

News for May 2009

Tuesday 5th May. The third of our longer Tuesday rides series got under way with eight riders starting at the Burrow Mump in Somerset with Sue Britton leading proceedings. After a dismal bank holiday Monday the previous day the weather was a big improvement with various shades of grey clouds but no rain as we crossed the levels through Langport and onto Somerton where Mike Titterton joined as we took a coffee stop. The terrain changed to rolling hills as we continued through the Charltons, past the motor museum at Sparkford and onto the Bull at Hardway for lunch. A fine meal, eaten "al fresco" although a bit on the pricey side. George entertained us with cycling stories from the fifties of club riders in a group of thirty riding the main roads on a 150 mile training run, and the landlady at Porlock Weir who kept offering tea and biscuits and then tried to add it to the bill - she wanted six and sixpence but they refused to pay more than five bob.

Then it was back via a tea stop at Glastonbury to end a sixty eight mile day with no rain, no punctures and smiles all round. Good to see Brian Trott back in the saddle for the whole trip, not recovered yet but certainly improving.

Thursday 7th May. A select group of ten (I don't know who selected them, somebody with a sense of humour) met at Ashton bridge for the ride to Port Zed. With John Killick not back to full fitness yet, John Upward took us through the lanes around Nailsea and Kenn Moor that you would never stumble across otherwise and along the edge of the Bristol Channel in the sunshine through Clevedon to the Windmill pub at Portishead. Another half dozen joined at the pub which was as efficient and good value as usual - although no riders from the Bath area today.

After lunch we rode into the town and waited at the red traffic lights as a red-faced motorist barged his way into the group fretting that we were "holding him up". He did not seem to realise that without us there he would be about 20 feet further on behind the same two cars in front. Mr Nit-Wit turned right as we turned left and took a route past the Marina and nature reserve before joining cycle route 26 and passing the Portbury car park before the general split-up by the Avonmouth bridge.



Thursday 14th May. Alan Hayward volunteered to lead today's ride so naturally chose his own local area. Alan started the day by cycling from Chepstow to Rexam, then leading the group back to the Severn Bridge to pick up some more before leading a dozen riders up the main road as far as St Arvan. We then went West of the river climbing on some quiet lanes through woods where the bluebells spread in a mist (go easy on the poetry - Ed) and then a long descent past the Ravensnest fishing ponds and into Tintern.

Lunch was at the Anchor pub next to the abbey. About two dozen cyclists dined well at the pub, good service and a fine choice of ales - plus Westons traditional cider. It was a wrench to leave.

Some took the direct route to Bristol down the main road but Alan had a route planned for us taking in the climb out of Brockwier to Hewelsfield Common, right onto the St Briavels to Chepstow road and then taking a left turn towards Boughspring on almost traffic-free lanes rather than the B4228. At one point we stopped on a bridge which once crossed a railway and Alan explained that below was planned for a Sustrans cycle path which would join up with a planned new bridge over the Wye near Brockweir, designed by - Alan.

The weather had been dull but dry and not cold or windy, then as we got to the bridge at about three o'clock the rain started although not heavy enough for over-trousers. Another fine day on the bike. See the photo gallery for some pictures from the day.

Tuesday 19th May. Working on a route originally planned by Tony Conibear to pass five breweries, Alan Partridge cut out some of the main road mileage and two of the breweries to make a fine tour of the Cotswolds. The forecast must have put many off as only six starters met at Northleach but it was dry, although dull, as we took in the delights of Bourton on the water, Lower Slaughter and Upper Swell before a coffee stop at Batsford Arboretum. Onwards through the frenzy of market day in Moreton in the Marsh we were soon back on quiet lanes through rolling hills, across the infamous ford where Winona took an early bath on last years ride and stopped for lunch at Hook Norton.

Next to the Hook Norton brewery is the Pear Tree pub which was our lunch stop. A fine traditional village pub serving good meals and of course, the whole range of Hook Norton beers, the Old Hooky was a treat. By now the sun was out although it was too cold for sitting outside.



