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THE MAGAZINE OF  
CHESTER & NORTH WALES CTC  
CAER A GOGLEDD CYMRU

*In this edition.....*

Read about:

Cycle Cross by Colin Homes

Lôn Las Cymru with Richard Barrett

Dave Matthews on Raising the Bar!

Chris Smith's Adventures in Gran Canaria

Chris Pattern rides for the British Heart Foundation

Young Achiever of the Year - Erin Spray

And so much more.....

Spring 2018



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Always makes for a good read!

*The views and opinions  
expressed in 'The Link' are  
those of the contributors and  
do not necessarily reflect  
those of the editor, Chester  
& North Wales CTC or the  
policies of Cycling UK  
National Office*

*Front Cover: Spring on The  
Wirral Way*

*Inside the back page: White  
Gates at Leeswood Old Hall  
built by the Davies Brothers.*

*Photos: Andy Polakowski*



Thank you for all your kind comments about my first issue as Editor of The Link. It didn't take me long to come back down to earth and realise that I had to do it all again! I hope you are as happy with this issue, it includes plenty more of your fabulous rides, achievements and adventures.

Autumn 2017 was, for the most part, a mild, dry time which was great for getting out and keeping those legs turning. The onset of winter brought some snow and Ice and then the brutal wind in December which certainly sent me reaching for the car keys rather than the helmet at times. Then we had every season in one month in January and February! More of the white stuff brought in March! Roll on Spring!

I'm told we have approximately 1,500 members of Chester and North Wales CTC. I understand that some of these are members of the same household but I'm sure we can still improve on that but I need your help. If you like what you see, please tell others and spread the word around your club. Please contact me at [link@ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk](mailto:link@ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk) and I can get some subscription forms to you. The form is also available on line, just follow the link on the Chester and North Wales website.

I sat thinking about a club ride the other day. Where else can you get so much out of one day, fresh air, great company, increased fitness, fabulous views, a wider knowledge of your local area, friendship, discussion/chat, an adrenalin rush as you fly down that hill, challenge as you ascend the other side to name but a few. I just love it! I know, I know I'm preaching to the converted!!

Safe cycling,

*Janet*

*So what's in store for you in this edition of 'The Link'?*

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*A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT.....*

A540 and A550 was formally opened on a bitterly cold morning in January. A number of brave souls took part in a 'photo-opportunity', riding their bikes over the new toucan crossing under the gaze of representatives of the Highways Agency and the contractors. The rest of us watched and shivered!

It was not unalloyed pleasure at this event, though. Not only did one of the would-be attendees suffer an accident on the ice while riding to this event but also, one Wednesday a short time before, a potentially fatal accident involving a Wednesday Rider occurred as he approached the new off-road cycle route. As was the case a few years ago when, in dazzling winter sunshine on a wet road surface, a car ran down a group of cyclists, killing one, so in the case of the Wednesday Rider, a car ran into him. Fortunately, although he was seriously injured, he escaped with his life. We wish both of these (and other) accident victims full and complete recoveries, of course.

The year started well with our annual Chairman's Meet on New Year's Day. As in recent years we were made very welcome at the White Horse, Churton. I estimated that around three dozen of us were present, seemingly mostly from Wrexham and Chester. (Where were all those from other groups?) It was just as well that there was a good showing of Chester riders because they were able to applaud Sue Booth when I was, at last, able to surprise her by presenting a Cycling UK framed Certificate of Merit. I say "at last", because your Awards Committee had primed National Office to have it ready for last November's AGM but Sue, unfortunately, was unable to be present. So, it was a case of "Well done!" to a worthy Sue – not forgetting further congratulations to Terry Davies and Lowri Evans winners respectively of our men's and women's Tourist Trophies for last year.

**Road News**

There was other New Year good news, too. After years of campaigning, in particular by Rights Office Peter Williams, and after months of night time traffic disruption, the scheme devised by Highways England to improve cyclists' road safety at the Two Mills junction of the

The stretches of the A540 approaching Eureka have for years posed a serious hazard for cyclists. There has been more than one fatality and some serious injuries in recent times. In vain have the likes of Peter Williams and the Cheshire Cycling Campaign 'battled' with the Cheshire West Authority (responsible for the A540) to improve things for cyclists on these approaches, but they have got nowhere and, sadly, I doubt if the near fatality described above will have any effect in improving things.

**Food News**

It hasn't been all gloom in spite of what that last couple of paragraphs might suggest, far from it. The counting of your votes for Café of the Year 2017 revealed that it was won by Café Fresh (at Dunham on the Hill, near Chester). "I can't tell you how thrilled myself and my staff were with

your letter voting us Café of the Year, it means a lot to us all", wrote the proprietor upon receipt of my letter telling him of our Award. And the wisdom and judgement which has been traditionally shown by Chester and North Wales members in selecting the best places to eat is echoed by a glance at the TripAdvisor webpage where Café Fresh merits an "Excellent" rating of 92% with comments such as "Hidden Gem". Look out when you are next at this "Hidden Gem" for the C&NWCTC's framed certificate. Five years have now elapsed since our first Café of the Year award took place (Tilly's at Bunbury) and the search can now go on for the 2018 nominee. The choice is for you to *chew over* during the year!

**Top News**

While you are out on your bikes enjoying yourselves in your own carefree ways, a lot goes on 'behind the scenes'. Some things seem routine, the making of arrangements for our events, the preparation of this magazine, but occasionally something different occurs. Over the past few months, Vice-President Glennys Hammond has been putting her artistic skills to the test by designing a new C&NWCTC top and John Ferguson has been assiduously promoting sales. The price is certainly a "competitive one" (as they say!) and I look forward to seeing many of the new tops on the backs of C&NWCTC riders in the near future.

**Resolutions**

The time for making (and breaking!) New Year resolutions is now long past, but one continuing resolution for all you readers is to encourage as many new subscribers to this magazine as you can and if you do that, then may all your rides in the rest of this year be safe ones and bring you much pleasure. Happy cycling!

**Mike Cross**

*Cafe of the Year Winner.....*



**Cafe Fresh**

**Address: Chester Road, Frodsham, WA6 0NT**

**Phone: 01244 303107**

**Cuisine: British**



My introduction to cyclo-cross was in an event organised by the Bradford Racing Cycling Club, held at Otley on the Otley Chevin in West Yorkshire. The event consisted of ten laps of a one mile circuit which included hazardous descents, back-breaking climbs and, for those unable to negotiate tricky bends, through gorse bushes at breakneck speeds, prickly fates.

There are those who have an aptitude for descending narrow, twisting, rocky paths and for negotiating the muddy leaf-covered bogs which the organiser of such an event usually tries to find to add to the difficulties of the riders. Unfortunately there are also those who lose control of their machines and crash drunkenly on to the rocky ground, either to remount bleeding and battered, machine all twisted or to stop dead in axle-deep mud and lose their shoes when trying to extricate themselves. Alas, I fall into the latter category. Why continue? I do not know. Perhaps it is the hope that one day it may come a little more easily even to the extent of winning and being acclaimed by riders and spectators alike.

### Fun

That first event made me think. I had only started my training two weeks previously. On two nights each week I went out with the bicycle on my back, up the hills, running with it on the flat and resting on the descents. As the cyclo-cross season starts after the normal racing season has finished in October, training is usually done in the dark and one or two people in the locality have been startled out of their wits by the 'pad pad' and 'puff puff' of a dark figure coming out of the gloom, carrying a strange load. In fact a car passed me while I was running uphill and through the open window, I overheard the passenger say 'What's he doing that for?' At the time I thought this was very funny but, on thinking back, I wondered why I did it.

### Falls

Four nights training were definitely not enough. We started at the bottom of the Chevin, forty aspiring cyclo-cross experts and myself. Harry Bond of the organising club, the favourite, led the field up the steep hill-side on to a path that ran along the top among boulders and pot holes. My two team mates were ahead of me and so was everyone else; I plodded on and ran where I couldn't ride – over a wall, across a field, another wall, down a rock-strewn path where I fell off, through another field, down a twisting path through gorse bushes, where I fell off again. By this time I had to straighten out my handle bars which had twisted round and at the same time get out of the way of three other riders who came hurtling on the scene and whom I had previously passed in a wild burst of enthusiasm. I ran the rest of the way down through the gorse bushes, remounted and tried to ride through a black muddy stream, twice as deep as normal because of the warped sense of



Colin Holmes



humour of the spectators, the majority of whom were at the spot and had dammed it. Of course the inevitable happened – I got stuck. Amidst jeers I waded through the mud to get myself and machine out and then continued, trying to ride where possible along the bottom. Then began the climb back to the top, up and up: I must have stopped to get my breath and ease my aching back ten times before reaching the top. The idea is to go as fast as possible, disregarding the pain and discomfort, comforting oneself with the thought that others are suffering as much as you are. But are they? Another two hundred yards and the end of lap one! The agony

of nine more laps to go, countless more tumbles and grazes but with the crowd shouting encouragement. I went on to the second lap.

The course is such that, if time is taken to look from the top, leaders can be seen down in the bottom and by the fifth lap they were getting appreciably closer to me. On the sixth lap, when my legs were beginning to feel weak. I was lapped at the bottom of the steep climb. To my amazement the eventual winner, Harry Bond, picked up his machine, put it on his shoulder all in one easy

movement and ran up the hill. I was inspired. Surely if he could do it, so could I. I picked my bike up, slung it across my shoulders and quickened my step from a crawl to a jog-trot, only to resume the crawl after ten yards exhausted. At the top of the hill he was out of sight and from that moment I resolved to train harder and harder. I eventually finished in 25<sup>th</sup> position, passing some riders who were suffering more than I and others who had retired hurt demoralised or mechanically indisposed.

### Fitness

Instead of being deterred, I went from strength to strength, creeping up the finishing sheet each week and before the end of the season. I managed to finish one or two events without being lapped – in fact lapping some of the slower riders myself but I still had the tendency to fall off in the most unlikely places, while riders behind clambered over me and my machine or told me in no uncertain manner to get out of the censored way. I persevered and eventually in one event held in deep snow on the same course as my initiation event, finished in fourth place after running most of the way. The course lay in the opposite direction, which meant that the steep slope was descended and not climbed. Everyone in front of me rode down the steep snow-covered slope and I did the same. Needless to say I renewed my friendly relationship with the ground. A large stone, snow covered and invisible had the misfortune to lie in my path. My front wheel struck it violently. I hit the ground on my back in a flurry of snow, my machine hurtled into the air before crashing to the ground beside me and

down we slid together. I picked myself and the machine up and started running: my front rim was in two pieces and I had a headache. After running a full lap I was able to borrow a spare wheel and continue to the finish pleasantly tired.

### Frustration

My last event of the season was at Parbold near Ormskirk. Forty riders started on a twelve lap event which skirted the edge of a lake. There were many spectators who would insist on placing large branches in the path of the riders of other clubs and lifting them for their own. This didn't make the task any easier and with one eye on the spectators and the other on the lake, it was not surprising that more than one fell in to be completely submerged and attract loud cheers from the crowd. Fortunately, I didn't fall in although my machine was submerged when I had to let go to avoid going in too. True to form I fell off twice, broke a brake lever and finished the event with injuries to knees and pride in twelfth position. After being patched up by a St. John Ambulance Cadet I rode home with a friend.

My bicycle, which had stood up to the shocks of crashing and being submerged in water and mud, finally let me down. Bicycles are not built to stand up to such treatment and the forks which had taken the brunt of the shocks, gave up the ghost and come away completely or so I was told because I came to in hospital where I remained a further week, a much sadder and wiser cyclo-cross rider.

Colin F. Holmes



Win Jones

**Here's a SUDOKU with a difference. Called Wordoku, the usual digits from 1 to 9 have been replaced by letters.**

#### How to play:

**When finished each completed 3 x 3 grid, each 9 cell row, and each 9 cell column must contain combinations of the same 9 letters. However, the same letter cannot be entered twice into the same grid, row, or column.**

**Hint: To start off, examine the grid and write down all the letters you know must appear in the finished grid.**

**When completed the shaded diagonal will contain a well known cycling word.**

**The completed grid can be found on Page 23**



### Wordoku

	D						S	
I			R		S			B
	S		B		D		O	
O		I		K		S	B	
				B	R			
	E	S		O		D		R
	B		E		O	K		
S			K		A			D
	K						R	



**2 x SAEs to Laurie Mason at 30 Clarendon Close Chester CH4 7BL.** The first SAE will be used to return entry form and route sheet. Completed entry form and cheque (made out to Chester and N.Wales CTC) for £26- to be returned to Laurie. The second SAE will be used to post details of ride groups and start times approximately 1 week before the event.

**Couple of other things:**

All those who have entered electronically will receive an email giving details of riding groups and start times approx. one week before the event.

**David Matthews**

**Start Venue:** Dutton and Clotton District War Memorial Hall

**Date:** Date of event is **Sunday July 1st 2018.**

**Closing date for entries:** Tuesday June 5 2018,



Some of last years starters

**Route sheets available from:**

[ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk/events2018.html](http://ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk/events2018.html)

If you cannot access this, then send an SAE to Laurie Mason at the address below to get a paper copy.

**How to Enter:**

**Go to - [ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk/events2018.html](http://ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk/events2018.html)**

and follow the link from the Bert Bailey Memorial Veterans' 100 – 1st July 2018 entry to...

**[entrycentral.com/vets100july2018](http://entrycentral.com/vets100july2018)**

The electronic entry system accepts credit and debit cards---but not paypal. It is also possible to pay by cheque if necessary (but we would much rather have credit/debit cards as this cuts down on admin)

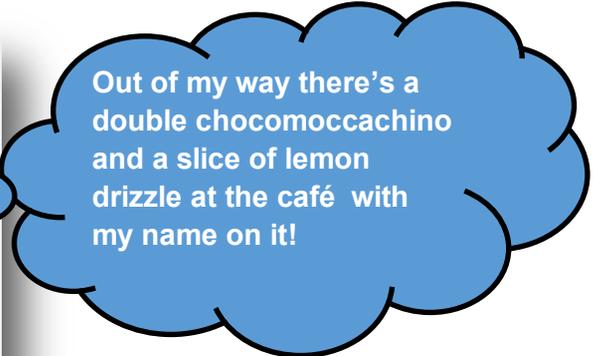
Anyone needing a paper entry for the event should send



Fun and Games in 2017



*Caption Competition.....*



## Chester & North Wales CTC Cycling UK Members celebrate new £1.1 million junction improvements in Ellesmere Port



A £1.1 million scheme to improve safety and create a new cycle path at a busy junction near Ellesmere Port has been officially opened by a group of local cyclists.

Members of the Chester Cycling Campaign and the Chester & North Wales CTC Cycling UK club were among the first to ride along the new cycle path through the busy Two Mills junction, where the A550 meets the A540 in Cheshire.

The Highways England project involved creating a new 320 metre cycleway through the junction, which is used by more than 37,000 vehicles every day, with new traffic lights and crossings also making it easier to cross the A550.

The project is among 24 cycling schemes completed in the North West over the past two years, as part of a £100 million government investment across England to make it easier for cyclists to cross motorway junctions and use major A roads.



They include a new 1.5 mile shared cycle path along the A585 near Fleetwood; a new 700 metre shared cycle path by the A5117 at Dunkirk near Chester; and a new 600 metre shared cycle path near junction 21 of the M60 alongside the A663 in Oldham, along with improvements to footbridges, signs and road markings.

Work is also due to start later this month on a new 400 metre shared cycle path under junction 9 of the M53 at Ellesmere Port, providing a cycle link from the town to the National Waterways Museum and canal towpath.

Phil Tyrrell, Project Manager at Highways England, said:

“We’re committed to significantly improving safety across our road network, and the new cycle path as well as the wider and longer right turn lanes at Two Mills will make it much easier and safer for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians to cross the junction.

“We want to provide cycling facilities that give people a genuine choice about whether to travel in their car or to

get on a bike instead. If we can encourage more people to use their bikes for local journeys then this should also improve the flow of traffic for drivers travelling longer distances.”

The A540, which runs between Chester and Hoylake, is popular with cyclists and group rides set off from a cyclists’ café near the Two Mills junction during most weekends throughout the year.

The new cycle path, which is shared by cyclists and pedestrians, runs along the southbound A540. The route crosses two new islands on the A550 at the Two Mills junction before continuing along the A540, and a new high-friction road surface has been laid to reduce the risk of collisions.

Peter Williams from Neston is a member of the Chester Cycling Campaign, and a RTR local Representative for Cycling UK, which campaigns for new and improved cycle routes. He said:

“The new cycle lane and other improvements at Two Mills make it much safer and easier to cross the junction and a lot of the cyclists I’ve been speaking to think they’re wonderful.

“There have been several accidents involving cyclists at the junction over the years and the new layout means you’re now much more protected.

“We’re all aware of the health benefits of cycling and improvements like these help to create safe cycling routes as well. I’d definitely encourage anyone interested in taking up cycling in 2018 to join their local Cycling UK group and to explore their local cycle routes.”

Highways England also opened a new three-mile route for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders in Cheshire last year following the completion of the new A556 link road between the M56 and the M6. The old A556 has been converted into a B road with a shared cycle path.



## Eureka Audax/CTC C&N.W Rides Sat April 21st 2018



Once again Chester & N. Wales CTC is to run a series of early season audax rides based at the Café, as outlined below:

**"Eureka Excursion"** 200k This ride is based on the Peak Audax "Eureka" route---but starting at the Cafe itself and visiting the beautiful village of Ellesmere at the southern point. The route then heads off to a cafe stop at Tilly's in Bunbury, followed by Congleton & Lymm (thus avoiding the Manchester conurbation). *Previous riders note some route changes near Tatton Park this year due to major road alterations in the area.*

Return is through Great Budworth to the Wirral. A generally flat ride with many interesting, scenic lanes and great cafes.

