

www.cambridge-cycling-club.org.uk

Cambridge Cycling Club 1901-2004

Journal of the Cambridge Town & County CC.

Affiliated to BC, CTT, ECCA, Norlond, ERRL, Eastway Supp League, Northants & District CA

La Gazzetta: ciao

Saturday September 25th. The annual club open 25 mile on the Stetchworth - Six Mile Bottom - Bottisham course. Details and offers of help to Bill Clough on 01223 861386; the start is 2:00

Sunday September 26th. The club is promoting an event for the Norlond TT combine. Volunteer for catering and general start and finish line duties would be greatly appreciated. Offers of help to Nick Jackson on 01223 313466. Start time is 7:00am

Congratulations to Nick Jackson in the ECCA 12 hour time trial on Sunday 15th August, who did an amazing 257.9 miles!! This is a new PB that gave him 4th overall.

The club's **annual dinner and prize presentation evening** is on the horizon. It will be at the golf club in Bourne as it was last year. The committee believed it represented good value for money in a decent venue. This year's date is the Saturday December 11th at 7pm. The cost will be about the same as last year – c£16- and Sue Taylor will once again co-ordinate the bookings. More details later but in the meantime make sure you put the date in your diary.

Why not put together a group for the evening? – see what those people you have ridden with or competed against all year look like in normal clothes.

The club collected £64 for MAGPAS at the event on the 15th July – well done.

John Short, aged 70, was an active member of the Cambridge Town & County Cycling Club as a young man during 1950- 1952 before being called up for National Service. He became the Junior Track Champion whilst a club member 1952 at an event staged at Ipswich Town FC, training on a diet of rice pudding - his secret nutritional weapon. The fact that he was away in the army and unable to return the trophy in time for the 1953 event has always troubled John - he still talks about it to this day! He lived with his family at Gloucester Terrace, Castle Hill in Cambridge and raced with a buddy called Dicky Turkentine, who was pretty well known in local cycling circles. John is keen to obtain cuttings about his win in 1952 for a family scrapbook and is keen to speak to anyone that may be able to help him. He is certain that it was reported in the local press but hasn't been able to track the exact publication down. John now lives in Biggleswade with his wife Marion and can be contacted on 01767 313105 or e-mail: john.short1@btopenworld.com

Note that the Annual General Meeting of the Eastern Counties Cycling Association is to be held on Sunday, 12th September, 2004, at Mountnessing Village Hall commencing at 2.30 p.m. We are allowed to send up to four delegates. The committee would like to have representation and if you can go please let the secretary know. You can see the agenda on the website at www.easterncounties.org.uk

La Gazzetta: club diary

5th September – it might be Chris James..

12th September – Glen to Lavenham

19th September – Sue to Cavendish

26th September – Terry to Hinxworth

3rd October – Harry to Danish Camp

10th October – Malcolm to Finchingfield

17th October – Justin to Risby

24th October – Steve to Waresley

31st October – Glen to Hare Street

La Gazzetta: ride reports

London to Cambridge, Sunday 25 July 2004

A number of the Club's cyclists took part in the London to Cambridge Bike Ride at the weekend. This was a 50-mile sponsored bike ride from London (aka River Lea Country Park, Waltham Abbey) to Cambridge (Midsummer Common), in aid of Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

This is Debbie Fuller's version of events....

Tom Farman (a "B" Group rider), Judie Howlett and me ("C" Group riders) had the pleasure of queuing in the rain at 5.45 am on Sunday morning. We passed the time by deciding where and what we were going to have for breakfast and whether anyone would notice if we jumped on the train at Kings Cross, straight back to

Cambridge. By 7.30 am we had registered, placed our beloved bicycles (bubble-wrapped for comfort) onto the lorries and were travelling, by bus, to London.

On the bus I sat next to a "new found" cycling buddy (*note complete stranger*) and chatted to him for the first 20 minutes. Then, without knowing, I proceeded to fall asleep on his shoulder for the rest of the journey (or at least that is what Tom and Jude said happened – and as I was asleep at the time I cannot argue). I did think it was strange when he made a sharp exit from the bus. (I think he got the quickest time home actually).

In London we queued again (in true British style) to start the ride. This time our wait was alleviated by an "M.C." (Timothy Biggles look-a-like) in a Yellow Suit making us laugh. The police had asked the organisers to send riders off in small groups, which proved to be a sensible idea as over 3,000 people took part.

The start consisted of a ride through the Country Park on "tyre-piercing" track with enormous "potholes for the unprepared" - so large that a family of five plus bicycles were lost for days afterwards (*unsubstantiated fact*).

Out of the Park, the route was mostly "B" roads, uphill or undulating. The countryside was interesting - although there was a moment towards the end, on a long, flat piece of road with rain and a head-wind, when I had to break into a rendition of "ten green bottles" to keep me going. (Anybody know any good therapists?)

There were stops every 10km with barbecues, tea stands and ice cream vans. There were "comfort break cabins" at the start and finish, but not many en route (male riders made their own, of course!)

People of all ages, shapes and sizes took part. Some very fit, some not so fit. This meant that you could always overtake somebody, but there would be another person who could overtake you.

Cars continued to use the route so overtaking was difficult at times. It became increasingly obvious that some participants had not gained their road-awareness badge at Cubs/Brownies: lots of riding 2/3/4 abreast; stopping abruptly; swerving mindlessly up the hills; walking with their bikes in the middle of the road, etc.

Fortunately, we made it back safely just before lunch and just before the heavens opened. It felt good to finish. We then relaxed under the marquee with a well-earned beverage and listened to a liddle-bidda-jazzz; nice (*nods head appreciatively*).

All in all the experience was great. The event was well organised and the marshals did a good job.

There are more to come: London to Windsor; Oxford to Cambridge etc and it's all in a good cause. Some of us will be putting our names down for these rides. But remember Tom, Jude – "IT'S NOT A RACE!!"

If members are thinking of taking part in one of the annual sponsored rides, you can get further information at www.bike-events.com or on the website of the relevant organising charity.

Sue Taylor accounts for her summer holiday – in Canada.

