

The West Surrey Cyclist



**October – December
2015**

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WEST SURREY CTC 2015

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WHAT WE ARE

CTC is the national cycling charity. It is the oldest and largest cycling body in the UK, promotes all forms of cycling, and has championed the cause of cycling for well over a century. Its network of local groups, of which West Surrey CTC is one, has 70,000 members. Membership includes third-party insurance, a cycling-related legal helpline, and a bi-monthly national magazine.

CTC headquarters: Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford GU2 9JX.
Phone 0844 736 8450.

CTC website: www.ctc.org.uk

West Surrey CTC website: <http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/>

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Friday 25th to Sunday 27th September: The Cycle Show, NEC, Birmingham. See www.cycleshow.co.uk.

Saturday 14th November: AGM, Jack Phillips Pub (Wetherspoons), High Street, Godalming, 10:00.

Friday 1st January 2016: Traditional New Year's Day gathering from about 10:30, but now at **Squires GC, Badshot Lea** as Seale is under new management and will be closed.

Saturday 5th March 2016: Provisional date for annual dinner and awards presentation, but this might change. When the date and venue have been confirmed, details will be published on the website and appear in the next issue of *The West Surrey Cyclist*.

Saturday 30th July 2016: RideLondon FreeCycle. A 10-mile ride on traffic-free roads in central London. You can take part by just turning up on the day, but there are advantages to registering before 18th June. See <https://www.ridelondon.co.uk/events/freecycle/> for details.

Sunday 31st July 2016: Registration for the ballot for places for next year's Prudential RideLondon-Surrey 100 is nominally open until 8th January, but will close once 100,000 registrations are received. See <http://www.prudentialridelondon.co.uk/events/100/> for details.



The West Surrey CTC magazine, *The West Surrey Cyclist*, is produced every quarter. Subscribers to the magazine also receive the rides list.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR PRINTED COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE AND RIDES LIST IS £6. Send a cheque payable to 'West Surrey CTC' to Phil Hamilton, 165 York Road, Woking GU22 7XS.

PDF COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE AND RIDES LIST ARE FREE. Send an email to the editor (editor@westsurreyctc.co.uk) to be added to the distribution list.

The magazine and rides lists are also available on our website:

<http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/the-club/magazine/>

<http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/rides-and-events/ride-lists-downloads/>

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

As we once again wave goodbye to summer, there is one aspect of it that I shall most definitely not miss: the wasps. At the risk of (or possibly in the hope of) provoking a letter of protest from Paul Holmes, an unashamed apologist for wasps, I should say that I have considered them to be unreasonable, ill-tempered beasts ever since one stung me as a child just because I was the nearest available victim for its temper after my friend had brushed it away from his ice cream.

To me it seems that this was a particularly bad summer for wasps, or rather for those that dislike wasps – for the wasps themselves it was a good one. I was present on a number of occasions when riders were forced indoors at coffee stops to escape the plague of wasps intent on sharing the fruit scones, jam, cakes, etc, while on another John Murdoch had to wander around eating his food as there were too many wasps gathered around his chair.

I've always felt that front grills are a good idea to prevent cycle helmets becoming mobile wasps' nests – I remember Jeff Banks once recounting the painful consequences of getting a wasp in his helmet – but my experiences this year suggest that more than just my head is at threat when out cycling.

The day before the 100-mile Reliability Ride I was out for a ride when suddenly I found myself thinking "Ow! My thumb hurts!" Glancing down I discovered a wasp firmly attached to my thumb by its sting. It took about a week for the thumb to recover fully. No sooner had it done so than an insect bounced off my arm during a Wednesday ride. Within a few minutes it became eminently apparent both that the insect had been a wasp and that it had managed to sting me during the fraction of a second that the collision had lasted. Thankfully unlike the first one this wasp hadn't had time to do its worst, so the swelling on the arm was gone within a few days.

