

San Fairy Ann Cycling Club

FOUNDED 1922

# The Milestone

SUMMER 2023



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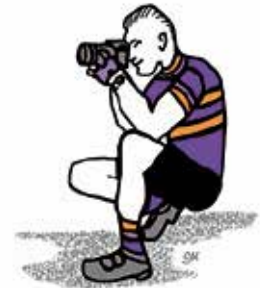
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# SNAP FAIRY ANN... IT'S THE GREAT SUMMER PHOTO COMPETITION!



**Who can enter?**

*Anyone can enter who is a current member of San Fairy Ann Cycling Club*

**What sort of photos?**

*Photos can be current or from the past, in colour or not, as illustrated in the lovely example above, courtesy of Michael Griffiths - but there is one really important condition: they **must contain at least one bicycle, tricycle, tandem, recumbent or hand cycle**. They also need to be digital. In this first competition, there will not be any division into categories until prizes are awarded*

**When by?**

*We want to give you plenty of time to capture a great summer of cycling, so the deadline is **31st August 2023***

**How do I enter?**

*Simply email [media@sanfairynncc.co.uk](mailto:media@sanfairynncc.co.uk), putting "Photo Competiton" in the subject line, and you will receive a link to a Dropbox folder where you can place your photos*

**Have I won?**

*Winners will be announced, and prizes distributed, at the Club's AGM in September. Winners will be notified privately before the AGM.*

**Are there Prizes?** *Prizes of Club kit, and goodies from local cycle shops, will be awarded. But surely, the kudos you will gain will be ample reward?*



# EDITORIAL



CAROLINE MORTLOCK  
DIRECTOR OF MEDIA

**And it's summer! Cyclists are out, all over our Kent roads, enjoying the sunshine and the fantastic countryside we have on our doorstep.**

I feel duty bound to begin with an apology. Although shifting to a quarterly publication has helped enormously with managing the workload of the magazine, a few unexpected events have resulted in this edition reaching you later than I would have liked - and that I do regret.

We have a packed issue for you and I am sure you are going to enjoy it. The diversity of this edition's content is a delight - such a range of experiences and events!

The SFA Sportive was, by every measure, a great success. Huge thanks are due to the organisers and helpers who made it such a memorable day. Happily, the Club website has space for many of the pictures I couldn't fit in here!

Many members have been commenting about the great surge in Club trips. Our Spring edition saw the B+ group off to the Mendips; in this edition we have reports of not one, but two trips to the Costa Blanca, as well as the A Group doing their Tour of Flanders. At the time of writing, the

Midweekers have just completed a day trip to France. Not only that, but this edition contains all the details you'll need if you're interested in next year's great Club adventure, to the Alps from Annecy. It's all rather wonderful.

Sadly, this edition carries a short obituary for Heather Wigston, who is much missed by many in the Club. I feel, as I have done with the obituaries in the last two editions, that what shines through the sadness is just how cycling enriches the life of not just the cyclist, but those of the good friends with whom they cycle.

It's been great to include news of Time Trials. A lot of effort is being put into encouraging more members to take part, with this year's Novice Time Trials and also the return of the "Rye and Back" event. Why not join in?

Our Club is flourishing, as you can see. Time Trials, Audaxes and events such as the Sportive can only happen with the participation of that all important person - the volunteer. Chapeau to each and every one who has staffed a checkpoint, baked a cake, recorded a time - or simply been there to lend a hand. Without you - none of it would happen.

## MAGAZINE CONTACT

### MAGAZINE TEAM

DIRECTOR OF MEDIA  
CAROLINE MORTLOCK  
e: media@sanfairyancc.co.uk

MAGAZINE EDITOR:  
CAROLINE MORTLOCK  
e: media@sanfairyancc.co.uk

WRITING TEAM  
Mark Cain, Mark Doxey, Duncan Edwards, Stephen Harmer, Kevin Smith, Mark Vowells, Bob Watts

PONY EXPRESS COORDINATOR:  
RUSSELL CHIDWICK  
e: ponyriders@sanfairyancc.co.uk

### FRONT COVER

David Parkinson; photo Lise Taylor-Vebel

### CONTRIBUTIONS

Features, information, cartoons, photos (300dpi) all welcome - please send to:

CAROLINE MORTLOCK  
e: media@sanfairyancc.co.uk

### ADVERTISING

To advertise in The Milestone contact:

MAGAZINE EDITOR:  
CAROLINE MORTLOCK  
e: media@sanfairyancc.co.uk

### NEXT ISSUE

"AUTUMN" planned for October.  
The **deadline** for all contributions is **5th September 2023**.

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# DIRECTORS' COMMUNICATION

## CLUB INFO

San Fairy Ann Cycling Club Ltd  
Registered in England and Wales -  
Company Registration Number: 13033225

Registered Office Address: 27 Old  
Gloucester Street, London WC1N 3AX

## CLUB MOTTO

Ça ne fait rien - It doesn't matter

## CLUB MEMBERSHIP

Senior first-claim £35  
Senior second-claim £35  
Second and subsequent Senior members of the  
same household £25 each  
Juniors: age 16-18 and students over 18  
in full-time education £5 (Free after June)  
Juniors: under 16 - Free  
Social membership: £5  
Non-members and Social members one year  
subscription to the Milestone: £20

## WEBSITE

Lots more information about the club at  
[www.sanfairyancc.co.uk](http://www.sanfairyancc.co.uk)

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: sanfairyancc  
Twitter: @SanFairyAnnCC  
Instagram: san\_fairy\_ann\_cycle\_club

## HOW TO JOIN

Online via the club website:  
[www.sanfairyancc.co.uk](http://www.sanfairyancc.co.uk)  
- go to "Join" on the top menu and follow the  
instructions.  
Payment can be made online.

## AFFILIATIONS

In addition to purely club activities, we are also  
heavily involved in:  
British Cycling (BC)  
Cycling UK (Previously CTC)  
Cycling Time Trials (CTT)  
The Kent Cycling Association (KCA)  
South East Road Race League (SERRL)  
The Veterans Time Trial Association (VTTA)  
Audax UK.

## COMMENTS FROM THE CHAIR



BY DUNCAN EDWARDS  
CHAIR SFACC

**This is a really exciting time of the year for the Club as the weather warms and we move into increased levels of cycling events, longer rides and the racing calendar.**

The Board and a large team of volunteers in the Club are focused on broadening and extending the range of cycling activity to espouse the Club motto - the pursuit of enjoyable and safe cycling in all its forms.

In this regard I hope Club members are seeing some broadening and extending of our Club activity.

For instance, we are hoping to increase whole Club social events. The Club Birthday events have been very well supported recently and this gives us the encouragement to introduce more into the diary; more to follow in due course on this.

Our Club cycling tours are gaining popularity and kudos. They are now looking like a regular annual feature, with the 2024 event arranged as we go to press. Amazing work making this happen – thank you to all involved,

notably the irrepressible Stephen Harmer.

We also have the new format "Rye and Back" which will have happened by the time you read this. With this event we are trying to embrace technology and use it to make new event formats possible as we have with the KCA reliability trial. Thank you to the creative innovators as well as the event delivery experts in the Club.

The Club Sportive felt amazing again this year. We have managed to create such a positive vibe in this event judging by the feedback. It fits in so well with what we are about as a Club - delivering a cycling challenge on fantastic routes with the support and hospitality of an enthusiastic team.

All our great events and opportunities are on the Club website so please take advantage, maybe do something new this year? If you want to join the ever growing team of Club volunteers, please contact any member of the Board. We have a complete range of tasks and jobs available for anybody who would like to get involved.



*Rolling out at the start of the Man of Kent Audax (see feature p.36)*





# CLUB OFFICIALS

## PRESIDENTS

Kate and John Bosley  
e: president@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## VICE PRESIDENT

John Longbottom

## CHAIR

Duncan Edwards  
t: 07402 549927  
e: chair@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## GENERAL SECRETARY

Position vacant, please contact  
Duncan Edwards  
e: chair@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Jonathan Engwell  
t: 07801 014877  
e: finance@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## TREASURER

Jonathan Engwell  
t: 07801 014877  
e: finance@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## CLOTHING OFFICER

Phil Gerry  
t: 01732 522277  
clothing@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP AND SAFEGUARDING

Carolyn Smith  
membership@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Carolyn Smith  
e: membership@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## SAFEGUARDING OFFICER

Steve Cheviss  
t: 07734 602269  
e: welfare@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## WELFARE OFFICER

Jenny Burton  
t: 07780 678201  
e: welfare@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## DIRECTOR OF CLUB RUNS

Philip Thorpe  
t: 07854 959705  
e: clubruns@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## CYCLE TRAINING

Tony Palmer  
e: ants.palmer@btinternet.com

## DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA

Caroline Mortlock  
e: media@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## MAGAZINE EDITOR

Caroline Mortlock  
t: 07948 613184  
e: media@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## ASSISTANT MAGAZINE EDITOR

Lise Taylor-Vebel  
e: media@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## MAGAZINE PONY EXPRESS COORDINATOR

Russell Chidwick  
m: 07773 324774  
ponyriders@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## SOCIAL MEDIA OFFICER

Position vacant, please contact:  
Caroline Mortlock  
e: media@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## DIRECTOR OF EVENTS

Position vacant, please contact  
Duncan Edwards  
t: 07402 549927  
e: chair@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## EVENTS OFFICER

Bob Watts  
t: 01622 737321  
m: 07718 812453  
e: audax@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## EVENTS OFFICER

Eric Przyjemski  
e: events@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## SOCIAL SECRETARY

Position vacant, please contact:  
Caroline Mortlock  
e: media@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Position vacant, please contact  
Duncan Edwards  
t: 07402 549927  
e: chair@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## WEB MANAGER

Position vacant, please contact  
Duncan Edwards  
e: technical@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## ASSISTANT WEB MANAGER

Russell Chidwick  
m: 07773 324774  
ponyriders@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## DIRECTOR OF RACING

Position vacant, please contact  
Duncan Edwards  
t: 07402 549927  
e: chair@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## RACING SECRETARY

Simon Charlesworth  
t: 01580 212114  
e: racing@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## TIME TRIAL SECRETARY

John Longbottom  
t: 01622 759081  
e: timetrials@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## ASSISTANT TIME TRIAL SECRETARY

Position vacant, please contact  
John Longbottom  
t: 01622 759081  
e: timetrials@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## ROAD RACE CAPTAIN

Simon Charlesworth  
t: 01580 212114  
e: racing@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## TRACK SECRETARY

Barbara Wiles  
t: 01622 873067  
e: track@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## OFF-ROAD CAPTAIN

Shaun Williams  
t: 01580 879315  
e: off-road@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## RECORDER

Ron Lee  
t: 01622 725334  
e: recorder@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## LEAD CLUB COACH

Kevin Charlton  
e: coach@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## CONSULTANT COACH

Geoff Wiles  
t: 07946 872327  
e: coach@sanfairynncc.co.uk

## CLUB COACH

Tony Richardson  
e: tonyr.sfacoach@gmail.com

## CLUB TIMEKEEPERS

John Longbottom, Helen Whibley,  
Jenny Burton, Dick Naylor, Richard  
Valentine.

## DELEGATES

### KCA DELEGATES

Ray Whibley, Duncan Edwards

### CTT DELEGATES

John Longbottom, Duncan Edwards

### BRITISH CYCLING DELEGATES

Geoff Hodgson, Carol Hodgson, Geoff  
Wiles.

## NEW MEMBERS

We would like  
to welcome new  
members to the club:

James Ausher  
Nick Baber  
Charles Barsley  
Stephen Creed  
Alicia Dahdi  
Richard Davies  
Melanie Deverell  
Kate Hammond  
Stuart McGovern  
Nicola Smith  
Alan Thynne



# SFACC BIRTHDAY LUNCH 2023



*A lot of silverware for Mr Doxey*



*Richard Valentine receives part of a bicycle*



*Happy Jeremy Roth*



*Racing Demon Reuban Davey*



*Comrades: Mark Cain and Matt Lacey*



*Charles Goode*



*Dean Chiddention*



*The much improved Sally Talbot and Emma Shaw*



*Splendid Club; splendid trophies*







# FIRST AID COURSE 2023



BY CAROLINE MORTLOCK,  
EDITOR

Larkfield, Granary Hall 30th May

**Everybody needs to do this course! Seriously, you do.**

I signed up dutifully, thinking that I really ought to, because I occasionally lead rides - but honestly folks, this course is for everyone.

Any one of us could find ourselves in a situation where an injured or ill person needs our help; how much better the world would be if we all had the confidence to step forward and give what help we could.

Our trainer showed us a very powerful short film early on in the day. A young man had collapsed in a tube train. No one helped him. They stepped round him, over him; someone filmed him on their mobile phone - but nobody helped him. That film has stayed with me.

We all recognised that there are significant barriers to stepping out from the crowd and offering help. We all tend to follow what everyone else is doing - it's human psychology.

Without going into a lot of detail, it takes quite a bit to be different from the crowd, to have the confidence to be that person who stops to find out if they can help.

The wonderful thing was that, at the end of the course, I felt so much more confident about helping a stranger in trouble. I really hope that if I do find myself in a situation now where someone needs first aid, I'll be able to provide it.

When we arrived, we were all very conscious of giving up what felt like the first sunny Sunday for ages - but we soon became totally engaged in the training.

Ben, our trainer, was excellent - enthusiastic, clear, knowledgeable and helpful. The group relaxed; it was easy to ask questions and everything was very well-paced. As a group, we had a range of experience and past training, and we all welcomed having that knowledge refreshed and improved.

We covered an impressive range of skills and knowledge; we all welcome being brought up to date. Since my last course (too long ago to remember) defibrillators have become a feature in towns and villages. Things don't stay still in the world of first aid; practice and guidance changes. We were all happy to ask questions and query what we'd been taught - or not taught - in the past. There were many anecdotes and a lot of laughter.

Thanks are very much due to Steve Chevis for organising such a brilliant day. Oh, and I forgot to mention - your Club membership pays for all this excellence. Do consider signing up next year. Simply, I cannot recommend this course enough!





# UNDER PRESSURE?



BY STEPHEN HARMER

Two misunderstood factors of riding your bike, and something many people get wrong, and fear, are probably two of the simplest factors to get right.

The two are **putting in the correct tyre pressure and fixing a puncture.**

In this article I am concentrating on clincher wheels that require a tyre with a tube.

## Punctures

Correct tyre pressure can make or break a ride, especially during the winter months when the roads are even worse than normal, and in Kent that is really saying something! The stone fragments, potholes and shards of flint can make life interesting, if not very unpleasant.

Firstly, whenever you go out on a ride, long or short, **you really need a minimum of two spare inner tubes, plus a puncture repair kit**, ideally with self-adhesive patches to avoid having to fiddle around with glue. It can be quicker and easier to simply change the tube rather than use a repair kit at the roadside, especially as the patch and tube need to be



completely dry for the patch to stick. But carrying a puncture repair kit gives you that second layer of security, "belt and braces" in fact.

