

GLOUCESTER CITY CYCLING CLUB



SPRING 2023

SPOKESPIECE

Spring 2023

The Newsletter of the Gloucester City Cycling Club



EDITORIAL

Spring has finally sprung, and the tulips (in Club colours, of course) have already come and gone. Speaking of tulips, new member Simon Pollington and his wife saw plenty on their cycle tour of the Netherlands. Read all about it [here](#). They seem to have been luckier with the weather than the [Club Spring tour](#) to Cardiff, which was dogged by consistently rainy days. Despite that the participants still seem to have enjoyed their trip, which is more than can be said for the poor professionals enduring the Giro d'Italia, Britain's early spring weather having moved south and east leaving us with excellent riding conditions, but condemning the Club tourists on a trip to Sicily to even more wet weather riding. More of that in the next issue.

The racing season has begun well, City riders performing well in the WTTA Hardriders' series, a successful [TG Hall TT](#), despite the low entry, and a new course record on the familiar Staunton 10 mile course.

Finally, we have a new [Club photograph](#) for the archives.

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Contributions for the next issue please to Spokespiece@gmail.com by September 15th

The Doddie Weir ride



Many took it easy over the festive period and the start of the new year, but a bunch of former Gloucester Rugby players did the exact opposite by heading out on their bikes in all weathers to get in shape for a daunting charity challenge.

Mike Teague, Ian Smith, Greg Keyse, Phil Pritchard, Pete Jones and John Gadd set off from Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium, as part of a 150-strong group of cyclists aiming to reach Cardiff's Principality Stadium within 48 hours. Their mission was twofold: to deliver the match ball in time for the Doddie Weir Cup fixture between Wales and Scotland in this year's Six Nations tournament and to raise funds for the [My Name's 5 Doddie Foundation](#) which is committed to a vision of a world free of MND.

Using a relay system, teams of cyclists planned to cover that 515-mile distance in less than two days, with various rugby clubs en route providing feed stations, medical back-up and shower facilities, Kingsholm Stadium being a stop off point.

Several club members assembled at Kingsholm on February 8th where Princess Anne presented the match-ball for the upcoming Scotland-Wales game, in this year's Six Nations, which Scotland went on to win decisively 35-7. The rugby players set off by bike from Kingsholm to Cardiff and then on to Murrayfield, and our members escorted them for the first part of their journey.

Spring Tour 2023 Cardiff: Wales in the Wet!

Day One: Friday 21st April. Malcolm Grainger

Red Doors, Lions and Dragons

With the prospect of a moist day ahead, seven hardy tourists assembled punctually in a gloomy Kings Square for a 7:30 am start. Even before Westgate Bridge had been crossed the first raindrops arrived. No surprise!

Passing through Tibberton on our way to St. Anthony's Cross the advancing damp front proved a harbinger of more to come. Capes on! And so to Penny Farthing and the Walford valley. Not only wet but predictably muddy, too. Could this have caused a pannier to leave its mount on our Captain's bike? Those following behind did well to avoid the obstacle presented to them. But all was quickly resolved to allow us to press on to Kerne Bridge and Goodrich.

Buckling to unspoken peer pressure our leader then chose the riverside trail. Alas! No sooner had we encountered sharp flints than the same Roberts steed, earlier noted for mishap, produced the only deflation of the tour. But help was at hand: soigneur John sprang into action and forward motion was speedily resumed. Grateful that rain had yet to soften the trail, regaining a tarred surface was most welcome before we navigated through Monmouth to gain some sanctuary from the steady drizzle at the Red Door Deli in Mitchell Troy.

Tractor John was miffed about not stopping in Monmouth, and his relief was palpable when we turned into the garden centre. Tepid radiators were turned to the max, aiding some drying while we enjoyed delicious fare.

Enthusiasm undimmed, a desultory drizzle did nothing to dampen the reassembled group's cheer. Pressing on, the undulating old A40 gave way at Raglan to a more southerly downhill course as we headed into Usk: drizzle still drizzling. Initially winding along the Usk valley, the road from Llangybi produced a few slopes to make us work for our next stop: The Red Lion (with a gold nose, we thought), at Caerleon. Welsh rarebit just one local touch, Hereford and Bath ales well kept. Emerging to resume, we were not surprised to discover we were being followed: similar, but Welsh drizzle.

Crossing the Usk that we had been following awhile, a gentle climb enabled us to enjoy a lengthy gentle descent through most of Newport. And that is where our leader erred. Mistaking one set of traffic lights for a later, similar, version he turned too early. Calamity! He was obliged - with others watching! - to look at a map. Oh dear, he had taken a short cut. Normal service soon resumed to pass by Newport's Transporter Bridge before leaving roads for a while.