Fast forward three weeks and you find me cycling along without a care in world, enjoying the sunshine and the scenery, when suddenly something embedded itself between my cheek and the helmet strap and started buzzing angrily. Yes, yet another wasp that had failed to see me coming and was now intent on taking its annoyance out on me. The cheek took nearly a fortnight to recover from this wasp's efforts.

That made three wasp stings in under five weeks, all sustained while cycling. I think I could be forgiven for feeling persecuted, especially as prior to this year I'd accumulated a total of only three wasp stings in the preceding 58 years. Evidently a helmet with front grills is insufficient protection, but just how silly will I look next summer if I cycle around in a beekeeper's suit?

LETTER COLUMN

Folders and Trains

I thought that a few lines were in order to stand up for firstly, the much criticised folding bike. Some readers who haven't tried one might conclude that these things are not bothering with, as Dane tells us of an 80 mile ride that "you might be horrified at the thought of such a distance on a folder". On his supermarket model, I would agree that he did rather well, but there are many quality folders out there that ride just as well as solos. Admittedly they are a little beyond my frugal cycling budget, but the Bike Friday and Airnimal spring to mind. And both will carry luggage and are suitable for touring. A budget alternative is a modified 1970's Raleigh 20 inch shopper. And before you all fall about laughing, google "Sheldon Brown Raleigh 20" and you will be amazed at what is possible. The man was a genius.

Next I need to leap to the defence of British trains, where we are told of "the limited space provided on British trains". For long distance travel there are now no problems at all with taking a normal bike anywhere. If you book your tickets through East Coast you can get free bike tickets to wherever you want to go. Next month I am going to Inverness with a Dawes Galaxy. The only problems can be with local journeys, where you have to hope that space is available. Rather like our SWT service. However, even here, a folder is always accepted, and it hasn't got to be a small Brompton either. A Raleigh 20 will be fine!

Paul Holmes

Ed: I hope your journey to Inverness went well. It might well have done so given that you were boarding and alighting at the termini of the train, but having often experienced the hassle of taking my bike on a train in the UK, I don't share your rosy view of how easy it is to do so. A fairly typical scenario when boarding somewhere other than the terminus goes

something like this: drag the bike through the awkwardly narrow door, hang it up on the hook provided, quickly try to improvise some means of stopping it swinging around during the journey (there being no such mechanism provided), leap back out onto the platform (there being no passenger route through from the cycle storage area to the seating), scoop up the panniers one has had to leave there while loading the bike, scamper along the platform to the door at the other end of the carriage, and then walk through four carriages with one's luggage to the reserved seat that has been so thoughtfully provided as far as possible from the cycle storage.

WEST SURREY CTC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM will be at 10.00 am on Saturday 14th November at The Jack Phillips Pub [Wetherspoons], in the High Street Godalming. The meeting will be held in a private room. There will be tea and coffee provided before the meeting. Parking is available behind the High Street in the Council car park which requires pre-payment. We hope that as many members as possible will come to the AGM and then stay for a pub lunch afterwards.

A motion proposed by the committee to allow proxy voting when more than one candidate is proposed for a position will be on the agenda.

Other motions for consideration at the AGM must be submitted to the secretary at least two weeks in advance, as should nominations for chairman, secretary, treasurer and rides' secretary (all ex-officio members of the committee), other committee members and auditor. Nominations for the honorary posts of president and vice-president can be made either in advance or at the meeting. The nomination form is available at <http://westsurreyctc.co.uk/the-club/ctc-forms/> on the club website.

In addition to the election of officials and the consideration of formal motions the AGM gives members the opportunity to make and discuss suggestions, e.g. about our publications, our social, rides' and events' programmes, and how to attract younger participants. Bring along some good ideas!

Contact the secretary, Nick Davison, on email: nickandmarion.davison@hotmail.co.uk or by post: The Bield, Mill Copse Road, Fernhurst, West Sussex, GU27 3DN.

