

GLOUCESTER CITY CYCLING CLUB



WINTER 2024

SPOKESPIECE

Winter 2024

The Newsletter of the Gloucester City Cycling Club



www.glosccitycc.co.uk



Important Notice

Will this be the last paper edition you read?

In recent years the Club has by default sent all members a paper copy of Spokespiece. The convenience of having it to hand, of being able to drop in and out of reading it in idle moments is undeniable; but so is the rising cost of printing and distribution.

The Committee has therefore decided that in future the paper copy will only be sent to members who request it. If you are one of them please contact the General Secretary, requesting that you remain on the circulation list. His email is glosccitycc.vc@gmail.com . The web edition will continue to be available to all at the Club's website. www.glosccitycc.co.uk .	Club Tour to Marlborough	3
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Contributions for the next issue please to Spokespiece@gmail.com by May 15th

Club Tour to Marlborough

Eight riders met bright and early on Friday 22nd September for a prompt start: the seven tour participants, plus one warmly welcomed supporter, Les. Full of excitement for the day ahead, I had already felt a thrill of the extra momentum given by my somewhat loaded pannier bags on the flat and downhill sections of the ride to the starting point.

All attendees were outdone by John W, who had opted to bring along his two full size crutches – just in case!

And so we began, at a relaxed pace, to make our way south out of Gloucester. Our ride leader wisely opted to take the cycle path all the way to Nailsworth (which was thankfully not too muddy, and with manageable debris levels) instead of the main roads, which were full of the heavy traffic of the morning rush hour.



We took a less used, scenic route to the top of the Cotswolds. Climbing on the Avening Road, we saw Gatcombe valley to the left, with lush grass - thick and beautiful bathed in the morning sunlight. Getting close to the breakfast stop, the Club Captain and I observed some very reckless driving from an SUV: the driver decided to overtake the peloton at the front while a thundering lorry was oncoming, narrowly getting back onto their side of the road in the nick of time. Breakfast near Ashton Keynes was most welcome, and the venue fairly welcoming.

After a discussion arose regarding categorised hill climbs (where a comparison between Frocester and Col d'Allos in the French Alps was made), a knowledgeable rider informed us of the origin of the numerical categories, being the Citroën C5, which gear was needed!



Post break, the route continued in a SE manner with many twists and turns. Cricklade's church spire was spotted by the Captain, but seemingly no-one else. The B road, a touch busy, to Purton Stoke saw our first mechanical of the tour: a serious chain-off and entanglement for the day's leader. This required a halt at a handy lay-by, to the entertainment of the resident truckers. John assisted the stricken rider but he was obliged to dismantle the chain to free it from its unhelpful position.

Blackened hands all round after a successful fix, it was onwards to Purton and a stiff climb through the village. At Hook we

turned west and onto a tiny road through picturesque scenery to arrive at the less than picturesque SW corner of...Swindon. A major road with a large and high-speed roundabout / motorway junction soon saw us onto the B4005, which was busier than expected. Up to Wroughton and a quieter section of road to Chiseldon then Sustrans route 45 which was challenging, offering a maze of tracks, culs-de-sac, and residential roads. We requested assistance from some locals – but they were equally confused. A short diversion, involving what turned out to be an unnecessary climb, soon had us back on track. Over the A346 (Marlborough – Swindon road) we rode and then were back on little lanes. A surprise turn meant we descended into Badbury via a little used, by anyone, lane.

The Baker's Arms was taken by surprise at the arrival of seven thirsty cyclists, although the sheep that were jumping up at the fence to reach some choice leaves from a hedge seemed unperturbed. Fine ales and other drinks were consumed. On leaving, a heavy shower forced a few minutes sheltering under the trees, where those with a packed lunch consumed their food.

