

Tour de France

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THE WHEELER



Summer 2015



Wednesday Wheelers



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Front cover photo: Sasha & Rory Evans on the Club 2-up TT

Photographer: Paul Evans

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PRESIDENT'S INTRODUCTION

Hello Everyone

The Tour de France has been a more exciting event this year compared with last year's disappointment for Chris Froome when he fell off and had to retire. This year's first week has again had a furious speed which has created a spectacular event for all of us. Falls have unfortunately happened and Chris Froome has been very lucky not to be seriously injured. With the Pyrenees stages decided, roll on the Alps – can any of the significant others upset the yellow?

We send our best wishes to Tom Brazier who has unfortunately been injured following a cycling event. We hope he has a speedy recovery.

Next week (26th July) sees the Wheelers Club 50 mile TT from Stretton Sugwas. Put this in your diary, it is a distance that not many riders give themselves chance to attempt. Let's see a good turnout from club members and some excellent rides.

The course record for this is (direct from Wheelers website)

Course record 2013: **Earl Smith** 1hr 57min 52sec

2012 **Paula Moseley** (Hfd Wheeler 2nd Claim) 2hr 09min 52 Sec

and it's a good distance to build up race stamina.

The Club membership now stands at 211; pretty healthy. Thanks everyone for supporting the Wheelers.

The committee have made the recent decision to stop the use of the Yazor 10 TT course for the foreseeable future. This is for a number of reasons mainly safe parking and the poor road surface along the course. The council will eventually resurface the road and safe parking will be arranged for next season.

On the subject of local roads can I ask you to put your thinking caps on and come up with possible suggestions of future courses? Let anyone on the committee know your thoughts. These could then be closely examined for distance measurement, access, and parking for building into future calendars.

If you have any information you feel should be on our Club website please let us know.

www.herefordwheelers.com

Chris Hughes

President

ARTICLES



World War 1 Battlefields 100 Years



'FROM THE UTTERMOST ENDS OF THE EARTH' We saw these words on a New Zealand Memorial in the outskirts of Messines in Northern France; the same village in which Hitler sought sanctuary and medical aid during the Great War. What if?

These words stopped me in my tracks, so many stories of bravery and sacrifice. This memorial was on a small raised area for which many soldiers gave their lives to take hold of a distance of a mere 200 feet.

Our tour guides, Charlie and Shane were excellent in their local knowledge and both having some military background were able to describe the battles and the strategies employed by both sides.

The description of battles and conditions faced were fascinating and incredibly moving. Being physically present at the battle locations really brought home the sacrifice that that generation had to make.



At Cambrai we met a local French man who had built up his own collection of World War I memorabilia. This included a tank that had been completely buried underground. He had been told of this by an elderly lady in his village and after many years searching eventually located and recovered the tank. One side of the tank looked fine and relatively undamaged but the other side was ripped apart demonstrating the havoc that a direct strike brought.

This gentleman's collection was huge and also included the old saddlery and equipment from the mounted sections. Our guide Charlie was able to describe one of the battles the saddlery was recovered from. It was one of the first engagements where tanks were utilised and ended in disaster. Tanks were sent in early one morning with thousands of horses following behind. The tanks became bogged down in marshy conditions and were easily destroyed leaving the horse section completely exposed to the machine guns of the enemy. Thousands died.

There were many stories similar to this recounted by our guides as we moved around the region. What was noticeable as we rode around the country side was the care and attention given by the locals to the many memorials located around. The memorials existed in many varied locations, often found in the middle of vast cornfields as well as wooded areas.



The many mass cemeteries were located across the region and what made it even more moving was the fact that so many of the headstones were of soldiers whose identities were unknown and simply marked

'A SOLDIER OF THE GREAT WAR'



It is impossible to put across the emotions felt on this tour, listening to the Last Post at the Menin Gate with hundreds of people was probably the most moving. I had found the name of a great uncle engraved on this memorial. Other memories that stand out is the visit to Passchendaele, the Harry Patch Memorial and going down the tunnels at Vimy Ridge to name a few.



Wendy Howells.

The Tour was expertly run by Green Jersey Cycling .

Super Randonneur

I am not the first in the club to have done this, and I certainly hope I will not be the last, but completing an audax super randonneur (SR) is definitely a challenge I would recommend to anyone.