**"Tea in Prospect"** 130k rides out to Prospect Tea Rooms near the Llangollen Panorama (one big hill to reach the cafe) and then returns on mostly flat lanes via a lunch stop at Tilly's in Bunbury. More great cafes on this ride.

**"Two Mills Twirl"** 60k is an introductory ride visiting Cleopatra's Cafe in Holt, followed by a return to the Eureka cafe through Aldford and Mickle Trafford.

Full details of these good value rides, low cost entry, entry forms, route sheets (please read as they also give car parking arrangements and other important information) are available on calendar page at [www.aukweb.net](http://www.aukweb.net)

Entries on-line using paypal or through the mail are now available until closing date (subject to reaching maximum numbers allowed - see website). Closing date is 17th April 2018. No entries on the line on the day!

## Chester & N. Wales CTC/Audax Rides, "Into the Berwyns". Saturday May 19th 2018

These well regarded, classic rides are based at Willington Hall Country House hotel near Kelsall, Chester and visit the beautiful Berwyn hills above Llangollen. Note that routes revised in 2017 are retained for 2018 following positive feedback from riders.

**"Tour of the Berwyns"** 200k. The West Cheshire/ N. Wales classic audax ride which has been followed for at least 30 years with just a few variations. Once out of Cheshire, the route visits Prospect Tea Rooms above the Llangollen

Panorama. After descending the Panorama, the River Dee is then followed to Corwen. From here the central, key section climbs the Milltir Gerrig pass, descends to Llangynog and then follows the hill road from Llanrheadr-Y-M back over the hills to Chirk. Finally there is a flat run back through Cheshire lanes to the hotel. An exhilarating ride in outstanding scenery.

**"Panorama Prospect"** 130k A shorter version of the above, which misses the central mountain section of the 200k route by descending early from the Panorama to the Aqueduct and hence Chirk. A new ride which now avoids the killer hill through Vivod (used previously by the now defunct Llangollen Panorama) to give a more even standard throughout.

Full details of these good value rides, low cost entry, entry forms and route sheets are available at [www.aukweb.net](http://www.aukweb.net)  
Plenty of free car parking at the start/finish.



**The bicycle, the bicycle surely, should always be the vehicle  
of novelists and poets - Christopher Morely**



Anyone strolling around Chester's city walls on the morning of 29th July 1854 may have noticed a tall, white-haired man with a battered green umbrella underneath his arm striding out by himself. Despite his 51 years and his snow-white hair, this man was upright and athletic and would continue to ride horses, swim outdoors into his seventies and undertake long walks that were taken at a rapid pace and lasted for many weeks. Had the safety bicycle been around at the time, he would have probably been a cyclist too.



Our solitary walker was the Victorian travel writer George Borrow, who had just arrived in Chester by train and was staying at the Pied Bull in Northgate Street with his wife Mary and grown-up step-daughter Henrietta, prior to

setting out on a convoluted ramble around Wales that he recounted in his book "Wild Wales" that remains in print over 150 years after it was first published in 1862.

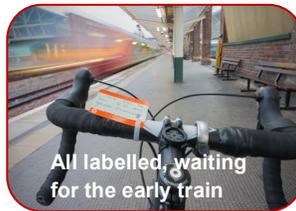
From my desk where I write I look out across the Chester Canal to the city walls where Borrow took the walk that he wrote about in the opening pages of "Wild Wales" where he notes the steep sandstone ravine which has provided generations of Cestrians protection against invasion from the north since the city's Roman occupation. After a few days in the city his wife and step-daughter took a train to Ruabon and then a coach to Llangollen with Borrow following on foot. Although much has changed over the last 160 years, Borrow's descriptions are sufficiently detailed that, with the aid of an early Ordnance Survey map, one can generally follow the route he took through Wales during this and subsequent walking tours.

This gave me the idea of writing a cycling guidebook tracing Borrow's

journey through Wales as closely as possible, combining the route description with extracts of Borrow's narrative and archive images and recent photographs to show the differences between what Borrow saw in 1854 and what is there today. It would take some creative route planning, finding quieter lanes alongside the busy A5 that Borrow walked along from Llangollen to Corwen, but enthused at the prospect of an adventure that combined cycling with social history, photographic research and the biography of a complex and enigmatic man, I approached the guidebook publisher Cicerone, for what I envisaged would become my fifth book with them.

Despite having reservations about its commercial viability, a few years ago Jonathan Williams, whose family owns the business, allowed me to indulge my love of the islands off the west coast of Scotland, with 'Cycling in the Hebrides'. It has since become one of their top cycling titles and so I was expecting my current proposal to be well received. It wasn't.

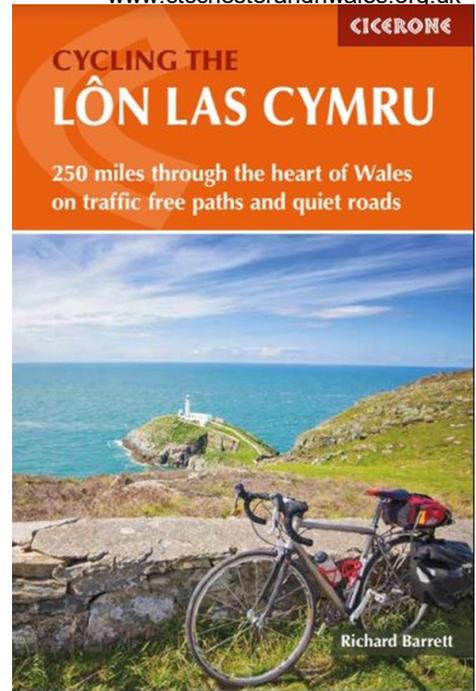
*'It's a bit esoteric Richard and not really the type of book we do'*, he told me. It may be that he noticed my shoulders slump while I struggled to find a suitable response. But he quickly continued, *'But we're getting lots of enquiries for a guide to Lôn Las Cymru, so if you can deliver the manuscript by October, it's yours. I know it's tight - and if the opportunity arises you can mention George Borrow along the way'*.



Of course, I accepted Jonathan's offer immediately; George would live for another day.

However, that left just ten weeks to ride the route; do all the photography and produce the maps and text. What's more, other than it ran the length of Wales I knew very little about the route. So I purchased the two Sustrans maps for the route but failed to get hold of a previous guidebook that looks to have gone out of print even from specialist book dealers such as Abebooks. Perhaps this was why Cicerone was only now getting asked for a guidebook on a route that was established nearly two decades ago.

To add value a guidebook first needs to provide the reader with tips and advice that will make planning and riding the route more comfortable and



enjoyable. Well that wasn't particularly difficult. For instance both the Sustrans maps and the previous guidebook for Lôn Las Cymru describe the route north to south from Holyhead to Cardiff or Chepstow. To me this makes no sense at all as it is surely easier to ride the route from south to north with the prevailing south-westerly winds behind you. Riding in that direction also means you are not riding into the sun and can quickly escape the urban landscape of South Wales.

Another aspect of riding a linear route that many guidebooks skip on is the logistics of getting to the start and home from the finish. Many local cyclists will happily add an extra day or two to either end of their tour and make use of the National Cycle Network to get to the route and back. But others from further afield and those pressed for time will undoubtedly need another form of transport. You may be able to commandeer someone to drop you at one end and collect you from the other. But unless you are riding in a big group or on a tandem, the easiest way to access Lôn Las Cymru is by train as Cardiff, Chepstow and Holyhead are all on the national rail



network. Similarly, there are a number of stations along the route so you can easily split the ride into bits.

Although I'm not averse to riding in bad weather – and did on a number of occasions such as a memorable 8-mile slog up out of Machynlleth in torrential rain – you do need fair weather photography to show the route at its best. Because of this, I continually monitored the weather forecasts at various locations along the route and rode most of the route in a series of one-day rides rising early to take the first train to Builth Road, Machynlleth and Bangor.

Although I always reserved a cycle space at the time I purchased my ticket, most train services along the route are provided by Arriva Trains Wales who in my experience are the most bike-friendly train operators in the whole of the UK. In fact it was so easy that I rode the entire route north of Glasbury, where the two alternative starts conjoin, without having to resort to overnight accommodation.

That only left Cardiff to Glasbury via Brecon along the Taff Trail and the section from the alternative start in Chepstow to Glasbury over the

Gospel Pass, the highest road in Wales. These two sections I rode as part of a triangular ride over three days using hostels for overnight accommodation. Other than a one-day road trip around the central section of the route in the car so I could take some supplementary images using a full-sized DSLR camera and some big lenses, a lot of desk research and endless hours identifying and listing bike shops and hostels, that was it; job done. Cycling Lôn Las Cymru comes out in April – and there's not a mention of George Borrow. **Richard Bennett**

### Beeching: the unknowing enabler of Lôn Las Cymru

In addition to the staff of Sustrans and the various county councils along the route, we should posthumously thank Richard Beeching (1913 – 1985) - for his unwitting help in the creation of Lôn Las Cymru. A brilliant physicist and engineer who held senior positions in both industry and the civil service, in 1961 Beeching was controversially appointed as the first Chairman of the newly created British Railways Board commissioned with curtailing growing losses and returning the industry to profitability.

He recommended closing one-third of the country's 7,000 railway stations and 5,000 miles of track resulting in the loss of 70,000 jobs.

Unsurprisingly, such proposals were hugely controversial and many were rejected by the government, which terminated Beeching's contract early allowing him to return to industry. Protests resulted in some stations and lines being saved, but eventually the majority were closed as planned.

Over the years, some routes reopened including a few in the Welsh Valleys. Other sections have been preserved as Heritage Railways or turned into roads. But some rural and urban lines have been absorbed into the National Cycle Network to give hundreds of miles of traffic-free cycling. Lôn Las Cymru includes the following stretches of shared-use paths which follow the route of former railway lines -The Taff Trail (55miles), The Mawddach Trail (9½ miles), Lôn Eifion (12 ½ miles) and Lôn Las Menai (4 miles). In total that is 81 miles of traffic free cycling that became possible because of the "Beeching Axe".



Erwood, closed in the 1960s  
now a thriving gallery

### FAQs

#### What does Lôn Las Cymru mean?

Lôn Las Cymru runs from Cardiff or Chepstow to Holyhead, passing through the heart of Wales. In English its name means Wales' Blue Lane which is appropriate for three reasons. Firstly it is the preeminent cycle route in Wales. Secondly, the route signs are blue. And lastly, when the route is not following former railway lines, it follows quiet lanes.

#### Where does it go?

The route from Cardiff is just over 250 miles (400km) or 237 miles (380km) from the alternative start in Chepstow. It passes through the Brecon Beacons National Park and Snowdonia National Park and over the Black Mountains, the Brecon Beacons, and the Cambrian Mountains of Mid-Wales taking in some of the most stunning and diverse landscapes in the British Isles.

#### Why you should ride it?

If you can proudly say Wales is 'the land of my fathers' then Lôn Las Cymru is the clearly the route for you. It crosses your homeland from the industrial south to the sea cliffs of Anglesey passing through wild mountains and along green valleys where some of the events that shaped Wales took place. Singing may come automatically as each new vista unfolds. But even if you have no familiar ties to Wales and simply love the landscape, there is a great satisfaction in doing a ride that crosses the entire length of a country and covers its industrial heritage and its remote and sparsely-populated heartland.

With over 70 miles of traffic-free, shared-use paths and the rest following quiet lanes, Lôn Las Cymru is also the ideal tour for anyone averse to busy roads. In fact the route follows such quiet roads through towns that you will inevitably find yourself leaving it to find lunch.

Route-finding is simple and the start and finish points are all easily accessible by train. So too are many locations along the way so you can easily ride the route over a couple of short breaks rather than one holiday.

#### How tough is it?

Lôn Las Cymru can be ridden as a leisure activity or as a challenge and this guidebook has schedules for both types of rider. There are some mountainous sections in Mid Wales. However, gradients are never severe and some, such as that up the Vale of Ewyas, barely perceptible until the very top.

#### How long will it take me?

The guidebook provides flexible schedules for 4-7 days, but with the hammer down you could probably do it in 3 days.

#### What will I remember?

The vibrant city of Cardiff; riding past the cemetery at Aberfan; the view from the top of the Gospel Pass; cycling through the Cambrian Mountains with a red kite wheeling above me; the eclectic and slightly hippy shops and cafes in both Llanidloes and Machynlleth; riding through The Mach Loop below fighter jets; the anticipation of riding across the wooden viaduct at Barmouth; the relief at riding off the wooden viaduct at Barmouth; the fact that the good folk at Sustrans cannot agree the exact spots where Lôn Las Cymru begins and ends; a truly excellent vegetarian café in Porthmadog; crossing the Menai Straits; thinking that both the locations that Sustrans suggested were the end of the route in Holyhead were a disappointment – I rode on to South Stack lighthouse instead.



My preferred end  
at South Stack  
Lighthouse



Dear  
Editor

*Despite benefiting from Cycling UK 3rd party insurance cover, I would love to see a wider choice of insurance options.*

*In 2014 I retired from work and to pursue my enjoyment of touring cycling I took the opportunity to be measured for a bespoke frame, arguably the most important part of a bicycle that is rarely replaced.*

*Following a video motional analyses, body measurements and observations of my cycling style a frame was designed to match my body size with a geometry suitable for touring. The drivetrain, wheelset and other components were later attached to the frame ([www.harlechjoe.wordpress.com](http://www.harlechjoe.wordpress.com) 'The story of Bessie the Bike' October 2014).*

*The cost of the frame was £3k and the finished bike was a shade under £5k. Despite living in a low-crime area the quote for full insurance cover from 2 main cycling insurance companies came to nearly £500. This is £200 more than I pay for comprehensive car insurance yet the value of my car is 4 times higher than the purchase price of my finished bike.*

*I contacted the insurers and asked for a quote to insure the frame only. I justified this request by saying the frame is bespoke and will always be used, unlike the rest of the bike that will be replaced due to wear or upgrades. Both companies replied to say they only insure a complete bike and not bits of it.*

*For the past 3 years I have upgraded my insurance for touring expeditions via the discounted Cycling UK holiday cover scheme. I average 3 tours a year that last between 7 and 14 days. For the remaining weeks of the year I cycle 3 times a week and only have Cycling UKs 3rd party cover to fall back on.*

*My reason for writing is to ask:*

- *If any readers know of an insurance company that will provide frame only insurance?*
- *Whether readers feel that we cyclists are being overcharged and therefore disincentivized from being fully insured? Is it about time Cycling UK used its influence to make bicycle insurance more affordable?*

**Joe Patton, Harlech**

*Ed: Very good point Joe, I hope you get some replies to your letter.*

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for such an interesting & varied edition of The Link! Certainly something there for everyone. I fear you will be hard pressed to maintain such an excellent standard!

Regards & safe cycling

**John Holiday , Mold**

*Ed: Thanks John.*

Dear Editor,

*Congratulations on an excellent edition of The Link - Martin would have been proud of you. Once again full of interesting articles and information. Of the cycling magazines which I read The Link is by far the best.*

*I enjoyed every bit of it particularly Mike Frith's and Tony Smalls articles. I also thoroughly enjoyed Mark Jones' article about his Eroica ride. I haven't tried making any of Lowri's recipes yet but maybe one day! Your piece about our Anglesey ride was good especially as you and Tony made me suffer. I still have nightmares about those hills!*

*Keep up the good work.*

*Glynn*

*Ed: Thanks Glynn, couldn't do it without all the contributions.*

Dear Editor,

The new A540 Cycleway  
It was with great delight that I heard about and saw for myself the stretch of separate cycleway that has been built around the junction of the A550 and A540 at Two Mills and was present for the press call on Friday January 19th, that really was like the formal opening. For those who have followed the work of Peter Williams , the CTC Right to Ride Officer for the Wirral area over the last few years, this small development may well become the epitome of his achievements as he heads into his last year in the post. For those who don't know, Peter, with the help of several others in the cycling world, has tried for many years to persuade Chester and Cheshire West local authority that it would make sense to have a cycleway alongside the A540 for the safety of cyclists and indeed all road users. This campaign, was given fresh impetus on Sunday 14th January 2007, when Mel Vaisey of the Birkenhead North End club was killed on the A540 just before the Two Mills junction, whilst riding to the Eureka Cafe with two companions, one of whom was hospitalised with several fractures,

while the third was left traumatised by his experience. The driver of the vehicle involved claimed he was blinded by the sun whilst approaching the junction, and did not see them. Indeed, at this time of the year, if a sunny day happens to coincide with a popular cycling day, usually Wednesday or Sunday, then any cyclist who is on the road between 9 and 10 am, will run the same risk, especially just before the turn from the west for the Tudor Inn, as here the road turns slightly, where it becomes directly aligned east /west, so that the sun shines directly into a road users eyes. Fast forward to Wednesday 10th January 2018, and Roy Sheriffs of the CNWCTC Wednesday Riders was knocked from his bike at a similar time in similar conditions at almost the same place. He is at present recovering, we hope, from injuries to his vertebra. This is why I look at this very small piece of cycleway infrastructure (funded by Highways England as part of a package to make the junction safer) with great hope, from here it is a small step to extend the cycleway eastwards to Chapel Lane, or Capenhurst Lane. In a westward direction it is only fairly short distance to Puddington Lane, or onward even to Badgers Rake Lane , where it would join up with the cycling network. From such small beginnings are off-road cycleways made. Thanks for all the efforts of everyone involved.

**Alan Oldfield**

Dear Editor,

John Ferguson raises an interesting topic (for me anyway) in the Winter 2017 issue of the Link magazine.

In it he refers to the steepness of various cycling hill climbs and their relative difficulty, concluding that Ffordd Pen Llech is the steepest he has seen. Reference to Google indicates that this is indeed the steepest road in Wales, in fact Wikipedia goes on to say that 'Its distinguishing feature is being the steepest signed public tarmacked road in the UK'.