After the shower we continued south on the upward sloping lane, turning east onto The Ridgeway. A close encounter with a desperate white van man reminded us of the idiots that are around. Then the B4192, a generally downward rollercoaster of a road that soon had us in Aldbourne. With a threatening sky the leader thought fit to call for refreshments at what was the HQ for Easy Company, 101 Airborne (The Band of Brothers) prior to the D-Day landings: The Crown, which, keeping up with trends, was resplendent with attendant Dalek and Tardis. The ladies were entertained whilst the chaps took to the bar for fine ales all round, plus a pint of fizz for our John. This proved to be a good call, not just because of the refreshments, but the heavens opened – and we were happily under cover. Timing is everything!



Once again replenished and with clear skies but sodden roads, we were off, south-west and up a very long, gentle (?) climb quite reminiscent of Tuscany (the gradient, not the scenery) to an excellent viewpoint. The precipitous descent to Ogbourne St George where we joined the converted railway line – all the way into Marlborough. The adjacent A346 sounded horrendous.



This is Sustrans Route 45 (we could have kept on it from Gloucester!) and in true style it 'ended' abruptly with a challenging slope into a housing estate, absent any signage. Hey ho. Luckily it caused no issues and after a final roundabout I was pleasantly surprised to see our lodgings for the weekend – an inviting Premier Inn.

An evening meal at the local Indian was fine, after we unravelled an error in the booking – we were expected on Thursday! In the nearby pub, some enjoyed beers by whilst the Irish saw off the South Africans in the Rugby World Cup, which went down well with the locals.

Emma Biggs

What the tour newbies learned:

- Sometimes there are two stops for 'lunch'!
- Pimms has multiple types, 1-4, but best not try them all at once!

Saturday: Circuit of Salisbury Plain

The Captain's day for leading. Although the day would be filled with encounters with his Majesty's Forces, these troops didn't quite manage a 09:00 muster. However, the GCCC Squad did manage to complete inspections and get all wheels rolling into the mizzle (an Irish/Scottish term meaning "miserable drizzle") not long after.

First up was the A4, very quiet, but quite a drag inside the early miles. Regrouping at the grand entrance to Savernake Forest the Squad was ordered off the tarmac by Captain Toby, and into the forest. We proceeded along the track. This was once properly surfaced – he had reconnoitred in the previous century – but now little tarmac is left; vehicles are also allowed, which explains it.

An exciting few miles followed, especially for those on road bikes, as we tackled the gravel



trails beneath the leafy oaks on the Cretaceous chalk plateau. (Though the author is pleased to report that no one was tempted to see if the ancient legend of the Big Belly Oak tree in Savernake was true. It requires dancing naked round the tree...) The 'road' is also quite undulating and arrow-straight (a roman road is just yards away to the east) – and the descents were somewhat treacherous. MG had a case of the shakes; the shakes almost did for Emma's mudguard, and several fixes were required to secure it. So, it was not the most easy or pleasant 2.5 miles of track – but the forest was quite something. Ideal for a gravel bike, which none of us had. No punctures, either. All riders and bicycles exited the Forest safely to see their first glimpses of the famous Salisbury plain.

The mizzle now having ceased, the Squad enjoyed a few peaceful miles on smooth tarmac, admiring the green, rolling pastures of an estate. Durley, Burbage (with its plentiful thatched cottages) and Pewsey were gained. Pewsey was about to be closed to all traffic for the annual fair, but we were half an hour ahead so progressed through without arrest.

It was time for our second climb, up from Pewsey Vale to the Salisbury Plain and the first White Horse of the day. The sun was now properly out and it was a long and fairly steep ascent – the horse was not at its best, but the views at the summit were astounding.

Once regrouped it was a gentle roller-coaster of a road south into tank territory where we stumbled upon Netheravon Airfield. This is home to several parachute display teams (the Army Parachute Team, Tigers Army Parachute Display Team, Red Devils Freefall Team – we wondered if there was any rivalry...) and we saw several parachutists nearby.



A long and fast descent into the Avon valley followed and our first stop at Netheravon, a quiet and picturesque village where we had advance-booked our places at "Florence & Opie Coffee and Flowers". Any remaining nerves from the adventures were soon quietened with steaming cups of tea, coffee, and the essential fuel for all soldiers - ~~flowers~~ bacon butties.

