

News for June 2009

Tuesday 2nd June: This longer Tuesday ride had an unusual start when Malcolm Hanson arrived with his Dahon folding bike strapped to the back of his motorbike. It should have been a simple unfold and clamp to get started but somehow the folding mechanism would not allow the frame to lock in the straight ahead position. After some adjustment with the largest multi-tool I've ever seen the eight of us were on the road, Tony Conibear leading past Nelson cycles, along quiet roads next to a canal and onto Brecon cathedral tea shop for a brew and tea cake. The next section to Builth Wells provided the hardest work of the day up a 16 percent drag followed by a 25 percent drop where Denis was held up by cars that had overtaken him previously. Lunch was at the Drovers Arms cafe which had a good selection of Wye Valley ales in the cooler cabinet plus Gwatkins cider which was enjoyed by Bill and Denis. The second half began with a section of NCN 8 along the river Wye where we were grateful for the shade on the tree lined route, and into Three Cocks for an afternoon cuppa and hunk of cake at the Old Railway Line garden centre. Then back to Llangynidr and the cars. Although we were surrounded by hills, some clever planning kept the hard work to a reasonable level. Sunshine all day - who could ask for more.



Thursday 4th June: Numbers seemed to have been dropping-off lately but we were a twenty strong group as John Upward lead out from Ashton in the sunshine through Long Ashton, Claverham and Yatton onto the Strawberry Trail. As a nod to the democratic process on the day of EU elections, John offered a choice of routes part way along the trail. Either through the tunnel and a flat ride to Axbridge or turn off the trail and climb Shipham hill. Half a dozen took the hilly option including John Killick who is not back to normal after his pneumonia but was riding strongly on the day.

Then we all met up at the Lamb with another dozen or so who had made their own way there. Most had lunch in the garden and then a flat ride on the cycle track past Axbridge reservoir and a climb up Cheddar Gorge before people started to split off for home. Good to see Brian Trott out as well, trying a new saddle which had the largest empty space up the centre that I have seen - good for avoiding pressure where you don't want it.

See the Photo Gallery for some pictures from the day.

Thursday 11th June: Numbers are still increasing as twenty seven started out from Bitton station in superb bright sunshine for the trip to Hinton Charterhouse with John Bishop in the lead. After a trip down the cycle track to Saltford, the climb and drop to Stanton Prior, briefly into Marksbury and we were on a long descent through Priston. Climbing legs were soon required as we passed through Dunkerton, Wellow and a long slog up to Hinton Charterhouse.



The Rose and Crown is a pub I have not visited before. Pleasant enough although not too much choice in the snack meals department. The manager came out especially to supervise bike parking rather than allowing us to leave them all over the place as usual - he must have been tipped off from a previous pub. Good to see Alan Bracey who turned up by car, now walking with a stick after a hip replacement and hoping to be back in the saddle by August.

After the pub we rode through Freshford and took the tow-path of the Kennet and Avon canal into Bath, then cycle path back into Bristol. The weather was brilliant all day - crystal clear visibility. If anybody had come from hundreds of miles away to ride with us, they would have been delighted. As the song says - "Its such a perfect day, I'm glad I spent it with you". Check the photo gallery for some pictures.

Tuesday 16th June - report by Brian Trott: Numbers were well down for this longer Tuesday ride but they missed probably the best day of the year so far, a 25% price reduction for pensioners on the IOW ferry and some stunning views. A flat ride along the River Yar path warmed up the legs before the well graded climb out of Freshwater Bay along the old Military Road. It was possible to see westwards as far as the Jurassic Coast cliffs in Dorset in the very clear conditions. Morning coffee and chocolate chip muffins were taken on the balcony at the Wight Mouse Inn before climbing again towards the Southern tip of the island and Ventnor, then heading inland for the East corner of the Island.