**Always carry a quality mini pump** that can put a good amount of air pressure in the tyre, without it getting too hot. A revelation for me has been this pump (see photo below left) that you can fit a CO2 cartridge into, to re-inflate a tyre after a puncture.

Make sure you buy the correct size cartridge. This is normally 16g for a road bike which should re-inflate your tyre to around 90-100PSI. During the winter months a cut in the tread or the side wall is not uncommon, so next time you change a tyre, keep it, and cut off short sections that you can use on a ride to insert under the tyre and over the inner tube. Folding tyres are best for this. It is a great fix to get you home. The new rubberised £5 notes can also be used this way to protect the inner tube in the case of a split.

**Good tyre levers are also vital.** These Pedros tyre levers receive excellent reviews and really do work well, (see photo). I got mine from Wiggle.

**Always use the levers to remove the tyre** from the rim but always try to put the tyre back onto the rim by hand without use of the levers. This will avoid pinching the inner tube and making a hole. Before the new tube is inserted put in a little air which will help avoid pinches. **Importantly check that whatever caused the puncture in the first place is still not lodged in the tyre and waiting to cause another flat.**

Good quality inner tubes are vital. Some are much better than others as quality can vary greatly. In the case of inner tubes, cheaper is a false economy. If in doubt before you purchase, make sure you read the reviews!



**Nine times out of ten, a puncture occurs when it's cold, wet or both!**

Fixing a puncture is something that you need to be able to do with freezing fingers while getting soaked.....so like most things you want to do better.....practise! Practice makes perfect. You cannot always rely on someone in the group – and anyway you may be out riding on your own.

Remember that **inner tubes do not last forever.** If you are lucky enough to rarely have a puncture or you don't use your bike very much, **change the tube at least once a year.** There is nothing like the sound of bursting tubes at a sportive start line where a tyre has not been inflated fully for a while and the sudden increase in pressure on a tube, past its best, and perishing, is plain to hear.

On that note don't leave your summer bike in the shed over the winter with reduced tyre pressure as you may find the tyre wall will start to perish and crack. Keep the pressure high and every couple of weeks turn the wheel so the tyre does not sit on the same section. On an unrelated note, while discussing





winter storage, never leave your bike in the big chain ring and the high rear cassette ring. This puts a strain on the chain.

## Tyre Pressure

Correct tyre pressure will affect the quality of your ride and it is another thing that is sometimes overlooked.

It is still a popular idea that you should pump up your tyre to the maximum recommended psi (pounds per square inch) for every ride, no matter the road and weather conditions, or your body weight. The thinking behind this was that higher pressure means the tyre does not deform while riding and cause increased rolling resistance. In fact you should find the ideal tyre pressure, and don't automatically inflate to the maximum tyre pressure.

**A good track pump with a gauge is a must-have piece of equipment.**

It is still thought that overinflating your tyre or running at the maximum pressure will stop pinch punctures. To a degree this is true, but it can cause a tube to burst if you hit a pothole hard enough, as there will not be any 'give'. What you need is a pressure that allows a little deforming over bumps to act as a mini shock absorber. Running at maximum pressure can also compromise cornering,

especially in the wet, as less tyre is on the road. You will also feel every bump, which can cause discomfort. You could end up 'bouncing' around the corner, the overinflated tyre jumping on any little stone or gravel.

Underinflating your tyres can cause just as many problems, such as higher rolling resistance, poor handling, and a greater risk of pinch punctures. There is also the risk of the tyre 'bottoming out' on the wheel rim. This will quickly ruin your tyre and possibly break a spoke, besides being very painful on the undercarriage.

**So how do I find the correct tyre pressure for me?**



There is a fine line for getting the right tyre pressure for you. As a start point look on the side wall of your tyre for the recommended pressure range.

If in doubt a general rule can be followed. The wetter and bumpier the road the less air pressure should be in the tyre. Off road riders may have only 15 to 30 psi in their tyres. If you are riding on a smooth indoor track, pressure can go up to 120 psi and even higher. On average general road cyclists inflate to around 90-110 psi.

Experimentation is the key, but if you are around 150-160 lbs try running your tyre pressure at 80psi. If you are lighter, try 75psi. If you are heavier go up 5-10 psi. Remember look at the conditions and see how the bike feels.

I would not suggest going higher or lower than the recommended tyre psi, but that should not stop you experimenting within that window. Some of the wider tyres now can be run at lower pressure.

They are not used much these days but a 23mm tyre would need around 95psi but a 32mm tyre will happily run on 80-85psi.

Hopefully if you get the pressures and punctures under control, you will have more time for eating cake!

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# YOU'LL NEVER RIDE (OR WALK) ALONE

BY MARK VOWELLS

When I saw 'You'll Never Ride Alone' on the club's advertising flyer, my first thought was what a great slogan. And my second was to wonder why the Anfield Bicycle Club hadn't thought of it first! After all, the anthem 'You'll never walk alone' rings out at every home game at Anfield Stadium, home of Liverpool Football Club, and the Anfield BC and Liverpool FC are not only from the same part of the country, they also share some common ancestry.

But we too have something in common with the Anfield BC – a very long-standing tradition of Saturday club runs. Today, we are just one of many clubs that have regular runs on that day – I often see large groups of Gemini, Bigfoot or Sidcup Cycles members when I am out training on Saturday mornings. And in the very early days of the sport, certainly up to the 1920s, many clubs held their weekly rides on Saturdays, although less so in the mornings as many had to work a half-day then. In those days Sunday riding was less popular and tended to be frowned upon for reasons of religion. But I would suggest there was a long period, probably from the 1930s to the 1990s when very few clubs, apart from ourselves and the Anfield, held organised social (as opposed to training) rides on Saturdays. For example, I recall being on one of our runs in the mid-1970s and coming across a group from the East Surrey Road Club, who were on their way to a nearby youth hostel. One of our members, possibly Laurie Broad, remarked afterwards that it was the first time we had seen another club on a Saturday afternoon

since meeting members of the Medway Road Club somewhere on the road about ten years earlier!

So, for many years we were largely on our own on the byways of Kent, and it may possibly have been the same for the Anfield in their part of the world. I could be wrong but I think until now there have only ever been two 'interfaces' between our respective clubs. The first I will come onto shortly when I mention 'Wayfarer'. The second was a conversation between their member John Thompson and myself at a Tricycle Association Dinner about 15 years ago. We compared our experiences of club riding in days gone by, John having by this time moved to Bristol but having retained his Anfield membership, while my own Saturday club riding had ended some years earlier, due to various factors. Other than these exchanges, our two clubs appear to have spent many years locked in parallel universes, a couple of hundred miles apart, hardly aware of each other's activities, but both mindful that what we did every Saturday, nearly all other clubs did on Sundays, or not at all!

## The Anfield BC

The Anfield club was formed in Liverpool in March 1879. It has an illustrious history and is still going strong to this day. Among its very early members were George Pilkington Mills, who in 1891 won the first Bordeaux-Paris race, and John Houlding, the club's second president. He founded Liverpool FC after evicting another football club from his ground, the one that became Everton!



*SFACC Club Run, 1970s*



*Anfield BC on their 1980 "Autumn Tints" tour in Wales.*

*Photos courtesy and copyright of Anfield BC*

[www.anfieldbc.co.uk](http://www.anfieldbc.co.uk)





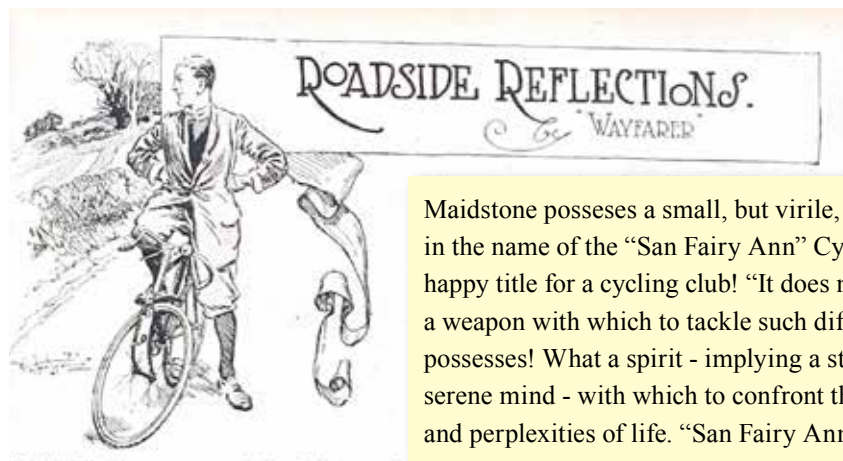


Another famous member was the cycling journalist Walter MacGregor Robinson. Writing under the pen name 'Wayfarer' his articles about riding in wild and remote places, sometimes off-road, inspired a generation of cyclists after World War One. He actually mentioned our club in a column in 'Cycling' in April 1923. But more amazingly he had already written an article in 'Cycling' entitled 'San Fairy Ann – The Cyclist as the Real Philosopher' two years earlier. This was published in April 1921 – 11 months before we were formed! Was this article in the minds of our club founders in March 1922? And did 'Wayfarer' unknowingly choose our name for us?

The Anfield 100 mile time trial was first held in 1889, it has a 'who's who' list of past winners, and remains a classic to this day, despite being lost to Covid in 2020 and to roadworks in 2021. When the world championships came to Britain in 1922 the National Cyclists' Union asked the Anfield BC to promote the road event, which they did in the form, not of a road race, but as a 100 miles time trial, based on their own annual promotion. The club also had a number of the country's leading time triallists during the 1930s.

The Anfield's Saturday rides date back to their earliest days. For a long period their year-round programme was centred around tea-time meets,

usually in cafés but sometimes pubs. Unlike most clubs, Anfield members do not have a single starting point for their runs, which instead begin "from members' cycle sheds". Even so, riders will often meet up en-route, and will sometimes ride home in groups. These arrangements started around 1890 (just after the club's headquarters had closed) and arose because new members were often from more rural locations outside Liverpool – the club's motto is 'Hic et Ubique' (Here and Everywhere). But John Thompson points out that once at the day's venue, members are 'never alone'! In the 1960s there was a switch to lunch-time meets, and this arrangement continues to the present day. It was as late as

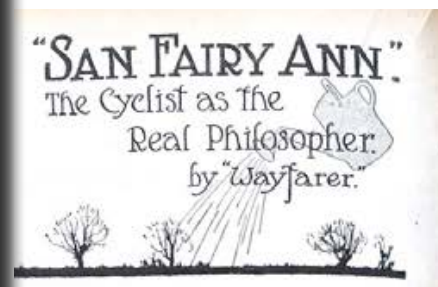


Maidstone possesses a small, but virile, organisation rejoicing in the name of the "San Fairy Ann" Cycling Club. What a happy title for a cycling club! "It does not matter." And what a weapon with which to tackle such difficulties as cycling possesses! What a spirit - implying a stiff upper lip and a serene mind - with which to confront the manifold difficulties and perplexities of life. "San Fairy Ann!"

*From "Cycling" 1923*

It has often occurred to me that the cyclist, of all people in this world, is the real philosopher - the philosopher of philosophers. To appreciate this fully, you have just to visualise him as he goes forth to indulge in our joyful recreation. The weather may be fine or it may be wet. He may strike roads that are heavy in surface and gradient, and winds that insistently obstruct him. These things are "all part of the day's work." Tiredness may harass him long before his allotted journey is done, or the pangs of hunger may seize him when the inn towards which he is aiming is still far distant - and when, indeed, no other inn is available. He may reach his intended sanctuary after dark only to find that everywhere is full up. Mechanical troubles may overtake him, and he may suffer a divided chain, a fractured tube, a broken crank or pedal, or a buckled wheel... In a way, cycling is full of hazard, of adventure, of dangerous possibilities, of difficulties, and, if we are to win through and come out on top of them all, we must cultivate philosophy... Sunshine gives place to glow, and a fierce rainstorm hides the smiling face of Nature. The philosophical cyclist "takes cover" either inside his cape or under a tree or convenient archway, and "waits till the clouds roll by". He accepts the change as part of the game. "San fairy ann" - it doesn't matter! Of the several expressions which our soldiers picked up in France during the war, none is so pregnant with happy philosophy as this, and we would do well to adopt it, not to the point of utter carelessness in things that do matter, but in connection with the difficulties and problems which assail us.

*From "Cycling" 1921*



*"Cycling" extracts by permission of "Cycling Weekly"*



1955 that the club first held Sunday runs and it is interesting to note that, at least to begin with, these did not count towards the annual attendance award – mirroring a decision our committee or AGM had taken relating to Sunday runs nearly thirty years earlier.

### The San Fairy Ann Saturday Afternoon Club Run

We originally inherited the idea of Saturday afternoon club runs from our predecessor club, the West Borough Congregational CC. But our Saturday runs did not start immediately upon our formation on 22nd March 1922. Reg Fuller chaired the club's inaugural meeting on that day. He referred to the dissatisfaction expressed by members of the West Borough Club at both its inactivity and its resolution to offer membership only to those connected with the West Borough Congregational Church. Reg therefore wanted the meeting to consider the formation of another club that would be more active and not confined to any particular sect. But he did not want to run the new club in opposition to the West Borough club. Reg therefore proposed that, for the present at least, activities be restricted to week-night runs only. His proposal was carried unanimously and all those present, together with Mr W. Garland, were declared founder members. Reg was then elected as the first Club Captain.

I think the life of the West Borough Club was probably over by March 1922 and it was certainly not long before our Saturday afternoon runs began. Wednesday evening rides were also a feature at this stage and a Wednesday afternoon run catered particularly for members working in shops, which in

the 1920s would mostly have closed at lunch time on that day. The club's early time trials were also held on Saturday afternoons.

Still showing a leaning towards West Borough, the early years saw the Saturday runs starting from the Boys' Grammar School on the Tonbridge Road, Maidstone, beside the junction with Westree Road. These premises later became the Boys' Technical School and more recently a technical college. I believe that pre-war the runs started at 2pm. The mileages covered were certainly impressive given the road and riding conditions at that time, and Canterbury, Hawkhurst and Chiddingstone were among the more distant places visited in the 1920s. At Brenchley tea would sometimes be followed by a musical evening with members playing instruments they had brought along strapped to their bikes!

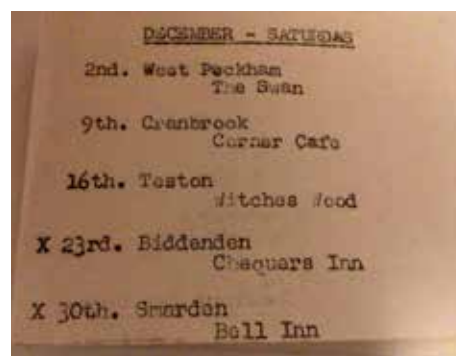
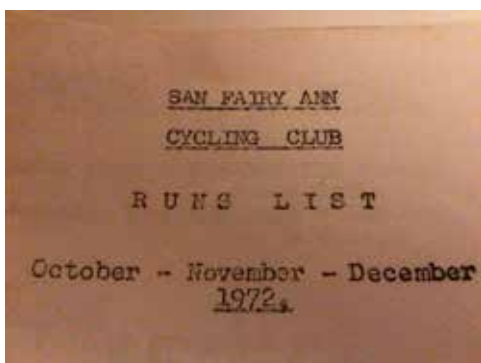
In about 1926 the club began holding all-day Sunday runs, but as previously mentioned, these did not initially count towards the Attendance Shield. Club activities were greatly reduced upon the outbreak of war in 1939 but Arthur Goodhew strove successfully to maintain Saturday runs for the duration. He once told me that even when he was the only rider present, he would still complete the day's fixture as planned, to ensure a programme was maintained for the better days ahead.