"Some of you may be aware that Neil and I are tour leaders for the Cyclists' Touring Club and lead two tours each year.. usually one to France and one somewhere else abroad. We've just come back from our tour to the Canadian Rockies. Of all the places I've been to, I can confirm that this is the most spectacular. We led a tour there four years ago, and as soon as I got home then, I was keen to return. On our last visit, we had no transport to take us directly to the most spectacular parts; instead, we cycled for three days through the vast open flat prairie land to get to a starting point at Saskatchewan crossing, half way along the famous 'Icefields Parkway'. This year however, we enlisted the services of a transportation company called 'Brewsters' which are a very well known and by far the most popular company operating transportation and accommodation services in the area. So, we flew to Calgary then were taken by Brewsters to a hotel in Calgary for our first night. Brewsters then picked us all up in the morning (12 cyclists in total) including our bikes to our first hotel at Canmore. We spent a couple of nights here to acclimatise.. It was scorching hot when we arrived and assembled the bikes outside the hotel. We had a meal then went off on a short 30 miler to get the legs back into action having sat on a 'plane for 8 hours and then on busses. The next 'rest' day, some of us more foolhardy ones (you can guess that they included Justin, myself and two others) went on a round trip of 100 miles including 40 miles of rough stuff road. The ride included a very steep winding gravel ascent in pretty intense heat. I couldn't see out of my sunglasses as they were misted over with sweat and steam. Several passing trucks showered us with a fine cloud of dust as they passed; by the end of the trip, my bike looked like it had been on a world expedition (not to mention the state of me). I expect it was worth the effort! We were cycling in Peter Lougheed Provincial Park at this time, which is just outside the much more famous National Parks of Banff, which we entered the following day. It was a short ride to Banff – just 30 miles – that gave everyone the opportunity to explore. Some went up on the Sulphur Mountain Gondola. Neil and I decided to walk to see the Hoodoos, strange rock formations which look like massive chalky coloured corrugations in the mountain side, some are freestanding. We set off, in the blistering heat again, and we walked on and on and on. I then realised the small tourist map I had taken from the hotel was not drawn to scale. So what we'd thought was a couple of mile walk turned out to be several miles. We did see our Hoodoos though, and also a fantastic view down into a valley leading to the extremely expensive and ancient Banff Springs Hotel. The next day, we entered Kootenay National Park along a beautifully scenic road, with mountains rising up way above us. The roads were generally good, with a shoulder of about 6ft wide to cycle in. Traffic was always courteous and we had no problems with dangerous or inconsiderate drivers, as we met none. We stayed at a gorgeous place called Kootenay Park Lodge, a series of log cabins containing an open fireplace and logs (should you get a bit chilly), tiny bathroom and tea/coffee maker plus of course a bed in the main room. All the windows had

their own handmade curtains, it was all apparently authentic 1950's style. Each person (or couple) was assigned to their own little cabin. The proprietors cooked us all a wonderful three course meal in the evening in the main 'hotel' building which was also an all-wood construction. We all decided this was our favourite abode at the end of the tour, despite staying in some fantastic places.

The following day, we headed down on the same road to Radium Hot Springs, where we stayed two nights. Some people did go to the hot springs ... but on as it was a scorching hot day, it didn't hold any great attraction for me. Instead, I had a cooling dip in the hotel pool, which I had all to myself.

On our rest day, we cycled about 80 miles around the lake of Windermere – nothing like our own Windermere though! Once back from the ride, Justin and I bombed back to Radium just in time to take a 4pm horseback trek on real western style quarter horses. The horses were very docile and their mind was set on sneaking any bit of vegetation they passed into their substantial tummies.

On leaving Radium, we had about a 75 mile ride to Golden. En-route, we saw several ospreys in nests with their young. We also saw Storks on nests (but no young that I could see). It was a long, long straight road. We stopped at Brisco for elevesens .. a small store which sold everything from fishing tackle, to screws and nails, to washing up powder, to crisps. From here, it was about 40 odd miles before we would pass anywhere for further food top ups. That's the thing about Canada.. It's so BIG! Golden as a place, was quite busy and built up.

From Golden, we had an uphill ride (all the way) to Lake Louise. It was a fairly gentle climb for the most part though; traffic was busier along this road and the road narrower than most of the others we'd been along, with a much smaller shoulder. En-route, Justin, Veronica (from Hatfield) and I took a detour to Emerald Lake. It meant an extra 10 miles or so, but it was worth it. The lake's name describes it well. It was a beautiful spot; we sat on the edge of a jetty drinking tea. How civilised. The water here, and in all the Canadian Lakes we visited, was as clear as a bell. We could see the fish swimming around beneath or feet as they dangled just above the water. Mountains of course, ever present, surrounded the lake. The next detour, for me, was to one of the most spectacular of waterfalls in the Rockies .. Takkakaw falls. It meant another detour, this time about 16 miles. More uphill on this detour too .. Justin, me and Arran (from Nottingham) did this detour. Veronica couldn't face any more climbing. The water came in torrents down from a great height, spilling down from over the edge of the mountainside like someone pouring it from a huge teapot. The spray could be felt several dozen metres away from it. I was very glad I'd made the effort to see it. Of course, there was the bonus that the return trip to the main road was down hill. One last climb along the main road to Lake Louise, not too bad as well graded. We had a couple of nights in Lake Louise; Neil and I took a short bike trip to Moraine Lake, yet another beautiful turquoise blue lake, then on returning to Lake Louise, we took a walk to lake Agnes, where we had drinks and snacks at a small wooden tea room perched on the mountainside. Finally, we finished off our day by taking a kayak out for an hour on Lake Louise. Our friend, Dave (from Cambridge), sat in the middle of the Kayak, I paddled the front end and Neil the rear. We managed to circumnavigate the lake in an hour. Poor Dave was caught between my shouts to Neil that we were heading the wrong way or on a collision course with another kayak etc. etc.

