

News for June 2011

Thursday 2nd June - report from Keith Borrisow: A small but select group of 14 met at Rexam, but we were pleased to welcome back John Bishop who had not been out with us for some weeks. It turned out to be a really warm summer day and stayed hot as we meandered welsh hills after lunch. But more of that later, as getting to lunch proved challenging. Arnold punctured before we reached the bridge and Dawn while she was on it! As we gathered to cross the bridge the Bath group appeared and swept across but not going to Tintern. The route seemed littered with intense looking end-to-enders and 'young club cyclists' all rushing in every direction. When we had crossed getting to lunch on time seemed the imperative, so we skirted Chepstow and kept on the main road past the race course to make the long fast descent to the Abbey, and so arrived early at the pub! Others joined us and we spread across the garden and the function room at the rear of the Anchor.

On leaving some decided to grind back up the main road we came down earlier, but eight followed Berry up the side of the valley to the Trellech - Devauden - Chepstow road. A great climb, but a wrong choice of road at the bottom meant we didn't take the option that would have brought us out nearest to Chepstow. But no matter, the ups and downs into and then from Devauden were finally followed by another very speedy descent back to the racecourse. All very stimulating, and mentioning no names of course but someone claimed to have topped 40mph on that drop!

As always after crossing the bridge the group split - so hope everyone then got back home with no more punctures or problems.'

Thursday 9th June - report from Bill Balchin: A superstitious cyclist may have been worried about being in a group of thirteen leaving Mangotsfield station but we were just glad to have no rain and a friendly breeze as we set off to Pucklechurch under the leadership of John Bishop. Instead of Coxgrove Hill we took the main road, past the Fleur de Lys pub and onto the climb of Hinton hill.

Once over the A46 we followed the route of the M4 through Burton, Grittleton and Stanton St Quintin. Straight over the A429 we were making good time as we rode on lovely Wiltshire lanes into Seagry and Sutton Benger. Of course it was the tailwind - why does that always come as a surprise? Getting to Christian Malford before noon John took us for another BTOTC culture trip to view the local church, very attractive in the sunshine in the countryside, plus it used up a few spare minutes and presented an opportunity for a group photo. I ended up at the back of the group with Keith Borrisow as Brian Griffiths caught us up just before the pub. Chatting to Brian I missed the pub and rode on past, luckily Brian spotted it and we turned back - otherwise I could have ended up in Calne.



Four of our regulars were already inside the Rising Sun and another half dozen from Bath put the number of cyclists up to two dozen with several regular customers. Most of us had baguettes pre-ordered from Mangotsfield. Is five pounds seventy five for a baguette with a bit of salad but no chips a good deal? Black Rat at three pounds forty? Well its only money, and they have to make a living to stay in business for us. It would be cheaper to stay at home but where is the fun?

Leaving the pub the group turned left with me again at the back when I discovered a soft front tyre. Waving the rest on I pumped up the tyre which seemed to stay hard. Oh well, I turned right to retrace the outward route. At Stanton St Quintin I saw a turning to Kington St Michael and on a whim turned left, under the M4 and at the end of the road - caught the bunch, well blow me down. We pressed on along Easton Piercy lane which joined the Yatton Keynell road by the concrete water tower. Back on familiar ground now after Grittleton there was a parting of the ways with Bristol bound riders turning left towards the Gib and a quartet for the North going right through Acton Turville and the grind into the wind up to Old Sodbury. But at least the rain held off.



Thursday 16th June - Buzz, buzz, buzz - what is that row? Oh yes, my alarm clock for the BTOTC motorised ride from Tetbury. To ride from home and meet Tony Conibear at Chipping Sodbury by half past eight it has to be an early start. Wondering if I was doing the right thing as I pedalled through the rain I was there by eight fifteen ... but nobody else around. Just before eight thirty Tony arrived with mixed emotions. If I had not been there he could have ridden home and put the bike in the car but off we went with just a few dribs and drabs of rain to Tetbury and ... nobody else around. So we rode down the hill to the railway yard car park and - John Bishop and Alan Payne unloading their bikes. After a brew in Hortensia's cafe we set out to Long Newnton and were soon on quiet lanes through Charlton, Minety and the attractive village of Cerney Wick. The lanes of Wiltshire have a different feel to South Glos, maybe a better surface, different styles of architecture or maybe they are generally flatter. Whatever, it was a pleasure to be bowling along through the countryside with the sun coming and going. As we arrived at South Cerney just on noon a bunch of cyclists turned into the Eliot Arms just in front of us. The BTOTC were outnumbered six to four by Bath.