The happily refuelled Squad once again set off, now eager to see what was next on Captain Toby's tour. Crossing back over the Avon and a small 'unintentional' deviation to check out the entrance to the airfield (this was really for Anna!) we were quickly back on track and enjoying the undulating lane heading south to Durrington. Once again over the Avon and up to Larkhill – a rather busy road, apologies to the Troops! This is the home of The Royal Artillery – and everything was quite well-polished.

The next target was Tilshead, via an interesting lane through the Plain. At the junction the Red Flags were abundant and a 'Closed' sign indicated army activity. We thought this may have been a bluff – previous tours have successfully ignored such warnings.

However...the group was treated to quite a sight as they rode past military vehicles and personnel. These were assembled for EXERCISE IRON TITAN, which was taking place on the Plains that weekend. Pedalling onwards towards the heart of the Plains, the group became slightly nervous, as they heard gunfire and witnessed military vehicles speeding along the tracks beside the trail. Soon the group was forced to a stop. Ominous warnings about the exercise and barriers were blocking their intended route. Fortunately, some friendly locals

were able to offer advice, and after also consulting the map, a trail off the side of the path was chosen. Fearless Captain Toby soon led off down this trail, with his slightly less enthusiastic troop on his wheel. The trail became a narrow grassy path, which the group managed, with no punctures or problems sustained. This forced diversion brought us to Orcheston village where there was once a pub, but not for many years.



John needed a little rest, and a handy abandoned sofa was enjoyed as we regrouped at the top of a climb, with the A360 to master next.

We pushed on, as time was pressing, to Tilshead, only to find the pub was now only an evening venue. Thwarted. As rapidly as possible we went north to descend into Littleton Panell and The Churchill Arms, arriving at 2.01pm precisely. They stopped serving food at 2.00pm precisely – military precision. The landlord was unmoved by our pleas and plight.

Unfortunately, and to add salt to the wound, to the group's dismay the beer on offer was Wadsworth's. It was soon decided that another pub would be sought, one that didn't serve W's! To the Squad's great dismay, the next few pubs along the route were all Wadsworth's pubs, all being too close to the brewery in Devizes. The route took us through a series of quaint villages to Urchfont, then Chirton and Patney. We were getting desperate. Even All Cannings failed us. Joining a high road, which presented a great view of Alton Barne's White Horse, a phone call was then made to the nearby Barge Inn to see what they served! To great delight the Innkeeper was able to inform them they had other drinks to offer. Not long afterwards the Squad was seated by the banks of the Kennet and Avon Canal.

Emma had been keen to visit Stone Henge, but this was deemed too far away and could have involved a crossing of the A303, which is not to be trifled with! But we did manage to find a standing stone for her...

Their thirst now quenched for a while, the group departed for the last few miles of the day back to Marlborough, with a good climb over to the next valley. Unfortunately, their luck ran out in the last stretch, and it was Captain Toby who ended up experiencing the first puncture of the Tour. (some in the group may have thought this was karma for all the off-road he had made them endure!)



The Squad was soon back in Marlborough and eagerly awaiting their pub meal, but upon arrival at the planned pub it became apparent that it had closed. The town centre didn't disappoint, and offered plenty of other culinary options. Pizzas at Green's were enjoyed, before returning to the hotel to get some kip before the final day.

Toby Wooldridge

Sunday – Homeward bound

The return leg had our Friday leader back in control. Sadly, not in control of the weather which proved to be mizzle for most of the morning. The cunning route back was by way of a short stretch of the A4, providing a view our booked Saturday venue, clearly no longer functioning. As the road started to kick up, we took a handy left and proceeded along a wonderful small lane, crossing the Kennett at Stitchcombe. The valley was superb even in the wet, until we took a northerly route up and out of the valley to pass the Ramsbury brewery at the top. Anne attacked at the foot of the climb; the Captain gave chase and soon wished he hadn't. Then a good descent and back into Aldbourne, visited on Friday.