We cycled along the Icefields Parkway from Lake Louise to Saskatchewan crossing. Lots to see en-route, Herbert Lake, Hector Lake, Crowfoot Glacier (named because the glacier was in the shape of a crows foot needless to say), Bow Lake and Peyto Lake. The latter represented the highest point on the parkway and we had a short walk to view the lake that stretched out in front and way below us.

Neil and I were last to leave Saskatchewan crossing the following morning, ensuring everyone else was OK and on the road (we didn't want to leave anyone behind). As I was just making my way along the parkway, Neil shouted my name in some panic. I looked down to my right beside the road and saw a huge black bear waiting to cross. It was so close I could almost have reached out to touch it. Amazingly enough I didn't panic but just rode calmly by it, but kept my eye on it until I'd gone some way ahead .. Neil kept well out to the centre of the road. At a safe distance we both stopped and looked back .. the bear calmly crossed the road. Unfortunately it quickly disappeared into the shrubbery and forest so we couldn't get a photo. That is certainly the closest I ever want to be to such a dangerous beast!!

We stopped at the Columbian Icefield Chalet that night, and had an enormous hotel room. Some people had split level rooms. Our room had 5 chairs, two double beds (which is quite normal), a huge TV, a sofa, a round table ... shall I go on? Anyway, we didn't spend long in it. We were soon off on a 'snocoach' which transports people from the hotel up onto the huge Athabasca glacier which dominates the skyline at the front of the hotel. The coach drivers were extremely enthusiastic about the glacier and it's formation; they gave us such a wealth of information it was impossible to take it all in. All was done in a very humorous manner too which made it an all the more pleasurable experience.

It was very cold when we set out in the morning from icefields and down to Jasper. It was downhill for most of the 75 odd miles. There were the usual compliment of panoramic snowy mountain views and spectacular waterfalls on the way .. the most impressive being the Athabasca falls. Hugh volumes of water crashing through rocks with such force you have to almost shout to make yourself heard!

So, the end of the tour was in sight. For those nature lovers, I can tell you we saw Hummingbirds, ground squirrels (huge numbers everywhere), chipmunks (huge numbers of these everywhere too), Elk (complete with enormous antlers), nutcrackers (birds), I saw what looked like a mink, Neil saw a coyote, Neil and I saw waxwings (quite rare) .. not to mention the many flowers and other birds and unidentified fauna. And the bear.

We had a bus transfer from Jasper back to Calgary for our flight home.

For anyone who is interested, and I do hope some people are! Next year, we're leading tours to Southern Germany/Bavaria – during the first two weeks of June, moving-on every other day to a new hotel. Also to Tuscany, Italy at a bike hotel for a one week fixed-centre tour during the first week of October. If you're interested, let me know and I'll send you details (by email if possible) when I have them."

La Gazzetta: race roundup

Peter Baumber organised a very successful **veterans 10-mile time trial on July 10th on the E2/10 course**. The actual fastest was Ken Platts in 20.10. Ted Wells won the best improvement category with 1.08 and 8.35 up on standard in a time of 25.31. Peter Baumber was just a place behind Ted on 8.29 on standard with a time of 24.33. Alan Sparkes was 39th at 4.58 on standard with a time of 24.08.

Peter would like to extend his sincere thanks to the following who made sure the event was timed and marshalled: Tim Groves, Mick Wiseman, Alan Sparkes, Dave Jones, Alex Baumber, Bill Clough, Sue Clarke, Chris Adams, Ian George, Chris James, Mark Matthews, Richard Staley, James Ward and Rosemary Baumber.

This event has now been established and run by Peter and Rosemary over the last three years but in order for it too run next year a new promoter is needed to maintain it. Please contact Peter to discuss what it would involve. He is on 01223 502159

Peter's prodigious racing season continues. Here is his latest report.

The racing season has only a couple of months to go, it's been a long haul since my first race on New Years Day. I should have sent my race reports in earlier but couldn't find the time (another way of saying I'm lazy). The weather this year hasn't been as good generally as in 2003 so I think my times have suffered partly for that reason, and maybe because I'm quickly coming up to my 74th birthday, time to take it easy I'm told. To date I've ridden 40 T.T.'s so here's the best of them

20/3/04	Plomesgate 10 (ridden in a gale)	28.38	1 st VET on STD	D Staff	23.22
9/4/04	Gt Yarmouth 10	27.09	1 st VET on STD	D Staff	22.14
10/4/04	VTTA (East Anglia) 10	26.10	8 th VET on STD	S Hunt	21.27
24/4/04	Stowmarket 20	56.33	1 st Age 70 plus	D Staff	45.57
1/5/04	Kings Lynn 10	26.22	2 nd on STD	Z Carr	20.45
3/5/04	VC Baracchi 10	26.37	1 st on STD	I Cammish	21.25
9/5/04	Colchester Rovers and VTTA 50 (inc. off course)	2.21.15	3 rd on STD	S China	1.55.33
12/5/04	VTTA London H C 10	25.41	3 rd on STD	E Adkins	21.40
15/5/04	Shaftesbury CC 10	24.40		M Hutchinson	18.38
23/5/04	Norwich ABC 50	2.19.00	1 st on STD	D Green	1.54.04
31/5/04	VTTA (East Anglia) 25	1.04.16	9 th on STD	Z Carr	49.17
2/6/04	C C Breckland 10	24.50	1 st fastest 70 plus	S Hunt	20.39
8/6/04	Colchester Rover 10	24.51			
12/6/04	Anglia Veto 10	25.24	1 st age 70 plus	J Burgess	20.30
13/6/04	Herts Whs and VTTA (East Champs)	1.23.37	2 nd VET on STD (Both)	B Robinson	1.11.31
17/6/04	East Anglian CC 10	25.09	1 st on STD	R Hill	21.14
19/6/04	Gt Yarmouth 10	26.12	2 nd on STD	J Burgess	21.18
20/6/04	Plomesgate 10	27.02	1 st on STD	M Pyne	23.19

22/6/04	C C Breckland	24.59	1 st on STD	G Taylor	21.04
27/6/04	Unity 25	1.09.53	1 st VET on STD	K Platt	57.15
3/7/04	Norwich ABC 10	27.24	3 rd VET on STD	M Pyne	
				Ling =	22.52
6/7/04	VTTA (East Anglia) 10	24.22	1 st VET on STD	K Gill	21.02
10/7/04	VTTA (East Anglia) 10	24.33	Ted Wells 5 th STD	K Platts	20.10
			Me 6 th STD		
17/7/04	Beds Road (M M) 10	24.23	10 th Fastest	M Bannester	21.49
24/7/04 *	VTTA Nat Championship 10				
		24.49	14 th	E Marsh	23.00
28/7/04	VTTA London H C 10	25.27	3 rd on STD	S Hunt	21.09
31/7/04	Godric CC 10	25.23	2 nd on STD	G Empsom	21.10

* Took wrong exit at roundabout, lost about 20 seconds must learn to keep wide awake.

