

## News for August 2011

**Thursday 4 August - report from Pete Campbell:** So, what do you want from your Thursday bike ride? A chance to ride with your mates, but not too many of them as you don't want to risk taking part in a Tour de France-style crash. A good place for lunch - the Bell at Yatton Keynell is always a reliable stop. The temperature not too hot and not too cold. Today was almost one of those perfect days, the only problem being the torrents falling from the sky between 9.00 and 10.00 on the way to Bitton.

We delayed the start till 10:20 in case anyone had been washed off the road on the way to the station, and then a small (bijou, select, mad) group of five riders set off. Martyn Hallet, John Upward, Mike Chouing, John Bishop and myself set off through Bitton to the Golden Valley, past Wick and on to Doynton, with the rain still falling, although by now you wouldn't call it torrential, merely heavy. There was no noticeable head wind, and as we were all as wet as we were going to get and couldn't get any wetter, the journey was nearly turning into a pleasure. Ah, the sound of the tyres hissing across the flooded roads! Any readers who stayed at home under the duvet must be regretting their poor decision today.

Through Dyrham village, and we took the road up the north side of Dyrham Park, crossing the A46 by the Crown, and then via Burton, Grittleton and West Sevington to Yatton Keynell and the Bell. I think the Bell is one of the best pubs we visit on Thursdays. Good atmosphere, the food is reasonably priced, a good choice, and it is delivered to the table very quickly. Today was no exception, but probably the staff thought that a collection of wet cyclists in the lounge bar wouldn't win them any votes in a pub of the year contest, so we sat in the conservatory. And three other cyclists appeared: Geoff Roberts, who doesn't ride as much as he used to, brought his car; Alan who normally rides with the Bath group turned up by himself, as his companion for the day had an unrepairable puncture (apparently a problem with the rim tape that I've not seen on my Mavic A319s - you see, you can't beat cheap wheels); Russell decided that the morning rain looked – well - too rainy, so he took the train to Chippenham, rode to the Bell, and came back with us in the afternoon.

Which was probably a good plan as any after the cold front dumped its last deluge on the conservatory roof just before we left, the ride home was dry and we even saw some sun as we approached Bristol. We used almost the same route out as back, eventually splitting with some going to Pucklechurch, and John Upward and I back to Bitton.

[How did we get there? click here to see.](#)

**Tuesday 9 August - report from Pete Campbell:** A trip across Somerset and lunch by the coast seemed just the thing after a few days of rain, so Malcolm Hanson's offer of a ride from Burrow Bridge to Watchet and back could not be missed. It was a shame that only few people were able to turn up at 9:00 a.m. for an excellent day's riding: Tony Conibear, Dave Woodward and myself tagged along behind Malcolm for a 56 mile tour of the Quantocks.

Three of us parked our cars in the Burrow Mump car park; Malcolm managed the impressive (to me) feat of arriving with his folding bike on his motor cycle. We quickly pushed off into the edge of the Levels, and then after Bridgewater the land started rising. The lanes were mainly quiet and after a couple of hours we had climbed from sea level to nearly 300 meters. This is the sort of terrain where you round every bend and find that there is just one more incline to go up, and of course, you can always manage just the one more. Well, you can if you expect to get your morning coffee and cake. Malcolm had picked the Pines cafe at Buncombe Hill near Broomfield where we were offered Passion cake which turned out to have no passion fruit, but did have nuts. Fortunately those with a nut allergy spotted the problem and had to make do with a tea cake. Otherwise, a pleasant place - worth a stop.

We carried on westwards, into the woodland, up more hills (puff puff), down more hills (wheeee!!), crossing and re-crossing the West Somerset Railway. There were definitely steam engines running, but the closest we got was smelling the smoke when we crossed the line and hearing the whistle in the distance.



Into Watchet and close to the harbour we found the Star, our lunch stop. Their sign said they have a CAMRA award in the past year or so (can't remember when) which seemed to be justified. Some of us tried the Cotleigh Golden Seahawk, which had fewer food miles than we had put in, as it had come over the hill from Wiveliscombe. I found it went down

very well with pasty and chips. Their suet pudding and their fried fish also looked appetising - maybe next time.

Back on the road and upwards again, heading east with good views of the Severn and Hinkley Point power station. A fairly level run with the wind now mainly behind us, we took our afternoon refreshment at the tea room at the Cannington Walled Gardens. It was darjeeling and toasted tea cake for me: I like to think I can do civilised when I have to.