A touch of confusion on the road to exit the village – it is confusing – saw the leader choose correctly, and there followed another long, gentle climb up to the Ridgway via the M4 – underneath!

From this high point it was down to Bourton and then Shrivenham for our late breakfast stop at the farm shop in town – a jolly good place it proved, too, with excellent breakfast baps and coffee.

Refueled it was out again – and the rain had largely abated! Our leader was confused by the road layout, and we ended up in slightly the wrong place. Maps were consulted and our exact location confirmed – a short hop on the A420 and then on the B4508 for a double encounter with a passenger in a Range Rover who was clearly half a wave short of a shipwreck! No matter, onwards and upwards to Highworth, then followed a damp descent into the undulating lanes around Hannington, Lushill and Castle Eaton – all lovely easy-cycling territory. Over the Thames to be entertained by another driver suffering attention-deficit, in a wide Aston Martin – despite oncoming vehicles he just had to get past on a narrow lane.



Down Ampney was soon reached, then under the A419 to Cerney Wick – over the Thames and the Severn – Thames canal with a smashing lock-keeper's house.

The lanes took us to South Cerney and into Cirencester, then to Stratton for a well-earned break for refreshments at The Drillman's Arms, which offered what was possibly the best beer of the tour! Even the sun made a brief appearance and lit up the whole of the pub's dark interior. This sunshine continued as we made our way through Daglingworth and made for some beautiful views to our left.

The author observed a Lady walking out of Stratton cemetery shaking her head as we sped past, taking advantage of the downhill slope of a big dipper. I thought to myself, cars are much faster, louder, more capable of harm and worse for the environment. We as cyclists use the same roads as the cars, but we don't deserve the disdain we often get!

From here it was the usual route via Daneway and Fostons Ash, with the group parting ways at the Cranham turn on the A46.

Another successful and varied tour completed – bring on the Spring Tour!

Some 70 miles for the day.

Emma Biggs

Gloucestershire Highways update

Gloucestershire's Local Roads Survey during the summer by the County Council received over 3,000 responses. Here are some highlights:

"It is too difficult to report highways issues". In response the Council has launched a new tool called "Fix My Street", making it easier to report issues and receive updates on repairs. You can use its interactive map to report issues ranging from overgrown vegetation to potholes and blocked drains. Its available as a web site or phone app. In parallel, Cycling UK has relaunched "Fill That Hole", an easy way to report potholes. The updated website and app have been optimised to be easy to use and get reports to the right places.

"You want to see quicker, higher quality repairs". The Council is testing new methods:

- A spray injection patching machine has doubled the speed of pothole repairs.
- New teams have repaired more than 20,000 smaller potholes before they get worse - while carrying out clusters of repairs to reduce travel time.
- A funding boost from central government (ironically made available from the curtailment of HS2) has expanded the winter road resurfacing programme.
- More roads will be resurfaced, bringing the total to 220 this financial year.

Progress on the County's new Cycle Spine continues. This is now rideable all the way from Elmbridge to Arle Court, although work is ongoing in the section between the Pirton



Lane and the golf course.

The Club met engineers from the Highways Department to discuss the design. Lessons have been learnt and the newest section, by Safran's factory is now the preferred standard. The entire width of the path is surfaced by machine, to provide a smooth surface. A buffer zone between the cycle path and the road varies in width with the speed limit in force.

Construction has begun on the section east of the Honeybourne Line, and further work in Gloucester will begin soon. In all, completion of the route from Llanthony

Road to Bishop's Cleeve is expected in 2025. Details of the scheme are available on the webpage.