The first ten or so years after the war were a golden period for club cycling, both north and south, and throughout this period our club enjoyed at least three runs per week, on Wednesday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and all-day Sundays. The overall runs programme had changed little from

pre-war days, and the club minutes show that attendances and support for club activities were all booming throughout this period. But during the 1960s the Wednesday and Sunday runs were discontinued in their original form. Meanwhile, the Saturday programme barely altered for decades, although at some point the meeting place was changed to the Park Way/Armstrong Road cross-roads on the Loose Road, Maidstone, and post-war the usual start time was 2.30pm. Under the leadership of Arthur Goodhew, Saturday Captain from 1955-72, the runs continued to thrive year after year. They were all at a steady pace, we walked many of the hills, but we rode in all weathers. Long-standing tea places included the Chestnut Tea Rooms, Charing, the Corner Café, Cranbrook, and the Carlton Café, Tonbridge. Fixed wheel was the preference of most of the regulars.

As a club we bucked the 1960s/70s trend of younger riders being interested in racing only – John Longbottom, Jack Mummery, Ray Whibley, Ron Winwood, Gill Winter, Helen Gill (who is now Helen Longbottom), my brother David and myself were all regulars as teenagers, along with many others from the same age group. If we wanted a faster training ride at the weekend, we would arrange this for the Sunday.

For a number of years Gordon Cronk missed only about two or three Saturday runs a year, usually just the ones coinciding with his summer holiday. As a result, he won the Attendance Shield every year but one from 1966-78. He also led many of the runs. Laurie Broad was the winner in Gordon's missing year, 1970, and he took over the captaincy from Arthur two



Club Runs List from 1972 - but Swarden Bell was "locked and in darkness" (see above right)

Photos courtesy of Fay Vowells





years later, a job he kept for the next 17 years. Others I recall from this time include Reg Fuller, George Stanford, Aubrey Ring, Nev Cording, Tom and Dolly Veitch, Len Fagel, Peter Price, Robert Parsons, Roy Manser, Carole Gandy, Dick Bradley, Roly Crayford, Geoff and Carol Hodgson, Alan and Anita Alldridge, Ernie Murdoch, Pete and Nora Avis, Ron Lee and Roy Harris.

Saturday 30 December 1972 was a landmark day in the life of the Saturday run. We arrived at the Bell Inn, Smarden at 5pm, only to find it locked and in darkness, or certainly not open for us. We were stuck for a moment before Ted Hill, an experienced cyclist but a new member who had already become one of our regulars, offered to lay on a tea at his home just up the road in Biddenden! We also knew Pat by this time and it was a marvellous gesture on their part. A few minutes later we were all seated around their dining room table enjoying an excellent tea, served up by Pat, seemingly at the drop of a hat. It was the start of a wonderful period in the club's life when we enjoyed Pat and Ted's great hospitality at their Oak Acre home. This was not only as a regular tea place for the club run, but also for committee meetings, barbecues, bonfire nights, and many other parties and social occasions, although it goes without saying that we all enjoyed may

happy hours at this time at our official clubroom in the cellar of Pete and Nora Avis's home in Florence Road, Maidstone. Pat also cycled with us on some of the Saturday runs.

Over the next few years Don Beevis, Geoff Wilkins, Len, Therese, Simon, Phil, Helen and Clare Mason, and Dick and Ronnie Naylor all became members and took part in the Saturday runs. Therese won the Attendance Shield each year from 1979-82. Arthur Goodhew was no longer able to cycle by this time, but Reg Fuller (his next-door neighbour!), now approaching 80, regularly attended the runs up until the late 1970s.

As Captain, Laurie devised some exceptional routes for us and if anything extended the mileages, as well as taking us onto roads we were less familiar with. The ride home tended to be more direct, but we usually stopped at a pub somewhere on the way, all year round. And it was often 10pm before we were back, even in winter time, the time in the pub often being spent playing cards, darts or bar billiards.

However, by the mid-1980s members were less keen to cycle in the dark and as a result the format was tweaked slightly. The start time during the winter months was brought forward to mid-morning, with a stop for lunch and the ride home was then completed

before dark. The summer programme was unchanged and continued to work well for a time, but support for the runs dropped off quickly in the late 1980s and the Saturday afternoon runs formally ended at the 1989 AGM. They had served the club well for nearly 68 years but times were changing and newer members were looking for a different sort of riding experience. Even so, Laurie and Ted, and separately, Gordon and Aubrey, continued to ride together on Saturdays for many years.

And about three years later, Ernie Bray started a weekly Saturday morning run from Marden which quickly caught on. The riders soon split into a faster and a slower group, the numbers grew, the two groups split again, and eventually we had the host of different rides on offer that we see today, providing something for everyone across our very large membership. As I heard Arthur Goodhew say on more than one occasion: 'The club run is the backbone of the club!'

**I would like to express my thanks to John Thompson and David Birchall, Anfield BC, for their great help in putting this summary together, and especially to David for providing the images published here from 'Amazing Anfielders' and the copies of the two 'Wayfarer' articles from 'Cycling'.**



Club tea at Pats early 1970s

LtoR: Peter Price, Alan Capon, founder member Reg Fuller, ?Wilkins, Gordon Cronk, George Stanford, Laurie Broad, ??, Ted Hill, ??.  
Kneeling - Pat Hill and Aubrey Ring .



Club Run through Bedgebury, 1970s

# CLUB TRIP TO THE COSTA BLANCA

BY STEPHEN HARMER



Over 30 club members travelled to Valencia airport in May. Some met at Staplehurst railway station at five o'clock on a warmish spring morning to board our coach to Gatwick. I had booked Roseway coaches operating out of Medway, and they were excellent, providing a first-class service at literally half the price of any other coach operator in Kent.

The coach was early, and we were away ahead of schedule. There was a pickup stop in Maidstone for a few of the group. Everyone had plenty of time for breakfast and some duty-free shopping at Gatwick before we boarded our EasyJet flight to Valencia. Once we made it through customs our transfer coach driver was waiting for us in arrivals with his sign: a little had been lost in translation! We had a smooth and pleasant journey to the hotel.

The Oliva Nova hotel and sports complex is situated between Oliva and Denia on the Costa Blanca. On arrival we were met by Sam from Sporta Bike Plus who fast-tracked us through check in, whisking us through in just a few minutes. Probably the speediest group check in, ever! The Oliva Nova hotel was excellent and had everything we would need for the duration of the stay. The evening buffet was outstanding. All you can eat and well-cooked quality food. I wasn't the only one, but I most certainly ate far too much on the first night....and the second to be honest! In fact, I ate so much I had to sleep propped up on pillows. The bar visit before dinner, drinking ice-cold beer, was also a hit. One of the good things about the trip was that we all met in the bar at around seven in the evening and socialised. Dinner was at eight; we all sat in our own group area of the dining



*Does he mean us?*



room. This made for good group bonding, and nobody was left on their own. Many good and enduring friendships have been formed during our stay. The hotel also served an extensive and excellent breakfast buffet. Nobody could say they were hungry. Apart from the riding, we could also make use of the indoor and outdoor pool, outdoor bar, steam rooms and treatment sessions. A few of the group had the sports massage. I can't recommend the hotel enough.

Once we had checked in and dropped our bags in the rooms, Sam met us in the bike garage that we had sole use of for the trip. Our hire bikes were waiting: two mechanics from Café Ciclista who supplied them were waiting to set everyone up. We had already sent our measurements in advance of the trip to make sure we had the correct frame sizes. Just adding the pedals plus a few tweaks was all that was required. A few of the group had brought their own bikes in bike boxes and these were soon put back together and set up. We had all the tools we might need in the bike garage as well as chilled water for our bidons.

Despite the very early morning start, we were all keen and went out on the first ride. A couple of the days had choices of route available, with a slightly different mileage and elevation. This meant you could choose your ride on how your legs were feeling! Each day Sam gave us a pre-ride briefing and safety talk. He pointed out the best cafés and restaurants and went through the complexities of the route. Sam was on the entire route patrolling, making sure we were happy and safe. Sam was always in front or behind us, on his bike and in the support van. He would pop out from strategic points taking photos. Sam is a great guide and really made the trip. Everyone felt safe knowing that we had support each day if we needed it. This first ride was a 35-mile loop that saw us ride through Pego, Sagra, Orba, and Pedreguer, before heading down to the





*John and Kate Bosley descending in style on the immaculate road surface - no potholes here! Below: The view inland*







coast road for the flat and fast ride back to the hotel. Not too bad with 1,627 feet of climbing. It was a good taster for what was to come and for most of us, our first ride in Spain.

On Day Two after a good breakfast, we could choose the big loop or the slighter shorter loop to ride. Only a few miles difference, but the elevation was a lot more on the longer ride. Both routes followed the same course until 35km. The longer route took us to a restaurant called Ca's Pelut high up in the mountains near Coll de Rates where you eat what the locals eat: authentic and delicious paella. The San Fairy Ann pretty much took over the whole establishment with two huge paella pans on the table, from where you scooped out the amount you wanted.

We still had 40 miles to ride back to the hotel, but the paella had provided

a good amount of fuel. The ride on this day was notable for the sheer natural beauty of the landscape. High in the mountains you hardly see a car and when you do Spanish drivers are mindful and respectful of cyclists...to the point when the only shouting they do is to encourage you up the slopes!

The roads are first class, with a small pothole an extremely rare occurrence. What a contrast with cycling in the UK! Cycling through orange, lemon, and olive groves with stunning views and smooth roads really does take some beating. Day Two was 71 miles with just under 5,000 ft of climbing.

On Day Three we had a 60 mile double loop taking in the climb through Bernia rising to 620 metres. The weather was not great up high and some of the group got caught in a storm! It's surprising how loud the thunder gets, up a mountain.

The coffee stop in the morning was an interesting one in the town of Jalon as the Velosol café and cycle bar is the official Spanish Fanclub HQ of Remco Evenepoel.

The highlight of the day (apart from the beautiful climb) was the ride back to the hotel after lunch with Roger and Janet. We covered 19 miles flat out, downhill, and on the level, and even got to race an indignant Spaniard on his bike who didn't like being overtaken! So, Day Three, fantastic climbing, wonderful views, outrunning the storm, sunshine with 60 miles of riding and 3,658ft of elevation. I thought at one point I was surrounded by big flies, but it was the exertion giving me black spots in my eyes! I must have looked a bit odd trying to swot them away.

Day Four was our last day and Sam was able to extend all our rooms until





four o'clock in the afternoon. Perfect - it meant we could get the last ride in and shower and change in our rooms when we returned. The ride took us through Tomos and Orba to the bottom of Coll de Rates. Pro teams use Coll de Rates as their testing/training climb. This is the "must do" climb in the Valencian region and the most dramatic and beautiful one to do. We all met at the top for lunch in the Coll de Rates Restaurant. The views from the top are breath-taking.

The wonderful thing about cycling in Europe is not just the climbing, with the spectacular views and great roads. It is that what goes up, must come down! The climbing has a great reward, descending! Smooth roads for miles, easy bends, and technical bends. It is so exhilarating and scary at the same time. The feeling of speed and freedom is quite liberating. I believe many in the group experienced the best cycling ever in the four days that

we were lucky enough to be in Spain. Spending time with like-minded cyclists and having a great time with them was so nice. We were also lucky with the weather. In the week or so since our return the region has had six months rain in one week! This last ride was 46 miles with 2,904ft of climbing.

Once we returned to the hotel everyone had time to dismantle their bikes into the bike boxes or take off their front Garmin mounts and pedals, and pack up ready for home. I for one was sorry to say goodbye to my Canyon bike. What's not to love about a very light carbon frame with a 34 cassette! We had time for some food and a few beers at the outside bar by the pool before the coach took us back to Valencia airport. The only slight issues were an accident that delayed us a bit on the motorway, and on our flight a problem with not being able to shut the front main door of the plane. To be

honest I didn't care what happened on the way back. Getting to the destination is all I worry about when organising these club trips.

I hope the best cycling I have done in Spain this year, will be superseded by next year's trip to Lake Annecy in France. Onwards and upwards... hopefully. You should all have received an e-mail or two about the trip for 2024 and there are more details in this edition of the Milestone on page 33. I hope you can join us again - or for the first time.

If you want to let me know you would like to come or have any questions about next year's trip, contact me at [stephenharmer1@icloud.com](mailto:stephenharmer1@icloud.com) or call on 07539324565.





# SFA TOUR OF FLANDERS

## BY MARK CAIN

After months of planning, meetings (over a beer), route discussions, hotel changes and possible strike action from the French, an intrepid Band of Eleven Brothers set off for Kortrijk, Belgium. The group consisted of riders from both the Fast Inters and the A Group. The plan was to ride for three of the four days and with the "Rest Day", we were to watch Tadej Pogačar,

Mathieu Van Der Poel and Wout Van Aert do battle on the Tour of Flanders.

**On Day One**, after a seamless journey over, we set out on the bikes in definite "Flanders Weather." Gusty cross winds, rain and steep cobbled climbs delighted some, when others seemed less enthusiastic about the task in hand. "A" Group Rider, Paul Butler, navigated us towards the climbs. The first was the "Oude Kwaremont" followed closely by the "Paterburg"

and then we completed the route on the "Taaiburg". It was a real treat for any cycling fan - but we all soon learnt how easy the pro's make it look! With the added help of hundreds of other cycling fans, you had to time your attempt just right. The cobbles themselves are more difficult than I ever expected. After a pro rider from Team DSM sped past us in a blink of an eye, we all stood back in amazement. It was time for a coffee, and of course being

in Flanders, we headed for the "Tour of Flanders" café in Oudenaarde. This coffee would be will needed, as we knew we were facing a 50kph head wind back to the hotel. A real leg tester for Mike Cross, Matt Lacey and myself.

**On Day Two**, we all headed west, except Rob Parker-Cole who hadn't had enough of those climbs and entered the Tour of Flanders Sportive. Massive effort from him in, again, very Flandrian weather. Chapeau for all who attempted that. Also, the Day One ride leader, Paul Butler, entered into a local Road Race (mad man) finishing well in a bunch sprint. The remaining riders, slightly hazy after sampling the delights of Belgian beers, headed west and towards the testing climbs of the Kemmelburg, Rodeburg and the Baneburg before paying our respects at the Memorial for the Missing at the Menin Gate. This was a very important land mark for me as a retired soldier. I also, where I could, gave short passages on what happened during the Battle of Ypres.