However John's original question was, *"Is this the hardest climb in North Wales?"*

For the answer to this I think we have to refer to the series of books by Simon Warren and in particular 'Cycling Climbs of Wales'. In this he selects a number of known climbs and gives them, what he accepts are, a subjective grade of difficulty from 1 to 10 ("Where 1 is hard and 10 equals it's all you can do to keep your bike moving"). However he has done a

significant amount of this type of climbing throughout the UK and should have a fair knowledge of where each climb sits in a list of relative difficulty. Some examples are:

- The Shelf 6/10
- Church Hill 7/10
- Horseshoe Pass 7/10
- Bwlch Pen Barras 9/10
- Ffordd Pen Llech 9/10
- Bwlch y Groes 10/10

In the book he gives one climb 11/10 to indicate something extraordinary and outside of the 1 to 10 range. This

he saves for a climb out of the Conwy Valley, which he calls The Colwyld but is in fact the road that heads up to Llyn Cowlyd from Trefriw. This 'gem' rises 410 m over 3150 m to give an average of 13% but this belies the bulk of the climb which to quote the book:

“ This road should carry a government health warning. Forget everything I've said before this is the toughest climb in Britain. Kicking up from the main road at 20%, it keeps climbing close to 20% on and on for just over 3

kilometres. Climbing this hill, every muscle from your toes to your neck will hurt by the time you reach the stunning summit to lay in the grass, surrounded by beautiful wilderness – a just reward for perhaps the ultimate ascent”

I hasten to add the I've not ridden up this climb, but it sounds pretty difficult to me.

**Mike Frith**

*Ed: Thanks Mike I might give all those hills a go one day.....In the car!!*



## Chester and North Wales CUK/CTC Chairman's Meet

The Chairman's Meet 2018 was held at the White Horse in Churton for the third year in succession (following the closure of the Carden Arms in Tilston for refurbishment). Approximately 40 riders Chester & N. Wales region turned up on the day to enjoy an excellent hot pot lunch. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and we look forward to a repeat next year---probably at the White Horse but possible returning to Tilston.

**David Matthews**

Mike Cross presented three well deserved awards:

Terry Davies was presented with the C&NW CTC Tourist Competition Men's Trophy for gaining the most points in 2017. This was the 1<sup>st</sup> time he had won the trophy; he was second in 2015 & 2016 (both times by only one point).

Lowri Evans was presented with the C&NW CTC Tourist Competition Ladies Trophy for gaining the most points in 2017.

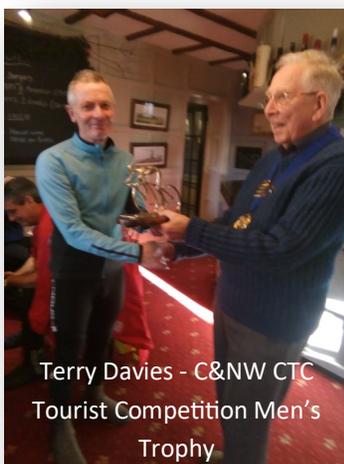
Sue Booth was presented with a Cycling UK **Certificate of Merit**. This was in recognition of the work she has done as a volunteer for CTC / Cycling UK over many years. The citation was read which included the following:

- Sue has been loyal member of Chester and North Wales CTC since a teenager, and a Committee

member for many years and has participated with enthusiasm in the Club's activities.

- Her enthusiasm in encouraging women's cycling as witnessed by the growth of the Fabulous Ladies cycling group.
- She has kept alive the Chester and North Wales CTC's tradition of women only annual cycling weekends by organising one every year.
- Her support of the Chester and North Wales Chester Group, its programme of Sunday rides as well as its weekday evening rides in summer. Sue's knowledge of local lanes and routes is invaluable for the many rides she leads, and inspires others to enjoy cycling.
- Her success in taking over the organisation and running the Bob Clift Memorial Cheshire Cycleway Rides
- Adopt new technologies such as blogging group rides, the use of Facebook, online entry systems for events and 'chips' for logging riders on events.
- Volunteering to help out at others and supports many rides and events as a participant.

It is for all these reasons and for her unfailing good humour when faced with difficulties that Sue Booth is worthy of the award of a Certificate of Merit.



Terry Davies - C&NW CTC  
Tourist Competition Men's  
Trophy



Lowri Evans - C&NW CTC  
Tourist Competition Ladies  
Trophy



Sue Booth - Cycling UK  
Certificate of Merit

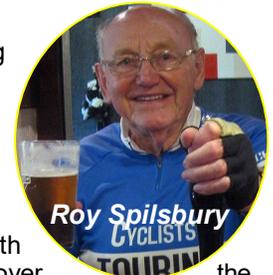
## The 1978 CTC Centenary Relay Ride Recalled

As we drip into the New Year after an unseasonal wet spell, it's perhaps worth noting this year is the 140th anniversary of CTC's birth in 1878.

During the 1978 centenary year there were many celebrations organised by CTC members around the country. These included a non-stop relay ride of 1300 miles around England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Four hundred and seventy three riders representing all District Associations took part with a back-up team of eleven. From CTC Headquarters five riders set off including touring staff member Nicholas Crane. Nicholas has since gained celebrity status as the author of the widely acclaimed book 'The Making of the British Landscape' and as a TV personality with his walking and cycling jaunts around the UK coastline and countryside.

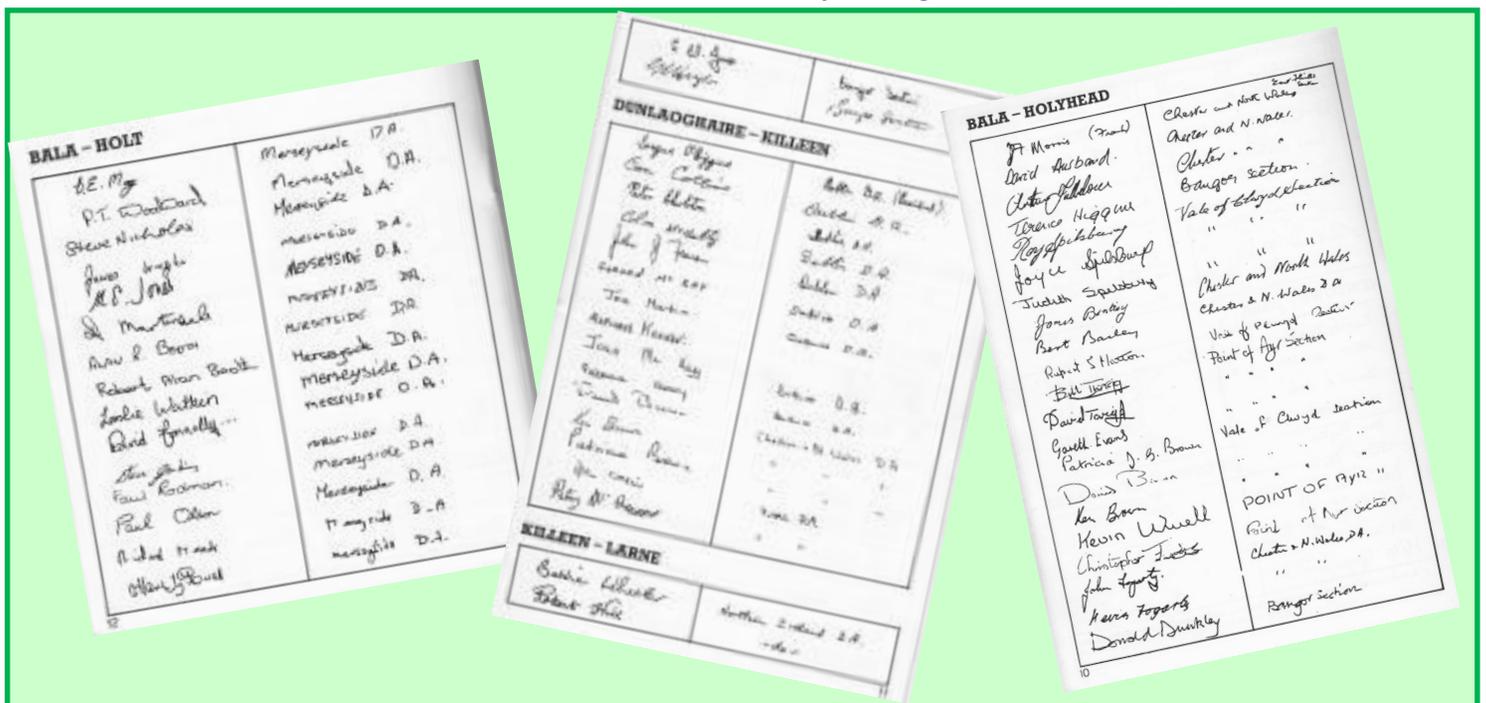
For its contribution to the centenary relay, the Chester&North Wales District Association as it was then called (still should in

my view) responsibility for the Bala-Holyhead leg. This involved collecting a log book of participant signatures from the Birmingham DA arriving in Bala during a sunny late afternoon. At this point the relay split into two. Chester&North Wales took responsibility for handing over to the Dublin DA after which a relay went north to the Ulster port of Larne for a return over the Irish Sea to the Scottish port of Stranraer. Merseyside DA on the other hand took responsibility for the next leg of the inland route to Holt. Finishing in the Home Park, Windsor, the relay took five days to complete.



Let Ken and Pat Brown take over at this point. This is their report to 'The Link' at the time.

*Chester and North Wales D.A. were asked to cover the Bala – Holyhead leg, some 76 miles in all, and it was decided to*



*ride it in sections. Accordingly, seven riders – Arthur Fullelove, Terry Higgins, David Husband, Frank Morris and Joyce, Roy and Judith Spilsbury, assembled in Bala ready for the hand over from Birmingham D.A. at 6.40 pm on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> May, setting out in glorious weather and accompanied by Gil Tirrell Kath in their support car from which they supplied welcome cups of tea along the route. Bert Bailey and Jim Bentley joined in at Pont-yr-Afon Garn, and Bettws-y-Coed was reached in good time to hand over to the next group. Rupert Hatton from Llanddoget, Bill, David and Christopher Twigg, and Gareth and Kevin from Point of Ayr section, ourselves from Vale of Clwyd, together with Terry Higgins. Fortunately, by this time (10pm) the crowds in Bettws were beginning to thin, and, with dusk descending, a fastish pace was set by our Point of Ayr members up past Swallow Falls, and on through Capel Curig, where we were joined by John and Kevin Fogarty on a tandem. By now traffic had dwindled, and we were able to gaze around us at the mountains towering above us on both sides of the A5. Surely our section must have vied with any other for grandeur of scenery! We arrived in Bangor well ahead of schedule, to be greeted by Gil and Kath with more tea, and by Evan Jones, Donald Dunkley and Gwylm Hughes, who, together with Rupert, were to ride on across Anglesey with us. The ferry terminal was reached with an hour to spare, and we were in Dun Laoghaire by 7 a.m. next morning to hand over to members of the Dublin D.A. whom we accompanied into the city, where they*

*entertained us to breakfast.*

*The whole ride had been without incident, apart from one puncture to the Spilsbury's tandem which occurred on the descent into Cwm Penmachno, where Ken and I had also punctured on our 'trial run' some weeks previously.*

*In view of the fact that most riders were involved in considerably longer cycling mileages than the ride itself, and the awkward timing (Holyhead being reached at 2 a.m.), all credit is due to the 23 members involved.*

**Footnote.** A wonderful effort on the part of all DA members participating. But not least the Brown family riding the full leg across North Wales to Dublin and beyond. All the more sad to recall that when Ken & Pat and their younger son David rode, it was against the tragedy of losing their eldest son Alan a few days earlier. He was in collision with a car returning home with Harry and Celia Watson after a camping weekend with the Rough Stuff Fellowship. To say the loss to family and friends was profound is an understatement. The Brown family continued their love of cycling and support for the CTC Vale of Clwyd section, and together Ken and Pat for many years jointly performed the secretarial duties of the DA. For my part the loss of Alan, and the grief still recalled by my family, has played no small part in my own commitment to cycle campaigning over many years.

**Roy Spilsbury**

**Rather than being yet another travelogue, this article relates a few anecdotes from my recent 4<sup>th</sup> unsupported, 1000+km solo ride through France.**

I am fortunate to have friends who live in Montmaurin south of Toulouse and close to the Pyrenees, which gives me a welcoming destination for these rides prior to flying back to UK. My previous long rides through France have been firstly Manche-Med (extended audax) from Caen to Gruissson followed by a return through the Pyrenees to Montmaurin in 2014. This was followed by Roscoff-Montmaurin via Nantes and the Charente in 2015. Last year I completed the Great French diagonal riding St Malo-Nantes-Nice in 2 stages (split due to terrible weather in June) at Audax tourist standard, a demanding course which marked my retirement from difficult Audax events after 28 years participation.

In March this year I was fitted with a pacemaker to correct secondary heart block (pulse rate dropping to 29bpm.) So this ride, 11 weeks after the operation, was as much a test of my new electric heart as a cycling holiday.

A route was mapped out using an interactive combination



**Montmaurin**

of google maps and booking.com that gave a schedule of 11.5 days to cover the 1100+ km to Montmaurin. Daily distances varied between 80k and 130k with some tough climbing days in prospect in the Massif Central. Provided I felt strong enough after this ride, there was a follow up plan to attempt to ride the 13km;1000m ascent to the famous Tour de France summit finish at Luz Ardiden.

My outward route from Chester was via British Rail to Portsmouth and then ferry to Caen/Quistreham. First dodgy moment of the trip was when the train got halted some 10 miles from Portsmouth as some idiot had thrown a brick at it. It was an unnerving time whilst other trains swept past our stationary one as I had only allowed a short time to connect from train to ship at the port. Fortunately, the train started up again after a 15 minute delay. Once in Portsmouth there was a huge rainstorm soaking me during the 4km ride to the ferry. The guy at Security was not too pleased at having to frisk a soaking

wet cyclist---my first experience of getting through security with a pacemaker.

Next morning I was late getting down to my bike, just as the upper car deck was lowered down on huge hydraulic rams. Readers of horror stories can understand my feelings as I rushed to the safety of the lifts to avoid being crushed alive.



**Pegasus Bridge**

The date was now June 6th 2017, 73 years exactly after D day. Unlike my last visit to the nearby Pegasus Bridge in 2014 when David Cameron was there with a huge crowd of be-medalled old soldiers, there was no sign at all of any celebrations. It will be interesting to see what happens at the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019 with the few remaining Vets.

Beyond the Pegasus bridge my route headed out SE through commuter country, in indifferent weather, to eventually cross the Loire 3.5 days later at Montrichard, some 30k east of Tours.

There is a long, steep climb onto a large plateau south of the Loire. Shortly after arrival on the plateau, a black animal about 3ft long sauntered confidently across the road just in front of me. I now believe this was my first ever sighting of a pine martin.

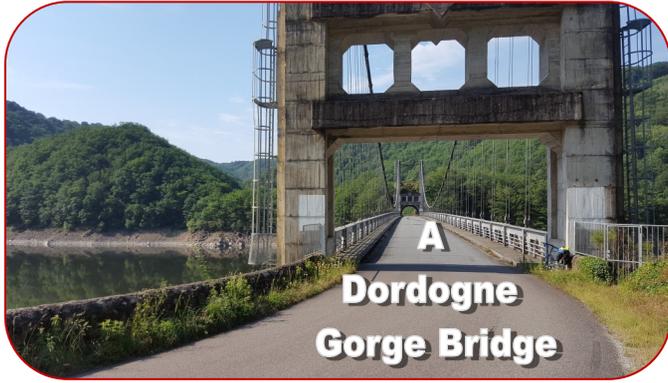
A couple of days later, now in continual hot sunshine, I reached the hamlet of Sarzay near La Chatre, gateway to the Massif Central. Having spent a fruitless, frustrating hour looking for my accommodation, well assisted by misdirecting locals, I eventually found the Chambre d'hote tucked away down a minor road. Hostess Fabienne had good English as she had once worked in Chester for a couple of months prior to spending 7 years in London.

My little house in the grounds of Fabienne's cottage was rural to say the least with its medieval furniture, micro shower and earth toilet. Evening meal was served at the local inn some 2km distant and it was no real surprise when Fabienne, prior to giving me a lift. asked me to move a bird's nest from the passenger seat of her rather cluttered old car.

Two nights later I was staying in a beautiful chateau near Neuvic where one could enjoy gourmet dining---these contrasts and surprises are very much part of the trip experience.

The next few days were very hot and hard work as I rode

through the hilly Massif Central, partly on the official Manche-Med route through the Dordogne Gorge.



5 days later I reached Rabastens on the Tarn river. My accommodation in a Chambre d'hote was easy to find down a side street, but surrounded by very noisy road works. 10 minutes after arrival I still couldn't gain entry and was getting rather irritated due to my tiredness, the heat and the noise. Just as I was trying to arrange an alternative place to stay on the smartphone, the door opened and the situation was rescued.



Next day was another boiling hot one, riding to Noe south of Toulouse. My accommodation here was in a Logis hotel, always excellent, which gave me encouragement as I sweated up the last steep hills to the village. Imagine my annoyance when I found the rather decrepit hotel was locked up with a notice behind the glass entrance door giving a phone number to ring to gain entry. Locked out again! So it was another annoying delay as I waited 10

minutes in the burning sun for the hotel to be opened up.

Next day was the final half day ride to Montmaurin through gorgeous, totally remote countryside in beautiful hot weather. My only concern was lack of any possibility to get more water through 60k of travel. In late morning I caught my first glimpse of the snow capped Pyrenees in the distance and knew I had almost made it. Beyond this welcome sighting of the Pyrenees, I chanced upon a restaurant at a remote road junction to replenish my water supplies. Well refreshed, but struggling for 4km along newly gravelled and tarred roads (life is never simple), I eventually reached the final hill climb to Montmaurin and my friends' welcome---after 1,128km and approximately 8,000m of climbing.