Ian (Rivers) having completed his monster event last year, and me pretending to have retired from long distance running (again) were looking for a bit of a challenge for 2015. Between us we discussed an audax season, and to try for a SR.

What appeals about audaxes is the flexibility and lack of race day pressure. They also tend to take in some stunning parts of the country and have tea and cake stops built in, which are compulsory! These events are also very cheap to enter, and with a bit of planning we could stay relatively local. This helps limit the travel and the impact on a family weekend. We approached, entered and rode each event with the same plan; ride steady, eat lots and take each day, stage or hill as it comes.

For anyone who has not come across the SR before, the aim is to complete audax rides of 200km, 300km, 400km and 600km in a year. What made this year special is it is also the 1,200km Paris-Brest-Paris. The completion of a SR serves as a PBP qualifier which is considered by many as the pinnacle of long distance riding. So a SR might have a dual purpose?! What it definitely meant was that events filled quickly as many others were also looking for a qualifying ride. It also meant most conversations with other riders quickly moved onto PBP and whether or not you were intending to ride. Given what I heard I am still not convinced!

PBP was not my aim, I had not even considered it, as the limit to my previous audax adventures had not seen me ride much over 300km. Ian had first mentioned the PBP idea, I remained sceptical, but we thought we would see if we could first qualify and take it from there. I preferred the idea of the Randonneur Round the Year challenge of riding a 200km audax every month for a year, but with some thought I hoped I could do both.

The year started with a 200km ride in January, from Cardiff to Gloucester and back. The ride started in the dark. Still half asleep and not concentrating meant we followed and allowed an early navigational error, a nice reminder that you need to concentrate a bit, welcome back to audaxes! Icy lanes around Slimbridge scared the hell out of me, I have never been so glad to see a main road and a gritter, but we just finished in daylight. This was a shock to the system, we spent the drive home reassuring ourselves it would get easier, we were just not used to it!

Next was 220km from Tewksbury in February that came up to Allensmore and dropped down into Chepstow to cross the bridge and return via Malmesbury. All I remember of



Ian climbing towards Dolgellau

this was it was cold for most of the day, proper cold that your hands and feet just cannot adjust to. Descending Birdlip in the dark on wet roads reminded us both that it does not matter how much front light you have, it's never enough! We were both happy to see the finish just before 7pm, and as we drove home we felt for those still out as the temperature plummeted. Shortly after this was another Tewksbury 200 that headed up to the Malverns and looped via Bromyard to Fownhope and down to Chepstow into a thumping head wind. Once over the bridge and turning North for home the wind pushed me along to finish at 3.30pm, so one of the fastest 200km's I have done. Three times over the Severn Bridge in as many months, the novelty by now had worn off, a drawback of doing local events.

Leominster, a grand 15 miles, but it made me feel like a proper audaxer. Enjoying the coffee and croissants at the start (included in the entry) gave me time to consider my clothing choice for the day – I was freezing! More than once Andy Sparks offered clothing from his huge saddle bag. Standing around gives a good opportunity to look at the vast collection of bikes belonging to other riders; it sowed a seed! So the ride, Leominster to Machynlleth and back, via the mountain road. It turned into the first warm day of the year so the clothing choice worked out. Clear skies, big hills and bigger

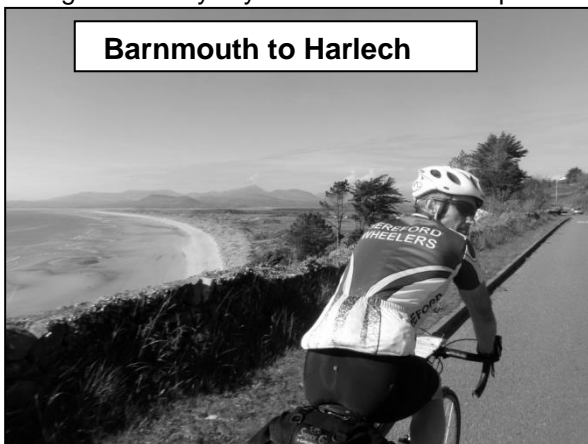
views. On completing I duly fell off my bike in the entrance to Leominster sports centre as both my legs cramped; most embarrassing. Not a very super randonneur, just me rolling around on the floor with my daughters giving me a very funny look. If a 200km felt this bad, how on earth do you survive 3, let alone 6 times longer?