And then back to Bridgewater, managing to miss the rush hour, alongside the drainage channels and finally into the Burrow Mump car park. Before nine o'clock we were the only ones there; by five thirty it was full. Malcolm had organised an excellent ride, with varied scenery, good food stops, and perfect weather.

[Click here for Tony Conibear's Garmin map.](#)

**Thursday 11th August - report from Bill Balchin:** Today was second part of a programme swap when Tony and Brian switched dates for their motor assisted rides. Only four went to Tony's and Brian had the same number at Chew Stoke in the rain. Bill and Martyn were the only two HERBS to ride from Bitton - that's Hard Riding Early Birds. (Alright the letters may not be in exactly the right order, don't be so picky). Those who rode from Chew Valley picnic site on 14th July will recognise the first part of the route up to Binegar where we cycled along the wonderfully named Binegar Bottom to the elusive Rocky Mountain cafe. Not just to look at but to call in for a quick brew. It was very pleasant to get out of the rain and the prices are very reasonable - two quid for a mug of tea and an Eccles cake. We were a bit behind schedule arriving due to Bill having a puncture, then discovered that Martyn had a flat when we left. Half the group with punctures and not even at lunch yet. Pressing on through a mixture of light rain interspersed with heavier rain we approached Priddy where the top of the mast was invisible in the mist. At the Hunters Lodge crossroads Jane said goodbye to get home early and the remaining three pressed on for the descent of Cheddar Gorge. Normally a treat we were working hard today against a blustery headwind and negotiating running water across many of the bends. Still not far now to Axbridge and lunch at the Lamb.

The Lamb has never let me down at lunchtime and today was no exception. Seven pounds fifteen for a two course meal, not bad. A group of half a dozen from Clevedon were the only other cyclists and we all sat together outside under the canopy. The Strawberry Line is normally a popular route from Axbridge but on a wet day was likely to be a mud-bath so we enjoyed the descent of Winscombe Hill, on to Churchill and Langford before the hilly maze round Butcombe and Nempnett Thrubwell then came out on Breach Hill road back into Chew Stoke for a forty five mile trip.

Martyn needed to push on for home but Bill was in need of an energy boost with seventy two miles already completed from home. I don't think Brian really wanted anything but went along to make sure that Bill did not collapse with exhaustion. Leaving the picnic site cafe just before four the sun came out for a while but it did not last and the showers returned on and off to finish my hundred and one mile day.

[Click here for the map of the route.](#)

**Thursday 18th August - report from Pete Campbell:** John Bishop thinks that today is an historic occasion in the life of the BTOTC: the first time in his twelve years of riding that there have been three consecutive rainy Thursdays. John's powers of recall are, of course, known to be impeccable so it must be true. It's a shame more people didn't turn out to celebrate. Only six riders and one non-rider turned up in Ashton in the rain. Martyn Hallet had to work today, but was hoping to see Mike Chouing to discuss his 1 September ride to a new lunch stop at the Carpenters Arms at Sherston (put this in your diaries now, rain is not an excuse).

Brian Trott led for the second time in two weeks, and took us through Long Ashton, out to the A38 and then towards Winford. Now, at the point where it is possible to turn onto Kingston Land up and the site of the old hospital, Brian took the group straight on, but Keith and myself missed the straight on and took the turning. We soon turned back, but we'd lost the leader and had to improvise our route to the Chew Valley cafe coffee stop: up and down Crown Hill to Regil, then Chew Stoke and coffee. A swift telling off from the group who were already on their third cake (I expect) and then back on the road.

The rain seemed to be getting less as we went over the A368 at Bishop Sutton. We were soon onto the climb up to Sutton Top, and were pleased to see the road sign at the top giving us one mile to Hinton Blewett.

The Ring O' Bells is owned by the Butcombe brewery and apparently has new managers since we were there last. They were probably pleased to see the ten riders and one driver who turned up, as there was almost no-one else there. Which was a shame because the food was very good, and included a two course for £7.95 option. My starter was whitebait fried in chilli oil which I haven't had for a long time and was excellent - like grown-ups' fish fingers.