Next evening there was a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Andre, one of the ex-pats living in the village. This gathering enabled me to renew acquaintances with the local Dutch and English people that I had met on previous visits, whilst also celebrating my safe arrival.

The weather in Montmaurin was getting hotter and hotter, as high as 35deg. Too hot for hill climbing during the day so I drove 60k to Luz one evening in order to get a really early start up Luz Ardiden the next morning. Following breakfast at 06:30 in the semi-dark hotel entrance hall, I started up the climb at 07:15. Riding steadily and pausing only for photographs, I arrived at the ski station summit 2h 28m later, proof to me that my new heart pacemaker had passed all necessary tests---Oh and I unretired from Audax rides in August this year thanks to a brainstorm, the Pacemaker and low gears!



David Matthews

## Motorists aren't the only ones who pay for our roads!

I feel sorry for some recent correspondents.

There's Kevin from Aughton who is still paying 'Road Tax' despite it being abolished in 1937! He probably meant the emissions-based Vehicle Tax, which bicycles are exempt from. His 'privilege of driving down roads' is paid for by everyone (including people with bicycles) who pay income tax, council tax, even VAT. But let's not let facts get in the way. Then there's Doug and Frank who've had their important journeys

momentarily inhibited by 'lycra-clad' cyclists. I trust they will write in to inform everyone each time they suffer a temporary delay. Heaven forbid they get stuck behind a jodhpur-clad horse rider, or some Hi-Viz-clad bin men, or an overall-clad farmer in a tractor, or a white and red-clad level crossing. Or a fur-clad dog being led across a zebra crossing, a chino-clad Sunday driver dawdling down a country lane, or a beige-clad pensioner confused at a busy junction. Or a leather-clad teenager on a 50cc scooter, or school uniform-clad children crossing the road with a lollipop lady. Or a handcuff-clad drunk

being arrested after crashing into a lamppost, or a suit-clad office workers rubber-necking at a motorway pile-up Or paramedics tending to a 'lycra-clad' mother-of-two still in the road having been knocked down by a reckless car driver with a dangerous attitude towards other human beings because of their chosen mode of transport.

Let's look out for each other.

Sent in by Paul Harrison





**HEDDLU GOGLEDD CYMRU**  
Gogledd Cymru diogelach  
**NORTH WALES POLICE**  
A safer North Wales

**Some great advice from North Wales Police**



**Mapping app advice to cyclists and runners**

North Wales Police is encouraging people who use fitness monitoring apps to turn on

enhanced privacy settings.

Such apps, where cycling, running and gym routines are shared through social networks, can be used by potential thieves to see when properties are left empty.

The GPS data sharing makes it easy to work out where a person lives and when they are not at home.

Community Safety Officer Kelsey Reed said: "I would like to encourage users to check their privacy settings on these apps, ensure your home address is hidden and advise not to start the mapping facility until you are several streets away from your

house.

"Fortunately, the apps make it very easy to adjust privacy settings in order to hide certain data."

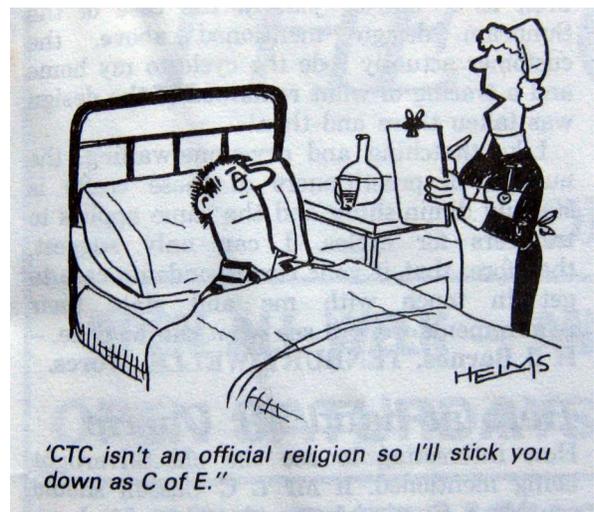
Implementing these privacy settings can help reduce the risk of burglaries as addresses and daily routines remain private.

If you have concerns about online privacy, contact the app's provider. If you have further concerns about safety or security, you can contact their live chat service:

<https://www.north-wales.police.uk/contact/live-chat-support>



Brian Macdonald sent me the following link to a very interesting article about bike sharing schemes, there are now 25 cities in the UK with a scheme in place. Turns out it's not without it's teething problems though, 300 bikes installed in Cambridge in the morning had all been stolen by the evening! Fortunately the report has far more positive news to tell. For more information go to <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/nov/10/bike-sharing-british-way-of-life-schemes-double?>



# Spread the Word of The Dutch Reach.....

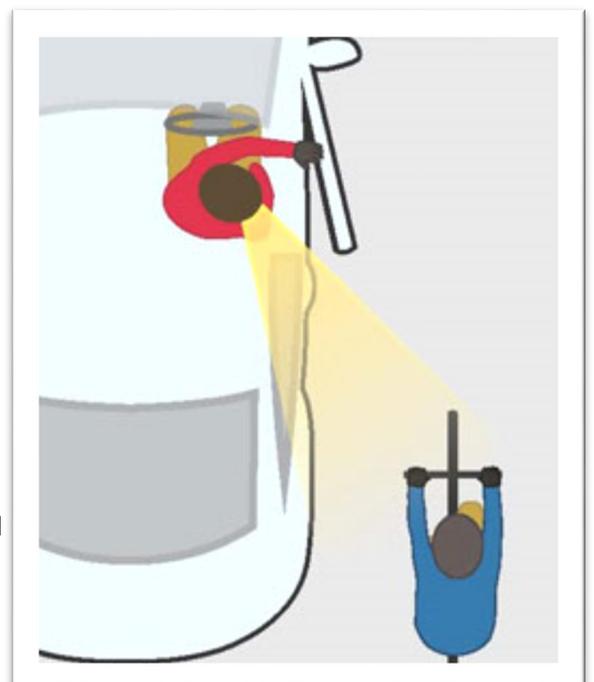
Ask most non-cyclists and possibly many cyclists what The Dutch Reach is and they will invariably look at you suspiciously or just blank. For those that are still not sure, it's a method of opening a car door for a driver (or passenger) where you use your far hand rather than the near hand, therefore looking back as you do so.

There's not many of us who have not had, at the very least, a near miss from being 'car doored'. Of course best practice it to ride far enough out so as not to be in the path of an opened car door but we've also all been in those situations where this is neither practical or safe to do so, lesser of the two evils so to speak.

Cycling UK is currently running a campaign to get The Dutch Reach included in the driving test and / or to encourage the government to start a campaign like the Think! Campaign that was launched to make cyclists aware of the dangers around trucks. "What we are calling for, though, is guidance and education about a life-saving technique".

So let's do our bit and not only adopt the technique ourselves but also educate our friends and family in the technique, hopefully they in turn will spread the word.

For more information go to: <https://www.cyclinguk.org/blog/samjones/dutch-reach>





### Shrewsbury to Blackpool

A few weeks before setting off, an email from the British Heart Foundation gave a timely reminder of my responsibility to check the bicycle was suitably equipped for cycling on a public road at night. The message arrived on a rainy day and being stuck for something to do.....

Browsing the internet for guidance a search engine took me to Cycling UK's information page that explains what the law requires. My front and rear lights were legally compliant but not the pedals; regulations require a set of four reflectors coloured amber and marked BS 6102/2, positioned so that one reflector is plainly visible to the front and another to the rear of each pedal.

Cycling UK point out that although the likelihood of being challenged for not having pedal reflectors is low, the absence of reflectors may be regarded as contributory negligence should an accident occur. So two clicks later I sourced two pairs of British Standard pedal reflectors that arrived by pony express the following day. Ten minutes later they were in place.

Looking proudly at my handiwork a passing glance at the tyres sent a shiver down my spine. The treads were wearing thin and indentation marks on the sidewalls had to be a gypsy's warning that bad things could happen. Would I really want to fix punctures during a midnight cycle ride in October? No thank you I would not. As for the mudguards '*decidedly shabby*' came to mind.....umm, the growing shopping list could cost a few quid. And it did.

In addition to buying a new set of clincher tyres I also ordered the manufacturers inner tubes that have greater substance than cheap spares. Inflating them to be suitably reassured I wasn't starting with a leaky piece of rubber, I let the air out and on they went. As for the new tyres – gosh, the beading was really, really tough. Although blessed with strong grip strength my thumbs ached from the force needed to work them into the rims.

After attaching my new mudguards I refitted the wheels and went for a bicycle ride. Beneath the front mudguard its turning tyre repeatedly wobbled right of centre. Groan.....mauling the tyre over the rim must have bent the wheel. Returning home I turned my bicycle upside down to investigate. The wheel was centred and secure but several spokes were slack. Could I find my spoke key? No chance, I had to buy another.

Aided by a neighbour whose working life had involved the black art of wheel truing (straightening), my wheel wobble wobbled away for a safer rolling bike.

After stress testing the spokes off I went for a couple of hours cycling and wow, what a difference. The steering was a seamless extension to my arms, speed an extension to leg movement and as for comfort, I was at one with my bike – perfectly balanced.



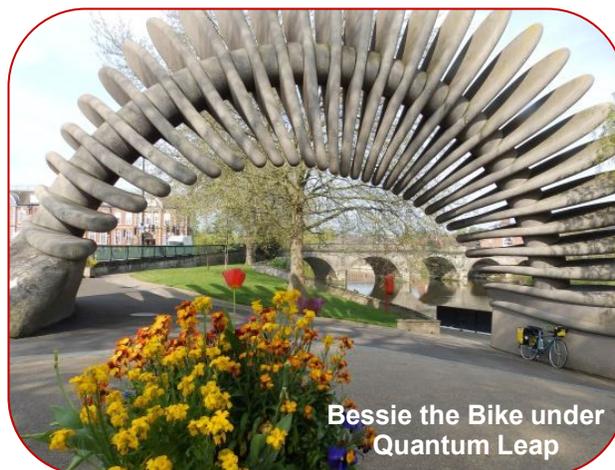
My new spoke key is now kept in a safe place.... I just have to remember where!

### Saturday 7th October

Today began at 6:30am with a dog walk and breakfast, then the 08:20 train from Harlech to Shrewsbury from where I would cycle to Runcorn, a distance of roughly 50 miles. This is the same mileage as this evenings cycle ride from Manchester to Blackpool for the Heart Foundation.

Because a 50 mile bicycle ride is well within my comfort zone, cycling these extra miles left my conscience clear that those sponsoring tonight's effort are not being taken advantage of.

If I wasn't spoiled by the beauty of living in Harlech I would probably live in Shrewsbury, the county town of Shropshire, where there is much to appreciate:



Bessie the Bike under Quantum Leap

- Quantum Leap commemorates Charles Darwin who was born here.
- The first 5 storey iron-framed building in the world (Ditherington flax mill) was built in a suburb of Shrewsbury and is the worlds 1st Skyscraper.
- Shrewsbury's folk festival is visited by thousands and countless other people listen on-line to its streamed performances.

AND.....

This haven of self-indulgence bakes my favourite strawberry and cream cake, sliced and sold in a more than generous portion size..... Yummy !



The streets of Shrewsbury are adorned with flowers and the place is well known for staging the world's longest running annual horticultural event, due in no small measure to the late Percy Thrower who worked as the parks superintendent

When we married and brought our first home we watched Percy on the television programme 'Gardeners' World' and learnt how to grow fruit and vegetables. With today's need for food banks I wonder if updated guidance could help some of the less fortunate to grow and then cook their own nutritional meals.



On the outskirts of Shrewsbury I cycled through the village of Merrington where Percy built his own house. Called 'The Magnolias' it sat in a 2 acre plot that was a location for *Gardeners' World*.

Just before setting out on this trip I discovered that Percy's house and garden no longer exists. I did pass a social housing development called 'The Magnolias' and a little further along the road a street sign bears his name.

For the next 6 hours it poured with rain. I was so pleased to have brought my waterproofs: a rain hat, sealskin gloves, overshoes and over-trousers. Visibility was poor so I turned on a very high intensity rear light as a warning to approaching motorists.



Arriving in Runcorn I unclipped my pannier and handlebar bags and left them at a hotel before continuing to the BHF starting point in Manchester.

With less weight I cycled the remaining 25 miles in 2 hours where the rain stopped.

There is no shortage of food outlets at the Trafford centre.

With an hour to go before the ride I enjoyed a beef-burger, chips, coffee and additional servings of coffee that I poured into my Stanley Thermos flask for the night ahead.

According to the British Heart Foundation over 760 people registered for this year's event yet far fewer actually turned up. In my estimation about 400 cyclists had gathered at the starting line. I am unsure what the collective noun is. Could it be a 'Café of cyclists' or is it a 'Herd'?

Some folks were just like me, an ordinary leisure cyclist supporting a great cause. Others were club cyclists, others were groups of friends. This is the 3rd time I have taken part.

On my first ride in 2013 I arrived at the start an hour before anyone else. Being the first to arrive I became the first cyclist in the first batch of riders to be sent off. Despite the official route being well signed I took the wrong turning off a roundabout and several cyclists followed. A marshal came to our rescue.

Two years later I drove to Blackpool where transport took

our 'herd' to the starting point in Manchester. There was no way I wanted to be first on our coach and what a blunder that decision turned out to be. Being last in my bicycle was first out.

How I hate being first and whether cycling or in life, first place is a very bad place. When you are 1st things can only get worse. A dozen or so cyclists assumed I knew where to go and followed me out of the car park and around the Trafford Centre perimeter to the starting point in the car park that we had set out from.

Tonight at the stroke of midnight we all set off towards Blackpool. Being with others acted as a motivation booster. I quickly settled into a comfortable cadence that was occasionally interrupted to stop at red traffic lights.

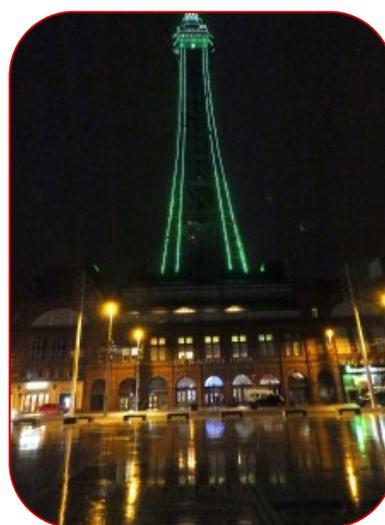
The first time I cycled this route was 5 years ago and the hard pot-holed roads of Manchester were now in an even worse state of repair. Within the first few miles several cyclists had pulled into the roadside to repair punctures. I was so pleased not to be amongst them.

BHF rides are exceptionally well organised. We all stopped for refreshments at 25 miles. Trestle tables were staffed by hard working volunteers offering fruit, cake, hot soup and bread rolls. I drank water, ate couple of oranges and set off with an energy bar.

During the cycle route it is surprising the number of people that clap and shout encouraging words to the passing riders. Many are just returning from wherever they have been on their night out. One man gave me £10. If he is reading this, yes, I did hand it over to the BHF and thank you again for your unexpected donation.



This evening I was chatting to a chap who was doing his first midnight ride. He was worried about falling asleep whilst cycling. I've known of people falling asleep when driving, but is it possible when cycling? Along the ride an emergency ambulance did pass me so perhaps it is.



Arriving in Blackpool its world famous illuminations twinkle to feed cyclists with that final boost of enthusiasm to cycle along the golden mile and arrive at the Tower Ballroom and its dazzling finishing line. Yep, it started to rain again but hey-ho who cares.

Supporters cheered, every cyclist received a BHF finishers medal – the icing on top of a truly wonderful and worthwhile event.

Since leaving Shrewsbury I had cycled 125 miles. It had taken me 13½ hrs at an average speed of 9¾ mph. The



time was nearly 6:30am and I had been awake for 24 hours.

Making my way to queue at the collection point for transport back to Manchester, I was the first to board the 2nd of 3 coaches. The significance of this was that I had reached the finishing line before two thirds of other cyclists.

After returning to Manchester I cycled to a nearby railway station and caught a train to Runcorn leaving me with a short cycle ride to the hotel I had booked the previous evening. After a much needed shower I retired to bed having now been awake for 30 hrs.

Whilst thanking those who have sponsored this effort I have also made the decision to retire from raising funds through cycling for charitable causes. I've done my bit and now look forward to cycling touring holidays of 30 – 50 miles a day.

**Joe Patten**

# Inspirational Erin Spray.....



- Mileage: 1,200**
- Days: 20**
- Average mileage per day: 60**
- Money Raised for Charity: £5,200**

**And all achieved at the age of 11!**

Welna Bowden, trustee from Cycling UK presented the Cycling UK Young Achiever of the Year Award at the Chester and North Wales AGM in November this year to Erin Spray a truly inspirational young lady and a very worthy recipient of the award.

**Erin receiving her Young Achiever of the Year Award at the Chester and North Wales AGM**



Erin Loved cycling and decided she would like to do a long ride in the summer of 2017. Along with her dad they came up with the idea of cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats. Erin also wished to raise money for a charity close to her heart, the Mental Health charity Young Minds. Erin's

cousin, who has Anorexia, was receiving care in Glasgow some 400 miles from her family home as there were no beds available closer. Erin wanted to do something to help.

## “My Little Hero”

Supported by a very proud family, Erin cycled the 1,200 mile route with Dad Chris whilst Mum, Bethany and sister, Ella kept the home fires burning. Erin and Chris were supported along the route from clubs all over the UK the level of support they received was amazing, some offering beds for the night whilst others cycled along side them, helping them along the way. Chris describes Erin as ‘My Little Hero’ as she showed such determination.

