

News for July 2011

Thursday 7th July - report from Bill Balchin: For the second year Martyn Hallett led the ride from Mangotsfield station to Bradford on Avon. The weather forecast and the sky suggested that the thirteen starters could be in for a soaking at some point but it was dry as we rode up Coxgrove Hill. By Pucklechurch a few spots of rain made me and John Bishop put on our rain jackets, but it came to nothing so the jacket came off again for the climb of Hinton hill. In a change from last year's route which took the main road from Burton to Yatton Keynell, today we crossed the busy A46 to West Littleton and stayed on the quiet Wiltshire lanes which had obviously had a good soaking shortly before but were now in sunshine, past the back end of Castle Combe, crossed the A420 at Ford, past the White Hart pub and climbed

the little lane leading to Biddestone. From here we were back on last year's route through Neston and Bradford Leigh dropping into Bradford on Avon just before one after covering nearly thirty miles from the start.

The Canal Tavern are not fazed by large groups so our thirteen, a handful of independants plus another eight or so Bath riders were soon sitting outside in the sun-trap garden tucking into lunch. Arriving at the pub later than our usual twelve o'clock with a longer than usual distance covered was all part of the Martyn master plan. At two it was time to head for home along the canal towpath. Although it is as flat as flat can be the surface does leave something to be desired. But the recent rain had been enough to lay the dust yet not enough to turn the ten miles into Bath into a mudbath.

At Bath there was culture viewing available for those not in a hurry to get home for the end of today's tour stage. (Note from Pete Campbell - six of us stopped to look at the new extension to the Holburne Gallery. Lovely piece of work, looking very much at home with the Georgian original building. Also seen sampling the gallery's tea and cake was the Bath group. Then Rob Shiels took us through the middle of Bath to the Bristol cycle path, and to a huge block of stone carved into a drinking fountain, covered with carved ammonites, No explanation of who did it, but a major piece of work for someone. See the route map for the exact location.)

Mike and Lara set the pace on the cycle path into Bitton - a bit like being in the tour yourself. Their strategy paid off when they got back to the cars parked at Bitton still in the dry. Ten minutes later I was riding home in torrential rain - first of the day. But in my book as long as you get to lunch in the dry that counts as a good weather day.

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

Tuesday 12th July - report from Tony Conibear: I always look forward to our annual 'Bucket & Spade' ride to the coast at Charmouth, not least for the early morning coffee and teacake at the Parrett Cafe.

So six of us were assembled in the Langport car park before 8.30 only then to find the cafe in total darkness, despite the prior arrangements. The times posted on the door do state that opening is 'usually 9am, we have been known to open at 7am or 11am or not at all !' . Total flexibility. There must have been a problem because we've never been let

down before. Most disappointed was Ian Fulcher who had ridden down on his motorbike to visit his favourite cafe. The next thing missing was the sun. It was one of those grey days. Varying shades like you get on those Dulux mixer charts in B&Q. Nevertheless quite warm and definitely not a day that you want to go into the rain jacket sauna if the forecasted showers arrived later.

We soon arrived at Crewkerne for coffee and cake at the Strawberry Fayre cafe, even sitting outside. After the short climb out of Crewkerne comes a particularly nice part of the ride down the B3165 Lyme Regis road, apart from the few kamikaze drivers (who had clearly been studying You Tube clips of Tour de France TV car lifting riders into barbed wire fences, and were attempting to perfect the art). Then we encountered dear old Hyacinth Bucket. A car had followed us cautiously for some distance, eventually overtaking when able to get a clear view ahead. Then came a long blast of horn. Dear old Hyacinth in her Jazz. Clearly frustrated for being stuck so long in the turbulent air flow behind the safety car, losing force and impeding her blast to the coast. Once she got off the horn button she was able to engage the kers boost and get on her way. After that we mainly encountered some very considerate lorry drivers on narrow lanes who seeing our approach from their lofty perch, stopped to allow us through. After passing a rather derelict looking 'Bottle Inn' at Marshwood (which still appears in all the pub review web sites !) we turned off for the final five miles through Fishponds Bottom, Wootton Fitzpaine and Catherston Leweston.

We arrived early at The George so Alan Partridge decided to have a quick look at the seafront while the rest of us disappeared into the pub. There is no rear entrance to the garden and we take our bikes through the bar. Just one local propped up on a stool at the bar supping his daily prescription. I'm sure he was there last year, and the year before. Probably their stable source of income. This was the first time we'd ever sat inside this pub, the garden didn't seem so inviting without the usual sun. Alan reappeared reporting many folk down at the sea front car park (schools not on holiday yet so must be pensioners!) and a stiff head wind riding back to the pub. So that was the forecast for our ride back north. As we were about to leave a few more customers arrived. In the meantime the guy on stool had consumed four pints and was preparing for the next as we squeezed by with the bikes. As is typical this time of the year we elicited the expected Tour de France comments and the enquiry, 'where have come from' ?. I don't know who replied 'Bristol' but our rating went up.