April was time for the Elenith 300km epic. A long established classic audax ride. Whilst the route had varied since I had ridden it last, the key highlights remain the same. Hills whose names send shivers down the legs of many cyclists. The Rhayader mountain road, Pontrhydygroes, The Devils Staircase (and the 2 steep buggers after that no one talks about). I could go on, but won't as I can't spell or pronounce the others! Trust me they are there, they are steep and I have no shame when it comes to using my granny gears! We started at 7am, had an hour of rain, before the weather cleared to leave a stunning day out in the heart of Wales. The only down side was the strong and relentless headwind for 150km. But we worked together pulling turns on the front and made better progress than many of the single riders we passed who looked battered! The stop at Rhayader gave time to inspect more bikes, the seed had grown!

Ian was riding well, I lasted until the last 3 miles when I totally ran out of energy and limped to the finish just before 10pm. Had to stop for a snooze on the drive home, it became obvious that recovery may take a while.

Early May, a 3am alarm for the 400km Brevet Cymru starting in Chepstow at 6am. The route takes in much of south Wales, touching the coast at Newquay, before returning via Crickhowell and Usk. Much of the talk focused on the weather forecast and the arrival of the expected rain. After the odd shower and drizzle, the middle of the day was fine and dry. A minor mechanical for Ian as he broke a rear spoke, we continued as it did not look as if it was getting any worse. Not that either of us had a spare spoke (or a clue what to do with it if we had one!) We stayed dry for the climb out of Llandovery and loop to Newquay, but talk in the cafe amongst other riders was of the weather looking bad. Leaving Newquay at 5pm the wind was strengthening and the rain started. And how it rained. Llandovery to Brecon was wet. Down to Talybont and Crickhowell the wind and rain was biblical. At the final stop we changed into any dry kit we had left and pressed on. Totally spent we finished at 2am, hell of a christening for my *new bike!* Titanium frame, Brooks saddle, Carradice saddle bag, triple chainset, dynamo hub, and disc brakes. Superb just about sums it up.

End of May, another 3am alarm, another 6am start from Chepstow, this time for the 600km Bryan Chapman Memorial. A day to head over the hills to Menai Bridge and a day to return via more hills. The weather was perfect, and progress was good. Trying hard not to think about the distance still to go and trying to forget the

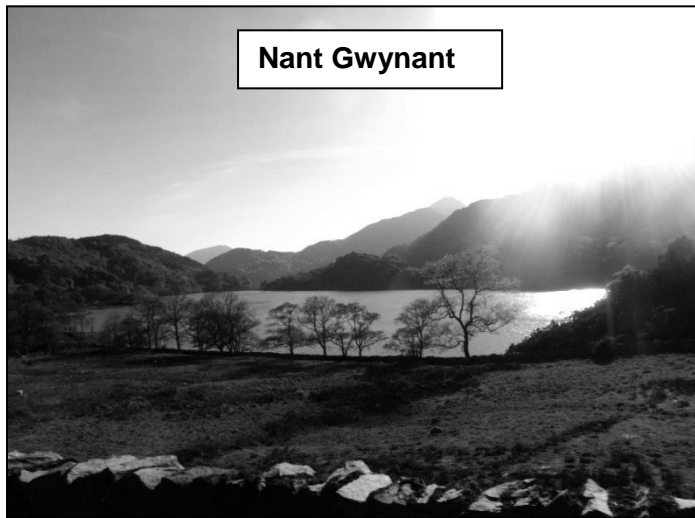


Barnmouth to Harlech

early start. First big climb over Wentwood near Usk went OK, the second over Llancloudy was fine. The first monster climb was from Machynlleth towards Corris, past Cadir Idris. A steady gradient, but relentlessly long. Barmouth to Harlech and onto Beddgelert was scenic and called for a couple of photo stops and the climb through Nant Gwynant is a stunner. Ian's back wheel broke, and this time looked like it was getting worse. An emergency food stop at Llanberis emptied the Londis of all their saturated fat and gave us time in the fading sunlight to assess the wheel. The buckled wheel was hitting the frame. Ian and I are not technical fellas, but this looked F*\$&ed. We resolved to get to Menai where the options for fixing or recovery seemed better than the drunks in Llanberis could offer. To keep a short story short, Ian's day was over and in a scene reminiscent of Top Gear, I abandoned him.

