddle sore and experiencing a sugar rush from all the chocolate so it was time to go home. (By train.)

Thanks to John C for taking time out to compile and write the clues and to all for taking part.

STOP PRESS: 11th December

11 Chelford Chicks lead out by Mother Hen (Carol Pardoe on a trike) won the M&DTTA team fancy dress prize.

Shorts & longs

By John Carberry

It seems as though logic has no place in the touring section and this was proved when discussion in the bunch turned to bicycle security.

The cynical reader might presume that because the section appears mostly populated by bearded, round, old people its members might be averse to spending money on the latest kit or trendy bike bling. Not so. We've got a fair number of titanium machines, hand-built and custom bikes, and some pretty high end finishing kit. Of course, if the faster sections didn't whiz past us so quickly through Hale, they'd see this and appreciate just how well turned out we all are.

Whether it's because so much has been spent on the bike itself or the bits that hang off it I don't know, but one member was overheard congratulating himself on how little he had spent on a lock.

"It was only £3. You can't go wrong with that," he swaggered.

Err, yes you can. In what other part of your life would you be pleased to have secured £1,000-plus worth of personal possession with a piece of kit that cost you less than a coffee and cake in Starbucks?

And proving that the adjective "discerning" best describes the tourer as consumer is the revelation of our runs demigod Pete.

All of his bikes are really nice, quality cared-for machines. But he saves a special pampering for his Sunday best ride.

An "original" Van Nicholas titanium frame, from when they were known as Airbourne, Pete has equipped it with the complete Ultegra (including an upgrade to ten-speed), ceramic rims and even a titanium seatpost.

But it seems something was still missing. Topping off his favoured mount he now has

a Brooks titanium saddle.

My eyes watered and dribbled into my open mouth when he told me the price.

"I got it cheap," said Pete, helping me up off the floor, "It was reduced to £211."

Clearly it was a bargain because a couple of weeks later another tourer revealed he'd got one too!

The value of good equipment was brought home to me when, for the second time, over-excited use of my frame pump resulted in my folding it in half.

I could pretend it's because I don't know my own strength but I think really it's because I spent about £4 on it a decade ago.

And I could tell just how long ago it was I bought it by the fact that most bike shops, even central Manchester's most reputable LBS, only stock micro-pumps now.

When I eventually tracked one down I pretended not to mind you much it cost. It better last longer than a decade is all I can say.

Still on the subject of pumps, there were two occasions in the summer when I stopped to help two random riders at the side of the road who had punctured but didn't have a pump.

One of them was riding a bike that would have cost well in excess of £2,000. Maybe he only had enough money left for a good bike lock?

Keeping up the Seamons end and showing the way for cycling camaraderie, super-generous Pete helped one of the riders out with a free tube. Graciously though, the rider who he gave it too offered Pete a fiver – all the money he had in his (very expensive) jersey pocket.

Considering we were outside the Mobberley beer festival this was ideal timing for us!

Time you ran out of excuses

By Ed Baldwin

Retiring TT secretary Ed Baldwin has some words of wisdom for would-be racers and trailers as they ponder the season ahead...

Sometimes in life there never seems to be a time when you are completely and utterly ready, whether it's preparing for an exam, going for a job interview, starting a family or just leaving the house to go on holiday. Are you ready to take part in a road race or time trial?

You might ask that of somebody new to cycling or the club and quite understandably you will get the reply: "No, I'm not ready yet," or "I need to work on my speed for a bit longer first," or "I'm worried that I will make a fool of myself" Oh, and another one: "I need to get a new bike first."

The more you think about it the more excuses the mind will make; there are thousands if not millions of reasons why we should not do something... and how do they make you feel?

As you get more familiar with cycling and get to know a few of the club members you are bound to meet with some of the people who take part in the events cycling has to offer. You will ask a few questions: how was it? Were you sore or tired? You might think "I will do one of those one day, as soon as I am fit enough and ready" and so on and so on... But the excuses will start to come, slow at first but soon with practice they will start to roll off the tongue at will.

Being involved with many of the time trials and races I have seen the other side of this. There are people out there who have seen the Nike adverts and "just do it", whether it's going to be part of their weight-loss programme or someone who watched the Tour de France yesterday and turns up on a shopper to do a club



time trial because they know they can't waste a minute and have just got to make a start right now!

Making that decision to ride the next possible event could be the best decision you make.

Everyone I have seen at the finish line of their first event is glad they did it; they look exhilarated, thrilled and full of beans (and sometimes a bit puffed out, to be fair).

Look at the positives. Firstly, you have ridden your first bike race; done, dusted and out of the way. That is pretty cool in itself and at the very least it's a story to tell your mates.