Crossing the River Ebbw by means of tarred cycle/foot ways we managed to bypass the western end of the city to gain the coast road to Cardiff. Aided by flat terrain and a following breeze, while dodging numerous potholes, we were able to make good time and appreciate the end of the rain. As we joined the Newport Road into Cardiff the bus/cycle lane took us safely along this busy road almost to the door of our hotel on Canal Street. Reflective of previous tours, there was a canal, filled in many years ago but now being dug out again - to what purpose remains unclear, aside, we suspect, from spending a generous Government grant.

70 miles, mostly damp.

Day 2: Saturday 22nd. Toby Wooldridge

The round trip

The day dawned gloomy but with an improving prospect until the afternoon, when rain was promised. The five housed in the Premier Inn set off to meet the three in a salubrious hotel in the dancing quarter of the city where they expectantly waited. Off we set, a little uncertainly, to find the Taff Trail just over the river from the castle. A pleasant cycleway took us to a footbridge, where we joined a very popular Park Run, in full pelt to the finish line. We joined in, sort-of, with care. No mishaps, not sure how. A further couple of miles on the east bank, then crossing another footbridge at Radyr.



Our first hills came on the lanes through Taff's Well west bank; and a good test at Treforest which had a couple walking. A nice descent into Pontypridd was followed by a not so nice climb out again. No arrows on the OS map, but it should have had two! There may have been a couple of walkers... This was the high point of the tour, 240m.

What goes up, as they say, goes down, and so it was to Beddau, then a wee diversion to take in the open road across

Llantrisant Common to the village for a well earned coffee and cake. It was here that Marie had to stop a car from driving her off the road, and Toby was almost T-boned by an enthusiastic motorist. No enduring damage caused.

Refuelled and bikes tinkered, steeply down and south for some difficult navigation through a cemetery and along a mass of minor roads in undulating country. Eventually we reached the village of Llantrithyd – a steep descent, leading to an even steeper exit on a lane with limited tarmac. More walking for some – but not Marie, who was observed exiting from a Post Office van at the top!



The weather was turning as we approached the coast. The expected pub in Llancadle was seen by no-one (another ex-pub) so we pressed on to East Aberthaw and The Blue Anchor. A splendid stop with interesting interior, good beer and food. It proved a welcome escape from the rain that had started as we entered – timing is everything!

On seeing the rain had passed, for now, we set off once again, skirting south of Cardiff Airport (no planes spotted) and took another Sustrans path, Route 88, to go under a most wonderful viaduct (below). Truly graceful.

Then into Barry – not quite so scenic. We abandoned the idea



of ice creams on Barry Island, instead hot-footed it to Cardiff via the industrial sprawl of Barry and then to Sully and Penarth. A small diversion to check out the pier – but too cold for our ice cream stop!

Climbing out was a struggle, and then of course we had the



precipitous descent to the Cardiff Barrage, which is a cycle way and handy entry point into the big city. Passing the monuments around the docks the rain started – mercifully late. No time for taking in the sights we skeddaddled into town and our respective hotels just before getting a soaking.

56 miles, almost all dry.

Day 3: Saturday 23rd. Alastair Goldie

Back to Gloucester

The leader had great difficulty fathoming the route out of Cardiff but, with the help of Malcolm and Tesh, the group reached the Newport Road. With the help of lots of cycle paths, bridges and



subways the main road was negotiated safely, and it was onto the B4239, St Brides Road, all the way to Newport.

The alternative plan to use quiet streets proved unnecessary as the main road was not at all busy, so ten miles of flat cycling was achieved until Newport was reached. Garmin, Komoot, and the very prominent Transporter Bridge meant navigation was straightforward through the town. Alas, the Transporter Bridge was out of commission so we were not able to use it.



At this point the weather changed and a squally hailstorm caught some riders as they donned rain jackets. It was then showery to Ham where lunch was taken at the Salutation Arms. At 3.00pm everyone's phones rang as the National Emergency system was tested.



The English Hills seem very tame after visiting Wales

The main road was taken through an industrial area, followed by Sustrans Route 4 which wiggled along an old railway, then followed quiet lanes along the salt marshes.

A couple of miles of hardpack broke up the tarmac sections. This overall section was nearly 12 miles of flat straight road - good for getting the miles in but a little dull with flat scenery and limited intriguing bends. A consolation was that I thought I heard a skylark as it was the sort of grassy land they like.

Caldicott was reached and the hunt for the Aroma Café began. The Café was OK but cash only, unusual these days.