I left Menai at 9pm, it got cold as it got dark. At about 10pm I put the GPS on, no longer being able to read the route sheet. Apart from checking a few turns during the day this was the first time it had been needed. The A470 felt endless, the power station at Trawsfynydd loomed out of the darkness and I finally descended to Dolgellau and turned into the Youth Hostel for a sleep stop at 1am. I ate (lots), changed into fresh kit, slept for 90mins, ate again, and by 4am I was off. Feeling slightly dazed and groggy but generally OK I was keen to cover the 200km left to finish. A text from Ian at 4am confirmed he had been recovered and would be at the finish. Which was good as all my kit was in his car. 2 big climbs in the first 100km and 2 notable hills in the last 100km. The descent from Newtown to Knighton was a blast. Weobley village stores provided the fats and fluids, Llancloudy ensured I converted fat to fuel. A tail wind and smooth tarmac down the Wye Valley into Chepstow was the only explanation for 25mph. I can honestly say I was glad to stop, finishing at 2pm. Double the distance of this for PBP! I remain sceptical.

Nant Gwynant



By the time this is in the Wheeler magazine, PBP would have been entered, or not. Ian is doing another 600km ride in July, so he too should complete the SR. All being well the 200km rides will be ticking along nicely too.

“Going back to cycling is cheaper than running – I have everything I need in the garage already”, famous words spoken to a wife, probably trying more to convince myself. But at least my knees still work

and I have not bought any more trainers!

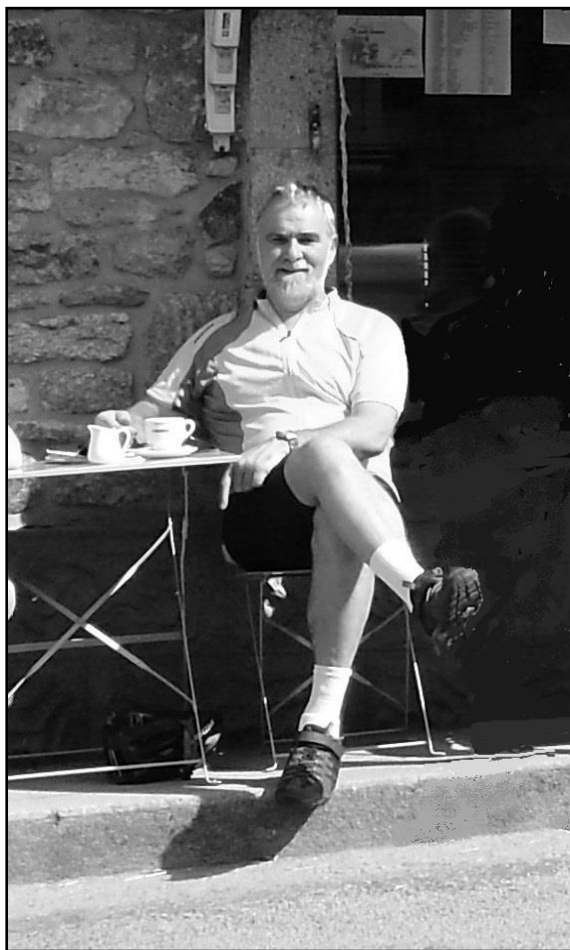
So far I have replaced chainset, rear mech, cables and tyres before ultimately upgrading a bike. Needed a new GPS unit, shoes, cleats, gloves, gilet, leggings and a pair of those

little neoprene toe covers that look naff but were a godsend on the 600km. Assos shorts, bottles and an excellent Goretex jacket and finally a Carradice saddle bag and holder that can only be described as a future heirloom. But the saddle bag is a piece of proper audax kit and will allow the sewing on of the cotton badge of the Super Randonneur!