It was a bit of grind up through Whitchurch Canonicorum to Birdsmoorgate but the tall hedges in the narrow lanes provided some relief from the strong north easterly breeze. Continuing past Forde Abbey and Cricket St Thomas to Ilminster to another reward, Bilby's Coffee Shop. Bilby's has the most enormous selection of cakes that you can imagine and doesn't close at 3.30pm like many others. At least the final twelve miles back to Langport is a quite gentle ride.

The grey sky was brightening slightly as bikes were loaded back into cars. A jolly day out all the same

[Click here for Tony's map of the day.](#)

Thursday 14th July - report from Bill Balchin. Thursday motor assisted rides have not attracted many riders lately. Last time out at Tetbury only four turned up so it was encouraging when eight set out from Bitton for the 'feeder ride' to Chew Valley picnic site. John Upward already had ten people waiting in the sunshine to get up onto the Mendips. Despite being motor assisted only a few actually brought cars - Neil and Joan Manners coming from Portishead and Malcolm Hanson back on his bike for the first time in several weeks. The rest had taken advantage of the warm dry weather to ride from home.



Leaving the picnic site we took the main road from Bishop Sutton before turning off through North and South Widcombe, Litton and Chewton Mendip. I was glad to just follow the leader through some pretty villages without having a clue where I was (and probably not the only one). The group split around Binegar when Joan Manners had trouble with her gear shift. Those at the front carried on unaware through Stoke St Michael and onto the pub. While the rest attempted to sort the bike. Eventually Joan and Neil decided that the bike was rideable but they would return back to the car. So it was a surprise for the first group to find the pair of them at pub before we were - but where were the others? After a few minutes they arrived at the Waggon and Horses having visited the Poachers Pocket in Doultling and established that the Waggon and Horses is not actually in Doultling but is, well, not anywhere really.

No complaints about the meals, or the local cider, or the dining inside or outside in the garden. My only problem was failing to take a group photo at the new venue - oops. For the homeward trip John took us past the elusive Rocky Mountain garden centre although I would never be able to find it again. There was a lot of riding on those long, straight Mendip roads with undulations that hide oncoming cars. And with a fair amount of traffic around it was nice to get down the Wellsway and onto the relative quiet of the roads around Chew Magna and home still in the sunshine. Probably our best weather day of the year so far.

[Click here for a map from Lara.](#) You will have to ignore the detour into Axbridge!

Thursday 21st July - report from Bill Balchin: So what makes a good day out on a bike for you? Weather that is dry, bright but not too hot or windy is a good start. A route on quiet lanes preferably some new ones. A good pub for lunch - special offers would be a bonus. And of course, good company from your friends in the BTOTC. Today's ride from Ashton organised by Malcolm Hanson ticked all those boxes. Fourteen set off through Long Ashton to the Flax Bourton cycle track, somewhere on the way we gained John upward as well. It was good to see a few people who had been absent recently - Jane's knee had been giving trouble but was now OK for light duties, and Berry Parker and Mike Whiteman had missed several rides because of other commitments. With the lunch venue about ten miles down the road Malcolm was going to have to put in some loops so after negotiating Backwell and getting out by Claverham he announced a trip up Cleeve hill. A few looking for a flat ride carried on to the cafe at Claverham while the rest had a good workout climbing Cleeve hill before bombing down the other side which seemed even steeper and through Wroughton and Langford onto the A38 at Churchill before turning off through Puxton and arriving at the Quart Pot at ten past twelve in the company of the cafe group plus the Bath boys.



No delays waiting for meals at the pub. Malcolm had arranged a hot buffet and they had laid on a fine spread. Help yourself to chicken fricasse, curry, fish, lasagne with choices of chips, rice or jacket spud and plenty of salad type items to choose from - all for a fiver a head. I just wish that I could still eat like I did thirty years ago to do it justice. There was an offer on the beer and cider - two 500ml bottles for three pounds fifty, an unexpected bonus. Good to see Alan Bracey, John Huish and Dawn who had made their own way. Shortly after one Malcolm was circulating to gee people up for a one fifteen departure - motivated by the chance of catching the end of the Tour de France stage finishing at the top of the Galibier. After the obligatory group picture outside the new venue we were off.

Our route back was the same as the previous trip to Weston Super Mare on the really windy day. Down the main road to Congesbury, Strawberry line into Yatton, over the moors to Nailsea and then a wriggle through Nailsea on a route that only Malcolm knows to take us back to the Flax Bourton cycle track. Although I had one of the longer journeys I was still home by three thirty and able to catch the last hour of the tour as Andy Schleck took the stage but could not quite get the yellow jersey. But would he have complained about our descent of Cleeve hill?