100 / 75 MILE RELIABILITY RIDES

By Mark Waters

These 2015 Reliability Rides took place on the 19th July, the following characters being found to be (more or less) fully reliable:

100 Miles: Peter Hackman, Mark Heal, Clive Richardson,
Dane Maslen, Martin Vinson and Mark Waters

75 Miles: Bob McLeod, Alan Ince & Chris Boggon

As a result of a most unfortunate set of circumstances Aiden Gill got separated from his companions and then suffered a GPS malfunction resulting in him taking a wrong turning. By the time he worked out where he was, he decided to head directly home rather than work his way back to the route and plod on alone: sensible chap!

The weather couldn't really have been better and it was altogether a most enjoyable day (however, see bottom para). The route is superb and the new start / finish point at Rokers, just opposite Merrist Wood College in Worplesdon, worked well. Many thanks to Roger Philo for finding it and holding the fort there at the finish until I completed the ride.

There are really just a couple of comments to make: although the route sheet might make it seem like there's not much in the way of refreshment stops, in fact there's a perfectly adequate supply: coffee can be taken at Selborne at 23 miles, although an early arrival there might find the café not yet open; the mini-supermarket at Clanfield (at 42 miles) is small but adequate and does provide fairly nasty coffee and tea if required; and at 60 miles, provided the deviation through Midhurst is taken, there are cafés and shops in the town. In addition to these, there are quite a few pubs along the way.

It would be a useful exercise to study the route and see if it could be improved upon. Only the very ambitious would choose to avoid a stop in Midhurst, so the *voie normale* really needs to pass through the town. And owing to the change of event HQ at Rokers, Clive and I found it necessary to cycle past the finish and up to the roundabout and back down in order to achieve a full 100 miles.

Just for the record, the first people back took, including stops at Clanfield and Midhurst, about 8 hours, 50 minutes to complete the ride.

From the point of view of the award presented at the Annual Dinner to the oldest rider to complete the 100 mile ride, the oldest willing acceptor of this prestigious award this year is Mark Heal. Congratulations, Mark!

Finally, thanks to all who turned out to ride the event. That said, with the Benstead Cup now no longer being competed for, holding events is essentially a fund raising exercise and the club isn't going to get rich on the revenue obtained from this event. Once you take that factor away, it could perhaps be said that this event spoiled what could otherwise have been a very enjoyable, and perhaps slightly less frantic – not that it was particularly – normal Sunday club run! Or maybe thought needs to be given as to how we might try and raise the profile of these rides so that they might appeal to a wider audience; however with the seeming gradual demise of the CTC Tourist Competition, attempting to achieve this might be quite difficult. Food for thought pending a discussion in the future sometime.

AUDAXES FROM ELSTEAD

By Nick Davison

Our new feather flag was hoisted for the first time outside the Elstead Village Hall on Sunday 31st May for the three Audax events organised by Nick and Marion Davison, Peter Hackman and Bob McLeod

We opened the Elstead Village Hall control at 0645 in steady rain and strong winds. Despite the bad weather, forty six riders on the Stonehenge 200k, Danebury 150k and Elstead 100k braved the elements as they headed out to Whitchurch and Overton for the first coffee stop.



Our feather flag (photo by Bob McLeod)

Luckily the weather brightened up in the afternoon and the returning riders were rewarded with sunshine and tail winds as they headed back from Alresford.

The last two riders finished at 9.15pm just as it was getting dark. We had some impressive riders taking part: two riders on the 200k are due to take part in the PBP in August and another two were training for a race from Belgium to Turkey this summer. Another rider in his 60's will be taking part in an organised ride across America from Los Angeles to Florida; he mentioned his difficulty in finding a robust touring bike able to take a full set of panniers and a tent.

A possible change for next year may be to extend the 200k route to within sight of Stonehenge and also avoid the busiest roads near the army camp - this may call for a start beyond Farnham to maintain the distance.