Jon Tetley

MEMBER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

This month's member's questionnaire is from Tony Spencer – regular Wednesday Wheeler, tourer and kayaker.



this was because I was quite a good runner)

WHERE WERE YOU BORN? **Ross-on-Wye**

WHEN DID YOU START CYCLING AND WHY? **I started cycling regularly as a teenager doing a fish and vegetable delivery job**

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST BIKE? **The delivery job enabled me to buy a Triumph Palm Beach 3-speed Sturmey Archer**

WHEN DID YOU JOIN THE WHEELERS? **About 7 years ago**

WHAT IS YOUR BEST CYCLING MEMORY? **Difficult to limit to one, holidaying in France with fellow Wheelers, a week touring in the Hertz Mountains or riding in the Vercors in France I am not a lover of climbing hills but the gorges and roads carved into the side of the mountains here were spectacular**

WHAT WAS YOUR BEST CYCLING PERFORMANCE / RIDE? **I did a season of cyclocross and managed one podium finish (but**

WHY DO YOU ENJOY CYCLING? **Being outdoors, exploring and planning new routes with my wife Kay and friends**

HOW OFTEN DO YOU RIDE? **2 or 3 times a week**

WHAT BIKE(S) DO YOU CURRENTLY OWN? **Specialized Roubaix, Secteur and Tricross**

WHICH IS YOUR FAVOURITE BIKE AND WHY? **Specialized, I like the ride**

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE RIDE? **From home (Hampton Bishop) to Bishops Cleeve via Preston Wynne and Ullingswick on a clear day the views are superb**

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE POST RIDE MEAL? **Anything as long as there is plenty of it**

WHAT DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE THE BEST CYCLING INNOVATION IN THE LAST 30 YEARS? **Quality Puncture resistant tyres**

WHO IS YOUR CYCLING HERO? **Bradley Wiggins**

WHAT KIND OF BOOKS DO YOU READ? **I don't read many books but when I do it would be a sporting autobiography**

WHAT KIND OF MUSIC DO YOU LIKE? **60s & 70s**

DO YOU HAVE ANY HOBBIES? **Kayaking**

HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE HEREFORD WHEELERS AS A CLUB? **Nothing – it works well for me**

ALL OUR YESTERDAYS

Brave Souls

We often consider riders in the Tour de France to be the most courageous of individuals who pull out all the stops in efforts to win stages or support GC contenders with the overall prize in mind. There are often mass crashes where downed riders untangle themselves from the wreckage to gamely ride on. Who could forget the 2014 Tour when first Froomey reluctantly pulled out after coming off three times in two days followed a week later by Contador who hit the floor at 77kph sustaining a broken shinbone but gave up only after riding for a further 20kms.

This year's tour has been no exception. It was amazing, looking around the peloton as they headed into the mountains, how many of the riders were sporting bandages. While wearing yellow Cancellara went over his handlebars at 60kmp to land in a ditch but rode on 50km, with fractured vertebra, to the finish. The next wearer of the yellow jersey, Tony Martin, came off in the sprint for the line, cycled to the finish and went through the process of press conferences and the presentation. When they eventually removed his jersey a bit of his collar bone was poking through the skin.



Some of the horror stories of the early days of the Tour, however, take some beating. One such individual is Frenchman Honoré Barthélemy.

In the 1920 Tour Barthélemy (pictured) crashed badly on the stage to Aix-en-Provence. He had concussion and hurt his back, which was so painful he had to turn his handlebars up the other way. But more seriously he had a broken shoulder, dislocated wrist and, worst of all perhaps for us reading this today, a piece of flint had cut into his eye rendering him blind in that eye. Despite being in so much pain with a life-changing injury he carried on not only finishing that stage but also the remainder of the tour ending up in 8th

in the GC. His heroism didn't go unnoticed and he received a triumphant reception at the finish in Paris. A year later he would finish on the podium and win a stage, despite riding with a glass eye. In those days conditions were often very dusty and often he was forced to take his hands off the bars, remove his glass eye, put it in a jersey pocket and stuff his socket with cotton wool. It is not surprising that he lost it quite often and later claimed that he'd paid more for replacement glass eyes than earned in prize money during his racing career.



Peloton 1920



Wheelers at the Bay Horse Inn start 'On the occasion of the Club "25" June 5th 1932'



Wheelers at the Stretton Sugwas start of the Club '25' July 9th 2015