

News for March 2010

Bob Wyatt dies aged 82. Bob was a keen member of the BTOTC long before I joined. There are some notes from Cyril in the latest programme telling how he had always been a keen cyclist until ill-health curtailed his enjoyment. Geoff Roberts adds a few more details: Bob met up with Gordon Lee in September 1995 and joined his first BTOTC ride in September 1997 when they had lunch at the Royal Oak, Leighterton after cycling from Sherston, Shipton Moyne and Westonbirt. His favourite venue was the Bell at Yatton Keynell where he liked to chat up Ann, and the Dolphin at Bath where he met with the "easy riders". Bob met one of his old climbing friends at the Ring O'Bells, Hinton Blewitt after many years - Ricky Hurd.

Thursday 4th March - report from Bill Balchin: Do you ever look at the "Leave a message" section of our website? Tony Weaver recently posed the question - Do cyclists wearing yellow tops belong to a jaundiced, grumpy sub-section. Personally, I would say that a grumpy cyclist is one who could complain about today's ride to the Lamastide at Brookend from Rexam. OK it was a bit cold and there was a bit of wind but with dry roads, bright sunshine and clear skies it was great to be out on a bike. Tony (that man again) planned a super route through Tytherington, Cromall, Damery, past Michael Wood and into Stinchcombe. I had already planned to use the same route later in the year when we go to Slimbridge in July. We turned left at Stinchcombe church (I will be taking you right here) to the A38, crossed over through Breadstone and Wanswell to arrive a couple of minutes before noon. Despite a group of twenty four starters we managed a safe and uneventful journey.

As usual several more independants joined us at the Lamastide and the pub was pretty well full. But they coped well, the meals were tasty and reasonably priced, and the Wye Valley bitter that I tried was so good I was obliged to drink two. The peloton for the homeward trip was even larger than the outward journey. Unfortunately I didn't get around to a head count but it must have been over forty. Back into Berkley we took route 41 at Ham and into Rockhampton ready for the big divide. If we can maintain this standard, 2010 is going to be an excellent year.

Thursday 11th March - report from Bill Balchin: In the week where a stage in the Paris - Nice cycle race (the race to the sun) was shortened due to snow and Barcelona had snow for the first time in forty years, our weather stayed with the recent trend of bright clear skies, dry roads and bitter cold. There would have been sixteen starters at Bitton but Ian Fulcher arrived early on the trike and decided to toddle down (or is it up) the cycle track towards Mangotsfield, expecting us to come along and catch him up. Wrong! John Tyler lead us in the Bath direction to the end and continued along the river bank into town. There must be dozens of permutations to get through Bath. Today we turned along the river to Pultney Wier, wriggled through a couple of streets and across Henrietta Park before coming out near the traffic lights by the start of the

canal towpath. Turning off at Bathampton, over the toll bridge anyone feeling the cold soon warmed up on the climb of Bannerdown. Through Colerne and we plunged down into Ford and turned right onto the A420 to the crossroads taking us left into Yatton Keynell.

We saluted Jane at the pub who, along with Sue Hawkins and Sally Pearson, have been honoured by the national CTC in recognition of their hard work with the Get



Gorgeous Challenge. Very well deserved, but with the amount of stuff that Jane does for cycling she should be getting awards every week. Over thirty were at the Bell, including some of our friends from Bath, but not counting half a dozen chaps around the

seventy years of age mark who were the Westinghouse Old Boys (or Wobblies as they are known locally). Unaware that we would be there, they often cycle to the Bell from Chippenham. Once back outside for the homeward leg the sky had clouded over and the temperature had dropped noticeably. No time for lingering as we headed to Littleton Drew losing the Winterbourne Wheelers as they headed to Acton Turville and the main peloton went through Burton and split up again by Tormarton. A nice day out - but could we have it a bit warmer soon please.

Thursday 18th March - report from Bill Balchin: I wondered what was going on at the Ashton start with lots of mobile phone calls being made. Only then did I discover that our planned destination of the Queen Adelaide at Blagdon was closed and we were now going to the Hunters Lodge by Priddy. Sorry if you ended up in Blagdon, John was trying to call as many people as possible who were not at the start.