**Well done Erin!  
You're amazing!**



## “Such Determination”





After our camping trip to Northern France in 1953 an executive decision was made to visit Ireland in 1954 but this time ditch the tent and go bed and breakfast. Once again the plan was to go during 'Colliers Fortnight' when all the pits closed down for holidays.

We did a little planning but before we could book a ferry crossing we had one small problem to sort out. I, like an idiot, had entered a two-day race – Wrexham – Bangor – Wrexham – on the Saturday and Sunday that we were due to go. I offered to withdraw my entry but Chris and Dave my two mates wouldn't hear of it. 'Do the race' they said 'We'll cross on Monday; When I say we did a little planning, I mean a little. We brought a map of Ireland and booked a crossing for early Tuesday morning.



The race turned out to be a disaster for me. It started from Bryn Offa on the Ruthin road and headed for Coedpoeth. On the climb up to the village all hell broke loose. Several of the riders in our club (The Premier) were from Coedpoeth. They went to the front and set a cruel pace into the village. Approaching Bwlchgwyn they did the same and I got dropped along with my mate Ron. We could see the bunch up ahead on Llandegla Moors but couldn't catch them until a bus or coach came up behind us. I shouted to Ron to speed up and tuck in behind it which we did and draughted up to the bunch (cheats!) A rider from the Rhos on Sea club jumped away somewhere along the A5. He was never caught and won stage one. On the descent of the 'Nant Francon Pass' my rear tyre exploded – race over for me!

My mate Ron won the sprint from the bunch for 2<sup>nd</sup> place. On Sunday the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. I helped out with the marshalling but I couldn't help thinking 'I could be in Ireland right now'.

Back to our plans..... no panniers this year just a large

saddlebag, brooks on carradice with our oilskin capes strapped across the top. We booked on an early Tuesday Morning crossing – 8am. This meant starting out Monday evening and cycling through the night. In theory this was okay but we didn't bargain for the storm during the night. It

lashed down with rain, thunder and lightening and howling head wind riding along the coast to Bangor. We arrived in Holyhead just missing the ferry sailing off into the mist!

A quick visit to the booking office and they very kindly re-booked us onto an afternoon crossing about 2pm. We soon found a café for a breakfast and replenished with food we decided to have a look at South Stack, as you do at nineteen. After riding approximately 85 miles through the night it seemed the sensible thing to do! After the climb to South Stack and a visit to the light-house we came back down to Holyhead and searched for a chippy then proceeded to embark onto the ferry.

The crossing in those days took about four hours but after the storm the previous night the sea was still very rough. We found a stairway in the centre of the boat and sat there for the entire trip. We disembarked at Dun Laoghaire harbour, we were now on Irish soil.

After a good Irish breakfast, much the same as an English or Welsh one, and a few false starts, we found our way out of Dublin and on the way to Galway. We had no set plan, just head for Galway and stop where and when we felt like it, why not?

We cycled through some lovely little villages with whitewashed cottages and thatched roofs. We travelled east to west in a straight line, well there were a few corners! Not many hills, very flat country until you reach the west coast. It took two days to reach Galway. We stopped at a B & B in Killbeggan near Athlone on the first night. Once we found a village we looked for the bar or shop they were often a bar and shop all in one and usually provided a B & B. Some were very basic but they always provided a fantastic breakfast. The prices? Well it was 1954 – The cheapest we paid was 7/6, seven shillings and sixpence, or 37½ pence in today's currency. The most expensive was 12/6 work it out for yourself, but mostly they charged 10/- (50p). Always good food, what more could you ask?

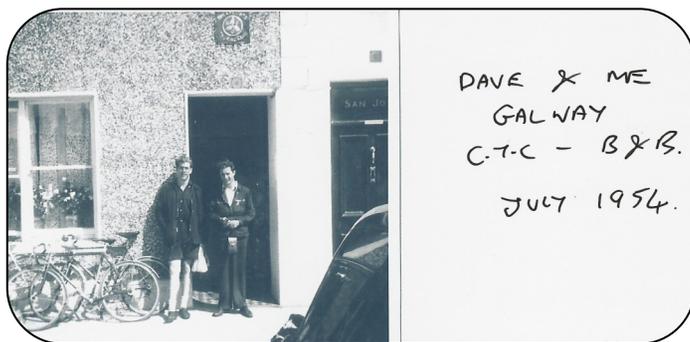
On our way to Galway, on the second day, we cycled through farming country with lots of horse drawn vehicles plus the occasional donkey cart. Sometimes we passed workers digging peat out of the bog, poor old Pete, sorry, couldn't resist!



Glynn Jones



On reaching Galway we looked for a suitable B & B and found one with a CTC sign over the door and they did evening meals...Wonderful!



We decided to spend three days in Galway and did quite a variety of things. One day we hired a rowing boat and took it out on Lough Corrib – Dave and Chris went swimming as well. I don't swim so I stayed in the boat and practiced my rowing. I don't row either!

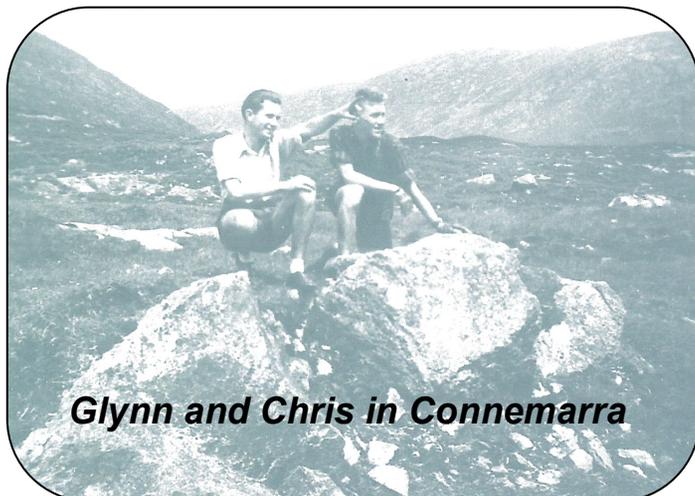


Another day we cycled the length of Lough Corrib to Cong Castle which was now a hotel. If you paid an entrance fee to visit the castle and grounds it included dinner. This we did but felt very out of place among the guests in our shorts being waited on, but

what the heck, our money was as good as theirs. The castle was quite interesting and we were told that there were 365 small man-made islands on the Lough. One for each day of the year!

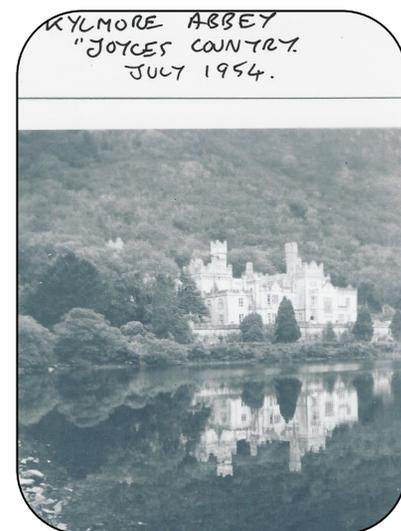
Another day we visited Galway Bay, we were also lucky to see a bike road race passing through. This must have been a stage of one of the early Irish Tours. We had one evening out at the local cinema just to check out the Irish colleens, well we were just 19!

We were a little bit sad to leave Galway but we had to push on. We headed for Connemara and eventually Clifton on the West coast. I'd never heard of Connemara or the Twelve Bens (or pins) of Connemara before. We



passed through Oughter Ard and Maam Cross on our way to Connemara National Park cycling through some fantastic countryside, wonderful views narrow rough roads but very few cars, very rugged county until we reached Clifden and another B & B.

Next day we set out for Leenaun passing Kylesmore Lough and Kylesmore Abbey. We were now in Joyce's Country. Through Westport and on to Castlebar, Swinford was next, then Longford to Mullingar.



Most of this part of the country was very rural, farming country which reminds me of a story about an American tourist pulling up by an Irish farm and asking the farmer leaning on the gate if this was his farm. Farmer 'Yes it is' American 'Back in the states it takes me all day to drive around my ranch – Farmer 'I know what you mean, I had a car like that once'!

After Mullingar our route was pretty much straight back to Dublin arriving in plenty of time to visit Phoenix Park, said to be the largest Public Park in Europe. We were fortunate to see the finish of a road race there (again I think it must have been the original tour of Ireland). The park is very impressive and I visited again on other tours.

We made our way to Dun Laoghaire Harbour for the ferry trip home. This time we had a very calm crossing which took less than 4 hours, all downhill. Only one incident, we decided to explore the boat, on finding a little door, behind which was a steel staircase, we found ourselves in the engine room below decks. We were quickly escorted back upstairs and told to keep away (they might have clapped us in irons who knows?)

After the crossing we rode home down the A5 without incident and got ourselves ready for another shift on Monday down pit!

I have visited Ireland since and learned more about the places we visited in 1954 such as Connemara, the Twelve Bens, Joyce's Country and Phoenix Park. The weather was good to us and the scenery wonderful. The villages with their white washed cottages with smoke curing up from the chimneys were fantastic. I visited Ireland three more times on trips organised by Eric Hughes and Des James in 2005 – 2006 – 2007 and found a big change in Dublin and Galway both now, large bustling cities.

I have enjoyed writing this as it brought back many happy memories, I'm just glad I can still remember them!

**Glynn Jones**



**You must be on your bike for a long time when competing in the 300k+ events!**

Yes, when I rode the Plains 300k it took about 18 hours to complete. The national 400k took 25.5 hours. Terry and I occasionally bumping into John Wilkie C&NW rider and PBP/LEL veteran at the food stops.

dropper post that only went down and not up, whereas I normally ride a Giant or Cannondale road bike with 25mm tyres.



Paul Mills

**Chester and North Wales CTC is a club of champions**

In the last 12 years of the CTC tourist Trophy competition (now renamed "Cycling UK Tourist Trophy competition") C&NW have won the team prize 11 times. Lowri has been the winner of the lady prize 9 times. The men's competition has been won three times by Peter Dilworth and the winner in 2015 and 2016 has been this edition's interviewee Paul Mills.

**How did you get involved in the Tourist comp Paul?**

I fell into it by accident, I started riding sportives and then Audax's with Terry Davis and most of the rides we have done together. Because I was using my CTC membership number for the insurance I found that I built up points in the competition.

**How does the competition work?**

There are six categories'. Points are awarded each time an event is entered. (This is a simplification of the rules. Full detail on the Cycling UK website John) There are four distance categories' ranging from 40K to 300K and over. Special events such as Treasure hunts, hill climbs, Freewheeling etc. Plus, a category covering off road rides.

**What do you use for lights riding at night?**

I have a Moon rechargeable mtb light, ensuring it does not blind oncoming cars and on low power with 300 lumens it is supposed to last 9.5 hours and a smaller rechargeable Moon as back up, I was a bit paranoid about riding down the Cat & Fiddle in 2015 as there are no street lights or ambient lighting but it was like riding in daylight especially as the road was practically empty. If I did more night rides I would look at road specific dynamo lighting (there is something about a different beam pattern for mtb and road).

**Do you use a Garmin for navigation?**

I am not a Garmin user, relying on route sheets and studying maps beforehand, I still manage to occasionally ride "scenic detours". I may yet need to succumb

**How far do you travel to enter events?**

I try to sign up and support all the local rides. I wouldn't usually drive more than 50 miles just to get extra points.

**What about the off-road rides?**

These were ridden whilst at the Welsh Festival of Cycling at Llandoverly, the first year I used a Hybrid with cyclocross tyres whilst last year I used a Whyte hardtail mountain bike with 2.4in tyres and a

**Do you ever enter events that don't score points?**

Gaining points has never been a primary reason for going on a particular ride. Previous years I have ridden John Perrin's Venetian Nights 200k from Macclesfield going up the Cat and Fiddle onto the Roaches and across the Tissington Trail well worth doing especially for his Van of Delights.

This year 2017 Terry and I did the Chirk 200k from Poynton. Also this years Plains 300k 2017 was not part of the competition, I rode this with Lowri, unfortunately it clashed with the Eureka 200k but I opted for the 300k. I have also failed at some of John Hamilton's very lumpy 300k rides from Shrewsbury, one by 20mins & one DNF

**How many miles did you ride and climb last year?**

I really don't keep count as I don't have a computer on the bike.

**Asked to say a few words after collecting the trophy in Birmingham!**

I said "I just ride my bike that's the easy bit, the hard work is done by the organisers"

**I always ask for a final message, is that yours?**

May the air stay in your tyres and the power stay in your legs.



**How did you do?**

R	D	B	O	A	K	I	S	E
I	O	K	R	E	S	A	D	B
E	S	A	B	I	D	R	O	K
O	R	I	D	K	E	S	B	A
K	A	D	S	B	R	E	I	O
B	E	S	A	O	I	D	K	R
D	B	R	E	S	O	K	A	I
S	I	O	K	R	A	B	E	D
A	K	E	I	D	B	O	R	S





## A Cycling Holiday in Gran Canaria in 2017

Last year I wrote an article in The Link about a 2016 family holiday in Gran Canaria where I had done some cycling whilst family did the more usual sunny holiday things. I invited other Ch&NW CTC riders to join us in 2017. I was somewhat surprised at how many people showed an interest in this trip and eventually fifteen people booked a trip themselves over roughly the same dates as us. This included three who did not cycle but enjoyed the island in other ways. The question in my mind was what ride to suggest on the first day that would show people what was possible, but not put them off venturing into the hills again. I had made it clear that this was just a group of people on holiday at the same time and I was in no way the organiser, but this didn't stop them asking me where we were going!



The only reasonable circular route was the ride to Soria at 3000ft and then down to Arguineguin and back along the coast. This meant a long steady climb – when I say long, the road went up for 12.5 miles with the café at the top. The scenery was spectacular, the weather perfect, the surface good, the traffic light – but it was uphill! Well a few people turned back only ½ a mile from the summit – oh, and I had forgotten to mention the “technical” descent over the next two miles to the café, where we were rewarded with a huge jug of fresh mango and papaya juice with our lunch; and then a long swooping descent over the next fifteen miles – taking care on the hairpin bends of

course. The coast road is not so pleasant to ride being quite busy with traffic and lots of ups and downs. The total for the day was 42 miles and 4000ft of climbing, not so different to many a B ride, but much more memorable and so wonderful to be out in the warm sunny air after leaving rainy Manchester a few hours earlier.

The next day we decided this was a holiday so just a gentle ride to the Restaurante Las Cañadas at only 1500ft, and then back down, stopping to look at the Windmill along the route.



It may only have been 10 miles each way but we managed to include a café stop along the way at what became known as “Harry’s Bar”. It was a combined green grocers, general store and café. To get lunch you point out what you would like and they take it off the shelves to prepare it for you.

The following day we decided to split into two groups. One going into the

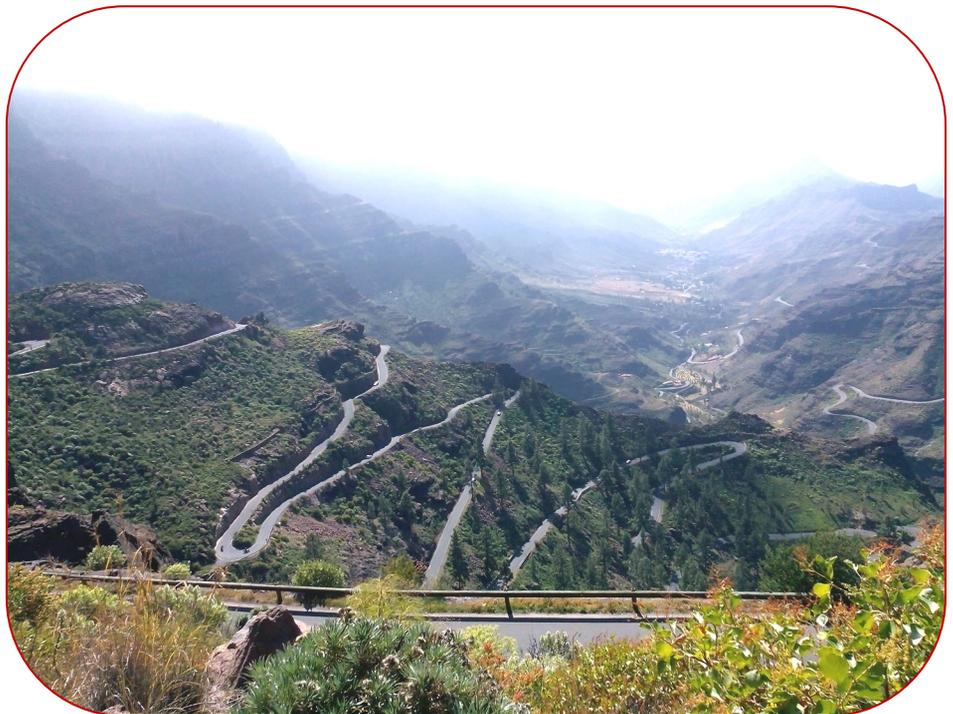
hills again, the other going along the coast.

Janet, John F and I set off up into the hills reaching an isolated juice bar on a summit at 2000ft, with

stupendous views over the Island. On the other side was a drop down to the north-west corner of the Island. This looked interesting except that there was no other way home than back over this summit. Janet and I decided to continue the ride to reach the small town of Aldea. This was the first town we met which was almost completely untouched by tourism. The only café in town provided lunch and we chatted to the only other customers - an elderly English couple who told us they were there on a walking holiday, although neither looked as if they could walk more than 100yds.

Feeling refreshed we set off back up the mountain and another stop at the juice bar, then back to Puerto de Mogan to hear the tales of ice-cream, beers, coffees, and beaches from the group who had gone to Maspalomas. For us today it was 40 miles and 5,000ft of climbing although the seaside group claimed to have done more than that (technical Strava GPS issue too complicated to go into here).