MONTE CARLO BY BIKE – 3: HEADING EAST

By Derek Tanner

Day 17 – We had reached the Mediterranean. Awaking to a pleasant sunrise over the sea, spirits were high, just a matter of turning left and pedalling a bit more. Soon we were crossing the Marais on quiet roads when we spotted a funeral procession coming the other way and effectively blocking the road. Luckily we were just passing a small shop. We used the delay to stock up on provisions. After coffee in Sérignan, more vineyards and a stretch back on the Canal du Midi we were on the main road to Sète. The first campsite we found was closed and after (what was now becoming depressing) complexes of villas – mostly closed – we arrived to a frosty reception at the Municipal site overlooking the sea at Agde. Settling down for a cup of tea we found that the milk had made a bid for freedom into the pannier. An 8km bike ride later I was back with a replacement.

Time to concentrate on the positives, what more could we wish for than breakfast in the warming sun as it slides slowly up over the azure Mediterranean. Pitching the tent for maximum effect there was a light air of expectation as we settled down for the night. Expectation however soon turned to panic (so what's new?) as the wind came up in the middle of the night and we were woken to flapping noises as the tent, pitched more romantically than sensibly, threatened to self-destruct in an orgasmic

frenzy.

Carrying tents around in the middle of the night is not a good start to the next day. Neither did moods improve as we returned to the beach and onto the main road passing a continuous line of parked camper vans. Squashed between these and the overtaking traffic we could not fail to notice the pools of glass laying in the road and that many of the vans had lost their mirrors. Arriving in Sète, it was a tourist honeypot. Following the cycle track we passed all the best apartment blocks, rubbish dumps and railway sidings. The campsite was easy to find and we were feeling a bit more positive after we had walked back into town and downed a few beers. But the great god of crisis had not finished with us yet when we got lost in the concrete jungle trying to find our way back to the tent.

The sun was the only thing that seemed to be getting off to a good start the next morning. However the lift bridge at Le Grau-du-Roi provided a different topic of conversation and the medieval walled town of Aigues-Mortes surrounded by the Camargue and salt basins provided a scenic stop for coffee. We spent the rest of the day fighting a head wind across the Camargue towards Arles. The non-motorway route into town was a challenge. Eventually we found a cycle route suspended under the motorway bridge over the river. The campsite on the far side of town was friendly and had a warm café-bar. We soon got talking to a Canadian cyclist who was occupying the pitch next to us.

It was a bright day but the wind was still strong, so leaving the washing to dry, we took the afternoon for sightseeing. By the time we got back the heavens had opened and we spent the evening sat in the bar surrounded by wet clothes - until they threw us out to close at 8pm.

Maussane-les-Alpilles was still touristy but less seasonal. We were able to pick up some more route planning information and decided to detour inland to the hilltop fortified village of Les Baux-de-Provence where they were staging a festival of medieval re-enactments. From there we climbed the mountains of Alpilles and down through olive groves and vineyards to find a grassy campsite at Noves – quiet and miles from anywhere. The bar was open. It was pitch dark by 8 o'clock.

Next day got us to Mormoiron, a one-horse village. We were the only ones on the campsite, but we had chosen it because it offered a base for day rides to Gorges de la Nesque and Mont Ventoux, which we did the next day

together with a very pleasant lunch on the terrace of the restaurant at Sault.

We were starting to take seriously the fact that the days were shortening noticeably. Coffee on the ramparts, overlooking the gorge at Venasque, a climb over Col de Murs for lunch, a descent into the touristy village of Gordes for tea, a big descent to cross the plain and climb back up to the campsite at Roussillon. A day of real progress and still plenty of people about.

Another early start to make a tourist visit into the “Ochre Valley” – a stunning geological oddity – more akin to Ayres rock or the Grand Canyon in miniature. Stopping for coffee, Anne fancied a pastry: the portions were huge and decorated with fruit and ice cream. That provided enough fuel to get us to the campsite at Cucuron where the town had a good TI and still busy.