Back on the route to Chepstow, the leader missed a turning (everyone else spotted it!) and we ended up on the A48 which was fairly busy. Les came to the rescue and offered to lead us via Mathern which involved a steep climb followed by a wonderful descent beside the M4 straight to the Severn Bridge.

A very wet ride back to Gloucester then ensued with the Captain coping with a slow deflation alternately riding and pumping. He avoided another Bruce's Bonus point because the deflation was not fixed on the ride! Three 'pump and sprints' saw him home, well ahead of the pack. Everyone was grateful that Colin had replaced his tyre (right) before the trip!



Very wet and cold, the group arrived safely in Gloucester after 74 miles.

GLOUCESTER CITY CYCLING CLUB TG HALL OPEN 25 MILE TIME TRIAL

30 APRIL 2023, COURSE U72 MAISEMORE –LEDBURY

Twenty competitors out of a registered twenty-seven rode our first open of the season, which took place in overcast weather with showers. There was plenty of comment about a well organised, friendly event!

Veteran rider Tim Wood (Team Echelon) took victory by just nine seconds, while Amber Bullingham (Gloucester City Cycling Club) was the only woman competitor. Wood covered the testing 25-mile course in a winning time of 56 minutes and 46 seconds to take his first open time trial win of the season.

Previous winner of the Beacon RCC round of the Merlin Cycles Classic Series in 2021, Wood showed his form over the undulating terrain to take the T.G. Hall Memorial Cup in his maiden open time trial victory of the season. He was also the fastest veteran. A close second was Tony Chapman (Frome and District Wheelers) with 56 minutes 55 seconds.

There was a total of five Gloucester City riders; the fastest was Matt Hill with 59 minutes 34 seconds, who also won the T.G. Hall the winner of the T.G. Hall handicap Cup. Jake Sargent's course record of 51-16 still stands, as does the women's course record held by Ellie Mackman of 1-00-44, both from the race of 2021.

Following this event, Gloucester City CC took the lead in the team competition in the WTTA Hardriders' Series.

	First name	Last name	Time hh:mm:ss	Handicapped time hh:mm:ss
1	Tim	Wood	00:56:46	
2	Tony	Chapman	00:56:55	
3	Karl	Norris	00:57:48	
4	Edd	Charlton-Weedy	00:58:06	
5	Jeremy	Addis	00:59:30	
6	Matthew	Hill	00:59:34	00:59:04
7	Philip	Wooldridge	01:00:35	
8	Mark	Halls	01:00:35	
9	Paul	Winchcombe	01:03:27	
10	David	English	01:03:37	
11	Mike	Hughes	01:03:48	01:02:18
12	Ian	Connolly	01:05:05	
13	Gareth	Bonner	01:07:23	
14	Damian	Dodd	01:07:35	01:03:35
15	John	Sirett	01:08:43	
1st lady	Amber	Bullingham	01:09:20	01:04:35
17	Trevor	Hodges	01:10:56	
1st Junior	Cameron	Bonner	01:11:16	
19	Nathan	Monk	01:13:12	01:07:42

Unfortunately the event suffered from a calendar clash with the Welsh 25 Mile Time Trial Championship, an event which several Club members had targeted. The Committee has resolved to try and avoid such clashes in the future. Tim Butler was the fastest of six Gloucester City riders to enter the Championship event, achieving a time of 52m 26s on the Usk to Monmouth R25/7 course .

A Tour of the Netherlands...

Simon and Triss Pollington

After cycling home from Athens last year Triss insisted on a shorter trip this time, somewhere with no hills where they like cyclists. I suggested the Atacama desert but apparently The Netherlands also fits the bill, and Triss wants to see the bulb fields.

Day 1 Hook of Holland to Lisse

An abrupt playing of 'Don't worry, Be Happy!' by the hidden loudspeaker in what seemed like the wee hours woke us from blissful slumber on the ferry and prodded us to get up and ready to disembark. We soon left the dock area and followed a wonderful coastal cycle path across the dunes and through occasional thickets of vegetation. What amazing bird song there was to accompany us!

Triss had to stop and use the very handy app *Merlin* to identify the bird song. Many Chiffchaffs were there. I hadn't heard of the bird until this year, but with this App I found out that they are all over Alney Island nature reserve. They are small and brownish, fly very fast and keep well hidden, and so very hard to spot. The other delightful prominent birdsong I heard was new to me: a Nightingale!

Every type of bike and cyclist shared a two way path about two metres wide. There's no traffic, but being a Sunday morning there were chain gangs of the local clubs riding at 20+ mph, weaving in and out between the e-bikes and tourers.