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/highways/major-projects-list/>

GCCC Evening Race Programme 2024 – Daryl Stroud



Photos of Damian Dodd & Joanna Hunek – courtesy of by Phil J Photos



In December a meeting was held, to discuss methods of making the evening club races more popular, more accessible, and more interesting. The meeting was well attended and produced a number of great proposals. A draft programme of races was generated. This will be submitted to the Committee at the next meeting. Proposed changes are as follows:

- Hold a season long Road Bike category competition with a trophy for the winner.
- The Dan Knight Trophy will still go to the overall winner, but the six cash prizes would go to the first two riders in the following categories: TT bike, Road bike and Female.
- The annual Roadman's Championship Race is always popular on the 6.5 mile Elmore Circuit. It is proposed to hold three road bike races on this course during the season, one of which would be 13 miles (2 laps).
- One race will be designated as the Ladies' Championship Race. The race will still be open to all, but female entrants will be grouped together and compete for the Ladies Championship Medal.
- Offer free entry for first time racers.
- Investigate a new course on the B4008 near Stonehouse to replace the Whitminster A38 course.
- Have more variety – last season we raced the Staunton 10 course on 13 occasions.
- Hold a test event race on a Sunday morning – date to be determined by examining the 'local' open race calendar published by the CTT.
- Marshals will be awarded 10 Barnard Trophy points.
- The nature of our primary 10 mile course at Staunton is still widely seen as an issue. Alternative courses should be considered, the obvious choices are U7B (Dursley), UC50 (Chaxhill) and UC715 (Teddington).

A further meeting is planned to plan the Open Race Season now that the CTT calendar has been published.

Journey to the End of the Wolds

We're in Lincolnshire to see Triss's brother, Stuart, and taking the opportunity to have a few days touring the Wolds while we're here. Our morning coffee stop after seven miles of easy cycling was hardly essential, but we couldn't resist stopping at 'The Cheese Shed'.



There was a lovely section of off-road cycling after coffee, a bridleway that took us up to the lower slopes of the Wolds. It was rough in places, and we were glad to be riding our well-engineered steel touring bikes with big tough tyres and spokes like scaffold poles.



From the end of the bridleway it was an easy couple of miles down to Market Rasen for lunch at the wonderful old fashioned Jossal's tearooms, with very friendly staff who were keen to chat about our ride and the local area, huge pot of tea and nice sandwiches. The undoubted highlight of the afternoon was this horse and cart. They're not kidding about drunk driving. They pulled out in front of us from a pub car park where they had clearly enjoyed a

very good but substantially liquid lunch. They shouted out to suggest a race! We pulled away from them at first but we heard the sound of hooves and inebriated laughter close behind. We didn't lose them until a downhill section of road about two and a half miles later.

Escaping from big cities by bike is frequently fraught with difficulties, but Lincoln scores a resounding ten-out-of-ten for the delightful Water Rail Way. This traffic free path follows an old railway line alongside the river Witham from close to the centre of town all the way to Boston, about 27 miles away. It's flat, well



surfaced and passes through beautiful countryside. We followed the route to Bardney where we diverted to find coffee and then pick up one of Jack Thurston's lost lanes. This



turned out to be a challenging mix of bridleways and country lanes, mostly rideable (as seen on the left) but probably best avoided in winter months.

Bad start to a day part one: Checked the weather forecast, wished I hadn't, made tea, went back to bed. Bad start to a day part two: After an excellent healthy breakfast we retrieved the bikes from the locked storage room to find my back tyre was flat. I have to say that the staff in Horncastle's Bull Hotel were fabulously friendly and helpful while I fixed the puncture. The Hotel is a wonderful 16th century building, too.

We enjoyed a fresh tailwind blowing us up the gentle climb to Fulletby, and then again up the much more challenging Tetford Hill, which was far steeper than expected. Poor Triss had to push up some of it. Once up the climbs we were on the top of the Wolds and on a gently rolling straight road with views on both sides. It was still dry when we rolled into Donington on Bain where lunch was taken at the charming Post and Pantry, a thriving shop/off-license/post office/cafe and general village meeting point. We sat for ages over coffee, sausage rolls, and cake, but our luck had finally ran out. When we left the café it was raining steadily .

Louth appears a more prosperous version of Horncastle, big enough to attract some of the household name chains but still has plenty of small independent local shops. I offer this opinion not based on extensive exploration, but from the window of the warm, dry, comfort of



cafe 601 where we sheltered from the persistent rain until check in time at the hotel. (pictured left).