Jane was the leader for the eleven strong official group. How can such a nice lady be hiding such a sadistic streak as she took us along Yanley Lane, A38 for bit and then up Dundry Lane. Everybody was glad of a rest at the top, but when we got going again we lost the leader somehow. Eventually we were all reunited at the crossroads and went straight over into East Dundry Lane then took a right dropping into Norton Hawkfield then on through Stanton Drew. On the lanes to Bishop Sutton there were almost continuous shouts of "hole" and "big hole" as we dodged the potholes, puddles and loose gravel. Right onto the main road to the farm shop we turned left towards Coley and Greendown and Priddy. What with the hills and the confusion in Dundry we did not arrive at the pub until 12:45 where another eight or so cyclists were already inside.

The Hunters Lodge is favourite with walkers and potholers. You could believe you were back in the fifties inside - no fruit machines, television, carpets, soft chairs - in

fact a real traditional pub. The Cheddar Ales Potholer straight from the barrel was excellent. The cloudy scrumpy won praise from those brave enough to drink it. Meals were simple but tasty, filling and cheap, although no chips available. You could have a pint and a bite for six pounds ten pence. We finally dragged ourselves back outside where the wind had increased and temperature decreased by two o'clock. Luckily the wind was generally behind us now as we went through Priddy and plunged down the Wellsway. On dry roads and with good visibility you could give yourself a real buzz descending. Past the lake and on to Chew Stoke the Bristol riders peeled off as the rest continued to Chew Magna.

Most took the Norton Hawkfield route but I continued on my own through Norton Malreward which I prefer as it is one big hill instead of two medium ones. After Queen Charlton that horrible rough road into Keynsham has been resurfaced now. Onto the cycle track at Bitton, I was nearly at Mangotsfield with the rain was getting steadier when I saw a sad looking lad with his mountain bike upside down. Decision time: it is raining, time is getting on, what do you do? "Are you managing?". "No, not very well". Hmmm. So I had a look, he had his chain jammed between the outer and middle chainwheels. After a rebuke for letting his chain get rusty we started to try and get it free. After about ten minutes, Berry arrived with some more tools and after Berry had given a much sterner rebuke over the lack of chain lube we managed to use a spanner as a drift and a rock as a hammer and un-jam his chain. Maybe in forty years time the BTOTC will gain a new member - if he remembers to get that chain oiled.



Thursday 25th March - report from Bill

Balchin: Another day when the forecast was for a cold start and rain later. It did not bother the eighteen starters at Rexam ready for the ride to Hawksbury Upton with Tony Weaver leading the way. It would be a challenge to make a suitable route for a pub not too far from the start - but Tony was up to it. Into Winterbourne and past Hicks Common we were warned by Alan Bracey about the poor road surface over the Damson Bridge - dead

right Alan, it's a shocker. Past Kendleshire golf course and we took the cycle track by the railway line into Westerleigh. As the photo shows, some sections were like an assault course but generally it was OK and with the sun peeping out it things were going fine. Up Wapley Hill then left and left again into Doddington we joined the Badminton Road up to the traffic lights by the Cross Hands at Old Sodbury then straight across for a loop through Badminton and Little Badminton (the obstacles on the cross country course for horse trials looked pretty fearsome) and into Hawksbury Upton for lunch at the Beaufort Arms by noon - all except Tony who picked up a puncture in Little Sodbury (WRONG! it was in Badminton - Ed), and Alan and Reg who kept him company. A very enjoyable ride on a route with some different features.

The Rexam starters had phoned in their food orders earlier and been given the secret password of "pre-ordered" (well it's not secret now is it - Ed) but several

independants, a large crowd from Bath plus a party of fifteen non-cyclists kept the staff busy. I am always ready for a drink but I must say that the Dursley Steam Bitter was like nectar. A nice meal and by the time we were ready to leave the forecast rain had started - although not too heavy. I rode directly home over Inglestone Common with Alan Hayward on his way back to Chepstow and the rain did not come to much. I hope your trip was as good as mine.