John meanwhile, had met a cyclist who had told him of a ride which he called the “Balcony Ride” – a circular



ride high up in the mountains. John came up with the idea that we could get a taxi to a point on this ride, and so do the circuit and then the descent. Cheating you may say but this was a holiday after all! Two taxis were organised and after an hour of climbing we arrived at our start point, the tiny village (and café) at Ayacata at 4500ft. This only cost us 10€ each. We left the café and after the first corner the road turned upwards and there was more climbing to 5500ft. Some balcony we thought! Some went back to Ayacata and then down the mountain - a 20-mile descent. The rest of us pressed on and enjoyed a really spectacular ride around the so called balcony - the views more than making up for the pain. This was another 40 mile day – this time with 3000ft of climbing even though our finish point was 4500ft below our start.

New people were arriving to join us and others were starting to leave, so we then repeated the Soria loop ( everyone finishing this time), followed by rest day to Restaurante Las Cañadas.



We had noticed from our apartments a very smooth tarmacked road high up on the opposite side of the valley and off into the distance. The road was firmly closed to traffic by security gates but each day the fence was broken down and people walked along the road.

Some of us walked to the top but our curiosity was raised even more when we saw that the road disappeared into the distance. Various unlikely explanations were offered to us about this road. Next day we decided we would ride it. It was 6 miles of



perfectly formed tarmac road 30ft wide. Rain the previous night had dislodged some stone onto the road in a few places but this was easily avoided. The road lead us to the top of a cliff overlooking an unspoilt beach. We later found via Google that this road was built by developers planning a new resort, but after a public outcry a preservation order was issued preventing any development.

We cycled back and became separated into smaller groups. I passed a young lad riding a very heavy looking touring bike, going in the opposite direction and noticed his helmet hanging from his bars – good idea I thought in this heat and with no cars. Further on he came to some downhill with some rock on the road in the dip before it went up again. He crossed to the other side of the road to avoid it and unfortunately at that moment met one of our group coming the other way, also at speed due to it being in a dip. The two cyclists only saw a glimpse of each other before they crashed head on. The young lad sustained a head injury, bleeding badly. The rider from our group received some cuts and bruising, but the carbon fork on the rented bike disintegrated. We then called an ambulance and the lad went to hospital, and we made our way home chastened by the experience.

The next day we repeated the taxi ride but this time went to an even higher point starting our ride at almost 6000ft. This time we were all able to complete this magical ride and drink in the wonderful views. While the

others made their way back to Puerto de Mogan, I took a different road heading down through San Bartolome to Maspalomas where I had persuaded my wife and daughter to collect me by car.

Although the end of my ride was 44 miles from my start, and 6000ft below my start, I still managed to climb 2800ft that day. Wonderful roads, wonderful views, a truly unforgettable day. The next day was my last and just time for one more climb to Restaurante Las Cañadas.

On reflection, it was a great week and I was really pleased with how it had gone. A great bunch of people to spend the week with, some wonderful rides, relaxing times, a break from English (or Welsh) weather; what could be better in cold wet dark February? It was interesting to me how different people took on different roles, some dealing with restaurant choice, taxi arrangements, route planning, ride leading, it all happened spontaneously without prior arrangement – wonderful! Are we going again in 2018 – well some of us are, why not join us? We will probably make more use of the taxi arrangement in order to extend our rides to new areas. Puerto de Mogan is not the best situated of the resorts for cycling routes, but it is much quieter and smaller than the others, whilst still offering a good range of eating and drinking places and we will choose to go there again for that reason.

**Chris Smith**



I have just returned from an interesting week cycling in Gdansk & Warsaw, Poland with my Brompton. I had hoped to do a tour earlier in the year, but it clashed with Welsh Festival at Ruthin. However, found some cheap flights from Manchester (with dreaded Ryanair! and I decided to have a taster week.



number of ladies riding, all in ordinary clothing. The only helmets and high-viz to be seen worn by German or British visitors. As ever, the Brompton and its fold prompted lots of interest. Interestingly, the Polish for cycles to arrive in Poland were made by the Rover company and the name



to Manchester.

There was much of interest in Warsaw, with amazing restoration of buildings. considering that 95% was destroyed during WW2. Some aspects of the visit were quite depressing when you see so many memorials to thousands killed in wartime.



has stuck ever since! Poland well worth a visit.

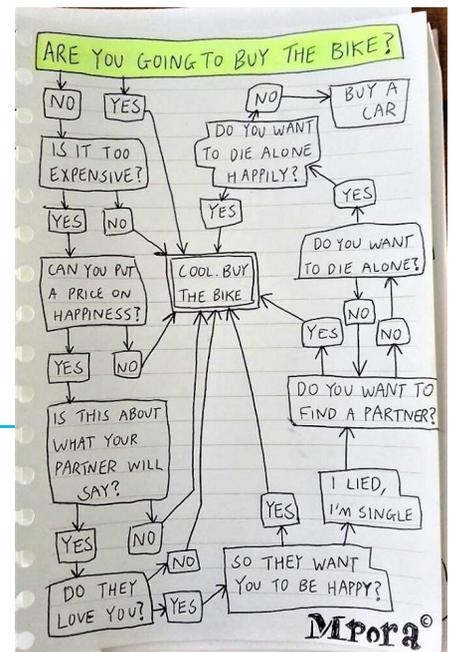
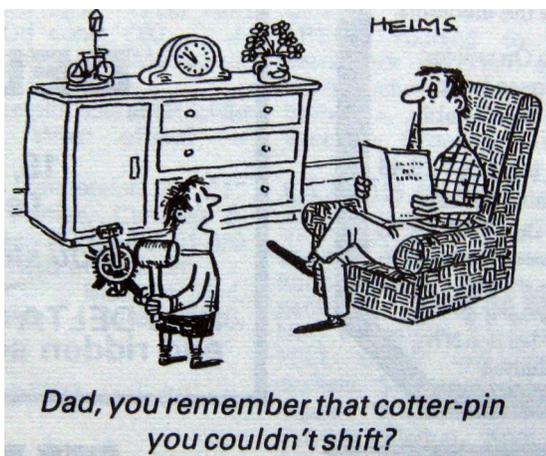
Next trip, Malta in January.

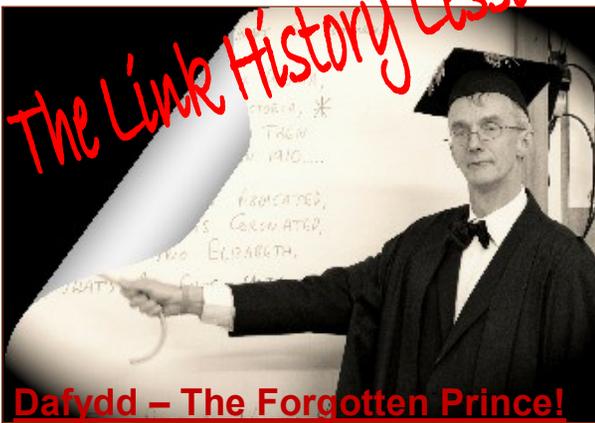
I Flew to Gdansk where I stayed in and excellent hostel near the harbour. Having explored the city and the Solidarity monuments, I ventured further afield along the Baltic Coast. After a few nights I caught a train to Warsaw, for the equivalent of ten pounds! I then had a few nights in Warsaw before returning

One heartening aspect was seeing the excellent cycling infrastructure in the cities. Wide, well surfaced cycle ways, with priority at lights. None of the 'Cyclists dismount' rubbish we see! They even provided foot & handrails alongside the lights when you had to stop!

Also I was very conscious of the

**John Holiday**





In 1237 Joanna died and Llewelyn had a stroke. Llewelyn relied more and more on Dafydd to control matters in Wales. As his health failed rapidly Llewelyn retired to Aberconwy Abbey, Conway where he died and was buried in 1240 on 11<sup>th</sup> April.

Dafydd took full control and Gruffudd was released from prison. In 1241 Henry invaded North Wales

Owain was a captive in England at Shotwick Castle, Rhodri and Dafydd were still children, this left Llewelyn and he assumed the title. In 1247 Llewelyn and Henry came to terms at the Treaty of Woodstock which gave Llewelyn, The Last, control of Gwynedd...for now but that's another story.



The Prince in question was/is Dafydd ap Llewelyn. His father was Llewelyn ap Iorwerth also known as Llewelyn Fawr or Llewelyn the Great. His mother was

King John's illegitimate daughter Joan or Joanna (Siwan in Welsh). Llewelyn also had another son called Gruffudd who was older than Dafydd but illegitimate (there was a lot of it about in those days) and he wanted to make Dafydd his heir, this he did with the blessing of most of the Welsh Lords.

Dafydd was born in 1212 at Hen Blas – Old Hall, which was at Coleshill near Bagillt, Flint. This was a royal house or court and Llewelyn stayed there often. He also built a chapel there in 1208. Not much remains of this now, just a pile of stones. There is talk of putting a plaque up to mark the spot.

By now Llewelyn was not a well man and he wanted to put his affairs in order. He arranged for Dafydd to marry Isabella de Brose. Gruffudd was not happy at being passed over as Llewelyn's heir and he rebelled and was imprisoned in Criccieth Castle.

supported by some Welsh leaders including the Lords of Powys. The English army was too powerful and Dafydd surrendered at Gwern Eigrion. He lost most of his lands and he also had to promise Henry 111 if he had no heir his lands, mostly Gwynedd, would go to the crown.

Henry captured Gruffudd and imprisoned him in the Tower of London as a hostage against Dafydd. In 1244 Dafydd who had remained quiet for a few years rebelled and regained most of his lands. There wasn't any threat of a hostage now as Gruffudd had died whilst trying to



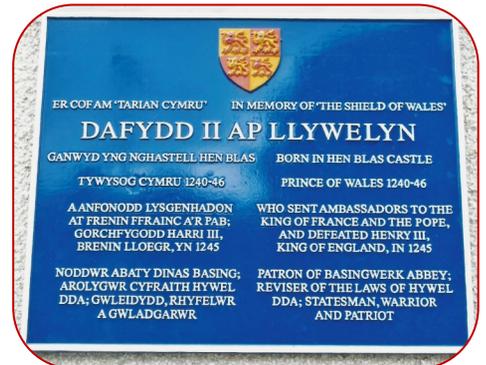
The coat of arms of Llywelyn ap Gruffudd.

escape from the Tower on St David's day 1244. The rope made of bedsheets he was using gave way and he fell to his death.

In 1245 Henry was preparing an army to attack Dafydd again.

Unfortunately on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1246 Dafydd suddenly died at his home Hen Blas, Henry once again gained control over Wales. Dafydd died childless, on even an illegitimate one, but Henry did not enforce his right promised by Dafydd.

However Gruffudd had left four sons.

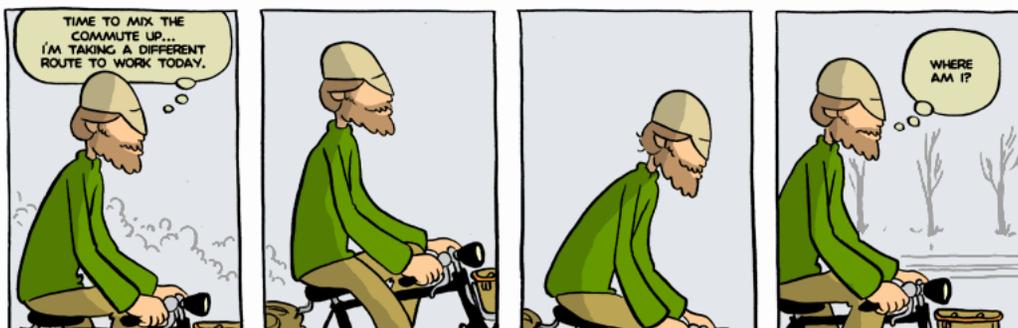


So we had our own local Prince of Wales born and died at Hen Blas, Bagillt, Flint. His wife is buried at St Michaels Church Caerwys. Although he only had a short reign as prince 1240 – 1246 he did manage to achieve quite a lot. He revised the Welsh laws and he became a patron to the Monks of Basingwerk, Greenfield, granting them lands of their own. He also sent envoys to the King of France and to The Pope.

There is a group called "The Dafydd ap Llewelyn Committee" They plan to put up an information board near Hen Blas and have already put up a plaque on the Llong Uchaf, Upper Shippe Inn on Sandy Lane Bagillt. Worth looking out for when on a coast road bike ride.

Dafydd was buried with his father at the Abbey of Aberconwy. He had Welsh and English royal blood in his veins. The Forgotten Prince!

**Glynn Jones**





## Raising the Bar (Quill type headsets)

I recently had need to increase the height of the handlebars on a 20+ year old Rossin steel bike, to put them on a level with the top of the saddle. (A situation only too familiar to old timers to relieve the strain of aching backs.)

The bike still had the original steel forks with 1" steerer tube tapped for a quill type stem. The screw threads are a short distance above the upper head race which just allows room for the twin lock nuts to neatly clamp the headset in place. A quill stem then locks in to the steerer tube using an internal clamp mechanism. (see



A traditional quill stem with head nut extender seen at Meadow Lea

picture of extender tube below). The maximum safe height of a handlebar held by a traditional quill stem is just a couple of inches above the headset---not nearly enough in this case as the bars are required to have 4" elevation.

This situation got me to thinking of various techniques to increase bar height above a quill stem---so here are a few ideas that have been used successfully over the years:

**Retain the original quill stem and use a head nut extender.** The bike above has gained an extra 1" of handlebar height by using a special double top nut to extend the safe height of the quill stem. I have used these extender nuts in the past and they work fine. My recollection is they are made by Specialised---who also produce arguably the best old style headsets incorporating two sets of replaceable, angled, needle roller bearings in cups. I was introduced to these headsets by Dave Lloyd some

20 years ago---he considered them better than Campag Record at 1/3 the price!

It is possible to raise the bars further by using a hinged quill stem. This is a feasible option used on many bikes, but I consider them to be cumbersome and heavy. (with apologies to those who like them).

**Convert to ahead stem.** Ahead stems have totally taken over from quill stems during the last 10 years, following their original development for mountain bikes. They are stronger, more stable and versatile than quill sets. Also it is much easier to change handlebars as the bar clamp screws on and off the front using 4 bolts, rather than the awkward compression tunnel used by most quill stems. If a decent bearing set such as Cane Creek is used, ahead sets can also give a smoother steering action than quill.

The simplest and cheapest way to convert is by using a "quill to ahead stem" converter tube. This uses the existing headset and conventional clamp mechanism within the steel steerer tube. An ahead stem of the desired length can then be affixed round the upper part. If an angled ahead stem is used, then approx. 3" height can safely be gained.

**Quill to ahead converter tube.** Note steering tube clamp at lower



end. Upper section can be 1" or 1 1/8" which is the more modern diameter.

The next option is to convert to an ahead set, whilst retaining the original steel forks. For the Rossin shown below, the original steel forks were sent to Bob Jackson Cycles in Leeds to have the short, threaded steerer tube removed and a new longer tube welded in place. Cost of this was approx. £100- for tube replacement and repaint of forks after welding. A new ahead set and 17deg rising stem were then fitted which comfortably gives the bar height needed whilst retaining the original steel forks.



Rossin with extended steel forks

A third method, and the most expensive if decent forks are used, is to fit brand new carbon fibre forks---as seen below on a Colnago. This frame was bought second hand 15 years ago. The frame was immaculate but the original steel forks were rusty---so they were replaced by an early pair of carbon fibre forks. Ironically, these were converted to a quill system as ahead sets were very much in their infancy at the time.

The bike is now fitted with Richey, 1" steerer, carbon fibre forks which have enabled the bars to be raised 4" even when using a horizontal stem. The forks were expensive at almost £200, but you get what you pay for---a quality ride and a lot of safety.



Colnago with new carbon fibre forks and raised stem, using a headset system.

So there are some ideas on "Raising the bar" to obtain a more relaxed riding position.

Next time in Tech Tips--Increasing saddle set back to ease those aching backs and knees even further.

David Matthews



Those that attended the AGM in Rossett will have had the opportunity to taste Terry Davies' delicious Apple Crumble, so as requested, here's the recipe.....Don't forget to serve with custard!

### Ingredients

- 8oz plain white flour
- 4oz brown sugar
- 4oz butter
- 1 table spoon of white sugar
- 1 pinch of salt
- 3-4 large cooking apples



### Method

1. Heat the oven to gas mark 6, 200-220 or 170-180 fan.
2. Sift the flour and salt into a large mixing bowl.
3. Then sift the brown sugar into the same bowl.
4. Dice the butter and add to the flour and sugar.
5. Rub the mixture with your fingers until it resembles bread crumbs.
6. Peel and slice the apples and put in a pan with a minimal amount of water bring to the boil and then strain.
7. Place the apples in an oven proof dish sprinkle the white sugar over the apple then cover with the crumble mixture.
8. Place in the pre heated hot oven, for approximately 45minutes. Serve with custard or cream.
9. Enjoy!

What's bad tempered and goes with custard.....

Apple Grumble!



Do you know anyone who would benefit from this Charity? Visit their website for more details, photos, and reviews. Tandems available in our area.



Mike Frith sent this photo of his Car assist ride to Llandudno. The weather was good so it was a higher than expected turnout but a good day was had by all!



I loved cycling.

From the moment I was able to climb aboard my sister's 16 inch wheel trike, and turn the pedals, I was hooked, soon learning to corner on two wheels as I raced round our block of ten houses, along the front on our unmade up road, and picked the fastest line round the back between steps, grass, and worn paths.

From there I graduated onto a black hand painted two wheeler, held up by my dad from the saddle, till that moment when I realised he's not there and I was riding it by myself.