It is indeed a pleasant town. We were particularly impressed by some of the independent food shops: cheesemongers stacked high with local goods, proper greengrocers bursting with fresh local produce, traditional butchers, and lots of very tempting bakers, cafés and pubs. Definitely worth another visit.

The next day's bright sunshine lasted for an hour or so before high clouds drifted over. We cycled on flat roads to start with, before heading up a moderate climb to the top of the Wolds. Villages here are dispersed and functional rather than picturesque and it's very quiet. We hardly saw a soul all morning: just one dog walker and a farmer on a quad bike.

We had plotted a diversion down to the main A15 to have lunch at The Landmark, a 'Restaurant, café, and multifunction venue' funded by The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development. The food and drink were very good.

After lunch we had to cross from the east side of the Wolds to Caistor on the west side. This inevitably involved poor old Triss slogging up and down a couple of significant hills, which she managed without complaint, but she was very pleased to sit down for a cup of tea once we got to Caistor. I must record my gratitude to her for taking on these adventures with such good humour, even though she finds the hills very tough. From Caistor it was a few flat miles back to Stuart and Angela's farmhouse for a hot shower, hot dinner, and a glass of wine before our return to Gloucester the next day.



Simon Pollington



Ups (the moderate morning climb up to Wold Newton) and Downs (Looking down to the south west on the descent into Caistor) typify the Wolds, with an occasional flat stretch to the finish.

Read the Pollington's blog post here <https://escapetocyclingadventure.wordpress.com/>

OUR V.T.T.A COMPETITORS



Around the end of the year the Veteran Time Trial Magazine drops through my letter box. Both the CTT and the VTTA make for some grim reading, relating the fall off in events and competitors, but a glimmer of hope is the onset of events for TT and road bikes.

The fall off in events is staggering: at times in the season there is no event for up to three weeks within forty miles of Gloucester. There appears to be an abundance of 10 mile TT's, but who wants to travel miles just for 25 minutes of action? Another sad observation is that the Championships' top places are often taken by teams that are not clubs, but just a gathering of a few riders.

On a brighter note, I reviewed our VTTA members' performances. In the competition over three distances (being 25, 50, & 100 miles) Daryl Stroud finished in forty second place, of eighty-six competitors, with an average 25.126 mph.

In the short distance competition, calculated from the best two ten mile and two twenty-five mile events, it is all about speed. Our highest placed rider was Tim Radley in 30th position who recorded an average 29.480 mph. Vincent Douglas qualified 89th with 27.861mph and Daryl Stroud qualified 111th with 27.328 mph. Our team of three finished in a very creditable sixth place from a total of thirty one teams.

Continuing down the list we come to a man who most of the riders admire, our very own John Murphy, who is not presently in the best of health. John has an enthusiasm that keeps him travelling the country, mainly to National Championships. Although his eightieth birthday is well behind him, John last year finished in 307th place, recording an average speed of 20.258 mph. After veteran standards and age were considered he was 250th, beating sixty two younger qualifiers.

