

# News for December 2009

## **Christmas lunch, Thursday 3rd December - Report from John Turton and Bill**

**Balchin:** The ride from Mangotsfield started off with 10, but that reduced to 9 after 50 yards when Martin punctured again and went home for another bike! What lengths some people will go to. He still caught us up at Littleton Drew. Lost Tony on the run-in to Luckington (did he survive the ford?) He made it ok, though. Return journey was uneventful, but nice uneventful. Six of us left the pub and went via Badminton, etc with showers, some sun and a strong wind in our face. Fairly normal, eh? Good

meal, good company, and a good time had by all, I hope. Cheers, John Turton.



The Old Royal Ship at Luckington did us proud for the seventh year in a row, providing a tasty Christmas lunch for a hundred and three of us. By 12:30 only a hundred and two had arrived - no names, no pack drill

but the last man eventually arrived (he had not been unexpectedly sent to South Africa after all) and was actually the first to be served with his lunch. Many thanks to John and Berry for the organising, and you looked splendid in the bow ties. On that note I must mention the ladies who came by car instead of bicycle and looked extremely glamorous. Well done to those who rode to Luckington, not only the official party but several others making their way from home either on their own or in small groups. It looked like a nice ride on the way out, but I am not so sure about the homeward trip in the wind and showers while full of turkey. Dennis was busy passing out copies of the DVD record of the last twelve months and looks on target to make another sizeable donation to Southmead Urology department. Another successful day for the BTOTC.

## **Thursday 10th December - report from Pete Campbell**

When you're riding in December you have to be prepared for any weather the Met Office chooses to throw at you. But our trip to a new lunch stop at Charfield coincided with the weather men going to sleep. There was no rain, no wind, no snow, no fog. All they could come up with was all-day sunshine.

John Bishop phoned the lunch order for the twenty four riders to the Pear Tree before we started. We had a low-lying sun on our backs as we went north from Rexam. We

reached Tytherington where Dawn took over as leader and guided us up Baden Hill, past the north side of Thornbury and through Rockhampton. Blue sky, long shadows and an easy pace was making this one of those days when its a real pleasure just to be able to get out on a bike. Eventually we crossed back to the east of the M5 and rode up through Michael Wood. A complete change of mood with dripping wet woodland and the river flowing strongly. You could tell there'd been a lot of rain lately.

The Pear Tree at Charfield turned out to be a good choice for lunch. There was enough room for us (spread through the two bars). We were offered a cut-down version of their normal menu, which included baguettes with various fillings and chips, various main courses and chips, and a vegetarian option. Service was prompt and the food and drink was good quality. Seems like a good place to stop in the future. (You can see their page on the Charfield Community web site at [charfield.org/the-pear-tree-inn](http://charfield.org/the-pear-tree-inn).) (that is a bit out of date now Pete, the new one is at <http://peartreecharfield.webs.com/> - Bill)

Riding home the sun still seemed to be in the south, so this time it was in our eyes. We took the road to Wickwar and then crossed and recrossed the railway line as we rode towards Iron Acton and onwards to home.

So, what have we learned from today?

1. All you need is a bit of sunshine and the world is better place.
2. The Pear Tree at Charfield is a good choice for a lunch stop.
3. A month of rain leaves Gloucestershire full of wet and muddy lanes, which easily transfer their contents onto any passing cycles and riders.
4. Dennis has one or two unsold DVDs of this year's rides which you really need so that you can see yourself in action and prove to your friends and family that you really do still know how to stay upright on a bike.

#### **Thursday 17th December - report from Bill Balchin:**

If you had been saving your winter kit until it got *really* cold, then this was the day to



use it. There was bright sunshine but temperatures just over freezing (thankfully no ice) as ten of us assembled at Bitton waiting for John Bishop to lead the way to Clutton. While we waited a couple of PCSOs were handing out special stickers that you can write your postcode on and attach to your bike to reclaim it should it be stolen and

recovered. I am not sure what prevents the thief from peeling the sticker off. The PCSOs did not bat an eyelid when they asked Malcolm how many bikes there were in his household and he replied "twelve". At 10:15 John arrived and reminded everyone else that the programme specifically states that December and January rides start at 10:15. As the rest of the year seems to be a nominal 10:00 meeting time and 10:15 getaway I am not sure what the difference will be in practice.

John and Mike Chouings decided to share leading duties, and after agreeing a route we took off along the railway path as far as the Dolphin pub, over the bridge, through Twerton and onto the lane past the back of Newton St Loe to Farmborough. With the bright sun and crisp, cold air the views of Bath and across to Bristol and beyond were sparkling. After Farmborough we headed towards Timsbury then turned right to Clutton Hill arriving at the pub at 11:45.

Despite being a bit early for the Hunters Rest nobody complained as we warmed up and enjoyed their food and drink. I always think that the Hunters Rest is one of those "out of the way" pubs that you have to make a conscious effort to go to - could be dangerous with so many pubs going out of business. But as well as our eleven plus a similar number of independents there were several other customers as well. Good to see as they are on top of their game there with good service, good food and good beer. All too soon it was time to get back out in the cold for the homeward trip. Mike took us through Hunstrete, Compton Dando, Chewton Keynsham and back onto the railway path at Saltford. I hope you got back safely in the light. Although there was brightness in the sky out my way, a big black cloud made it dark and gave me a half-hearted snow shower in the last few miles before I put my bike away at 3:45.

**Thursday 31st December - report from Bill Balchin:** Last day of the year, and after a fortnight of ice, snow and rain news years eve was suprisingly good for cycling - cold without being freezing and roads pretty clear apart from several puddles. Only five assembled at the Rexam start for a trip down Hortham Lane, across the A38, down Fernhill into Moor Lane and straight on to Northwick. After crossing the M4 which looked very quiet we took the cycle path along the A403, detoured into Old Passage then Elburton, Littleton and on to the Ship at Oldbury just before noon where

Brian Griffiths and Bob had arrived a few minutes before.



The Ship does not usually open at lunchtimes so this was a special for us. It could have been

embarrassing if only a handful turned up but eventually with some individual cyclists and car drivers we were about fifteen strong. Not too bad for a mid-winter day when the main aim is to keep the whole group ticking over. Good to see Brian back on his bike after suffering knee problems which have resulted in the longest spell of non-cycling he has ever endured at over fifty days. Baguettes served with chips and salad were a popular choice - filling and reasonably priced. Old Rosie cider was another bonus although it had run out by the time some had gone back for seconds. There was even a bit of sunshine for the homeward journey. Happy new year and hope to see you all soon.