

Thursday 5th July. Bitton to Clutton Hill. Report from Bill Balchin: More warm dry weather for our ride from Bitton to Clutton Hill led by Alan Partridge. Today the fifteen strong group had the added benefit of some high level cloud taking away some of the fierceness from the sun so without much wind either we were looking at a pretty much perfect day for cycling. With nobody available to organise a moderately paced ride today Alan assured the group that the ride would not be demanding as we set off along the cycle track in the direction of Bath. Down to the two tunnels and you could feel the cold air rushing to meet you as you entered the first tunnel. After the second tunnel we turned off the path with ten miles covered and hardly a hill climbed and started on the ups and downs of single track lanes starting with Tucking Mill. I have cycled this route before with Alan. He says it is easy to follow - you just go straight. Looking at the map that does seem to be the case but out on your bike there are a lot of junctions without signposts where it is possible to go wrong. With so many short climbs it is easy to get ahead on an electric bike to grab a photo, the first at Combe Hay with Pete and Moira at the front of the peloton.



Staying on small lanes which were generally quiet and dry we continued in a westerly direction through Dunkerton and climbed into Carlingcott. After a regrouping stop we took the descent out of Carlingcott where the bumpy road surface demanded a firm grip on the bars to avoid crashing. I managed to get in front again for a small bridge that I had noted for a photo opportunity but never managed it before.



We were getting close now, plenty of time in hand, just the small matter of Radford Hill to bring us into Timsbury where a short rest at the top of the hill was very welcome.



With most of the serious climbing completed we cruised through Timsbury to High Littleton and when you get onto Scumbrum Lane you know you are almost there. At five to twelve we rocked up at the Hunters Rest to join Brian Trott in the garden. Everybody decided to dine outside and by half past twelve everybody was tucking into their lunch. Pretty quick for a pub that does not require a pre-order. By one fifteen we were ready to leave. Two groups formed - one for Bristol and one for Bitton. The sun was noticeably warmer now as a long descent took us to the A368 and on the Compton Dando. I swapped bikes briefly

with Keith so he could ride up Fairy Hill. He was impressed with mine although I thought I would die riding his bike. Still made the top but I think I will stay with electric.

[Alan's warm and lumpy ride looks like this.](#)

Thursday 12th July. Ashton to Nailsea. Main group report from Bill Balchin: Twenty riders were assembled at Ashton Bridge this morning - fifteen ready for Guido's "nice and fast" ride and another five for Steve to lead on a more moderate excursion. And both groups were feeling the effects of the weather. After weeks of bone dry high temperatures and blazing sun we actually got some rain this morning. Apparently eskimos have fifty words for snow. We have several for rain including deluge, drizzle and light but this was regular sized drops but spaced out a bit so you did not get soaked. Let's go with light.

Guido took his group through Long Ashton ignoring the Festival Way (not fast enough?) and along Wild Country Lane which now sports some sections of fresh tarmac which were definitely fast enough. We took an unusual way to get to Hobbs Lane by continuing on Wild Country to the Barrow Gurney road and then turning left into Hobbs Lane avoiding the blind road crossing of the direct route. We went single file between the overgrown hedges avoiding the nettles and then had a tricky crossing of the A38 into the Winford road with steady traffic coming from both directions plus cars waiting to pull out from the Winford road. It was still hit and miss whether to have your rain jacket on or off as we rode into Chew Magna where the roads were dry.

That lasted all of five minutes as we took Denny Lane then passed the surprisingly full lake. Into Chew Stoke we then turned into Pilgrims Way then left into Gravel Hill. I may have been along here before but I don't remember it, and I am sure I would remember such a charming little lane with a climb that took us to today's high point before a vicious descent near to Nempnett Church. More narrow lanes followed as we skirted around the northern edge of Blagdon Lake and picked up Aldwick Lane past the vineyard. At last! I know where I am.

With the rain still coming and going but never heavy we popped out on the A38 at Redhill and did a left and right which brought us into Wrington. I don't know why I was surprised to see it, I knew Wrington was on our route, I guess the Butcombe triangle has that effect. Now our other big climb of the day, Wrington Hill going up, over the top into a dark tunnel of trees and Cleeve Hill on the way down. Guido and Max had their climbing legs on today but everybody go up ok.



I always try to anticipate the route and yet again I was wrong. I guessed right then left at the main road into Meeting House Lane, but no. left and right took us through Cleeve which I have never done before and carried on into Claverham which I have done dozens of times but in the opposite direction. In fact I did not recognise it until we were almost at Yatton. Through the high street and onto the moors and the fast pace kicked in. By now it was after twelve so I guess the pub was calling out to those speedsters riding at twenty miles per hour and more. Guido delegated people to wait at junctions throughout the ride until back marker Shirley appeared so nobody was lost all day. He had also promised a nice fast ride and delivered as we arrived at the Moarend Spout bang on half past twelve.