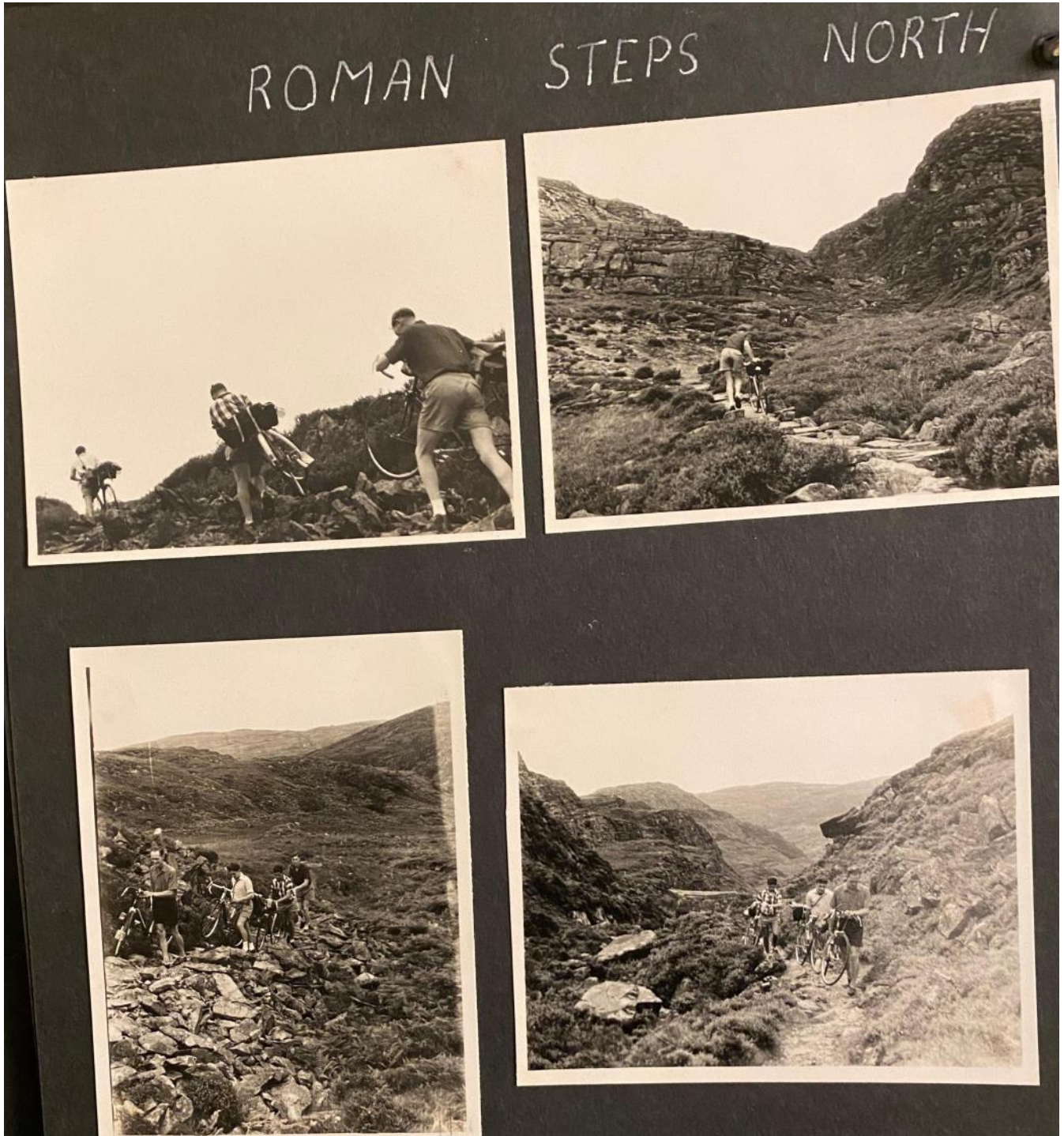
The Club has many more veteran riders who can hold their own against those mentioned, and so I say, hats off to all.

Ted Tedaldi

Photo of John was taken at a VTTA event near Hungerford on the H10/3R course and is reproduced with permission.

Off the beaten track

As the sharper eyed amongst you will have noticed, “gravel rides” are making an occasional appearance in the Club’s ride calendar. They are reviving a tradition of adventurous riding that got somewhat lost in the age of lightweight and aero bikes. A recent email from Dave Hall, T.G.Hall’s grandson, demonstrated the Club’s pedigree in off road adventures with these pictures from the Rhinog mountains in 1960.



They show an ordinary touring bike is quite enough—as long as you don’t mind carrying it!

Top left: Alec Goulding, Dave Hall, Morris Panter.

Top right: possibly Tony Chalkley.

Bottom left: Ossie Andrews, Alec Goulding, Dave Hall, Morris Panter.

Bottom right: Ossie Andrews, Alec Goulding, Dave Hall.