Davey Jones reports on local time trials.

31/7/04 Shaftesbury 50 miles

Deceptive breeze made it a bit of a grovel up to the turn at Red Lodge...for some that is. Even Ian Cammish could only manage a 1.48.22 to win the event. Dan Staite was 3rd in 1.51.34. Angus Wilson did a 2.08.37 and my good self, 2.24.49. I was quite pleased with that as it was 4 minutes better than I did the previous weekend on the F1 but a minute outside my PB. The real achievement however, was to stay on the tri-bars for the whole of the event.

Dan added this comment on the message board

"I found the last 5 miles really slooow (kept checking the GPS for 80km). I also went off course where the A14 turns into the A14, DOH!, I carried on down the A14!, Also my tribars fell off at 20 miles so I had to stop and ask a kind marshall for a 5mm Allen key. That said I was pleased with my ride. I caught my 2 minute man 3 times!"

and this was his first 50 – we all await some stunning performances when he gets it all right....

7/8/04 St Ives CC 25

The St Ives 25 held on the N1/25C, Alconbury to Stilton course, with temperatures in the 80's, had the marshalls flagging never mind the riders! Nevertheless Dan Staite produced another stunning 56 minute ride to finish second. St Ives rider Garry Stevens won the event with a course record 55.37 but collapsed onto the grass verge at the finish. He is now fully recovered and I expect he will be back on the F1 tomorrow morning.

8/8/04 Bedfordshire Road CC 25 time trial

Cambridge CC managed a team of 4 in this event on Sunday morning. A south easterly breeze made the ride to the turn a bit of an effort. Top dog for CCC was Steve Cotton with a 57.10, followed by Nick Jackson with a 57.57. Another sub hour ride was recorded by the invisible man Angus Wilson (59.44). Stuck in the 9.s was Davey J. with a 1.9.41. The event was won by Michael Hutchinson just 6 seconds over 50 minutes. Ken Platts fresh(?) from climbing this col and that col in France was second with 53.11, just 4 seconds ahead of Stuart Wright and 13 seconds ahead of Gary Stevens who had won the St Ives event the previous day. At least it was reasonably cool.

Back to the F1b again for the **Hitchin Nomads 25 open** only to those riders who had not beaten the hour in the last three seasons. It will no doubt surprise to some of our members that there were 86 entrants. It was a relatively calm morning with the promise of a slight headwind but an easy ride back from Baldock. This assistance did not materialise. Nobody broke the hour and most went back at least a couple of minutes. Despite or perhaps because Tim Groves was officiating as time keeper, father-in-law Peter Baumber came in with a disappointing 1.07.32 - the slowest 25 he had done for several seasons. Thus I was quite chuffed to come within a few minutes of his time with a 1.10.36. However, I subsequently discovered that he had done a 23 minute 10 the previous evening. Well done Peter!



Mark Fraser takes us over the races of one of the club's longest serving members. I'm sure most *La Gazzetta* readers know Ted Wells. You might also know that, apart from serving the club by frequently marshalling its time trials and (until this year) performing the role of General Secretary, his name often appears at the top of time trial result sheets for winning veterans' events "on standard".

Left – Mark and Ted on the Redmon Grand Prix des Gentlemen

Ever modest, he tends not to share news of his racing achievements so I thought it was time I did it for him! In particular, to describe a particular two-up time-trial that I've ridden with him for the last few years. The Redmon Grand Prix des Gentlemen is a classic time trial on the British calendar taking place in October each year. Run over eighteen miles over undulating roads between Dorking and Horsham, the event uses a mixture of dual-carriageway using the A24 (the same roads as the G10/42 for those who know Surrey and Sussex courses) and rural lanes. The term "GP Des Gentlemen" refers to the nature of the race – each team consists of a veteran rider (40 years plus) and a pacer. The veteran is not allowed to overtake his/her partner but must stay on their wheel for the whole race. The Redmon GP is now so well-known that there is always a full field of sixty teams, and although there are prizes for the absolute fastest times achieved, the main competition is based on age-related handicapping ("veterans' standards"). Each pair is given a target time to complete the race calculated using the age of the veteran member of the team. I hope that Ted won't mind me mentioning that for the last couple of years he has been the "most senior" of the veterans competing. Each year of age brings an extra allowance of thirty seconds or so.

The event has a great atmosphere – apart from National Championships it's the only event I can think of where there are groups of spectators dotted around the course. It's also one of the few time trials these days that has a prize presentation afterwards in front of a packed hall. Perhaps what makes it a particularly fun event is the presence of interesting top riders from the UK & beyond. High-profile riders in the previous few years have included Bradley Wiggins, Rob Hayles, Tony Doyle, Sean Yates, our own adopted son Michael Hutchinson and, last year, a Team Bianchi professional from Jan Ullrich's team. One year we even had Tony Rominger, Tour de France hero, Tour of Spain winner and World Hour Record holder. I think his concept of time-trialling was a little different to what we're used to – his Cofidis team car drove behind him the whole way as protection from UK drivers!

In 2000 Ted and I finished 11th. We rode well together having practised in a few local events in the month or so leading up to the GP, but identified a few areas where we could improve. For example, I started too fast so Ted had to make a very big effort up the first long drag which took him a while to recover from. Nevertheless, we enjoyed the event enormously and entered it the next year.