The winter gloves had to come out to start riding in the morning. La Bastide-des-Jourdans provided a stop for a much needed coffee. It became a lovely warm sunny day as we cycled through the vineyards. Fantastic views of the Alps appeared ahead as we climbed towards the ridge to cross into the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence department. Following the signed bike trail we had a vicious climb into Piervert, but the views were making it all worthwhile. Making up time on the descent, we were in Manosque by early afternoon and decided to check into the YHA.

It was nice to wake up in a warm building rather than a cold damp tent. A 7km climb with a healthy tail wind soon got us up onto the plateau. Then we struggled for another 14km into Valensole for a much needed coffee. Revived we set off again through wonderful scenery, the mountains of the Alps in the distance. Reaching the junction to Moustiers, seeing it laying below us was stunning. The ride was then topped off with a long hairpin descent into town. The campsite was just down the road. We were pitched, showered and down town before 4 o'clock.

Staring into the glass that was emptying rapidly, a day of fighting the wind and being blown off the road had its rewards somewhere like this.

But outside, the weather is not looking much better. Either the campsite warden is a manic depressive or the Mistral season really is starting, “riding our bikes will be impossible and we should think of going home”.

Ed: The final part will appear next issue.

LA MARMOTTE 2015

By Don Gray

Ed: the following web page shows the route and its height profile:

<http://bike-oisans.com/en/events-cycling-mtb-oisans/marmotte-granfondo>

Some of you might be interested in La Marmotte; some of you might even be contemplating, in a moment of madness, riding this event. It is really TOUGH – the hardest endurance event I’ve ever attempted, and I only just finished. To put the ride into perspective, it involved around 5100m of climbing over 176km and the temperature was HOT, in the high 30’s/low 40’s. The climbs are unrelenting, the descents tremendously exciting (but unforgiving) and the feed/drink stations manic.

The route had to change this year as the traditional Telegraphie/Galibier was not possible because of a tunnel closure (the mountain is squashing the tunnel) on the way down from La Grave to Bourg d’Oisans. The changed route (Col du Glandon, Les Lacets de Montvernier, Col du Mollard, Col de la Croix de Fer and Alpe d’Huez) was, by general consensus, harder with a little more climbing and a bit more distance. The front-runners took an extra half-hour or so compared with the traditional route.

Entries sell out very quickly indeed, and it is a little difficult to know when exactly entries open. However, persistence did pay off and I was successful in getting an entry. I was given a high number, with a correspondingly late start time. The early numbers were off at 0700 and I probably didn’t cross the start line until 0830.

There is a cut-off time of 1830 at the bottom of Alpe d’Huez. If you’re late here, your timing chip is removed and you won’t get a finish time. I knew that to survive the ride I had to climb steadily (climbing is tough!) and, naively, I thought that I’d have plenty of time to make the 1830 cut-off. The descent from the Col du Glandon is rather demanding so to avoid unnecessary accidents is neutralised (untimed) by the organisers, with the rider’s clock stopping at the top and restarting in Saint Etienne de Cuines at the end of the descent. Naturally, I took my time on the descent, enjoying the view and buying water and food in the villages to avoid the mêlée of the feed stations.

All these delays were pushing me towards that cut-off time, although I wasn’t aware of it until I approached the Col de la Croix de Fer (after

stopping for coffee and cake in the village below the tough upper section). It gradually dawned on me that time was somehow pressing and that I'd better get a move on! I flew down the descent from the col (we'd ridden it on Monday/Tuesday) and ended on the flat into Bourg d'Oisans hooking onto whatever chain was passing, hoping for a wheel to get me to the cut-off in time. I have rarely been so tired – rolling as fast as I could just trying to get to the bottom of Alpe d'Huez in time. Desperation paid off, and I was there with a couple of minutes to spare. The penalty was that I was completely Cream Crackered, out of food (no time to pick my grub up at my pre-planned feed station) and facing a tough finishing climb. My back was causing me a bit of trouble as well.