There followed lots of riding round the local streets, a few longer rides and one brush with a vehicle, as I rode into a stationary car whilst riding with my head down, luckily resulting in only a broken headlight on the car.

When I was about eleven my Dad turned up with a second hand burgundy coloured Rudge Whitworth bike, complete with hub dynamo and more importantly, three speed Sturmey Archer gears. On this bike I learnt to explore my city, and went further and further, till one day, whilst out on a long ride in the country, I was overtaken by some school friends, who were members of a local cycling club, on their 'sports' bikes, drop handlebar jobs with five derailleur gears and high pressure tyres. I was hooked again!

After several months of saving from my part time job and a birthday gift from my mum and dad, I had my own new 'sports' bike, a white F C Parkes, with five Campagnolo gears and Weinman centre pull brakes.

With this I joined a local cycling club, and started the big adventure of club runs, cycling weekends away, and time trialling, eventually after a few years becoming club



handicap champion over 50, 100 miles and 12 hour time trials, on my by then fully Campagnolo equipped Harry Quinn racer, bought from a work colleague, who needed the money to help fund his premature entrance into the marriage stakes!

College, later career and family prevented my full participation in the cycling world, but I always had a bike, leisure riding, riding to work, and taking the bike on holiday for lovely pure pleasure.

After many years, meeting some magic ages, and being able to qualify for the fully leisured club, I gained what would be my second new bike, and once again joined a club, where I was able to enjoy the pleasure of lane cruising and cycling companionship.

With this renewed passion, and carefully reading the published list of weekly rides, I was able to venture farther and farther with my club, take part in local challenge rides, and was honoured by being asked to lead rides and even take part in cycle tours.

As the group organisation became more slick, details about group rides and routes were sent out by weekly e-mail, to ensure everyone knew what was going on. As the sport grew dramatically to become something more than a minority pastime, so rules grew regarding numbers in groups, and even courses for aspiring group leaders.

Somewhere along the line, a new route device for cyclists came into being, whereby one could plot one's route, then follow it via a moving arrow on a little screen attached to the handlebars!

Soon the screen route was also included in the weekly email, whereby one could 'load up' on one's own device, and follow the route in real time as it unfolded on the screen..... sort of reminiscent of my early head down approach to cycling.

I even thought about purchasing one myself, but when I saw the price thought, 'How much? I could nearly build a bike for that!', I decided to keep following the maps.

Nevertheless, I followed the routes given in the weekly email, and by use of maps, both paper and those in my head, was able to turn up knowing the intended route. Turned up one week though to find the route had been changed by an e-mail two hours before the start, due to sheep poo problems on the track! I decided to use the original route that had been planned, and arrived early in plenty of time for lunch.

Some time ago my club was taken over by another, who now ride mob-like down the lanes in sportive fashion, lose people, take the wrong route, occupy the whole pub where we once had a reserved table, and sing [chant] raucous songs.

They also came with their own colourful outfits, adorned with motifs of a bygone pre-industrial age, and proclaim 'We are Cycling UK', so they must be!

Some of my club diehards have also acquired this outfit, perhaps to blend in with the new order.

At a recent meeting of all clubs in the greater area, a lady from a club in the far reaches of our western world was asked if they would be interested in a newly designed club outfit. She replied, " No, we just meet up every week and go out for a ride."

I loved cycling.

**A. Wheeler.**

**No doubt others also share your views. I am humbled by the knowledge of some of the older members and the maps they carry around in their heads, whilst I rely on my Garmin, which gives me the freedom to 'get lost'. I must say though I am looking forward to sporting my new Chester and North Wales CTC/Cycling UK top this summer whilst out on a ride.**



**The Editor.**

## Dates for your diary 2018

### Chester & N Wales CTC events

Date	Event	Organiser
6 <sup>th</sup> to 8 <sup>th</sup> April	Ladies' Weekend	Sue Booth
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> April	Eureka Audax Events (Choice of 3 distances)	Dave Matthews
Sat 13 <sup>th</sup> May	C&NW CTC Map reading & Treasure Hunt Manely Mere Sail Sport	Liz and Peter Conway
Sun 19 <sup>th</sup> May	Tour of the Berwyns & Panorama Prospect Audaxes	Dave Matthews
Sun 10 <sup>th</sup> June	TBC Short bike rides to coincide with Bike Week possibly in conjunction with Chester Cycling Campaign	To be confirmed
Sun 17 <sup>th</sup> June	Bob Clift Memorial Cheshire Cycleways (50 miles or 100miles)	Sue Booth
Sun 1st July	Bert Bailey Memorial Vets 100	Laurie Mason
Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> July	Audax events: Barmouth Boulevard, Brenig Bach & Bala Parade	Vicky Payne
Sat 1st Sept	Momma Audax Rides (Choice of 3 distances)	Dave Matthews
Sun 23 <sup>th</sup> Sept	President's lunch & presentation	C&NW CTC President
Sat 29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	Hill Climb & Freewheel	Lowri Evans
Sat 13 <sup>th</sup> Oct	Corwen Audax Events (Clwydian, Clwyd Gate, Bala Mini Bash)	Vicky Payne
Sun 4 <sup>th</sup> Nov	CH&NW CTC AGM	C&NW CTC Sec

### Events in the C&NW CTC area organised by other Cycling UK groups:

Sun 25 <sup>th</sup> Mar	Two Mills Spring 50 (This ride is now full)	Janet Gregory Two Mills
19 <sup>th</sup> to 23 <sup>rd</sup> July	Welsh Festival (4 days of rides) Ruthin	CTC Cymru Emrys Jones
26 <sup>th</sup> August	Wild Wales – Merseyside (for early entry please contact Lowri Evans form early March as this is when the club entry code should be sent out to C&NW CTC)	Merseyside CTC

At the time of writing entries are open for the Spring 50, the Vets 100, and the Audax events.

For links to detail about the events visit either <http://www.ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk/events2018.html>

<https://www.cyclinguk.org/local-groups/chester-and-north-wales-ctc-caer-gogledd-cymru>

Or if you have no access to the internet contact C&NW CTC secretary or event organiser

**Lowri Evans**

**This article appeared in the CTC Gazette 1929**

**Not all horseshoes are lucky!**



Miss Roberts, a Northampton young woman, was injured in a singular way when cycling near Sywell on Tuesday. A high-powered car which passed her threw up a horseshoe, which struck her on the forehead, and caused a nasty cut. In falling from her machine she sprained her ankle.—*Northampton Echo*, April 25th.

That horseshoe was evidently not one of the lucky kind.

As a cyclist I should welcome a road tax of about 5s. per annum for the sake of the improved status it would bestow on us.—Correspondent in the *Daily Express*, April 25th.

Unfortunately, this correspondent does not indicate what benefits he expects to accrue from his "improved status," whatever that may mean. Short of salutes from the road scouts, the cyclist already has every right and privilege of a traveller by wheel.





**Remember in the last issue we followed Joe through The Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic and into Austria? Sit back, relax, and enjoy the rest of his journey:**

**Day 10 183km or 114 miles**

<https://www.strava.com/activities/932077306>

I awoke into torrential rain and gales. Leaving Vienna was a bit like coming into it, wet and windy with lots of wet cobbles to keep you alert on the bike. It was amazing how quickly Vienna was left, the cycle route feeds you quickly onto river meadows and nature reserves and before long it is hard to believe you are so close to one of Europe's

I stopped outside Bratislava for one of the finest lunch stops I could ever imagine and watched the rain plummet into the puddles, it made leaving into the downpour even worse. My visit to Slovakia was brief but I can confirm the food is good and cheap!



The rest of the day was basically arduous cycling into the wind, with rain and closed roads, detours and miserable conditions, and it was cold. The rain stopped in the late afternoon as I passed through the parks and meadows on the Danube. I was past Vienna before I found a place to stay and it was a fantastic Inn with quality food and a comfortable bed, I had turned for home.

**Day 11 246 km or 152 miles total 2147km**

<https://www.strava.com/activities/933665554>

I needed a big day on the Danube, but today would be a tough one. I left later in the morning than was wise, which



major capitals. I seemed totally alone hardly seeing a person for miles, I spotted more deer, polecats and hares than people. I wonder how different this trail would feel in the holiday season? In the backing heat of a central European sun. Today's weather was foul with stiff winds and cold temperatures. The wind was behind me which normally would be a good thing, but I knew in Bratislava I would turn for home and straight into a headwind.

I arrived in Bratislava, on reflection at my lowest point of the ride, soaked to the skin, cold, with over 2000km cycled but just over half way. Home felt a long, long way away. I'd have jumped on a river cruise back to Vienna if one was running to avoid the gales and cold.... But I didn't, like a good soldier I turned back into the wind, little realizing that apart from one day of respite the wind would blow steadily into my face for 2000 km or so.

seemed to be a habit on this trip as breakfast was normally included and not served till later than I would have liked and I didn't want to miss out on the feast!

With headwinds all day, it was hard to make any decent speed, but I was in a wonderful country with a magnificent



views at every turn of the mighty river, so really speed wasn't that important. The Blue Danube was brown but offered magnificent vista, wonderful villages, top food and friendly people. It was a joy to be cycling in such stunning country and my black mood of the previous day seem to evaporate with the rain. A fantastic day often following the opposite bank of the Danube to the one I had travelled down on, both sides were equally beautiful but maybe the North bank just had the edge. The Danube was becoming a friend.



**Day 12 204km or 127 miles total 2351km**  
<https://www.strava.com/activities/935311760>

Leaving my hotel in warm sunshine was a good omen and the day was to prove equally lovely with temperatures around 20-25c and wall to wall sunshine, the wind had dropped to a gentle breeze. The next section of the Danube up to the German border at Passau was arguably the most stunning part of the river as well as one of the busiest. Being a Sunday, families and groups were out on their bikes enjoying the open air in the stunning glades. I loved the section up to Passau, it was delightful as was Passau itself. This student town was typically Bavarian with astonishing architecture, open spaces and a vibrancy that comes from a massive student population and families out enjoying the Sunshine.

The German efforts at cycle paths vary greatly, generally where cycle paths have been modernized or are new they are exceptional, the older ones are often gravel paths more suited to a MTB than a road bike's narrow tyres. This really categorized the next section as route finding got slightly harder, often on roads to avoid the gravel and often a reasonable distance from the Danube. I was no longer following the river, more following the general direction of the river. But it really was a beautiful day and despite the more fiddly route it was top cycling, passing stunning towns (I have concluded that all German towns are stunning or at least have a beautiful and perfectly preserved old town. The weather was so nice I even stopped for an ice cream, on top of that the bike front tyre/wheel had got no worse and my tendon was far better.

I arrived in Regensburg, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, around five o'clock. The town was heaving and amazingly beautiful in the evening sun. I pondered stopping for the night at the end of my Garmin track but decided to push on another hour or two.

First doubt, then a slight panic then angst and frustration took over, all the GPX tracks on the Garmin GPS from here till I reached the ferry were missing, gone! I decided to find a hotel in this stunning town and re-group.

I found a lovely hotel and had a dilemma. First things, I had a spare Garmin, I powered it up, checked the tracks and realized I hadn't loaded any at all on this device. Not for the first time were the problems self-inflicted!

Plan B: All the tracks were on the cloud I could simply download them. Well simple if I had a PC and an old-style USB cable that fitted the Garmin Etrex. I found a PC in the hotel but had no cable. The hotel searched high and low but it appears that no one uses USB like the Etrex anymore. I'd have to see if I could get one in the morning.

Plan C, what if I put the micro sd card from the Garmin into my phone and tried to download them? That could work and in a way, it did but I then couldn't rename the folder for some reason and didn't think the Garmin would find it. On firing up the Garmin after a boot up that seemed to take for ages the Garmin awoke and the tracks were there. That sounded simple but took me around three hours, nowhere local was open for food so I raided the mini bar of crisps and peanuts and went to sleep. A top day, a bloody frustrating evening and I had no idea why the files had corrupted. The Etrex is solid, has guided me 1000s of glitch free km. I had no clue.

**Day 13 186 km (116 miles)**  
<https://www.strava.com/activities/936712674>

All was good in the morning and I left the medieval wonder town of Regensburg heading towards the medieval wonder town of Nordlingen. Germany has some amazing medieval masterpieces.



And apart from a nagging headwind which stayed my companion all the way to Rotterdam the weather was lovely if still not that warm. Since Bratislava all but one day had been into the wind, I guess a 1000+ miles of headwind. But life was good, I was making good progress and the riding was lovely.

Around a couple of hours in I stopped to have a boiled egg 'borrowed' from breakfast, to save batteries I turned off the Garmin. Fifteen or so minutes later I turned the Garmin back on, the GPS was taking ages to boot up. Bored I turned it off and on again, this did the trick it booted up

nice and quick. I looked at the unit with disbelief, now all the tracks had vanished again. Fook! This was desperate, I had a general road map of where I was going and decided I needed to find a USB cable for the device and a computer. What followed was a frustrating few hours riding around towns and down gravel tracks. The wind was annoying, my brakes were down to the metal and my front wheel or tyre was so far out of balance. I also had an irritating squeak that I thought was the bottom bracket about to go. I needed a bike shop and a computer shop. Arriving in Ingolstadt, a large town on the Danube I stopped for coffee and to look for the Germanic equivalent of Maplin on the phone. A lightbulb came on – what if I just reset the Garmin Etrex? I know the tracks were on it but just not showing. Wow! After a reset it worked. I believe what had happened was that the action of turning it off when it was booting up had somehow corrupted the files, I remember doing this at home originally. The moral of the story is let the Garmin boot up!! It did have nearly 4000 km of tracks to load after all, cut up into 80 - 100k sections on average. The Garmin Etrex 30x I use is really rock solid and it was good to know it was a stupid user and not a flaky Garmin that had caused the issues.

I was in need of a bike shop to look at my wobbly front wheel, non-existent brake pads and squeaky bottom bracket, but decided to just keep pushing on and chance I'd come across one on the route. The route was a delight.

It was great to arrive at Donauwörth this historic town was my last on the Danube and I was now turning North and heading towards the Hartz mountain following the



breathtaking Romantic Road tourist route for a day or so that links some utterly amazing historic German towns. I stopped for the night in the 1200-year-old town of Nordlingen with its intact medieval walls. A splendid town, I had stayed at before. I even went back to the same hotel,

but it was fully booked with a coach load of Chinese tourists!! The hotel helped me find another hotel, cheap, great food and a comfy bed. It had been a long frustrating day and the bike needed some TLC.

### Day 14 112k (70 miles)

<https://www.strava.com/activities/937692682>

It was a beautiful sunny day and I was following the Romantic Road trail through a stunning area of Germany, undulating hills with fine views. It was so good I decided to get a bit lost and add another 30k to the trip. Bavaria is a stunning place. And when I arrived in impeccably preserved town of Rothenburg on the Tauber.

I was so relaxed I really couldn't be bothered pushing on any more. The idea was to find a bike shop and get the bike sorted, the reality was I found a café and sat in the sun watching the world go by in this most fairytale of towns. I had been here before and this time I stayed in the same hotel. Maybe after the frustrations of the last few days I just needed some downtime.



Rothenburg really is astonishing and the story behind its 17<sup>th</sup> century appearance is not what you would imagine. As with most things in this part of Europe War was involved. In 1631 the 30 Year War was raging and a Catholic army wanted to garrison its 40,000 troops in the Lutheran town of Rothenburg, they refused but were quickly over run by the Catholic army and when the Catholic Army left, the town was stripped bare and poor. Then a few short years later the bubonic plague killed many but the funny thing was this episode in the 17<sup>th</sup> century preserved the town in the amazing condition it's in now as they couldn't afford to modernize it!

The town is now visited by tourists from all corners of the globe, and we have a quick-thinking American to thank for that. During the Second World War the Americans first bombed this medieval wonderland, destroying over three hundred houses and six hundred or so meters of the wall, and then when American troops were in artillery range of



the town and the German garrison was dug in to defend it some common sense took place. The American's Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, knew the historical significance of the town and ordered the US General Denver not to use artillery, if possible, in taking the town. What transpired was a few USA soldiers under a white flag drove into Rothenburg and negotiated with the Germans. The Germans were under orders to defend the town till the last man, but saw common sense and pulled out allowing the US to take the town without any more damage. No easy feat when the punishment for disobeying an order like that was the firing squad. So Rothenburg was preserved by one war and saved in another. Let's hope it and our future is more peaceful.

#### Day 15 202km (126 miles)

<https://www.strava.com/activities/939389641>

I left Rothenburg on good roads into the Bavarian countryside heading to the mountains of Hartz. It was a fine day if windy and around lunch time I finally came across a massive bike shop and they had a mechanic spare. A few hours later I had a clean bike, a new front tyre and brake blocks and was ready to roll. The tyre imbalance was caused by a massive bulge but the bulge wasn't that visible when the tyre was at high pressure. The squeak I thought was the bottom bracket turned out to be the pedal. The chainset was also worn, stretched and needed replacing which wasn't a problem as I'm sure it would last till home (it did) what was most worrying was

the front wheel rim was paper thin. Ground away by the winter grit. I was advised to only use the back brake! The bike felt finally balanced and I had now replaced both tyres. This was the last mechanical I'd suffer on the trip and both tyres were faultless all the way back home.

I crossed out of Bavaria, Germany's richest county into Thuringen its poorest and back into the Old East with its worn buildings and generally 'empty' feel. It had been a good day, lower KM than I had hopped but with 3-4 hours lost in the bike shop I was happy with that and booked into a deserted hotel in an empty town in stunning country.