Lunch was taken in the Flying Club at Bembridge airfield, then around the harbour before turning slightly inland and heading for Cowes where the Medina River was crossed on the chain ferry. The High St in West Cowes had been pedestrianised since our last visit so we walked to our café where the tea pot offered held at least eight cups.

Westwards along the coast now before sharp undulations took the route inland and through a section of road works with very rough surface. Very quiet traffic free lanes led us eventually to Yarmouth, 66 miles and 3,500 feet of climbing. Very tired at the end of the ride due to a lack of miles recently, but a stunning day whilst making friends with a new saddle.

Thursday 18 June - report by Pete Campbell: A fine but ultimately blustery day saw twenty two riders meet near the Amcor site. Tony Weaver lead us to lunch at the Lammastide Inn in Brookend, along an almost flat route (compared to last week's outing to the hills south of Bath).

The route went north-east, past Titherington, Leyhill prison, Michael Wood (no diversion for M5 coffee), and Stinchcombe, then crossing the A38 and through Breadstone and Purton to the Lammastide Inn.

At least another twenty people arrived, on two wheels and four. The kitchen seemed to be struggling to keep up with the orders, but the beer was there when needed. (Can't remember if you cider fans were happy.) And there didn't seem to be any civilians (i.e. non-cyclists) there at all.

Then home again, through Berkeley, Rockhampton and the eastern edge of Thornbury, and then south-west into the breeze back to Bristol.

For a few pictures, see the Photo Gallery.

Thursday 25th June - report by Bill Balchin: Brian Trott has been under the weather for the early part of this year, but there was no sign of it today as he headed an eighteen strong group through Long Ashton and up the climb of Providence Lane. Once at the top we kept generally straight on as roads gave way to single track lanes with grit both sides and two clear(ish) lines separated by a central layer of more grit and gravel - but very few cars and nice countryside as we passed Failand Church and on to Portbury. At Portbury we followed the Avon Cycleway into Clevedon. You might have thought that with Bristols Biggest Bike Ride taking this route a few days previously somebody may have swept up the worst of the loose gravel and maybe filled in the few potholes big enough to hide a suitcase. By now the clouds had dispersed and the temperature was rising to give a very pleasant day for cycling. Coming up to Clevedon we took a left turn and a loop over the moors past the craft centre, Hand stadium and golf club to arrive at the Salthouse right on noon. Nearly everybody decided to eat outside on the patio, but after about half an hour the rain started and we carried our meals and drinks inside. Luckily there was plenty of room.

By the time to get going again the rain had passed over and the sun came out again. There were several different groups making their own ways back, but the official group - I say that as we had Brian the leader and Dennis the film recordist - now reduced to nine turned right out of the Salthouse, into Old Church Road and along a traffic free path along the river which came out near the golf club again. This time we went straight past the golf club and came out by the Bridge Inn pub near Yatton at the junction for Kingston Seymour. From there it was Backwell, Cycle track into Long Ashton and through Ashton Court before the parting of the ways. Yet again a super day.

Tuesday 30th June: report from Bill Balchin: After dire warnings from weather forecasters of a heat-wave for the week it was a bit of a surprise to drive to Cirencester in steady rain for the start of this ride to Burford. The signs did not improve when John Killick got a puncture within the first hundred yards but the rain eased and coats came off after half an hour as we rode through Daglingworth, the Duntisbournes and on to the coffee stop at Denfurlong Farm at Chedworth (including a puncture for Sue Britton on the way). Between Chedworth and Northleach we were treated to a flying display from a red kite a few yards away. Then along the Windrush valley for lunch in the garden of the Cotswold Arms in Burford. Coming out, Bill Balchin found a flat tyre - three punctures between six riders? Is this some sort of record?

After lunch the temperature was well up and humid to boot as we took in Bibury and had a group picture taken by the Arlington row of cottages - very pretty, well the cottages are. Then over the White Way cycle route to take us back into Cirencester. Six riders, fifty seven miles, 1092 metres of climbing, good day out - but sticky weather.