*Kings of the cobbles*





*The pro's attack the cobbles...*

**Day Three** was all about watching the "Tour Of Flanders" and our first challenge was getting to the fan zone on the "Oude Kwaremont" along with thousands of other mad fans from all around the world. We were treated to the pros riding past us three times on the climb. It is two kilometres long at an average gradient of 6.6%. We were also at the right point for Pogačar's eventual race-winning move.

No matter how loud I screamed Van Der Poel's name, he was unable to catch the Slovenian. A lot of Belgian beer and chips were consumed during this, as well as an education in some Euro Techno songs, like "Links Rechts". I'd recommend this event to anyone.

**Day Four** brought the final climb of the weekend. This one was in brilliant

sunshine and every effort was made to ensure we all gave it everything - even when the Muur Van Geraardsbergen comes in the form of a one kilometre climb on cobbles at an average gradient of 8%.

Massive thanks to all for the support in planning this trip. It will be on the calendar for 2024.



*It's what Belgium is famous for..*



*A proud soldier at the Menin Gate*





# SFA A GROUP TRAINING CAMP, COSTA BLANCA

BY MARK CAIN

Spain, May, great weather, massive climbs and 12 enthusiastic but ageing riders set out for Alicante with one shared goal of long days on the bike with mountain views and sleepy Spanish cafés. The plan was masterminded by Michael Cross and executed in the same vein as any professional cycling team, just without the moaning from the ageing riders....

Day One had the usual complications for myself and D12 gears, but thankfully the bike shop had a spare bike for me. We then set about riding to our first objective and after finding something to eat and a coffee, we hit the famous Coll De Rates. Some riders tried their best to climb as quickly as they could ...but the smarter ones thought about the rest of the week and what was to come.

The next two days saw the riders climb over the remaining big ascents, including Vall d'Ebo, El Penyo, Cumbre del Sol, Puerto de Tudons and for those who could manage it, a local bonus climb which maxxed out at a vile 24% with sections of gravel. The highlight of these first three days was meeting Mark Cain's twin brother, Mathieu Van Der Poel, at the local café "Musette". Jeremy Roth seemed to be more interested in his bike than grabbing a selfie with the famous rider. Takes all sorts, I suppose.

During the first three days, a new custom was introduced and in the form of a small rubber chicken called "The Cock (male chicken)". This had to be carried by who ever was late, had a mechanical or messed up. Riders like Paul Jenner and Richard Jones seemed to be attracted to this, even when they complained about the added weight.

Day Four was all about the active recovery, while some headed up into the mountains, others headed along the coast towards "little England", and Benidorm. Keeping the legs moving and fuelled was the order of

the day, with coffee, cake and ice cream before some well-earned beers by the hotel pool.

Day Five and Six again saw the riders heading inland and long days of climbing, descending and more climbing. With riders putting in some "full gas" efforts on the climbs and others feeling the past four days, the riders continued to set their own PB's and feel the benefits of the training camp. At one stage even Mike Cross had to bridge over after missing the attacks by Matt Lacey, James Lawrence and even myself. He still showed his strength in climbing, as he just seemed to be unfazed by it all.

Over the training camp, the group climbed over 15,000 metres, rode 9,600 km, burnt 223,776 burnt, consumed 168 cups of coffee, 132 cans of coke and five Pina Colodas (no names mentioned).

On a personal note, it was great to get to know the riders I meet on every Saturday morning. Some great stories were told, over far too many bottles of wine, G&Ts and beer (It was a training camp by the way).

A special vote of thanks goes to Michael Cross for his planning and calm head when the moaning started. Here's to the next camp in 2024.





# THE FRED WHITTON CHALLENGE

BY KEVIN SMITH

"Tommyes...backfromfirstworldwar... çanefairrien...justgetonwithit...". For the third time in an hour I've been asked "Funny name for club that, what's t'story?" by a local rider, and if you've ever had to explain the history of San Fairy Ann on a sustained 15% climb, I'm guessing you'd give a similar staccato answer.

**I'm riding the Fred Whitton Challenge, England's premier climbing sportive and it's amazing** - and a major part

of that is the good weather. Up at 4.30am to load up on porridge and get to the Grasmere sportsground in time for the 6am start, my riding partner for the day (from St Albans' Verulam CC) and I are able to get away with short sleeves, arm warmers and a rain jacket under the saddle, with a dry day forecast.

Last night's rain has left the starting climbs to Kirkstone Pass greasy, and it's a ferocious pace from the peloton eager to make the most of the quiet early morning roads. However, the sun rising over the top of the fells, revealing the beauty of the valley mist over the lake, means I spend most of that climb looking to my right, ignoring the gradient and somehow avoiding the many potholes.

Shortly afterwards I'm glad I'm wearing my club top as I get hailed by Steve Hargreaves, who had ridden the event last year (modestly playing it down as 'a Cumbrian ride'), before he hits the afterburners. A fast but straightforward descent takes us to the A66 for a long 40kph stretch before the first big climb of the day, Honister Pass, albeit from the easier side. A long grind nonetheless, with the first signs of weaving riders that would become a problem on later climbs... but the first of many morale boosts from the terrific summit crowd with their cowbells. Of course, climbing the easier side means the subsequent descent is terrifying, and the Inters Plus know what a cautious descender I am, even in Kent. It's ridged, rutted, steep, tight and twisting - I'm glad I've flipped my stem as otherwise I'd be close to going over the bars.

The first feed station appears, with friendly locals handing out fruit, bars,

water and, I'm appalled to say, egg mayo sarnies - how is that ride food? A comedy moment as I'm passed by Southborough Wheelers and hail the last with "Oi Sahfbru!". He looks at me quizzically as I show him my SFA kit - it turns out he's new to Tonbridge and has never heard of us!

Then a beautiful rolling valley before the next major climb of Newlands Pass. It's



getting warm now and the arm warmers are off, I'm feeling good and the Yorks/ Toys repeats are paying off. This good feeling continues through cheering villages - and even cheers from the queues of cars held up by the event! - into Whinlatter Pass, a pretty forest climb and out into more open country, including a hilarious water station at the top of a short ramp that's pumping out Europop to the dancing cheering spectators in the sun! This really buoyed our spirits....at least for a short time.

Because... soon after it was as if we'd joined a different race, at a different time. Cold Fell lives up to its name. The temperature plummets as we enter - and stay in for 20 minutes - a cloud. It was so thick that I could barely see the road, and at points lost all sight of other riders...and I was nearly taken out by a stray sheep.

By the time we finally descend to the second feed stop all I can think of is egg mayo sarnies(!) and I gratefully blag one from the melee of chilly riders. We're

delighted to find that we have smashed the cut-off time by hours, so arm warmers go back on, and we're off to the final quarter: the dreaded Hardknott Pass, with a few shorter hills first.

Approaching Hardknott a marshal warns us of a medical incident at the top.

Having done the hill once before after a brief warmup, I know that after 99 miles this is simply a case of "how high can get I before I walk?" And I'm pleased to do the first hard part, after frantically yelping at the walking riders to please move, helped no end by my 6kg bike and stiff wheels. I walk and ride alternately to the top where a rambler has fallen, but during another terrifying descent we see a rider down, crashed and getting treatment. We get through just before the valley is closed for an hour to allow the helicopter ambulance in and out. The valley itself is the most beautiful part of the ride yet, but has to be exited via the fearsome Wrynose Pass. This is the worst descent yet, scored by screaming disc brakes and panicking riders around me. Then a short push to the final climb of Blea Tarn, a mere

25%, but the scenery is so stunning you don't care. A sweeping descent speeds you back to Grasmere and a rapturous welcome through the finish arch. A magnificent day is capped by news from the marshals that the crashed rider should be okay, and a free pie and peas to enjoy while chatting to other riders listening to the live band and watching the Giro!

The next day and the journey home featured torrential rain and a failed attempt to get our bike reservations honoured by Aviva, but that's another story...



Photo credit: Steve Fleming



*Popocatepetl had not got the message*



*An Airnimal is a wonderful animal.*

# MEXICO

## BY BOB WATTS

An Airnimal is a wonderful animal. The Chameleon is compact, 'designed for speed', rides like a road bike yet folds into a suitcase posh enough for the best hotel foyer. On a visit to our son in Mexico City this winter it came along for the ride.

Mexico is certainly the place to bag a few summits: only once were we lower than the highest mountain in Britain; good views are almost guaranteed. Indeed, on the first day cycling I had just about enough time to summit the Paso de Cortes at 3692m and get back down

before night. In Mexico no smoking signs are everywhere, but it looks like Popocatepetl had not got the message as it erupted with a plume of smoke and steam although nobody seemed to notice, unlike more recently when it closed Mexico City's airport. I followed one of the signposted evacuation routes for much of the next day.

Mexico has so much to see. Built in the middle of a lake, one part of Mexico City is like Venice, with boats to get around. Every town has murals sometimes whimsical, comical or a bit subversive, and often featuring a skeleton. This represents resurrection, celebrated in

one of the many festivals, Day of the Dead. We came across a clown festival, a funfair in the road, a street procession for kids. There are marvellous markets and town squares where you can get a shaman blessing, stunning gorges with big crocodiles and at the beach on successive nights we stumbled across a turtle coming in to lay eggs and saw hatchlings making for the sea. There is a brewpub scene and mezcal is the strong hooch to excite or repel tourists.

After the sightseeing came the cycling. Route planning was tricky as there are no maps at a useable scale. Instead I did my best with Ride with GPS, the



*Doing what it says...*



*...a street procession for kids*



*...one part of Mexico City is like Venice*





*Mezcal...strong hooch*

poor Google Maps, a terrible hardcopy map and intuition which was the most reliable. But often I would find myself on a deteriorating farm track or, worse, no route at all so there was plenty of walking some days.

"Pueblos Magicos" are towns with a bit of something for the tourist so my tour stopped at them where I could. In some cases, the 'something' was big bouncy cobbles to look the part but rattle the bones. But great food too. Maybe because of the altitude the days were punishing, even though the distances were only around 100km a day.

Bicycles are not uncommon in the country so when I needed a cycle shop I came across one, looking like the set of Steptoe and Son and sitting anonymously on a backroad in a nondescript town. There seemed little chance of a much at all but it did have a gear

cable at a ridiculously small price.

On one of the long uphill in the morning of day four I was flagged down by a Mexican cyclist, a national champion mountain biker, who wanted a chat. Nice. He tried to thrust a hundred peso note in my hand "por el agua" (everyone drinks bottled or boiled water here). Pan y agua is actually what I was on because of an increasingly severe upset stomach. And in the afternoon I saw something I might have read about in a folk museum but have never seen. A bloke on a flatbar bike was idly cycling from one roadside business to the next touting his knife sharpening. There was a belt drive on the rear axle running a grindstone on the top tube. What a great idea for a low-impact, eco-friendly mobile business I thought.

On the fifth day I was catching my plane home so had just one hill planned. It was a thousand metre climb, though, topping out at 3713m so not a trifle - indeed

slightly higher than the Paso de Cortes on day one. The road through this range of dormant volcanoes was so pleasant yet devoid of traffic or any settlements at all, perhaps because it is volcanically active it cannot be settled. At the top a bloke was selling ice cream cones from the boot of his Ford Fiesta. I had a refreshing limon as a reward for the climbing, which was long and breathless, slow though I was. The 1500m drop to Mexico City was a buzz until hitting the city traffic, following an old railway line converted to cycle path and with the odd lineside sculpture. It was steep for a railway: I was freewheeling at speed. I bet the steam locos would have been as breathless as me. Finally, the route dropped seemingly off a cliff into the Mexico melee.

What a pleasant five-day excursion.



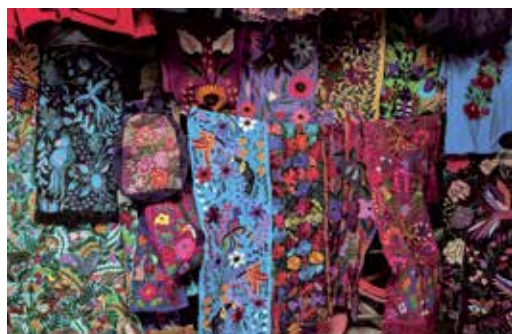
*Feather dusters for high ceilings..*



*Off duty*



*Ubiquitous Day of the Dead imagery*



*Colourful fabrics.*



*...following an old railway line converted to cycle path and with the odd lineside sculpture..*





# OFF-ROAD TO BRIGHTON

BY MARK DOXEY

## ...Unfinished business...

Almost exactly ten years ago, shortly after I first joined San Fairy Ann and was riding with the Fast Inters, Nigel Perry – who at the time was the Fast Inters group leader – invited us to join him on the British Heart Foundation's annual London to Brighton Off Road Bike Ride, which provides a largely traffic-free alternative to the better-known road version of the event. A total of six of us took part on that occasion, joining approximately 3,000 other riders on the 75-mile route, which starts in Richmond Park and finishes on the seafront in Brighton. The vast majority of riders were on mountain bikes, as were five of the six of us, although Tony Richardson – who at the time was an active member of the Abellio-SFA Racing team – showed us all that it was perfectly possible to instead tackle the route on a cross bike.

While the event proved to be a very enjoyable day out, there were certain pinch points where we had to dismount and push our bikes, either because of the sheer weight of numbers or because of a handful of slightly technical sections where less-experienced off-road riders were choosing to get off and walk. I therefore resolved to come back one day and have another go, using the official GPX route, but in a smaller group rather than as part of a mass ride.

However, as John Lennon sang, "Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans", and it wasn't until August 2021 that I finally decided to take up the challenge once again. On that occasion, I persuaded two others to join me, one of whom offered to modify the original GPX route on Strava, in order to add a 10-mile section across London from St Pancras to the official start in Richmond Park. On the day of the ride, the weather forecast was very variable, so the route-modifier (who shall remain nameless) dropped out, leaving just two of us to face what turned out to be torrential rain for the first couple of hours, and sporadic rain thereafter. Not only that, but in re-plotting the route,

Strava had missed out some of the most scenic and challenging off-road sections, and instead taken us down lengthy sections of busy highway.

## Third time lucky?

Noticing that there was a rare window of favourable weather forecast on Good Friday this year, I decided on a whim to try the route once again, this time as a solo venture on my cross bike, fitted with 40mm off-road tyres. And so it was that I took the fast train from my home town of Ashford to St Pancras, arriving at around 8am and cycling across Central London ten miles to the start in Richmond Park. The park is a very cyclist-friendly venue, and numerous cyclists – almost exclusively on road bikes – were already riding circuits of the expansive landscape in ones and twos, while others were assembling in large groups preparing for the day's club ride.

Ignoring the masses, I followed the GPX route across the park, exiting on the western side and following quiet streets to the River Thames. From there, the route joined the Thames Path which runs alongside the river through Kingston upon Thames, Hampton Court and as far as Walton-on-Thames. The Thames Path is a shared space with pedestrians, and provides the chance to enjoy riverside

views on flat easy terrain at a gentle pace, although the route also briefly joined busy roads across Kingston Bridge and Hampton Court Bridge. Shortly after Hampton Court Bridge, there was an opportunity to pull over and stop at a café set slightly away from the main road. However, I decided to press on, and my patience was rewarded when, a few hundred metres further on, having rejoined the Thames Path, the route passed the Little H café at Molesey Lock, where I had my first coffee of the day, seated outside in the surprisingly warm morning sun.