Holland, we thought, was flat but these sand dunes were definitely not – they were undulating! Over the day we climbed 925ft over 41 mile journey. When we turned inland we soon came across bulb fields. As we stopped to look at their beautiful, coloured stripes we could smell the scent of the hyacinths.

Day 2 Lisse to Haarlem

Despite rain hammering on the roof of our lodging we slept pretty well. By morning the rain had abated to a steady drizzle, but it was only 8°C and there was a biting northerly wind. The day did not bode well.

The signs were confusing at Keukenhof bulb field and we struggled to park the bikes but the gardens are undeniably beautiful, even on a vile Monday in April. There are apparently 7 million flowering bulbs at Keukenhof. We didn't check this figure personally but it's plausible. The scent from the hyacinths was

wonderful.

Yesterday's warm and friendly tailwind had become today's biting headwind. A field full of tulips may look amazing but it offers chuff all shelter from a North Sea gale!



Once back on the coast things improved, the dunes offering some shelter, and the sun even made a brief appearance.



Tonight's accommodation is courtesy of ['Vrienden op de Fiets'](#) (Friends of cyclists), an arrangement whereby B&B is offered to travelling cyclists for a fixed €25pp. We stayed in a beautiful Haarlem townhouse.

Day 3 Haarlem to Amsterdam

The day started with breakfast and a chat with our hosts. They have never owned a car; living near the town centre in such a cycle focused country means they could manage better with a couple of bikes, even though they had four children. We noticed that the side roads are free of parked cars; neighbours who do own cars have to keep them five minutes' walk away.

In the city centre traffic, trams, pedestrians and bikes are everywhere. Motorists generally give you a bit of room but the same can't be said of the local cyclists, who seldom slow down or look before turning, and certainly don't indicate.

We found our hotel in central Amsterdam without major incident, but arrangements for storing our bike had a dubious level of security. On the advice of a friendly local who saw us looking worried we headed to the central station instead where there is a massive underground bike store, accessed by a dedicated bike escalator.



Day 4 Rest Day in Amsterdam



Day 5 Amsterdam to Alkmaar – Kings Day

Today was 'Kings Day' in The Netherlands. It marks the king's birthday but really celebrates national identity and is a good excuse for a day off work and a boozy party.

Getting away from our narrow-staired hotel, a free ferry took us across the main canal to Buiksloterweg, a very different part of Amsterdam with narrow streets and pretty single storey houses, then we were soon in the countryside on another wonderful cycle path through fields and wetlands teeming with bird life. It took us on through Volendam, packed with coach loads of tourists.



Teresa's sixth sense for finding good cafés is legendary (we call it caf-nav) but today it surpassed itself. We rode past a small church and Triss spotted a notice board outside advertising tea and coffee. A helpful local directed us to the back of the church where there was a lovely garden and a small shed in which there was a kettle, a coffee maker, and an honesty box!



We got to Alkmaar about 4:30 and the parties were already in full swing. The market square was

packed, there were at least two other venues in town equally popular. We strolled around in bright orange tee-shirts to feel part of the scene: there were at least three open air free concerts, all packed with orange clad fun lovers.

Day 6 Alkmaar to Den Helder

I didn't realise how near our hotel was to the nearest church until the delightful string of bells woke me in the middle of the night... then every 15 minutes after that until I eventually fell asleep again.

Friday morning in Alkmaar is cheese market time. There has been a cheese market here for hundreds of years, but now it's just a sponsored bit of theatre put on for the tourists who had replaced the partying locals of the night before.



There must have been a small army of cleaners working since dawn to clear away the previous night's detritus that had been all over the streets and floating in the canals when we retired.

Throughout today's journey we heard an amazing range of birdsong. *Merlin* detected Wood Lark, Stonechat, Tree Pipit, Whimbrel, Chaffinch, Common Redshank, Eastern Bluebird, Common Green shank, Great Tit and Nightingale. We also saw a flock of Linnets, Lapwings, Herons, Egrets and also hares. It is barely worth mentioning the geese, blackbirds ducks, robins, and seagulls...

Day 7 Den Helder to Bolsward

Den Helder is an important transport and commercial centre, with a big maritime museum, ferry links to Texel island, shipping port, and by the looks of it a naval base too. It's correspondingly busy even on a Saturday morning and the town was not as cycling friendly as most in The Netherlands, we actually had to ride on the same road as some cars for a few hundred yards! The maritime museum looked worthy of exploration, should we ever get the opportunity.

