

News for November 2009

Thursday 5th November - report from Bill Balchin: Prior to Thursday the weather had been a right mixture of rain, cloud and sun - although not in equal measure. As we met up at Bitton station for the ride to the Rose and Crown at Hinton Charterhouse sunny intervals had been forecast and proved to be the case as fifteen of us set out along the cycle track to Saltford with John Bishop leading. You would expect the cycle track to be a lot safer than riding on the roads but within a few minutes there was almost a major crash when a mountain biker doing about twenty five mph met the BTOTC peleton taking up the whole track. Expecting us (quite rightly I must concur) to make some room for him he ploughed on and had to take to the grass verge in a big slide accompanied by a vocal tirade - oops.

We took a similar route as the previous time for this trip - Stanton Prior, Marksbury, Priston and some BIG hills into Wellow and then Hinton Charterhouse to the Rose and Crown. I guess you could call the hills in this area of Somerset "rolling" but some ended up as "walking". Our favourite Australian lady (depending on what you think of Kylie Minogue) was one of those forced to dismount - the penalty for borrowing a racing bike with 52/39 chainset. Even worse was the lack of mudguards which soon

resulted in an interesting spray pattern over Cate's back.



After the buffet debacle at the Waldegrave Arms last week we were all relieved to get some decent meals. The London Pride was exhibition standard, it was a pity to only have one. But with nights closing in and a long

way from home there was no time for lingering as we descended into Freshford, took the puddle-strewn towpath into Bath and cycle track back to Bitton before the homeward split. Plenty of sunshine all day - a muddy but enjoyable ride.

Thursday 12th November - report from Bill Balchin: After a week of wet weather the roads were muddy and full of puddles but it was not raining as nearly twenty of us



assembled at Rexam for the ride to Wotton. I was a bit surprised to be the only one in shorts, but had got so hot recently in longs. The temperature was not too bad as we negotiated Swan Lane, Frampton End and Nibley Lane with Jane stepping in as leader after John Bishop had phoned in earlier to report an

overnight puncture. As we crossed into Dyers Lane some considerate motorists waited as we crossed the Yate road and then we met the exact opposite as Mr Awkward in his lorry stopped smack in the centre of the lane to give us the minimum of space to get past. But even

morons in lorries can't spoil a bike ride for too long as we continued to Mapleridge Lane and over the common followed by the turn to Hillesley. Well motorists are a nuisance but so are punctures, and John Turton collected his third rear wheel puncture in the last half a dozen outings. I stayed with John but we still managed to get to the Royal Oak by about 12:20.



The Royal Oak struggled a bit with our numbers the first time we visited earlier this year and to be fair they have improved. Numbers were swelled by a further dozen or so by riders from Bath and locals making their own way. However, in the game of meals lottery John Turton and I lost out when our meals - ordered before 12:30 - had not arrived by the time we left at half past one. While we had been in the pub the promised rain had started but then stopped before we mounted up. Not to be tricked everybody donned their wet weather gear and just as forecast within twenty minutes we were getting a right soaking. I guess most people took the shortest route home - I

certainly did, riding with Cate who will be off to Africa this weekend before returning home to Australia after Christmas. Cate has enjoyed her riding with us and says goodbye.

Thursday 19th November - report from Pete Campbell:

No rain was forecast for today (first time for maybe a week). But strong winds this morning seemed to persuade some regulars to have a long lie in. Eight people turned up at Ashton bridge with John Killick guiding us all the way to Nailsea. (Regular contributor Bill Balchin decided that getting a new cooker fitted was much more important than fighting the gales. Yes, a working kitchen has got to be top priority.)

Nailsea is a short ride from Ashton, so after gliding through Long Ashton and the cycle path to Farleigh, John thought we could do with a brief workout. Across the A370 is Backwell Hill, and we went up a road with a dreaded arrow on the Ordnance Survey map. No-one was seen having to get off and push, but we all needed a rest at the top. Then we had the benefit of our efforts, with a long rapid descent along Brockley Combe.

Back across the A370 we found the winds again, heading across Kenn Moor. We were able to practice our bike-handling skills, riding two abreast along narrow roads between drainage ditches with no-one being blown into the water (we're all so expert!).

Lunch was at the Moorend Spout. Various others turned up, so around 25 cyclists filled the bar. The pub directed us to their cyclists menu which was a small but good choice of soup, baguette and chips, beef and dumplings, etc. Good quality food, and very quickly delivered to the table, seemed to make everyone happy. I'm sure we will be going back again.

After lunch a slightly different group followed John back to Bristol. Dark clouds were seen to the south west, so we ignored any possible diversions, and headed straight to the Brunel Buttery on Bristol harbourside. John Turton was still with us and had avoided any punctures, thanks to his brand new set of Schwalbe Marathons. Most people celebrated this victory over the puncture fairy by stuffing down one of the Buttery's rock cakes. Fortified by these, we all made the final push home.

Thursday 26th November - report from Bill Balchin: Bright and Breezy with heavy showers was the forecast for today, and the heavy showers got going pretty early on as I made my way to the start at Bitton. Through the lanes to Coxgrove Hill and onto the cycle track I was thinking how wet and dirty the roads were - real puncture conditions - when I got that familiar bumping sensation from the back wheel, rats! By pumping it up a couple of times I almost got to the start when I met the dozen strong group lead by John Tyler going back down the track. I carried on to Bitton, changed the tube there and had the luxury of washing my hands in their loo before setting off, not really in pursuit.

By now the sun was bright in a blue sky and the rain had stopped. I took the first exit from the track to skirt Wick then Doynton, Hinton, Burton and the main road to

Yatton Keynell. The bunch meanwhile had carried on to Mangotsfield and gone up Coxgrove Hill where the puncture demons claimed several victims. This caused some splits in the ranks as they made their way through Pucklechurch and Acton Turville, some giving up and going home. So I got to The Bell in the middle of a staggered arrival.

The Bell coped really well with the numbers, not only us but a large party of vicars as well as several other customers. I don't know the collective noun for a group of vicars but wondered to Jane how they would decide who would say grace. Jane thought that they would have more trouble over who would take the collection. Dennis was handing out copies of the DVD of this years riding - see the item in "From our own correspondent" for details of how to get yours.

To borrow a football expression, it was a day of three halves (were you off school the day they did fractions? - Ed) on the way back. That nice wind that had been helping us from Bitton was now in our faces as we passed through Grittleton and Burton and split-up at the crossroads on the Marshfield road to go home. In the end the wind was not too bad but the rain returned for a last downpour near Alveston, other areas looked OK so maybe it was just me. Overall a better day to be out on your bike than stuck at home or Christmas shopping. After seeing those poor souls from Cumbria on the news who have had their homes ravaged by floods, I feel petty about moaning about punctures and a bit of rain.