*Byfleet, bridge over the River Wey*



*Molesey Lock - first coffee of the day*





*A "quaint eatery" at Shere*

After abandoning the Thames Path near Weybridge, the route headed south along main roads for about three miles until reaching Byfleet, alongside the River Wey, where it again diverted off-road. For the next 12 miles, the route followed scenic trails and quiet lanes, mostly of a non-technical nature, apart from a steep woodland descent just outside the picturesque village of Shere, which is nestled in the heart of the Surrey hills in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. With the sun still shining and the wind never more than a gentle breeze, I took the opportunity to have a leisurely lunch, sitting outside in one of the numerous quaint eateries.



*...high-sided woodland trail*

Heading out of Shere, the route joined a narrow, high-sided woodland trail, which meant that I had to dismount when I found myself heading directly towards a long line of horse riders, adorned with numbered vests, riding in my direction. The riders politely acknowledged my efforts to move out of the way, although the final horse in the line was less impressed, stubbornly coming to a halt and relieving itself in front of me. Chatting to its rider, I learned that they were participating in a 13-mile charity

ride, and that other riders would be following along the same trail, so I made a mental note to take particular care on blind corners and descents.

### Downs Link

Around ten miles further south – roughly a mile north of the bustling village of Cranleigh – the route joined up with the Downs Link, which is a 37-mile pedestrian and cycle path that begins in Guildford in Surrey and runs south as far as Shoreham-by-Sea in West Sussex. Following two disused railway lines, the Downs Link connects with several other long-distance routes, including the North Downs Way, the South Downs Way and National Cycle Network Routes 2 and 22. Although the surface of the Downs Link is predominately compacted gravel or crushed stone, the section immediately south of Cranleigh was comprised of once hard-packed earth that had become waterlogged and muddy.

Despite the occasional muddy sections, the flat nature of the route made for easy-going terrain, and I was able to appreciably pick up my pace. This was by now an important consideration given the limited light left in the day, and the fact that I still had another 35 miles to cover. It did, however, mean that I didn't have time to stop and fully appreciate one of the highlights of the Downs Link, namely the disused West Grinstead Railway Station which was closed in 1966, but which is marked by a replica station sign, an old railway signal, and a green British Railways Mark 1 coach perched on rails alongside the cycle track.

A couple of miles beyond West Grinstead station, at Partridge Green, the Downs Link was briefly interrupted by a short stretch of road, before reverting to a traffic-free pathway. Here, I came across a family of three – two parents and their teenage daughter – standing at the roadside in casual clothing beside their utility bikes, with the father carefully examining one of the bikes. I stopped to check if they were OK, and it transpired that they had had a puncture, and did not have the means to fix it. I offered them one of the two spare inner tubes that I had brought with me, for which they were disproportionately grateful, even apologising that they were unable to pay, although I did feel slightly guilty that I didn't have time to stop and help them fit it. Resuming my journey, it dawned on

me that I had only one spare inner tube remaining, and had neglected to pack a puncture repair kit.

### South Downs

Just outside the historic market town of Steyning, a little over 10 miles before the finish, the route finally abandoned the Downs Link, and swung eastwards towards the village of Upper Beeding – the location of an ominous street known as The Bostal, which had become etched in my mind from my first effort at the London-to-Brighton off-road route ten years earlier. The Bostal runs for half a mile and has an average gradient of 10.5%, which in itself is daunting enough when compared to the infamous Ditchling Beacon (0.9 miles, average gradient of 9%). However, although the first 100 metres or so consists of smooth tarmac, the surface then breaks up into long stretches of deep ragged ruts, with large lumps of chalk and flint scattered liberally among them.

I had set myself the challenge of reaching the top without getting off the bike, and was grimly grinding the gears about two-thirds of the way up, when I realised I had taken the wrong line and was confronted by the angular base of a drain protruding six inches out of the rutted ground at right-angles to the surface. I was forced to dismount, with no chance of starting up again on the steep incline, and ignominiously pushed my bike up the hill for the last few hundred metres.

Reaching the end of the Bostal, I found myself at the top of Beeding Hill, and was rewarded with breathtaking views of the undulating landscape of the South Downs as I gazed towards Shoreham-by-Sea and the crystal blue expanse of water beyond. The top of Beeding Hill is where the South Downs Way intersects with the London-to-Brighton bike route, and I paused for a few minutes as I watched two backpackers laboriously ascend the hill from the west, weighed down by their enormous rucksacks. I had a brief chat with them when they eventually reached the top, and discovered that they were each carrying a weight of 25kg!

Thankful that I wasn't similarly encumbered, I followed the South Downs Way eastwards for a few hundred metres on a tarmac section of road leading to the YHA (Youth Hostel Association) hostel and campsite on Truleigh Hill.





*"waterlogged and muddy" on the Downs Link*

Seeing the angular structure of the YHA hostel lifted my spirits in a way that was entirely out of proportion with its stark and uninspiring 1970s office-block exterior, given the memories it conjured of previous trips along the South Downs Way, either on bike or on foot. Starting from Eastbourne and heading west, the hostel is situated at a point approximately 37 miles along the South Downs Way, and it had always represented a welcome refreshment stop along the route. As Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince intuitively understood when he crossed the Sahara Desert to find a well to drink from, the refreshment is immeasurably enhanced by the effort it takes to obtain it.

Passing in front of the YHA hostel, my tastebuds were aroused as I caught the smell of flame-grilled hamburgers; and, for a few moments, I toyed with the idea of stopping and sating my appetite. However, rationality kicked in, and I realised that, with evening

approaching, any delays would necessitate having to make a potentially hazardous off-road descent to the coast in the dark. Nor did I relish the thought of puncturing and having to use my last remaining inner tube before reaching sea level. Even in daylight, the fast-paced three-mile descent to the seaside town of Southwick proved to be an exhilarating experience on the uneven stony track, and I was happy to reach the bottom without any mishaps. From Southwick, the route swung east for three or four miles along the seafront promenade towards Brighton, where I arrived just as dusk was beginning to fall.

**For anyone who may be interested, this year's BHF London to Brighton Off Road Bike Ride takes place on Saturday 23rd September, with details available here: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/how-you-can-help/events/bike-rides/london-to-brighton-off-road-bike-ride>**



*Descent to Southwick*





# RACING AND TIME TRIALS ROUND-UP

## RETURN OF THE "RYE AND BACK"

**We had some fine, dry if slightly breezy weather for our revival of the Rye and Back event. In the end there were three riders who entered and completed the ride and the results were:**

Barry Fowler - 1:07:19 for the eight timed segments

Jonathan Leeson - 1:22:20 for the eight timed segments

Philip Harris - 1:26:46 for the eight timed segments

**For the veterans trophy:**

Barry Fowler - beat his age standard time by 24 seconds

Jonathan Leeson - was 14:10 slower than his age standard time

Philip Harris - was 15:55 slower than his age standard time

### MY EXPERIENCE OF THE "RYE AND BACK BY JONATHAN LEESON

This year I have been focusing on improving my Triathlon performance. As part of this structured programme, I decided to focus on my bike speed and thought taking part in the SFA Time Trials would be an excellent opportunity.

I was introduced to John Longbottom through the novice time trial on 15th April. This was an excellent starting point. I enjoyed the buzz of pushing myself in the outside environment as opposed to turbo training speed sessions. There is so much more to focus on: the weather, undulations in the road and of course, the dreaded potholes. You also can't beat reviewing the data and catching up over a coffee afterwards. I would highly recommend giving it a go, as everyone is welcome.

Following the novice TT, I then went on to do a few of the 8.5 mile events on the Wednesday evening from Lenham. It makes you realise how much climbing there is along the A20. The good news with the new Road Bike class you can turn up on your standard machine and just go as fast as you can in a short space of time.

This brings me to the Rye and Back Time Trial. Having enjoyed the individual TT's, I was new to the concept of doing multiple mini TT's in one ride. It was an excellent idea to test my performance and recovery.

A combination of a 60km ride and eight individual TT sections proved to be good test. Having been on most of the route before, it was interesting being more focused on certain parts of the route and then having defined recovery periods. This was also the first time I'd used the segments on my Garmin. It didn't work quite as planned, as I didn't realise you need to download the STRAVA map and segments to the Garmin, rather than doing a map download and transfer (I now need to retest this). I wrote the sections down on paper just in case (a

tip I remembered from long distance walking and navigation).

This being my first event I had plenty to learn, and I'm sure Barry Fowler will give me some tips if I ever see him. Upon completing the event it was very nice to see John and other members of SFA at the Headcorn Airport Café.

I'd just like to thank John and those involved in the setting up this event and give a big thank you for taking the time. I will certainly be doing it again and would encourage others to do so. Barry and Phillip Harris were the only other riders and I hope they'd enjoyed it as well.

My ride home from Headcorn was taken as a recovery ride, however I didn't enjoy cycling up Westerhill Road. In total it was 110Km of riding and an amazing day. It is always great to try something new and I'd recommend it to everyone.

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We take cyclists' bikes and bags from Kent (and back again) to ride in dream destinations such as Mont Ventoux, the Alps and Pyrenees, Italy, Girona, Normandy; or anywhere else you'd like. We specialise in supporting groups' own trip ideas.

## CLUB TIME TRIALS

### Novice TT1 15th April

Four intrepid souls braved the early morning rain and signed on to ride.

A nice 1/2 hr. ride from Marden to the start in Laddingford warmed everyone up and by the time it was ready to start the rain had stopped and the clouds were parting to show some blue sky.

Everyone reached the finish line in one piece and seemed happy with their initial times; this will be their target for the next event on Saturday, the 22nd. Afterwards everyone retired to Teapot Island to replace the calories expended and talk about their ride.

### Novice TT2 22nd April

A much better morning, weatherwise, yesterday which showed an improvement in times from last week. Five riders this week with Martin and John joining us for week 2 but Jonathan having commitments elsewhere.

Many thanks to everyone who rode and to Dean and Harry Chiddention for marshalling at the turn.

### TT3 3rd May

#### First Wednesday Club Event 8 mileTT

A fine, dry but rather chilly evening due to the north east winds for our

first event in the club evening time trial series, an 8 mile event on the QS/35 course based on the A20 between Lenham and Charing.

### TT4 10th May

Sadly the event last night was cancelled due to only two riders turning up and some wild rain showers that were approaching from the west; shortly after deciding to pack up and heading home, there was an almighty squall on reaching the A20 with rivers running down the gutters. Weirdly, by the time I got to Bearsted it was totally dry!!

Thanks to Mark, Dave, Hayley and Harry for turning out to organise and marshal and to Dean and Tom for riding, or at least intending to!

### TT5 17th May

Finally a decent evening for our 8 mile event on the QS/35 course based on the A20 between Lenham and Charing last night: dry, bright and not too windy.

### TT6 24th May

The best evening so far for our 8 mile event on the QS/35 course based on the A20 between Lenham and Charing last night: dry, bright and not too windy.

Thanks to all the marshals and timekeeper.



Novice Triallers Rob, Simon, Kevin and Martin

### TT7 31st May

A rather windy and chilly evening saw just 5 riders tackle the first 10 mile event this year on the Q10/44. Despite this there were some very respectable times recorded with Reuban getting close to beating 22 minutes.

Thanks to all the marshals - Richard Valentine, Alex Woolley, David Etnicknap and Jeremy Roth and timekeeper Mark Vowells for turning out. Also big thanks to Dean and Harry Chiddention for setting up the signs and signing on.

### TT8 7th June

Another very windy and chilly evening saw us having to change to the QS/35 8 mile course due to temporary traffic lights on the A20 just east of Charing for South Eastern Water repairs. Just 5 riders tackled the event with one 2up and 3 solos.

Thanks to all the marshals - Dan Chambers for assisting me as timekeeper, Tom Richardson and Rob King for marshalling. Also big thanks to Dick Naylor for setting up the signs and signing on.

### TT9 14th June

Our 1st event on the East Peckham course after a few years away saw ten riders tackle the newly resurfaced East Peckham bypass. The warm weather made it hard for some but overall the times were quite good.

## LOCAL TIME TRIALS

Date	Race	Results
10th April	Brighton Mitre Hilly 25 miles TT (Road Bikes) GS/999 SEDLESCOMBE	1st: O. Thomas 1.08.45 Sussex Revolution VC Mark Vowells 1.32.40 SFACC (Tri)
16th April	Tricycle Association (Eastern Region) 25 miles TT B215/17 BRESSINGHAM	Mark Vowells 1.08.27 SFACC (Tri) 1st
23rd April	Tricycle Association (South Eastern Region) 25 miles TT Q25/8 CHILHAM	Mark Vowells 1.07.39 SFACC (Tri) 1st
3rd May	VTTA Kent 10 miles TT Q10/33 LEIGH GREEN	1st: A. Bee 24.05 Wigmore CC 2nd: Mark Vowells 25.27 SFACC
7th May	VTTA London and Home Counties 10 miles TT F11/10 TRING	1st: R. Oakes 18.14 Team Ohten Aveas David Prom 22.01 SFACC Mark Vowells 24.46 SFACC (Tri)
21st May	a3crg 25 MILES TIME TRIAL P881/25 GREATHAM	1st: C. McNamara 49.05 Sigma Sports / Cannondale RT Mark Vowells 1.04.16 SFACC (Tri)
29th May	Brighton Mitre 10 miles TT G10/97 STEYNING	1st: J. Storey 19.46 trainSharp Mark Vowells 26.03 SFACC (Tri)
29th May	Brighton Mitre 10 Hilly miles TT GS/995 STEYNING	1st: P. Wright 24.35 Paceline RT Mark Vowells 32.40 SFACC (Tri)





# SFA SPORTIVE 2023: PREPARING THE WAY

Although the 100 mile epic route was intended to be a one-off special last year for the centenary, it was so popular that we decided to run it again alongside the 73 mile classic and 53 mile scenic routes.

This doubles the workload so it was great news that D and D+ groups helped with the onerous task of putting up the direction signs. Although, looking at the picture, are they all heading in the same direction? And running the epic route meant the extra feedstop at Sedlescombe, where the sports pavilion was made available at no cost thanks to the parish council.



Peter Waring



Trevor, Peter and Neil puzzle it out



Jo Ellesmere



Emma Shaw



The Great D+ Signage Ride



# SFA SPORTIVE 2023

The San Fairy Ann Sportive has been a fixture on the Kent cycling calendar since 2006. This year we managed to bag ideal cycling conditions: neither too hot nor too cold, and sunny once the overnight cloud had lifted. Perhaps because of this, all but four of the 178 starters finished. There were no accidents or incidents which is always a relief for the organisers.