A lovely flat ride through yet more bulb fields with beautiful flowers in perfect blooms. We were puzzled as to why the flowers weren't picked for sale but learned that in this region the flowers are grown for bulbs. After flowering the heads are removed and the plants left until July when they are dug up for sale.

If we ever come this way again we would be tempted to take the boat to Texel and hop between the islands to Harlingen rather than ride this section of the coastal path.

Day 8 Bolsward to Leeuwarden

We had an excellent breakfast chatting with two Dutch cyclists. We had suikerbrood (sugar bread), a Friesland speciality. It was so good that we resolved to find a baker in Leeuwarden and buy some to take home. We were also told about Oranjekoek (orange cakes), another local speciality, each baker having their own preferred decoration.

When we eventually tore ourselves away from the breakfast the cycling was very pleasant through fields with cows – Friesian of course – sheep – also looking Friesian – and lots of birds.

Leeuwarden is the capital of Friesland and one of the eleven towns of the *Elfstedentocht*, a 200km skating race around the main cities of Friesland. It was first raced in 1890 and can only be held in years when the winter is severe enough to freeze all the dykes and canals. The most recent race was in 1997 when two million people flocked to watch the spectacle. The route is now used for other purposes, cycling, walking, and coach trips. To celebrate this statues have been installed in each of the eleven cities.



'Love', one of the eleven Elfstedentocht statues.

Day 9 Leeuwarden to Groningen

First stop this morning was the wonderful Bakkerij Tromp. We do, of course, carry fruit and nut based energy bars for emergencies, but Triss regards such things as only marginally better than eating the spare inner tubes, so we stocked up with mini pizza, Oranjekoek, fresh fruit Danish pastries, and two loaves of suikerbrood to keep us going.

Outside of Leeuwarden we cycled through another wetland nature reserve on a deserted path of brand new tarmac. Then followed the same canal for nearly 20 miles, not anywhere near as boring as it sounds. The path changes from wide to narrow, gravel to smooth tarmac, swapping sides from time to time, and we had the river traffic and the birds to entertain us. We played leapfrog with one barge all afternoon, and just managed to catch it again as we got to Groningen. The guy on the deck gave me a big smile and a wave. Could it be that there is little else to do on board than watch passing cyclists play leapfrog with them?

Day 10 in Groningen

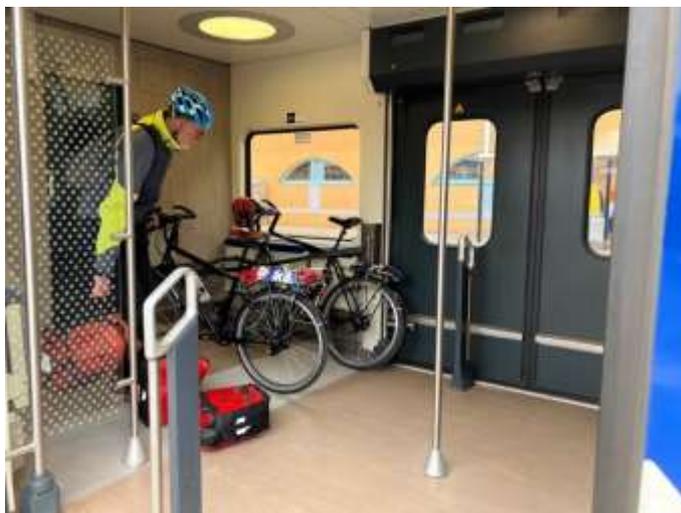
A rest day today in the university city of Groningen. Although it doesn't feel like a tourist destination there is plenty to see here. There are some attractive old parts of the city, especially alongside the canals, but the large university and a bustling shopping district stop it being a 'chocolate box' destination. For me it's the modern architecture that makes Groningen memorable and stand out from the other Dutch cities we've visited.



Day 11 Groningen to Hook of Holland

Commitments at home prevented us cycling back to Hook of Holland so we took a train from Groningen to Rotterdam. Some of you reading this may have tried to take a bike on a train in the UK and know how difficult it can be so we took the precaution of buying our tickets a few days before in Leeuwarden.

The very helpful lady in the ticket office seemed quite bemused that we were doing so; "no, we didn't need to book a specific train", "no, we didn't need to reserve a space for the bikes", "no, we didn't need to get there extra early". We turned up at the station about 15 minutes before the departure time to find the train already there and had no trouble strapping the bikes in to the storage area at one end of the carriage, then finding a seat from where we could keep an eye on them. Absolutely no difficulty at all.



We were left with a twenty mile ride from the centre of Rotterdam to Hook of Holland. The first few miles were busy and although there is a proper bike path you have to cope with the other cyclists, mopeds, pedestrians, trams, and motor scooters. You need to keep your wits about you!