#### Day 16 153 km (95 miles)

<https://www.strava.com/activities/940713519> & <https://www.strava.com/activities/9407144>

I was hoping for a big day today and to get over the Harts mountains, however the route was problematic. I found myself on busy roads with little alternative, had some long high-speed descents with scary cross-winds and a front brake I was a little nervous of using and it was wet. I'm not sure if it was poor route planning or no alternative roads but some of the route was a little scary busy with cars and lorries. I had used Strava for this section for planning rather than my trusted Basecamp and OSM maps. Strava was quick but seemed a bit crap! Or I needed more practice. I found myself, once too often, on busy 'A' roads with scary crosswinds and the fear of an exploding wheel if I pulled my front brake too hard. I had many diversions trying to avoid the busy areas and found myself on many a mountain bike track. It was a frustrating day, wet, windy and frigid. I crossed back into old West Germany and stopped for the night just short of the Hartz Mountains. A much shorter day than I'd hoped but the day just did not pan out and time and daylight had evaporated.

My Hotel for the evening in the tourist town of Bad Lauterburg was gorgeous with top food and full of people away for the Easter weekend. I was back in Lower Saxony, back in the West and just a hop skip and a jump from Rotterdam. A big HOP but felt like I was nearly home.

#### Day 17 504km (313 miles)

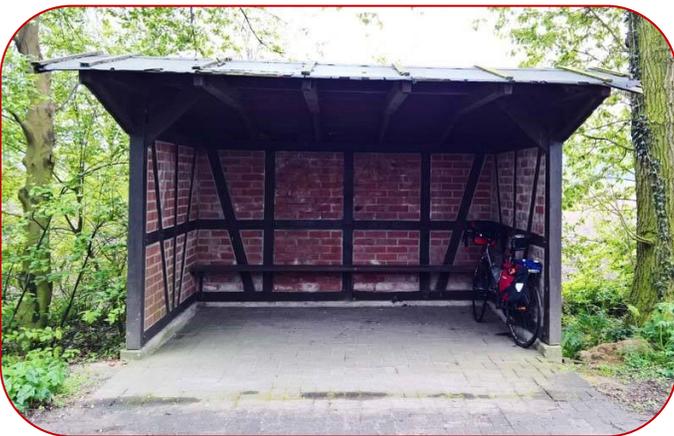
<https://www.strava.com/activities/944196064>

600 or so KM to home, one push and I would be there. Well that was the plan leaving the warmth of my hotel into cold mountain air at 6 am and straight into a climb, up high into the Hartz mountains and the highest point of the ride at around a 1000mtrs. I was looking forward to this stage since the beginning, the climb was long and gradual in the forest, and the views were....well of woods! The descent that would normally have been amazing was a bit scary with the thought of an exploding front wheel! At what I thought was the bottom of the long descent I saw an open café, a life saver as I was frozen to the core! I had forgotten to pack a warm layer – I had a insulated Gilet and a long sleeve base layer as my only insulation and was really feeling the cold. It was foolish not to have taken a primaloft jacket and I was going to have far more time to regret that choice as the day wore on. What I still can't

work out is why I just didn't just stop somewhere to buy an extra layer. It was too late now, it was Easter weekend and Germany shuts down for Easter big time.

After leaving Hartz and turning West for home the next section was just sublime riding, massive views, undulating territory, car free for most of it and the normally perfect German town and villages. The sun was out, as was my constant companion the wind which I had turned straight into. I really enjoyed the section, route planning was spot on and I wound my way across Europe. Day turned to night and I finally arrived in Munster not long before midnight. It looked a fantastic city and there were plenty of people out enjoying the Easter weekend. I wasn't planning on stopping just pushing through and hoping I could stay awake as I didn't have enough clothes to sleep in!

As things panned out, after a beautiful day I would have a very miserable night. I was hardly warm enough when I was moving with every layer I had on. The wind was now gale force and then it started to rain! I didn't want to get soaked as knew it would be very difficult indeed to keep warm so pulled up at an 'Audax Hotel' or as it's commonly known, a bus shelter, and tried to sleep, sat up in a fetal position to try and keep warm. I was amazed I did



manage to get some sleep but still couldn't believe I was daft enough to forget a primaloft jacket bivvy layer. It was early April, still cold and pouring down! At dawn, I decided it was time to push on so left the shelter of the bus stop and into the rain, which thankfully soon stopped! I found a café had a hot breakfast and carried on through delightful Northern Germany for at least another 20k before stopping at another café. I was finally warm! I crossed over into the Netherlands soon after and as always on crossing a border everything changes. The houses, the people, the cycle ways, the roads, all different, all Dutch, all speaking perfect English. Onto Arnhem and the Rhine. I was in fantastic country; the sun was out and the wind was just as persistent in my face.

Not long after Arnhem I figured I should start looking for a hotel for the night in Rotterdam. Ride end. It was a fantastic feeling, I felt fitter than when I started, the distances each day had allowed for plenty of recovery time and I was getting stronger day by day.



It was a shock when I couldn't find one vacant hotel in Rotterdam for Easter Saturday. Not one! Holland and Germany does really shut down for Easter, everything is shut except the odd café which shuts early. Thank goodness for Turk kabab houses, the hotels seemed no exception, they were either full or I guess had decided to shut. I phoned home and asked for help and carried on.

The news from home wasn't good either, Debbie could find no accommodation on any site. I had two choices really, a night in the open without adequate clothes or stop short if I could find anywhere and finish tomorrow – which was when the ferry was booked for. I decided the route would decide and just pushed on and came across a lovely bar with rooms in Wijk bij Duurstede, 100k or so from the end. The idea of warm food and a cold beer after 36 hours on the bike was too big a temptation so I stopped pedaling and had a fantastic meal and even had a drink or two bought for me by some friendly Dutch people.

### The last leg (110km 68 miles)

<https://www.strava.com/activities/945056801>

I had a long lie in and a lazy breakfast and didn't leave the hotel till around dinner time, waiting for the rain to stop. What should have been a relaxing 100km back to the ferry turned out to be a total headwind battering all the way to the boat. Through deserted towns, even Rotterdam had few people. This was Easter Sunday and Holland was on holiday. The only place open I found was service stations. Soon I was at the ferry. Literally the end of the road and I had managed to raise a few quid for charity!

**3618km or 2248 miles** around Europe, in a straight line I'd be in Africa. Top Trip.

To sum it up..... in the words of a good friend.....

**'Blimey!'**

# Llansilin-St Melangell's Church-Llansilin

**Start/Finish:** Llansilin car park.

**Start Map Ref:** SJ 209 279

**OS Maps:** Landranger 125.

**Distance:** 31.5 miles.

**Grade:** Moderate-Severe in places.

**Ascent:** 2807 ft.

**Suitable for:** Strong riders.

## General Description.

Although a relatively short ride, this is a very strenuous affair for the first 9 miles or so through what has been aptly described as "God's own country". After that it becomes a gentler ride, and is mostly all downhill on the return from St Melangell's Church. It is nearly true to say that the only flat ground is the car park at Llansilin, with some very short but steep hills separated by other little gems, all to test les grimpeurs. The scenery is magnificent, especially in the Tanat valley, though some small sections of the roads in the early stages have deteriorated to an extent that makes them more a collection of potholes, so care needs to be exercised particularly when descending the steep hills.

In the author's opinion all rides are the better for having a purpose in mind, and that, for this ride is to visit the Pilgrim's Church dedicated to St Melangell, the patron Saint of Hares and Small Animals. This Church is the only one dedicated to St Melangell, and is situated near to the head of the River Tanat in a beautiful and very peaceful valley; add in the fact that you can visit the site of one of Owen Glyndwr's houses on the way back and you have one of the finest rides anywhere. Anyone interested in Industrial Archeology and old railways will find that there is much to be studied about slate, lead and granite mining around Llangynog.

## The Shrine Church of St Melangell, Pennant Melangell.



## HISTORY of ST MELANGELL

The following is taken from the website of St Melangell's, one of Wales's 'Hundred Best Churches',

*"it lies in a remote and beautiful spot at*

*the head of the Tanat Valley. It is set in a circular churchyard, possibly once a Bronze Age burial site, ringed by some of the country's finest ancient yews which may also predate the Christian era. In its location and atmosphere it typifies the special qualities of a Welsh country church.*

*The first church on the site is said to have been founded in the 7th Century by Melangell, the daughter of an Irish king, who dwelt here as a hermit. One day the Prince of Powys came hunting, and a hare took refuge under Melangell's cloak. The Prince's dogs fled howling and, deeply impressed, he gave her the valley as a sanctuary. Ever since Pennant Melangell has been a place of pilgrimage, and Melangell remains the patron saint of hares.*

*There has been a Christian Church here for over 1200 years. Its setting, in a place of great beauty deep in the Berwyn Mountains, is peaceful and unspoilt. Parts of the building date from the 12th Century though the most recent, a rebuilding of the apse on its original foundations, was completed only in 1990. The impression is still that of a simple Norman church, well loved and beautified over the years.*

*In 1987, the church was in such a poor state that repair was impossible and a full-scale restoration was necessary if it was to be saved. This work was begun in 1988 under the Rev'd Paul Davies and his wife Evelyn, and was completed in 1992 at a cost of £170,000.*

*The church contains a fine 15<sup>th</sup> Century oak screen with carvings that tell the story of Melangell and Prince Brochwel. There are also two medieval effigies, one of which is thought to represent the saint; a Norman font, a Georgian pulpit, chandelier and commandment board, a series of stone carvings of the hare by the sculptor Meical Watts, and the mysterious Giant's Rib.*

*Within St Melangell's church, above the screen, is the bronze figure of the risen Christ with arms outstretched, symbolising the compassionate Jesus, welcoming in the broken, the suffering, the fearful and the lost and all who seek the healing love of God in their lives.*

*The church's greatest treasure is the 12<sup>th</sup> Century shrine of Saint Melangell. This was dismantled after the Reformation and its stones, carved with a strange blend of Romanesque and Celtic motifs, were built into the walls of the church and lych-gate. They were reassembled in the last century and have now been re-erected in the chancel. It is unparalleled in Northern Europe and is visited by pilgrims from all over Britain and beyond.*

*There is a small shop under the tower, and the first floor tower room contains a display of old photographs of the area and another on local wildlife. Nearby is the St Melangell Centre, a Christian Centre for counselling, reflection and pastoral care.*

## Route Sheet.

Miles.

0.00 R out of Llansilin car park.

0.10 L SP Moelfre.

0.70 R No SP.

2.10 L No SP.

2.20 R SP

4.00 L @ T. No SP.

4.60 R @ T with B4580. SP

Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant.

7.2 SO through Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant SP Penybontfawr.

9.8 R @ T with B 4391. SP Bala.

12.2 L alongside Chapel before bridge.

13.7 R No SP.

14.0 L @ T. SP Pennant Melangell.

14.6 Arrive at St Melangell's Church on RHS.

From the Church retrace your steps to 15.2 miles to the T (at 14.0 miles)

## where you now go SO

16.6 L @ T with B 4391. There are two pubs in Llangynog for lunch.

16.7 **R on LH bend and imm R again by house with a glass porch uphill into a twisty lane which is very narrow in many places. The chances are that you'll have to stop for other traffic.**

19.5 R @ T by bridge into Penybontfawr.

19.7 L @ T onto B 4391.

SP Llanfyllin.

20.6 L @ Fork onto B 4396.

SP Oswestry and Waterfall.

23.1 R @ Y onto B 4580.

SP Oswestry.

28.3 L into narrow lane. SP Llansilin 29.8

Motte and Bailey which was the site of one of Owen Glyndwr's homes.

Well worth a visit to see the magnificent oak tree growing on the site.

30.1 R @ X. SP Llansilin.

31.5 R into car park and the end of the ride.

## Legend.

R = Right. L = Left.

R/LHS = Right/Left hand Side.

T = T-junction.

Imm = Immediately.

X = Cross roads.

RBT = Roundabout.

SO = Straight on.

SP = Signposted.

Y = Y-junction.

TL = Traffic lights.

**RED = A more than usually dangerous hazard.**

CW = Cycleway.

C = Café.

PH = Public house.

**If I collapse, please pause my Garmin.....I'm not joking!!**



## Obituary

### Barry Lawson Davis

**1st Oct 1937 – 23rd Dec 2017**

Barry, of Little Neston, was a well-liked member of Chester and North Wales CTC, riding for over 30 years with both the Wednesday Riders and with Two Mills (formerly the Ledsham Section). He was also an active volunteer worker for Sustrans. His early years were spent in East Wirral where he attended 3d Wirral Grammar School for Boys. After leaving school he worked for a time as a trainee draughtsman before joining the RAF as a regular. During the Cold War he was stationed in West Germany but his career of some 30 years in the RAF meant that he saw service both in the Far East as well as in various other postings the UK.

His work in the RAF as a skilled technician meant that when he finally retired he found employment as a civilian maintaining electronic equipment at RAF Sealand. It was during this time that, for medical

reasons, he was unable to drive. To get to and from work he used to cycle across the Burton Marshes. This was not the easy route that it has become in recent years, nor even the one that could be followed by cyclists of 60 or more years ago. As a result of the building of by-passes, industrial premises and the deliberate obstructionism of landowners, the route was more of an obstacle course for cyclists who largely avoided it - but Barry persevered.

Barry's work for Sustrans and the needs of us cyclists bore fruit in a number of ways. Never afraid to speak his mind, he took a keen interest in proposals for new road schemes and provisions for cycling that we now enjoy. (He often kept a pair of secateurs in his saddlebag to deal with overhanging bushes on off-road cycleways.) His work for the opening of the route across the Burton Marshes in July 2013 he saw as one of his greatest successes and gave him great satisfaction.

Barry was an enthusiastic and committed touring cyclist for all his adult life. He completed the End to End twice and, at other times in search of new cycling territory, he would often slip off on his own with his bike in his



car to distant parts for some fixed-centre touring. His great

love of the countryside also showed itself in his enjoyment of walking, something he took to in his later years. He was quite a 'character', noted for enjoying his pint and bag of crisps (his principal choice for lunch!).

About ten of his former cycling friends attended Barry's Service of Remembrance at Blacon Crematorium in early February to pay their respects. Our condolences are, of course, offered to Barry's sons and the other members of his family.

**MFC**

### Adrienne Devey

**Aged 82**



## Obituary

A number of older members of the Wednesday Section (now "Riders") together with other past and present cycling friends, attended the funeral of Adrienne Devey at the Church of Christ the King in Bromborough on 1<sup>st</sup> February. Adrienne, who was 82 years old, was a popular and enthusiastic member of the Wednesday Section, joining in the early 90s - the days of Charlie Allan and Laurie McCabe. For some years she served as one of the Section's Social Secretaries and remained loyal until age and ill-health forced her finally to give up cycling.

Her passing leaves Joan McPhillips as the only remaining survivor of the group of Wednesday Section women that planned and successfully completed (without male meddling!) the End-to-End some twenty years ago. (Dorothy Cliff and Jean Nicholl who also took part are, sadly, also no longer with us). Adrienne will be long remembered by those who rode with her and enjoyed her company. She will be much missed and our condolences are offered to all her family.

**MFC**



Thanks Geoff for agreeing to do the Chris Quiz (the arm up your back may have helped!) Geoff had a little more to say than most contributors! Great answers though.



Geoff Pettitt

1. How long have you been cycling?...5 years ago I joined the Wrexham Reivers/Caféhoppers on a ride from Gwersyllt to Wrexham Industrial Estate. I was reborn as a roadie. Nothing before that counts.



Stac Pollaidh

2. The best ride you have done? A hilly one from Gairlock to Auchinloch in North West Scotland. I particularly liked cycling around Stac Pollaidh as I hitch hiked to Scotland to climb it when I was a youngster.

3. Best holiday you have had?...my parents took us to stay in Dunnock a gas lit chalet deep in the New Forest. I had the run of the woods and loved it.

4. Your two favourite songs/music?..... You've got to Pick a Pocket or Two from Oliver (my grandfather used to pretend to be Fagin) and 74 Years Young by Buddy Guy. Incidentally someone once asked me whether I preferred opera or sex, I had to answer that it depends upon the repertoire and who's performing....That applies to opera too!

5. Two best books? .....Wild Swans by Jung Chang and Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe.

6. Who would you best like to meet present or past? .....Princess Nest.

7. What would you liked to have achieved / learnt?..... To play the bagpipes.

8. What makes you happiest?.....Setting out on a ride with a bunch of my lovely mates.

9. Favourite film?... .Excalibur - Behold! The sword of power! Excalibur! Forged when the world was young, and bird and beast and flower were one with man. The sound track includes the Death of Siegfried from 'The Ring' and it's got Helen Mirren writhing as she conjures a magic mist from within herself.....Don't ask!

10. Do you enjoy poetry, If so what's your favourite?The Horses - Edwin Muir and A Marriage by R.S. Thomas

11. Would you consider riding an E-bike? .....Yes.

12. What single thing would make life better? Peace and I would also like to see a return of our flying insects. We've killed over 75% of them in my lifetime. I want them to come back.

13. What's been your longest ride?.....A ride of 120 miles from Pwllheli to Wrexham organised by our Esteemed Editor in aid of Ysgol Heulfan, Y Canol Special School Minibus Appeal. - **Thanks Geoff.**

14. Do you think there is life on other planets? ...Yes. The lower classes will be dressed in skimpy costumes and the ones in charge will have flowing robes, They'll all be speaking English.

15. Which person throughout history or today do you most admire?... Janusz Korczak. Also an unsung local hero Juday Smith, creator of the Llangollen Round. Log on to [www.thellangollenround.info](http://www.thellangollenround.info)

16. What trait do you most admire in people? ..... Courage in adversity.

17. What do you think are your best attributes?.I don't really know where to start...Wisdom? Integrity? Fine head of hair?.

18. If you could ride one tour which one would it be, Tour de France, Giro, Vuelta?...I like Tapas so the Vuelta.

19. Have you a favourite building?..... Lady Lever Gallery, Port Sunlight.

20. Have you a favourite piece of Art/Picture/sculpture? ... "The Badminton Game" - Painting by David Inshaw.

**Geoff's Favourite Quote:** I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone. **Edith Cavell**

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