

News for July 2009

Stolen bike. Jane's Thorn bike with the Rohloff hub has been recovered by the police in Bristol. It is being held as evidence currently but then will become the property of the insurance company who paid out on it, although they have offered to sell it to Jane.

With Bristol becoming one of the country's "hot spots" for cycle theft we can only hope that the culprit is taken off the streets for a long stretch. I hear they have a suitable device in the Tower of London.

Tuesday Rides. When I first started going out with the BTOTC a couple of years ago there was a spin-off called a "longer harder ride" on some Tuesdays. I left them alone for a while but eventually came to realise that the "longer" part referred to time rather than distance and the "harder" was completely misleading. I often do more miles on a Thursday riding from home than a Tuesday driving to the start.

The format is to go somewhere different to your local area, ride to a coffee stop, on to a lunch stop (usually a pub), another coffee stop and back to the car (or train, or motorcycle in some cases). The schedules are in the "upcoming events" on this website and also in the printed programme. The photo shows the six on the 30th June ride at Bibury, a fine example of well preserved English heritage - and the buildings are not bad either.

Thursday 2nd July - report from Bill Balchin: Fifteen people turned up a Bitton, several with mudguard-less bikes in scorn of the predictions for heavy thunderstorms in the afternoon - it wasn't half hot though as Sue Britton lead off through the Golden Valley, Wick, Doynton and across the A46 as if going to Marshfield but then North for a bit as we prepared to turn East towards Castle Combe. It was here that an enormous bang sounded as Alan Hayward's rear wheel rim blew out causing an instant flat. Alan got on the mobile for his wife to drive to rescue, I hope you got together again OK.

We carried on through the lanes eventually coming to The Gib by Castle Combe and going straight across, under the M4 through Littleton Drew and on to Luckington and the excellent Old Royal Ship. It was nice to get out of the heat as we met up with a further thirty or so cyclists, but all too soon it was time to saddle-up and take Luckington Lane back through the Badminton estate, Old Sodbury and on home. I guess that we all made it home before the promised thunderstorms arrived - although the one at my house lasted all of ten minutes.

Thursday 9th July - report from Bill Balchin. Numbers are still increasing with twenty at Rexam for the ride to Wotton under Edge lead by John Huish. The sky was overcast and the temperature way down on previous weeks but it stayed dry as we cycled through Tytherington, Cromall, Damery and past the old Huntingford Mill. The futuristic looking house owned by one of the Renishaw directors is always worth a look as we rattled over the freshly surface-dressed lane towards North Nibley before turning into Wotton and the Royal Oak for lunch.

The beer prices seemed a bit more down to earth after paying over three quid a pint the previous week and the meals were delivered swiftly - although Berry and Hugh would disagree after their order appeared to have gone astray. Another dozen or so joined us from other parts of the area.

The homeward trip started unusually with a bit of downhill for a change, into Kingswood then Wickwar before people started to peel off for home. Those with Eurosport or Virgin cable were able to watch David Millar lead the Tour de France stage into Barcelona until getting caught in the final kilometre - with plenty of crashes on the wet roads. I am glad that ours stayed dry all day.

Thursday 16 July - report from Pete Campbell. Ten people met at the Radstock Co-op cafe for John Upward to lead us via Frome to lunch at Rode. The Co-op car park is no longer free, so the cars were parked by the Victoria Hall or the nearby free car park on Fortescue Road. Rain had been forecast, and for some of the morning there were occasional very light showers, as we passed through Charlton and Coleford. Then real rain started and most riders decided to use their rain gear as we approached Nunney, although a few tough (or maybe brain-dead) few kept with their summer outfits. But the skies dried out just as quickly, and we swept through Frome, passing some of the town's notable architecture - maybe we will give it more attention on another day. The only incident to note was the piece of glass on the edge of Frome finding Norman's front tyre.

We were pleased to find that the Cross Keys at Rode does excellent food. Various people tried the all-day breakfast, which seemed to come on an extra-large plate. I had what I must describe as a gourmet standard burger and chips - real meat, crisp chips, spicy relish - and accompanied by Fuller's London Pride. So we can certainly go back there.

Then a leisurely return to Radstock along the Colliers Way cycle path, a disused railway that (strangely) has a few hills. Half a dozen riders then adjourned to the Co-op cafe again for tea and coffee and got back to their cars minutes before torrential rain for the drive home.

Thursday 23 July - report from Bill Balchin: Fourteen starters met at the Cumberland Basin for Brian Trott to shepherd us through Long Ashton, Winford and along Thrubwell Lane into Butcombe. There were excellent views across the Chew Valley to the Mendips in the bright sunshine but safer to watch where you were going as we descended over the causeway of Blagdon lake. Maybe the Tour de France is making cyclists more frisky than usual but we took the long steep climb through Blagdon and straight on onto the top and on to the Queen Vic at Priddy.

This pub has had some flak in the past about serving meals, but apart from a rather long queue to place your order the meals were soon being brought out. No mean feat with over thirty cyclists turning up. I wonder why they don't operate some sort of number system for orders - there was almost a fight over who was faggot number one. After a pleasant meal and drink in the sunshine it was time to move on.

The splitting up for home started at the very first road junction. I stayed with the group heading for the Harptrees. There were a few spits of rain for five minutes but the water on the road down the Wellsway suggested that we just missed something

much heavier. It was a bit hairy on the descent - Mr Thatcher and his cider could have had a hand in that. By three o'clock I was on the cycle track at Bitton as a few more spots of rain tried an appearance but came to nothing leaving us with an excellent day's cycling in the sunshine.

Thursday 30 July - report from Bill Balchin: It is a measure of the esteem in which we hold John Bishop that seventeen riders arrived at Mangotsfield Station, on time, in the rain for a ride to a new venue at Great Somerford. We picked up several more on the route through Pucklechurch, Hinton, Burton, Grittleton and Stanton St Quintin as we splashed along the lanes to the Volunteer pub. This was a bit outside our normal area so nobody was quite sure how long the journey would take - but we arrived promptly at noon.



Now, I am a fan of pubs, drinking in them and eating in them. It is a sad day when another pub closes for good as several do each day. So I am happy to give my custom to a husband and wife team running their own pub, but I have to say that the Volunteer struggled when our group of twenty arrived, plus a few already there, plus some more later to swell the numbers to forty odd. Some meals did not arrive until after one-thirty so we ended up splitting the group for the homeward trip - after a quick group photo (left).

After the wet trip out it was a bonus to have sunshine and dry roads on the way home, shame about the headwind all the way but you can't have everything.