2001's event was held on a windy day but we rode a well-paced race and finished 7th. The event sponsors were generous and we were grateful to pick up some good prizes.

Each year in the lead up to the Redmon GP I found myself wondering if I should ride my low-profile time-trial bike to pace Ted or whether I could get away with riding my road bike. And each year, a few weeks before the event two things would happen: first, Ted would ride an unfeasibly fast solo "10" which would make me worry whether I could pace him fast enough; and second, we would have a couple of practice rides in which he seemed rather too comfortable as a I was blowing a gasket riding flat-out on the front. So I always erred on the side of caution and rode my time-trial bike.

I was never more thankful for that decision than in 2002... I'd had a decent year's racing, won a few races at Welwyn track league, had done OK in the regional pursuit championship, and had set a personal best in the 3km pursuit just before the Redmon GP. So, I thought I might have a fairly comfortable ride pacing Ted despite the wet conditions that year. Instead I blew up spectacularly after ten miles and was just about able to pace Ted properly to the finish where I was mildly sick. Ted recovered from the effort very quickly of course whereas I had to sit in my car for fifteen minutes without moving or speaking. We came 5th though and looked forward to the next year's event.

So last October found us again at the event headquarters at a school near Dorking. We rode well together (this time both of us finished in good condition) and Ted again rode skilfully very close to my back wheel the whole way round to finish 7th on this occasion.

As we approach this year's event I'm starting to get a little nervous as I see Ted starting to do a few local club events and a couple of open time trials - his times seem rather good... It doesn't look like I'm going to have an easy ride this year either then. Wish us luck - me especially please...

La Gazzetta: cycling development

I received this email from John Scripps. Some members may be interested in the coaching courses – let the committee know. We will discuss the go-ride item in the next meeting.

"I am writing to you firstly to introduce myself as club and coaching development officer for the Eastern region. I have been in post since June 21st and look forward to meeting you at some point in the future. I am also enquiring as to whether you are aware of the go-ride scheme British cycling has in place and whether you are interested in becoming a go-ride club. If you are interested I can arrange to hold a presentation on Go-ride in more detail to explain through everything with the club, so this would be the ideal time throw any questions at me.

Also, I'm currently looking for interested parties to take up the BC coaching courses that I'm planning to organise for Autumn/Winter 2004/5. I have no confirmed dates yet but once I have sufficient interest I can get these to you. If you could spread the word of these courses and give me contact details on interested individuals that would be much appreciated

Kind regards

John Scripps
Regional Club and Coaching Development Officer, Eastern Region
Gosling Sports Park
Stanborough Road
Welwyn Garden City
Herts
AL8 6XE
07843 549106
develop.east@britishcycling.org.uk"

La Gazzetta: joining the club

David Ross came to Cambridge to work at Addenbrookes and joined the club. I asked him to reflect on what we were like to the newcomer and this is what he said:

MY FIRST TIME

I left Adelaide at the height of the Australian summer. Adelaide is a city of one million people sandwiched between the sea and the hills that rise to about 900 metres above sea level. For some years I had a mountain bike and used to take to the hills on weekends, but I had never owned a racing bike or been part of a club.

I first came across the Tour de France on television around 1997 and I was instantly captivated. I think it's the sadomasochistic, epic nature of the event, which appeals to me. Each day is a super-human effort, but then it all happens again the next day, and again. As the years went by I gradually came to the realisation that I must shed the knobbly tyres and spongy suspension and be reborn as a gleaming concoction of lycra, aluminium and hairless legs!

My career brought me to the UK at the start of 2004. I was offered jobs in London and Cambridge. Among the factors, which influenced my choice, was the availability of good cycling territory. Shame about the lack of hills! When my job at Addenbrooke's was confirmed I headed straight to the internet and found the excellent CCC website. It seemed a good omen that the hospital is the meeting site for the club runs and there and then I decided that I would like to join the club.

There could perhaps be no greater contrast between the weather in Cambridge and the weather in Adelaide in mid-January. One day in my first week at work I got up early to go and take a photograph of King's in the snow. I was deeply impressed by the locals' commitment to cycling. I watched as the few intrepid cyclists slipped and slithered around the town. I had never before even thought about what it would be like to cycle in such conditions!

Despite all of this I found my way to Hayward Fils and emerged with a Trek 1200 in time to make it to my first club run on Sunday 25th January. I am a little neurotic and wondered what sort of reception I would receive. Would my bike be too cheap? Would my lycra be too drab? Would I be too slow? Would anyone talk to me if I turned up unannounced?

I was wearing my only pair of bike shorts from Australia (i.e above-knee) and a new long-sleeved jersey. There was still snow on the ground at the side of the road and at nine o'clock it was 2.4 degrees Celsius. To say that I was inadequately attired would be a glorious British understatement.

Being the enthusiastic new boy, I found only one other person waiting at the bus station. Glen gave me a warm welcome and a little information about the ride. As the other riders turned up I was touched by the concern that they expressed at my light clothing. At first, I took this as a sign of a welcoming and nurturing club. As I started to shiver I realised that it was a serious warning. But I thought I would warm up when we started and so off we went!

As we rolled along my education started. What do all the funny hand gestures and shouts mean? Terry and Glen explained etiquette in the peloton. It was made very clear that no-one will be abandoned on the side on the road if they have a puncture or run out of steam. On several occasions I had other riders come alongside and enquire after my health. In retrospect it was probably my mental health that they were worried about!

At Stradishall we stopped for warmth and sustenance. I had a cup of tea, but did not eat. I had this strange idea that the food would weigh me down and impair my performance on the ride home. On a day of firsts, I added another to the list. My first "bonk". My recollection of the ride home is hazy. When I made it back to Cambridge, I plunged into a hot bath and then went straight to bed. I woke up in time for dinner and descended on the kitchen like a plague of locusts.

I felt audacious after this auspicious start. And so in early March I found myself attending my first Audax event – Lucy's optimistically named "End of Hibernation 200". I trusted the club enough to know that they would not suggest I take part if they thought I wouldn't make it. I took a photograph of myself when I got home that day. My hair is moulded into helmet ridges, my face is splattered with mud and my eyes are watering, but most importantly, I am grinning from ear to ear.