[Click here for Malcolms Garmin track of the ride.](#)

Tuesday 26th July – The Three Churches Ride: report from David Woodward: The second Longer Tuesday ride of July attracted only three riders and two of those were concerned about the surface of the track through the forest for the final three miles of the ride. I told Tony Conibear that I was on Schawble Marathons, so he said fine he would do the same and come on his Specialized. It must be good to have more than one bike I replied. Alan Partridge was going to use his thinner wheels and just risk it.

It was cool enough to put on a second top at the start of the ride from Fancy View Car Park, Parkend. This proved to be a good idea with the first 2 mile down hill in the full shade of the Forest. The downhill didn't last long enough and we were soon taking our first steady climb through Lower Soudley to Littledean – then follow the main road and turn left at the white dinosaur. We followed some quiet country lanes and passed a huge topiary at Glasshouse before passing the National Bird of Prey Centre and on to Newent for our morning stop. It was warm enough to sit outside to be served by the very friendly chatty staff. I told them it was Tony's birthday, and he nearly had a candle on his toasted teacake. Tony was concerned that in spite of all the hills we had climbed we were well into ascent deficit. Alan was wearing his new Lidl heart rate monitor, so we had to guess what his fastest heart beat had been.



My top came off to resume the ride, but the other two weren't too keen. We soon passed our first church at Pauntley, but didn't stop to view, as it was just over a mile downhill to get there, and then the same uphill to get back on track. The lanes continued through Redmarley D'abiot where we began to pick up signs closing roads for 'The Big Chill'. We were all the wrong side of 20 years old, so hadn't a clue what this was about, but it transpires it is a music festival at Eastnor Castle in early August. We rushed past the Castle and onto Ledbury for lunch. We discussed the interest of the church we had ignored earlier, and Tony bought the beer for his birthday. It's a good job there were only three of us or it would have cost him a fortune. Still in Ascent deficit!

We left Ledbury along a bridleway to the A449 island, and then soon got back to the lanes to Much Marcle and our second church. The attraction here was the 1500 year old Yew Tree where Alan and Tony were photographed. We continued past Westons Cider and on to

Brockhampton where we visited the iconic arts and crafts church with its thatched roof, wooden tower, and William Morris tapestries designed by Burns-Jones. Tony was that inspired that he bought their guide book. The journey continued along the banks of the Wye to Ross-on-Wye, where we visited Morrisons for tea and cake. More hills but still in ascent deficit!

We continued through Hom Green to Walford where we joined the B4234 through Lower Lydbrook where we eradicated the ascent deficit with the climb to Upper Lydbrook, then onto Cannop and along the forest track back to Fancy View. "Back to ascent equal but only after 1340 metres of climbing", said Tony.

[Click here for the route from Tony's Garmin](#)

Thursday 28th July. report from Bill

Balchin: John Bishop and Dave Ashton took over leadership duties today as Tony Weaver is still not up to cycling. Before setting out in the sunshine from Rexam the sixteen starters were given an update on Cyril Slocombe who is now in Southmead hospital - everybody's best wishes go to him. Mike Whiteman came rushing up to swell the numbers to seventeen for a few minutes before we turned into Swan Lane and Mike decided to go straight on and make his own way to Wotton under Edge. As we rode along Frampton End Road there was a slight holdup when we had to squeeze past a big lump of a jeep while the geezer inside sat chatting on his phone. The day when the gates are installed on this lane can't come soon enough. We took the right turn to Mayhill then left into Nibley Lane and right to bring us out onto the cycle track that follows Goose Green Way. From there it was Engine Common, Mapleridge Lane, Hillesley and the ups and downs through Alderley into Wotton at about a quarter to twelve where Mike was waiting for us in the High Street.



Sitting out in the garden of the Royal Oak the sun was really hot. By twelve fifteen most folk were tucking into their meals. Mike Chouings was looking especially smart today in a red,

gold and black silk cycling top. No, not the Belgian national champion as someone suggested but an original Mid Devon Road Club top from the sixties to celebrate fifty nine years with the club.

Soon after one people were getting itchy feet to get back on the road so we made an early departure through Kingswood and into Wickwar with the sky still bright and dry. Most took the lanes through Westend that follow the railway line back towards Yate. I turned down Cowship lane with Hamish and Berry and was home by about two thirty - a bit different to some of our ventures on the Mendips when I end up doing seventy miles. Still it gives me a chance to update the website. Some of our photos have been restored but there are still some lingering problems that I need to sort out with the providers.

Extra from Pete Campbell: Riding into Frampton Cotterell there seemed to be storm clouds forming in the west, so while the sensible people headed straight home, five of us took the opportunity of tea, coffee and cake at the Truly Scrumptious cafe just to be sure we had enough carbs on board to get all the way to Bristol. Well, no, there wasn't actually any rain, but the coffee and walnut cake was very good.

[Click here for a map of the route to Wotton-under-Edge.](#)