It is good to report that – following a late flurry of entries – 51 of the 178 riders were SFA members, and another dozen or so were helpers (although we are indebted to a similar number who are not club members). We awarded 34 gold, 67 silver and 47 bronze medals. 37% opted for the epic route, 52% for the classic and 11% for the scenic route. All seemed to arrive back with smiles and good things to say, and here are the top ten:

**I just wanted to congratulate you and all concerned with the Sportive yesterday. Super efficient organisation and support... very happy with the event so top marks all round**

Thank you so much for organising such

**a great day! Loved the route. Feed stops were great - thanks to all those who gave up their time to staff them**

**Thanks for putting on a well-organised ride**

**...the cakes were fab**

**I'd just like to say how well organised and how friendly all the helpers are... a real credit to our club**

**First time for me, good day**

**Thank you for hosting a great event.**

**Thanks for all your efforts**

**Such a great cause**

**Cracking route, super friendly people and the sun did come out at long last!**

As usual every single penny after expenses goes to the Air Ambulance. As well as all those helpers giving their time for nothing, we had sponsors generously donating, and allowing us to maximise the amount we give to this very worthwhile cause - **this year a massive £3,800. This brings the total raised since that very first club sportive in 2006 to**

**more than £57k. What a marvellous achievement for riders, helpers and sponsors.**

**Helpers:**

Carolyn and Doug Smith; Charles Goode; Eric Przyjemski; Gary Fitch; Geoff and Carol Hodgson; Graeme Harris; Jon Dix; Lise and Andy Taylor-Vebel; Liz Watts; Lynne and Richard Spear; Philip Thorpe; Rita and Maurice Wilkins

Sally, Jack and Duncan Edwards

Sandra and Andy Avis

**D and D+ groups marshalled by Russell Chidwick**

**Sponsors:**

**Cranbrook Co-op**

**Cranbrook Farm Shop**

**Hartley Dyke Farm Shop**

**Leda Scaffolding**

**Rhokett**

**Sedlescombe parish council**





# SFA SPORTIVE 2023



Helpers: Graeme Harris, Lizz Watts, Sally Edwards and Carolyn (our membership director).







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Kent Velo Girls at Sedlescombe



## SAN FAIRY ANN

CYCLING CLUB



2024 Cycling Trip - Lake Annecy, Haute-Savoie, France

6th - 9th June 2024

£845pp

Included in cost;

- Flights - LGW to GVA (early out, late back)
- Transfers from Geneva to Doussard
- Small hand luggage + overhead locker luggage
- Hotel Arcalod, Doussard, Lake Annecy
- Breakfast and Dinner during your stay
- Based upon two sharing
- 4 days cycling - pre agreed routes (2 routes per day)
- Challenging and inclusive routes
- Support/rescue vehicle
- Rider on the road with group
- Bike transport to destination included from Marden, Kent

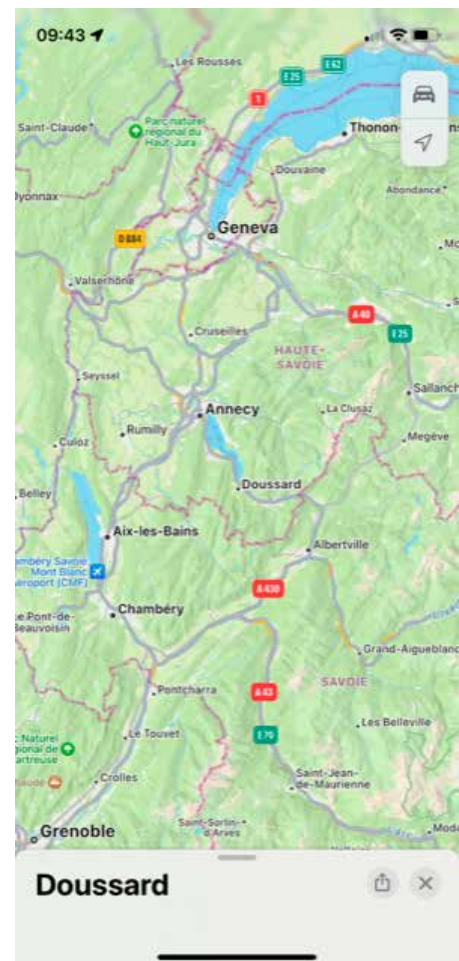
Supplementary Costs

- Single room - £30 per night
- Local bike hire - £70
- Bike on flight - £90
- Paragliding - £50pp

Cycling Highlights

- Annecy Lake loop - 36km largely on a wonderful bike path
- Semnoz - HC climb to the Ski station
- Col de Leschaux - the perfect Alpine climb for those new to longer ascents
- Options of Col de Aravis, Col de la Croix Fry, Col du Marais, Col d'I Arpettaz







# A RIDE COMMEMORATING THE WAR GRAVES

BY RICHARD VALENTINE

Richard Barsley suggested on a Club run that, as someone who had been doing many Royal British Legion commemorative rides in France, he would organise and lead a D group trip to visit some of the Commonwealth War Graves and Memorials of Northern France and Belgium. Fairy members, including his son Charles, Colin Campbell, Tony Munn and Richard Valentine jumped at the offer to join him and, when a friend of his named Martin offered his services as a support vehicle driver and organising all the lunchtime baguettes and cakes, it made the proposal even more appealing - especially as he spoke fluent French.

So, immediately after the Coronation Bank Holiday, they all met up at Dover and caught the ferry to Calais to start the four night adventure. Richard B planned the route beautifully with an average of 50 miles of cycling each day, but with interesting and emotive places that are not yet consigned to history, thank goodness.

Initially, following the coast and lumpy road past Cap Gris Nez, the group visited the Todt Battery museum, the most massive coastal fortification of the Atlantic Wall. It was built in 1942 by slave labour and



consisted of monstrous Krupp guns, capable of a range of 55 kilometres (which would reach mid Kent). Fortunately they were subsequently taken out by Anglo-Canadian air bombardments in 1944. However, the Museum still offers insights with much memorabilia.

It was then on to the Étapes First World War cemetery which houses 10,771 Commonwealth burials; like all the other cemeteries, it is beautifully kept. At each cemetery and memorial, Richard B had arranged for British Legion/San Fairy Ann wreaths to be laid together with a very short service.

The group continued on wonderful clean and pothole-free roads with great cycle paths. The very considerate drivers gave the cyclists priority at junctions and



roundabouts; it was thought-provoking as to how it differed so much from English cycling.

After an overnight hotel stop at the very quaint town of Montreuil, the group left for a 57 mile ride to Arras, and the huge cemetery there. Richard B related information about the 39 days of sheer hell that took 150,000 British, Canadian



and Australian casualties - and 120,000 German troops. Richard had also organised a visit to the ancient Wellington Tunnels, dug 20 metres underground, which housed the British, New Zealand and Commonwealth infantries before the launch of the horrendous Allied offensive of the Battle of Arras. The group left Arras the next morning in torrential rain, arriving after a short ride at the memorial with thousands of names. They then continued to the reconstructed trenches at Vimy Ridge, taken by Canadian troops. This offered more insights as to the futility of war. When they reached Messines town square and saw the statue of an Allied and German soldier shaking hands, commemorating their Christmas Day truce, it confirmed the senselessness of the war.

With the sun then coming out, it was time for a warm up café stop at the strategically high Hill 60, viewing the massive crater and Caterpillar Ridge, which formed part of the Battle of Ypres. The group then laid another wreath at the Essex Farm cemetery. This was used as a dressing station and was where Lt.Col. John McCrae wrote the famous poem "In Flanders Fields."





Then it was on to the last hotel in the cobbled town of Ypres. The group attended the Menin Gate; every night at 8pm since 1928 (except for four years in the Second World War when it was held every evening in Surrey) there is a wreath laying ceremony with buglers - and on our visit, a piper. Richard Barsley, his son Charles and Martin, our support vehicle driver, laid a wreath on behalf of the British Legion and San Fairy Ann.

On the final day, with very flat, mainly cycle-laned roads, the group set off to Dunkerque. On a much smaller, but still emotional scale, was the visit to what was a cow shed, the scene of the Wormhout Massacre in 1940, when approximately 80 British and French prisoners of war were herded up and shot by SS troops. They even pursued two who

managed initially to escape to a nearby pond, shooting one dead and leaving the other for dead.

The group made a final visit at another cemetery in Dunkerque, before the ferry. It was the end of four very memorable, sometimes upsetting, but equally enjoyable days in good company with stress-free cycling.

An overall distance of 208 miles, with just one puncture.



## IN MEMORIAM: HEATHER WIGSTON

**27th February 1940 – 29th March 2023**

**After a short illness Heather passed away on Wednesday, 29th March 2023.**

Heather was an inspiration to many in the Club. She epitomised the Club ethos in her enjoyment of cycling and her encouragement for others to enjoy it also. Those that knew her well were always amazed at her resilience in maintaining her love of cycling and adventure despite her health struggles in recent years.

Members and friends attended her funeral at St Margaret's Church in Barming on 11th May.

Krissi Pink recalls meeting Heather when she joined the D group over ten years ago. Heather, along with her cycling buddy, Pat led rides all across Kent. Chatting at the

coffee breaks Krissi discovered that Heather and Pat, with Rita and Maurice had completed numerous cycle tours as far afield as Asia and South America. They loved attending the Semaine Fédérale in France each year and were always keen for others to join them.

Despite numerous health problems Heather continued to ride with several of the groups within the club encouraging new members to try out "higher" groups when she thought it appropriate. Due to her own limitations, Krissi was unable to keep up with the pace of even the slowest groups, so Heather would accompany her on rides as well as the twice weekly rides that she was already doing. Krissi says how she will personally miss her a lot as a friend, as well as a cycling buddy, as so many of us will.



*"What a delight to see the sun setting as the moon was rising, over the River Wye."*



The traditional opener to our Audax season was, as ever, David Winslade's 200km Man of Kent out of Golden Green. Popular as ever – especially so in this Paris-Brest-Paris year – there were 49 finishers who had enjoyed a trip around most of Kent east of the Medway. Four SFA members completed: Lisa Loft, Jill Edmans, Kevin Griffiths and Tom Humphrey.

For Tom, it was the first of his PBP qualifiers and he has now gone on to do the 300, 400 and 600km qualifiers too, culminating in the recent Wye Wander which took him from Raynes Park to Wales and back with a punishing 5,700m of ascent over the 40-hour weekend. I did a similar but flatter 600km audax from Stevenage over Gospel Pass in ideal conditions on the weekend of the full moon. What a delight to see the sun setting as the moon was rising, over the River Wye. Climbing the pass gently then more steeply in the balmy evening breeze on untrafficked roads as the bats flew and the owls hooted was most certainly the highlight. Why do more of us not choose to cycle at dusk or at night?

# AUDAX

BY BOB WATTS, AUDAX AND SPORTIVE CO-ORDINATOR



Earlier, for my 400km qualifier I did the Lincolnshire Poacher 400 because it went out of Newark on Trent which is nice and easy to get to on the train. I always think the Lincolnshire Wolds are underrated – like the South Downs with some hills and great views. Most of these roads I had never travelled before, which was a big bonus. There was a stretch of cycle track in the dark, a view of Humber Bridge in the light and 20 miles along the sea front, where hardy souls were braving the vigorous easterly wind off the North Sea. Remember the classic poster 'Skegness is so bracing'? That was how it felt.

On 18 June this year – always on the Sunday nearest Midsummer – the club ran its Fairies 5 series of Audaxes: 50, 100, 150, 200 and 300km. 108 entrants became 77 starters and 71 finishers. In the end it was a success, with plenty of appreciative riders:

*"I want to say a big thank you to you and your team for organising yesterday's Audax. It was my and my husband's first Audax event and I enjoyed every single moment. The route was wonderful, participants were so friendly, and most importantly - the entire support. From the breakfast, tea and coffee to the 46 km feed station. And a bowl of soup at the end! It was such a surprise and so delicious. How thoughtful. I really appreciate it"*

*"a big thank you for organising Sunday's rides. A group of five of us naturally formed, all of whom took turns in keeping things moving 'before the deluge' as Marianne put it..."*

*"thank you for Sunday's audax. Fantastic day, great route, and lovely food to come back to. Thanks to all involved in making a brilliant day! I am looking forward to the next one."*

*"For me it's 14 years since I last rode your 200. In fact, a long time since anything so long, so today was special for me."*

*"Just wanted to say thank you to you and the club members who helped ensure today went well."*

But there were obstacles to overcome on the way. Commiserations to Jenny Burton who caught Covid at the last minute and thanks to Helen Whibley who stepped into both their shoes as well as Lise who put in a 15 hour shift to help Helen and me. Running with the absolute minimum number of volunteers it was sad that nobody from the Club answered my desperate plea for help. Come on, folks, a club will only thrive if its members put their hands up sometimes!

The heavy thundery rain for the later riders was a only a bit of a dampener as most riders seemed to think it was not as bad as it looked – which is always the case with rain of course.





# SFA GROUP RIDES

BY PHILIP THORPE, GROUP RIDES CO-ORDINATOR

The San Fairy Ann Cycling Club has group rides on Saturdays, Sundays and Wednesdays. We have 16 group rides that cover pace from 10-20 mph and distances from 25-70 miles, so there is a group suitable for everyone. If you would like to discuss which group is best for you, please contact philipthorpe@btinternet.com

The table below lists our club runs in order of average speed. A clearer hierarchy of ride levels, with clearer signposting so that members can more easily choose a level and move between levels of club runs. More information is available on the Club website.

## SAN FAIRY ANN CC GROUP RIDES IN ORDER OF SPEED AND DISTANCE

Group	Start Time	Speed	Distance	Coordinator	Start Location
A Group	9.00 am Saturday	18-20 mph	50-60 M	Simon Charlesworth	Marden Station
Fast Inters	8.30 am Saturday (9.00 am Dec-Feb)	16-19 mph	50-60 M	Dudley Curtis	Marden Station
Inters +	9.00 am Saturday	16-17 mph	50-70 M	Vacancy	Marden Station
9 am Inters	9.00 am Saturday	14-16 mph	45-70 M	Kevin Griffiths	Marden Station
10 am Inters	9.00 am Saturday	14-16 mph	50-70 M	Vacancy	Marden Station
Sunday Inters	9.00 am Sunday	13-16 mph	50-65 M	Eric Watts (Dep: Alan Devriendt)	Marden Library
Inbetweeners	9.00 am Sat (9.30 Dec-Feb)	13-15 mph	40-55 M	Philip Thorpe	Marden Station
B+ Group	10.00 am Saturday	13-15 mph	40-50 M	Tony Palmer	Various
Midweekers	10.00 am Wednesday	11-16 mph in multiple sub groups	30-45 M	Russell Chidwick (Dep: Richard Valentine)	Various
D+ Group	10.00 am Saturday	12-14 mph	30-40 M	Richard Valentine (Dep: Russell Chidwick)	Various
B Group	9.30 am Saturday	11-13 mph	30-40 M	Phil Taylor	Marden Library
D Group	10.00 am Saturday	11-13 mph	25-35 M	Richard Valentine (Dep: Russell Chidwick)	Various
C Group	10.00 am Saturday	10-12 mph	25-40 M	Sandy Ray	Various
Easyriders+	10.00 am Saturday	10-12 mph	25-30 M	Gail Crutchfield (Dep: Nick Crutchfield)	Various
Mountain Bike Group	10.00 am Monthly	2 groups - faster and slower	Distance to suit riders	Martyn Peal	Various
Virtual Zwift Group	6.30 Thursday and 10.00 Saturday	Your own	Distance to suit riders	Natalie Ceeney	Your telly!
Virtual Training	10 am Saturdays (winter only)	Formal training session	1 hour	Tony Richardson	

These are typical average speed ranges of the group rides; the actual speed will be dependent on terrain and weather.