Further on it was much quieter riding along side the channel that serves Europoort, one of the world's busiest ports.

We arrived in Hook of Holland in plenty of time so we enjoyed a glass of our favourite Dutch beer – Texel – before a very smooth boarding of the ferry.

This is a condensed version of the adventure. The full story with lots more pictures may be found at

<https://escapetocyclingadventure.wordpress.com/>

If you'd like to try the bird song app download it here

<https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/download/>

B4063. Old Cheltenham Road, cycle scheme

This project is part of the County Council's wider ambition for a Gloucestershire Cycle Spine, extending across the county from Stroud in the south to Bishop's Cleeve in the north. It is being funded from National Highways and both the Levelling Up Fund and Active Travel Fund and aims to be accessible to all.

It's fair to say that it has been met with some reservation



by Club members who prefer to stay on the road and fear that the reduced carriageway width will mean closer passes by traffic.

The new path is designed to the latest LTN1/20 design standard which call for cyclists' segregation from traffic. Various options to achieve this segregation include a full height kerb, a buffer zone (space between the road and cycleway) and a trapezoidal kerb between the cycleway and the footpath. The buffer zone is required to keep adequate space between the traffic and cyclists and provide a safer feel for cyclists being further away from the carriageway. The buffer is especially relevant for two way cycle tracks, where westbound cyclists are heading towards the traffic.

The option to have the cycleway at carriageway level (still with a kerb in between the carriageway and cycleway), was found to affect far more underground utilities whose diversion would incur a significant cost so that option was not taken forward.

Winter maintenance of the new cycle spine has been raised with the Council who say that it is under review with the depot teams who are responsible for the winter maintenance plan.

More information is online [here](#)

Highlights from Great Western Railway's Cycle Policy Update

GWR have announced some welcome changes to their policy on cycle carriage. Reservations were required on all services but that changed this month. The rules are now:

Bike Reservations should be made, otherwise spaces are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis. There is no charge for making a reservation which can be done at time of ticket purchase, at a ticket office, or by phoning 03457 000 125 up to 2 hours before the train departs its originating station.

Folding bikes with a maximum 20-inch wheel can be taken on any train at any time but tandems can not be carried on any services.

Catching your train Show your bike reservation. Our staff will advise you of the best place to wait. Be in the correct position on the platform at least five minutes before your train is due to arrive. Your reservation will show the carriage you need to join for boarding with your bike.

On the train bikes should be stored in the area

marked with a bike icon. If the train does not have dedicated bike storage then bikes should be kept in the doorway away from the platform and attended at all times in case they need to be moved.

Restrictions

Unless you have a reservation, you can't take your bike on any train to or from London Paddington in the rush hour.

Weekends and Bank Holidays

Bikes can be taken on all train services, subject to space being available.

Rail Improvement Work

If trains are replaced by buses, non-folding bikes cannot be carried. Folding bikes may be carried on rail replacement services.

www.gwr.com/travelling-with-us/on-our-trains/bringing-your-bike

High attendance on Sunday rides led the Committee to introduce a new ride category, intermediate in speed between the training ride and the B ride. Since then we've had feedback, especially from new and prospective members, that the Club's ride descriptions are confusing. So that people can pick the ride most suited to their interest and ability the ride descriptions have been updated as follows. We hope that it helps you get the Sunday experience you want.