Secondly, it puts down a marker, it gives you a starting point to measure your progress. This gives a new focus to your riding and you now have a new motivation to keep up your fitness levels, in turn giving you more chance of success.

Thirdly, more understanding in the types of riding disciplines enhances the enjoyment of watching cycle events – you've now been there, you can empathise with the pros.

They all started with their first event. Start Now!

SEAMONS' LADY BICYCLISTS

A Squirrel ILLUSTRATED guide

SEAMONS' LADIES enjoy taking afternoon tea whilst re-greasing their bearings and debating the merits of Signor Campagnol



Should a chap ever find himself in a spot of bother

NEVER FEAR

SEAMONS' LADIES are at hand
But remember your manners...

Hats off, chaps!

SEAMONS' LADIES are *bonnes vivantes*, but ladies, *decorum* please !!!

REMEMBER

No shoulders show for the

CTT



Illustrations courtesy of
Mr Berners-Lee



Defining the Seamons way

The club committee does more than look after the finances and logistics necessary to keep us organised, it also tries to keep an eye on the bigger picture.

Discussions and topics from the runs often find themselves being rehearsed and re-visited when the committee convenes.

It was one such debate – what does being a Seamons member actually mean for people – that resulted in what you are about to read.

It's meant to be more than a statement of intent; it's a manifesto, a description of club standards and behaviours. They are not rules but they are expectations.

The committee is just the guardian of the club, it is not the owner – we are all the owners of the club.

If you have any comments, additions or suggestions on the statements let someone in the committee know. They are not

set in stone but they can be the basis for setting a different type of “club standard”.

- The club welcomes everyone and will respect and treat them equally.
- Members are expected to observe and respect the Highway Code, treating other road users with the respect they would themselves expect.
- When you are wearing the club kit at any time you are representing the club and are responsible for its reputation.
- The club can only exist and be successful through the commitment of its members. All members are expected to actively contribute to club life
- Seamons Cycling Club is not run to make a profit. Surplus funds will be allocated for the benefit of current and future members, or to the development of cycling in general
- The club is managed by an elected committee that is accountable to members at all times. Members will elect their committee at the annual meeting.
- Committee members and others give their time willingly in relation club activities. Apart from occasional agreed and necessary expenses, there will be no financial remuneration for any activity undertaken.

Members Subs

Members are reminded that their annual club subs are due on January 1, 2012 – but you are more than welcome to pay beforehand if you wish

Riding members are also reminded that it is a club rule that you be a member of CTC or BC. Triathletes are covered by membership of BTA.

Membership secretary Mike Brooks receives a monthly list from BC, informing of lapsed membership. There are a couple of Seamons riders on this list; maybe they have joined CTC?

Please contact Mike with your subs, including something which can show you're a member of the respective organisation.





CLUBS RUNS LIST

	Half day	Tempo	Touring	Social
8 Jan	Beeston	Rose Farm	Higher Poynton	Wizard, Alderley Edge
15 Jan	Delamere	Beeston	Beeston	Whatacroft
22 Jan	Meerbrook	Congleton GC	Delamere	Dones Green
29 Jan	Two Mills	Aquaduct	Gawsworth	Delamere****
5 Feb	Dagfields	Summer Trees	Alsagers Bank	Pott Shrigley
12 Feb*	Astbury	Astbury	Frodsham	Spinney, Allostock
19 Feb	Whitchurch/Prees	Delamere	Mow Cop	Henbury
26 Feb	Rose Farm	Two Mills	Spenn Green	Astbury
4 Mar**	Llangollen	Meerbrook	Cerrig Weekend	Lach Dennis
11 Mar	Blaze Farm	Tattenhall	Church Minshull	Middlewich
18 Mar	Tattenhall	Blaze Farm	Common Barn, Rainow	Spinney, Allostock
25 Mar	Meerbrook	Elvis Cafe	Audlem	Poole Marina****
1 April	Congleton GC	Nantwich Marina	Meerbrook	Pott Shrigley
8 April***	Buxton	Dagfields	Easter 50-in-4	Wizard, Alderley Edge
15 April	Summer Trees	Congleton GC	Buxton	Whatacroft
22 April	Radway Green	Buxton	Chester	Dones Green
29 April	Longnor	Rose Farm	Paddock Farm	Beeston****

Cover image:

RF's Bike by David Evans

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<http://www.wendyjlevy-art.com/artists.php>

* Following the Annual Dinner on Saturday night

** Llangollen

*** Easter Sunday

**** Last Sunday of the month the Social runs are longer and are not advisable for less experienced riders.

Nuts

By Lomas