The club makes itself known through the excellent website. The regular members are friendly to new-comers and a special effort is made to seek out new riders and ensure that they feel welcome and that they are taking part in a ride appropriate to their level of fitness. Road safety is taken seriously in route selection and the club makes it clear that there will be help at hand in the case of mechanical (or muscular) failure.

And it's fun. There is a wide enough range of activities that there is something for everyone. The club runs are very sociable and are a relaxing way to spend a Sunday morning. The time trials are competitive, but genuinely friendly, with the hares and the tortoises equally welcome.

The club seems to be very healthy at present with a near-record level of membership and large numbers of riders at the Thursday time trials and the Sunday club runs. I'm sure that a lot of this is a reflection of the care and attention given to new riders. As an absolute newcomer to road riding I could not have hoped for a better club. I know that when I leave Cambridge many of my fondest memories of the place will be thanks to the CCC.

La Gazzetta: for sale

Chris Adams is extending his repertoire to act as a middleman in transactions....

Remember "Ed The Pope"? He'd like to sell/practically give away his bikes to deserving homes!!

Here are Ed's orphans:

753 Graham Weigh with straight forks 22.5 inch

8spd Ultegra ('99)

No wheels

Blue/silver (nice)

'95 Dynatech med. MTB

Ti frame

Pukey colours

DX gruppo

Ribble mish/mash 22.5 inch, etc

Plus many spare wheels!!

Phone 07950 825744

Young Derek has a saddle to sell! Selle San Marco US Postal team replica. Didn't suit him! Cost him £40 ,will accept lots less. He's a Girton resident - 276097. (No email address)

And wanted: Ladies Roadster

Does anyone have an old Raleigh/Triumph (or similar) lying neglected in the darkest recesses of their shed/garage? My girlfriend is in need of a suitable machine to ride across town to the station each day. Nothing flashy, but must be road worthy, or easily made so with the aid of a couple of spanners and a tin of WD40. Price TBA. Contact: Matt Heywood 01223 462925

La Gazzetta: ride reports continued

And, after a rather long gap since the publication of the first part, here is Iain Law's second part of the trip to the etape in 2003. You'll need to go back to December 03 for the start. (sorry Ed.)

"All of a sudden we were off! Then we stopped. We proceeded in fits and starts for a few minutes towards the "Depart" banner overhead and then we really were off. With a mix of fear and exhilaration we became part of a massed peloton charging out of Pau to the cheers of the locals. We quickly split up with a small Cambridge grupetto of Terry, Chris, Angela and myself slotting into a larger pack, before Terry got into his stride and we were comfortably going along at a modest 20+ mph(!) Like many others I'd read about the route, pacing myself and all the rest and must admit to wondering if this really was such a good idea. I told myself that it really was ridiculously easy to go at this pace in such a huge group. That was the theory, anyway. Within the first couple of miles, there were people having punctures, dropping kit and having bits fall off their bikes. If you want some expensive kit for your cycling wardrobe, just follow the Etape. All along the route from start to finish there was kit scattered all over the place.

Anyone who read the various articles in the cycling press will have seen how the first third of the course was flat, the middle third vertiginous and the last third flat all the way to Bayonne. Wrong. The general conclusion of all those we talked to was that the Cycling Weekly team didn't ride the course we did or more likely, drove to the main climbs to ride them and then drove to the finish.

Blissfully unaware of what lay ahead of us, we continued on our merry way until after around 15 miles we came across the first of two short-ish (only a mile or so) 3rd category climbs that our intrepid cycling weekly team hadn't noticed when they rode the course. All of a sudden we were reaching for lower gears as everything slowed and bunched up. There were a few people falling as they either failed to get in the correct gear or someone in front slowed or stopped. I managed to dodge one crash with a quick stretch of cyclo-cross and as the slope levelled off near the top, nipped behind a hedge for a comfort break while the pace was slow. We'd split up on the climb but Terry, Chris and I ended up back together just in time for the start of the second of these short, allegedly non-existent climbs. We finally split up, for good as it turned out on this climb and the last remaining section of flatter roads until the major hills started to loom menacingly ever closer. On the final run in towards the Col du Soudet, I came across the other Ian from our party who was happily pedalling away. After a further comfort break (either I was well hydrated, suffering from nerves or it's just my age) I came across him again as the road just started to begin to drag on a long slow incline to the foot of the Soudet. Just before the climb proper began was the first of many welcome food stops. The feed stations looked more like a feeding frenzy than anything else. Everyone was fighting to get towards tables groaning under the weight of bananas, energy bars, buns, energy drinks and water. The crowd was 4 or 5 deep and the people handing out the water were lobbing bottles into any raised hand. They must have been pretty accurate, as there didn't appear to be any cyclist with concussion. Perhaps that's why helmets were compulsory. I was able to eat a banana and refill both of my water bottles – maybe that's why I had to keep stopping – adding sachets of isotonic powder as I didn't want to cramp up or get dehydrated. I stuffed assorted goodies in my already bulging back pockets. It was then a matter of wading through drifts of empty bottles to get back on the road. The first major climb didn't seem too bad. There was quite a bit of banter going on in various languages and I steadily made my way up through the masses of cyclists who had either started ahead or come charging by on the flatter parts. Incredibly, several of our group were asked by riders from the Ideal Travel party if we were from coach 24. Our tale of misfortunes had already spread through the peloton. What was worrying was the number of people in obvious distress through having too high a gearing, going off too fast or simply not having prepared properly. As a self-confessed non-climber – being big and ugly is good in a boat but not for going uphill – I couldn't believe that very few people were riding past me. I was deliberately sitting in my bottom gear (30 x 23 for those interested) spinning away to avoid any temptation to try too hard and was working my way through the peloton.

At the summit, another food station gave a further opportunity to top up the water bottles and do some more snacking. Thankfully the forecast stormy weather had passed over during the night and it was a warm, sunny day so it was essential to keep the bottles filled. I was drinking a large bottle of water roughly every hour, which translated to one per climb or 11/2 between each feed station. Just prior to beginning the descent I stopped to put on my gamex to avoid becoming chilled, then it was time to enjoy the fruits of all the hard work uphill.