Previous description	New description
<p style="text-align: center;">AA</p> <p>Flat, easy pace, open invitation ride typically 18 to 25 miles to coffee, 35 to 40 miles round trip. The average riding speed is 10 to 12mph, depending on attendees.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Novice (AA)</p> <p>An open invitation morning ride at an easy pace on quiet and flat minor roads; typically 18 to 25 miles to coffee, 35 to 40 miles round trip. Cruising speed will depend on attendees but is usually 9 to 12 mph,</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>Easy(ish) possibly with a few gentle climbs; some experience necessary, typically 20 to 28 miles to coffee; 50 to 60 miles round trip. Average riding speed 12 to 15mph.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Steady (A)</p> <p>Typically, 20 to 28 miles to coffee; probably with a few gentle climbs. Some riding experience is necessary. Expect 40-50 miles round trip if returning after coffee, 50 to 60 miles if staying out for the full day. Cruising speed 12 to 15 mph.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">B</p> <p>Hills, experience & stamina necessary; typically, 28 to 32 miles to coffee; 60 to 70 miles round trip. Average riding speed 14 to 17mph.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Moderate (B)</p> <p>Experience of group riding is required. Serious hills are likely. Typically, 24 to 30 miles to coffee; 40-50 miles round trip if returning from coffee, 60 to 70 miles for the full day. Cruising speed 14 to 16 mph.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">C</p> <p>Long ride requiring very good stamina and food supplies. Check with Captain for details. 80+ miles round trip. Average riding speed 14 to 17mph</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Strenuous (C)</p> <p>Like Moderate, but longer: usually over 80 miles with no short route home from coffee. Good stamina and food supplies are needed. Cruising speed 13 to 15mph. Check with Captain for details.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Sport</p> <p>Sport rides are generally category B as above, the route often being longer/hillier. Destination may differ from Club Ride if numbers dictate. Average speed 17-19mph.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Tempo</p> <p>Like Moderate, but faster, the route often being longer and/or hillier. If numbers dictate it the coffee stop may differ from other rides that day. Cruising speed 14 to 18 mph.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Training Ride</p> <p>Training Rides are around three hours with a coffee stop at the end. Average Speed of about 19-21 mph. The Training Ride will split into two groups, to help with mixed abilities, to encourage new riders, and to help anyone recovering from injuries. Once two groups are formed, there is no need to wait at the climbs, stay in two groups and if anyone falls off the faster group, they will hopefully be picked up by the second group.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Fast (training)</p> <p>Rides are around 50 miles, lasting 3 to 3½ hours with a coffee stop at the end. Cruising speed of about 16-20 mph, usually on A and B roads. Riders need to be capable of riding through and off at 20+ mph in a close bunch. The ride may split into groups, to support mixed abilities and allow anyone dropping out of the faster group to be picked up by the next one.</p>

Some entries from the Club Run diary, provided by the ride leaders

7th May Leadon Valley ride

Following the club photograph, after non-riding club members disappeared in various directions and after a bit of milling around, eight members set off down Quay St, losing a ninth rider before the leader had identified those present, then via the causeway to Maisemore then Hartpury. The original planned route containing maximal Leadon Crossings (eight) was discarded as too long and would have failed at the first crossing, which was closed. Blackwells End then Forge End and Forge Lane took us to Upleadon. Onward to Brand Green and then Compton Green via an unseen pothole which initiated a problem that dogged one rider for the rest of the ride.

The leader's navigation became confused (again) when the outward journey crossed the planned return but was resolved with input from wiser heads. We continued through Three Ashes and Oxenhall and crossed the M50 on the Dymock road, through Dymock woods (a particularly wonderful lane, mainly downhill) and into the town. After travelling a short distance on the Leominster road we turned to Tillers Green, crossed the Ross road and followed the lumpy Lilly Hall lane. It was then Falcon Lane to the Hereford road and west to The Nest for coffee at 11:00.

After meandering service of coffee and assorted snacks, four set off to meander some more. Their route, made up largely on the hoof, took in some little used roads – little used by anyone as they hardly encountered a vehicle until Eastnor.

First up was the hamlet of Munsley with its ancient oast houses and a modern 'grand design' to get you thinking. The twisty-turny road meandered to a descent to the Bosbury road. Here it was straight across, followed by a cunning left turn – to avoid the climb to Wellington Heath, but also to add some beautiful miles to the route. A church high on a hill was spotted – of course, our road had to venture up to it where a Coronation party was in full swing. This was the village of Coddington, famed for its vineyard – well worth a visit.

Our road meandered north-ish, eventually popping out on the Bosbury – Colwall road. Here we headed south and a few miles later the Captain insisted on a diversion to the Colwall church and lane beyond: why? Because we could! From here it was to Petty France and the steps up towards Ledbury. The main road to the Hollybush pass was as rough as always. Over the top and left to then enjoy the superb descent of the common to join the Pendock road. The scenery was quite splendid with the yellow of the gorse resplendent in the sunshine.

Another diversion to Hill End (road was closed, but for no good reason) soon saw us arriving at the appointed destination of The Farmer's Arms – a favourite haunt. Good cider and beer was enjoyed by all as we reunited with Nev. From the B4216 we turned left at Anthony's Cross on pleasant roads to Tibberton where we left the local rider. Then it was back to the "main" Newent road to Over where we took the long winded cycle path across Alney Island into Gloucester city centre.

The remaining riders went their ways to home to enjoy what promised to be the best weather of the week.

23 April Ride leader develops selective deafness

On a fairly cloudy Sunday morning seven riders (and I), set out for "the Bank" in Dursley. We took a steady ride up the Painswick Road in great spirits, turning right just before the motorway flyover on Corncroft Lane to Brookthorpe. When we came to the A4173 the group turned left to head up to "Edge". The sun was just beginning to break through the clouds and I thought I detected a hint of dissent. However, my ears are not what they were so I probably misheard...

