

Rovers' Review

Newsletter of the Colchester Rovers Cycling Club
 Founded by Alan Heales 1935-1996
 No. 110 June/July 2007.

Congratulations

Another fantastic result for Elspeth Knott who won the Ladies National Duathlon Championship for 55 to 60 year olds at Ashbourne in Derbyshire on the 28th of April. Elspeth's account of the event is printed below, and should inspire all of us. She will complete in the World Championship in Hungary later in the year.

Congratulations are also due to Tim Pearse and Barbara Howard who got married early in May. Barabara is still getting used to putting her new surname on the signing on sheet, but Geoff says that Cycling Time Trials only give you a lifetime ban if you do this more than twice!

From our President

Geoff Keeble

After only four weeks of the '10' season, no fewer than 52 people had already taken part. In three of the four weeks the number wanting to ride was greater than the maximum permitted entries. An outstanding ride by Andrew Woolf at Tendring, 22-39, was followed by another at Langham. Mike Smith's 22-35 was a new course record, breaking Tom Starmer's 22-53.

The 24 entries by club members in this year's open '50', 11 riding a '50' for the first time, was the most since 1981. In that year there were 25 entries and the event was won by 'Mac' Mc Dermott, who completed a hat-trick of wins, having also won in 1979 and 1980. This year personnel bests were recorded by Andrew Woolf (5m 5s) and Tim Warner (6m 34s), Tim taking first handicap. Mike Smith recorded a fine 2-02-05 with Andrew Woolf second in 2-03-22 and Ken Baker third with 2-05-37.

In the Club '30' on 15/4/07 Jim Reed set up a new course record with 1-12-00. He was joined by Errol Baker (1-21-30) and Tim Pearse (1-23-03) in setting a new club senior vets' '30' record of 3-56-33. This record was set 100 years after our first known club record, by A. Fisher who recorded 1-13-28 in the club '25' of that year. In this year's club '25' Tim Warner did exactly the same time!

We had the good fortune to acquire some club data from the past. Among this is a start card for the Rovers' 'Annual Dinner, Smoking Concert and Prize Distribution' for 1934. This was held at the Plough Hotel, St. Botolphs Corner. This document had been signed by those who attended. There were 50 signatures. The menu was tomato soup, fillet of plaice and chips followed by roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, special trifle, biscuits and cheese, and coffee or tea. How many of us could put away five courses today! The evening was rounded off by a sing song - not the ramblings of an aged President like today!



The Ashbourne Duathlon held at Carsington Water in Derbyshire is organised by a group called Punishing Events. I should have known better when I took part last year, but I had no excuse when I entered again, except that I just wanted to see if I could be the National Champion in my Age group.

This was the third Duathlon I had entered this year. Clumber Park had been disastrous as I was suffering from a chesty cold and lack of training. Surprisingly, Cambridge had gone really well, with faster run times and a bit of a flyer on the bike, so I just didn't know what to expect.

Carsington Water is very much like Alton Water, only with more hills. The distance was 12km approximately, for the first run around the reservoir and 4km run along the dam wall, after the bike. Last year, I had found it extremely hard in freezing cold conditions (we had got

up to find 2 inches of snow had fallen in the night), so I was pleasantly surprised when I was still in contact with other competitors at the end of the first run. I didn't know it at the time but I had knocked 6 minutes off last year's run

I normally look forward to the 40km cycle, but I was more than a little nervous. Last year I had no idea about the steep, twisting descents and so just hung on; this time I knew what to expect and was a bit panicky. It would be so much easier if they knew how to make / mend roads in Derbyshire. I will never ever moan about the dips in the Clacton Road or the potholes through Tendring again. At one point I almost lost hold of my handlebars, as I was shaken down a hill. I had one very scary incident when a horse rider turned into the road, which I was hurtling down. The horse saw me at the moment of the turn and skittishly went sideways down the road. As I braked hard, my water bottle rattled and sent the horse careering further into the centre, just as I was pulling out. I had to stop in Wirksworth, behind a lorry which had pulled up at a zebra crossing. As I put my foot down, my calf muscle cramped. Try as I might, I couldn't pull my toes up to release it and ended up taking both feet out of my pedals. However, I managed to get up the infamous Middleton Top, which was the next challenge. I was delighted to see the transition area, and supporters, and still be in one piece.

The last run went well, too; I actually felt that I was running rather than dragging one leg in front of the other. I was really pleased to finish first in my age group, 18 minutes quicker than the year before and despite the stops I had knocked 10 minutes off my bike ride!!

Fred Whitton Challenge 2007

Nick Webber

The last thing I needed on the eve of one of the toughest cyclo-sportives in the country was a mechanical problem with my bike. After only 15 minutes of our gentle pre-event outing into the Lake District hills my rear wheel sounded like a bag of bones. My Dutch friend, Bert, diagnosed a loose sprocket body - something neither of us had the tools to fix. It was too late in the day to find a bike shop so I trusted that I would be able to get it fixed in the morning...