This first descent was a little bit rough, narrow and twisty at the top, so it was a case of starting off fairly steadily until the road opened out a little. The route was well marked, any narrow bridge or tight bend having signs to warn the riders. My only problem was with some of the other riders who didn't have a clue about picking and following a line or would chop in front coming into the apex of a bend. Any passing was to be done

on the straighter stretches of road if only for safety's sake. All too soon the descent finished, so it was off with the gamex and on towards the second climb. With so many cyclists around, it was no problem to find a group going at the same pace and tag along to get to the second, shorter climb.

As I was nearing the top of the second climb, we passed through a small village where the first of the "fallers" were being treated. Most simply appeared to have charged off from the start without considering what was to come and were now suffering the consequences. I was feeling quite smug until I saw one guy being attended to by the paramedics and he did not look at all well – frightening. All along the route, especially in the towns and villages and on the climbs, the crowds were amazing. Everyone seemed to have taken a day off to come and watch or cheer the lunatics on bikes. There were entire families having picnics, people offering drinks and giving helping pushes on the hills - it was fantastic.

Any pleasant feelings rapidly disappeared as soon as we started to head towards the third and steepest of the days climbs, the Bagargui or Bu**er-me as some called it. The valley road was one of those horrible drags that seem to go on forever and made you feel as if there was someone hanging onto your seatpost. Eventually a sign at the side of the road announced the start of the climb proper. Straight away it was a case of finding your lowest gear and trying to keep it turning fast enough so you didn't fall off. Within 500m of starting the climb there were people pushing or simply standing wheezing at the side of the road. I kept trying to change down through my gears convinced that the mech had jammed on the middle ring –I wish. Thankfully the gradient eased enough that you were able to focus on more than just the patch of road ahead of your front wheel. This proved to be rather unfortunate though, as you were then able to see the road crossing a sun dappled meadow with a cliff at the far end. As you craned your neck to look up, you could make out a continuous stream of cyclists making their way on bike and foot around a corner about 200m above your head. The gradient soon returned with a vengeance. What was so helpful were the signs at the side of the road giving you all the information you didn't want to know. Summit 8km. Next kilometre, average gradient 12%, and so on. Around about this stage I think my brain shut down in self defence as all I, and everyone else around me, could do was concentrate on keeping the pedals turning and try to ignore all thoughts of stopping "to enjoy the view". It was quite surreal. After the banter of the first two climbs, there wasn't a word spoken. All that could be heard was the panting of the riders, the whirring of chains through the gears and the click-clack of cleats from those pushing their bikes, punctuated by the odd grunt and crash as someone simply couldn't keep their legs turning and fell off. I have never known kilometres to be so long. I was struggling to keep the bike moving, wishing I had mountain bike gearing, at less than 7mph. I don't even want to think about what my pulse was doing. It was here that the crowds were at their thickest on the climbs. Anyone who did have to stop and tried to get going again was given a helping push, people slumped at the side of the road were offered food and water and everyone was given a cheer, no matter how they were doing. I think it was here that one of the official photos of me was taken, lets just say that I won't be bothering to get a copy of the picture.

At last, after the climb seemed like it was never going to end, the 1km to the summit banner came into sight. You came around a bend and there it was, another steepening of the gradient. I couldn't even think swearwords by this stage, but managed the final stretch to the second last summit and last but one feed station. Once again the feed station was a frenzy as cyclists tried to stock up on the food they should have eaten beforehand or, like me tried to top up their food stores in preparation for the final climb and run-in to the finish.

With the gamex back on, I was able to enjoy the long descent. This part of the road had been re-laid so was beautifully smooth and the bends were more open allowing gravity to take maximum effect. Shortly after starting the descent, however, my bike didn't want to take one of the hairpins and as I scabbled my way out of the bend I realised I had a puncture. Thankful I hadn't been up to maximum speed at the time. I tried to replace the inner as quickly as possible and get going again. This descent seemed to just keep going for miles. The few times I looked at my computer on the straighter, flatter sections I was doing 48mph, so must have been going much faster on the steeper sections.

The final climb was almost an anti-climax. Having suffered on the previous climb, the Burdincurutcheta (or bloody unpronounceable) seemed relatively short and definitely not as excruciatingly steep. In what seemed like no time at all I was on the last downhill, looking forward to the final run in to Bayonne.

I latched onto a fairly large group and we were soon zipping along at over 20mph. We were making good progress over some slight rises when I suddenly realised we had just passed our final feed station. I was in a quandary, do I continue with the group and risk blowing up through lack of food and water, or do I stop to refuel? Rather than die the death of a thousand pedal strokes, I decided to do a U-turn and nip back to the feed station. I hardly lost any time and was soon trying to time-trial my way back to the group. Where are all these following vehicles that you see in the Tour when you need them? Thankfully, after a fairly short chase I was able to catch them and get my breath back. Bayonne, here we come, I thought. Unfortunately I now discovered that in my haste to fix my puncture, I hadn't properly fastened the valve which was slowly leaking air and I was starting to get a squishy front tyre. There was no way it would last to Bayonne so I had to resign myself to losing the group whilst doing a proper job this time of inflating my tyre.

By now though, there were loads of groups forming on the road so I was able to pick up a group for the final stretch. My only problem was that I was actually going faster on my own than the group I'd joined. Since I could see the next group ahead on the road, I thought it was time to pretend I was in the Tour and try to

bridge the gap. So off I went, chasing down the next group. I now discovered the downside to these big events. If you go to the front of a group, you end up towing what seems like your own personal peloton with no one prepared to share the work with you. I was not impressed, and Terry and Chris both found the same problem during their rides. It was so bad that even if you stopped pedalling, the others freewheeled with you until you started again! (Why doesn't school French teach you how to swear effectively?) I did succeed in bridging the gap, but after a short recovery, realised that I was still capable of comfortably going faster than the group I'd just joined and could see the next group ahead on the road. Sound familiar? Off I went again, still towing my personal retinue. This continued over ever-increasingly rolling terrain and 4 or 5 groups until I eventually rejoined the group I'd been in before stopping to sort my front tyre.