Winter rides are generally shorter and slower than summer rides.

**Note: Riders should check their group Calendar, Forum and/or WhatsApp during winter, as timing of rides may change due to number of riders out or inclement weather.**

### WEDNESDAY WOBBLERS SUMMER SCHEDULE

Wednesday 12th July. Lord Raglin, Rabbits Cross.

Wednesday 19th July. Hawkenbury, Hawkenbury.

Wednesday 26th July. Rose & Crown, Munday Bois

Wednesday 2nd Aug. Woolpack, Benover.

Wednesday 9th Aug. West End Tavern, Marden.

Wednesday 16th Aug. Pitlands Cafe, Churn Lane, South of Claygate.

Wednesday 23rd Aug. Lord Raglin. Rabbits Cross.

Wednesday 30th Aug. Hawkenbury, Hawkenbury.

If one of the Pubs cannot make it, Flooding Etc, I will replace them with another pub and let the members know. Co-ordinator, John Kavanagh, 01622 726959. johnkav@blueyonder.co.uk



## FAST INTERS

Date	Leader	Route	Distance	Average Speed	Ascent	Café Stop
11th March	No Ride - Ice					
19th March	Eamonn	Benenden / Rye / Bethersden	55 miles	17.4 mph	2,500 ft	Mermaid Café, Rye
25th March	Alastair	Mayfield / Hawkhurst	45 miles	15.0 mph	3,500 ft	Hawkhurst Café
1st April	Rick	Ide Hill / Chiddingstone	51 miles	17.0 mph	2,400 ft	Tulip Tree Chiddingstone
8th April	Paul	Knole / Langton Green	56 miles	17.0 mph	3,417 ft	Kingdom Café
15th April	Andy	Staplecross / Tenterden	56 miles	17.3 mph	3,000 ft	The Hub, Bodiam
22nd April	Dudley	Mayfield / Hawkhurst	53 miles	17.7 mph	3,400 ft	Hawkhurst Café
29th April	Andy	Tenterden / New Romney	69 miles	19.0 mph	1,600 ft	The Coach House, New Romney
7th May	Rick	Ham Street / Tenterden	53 miles	18.0 mph	2,000 ft	Silcocks Farm Shop, Tenterden
14th May	SFACC Sportive	Charing / Tenterden / Seddlescombe / Marden	100/70 miles	19.0 / 19.5	5,500 ft / 3,500 ft	Tenterden / Seddlescombe Marden Memorial Hall 14x Gold / 3x Silver Medals
20th May	Eamonn	Chartham / Wye	68 miles	18.4 mph	3,200 ft	Perry Court, Wye
27th May	Anthony	Lenham / Faversham	55 miles	18.0 mph	2,600 ft	Brogdale Farm, Faversham

## INTERS

Date	Coffee Stop	Route Planner	Distance	Ascent	Average Speed	Number of Riders
11th March	Cancelled due to ice					
18th March	Cancelled due to heavy rain					
25th March	The Honey Pot, Shoreham	Bob	50 miles	2,600 ft	14.5 mph	6
1st April	Dunorlan Park Cafe	Andrew	47 miles	2,200 ft	14.3 mph	4
8th April	Oasis Café, Old Romney	Duncan	53 miles	2,050 ft	15.5 mph	3
15th April	Woodchurch Old Post Office	Dick	48 miles	1,350 ft	15.7 mph	2
22nd April	Penshurst Place	John	56 miles	2,900 ft	15.2 mph	4
29th April	Miss Mollets Appledore	Paul	56 miles	2,275 ft	17 mph	6
6th May	Trosley Country Park	Bob	47 miles	2,800 ft	14.4 mph	4
13th May	Cancelled due to Sportive					
20th May	Bosun's Bite, Rye	Anthony	63 miles	2,700 ft	14.9 mph	7
27th May	Cosy Kettle, Hamstreet	Paul	53 miles	1,100 ft	16.5 mph	4





## SUNDAY INTERS

### Sunday 12th March

We set off from Marden under sunny spring skies with a keen wind at our backs, as we headed east to Frittenden. It was so warm that we almost felt overdressed, although the temperature dropped a few degrees as clouds rolled in. There was plenty of standing water to contend with after more rain overnight.

The route stayed flat through to Smarden with its timbered Tudor houses and crooked streets. Skirting to the west of Ashford, we zipped up to Hothfield and then Wye, where the Great Stour appeared close to bursting its banks. The churchyard at Wye glowed gold with a sea of daffodils in full bloom.

From Wye it was due north up the Great Stour Valley to Chilham, where Badger's Hill Garden Centre provided its usual warm welcome, decent food and reasonable prices. Matt went for the 'big breakfast' which looked like enough for three people but barely touched the sides!

The route back to Marden was a stark contrast to the route out, with hills right from the off. Perry Wood was a delightful detour with a mixture of birch and chestnut trees. It will surely look even better in a month or so's time when the bluebells bloom.

The aptly named Winding Hill near Selling was a highlight, with its steep

hairpin climb. Beyond Throwley Forstal we decided to deviate from the planned route in order to avoid the worst of the westerly headwind which was now causing us problems. We plunged downhill into Charing and then onto Charing Heath.

By now, the weather had closed in and there was intermittent drizzle on the wind. Another precipitous descent down the escarpment at East Sutton brought us to Hawkenbury, over the fast-flowing River Beult and through to Staplehurst and Marden.

Another excellent ride with plenty of variety!



### Sunday 30th April

Despite the glorious spring sunshine there was a slight chill in the air as we departed Marden, but our extremities soon warmed up as we picked up the pace on our way out towards East Peckham. There was still plenty of water and mud on the minor roads, so care had to be taken in places.

Our route took us due west to Golden Green and then north from Pout Wood, where the climbing started. The profusion of colourful blossom and sunlit bluebells added to the delight of the climbs, which eventually brought us to Plaxtol and Ightham.

We took refreshments at Melia's Place in Borough Green, taking

advantage of the large outdoor seating area along with several other groups of cyclists. The prices were at the high end of the usual range, but the food was worth it. My goat's cheese omelette went down a treat!

To get home, we followed the contours west along Comp Lane to Offham, a bustling West Malling and then King's Hill, where coronation fever had taken hold. An exhilarating glide down Red Hill took us to Wateringbury, where we crossed the Medway before climbing Bow Hill, dipping back down to Yalding and then home.

Glorious!





### Sunday 14th May

From Marden we headed north to Hunton and climbed Barn Hill before dropping to down to cross the Medway for the first time at East Farleigh. We carried on our northerly trajectory to Ditton and Aylesford, where we crossed the Medway for a second time. Defying the optimistic weather forecast, a persistent layer of grey cloud hung over us and a chill wind numbed our fingers to the bone. We crossed the river for the third and final time, turning westward to Halling and onto Cuxton. Leaving the town firmly behind, we climbed up the valley to Harvel and then to Vigo. By now we were, at last, in full sunshine, and were greeted at Trosley Country Park by the beaming smile

of Andrew Nannery who had ridden up to meet us.

After some rather tasty BLT sarnies and a quick puncture repair, we set off towards Stansted and Exedown for some breathtaking views over the North Downs and Darenth Valley.

Our route home took us through Ightham village, Dunks Green, Hadlow and East Peckham.

As we passed Teapot Island just outside Yalding, we noticed the first signs of the Great British Summer: a mass of bare chests and the smell of barbecues by the river!



Date	Leader	Start	Break	Distance	Speed	Weather	Ascent	Riders
12th March	Eric	Marden Library	Chilham	62 miles	14mph	Cold Overcast	3200 ft	Eric Watts (lead) Matt Vousden Nick Robinson
19th March	Alan	Marden Library	Penshurst Kingdom café	53 miles	13.8mph	Cold sunny	2400 ft	5
26th March	Ride cancelled					Heavy Rain		
2nd April	Eric	Marden Library	Mermaid Café Rye	58 miles	14mph	Windy	2990 ft	4
9th April	Alan	Marden Library	Hutch's Deli A25 Ightham	47 miles 1	14mph	Warm sunny	2600 ft	2
16th April	Eric	Marden Library	Secret Garden Faversham	60 miles	14mph	Dry and Sunny	3236ft	3
23rd April	Ride Cancelled					Heavy Rain		
30th April	Alan	Marden Library	Borough Green	48 miles	14mph	Dry	2200 ft	Alan De Vriendt (lead), Nick Robinson
7th May	No Ride							
14th May	Eric	Marden Library	Trosley	55 miles	13.5 mph	Dry and Sunny	3300 ft	Eric Watts (lead), Anita Clifford, Nick Robinson-
21st May	Eric	Marden Library	Bucket and Spade Dymchurch	72 miles	14mph	Dry and Sunny	2231 ft	3
28th May	Eric	Marden Library	Jarvis Brook Whistle Stop	50 miles	13.5 mph	Cool and Dry	3837ft	3





Café at Tenterden



Windmill Wallies



Dymchurch in the sunshine

## B + GROUP

Date	Lead	From	To	Distance	Ascent	MPH	Numbers
12th March	Tony Palmer	East Malling	Meopham	41.65	2,548	12.7	4 Riders
19th March	Richard Ramsden	Boughton Monchelsea	Goudhurst	36.25	1,864	13.1	4 Riders
26th March	Maria Marchesini	Marden	Heathfield Tottingworth Farm	46.00	3,894	13.2	8 Riders
1st April	Anita Clifford	Coxheath	Wye	49.56	2,480	13.75	5 Riders
8th April	Jonathan Engwell	Charing	Hawkhurst	46.61	2,911	13.8	7 Riders
15th April	Richard Ramsden	Paddock Wood	Penshurst	44.88	2,483	13.7	7 Riders
22nd April	Rachel Chacon	Marden	Goudhurst	39.5	2,722	13.4	11 Riders
29th April	Brian Kavanagh	Marden	Tenterden	44.90	1,850	17.0	13 Riders
6th May	Jonathan Engwell	Bluebell Hill	Oare Creek	49.90	2,625	13.4	5 Riders
14th May	SFA	Sportive					
20th May	Maria Marchesini	Charing	Elham Valley	51.05	3,455	14.4	3 Riders
27th May	Anita Clifford	Marden	Dymchurch	65.2	1,421	15.2	10 Riders
3 June	Neal Corby	Bearsted Green	Seasalter				

## INBETWEENERS

BY PATRICK O'DONNELL BOURKE

**The soggy weather played havoc with the Inbetweeners' cycling schedule in the Spring, but then things improved...**

**Saturday 11th March** was a damp squib and yours truly ventured out on his own.

On **18th March**, Patrick led a group of three on a 45 mile ride stopping at the Cornerhouse café in Lenham. The café was very welcoming and the other good news was that it didn't rain two thirds of the time;

On **25th March**, Patrick again led a group of three on a 45 mile ride, this time stopping at Brogdales. We made good progress on the way out but were lured into a false sense of security, as we found ourselves facing a brutal headwind on the way back;

On **1st April**, three of us made our own way to Singleton and then cycled back together. Leaving Marden, Jacqui encountered a large and unforgiving puddle and got very wet feet – luckily this happened quite close to her home and she was able to pop in and change her socks. The total ride was 50 miles;

On **8th April**, Patrick led a group of nine on a 50 mile ride, stopping at Teals café. The café internet wasn't working – which meant cash payment only – and the service was like something out of Fawlty Towers. Despite this, we maintained the good humour which characterises the Inbetweeners!

On **15th April**, Martin led a group of four on a c50 mile route stopping at the Kingdom café near Penshurst. The café was

very busy, but it was warm enough to sit outside in the sun – and absorb a very welcome dose of Vitamin D;

On **22nd April**, there was no take-up from any Inbetweeners, and so yours truly joined the 9am Inters on a hilly 60 mile ride via Penshurst Place;

On **29th April**, Jacqui led a group of nine on a 50 mile ride via Ripleys garden centre near Bethersden. This was Jacqui's first lead and by all accounts a resounding success!

On **Coronation day**, Mark E led a group of six on a wet c45 mile ride via the Weathered and Worn café in Hadlow.

On **13th May**, early on in the day's group ride, Nick Terry suffered a very unfortunate accident when he was clipped from behind by a car near Staplehurst. All the Inbetweeners wish Nick a speedy recovery. In the circumstances, the ride was abandoned;

On **14th May**, a number of Inbetweeners took part in the SFA Sportive. Some good times were recorded and we all enjoyed what was a brilliantly organised event.

On **20th May**, Patrick led a group of six on a 53 mile ride via Tibbs Farm café near Udimore. This café was new to us and we enjoyed sitting out in the sun as well as taking in stunning views of the Tillingham valley.

No group ride on **27th May**. Bank Holiday duties took precedence.



Folkestone Harbour Arm, 12th April

## MIDWEEKERS

Date	Start Point	Café Stop	Distance Miles	Number of Riders	Ascent - feet	Average Speed mph	Leader(s)
1st March	Hollingbourne	Silcocks - St. Michaels	40 & 37	17	1800	14 & 12	Jonathan Engwell and Marjory Caine
8th --March	East Malling	Cancelled		0			
15th March	Yalding	Frankies - Staplehurst	38.7	24	1420	11.5 & 14	Martin Phelps
22nd March	Lenham	Silcocks - St. Michaels	36.6	17	1750	11.5 & 14.6	Mark Eyres
29th March	Wrotham	Wetherspoons - Tonbridge	34	17	2400	11	John Gibbons
5th April	East Malling	Chiddingstone Castle	43	23	2950	11 & 13.5	Jonathan Leeson
12th April	Hothfield	Folkestone	55 & 50	12	1900	11.2 & 12.4	Jonathan Leeson
19th April	Marden	Wittersham	46.9	18	1950	11.6	Rachel Chacon
26th April	East Malling	Paddock Wook	37	27	1475	11.5 & 13	Tony Munn and Jonathan Leeson
3rd May	Ditton	Gravesend	35.3	24	2000	11 & 14	Richard Valentine
10th May	Headcorn	Tonbridge	43.6	18	1450	12.7 & 15	Mike Lambourne and Laurence Coleman
17th May	Aylesford	Upchurch Golf Club	33.3	18	2150	11.5 & 13	Jonathan Engwell
24th May	East Malling	Lullingstone	36.6	20	2030	11.5 & 14	Angie O'Flaherty
31st May	Yalding	Penshurst	39.5	16	2040	12.2 & 15.5	Laurence Coleman

Detling Hill Challenge, 27th May

A Challenge on our Gravesend Ride, 3rd May







*Consulting a paper OS map for a way around a road closure, 17th May*

## RIDES SUMMARY

Of our 14 rides in the quarter one had to be cancelled due to bad weather. With our late spring, our rides have benefitted from some lovely sunny conditions and we are looking forward to awaydays in the summer including our French trip on 18th June. Our varied start points and our many volunteer leaders have made for some great rides to some great café stops. Some of our favourites are Sillcocks (St Michaels), Chiddingstone Castle, Lullingstone Country Park, Penshurst and a new one for us, Upchurch Golf Club. We welcomed several new SFACC members and guest riders who are now joining the Club. A very windy ride from Hothfield to Folkestone proved a challenge but a great ride and our ride to Wittersham proved there is more to our rides than just cycling as these two ride reports describe.