It was almost warm enough to eat in the garden but all ten decided to stay indoors where they had reserved an area for us. The meals were on a two for a tenner offer and were excellent value. Huge burgers, gammon steaks an inch thick and I heard one man drooling over the steak and ale pie.



It was noticeable that the BTOTC all had beer while the Bath team had orange juice - what does that tell you? The weather forecast had been a bit out regarding the amount of rain in the morning but it was correct about the wind in your face for the return trip. But the sun was still out as we went through Ewen, Kemble and into Cherington via a gated lane. John could not resist a look at the cricket pitch which he rated as one of the best in England. More quiet lanes took us back into Tetbury where there was more Bishop culture on offer as John showed us a village pavement near the car park. This is a large circular construction covered in dozens of tiles which were hand made by local people. Back to Hortensia's for a final brew and the car drivers loaded their bikes with thirty seven relatively easy miles done. Anyone crazy enough to ride from Alveston did eighty eight.

[Click here for Tony's Garmin trace of the route.](#)

Thursday 23 June - report from Pete Campbell: Today's ride to the Windmill at Portishead was advertised as being led by Jane. John Bishop turned up at Ashton and announced that Jane has a wonky knee, so she wouldn't be riding with us, and he would be leading. That was okay till he then started telling us that he also has various wonky bits - well, obviously no-one else wanted to know about those, so we quickly got riding before any details emerged. Twelve riders started, and as south-

west of Bristol is not really John's area, he asked for assistance from the group. So the ride shifted from the normal BTOTC autocratic model, to a democratic mode which got us to lunch in good time.

The normal Ashton departure took us to Long Ashton, and then part way into the village we took a right turn up Providence Hill to the B3128 Clevedon Road. That was today's one and only steep climb completed, with no casualties, and then past Failand, down to Lower Failand and a stop to admire the view of Avonmouth, then to Portbury village and along the Gordano valley. I've ridden this road when there's been almost no traffic; not today, when we had cars, a bus we all had to stop for, and three lots of horses, one of which was apparently so unpredictable that the rider advised us not to go past her.

Sharp right onto the B3124, and then left at Walton In Gordano onto the coast road towards Portishead. This is a long climb up to the hill above Portishead, which is not really what you want when its lunchtime, but you're rewarded with a long downward run to the Windmill. This is one of the few pubs we visit on Thursdays where cyclists are outnumbered by civilians. The owners have spent a lot of money on upgrading the place over the past couple of years, and it is now large, modern, clean, attractive, with superb views over the Severn to Wales, a good range of beer (although I didn't look at the cider situation), and reasonably priced food, which is brought to the table very promptly. There was probably around twenty cyclists there, but with maybe about 80 customers altogether, the pub was doing very well.



Then back home in a group of ten riders, through Portishead to Sheepway, and back into Bristol past the Avonmouth car imports (very few cars these days), through Pill, along the Avon opposite the Portway, the Chocolate Path, and finishing at the Brunel buttery. The final seven riders took advantage of tea and rock cake before the final push homewards.

[Click here for a map of today's ride.](#)

Thursday 30 June - report from Pete Campbell: A smaller-than-usual turnout at Amcor Packaging near Winterbourne, where we had eleven riders turning up, including Jane who was suffering with a knee problem, and any cyclist will know that is one of your bits that needs to be operating at 100% efficiency. John Bishop took on the role of ride leader at short notice, and as he wasn't sure of the best route to deliver us to the Tudor Arms at Slimbridge by noon, we had a re-run of last week's democracy in action with everyone who fancied their route planning skills chipping in with suggestions. Fortunately John wasn't fazed by the pressure, and made a decision, which is what a leader is for, of course.

So off we set on the usual route north, going via Titherington and Leyhill prison, and through Michaelwood. More democratic discussion ensued when some riders tried to ride towards North Nibley instead of crossing and recrossing the M5 on the way to Stinchcombe; when someone produced a map, I knew that things were getting serious. We decided to avoid Dursley, mainly because no-one would admit to knowing the route through the town, so we took the B4066 to the A38, and then survived four kilometers of fast traffic to the Slimbridge turnoff.

We arrived at the Tudor Arms at around 12:00. They had reserved the conservatory for us, and so the total of around two dozen riders didn't need to mix with the civilians. (The Tudor Arms' usual customers were probably pleased as well!) The food was good, the beer and cider was good, and the staff were pleasant. What more could you want?

Well, the answer is "No rain", which started coming down just as we were thinking that it was time to get back on the road. The temperature dropped, so extra layers of clothing appeared, and we set off into the rain. But it didn't last long, and after half an hour the temperature was rising, so the day was ending on a positive note. Back home through Brookend, Berkeley and Rockhampton to Thornbury, and from here people peeled off on their own directions home.

[Click here for the route to Slimbridge.](#)