I was quite pleased with myself as my preparation and feeding strategy must have been about right and I'd been able to keep making efforts to get to the next group. I was less than impressed with the cyclist who'd sat on my back wheel all the way, then finally jumped me 200m from the last group on an uphill.

It was about now that the final sting in the tail of the route became apparent. Those flat or downhill-all-the-way-roads turned out to be a series of short, savage climbs to be grovelled up however possible. After the distance covered so far and previous climbs, these really were soul destroying, especially when according to Cycling Weekly they didn't exist. (Bitter? Me?) It was during this stretch that the tiredness everyone was suffering from became apparent. One guy in the group just cycled off the road and into a ditch beside a Gendarme, whilst 3 or 4 others soon after had a pile-up in the middle of the group through loss of concentration.

Eventually we began the final approach to Bayonne. We came down beside the river and started to see the signs counting down the final few kilometers. The crowds started to grow again and as we entered the final few k's the pace slowly but surely increased as all the earlier suffering was forgotten. Going under the red kite for the final kilometer was a real buzz and it was into the big ring for the final sprint. Everything was going well, I was tucked in about 4 or 5 riders from the front, feeling good and waiting to "do a Cipollini" over the line. I was just starting to pull out and go for the sprint when the road unsportingly started to gently rise in front of us. Dreams of winning the bunch sprint disappeared as everyone started grabbing for lower gears and we wheezed our way over the finish line to be funnelled along to receive our medals and a food bag.

By the time I found Averil I'd just about been able to uncross and refocus my eyes. We found a spot where I could have some more water to drink and tuck into the goody bag. After 200km on bananas, chewy bars and energy drinks, the bag of salted crisps and a ham roll were like manna from heaven. (Even for vegetarians like Angela!) Back at the coach we took the bike apart as others arrived and exchanged tales about the ride. Averil had decided to cycle the 20km to our hotel in Biarritz, but everyone else chose the easy option in the coach.

How did the Cambridge group do? We had 3 non-finishers. Percy was swept up at the first of the check-points halfway through the major climbs, but was pleased with what he'd achieved. Gordon and Ted only just missed the time cut at the end of the hills. Gordon literally saw the barrier being put across the road while Ted was only just behind him. As the broom wagon followed the course over the last lumpy hills, they didn't know whether to be disappointed or relieved. All our other starters successfully completed the course.

After our less than average hotels in Paris and Lourdes, the hotel in Biarritz was fantastic. It was an art deco style hotel, beautifully looked after – you could almost hear the sighs from the entire coach as everyone got to their rooms to shower and collapse onto their beds. After a very pleasant meal, we had a promenade through the town and a medicinal beer before heading for bed. With all the hard work over, we were now due to watch several stages of the Tour. Our first was to be the finish at Toulouse. We nearly didn't make it as the transmission of the bus decided it would have a rest and we ended up sitting for about half an hour at the side of the motorway. Instead of going to the finish, we stopped on the outskirts of Toulouse at around 5km to go and saw the race go by in a blur. Prior to that we'd been kept amused trying to grab booty from the publicity caravan.

We were now to stay in Castres, a small town. Unfortunately we were booked into two hotels, one in the centre of town, the other just outside. Luckily both were nice hotels and once the "townies" had sorted out that they didn't have to pay for their meals, everyone was quite happy.

Our next stage was the first time trial. As the course was only about 30km from the hotels, we could either take the coach, cycle or use a combination of the two. The heat was incredible – over 40 degrees C. Averil and I were drinking water almost constantly and went through over 2 litres each just sitting in the shade. It's no wonder Armstrong was suffering from dehydration by the end. My plan had been to cycle back from the start to the hotel, but as soon as I sat on the saddle I knew that I would be returning by bus. My body-saddle interface wasn't all it should be after the Etape. So while the others all made their way back by bike via every shop selling water, those of us using the bus were able (forced!) to retire to a suitable bar to drink some cold lager and watch the end of the stage on tv.

The final opportunity to see the tour was to travel for around 3 hours by coach to watch the first of the Pyrenean stages. By now, quite a few of us were suffering from "coach fever" and opted to have a day in Castres. This allowed us an easy start to the day, a wander around the market, coffees followed by a relaxing lunch before retiring to a local bar to watch the stage on tv. We had returned to the hotel, eaten our dinner and were about to head off to bed before the stage-watchers returned.

Unfortunately, that concluded the main part of the trip and we headed off the next morning to return to the UK. After another day and a half travelling by coach we were only too delighted to finally get off and meet Jane who was collecting us from the drop-off point. As at the start, Gordon, Averil and I went in the car whilst the ever intrepid Terry, Chris and Ian cycled their way back to Terry's house.

Did I enjoy it and would I do it again?

A qualified "yes".

I would do it again, but definitely not by coach! It very quickly felt as if we were spending our entire time on the coach and the constant packing/unpacking of clothes and assembly/disassembly of the bikes became a real pain. Being able to ride a stage of one of the big tours is a great opportunity to see what the pros do day after day – believe me, they are welcome to it! Doing the ride as part of a big group at pretty much your own pace appeals far more than racing, to me at least. I'd like to be able to take part in other similar rides over the courses of the Tour of Flanders, Paris-Roubaix, the Giro etc.

Finally, for those interested - distance covered 200km, cycling time 8hr 11min, punctures 1. Food consumed – 4 bananas, 6 muesli bars, 12 slices fruit loaf, 3 packs dried apricots, 5 energy gels, 6 litres water/isotonic drink. Not to forget the week long recovery for my body-saddle interface!

I'd like to thank Terry for co-ordinating everyone – all the aches & pains are accepted as self inflicted and also thank Gordon and Jane who made it much easier for everyone to get to and from the coach with our bikes and kit."

More photographs from the Ike Saul Road Race.
Left to right:
Tom Platts, Nick Jackson and
Camilla Ward.

Photographs – and those used
last month – by Julia Baylis