The Moarend Spout may have got wind of our possible pub of the year vote. Their service, value and quality of meals were first class although, come to think of it, that's always the way. We had our own section of the dining area with several independents boosting the numbers to around two dozen. By the time we left at around one thirty the rain had stopped so it looked like a good ride home.

Unless you were riding a Giant E-bike that jammed it's chain between the small ring and

the motor. This is just what happened at Slimbridge, so after a few folks tried to help and got their hands covered in oil, I knew it was a lost cause. Thanks to you all that stopped to help and especially to John Upward who led me to the local bike shop - which was closed for another half an hour. Next on to the bus stop where the X8 driver refused at first to take a bike but then relented and took me to Bristol bus station. In the "Bear Pit" next to the bus station is Jakes Bikes where they quickly extracted the crank, removed a locking ring with a special tool and a chain whip, then released the chain rings and the chain. Certainly not a roadside repair. So I ended the day cycling home along the A38 from Bristol. I feel a strongly worded complaint to the Giant bicycle company coming on.

[Follow the outward route here, see the X8 schedule for the return.](#)

Thursday 12th July – moderate paced ride report from Steve Hicks: Five takers for our moderate paced ride today which was soon to become six as we were joined by Keith at the top of Ashton Court. Our route was a traditional BTOTC variety, taking us first to Abbots Leigh then along Harris Lane and into Sandy Lane.



With evidence of road works around us we soon encountered a 'ROAD CLOSED' sign; however we were waved on by a friendly workman until we reached an almost perfect road block. Sandy Lane is narrow at its most generous parts but here was a tipper truck filling the lane and no sign of the driver. Not to be deterred, we just managed to squeeze through with bars barely clearing the gap between truck and hedge.

Having safely negotiated today's hazard, the remainder of our route was remarkably tranquil though we were accompanied by a light drizzle for the majority of the way; never enough to warrant an extra layer but just enough to keep the roads messy. We skirted around Clevedon, out towards the Hand Stadium, then back across Kenn Moor and into Nailsea arriving at the Moored Spout at a couple of minutes before twelve.

The return journey saw the main group go off in search of a 'big hill' to climb while we were determined to take the most direct route back; not so easy when you have to navigate your way around Nailsea! Just as we were contemplating this conundrum we encountered Bill with a chain which was not only off but well and truly jammed. We stopped to offer assistance but after a number of fruitless attempts to free the errant chain, we departed leaving John Upward to escort Bill and machine to the local bike shop. We eventually found our way out of downtown Nailsea only for yours truly to suffer a rear puncture as we approached the cycle path at Farleigh. With plenty of help on hand the tube was soon changed and we finally made our way back to Bristol - a short but eventful day.

Thursday 19th July. Severn Bridge to Redwick - main group. Report from Bill

Balchin: If you wanted to describe a perfect cycling day this would fit the bill. Warm but not too hot, sunny but not too strong, dry roads and hardly any wind. Add that to a lunch stop at the Rose Inn at Magor and it was no surprise to find thirty riders assembled at the bridge. I led the main group of twenty riding my Giant e-bike. After all the problems on the previous Thursday I was risking it again. I think the problem is down to "chain suck" which is a complicated phenomenon that you can search on Google. Basically your front chain rings do not want to let go of the chain, and an electric motor seems to make matters worse. My plan now when changing gear on the front is to momentarily stop pedalling, flick the shifter then start pedalling again. Let's see how that pans out on the hilly route in front of us.

Once over the bridge we negotiated the Chepstow roundabout towards the race course then turned left into Mounton Road - the beginning of country roads that we would be on practically all day. It's a shame that road dips down as soon as you are on it because from there it was almost non-stop climbing through Shirenewton, on through Earlswood heading towards Wentwood. Taking an unmarked right turn I announced that we were paying an *homage* to the Tour de France which had sections of pave on stage 9 and a gravel road on stage 10. Ours was only short and a bit rough but it still caught out Martyn with a rear wheel puncture. The rest of the group continued a short distance to Old Road to wait at the highest point of the day ready for the big descent to come. Once Martyn and back marker Guido had rejoined and pumped a bit more air into the tyre it was time for the scary descent. Now I know how ski jumpers feel now as they launch themselves down the jump. Well maybe that is exaggerating a bit but it does drop away sharply with a fantastic view across the river Usk to the Brecon Beacons in the distance - best to keep your eyes on the road though.