After forcing down a huge breakfast I left Bert resting on his bunk in Coniston youth hostel to ride the 600 yards down to the start of the Fred Whitton Challenge (a 114 mile ordeal where, if the 33% climbs and torturous, poorly-surfaced descents did not get you then the unpredictable Cumbrian weather probably would).

The place was already humming with many of the 800 riders preparing to set off but I managed to engage the assistance of a wonderfully cheerful bloke with a mobile bike shop. I was back in business.

Bert had planned to start later with the elite group, so I waited around for a while to ride out with any other likely-looking bunch. However, I had clearly misjudged the ability of my chosen riding companions as they set off at a ridiculous pace and I was hanging off the back, out of breath and wheezing after the first short climb. Harboursing grave doubts about coping with this for another 7 hours, I

just concentrated on spinning a low gear and following the wheel in front of me. It was not until we sped through picturesque Ambleside, some 30 minutes later, that I felt more relaxed and at home with the rhythm.

The serious climbing began just beyond Troutbeck as we began to ascend Kirkstone pass. I'd fitted a 27 sprocket to compliment my 34/48 compact chainset only as a late thought but already I found I needed to resort to it to avoid fatiguing my legs too soon. The climb was long but I had no real problems and began to drop several of the over-enthusiastic souls who had set off too fast. The drop down to Ullswater was stunning - from what little I witnessed as I sought out a safe line for my bike (and me). Once back on flatter roads - a relative term in this part of the world - I found myself alone for the first time in the day but, after catching and passing a few small groups, I rode hard to tag onto the back of 5 other fast-moving riders. This part was fun as we shared the pace for several rolling miles, eventually flying through Keswick and onto Honister pass.

Honister was hard ! People were walking here and I was beginning to struggle to keep 34x27 turning. If I was having to dig so deep into my reserves here how on earth would I cope with Hardknott & Wrynose! A local guy I was riding with told me that Honister was harder than Wrynose. (I believed him then but certainly didn't later.)

The road down from here was unpleasant - rough, twisty and very steep. I gained speed alarmingly quickly when I released the brakes and could smell melting brake compound when I sought to slow the inertia of my 85kg mass. A poor descender at the best of times, I lost a little ground here but it mattered little as we all trundled into the first checkpoint and feed station. It was a relief to straighten up off of the bike to find that my back was still feeling OK.

Once back in the saddle I really struggled for a while. My leaden legs just did not want to spin and, psychologically, the thought of another 4 hours hard riding was not appealing. I don't remember much about the next couple of hours and it was really not until I got to the 2nd check point and feed at Calder Bridge that I began to feel OK again. I ate and drunk as much as I could and spent a few minutes stretching my quads and hamstrings before setting off again to face the final challenge.

I managed to work with two other well-matched guys to get to the foot of Hardknott at a comfortable pace and then it was a quick, "good luck, gentlemen", before dropping into my bottom gear and kicking away up the lower slopes. It was hard immediately and I tried to avoid looking too far up ahead for fear of being overwhelmed by the task in hand. Overused muscles were threatening to cramp badly so I tried to keep it as smooth as possible. The cheers from roadside supporters really helped at this point and somehow I was able to return a smile of appreciation.

About halfway up Hardknott the gradient eases to about 10% for 100 yards or so but any relief was short-lived as I looked up to the next bend. As the road reared up to the left all I could see was people walking with their bikes, and even that looked horribly difficult on such a steep incline. At over 33% I had never seen a road gradient like it and could not see how it would be possible to ride a bike up it.

My speed was already at a crawl as I negotiated the outside of the hairpin but somehow I was able to keep going. Leaning well over the front wheel to stop myself falling backwards I was just able to keep the cranks turning. My biceps and forearms throbbed and I could see the handlebars bend alarmingly as I fought to keep the bike in a straight line and force the power down through my legs. And still the pistons pumped...

I must have felt more pain in my legs before but I really can't remember when. I was now sucking up as much air as I could through my nostrils - sounding like an old steam engine - and grateful right now for my large nose. There was something almost beautiful and poetic about this moment. I was asking a huge amount from my body and it was giving me all it could, even when it would have been so much less destructive and more pleasant to just stop pedalling. The source of primeval smile on my face as I crested that craggy summit was much more than the effect of endorphins but its definition defies mere words.

Had I not been keen to complete the ride in under 7 hours I would have stopped here for a while to take in the view and to witness other riders' moments of suffering and glory but I had to roll on and to negotiate the dangerous route back down to the valley. During my ascent I had barely noticed the darkening sky and the rain that had begun to fall. Several people had already crashed going down Hardknott and the air ambulance was on hand so I took no risks at all.

Once safely back to easier terrain I drank a pint of liquid straight down to try to offset the cramp in my hamstrings and quads. Just before I negotiated the lower slopes of Wrynose I emptied the remaining contents of my bottles (as the pros do) to minimise the weight I would have to haul against gravity. The heavy rain that was now falling kept me awake but I would have preferred dry roads.

