

The beauty of steel, and the call of the white roads of Tuscany

I started my love affair with vintage cycles about 5 years ago. I rode the Eroica Britannia at Bakewell in 2016 and became an advertising image for Buxton Mineral water. In 2017 my wife Glynis joined me on our Chas Roberts 87 tandem and in 2018 I rode solo again in prep for Gaiole (pronounced Gai-o-Le) in October. Gaiole in Tuscany lies between Florence and Siena and is the true home of the Eroica created by John Carlo Borrochi and inspired by his childhood hero Gino Bartali.



My plans for extra training were scuppered in January this year when my right knee became very painful to walk on and eventually led to Meniscus tear surgery in April. I still had a lot of pain when walking but it appeared ok on the bike.

I started to get out as much as possible and was soon doing 50 mile rides with no real discomfort.

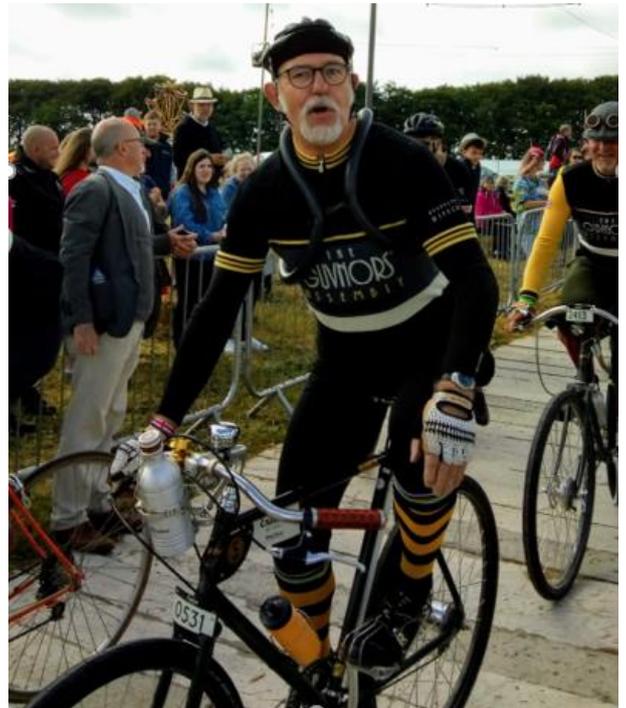
My bike seemed to have a magnetic attraction to the Stroud valleys and when the Britannia came round and I was going well and especially enjoyed the hills. I rode this



on my Pashley S5 with the Guvnors Assembly

Three weeks before the ride I had to go back to the consultant as walking was becoming painful. I stated that cycling was ok to which he replied don't walk then, cycle everywhere. He gave me a cortisone injection and that sort of sorted it.

October saw myself and Glynis setting off to Heathrow with my 55 Rotrax boxed for the flight. After driving from Pisa to our apartment in Gaiole I immediately built the bike back up ready for business. Glynis laughed when I turned to her in the morning and said it was so nice waking up with the one I love (the bike was in the bedroom with us)!!!!.





As the weekend drew near the little town was transformed into a vintage cyclist's town with trade stands, vintage bike jumble (oh I could have spent a fortune) and food vendors. The race HQ was held in the town's civic centre where registration race packs were collected and and on showing this at control were presented with a really nice tin (with a commissioned artwork of Luciana Berrutti, the face of the Eroica worldwide) filled with goodies, race number (I am also in Ciclo Club Eroica and my ride number is 891.



Monument unveiled in memory of Luciani Burruti. The most famous Eroica cyclist who died in 1917



The ride

The alarm went off at 3.30am on Sunday 7th October. A hearty breakfast and bike check done I headed for the start line. The long distance riders (209k and 130k riders started from 5.00am to 7.00am). I entered the 130k and started off at 5.15am in light rain riding with a chap from Stratford on Avon who seemed a little apprehensive of what was in store.