We all got down safely although Martyn had to put in another tube at the bottom. Despite the big height loss we still had a long descent towards Usk before turning sharp left on a lane with the busy A449 to our left and the peaceful river Usk to our right. There was not much peaceful about the next section as the urge to put the hammer down was too much for several riders and a chase developed. Guido would have enjoyed it but stayed true to the back marking duty. What a grand guy - leading last week and next week plus back marking today. Take a star from the box.

After checking that we were all together at the junction I had to ride like a maniac to catch the *tete de le course* and managed to stop all but one from over-shooting our turning. It is hard to lead and get photos but I manages to get a couple as we approached Langstone before crossing the A48 and getting back to small lanes through Llanwern, Bishton and into Redwick by twenty past twelve - not bad after a couple of punctures.



I am a fan of the Rose Inn but it was not looking good as our large group arrived and formed a long queue waiting for the solitary lady behind the bar to serve drinks and take food orders. But it soon improved when the rest of the staff appeared from the kitchen where they had been busy preparing the meals so that we all got them as close together as possible - not an easy task for thirty diners.

After a leisurely lunch we left as a single huge peloton at one thirty with me leading the way at a steady fourteen to fifteen miles per hour. Everybody seemed content to jog along behind as we rode along the flat lanes to Magor, St Brides road to Carrow Hill then undulating lanes to Dewstow, cycle track into Caldicot and through the grounds of the castle where they were preparing for a VW owners festival. The length of the bunch meant that I did not realise we had lost some from the back of the group but as we waited by the

exit from the castle onto the Portskewett roundabout the rest came along the main road. And so we got back to the bridge with forty six sunny miles completed to end a grand day out. Several people commented that we seemed to have done more descending than the climbing should have given us. I don't know why that should be but it was welcome. And the gear shifting? The e-bike did not misbehave once today. The new gear shifting policy seems to work. It is a bit of a nuisance but I love this bike so much I will live with it.

[Trace the main group route here.](#)

Thursday 19th July – moderate paced ride report from Steve Hicks: A short report this week which reflects a steady but uneventful ride to Redwick.

Ten moderates set out from the meeting point, including the Team Shepherd tandem duo, Don who had driven back from the Scottish Borders only yesterday, and long-time absentee Jane Chapman.

Our route was one that used to be a 'main group' ride, albeit slightly shorter in the days when we lunched at the Golden Lion in Magor. So, across the Severn Bridge and down through the delightful village of Matthern with its abundance of floral displays (previous Wales in Bloom silver medalist). Then the long climb to Shirenewton, though not as steep as the Mounton Road, it proved too much for Jane who made the top only to feel unwell and turn back. The remainder of us negotiated the newly laid 'Roubaix homage' cobbles of Shirenewton and headed off to Earlswood and the steep climb to Penycaemawr. We then had the delight of the 2.6 mile descent through Parc Seymour to the A48. Crossing at the Groes Wen Inn we made the short climb and another long descent along Bowdens Lane to Magor. Exiting Magor over the railway bridge gave us three options: turn right the take a gravel track left, turn right and pick up the A4810 or turn left across Magor Marsh. We decided on the Magor Marsh route and rolled up at The Rose at 12.05 just minutes ahead of the main group. For lunch my hobgoblin Gold went down very well, as did the cottage pie, peas and chips. For the return trip we joined the main group and all headed back through St Brides, Caldicot and Portskewett together.

[See the moderate pace group route here.](#)

Thursday 26th July. Bitton Station to Langley Burrell - main group. Report from Bill Balchin: If you wanted to describe a perfect cycling day this would fit the bill. Warm but not too hot, sunny but not too strong, dry roads and hardly any wind. Hang on - that's how last week's report started, but it applies just as well today for our first visit to the Langley Tap at Langley Burrell (no, I've never heard of it before either). Several riders who had completed the long ride to Gloucester were among today's starters including Max, Julian and today's leader Guido who all clocked up a hundred miles on Tuesday.

With the large group split roughly fifty fifty Guido announced that the main group would only be climbing one significant hill - Hinton. "Oh yeah" muttered one wag from the back "like the one hill on the way to Nailsea a fortnight ago?" Heading back along the cycle path towards Bristol we took the first exit then Cann Lane and Chesley Hill before turning up Lodge Road. "Oh yes, there is this little hill as well" admitted Guido as we climbed up to Abson where Nick decided to turn back as he was feeling unwell - hope you get over it soon. Hinton hill was it's usual self (unless you could call on 250 watts of electrical assistance) and then we were on the top with mostly flattish lanes for the rest of the morning. Although the day was bright and warm, high clouds stopped the sun from cooking us too much as we followed quiet country lanes through Grittleton, Stanton St Quinton and

into Upper Seagry where we turned southwards through Sutton Benger. As we approached Langley Burrell Guido dropped the pace considerably. He was timing the arrival for twelve precisely which we managed almost to the second, followed about ten minutes later by Don's moderate pace group.