When we got to the junction near the St John the Baptist church we took the right fork to carry on straight up to Whiteshill, staying on the road (to the left) down the hill, we took the Randwick turn off (right) avoiding a "sketchy descent" through Whiteshill. We regrouped at the bottom of the hill by the Cainscross Roundabout, and headed down to the Sainsbury's Island.

At the island we took the left turn up to Selsley Hill and yet again I thought I detected a suggestion of indignation. Once again, I must have been mistaken as everyone commented on how pleased they were to be undertaking this challenge! We regrouped again just before the second "cattle grid" and all continued along the B4066. With no more peaks to overcome we took a steady ride down through Nymphsfield and Uley right into Dursley and our final destination "the Bank".

Ride Leaders Note: the role of Rider is a different challenge to being led.....

26th March Gravel ride to the colliery

This, the Club's first gravel ride, began with a caution. The planned crossing of Alney Island was off, there being an inch of water on the cycle path. Given how wet everyone became later in the ride there was an irony about this diversion but at least it showed the leader's good intentions. Eight set off from the Square, and were joined at Highnam by a ninth. His ride was short lived though, for a mechanical problem quickly saw him turn for home. After a run through the lanes and a burst of A road to Mitcheldean we picked up two more at the top of Stenders and hit the trails. Some confusion was caused by the leader's failure to follow his own route plan, but the group reunited before Cinderford's linear park. The ride past the Dilke along to Mallard's Pike was trouble free, with everyone making a fast descent to the road. Confusion on leaving the car park led to a technical and rooty segment, which was brief/interminable (opinions differed!), before finding a hard packed surface that took us to Cannop Ponds, crowded with downhill riders who were avoiding parking fees at Pedalabikeaway. A path west of the ponds through Barnhill Plantation, instead of the family trail, kept us alert for crossing traffic from the downhill trails before we arrived a little late, a little wet, and really quite muddy at Hopewell Colliery cafe. Despite that, we could not have asked for a better welcome, as seating was rearranged and protected with bin bags for us to sit in comfort.

5 February With a Fistful of Dollars

Clear skies and bright sunshine generated an exceptional turnout this Sunday, with over forty riders showing up at the Square. We divided into a number of manageable groups, chosen roughly on the basis of riding speed. Many enjoyed a good ride north, despite the chill wind, to the Faun cafe in Malvern where they liked the cakes and complementary blankets that let them keep warm outside. This led to comparisons with Clint Eastwood and friends (perhaps, the Good the Bad, and the Ugly?), seen below enjoying the cafe on a cold February morning.

The President suffered from a navigational error after taking a short cut through the Wyche Cutting and failed to make the rendezvous in Great Malvern. He enjoyed instead the opportunity to take coffee in Wellan and sit in the sun and enjoy the apricity. Other rides went to Stanway and Tewkesbury.

29 January Bad luck comes in threes

The forecast of "fair and frost-free" may have applied in the Severn Valley, but up at Foston's Ash, we were in cloud that was so thick, it was hard to see the front rider from the back of the group. We struggled to make out the turn to Stancombe then started to drop out of the cloud into Stroud.

Butterow Hill is not one we use often but it is probably the most pleasant of the options to get up onto Rodborough Common. The traffic calming rumble strips at Tom Long's Post shook the vice-captain's rear light off, and the following traffic ensured that this was fatal to the light. A road closure in Minchampton saw a diversion to the Ragged Cot, and the vice-captain's saddle-bag gave up at this point, luckily fitting into a rear pocket.

It was a friendly group, and we enjoyed a good chat over coffee and cake. However, bad luck comes in threes, and so it was no surprise when the zip on the vice-captain's jersey failed catastrophically on leaving coffee. He claims it was not related to any weight gain!



In Memoriam

A celebration of the life of Gerry Downing took place on February 6th at Hereford Crematorium. Gerry reached the great age of 92 and was a member of Gloucester City Cycling Club for many years and a very talented all round sportsman. Educated at Chippenham Grammar School he was a member of Chippenham and District Wheelers, in his youth winning the Junior 25 mile Championship.

Work took him to Gloucester and he won many trophies, including the T.G. Hall Handicap, the Pete Reed trophy every year from 1991-96, and in the West District. He was a keen supporter of Gloucester RFC.

He was also an original member of the 'Flat Cappers' a traditional cycle group formed in the 1990's with Aubrey Roberts, Heath Payne and John Barnes. RIP.



Club Photograph taken at the West door of the Cathedral on 7th May, featuring several generations of Club kit