The start led up a gradual incline of about 7% until increasing to 10% on the first of 50k of gravel white road was reached leading up to and beyond Castle Brolio (the home of Barone Riscola's Chianti Classico vineyard. The wine was

produced in the castle. My ride partner James from Stratford came off twice on this stretch grazing both arms and legs. Descending on wet gravel at speed was not easy.

1st gravel climb of the da up to Brolio Castle



First feed station at Radi at 45km



The 1st control checkpoint at Murlo was reached by a 25% gravel climb before entering the town via the town gate where the gradient eased (slightly)



Castle Murlo

2nd feedstation was at Buonconvento at 70k. More italian specialities and vino.





Leaving Bounconvento for Asciano.

Typical condition of the "White Roads"



The climb on way to Asciano was very beautiful and the gravel had dried out.



Que at Asciano control checkpoint with 90k completed



A pretty face looking after the “Eroicas” or Hero’s

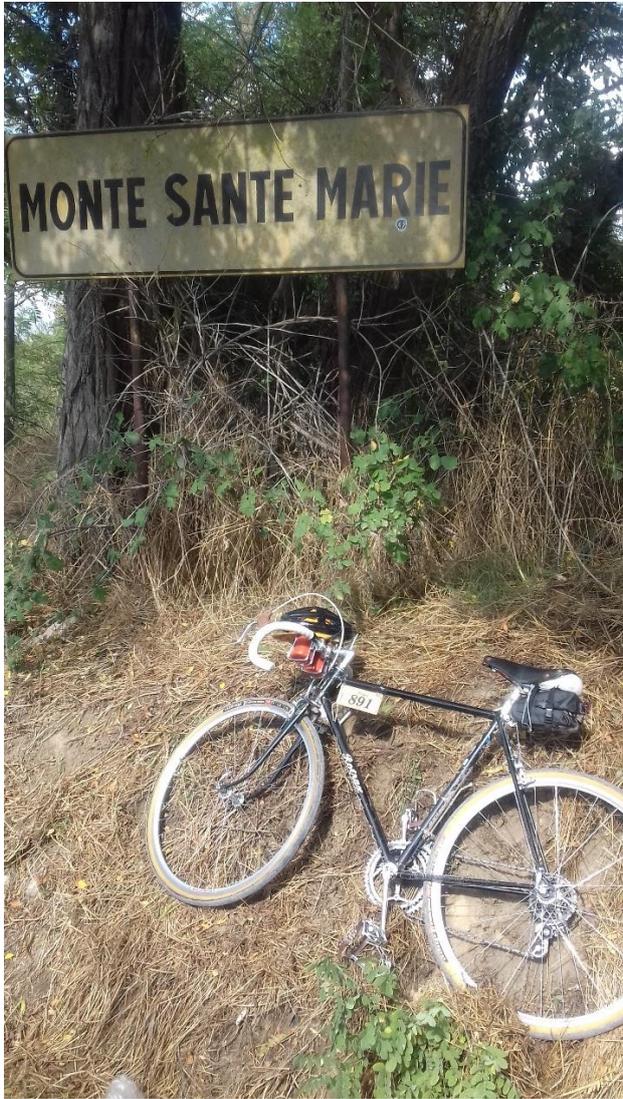


Classic shot of riders on route to Monte Saint Marie.



The descents were very dangerous and arms shoulders back and neck took a battering. Corners were very scary.

Highest part of route at 95k in and very testing



Waiting for my ride partner James on route to Castelnuovo Berardenga

The mountain spring here was in high demand here, very tired.



Final control checkpoint and feed station at Castelnuovo Berardenga 110k in



Coming into Gaiole near end of ride



Happy at end of fantastico ride



Proud to have worn GCCC Tyndale 1891 colours.

After a difficult time when injury threatened to prevent me doing the event that I had wanted to do for so long I was overcome with emotions of happiness. To my mates in Tyndale 1891 thanks for putting up with me taking you up hills not normally suited to heavy bikes. I think you have all improved tremendously. Thanks to the Stroud valleys and Malvern Hills for the joy of riding.

I completed course without getting off on any of the climbs

2019 targets: Eroica Espania in May, Velo Anjue in France in June and Velo Retro in the Lake District in July