There were more nice cycling lanes after lunch but by Chipping Norton the threatened showers arrived and we had a wet journey to Burford where we dripped on the furniture while drinking tea. For the final leg back to Northleach the rain had stopped although the roads were soaked as we cycled the Windrush valley as far as Sherborne then took a left turn and passed Eastington. A man having a quiet fag outside the pub in Northleach market square was press-ganged into taking a group photo for us. Sixty Eight miles covered and another successful day - despite the weather.



Thursday 21st May. Today's event started from Bitton railway station, with twenty riders meeting there. The railway company's buffet serves all-day breakfast every day from 10:00 a.m., so our 10:00 start meant we were forced to ride away on empty stomachs. Still, the Bell at Yatton Keynall was beckoning, so we rode on

under John Bishop's leadership. The route to lunch took us via Wick and Doynton to today's hardman (and woman) test up Dyrham Hill. Dennis was at the top to record everyone's struggles on film. No significant straggling was noticed, and then we moved on, through Castle Combe (where some tourists seemed impressed by our examples of being exceptional athletes), and arrived at the Bell at Yatton Keynall at around 12:00.

Forty three riders assembled for lunch. A good choice of food was on offer, and your correspondent can report that the bacon and mushroom baguette and chips was an excellent basis for the afternoon's ride home. Any technology fans out there might like to join the Bell's appreciation society on Facebook (or not).

The only rain of the day appeared when we were preparing to leave the Bell, and this was soon replaced with sun which shone most of the way home, going through Grittleton, then north of Dyrham Park to Pucklechurch, from where we went our separate ways home.

Thursday 28th May: This was the 2nd in the series of summer motorised rides. The attraction of this ride from Cheddar, which starts from a cafe, is that you can ride to the start from at least the southern parts of greater Bristol. It's also a rather flat ride around the Somerset Levels making it ideal for tailoring your own 'longer ride'. So it was rather disappointing to only have 8 at the start this year, 5 riders and 3 drivers. We did gain another rider at the pub as John Upward had made a diversion via St. Johns Street cycles in Bridgewater in search of some wheel refurbishment components, (anguished tale of spokes at £1 each). Alan Partridge and Martyn Hallet having ridden from Downend, Tony Conibear from Yate who was joined by Ian Fulcher at Whitchurch (on trike), and it was good to see Ricky Hurd out again having ridden from Binegar. Malcolm Hanson added a new dimension to the motorised theme arriving with folding bike strapped to motorbike.



The weather forecasters had been banging on all week about the fantastic fine weather that was heading our way for the weekend, although Thursday was predicted to be dry, warm but rather cloudy. So it was a pleasant surprise to wake up to a sunny morning with only a little cloud. All that changed for those riding and driving over the mendips in a rather thick mist at the higher levels. It was clear by Cheddar.

Brian Trott who had organized this ride was still not fit to ride and handed over to Tony Conibear, who with map and occasional local knowledge corrections from Ricky Hurd managed to lead us to lunch at the Red Tile, Cossington. Brian appeared once on route as a sort of hidden audax control to make sure we weren't cheating.

As is generally the case on all Thursday rides the numbers were swelled at pub by the Bath and Clevedon groups. Cyril also made a grand entrance having driven Mary out for lunch, selling a few more rides lists in the process. In total we provided the landlord with 23 hungry and thirsty customers who returned the complement with good food and service.



The ride back to Cheddar was not without incident. Alan suffered his second puncture of the day near Shapwick. A rear to add to the front he had on the ride down to Cheddar. Such events are generally welcomed by the rest of the group who have a rest, drink and chat and provide mostly unhelpful suggestions to the victim of the puncture fairy. Only this time it wasn't down to the PF as visibility of the casing fabric of a Continental Gatorskin revealed. Surprisingly and with good fortune, the application of a large patch to the casing survived all the way back to Downend. More business for Wiggle.

Ricky was a bit miffed that we failed to stop at Sweet's cafe, near Westhay, but it was rather soon after lunch. Some riders detached at various points approaching Cheddar for more direct routes home. Those riding home back up the gorge were greeted by blue sky and sunshine for a pleasant late afternoon ride. An excellent day out.