So many were walking here too but I just managed to keep the cranks going (32 rpm when I looked down at my computer) and the bike in a straight line. It was so much a mental battle now as I did not want to see myself as a failure for having to walk up a hill. Again, the waterproof-clad support on the slope was vocal and wonderful and, with the boost it gave me, I completed the last major climb of the day.

A little complacency nearly cost me dearly as I almost lost it coming off the top of Wrynose; the back wheel locked up and skipped unpleasantly over the damp, uneven surface while I fought to keep control and remain upright on a hairpin bend. Confusion reigned at the bottom as a sign had apparently been misaligned and two of us headed back up into the hills. It was only when the guy with me said that he was sure he did not go this way last year that we looked back to see someone waving at us to come back. It cost me a few minutes but, thankfully, we were soon back on the course.

From there, apart from a few minor climbs the run into the finish was superb - rolling and majestic with sweeping, swooping turns but always heading gently downwards. Such a pleasure then to roll back into Coniston less than 7 hours after setting off, having survived the Challenge.

Advertisement

Derek Snowling

Do you suffer from night starvation, housemaid's knee, spots in front of the eyes, shortness of breath, shortness of cash, shortness of temper, backache, or fallen arches? You do! NO GOOD RACING THEN!! REGISTER NOW WITH TONY SHEPPARD FOR MARSHALLING DUTIES, AND SEE THE WORLD.

From Ken Baker

I will be sending in an order for a batch of club kit very shortly. Let me know A.S.A.P. if there is anything you require.

For all you trackies out there. We will be holding three grass track sessions for junior/senior riders this summer. We had eight riders at the first session on the 11th of June, including two from the Chelmer CC. Everyone enjoyed themselves, especially Mike Smith -- once he had discovered that it was better not to have 120psi in your tyres when riding the grass! The remaining dates are :-

- Monday July 2nd
- Monday July 23rd

All sessions will follow on from the U16s sessions, start time 7.30 p.m.

Get your tyres stuck on and get to Shrub End track on the above dates.

Time Trial News

Gerry McKee

Jim Reed raced to a splendid April Fools Day victory in the Club '25' at Tendring. The club champion was in no mood for traditional distractions with a winning 1-1-59. Closest challenge came from Andrew Woolf with 1-2-27 ahead of Nick Webber, marking his return from injury with a third-place 1-3-15. Unluckiest rider was Tom Starmer. Leading at halfway, he was forced to retire when his tri-bars came adrift. Handicap honours went to Tony Anderson winning by a healthy three minute margin from newcomer Peter Newell and current handicap champion Tim Warner.

Another magnificent late surge secured Jim Reed victory in the Club '30' on the 15th of April. For the fourth time this season he was behind Andrew Woolf at midway, but edged the younger man at the final gasp. A winning time of 1-12-00 gave him a slim 4 second advantage, with both setting new course records. Handicap honours went to Chris Douglas ahead of Tim Warner.

Mike Smith stormed to a daring individual win in the Inter-Club '10' against the Maldon and District CC at Abberton on 12/5/07. Circuiting a rainswept course in 23-27, he saw off the dual challenge of Maldon's Mark Beattie (23-53) and Neil Chapman (24-28). But the Maldon cornered the team honours with their two fastest riders plus their slowest compiling a total of 1-21-7, ahead of the Rovers' 1-23-20. On a day that called for caution, the pick of the chasing Rovers were Phil Jarvis (25-26), Ken Baker (25-35) and Jim Reed (25-44).

Up and coming events

Herman Ramsey.

Barbecue.

This is now arranged for Sunday 29th July at Holly Cottage, Crown Street, Dedham by invitation of John and Annette Malseed. Charge is £6.00 per person. Please book with Herman and Pauline on 01255 880768 by Wednesday 25th July.

Friday lunch club.

A number of senior Rovers meet once a month for lunch. The one on the 3rd of August will be at Wrabness village hall at 1pm. Also £6.00 each, and please book as above by the 1st August.

Audax.

I hope to revive the 400km predecessor of the 'Green and Yellow Fields' next year as a French-style event - find your own controls and post cards at the finish. The date will be 14th June starting from Manningtree at 10am. I am about to apply for a 50km permanent starting from Holt and based on promotion of local produce. One of the controls is a farm shop that sells only ales brewed in Norfolk.

Cultural bike rides around Colchester.

Insite, the Essex Cultural Tourism Programme, is organising a series of rides starting at Wivenhoe Station car park, lasting about 3 hours with local poet and broadcaster Martin Newell and visual artist Charlotte Bernays as tour guides. Further details on www.insite-essex.co.uk and bookings to Colchester Arts Centre, tel. 01206 500 900. Might make a nice change from racing and get your partners who are interested in the arts and local history out on their bikes.

Please get copy for the August/September issue to the editor by July 25th. Contact address: Hugh Ward, 5 Clay Lane Grove, Colchester, Essex, CO4 0HH, 010206 843163, hugh@essex.ac.uk.