### 12th April – Hothfield to Folkestone by Jonathan Leeson

The slightly further start location from Hothfield always brings some good opportunities to cycle to the coast. Usually, we opt for Dymchurch but seeing as we are now in spring, I thought a slightly longer route to Folkestone was in order although we had a shorter option to Hythe for those wanting this.

The day didn't start quite to plan as the weather gods had provided storm-force winds on the coast and lots of heavy showers. I cycled to Hothfield and met Lisa along the way. We had a nice ride in along the back roads from Maidstone and arrived just as a heavy storm came through.

As 10am came the rain stopped and we had a blue sky ahead, which we retained for the majority of the ride, - which was amazing considering what was happening elsewhere.

We had 12 people attend, which was a result, as at one point I thought we'd have nobody. I was also impressed that nine wanted to go to Folkestone, clearly the thought of ice cream was a pull. Russell led a smaller Hythe group and we did briefly see them en route.

Our ride down to Sandgate (café stop) was quicker than expected, arriving 45 minutes early, so we decided to cycle along the front to Folkestone and then cycle back for lunch. The ride to Folkestone was lovely, with quite calm seas, blue sky and very little wind (it was pushing us along).

The stop off at Folkestone Harbour was great with a few photos at the lighthouse, but no ice cream! Leave that for a warmer day in summer. Once we turned around we then hit the full force of the wind. Turning onto the promenade to Sandgate we were cycling the equivalent of a 5% climb based on my gearing and power output. However, we survived and made it to Loaf for lunch.

Lunch was spot on and we even parked the bikes inside which is a first. There was a good selection of food on offer and I'm sure we will be back.

Onwards then and a full on coastal ride into the wind all the way to St Mary in the Marsh, certainly a good strength builder. We had an interesting altercation with an elderly couple in a car who clearly were not bike fans, but apart from that no major issues.

The ride back inland from St Mary was much better with some shelter from the wind and the last climb felt almost flat compared to our windy sea ride.

Well done to Stephen for cycling from Leigh and clocking 100 miles.

All in all a lovely day out and we were blessed with amazingly dry weather, that was until the ride back to Maidstone where the heavens opened and I had a rather wet and windy ride back to home. Still a great day out and great company, Theresa enjoyed herself so much she wanted to go around again; will leave that for another day.

90km, 20km/hr average and a 27km/hr wind from the South West.

### 19th April – Marden to Wittersham by Rachel Chacon

For my first lead in a long while, my focus was, of course, a dip in the Rother. Lisa sent me the map pin and I plotted a route. By happy coincidence, The Swan in Wittersham were opening their new café the week before. Perfect! On arrival at the café EVERYONE ducked out while Lisa and I ducked in, carrying on down a steep hill for a rapid refresh in the Rother ... soon followed 'allegedly' by Steve who also had a dip in the Rother. We (don't) believe you Steve. We warmed up pretty quickly on the hill back up to the café and reminded the cheerful MW crowd that the Rother was on our route so they would all have to get down there and back - which of course they did very willingly! It was a fab group, a fab ride, the views on a beautiful sunny day were breath-taking ... or maybe that was the hills?! Another lovely day out with SFA friends.

*At Wittersham, 19th April*







An Awayday ride embracing the delights of Margate

## D AND D+ GROUPS

Date	Group	Start Point	Café Stop	Distance Miles	Number of Riders	Ascent - feet	Average Speed mph	Leader(s)
11th March	D	Snodland	Blue Bell Hill	35	10	1800	12.5	Tony Munn
	D+	Snodland	Ightham Mote	28	14	1950	11	Sarah Lewis
18th March	D & D+	Boughton Monchelsea	Lenham	25	19	800		Russell Chidwick
25th March	D	Barming	Blue Bell Hill	31	9	1750		Steve Farndon
	D+	Barming	Hadlow	35	14	1900		Lee Baring
1st April	D	Paddock Wood	Offham	34	8	2000	12.5	Wendy Parker
	D+	Paddock Wood	Headcorn	40	11	530	13	Richard Valentine
8th April	D	Aylesford	Borough Green	30	4			Jo Ellesmere
	D+	Aylesford	Yalding	30	23	1233		Tony Munn
15th April	D & D+	Reculver	Sandwich	42	20	1410	11.4	Russell Chidwick
	D & D+	Yalding	Penshurst	31	6	1400		Lorna Stafford
22nd April	D	Headcorn	East Peckham	32	13	614	12.9	Trevor Baker
	D+	Headcorn	Pittlands Lakes	35	10			Keith Dampier
29th April	D	Yalding	Headcorn	35	14	770		Tony Munn
	D+	Yalding	Wormshill	35	14	2000		Peter Waring
6th May	D	Maidstone	Headcorn	31	7	1168	11	John Blakeley
	D+	Maidstone	Hartlip	31	4			Neil Hunt
13th May	D	Marden	Headcorn	32	2+	1280		Mark Phillipson
	D+	Headcorn	Tenterden	39	11	1300	12.4	Trevor Baker
20th May	D & D+	Staplehurst	Singleton	34	7	1100	12.5	Russell Chidwick
	D & D+	Staplehurst	Singleton	34	7	1100	13	Trevor Baker
27th May	D	Wrotham	Borough Green	30	7			Jo Ellesmere
	D+	Wrotham	Westerham	34	7			Peter Waring

### BY RICHARD VALENTINE

**Saturday 11th March:** D+ Group. Tony Munn led from Snodland with ten riders to Mickeys Diner, Blue Bell Hill, 35 miles 1800 ft ascents at 12.5 mph D Group: Sarah Lewis led from Snodland with 14 and went to Ightham Mote, 28 -miles

and 1950 ft ascent at about 11 mph.

**Saturday 18th March:** A joint group ride led by Russell with 19 overall, left Boughton Monchelsea Village Hall for a stop at the lovely Lenham Church on atrocious puddly roads. A distance of 25 miles and only 800ft ascent before the

splendid Club's Birthday Lunch.

**Saturday 25th March:** A really gusty morning for a Barming start and Lee led 14 D+ riders on a lumpy ride to the Weathered and Worn Cafe at Hadlow, via Offham and Plaxtol. Uneventful except for Mark T, the only one with





*Who needs men?*



*A Mote Park start*



*A loveheart sandwich for Russell*



*An audition with Elvis at Pittland Lakes, Paddock Wood*



*A big turnout at Weald of Kent*

a mountain bike, getting a puncture. A pleasant stop, sitting out in their rear garden. A wind assisted return via Yalding and an overall distance of 35 miles and 1900 ft ascent.

Steve Farndon took charge of the D Group. Good to see Emma and Tim join him on their tandem, together with nine overall. His route took in Coxheath, then out to Hollingbourne before the stop at Mickeys Diner, Blue Bell Hill. Steve had serious chain problems later, so had to pull out. A distance of 31 miles and 1750 ft ascent.

**Saturday 1st April:** Puddles galore for both rides from Pittlands Sports Club, Paddock Wood.

Wendy Parker led eight D riders on a lumpy ride to Spadeworks, Offham. A distance of 34 miles with almost 2000 ft ascent at 12.5 mph average.

Richard V. with 11 went in the opposite direction on a flat ride to Headcorn Aerodrome, a distance of 40 miles at 13 mph average and only 530 ft ascents, without incident.

**Saturday 8th April:** Tony Munn had a huge D+ turnout of 23 from Aylesford. Great to have both Brigitte, following her fractured shoulder cycling accident, and Lorna out riding again. A sunny stop at Teapot Island, and an overall distance of 30 miles and 1233 ft ascents.

Jo Ellesmere who, due to motor problems, arrived just in time, only had a lead for four on her D ride. Her destination was a café in Borough Green, and again 30 uneventful miles.

**Saturday 15th April:** Russell led an Awayday Joint Ride with 20 from Reculver to Sandwich on a dry morning.

Mainly off road along the Viking Trail to Margate for a photo call then on to Broadstairs and the break at Sandwich. Leaving the coast thereafter for a picturesque route via Ash and Grove Ferry. A distance of 42 miles and 1410 ft ascents.

For those wishing to stay more local, it was great to see Lorna out riding and leading again. She chose a Yalding to Penshurst Castle ride with a group of six. A distance of 31 miles and 1400 ft ascent.

**Saturday 22nd April:** A Weald of Kent start with 23 riders on a dry bright morning. Keith Dampier led ten on a D+ ride and had the break at Pittland Lakes with a photo call alongside Elvis's mannequin. A distance of 35 miles. Trevor Baker took his 13 on the D ride on a flat route to the Waterside Café at East Peckham. A distance of 30 miles.

**Saturday 29th April:** A massive turnout of 28 at Yalding, which was equally split between both groups. Peter Waring took charge of the D+ Group with a challenging ride up to Wormshill Light Railway Cafe. A distance of 35 miles and over 2000 ft ascent. By contrast, Tony Munn led a lovely flat ride of only 770 ft ascent going to the ever-popular Headcorn Aerodrome, which was busy with parachutists and a resilient plane wing walker. Again a distance of 35 miles in the spring sunshine.

**Saturday 7th May:** A group of only four, under Neil Hunt's leadership, set off for a D+ ride from Mote Park and headed to Hartlip, via Detling Hill on Coronation Day. The roads were pretty quiet and, unfortunately, the Tuck Inn Cafe was shut on arrival. So, it was a straight return which was disrupted with two riders getting rear punctures at the same place

and, as one was an electric bike, there was a learning opportunity. A distance of 31 miles.

John Blakeley led the D group of seven from Mote Park with a stop at a very quiet Headcorn Aerodrome, probably due to the Coronation. An uneventful ride other than having to divert on the return due to a street party in progress near Mote Park. A distance of 31.4 miles at 11 mph average and 1168 ft ascent.

**Saturday 13th May:** It wasn't about the rides really, as the groups split into two to put out the signs for the next day's Sportive. One started at Marden, led by Trevor Baker, and the other from the Weald of Kent by Mark Phillipson. A total of 13 great volunteers. Sincere thanks to them. **(See Sportive feature on p.29 for photos of these heroes)**

**Saturday 20th May:** A joint group ride with 14 from Staplehurst, which was split between Trevor and Russell as leaders, with the break at the popular Footprints Café, Singleton. They reversed the routes to avoid vehicle congestion, in pleasant weather. Total distance for both around 34 miles and only 1100 ft ascent; very social cycling.

**Saturday 27th May:** A warm start from Wrotham with Peter Waring taking over the D+ lead of seven, at very short notice, on an uneventful ride to Westerham, other than severe problems the traffic diverted from the M26. A ride of 34 miles. Jo Ellesmere led another seven on the D and went in the opposite direction, initially to East Malling, before the break at Melia's Café, Borough Green, and a more lumpy second part via Ivy Hatch. A distance of 30 miles.





Bikes in the sun



Coming along the footpath



Resting in the shade with tea and cake



Coronation Ride

## C GROUP

Date	From/to	Distance	Speed
11th March	Lenham to Faversham	28 miles	10mph
18th March	Birthday Lunch	14 miles	10mph
25th March	Staplehurst to Bewl	26 miles	10 mph
1st April	East Malling to Otford	28 miles	9 mph
8th April	Frittenden to Brenchley	35 miles	11 mph
15th April	Yalding to Offham	24 miles	10 mph
22nd April	Bearsted to Cross-at-Hand	31 miles	10 mph
22nd April	Headcorn to Sissinghurst	31 miles	10 mph
6th May	Charing Coronation Ride	14 miles	9 mph
13th May	Chestnut St to Oare Creek	34 miles	10 mph
20th May	Headcorn to Woodchurch	30 miles	10 mph
27th May	Linton to Pembury	30 miles	9 mph

### C GROUP RIDES SUMMARY

#### Three memorable rides:

##### The Birthday Lunch:

So lovely to see so many friendly faces, good food, however, the pièce de resistance was listening to Lise's very interesting *A Century of Cycling* book launch. A lot of time and effort, very well done Lise.

##### The Coronation ride.

Ten of us went on a short, round down and back up the hill ride with our photographer Mike awaiting our return making 11. It was a great day; everyone contributed to food and we sat and watched the proceedings while chatting and snacking. Hopefully, having waited so long to be crowned, King Charles will have a long reign. Two of us adorned ourselves with a flag or two.

##### Linton to Pembury.

Eight of us ventured out with George - or was it her bike-leading us over hill and down dale. While the bikes rested in the sun we sat in the shade with tea and cake before the return trip, stopping at Brenchley Viewpoint. For once it was a clear day, making the most of the view. The final stage of the ride should have taken us up Linton Hill. Oh my oh my, but phew, no. We cycled up Vanity Lane and walked the bikes along the footpath, up some very steep steps. It was a good job we had some strong men with us to take the bikes up, along a rather overgrown narrow foot path with a rather scary drop. We arrived in the Bull car park, then went over the road along the footpath by the Church and into the car park. An adventurous ride and walk on a sunny day. Our highest ascent so far this year 1728ft. Wonderful.





# EASYRIDERS +

Date	From/To	Distance	Ascent	Speed
11th March	Charing to Westwell	25 miles	N/A	10mph
18th March	Boughton Monchelsea to Lenham (Birthday Ride)	21 miles	760ft	10mph
25th March	Bredhurst to Bredhurst	24 miles	1000ft	11mph
1st April	Cliffe to All Hallows	26 miles	1,600 ft	9mph
8th April	Penshurst to Hever Golf Club	25 miles	1,900ft	10mph
15th April	Marden to Marden (two different loops)	28 miles	1,000ft	10mph
22nd April	Lenham to Faversham	26 miles	1,500ft	10mph
29th April	Wouldham to Strood	25 miles	1,500ft	9mph
6th May	No ride; Coronation			
13th May	Marden to Cranbrook	25 miles	1000ft	11mph
20th May	Headcorn to Lower Ladysden	27 miles	760ft	10mph
27 May	Biddenden to Woodchurch Rare Breeds Centre	26 miles	1,100ft	10mph



## EASYRIDERS + RIDES SUMMARY 11th March - 27th May 2023

With 11 rides in this period we had nine different start points (stretching geographically from Appledore in the south-east to Cliffe in the north-west and Penshurst in the west) and seven different ride leaders. A new area to most of us was the undulating ride from Penshurst to Hever Golf Club (where service was very quick),

The average number for each ride was around nine but spread between four to 13 riders.





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