The garden was the obvious place to eat today and once we had made our selection from the choice of locally brewed Wadworths ales with the Horizon Golden Ale particularly popular we took our seats. The pub had made life difficult for themselves by planning to deliver all the meals at the same time (or as close as reasonably possible) and they did a fine job. The general consensus was that the meals and service were very good. Moira gave herself a treat by having a pudding - a Gin and Tonic sorbet. And apparently they had not skimped on the gin.



By about one fifteen we were ready to depart once the pesky photographer had taken the obligatory group photo outside the new pub.



Now a decision was required - go back with the guy what brung you or swap groups. Guido was offering a trip via Bath featuring views over the city and pave past the Royal Crescent before the cycle path to Bitton. Don's route was mostly Guido's outward route in reverse - good enough for me.



One deviation was just minutes from the pub when we came across a causeway by the side of the road, built with no apparent purpose. On the opposite side of the road is a monument to Maud Heath who paid for the road to be built in 1474 for the benefit of travellers - thanks love, much appreciated, sorry my photo refuses to do anything but lay on it's side.

[See the whole of Guido's route here.](#)

Thursday 26th July. Bitton Station to Langley Burrell - alternative group. Report

from Don Ford: There were 11 of us for the alternative ride today which gave me a bit of stage fright. It was really good to have Alex back and riding with us from the start. It was the usual start via Golden Valley Lane to Doynton and Dyrham. As some of us struggled up Cock Hill at Dyrham, Mike Chouings breezed up effortlessly breathing normally. He leaves me in awe and in his wake. On joining Hinton Hill we met two young women with bikes laden with camping gear on their way to the Womad Festival. I felt my years even more as they sped past.

After crossing the A46 the route became a real pleasure. The lanes around West Kington are scenic and from there our progress was mostly downhill. Summer Lane provides a quiet alternative to the B4039 near Castle Combe, although the surface leaves a bit to be desired. Mike left us at Kington St Michael to return home and I hoped we hadn't slowed him down too much.



An occasional requirement of my rides is the patience of the group to listen to me hold forth on some building or person and Kington St Michael is an obvious place. The attractive almshouses in the main street were built by Isaac Lyte in 1675. Lyte was the grandfather of John Aubrey the famous 17th century antiquarian and polymath who was born in Easton Piercy and has several monuments in the Kington St Michael church. Among many other achievements, he was the first person to write about Stonehenge and Avebury and to consider what they might have been. The village also has another more recent notable resident. Jeremy Corbyn spent the first 7 years of his life there.

Continuing on and crossing the A350 into Plough Lane we passed through the delightful village of Kington Langley with its large green spaces and imposing residences. Turning right on to the B4122 we began to approach Langley Burrell. We passed the village church of St Peter which is remote from the village because it was built on the estate of the squire who controlled the living. Its most famous vicar was Francis Kilvert the famous diarist. His diaries, which are detailed observations on mid-19th century rural life, are believed by many to be the equal of Samuel Pepys. The rectory where he lived is near the Langley Tap which we were all relieved to reach at 1210. The main group were all in the garden and so we had quick service and were ready to leave after an hour.



The return to Pucklechurch saw a change in the group as some opted for a Bitton finish via Bath. Our route began with a short detour. A short distance from the Langley Tap is a very unusual monument which celebrates a lady called Maud Heath. She lived in the 15th century and had earned a living selling eggs in Chippenham. To do this she had to walk 6 miles each way on a boggy path via Langley Burrell. When she died in 1474, being a widow and childless, she left all her money to build a causeway and maintain a path 'for the good of travellers'. The charity still maintains the path to this day. I felt that the philanthropy of this remarkable woman justified the detour.

The lanes through Sutton Benger and Upper Seagry are ones we don't often cycle but the villages are picturesque and the lanes good for cycling. Heading west towards Grittleton the roads are more familiar and more of a slog. We were grateful to Bill who took the wind and led us as far as Littleton Drew. After Burton the gradual ascent becomes hard especially in today's heat with the last mile to the A46 being a real slog. We were down to 6 by the time we reached Pucklechurch and went our separate ways. Many thanks to all those who joined me today and made the ride so enjoyable.