Back on the road home democracy had to break out as Brian was taking a different route home and so we were leaderless. But we managed okay. The rain had stopped, and we followed almost the same route as Keith and I had taken on the way there. The road downhill to Bishop Sutton seemed to go on and on, with Mike Chouing in front showing me

how to descend, I barely touched the brakes till we reached the main road. Close to the lake the group split, with two heading towards east Bristol, and the rest towards Long Ashton. Only a short ride today, so we compensated with one last climb: up through Ashton Court past the deer and into Clifton.

[For the route to Hinton Blewett, click here.](#)

**Thursday 25th August - report from Bill Balchin:** After three wet Thursdays in a row we were due a dry ride today and sure enough the sun was out to dry the roads soaked by heavy rain the previous day and overnight. Bill was planning to use the Ram Hill cycle track but anticipating a mud-bath and with Old Gloucester Road closed just before the Trench Lane turning, Bill took the dozen starters under the motorway bridge towards Winterbourne, left into Church Road and through Frampton Cotterell to Frampton End Road. Despite cloudy skies it was dry, not windy and warm enough to leave extra layers off. Taking the Badminton Road at Mayhill we went right into Nibley Lane followed by the climb of Wapley Hill. Cruising along in the sunshine on the lovely smooth tarmac on the lane to Chipping Sodbury chatting away it was a grand day to be out cycling as we dropped into Doddington, climbed to Tormarton then cut across to Badminton and Little Badminton. I don't know if the duke of Beaufort is a cycling fan but the lanes through his estate are little beauties for cyclists. Leaving the estate onto the A433 for half a mile we took Starveal Lane to bring us the Beaufort Arms at ten past twelve.

What a good idea to have the choice of smaller portion meals for only four pounds fifty as well as dearer full size meals. There was some good news in store as John Bishop informed the thirty cyclists that Cyril Slocombe has been discharged from hospital and hopes to be able to meet us at a lunch stop before too long.





Good to see Tony Weaver back on his bike again, sensibly easing himself back with a steady ride in the company of John Huish and Dawn rather than the savage pace of the official peloton (yeah right! - Ed).

The happy bunch pictured riding along Sandpits Lane on the way home were soon not smiling so much when Bill punctured just as the rain began. What? Another wet Thursday? Luckily the trees overhanging the lane into Old Sodbury made such a good canopy that the road was completely dry as the group waited. Inner tube changed we pressed on Chipping Sodbury common as the rain stopped to give a dry end to another fine Thursday.

[Route map for the ride out there, and back to Chipping Sodbury - click here.](#)

**Tuesday 30th August - report from Bill Balchin:** If you like quirky little towns that appear to be caught in a time warp and you have never been to Upton-on-Severn you would have enjoyed today's longer Tuesday ride. Six riders set out from there for a circuit around the

Malvern Hills with John Upward in the lead. We have all seen that large set of hills when cruising up the M5 towards Birmingham so we had a big target to aim at for our first coffee stop in a lovely cafe in Malvern after less than an hour.

With four out of the six riding with a Garmin on their handlebars there would be no chance of going wrong, so I nearly crashed into John when there was a sudden lurch into a turning we had almost passed. Maybe it was a cunning ploy to publish the route then make changes on the day to keep everybody on their toes. With a bit of mumbling about "going off route" we continued through the rolling countryside through the villages of Alfrick and Suckley going round the hills towards Ledbury on quiet little lanes. A few miles from lunch and there was the pleasant smell of newly cut hedge - nice to smell but we know what it really means. Bill, Mike Chouings and Dave Woodward found themselves ahead so waited at a junction. Eventually Tony arrived to say that Dave Ashton had punctured and would catch up in the company of John at lunch.

The Prince of Wales in Ledbury is tucked away in an alley but is worth the effort to find with a fine choice of ales and meals. After about forty five minutes we were wondering where the puncture team were when they arrived after fixing THREE punctures. Dave was apologetic but we were just glad that he had single-handedly taken on the day's whole puncture ration.

The sun was still hiding behind the clouds for the second half of the ride and although the sky was a brighter shade of grey it was still too cool for short sleeves. Riding on many of the lanes that Arnold uses on his Gloucester trip we called in for coffee at the Staunton garden centre and back to Upton to finish with just under sixty miles done. No rain all day but cool and cloudy, it was more like Autumn than Summer - does this mean our Summer has finished? Some of us are still waiting for it to begin.