I sat down just past the timing point for the Alpe d'Huez TT to ponder... My apartment was just down the road. I knew how hard the first 4km of the climb were. I was short of food and water. My legs, head and back were shot and I was really sleepy. But – I'd bought the Marmotte jersey at registration on Thursday and knew that I could never wear it if I didn't get to the finish. So the sensible decision was to press on up the Hill.

Silly me! I was walking within a bend and a half, with both elbows on the hoods to support me and with my head drooping low, wondering how I could struggle up a further nineteen and a half bends. I must have looked more like a geriatric with a Zimmer frame than a cyclist!

Eventually I struggled onto the bike, probably on the flattish part of hairpin 19 and turned the pedals. I counted the spokes going round, we moved, and the bends passed. Water was available at Dutch Corner, at a roadside stream further on, and I discovered three slices of salami in my 'nose bag'. That savoury delight was amongst the finest food I have ever tasted! After a day of gels and 'good-for-you' bars the thought of yet more sweet food was repellent so the salt and texture of the salami was very, very welcome.

Eventually we were at Bend 5, then Bend 1, the Village & the Finish. I'm not sure how many times I stopped, lay down and stretched out for a few minutes (no more than three minutes – that was my rule or else I'm sure I'd have nodded off) but, eventually, it was over. Once I'd passed the finish I went straight to our van, which was to take me down, without collecting medal, food, certificate etc.

I finished in around 12h30 & was one of the later finishers, taking an hour longer to cycle up Alpe d'Huez than I normally do BUT I can wear that

jersey! There was around a 30% attrition rate, I guess largely due to the excessive temperatures.

On a lighter note Theo Flack and his girlfriend, our 'chalet maids' who were looking after us for the week, both rode the event. They were touring Europe for a few months and had stopped off to assist 'MoreThan21Bends' with their chalets before continuing on their tour. Theo took the panniers off his touring bike and rode the 'hand painted' (Dulux green?) steel steed, on Schwalbe Marathon tyres, to 750th place in around 8 hours! That must really have surprised so many Pinarello Dogma riders – they wouldn't know that he was a Cat 1 racer!!! It really isn't about the bike, but all about the engine.

I have an accurate record of timing etc. and plenty of details for those who want to ride this iconic event. It's probably worth getting an entry with a commercial outfit to ensure an early start time. I went with 'More Than 21 Bends' and they were excellent. We rode the route over three days, had just one day off, and the organisation was superb. It's also worth staying in Bourg d'Oisans; if you are staying in Alpe d'Huez and are timed out you still have to struggle up the hill to bed!

I will ride there again, but not La Marmotte. Well, that's how I feel right now...

Ed: I've had a rummage on the internet and found videos of Don at various points during the event:

[http://mysports.tv/default2.asp?
r=7197&e=MA15174K&n=DON+GRAY&ct_s1=10:31:15&ct_f=2
1:15:06&ct_s2=12:55:15&ct_s3=14:59:55&ct_s4=18:30:08&k=co
mmercial&ks=176184498&l=EN&gotostream=false](http://mysports.tv/default2.asp?r=7197&e=MA15174K&n=DON+GRAY&ct_s1=10:31:15&ct_f=21:15:06&ct_s2=12:55:15&ct_s3=14:59:55&ct_s4=18:30:08&k=commercial&ks=176184498&l=EN&gotostream=false)

He even manages a smile (or is it a grimace?) at the finish.

The timer shown in each video counts down until Don passes the timing point. The cameras are beyond the timing points, so Don doesn't pass the cameras until several seconds after the timer reaches zero. As Don mentions above, he sat down immediately after the timing point at the start of the ascent of Alpe d'Huez, so he doesn't pass the cameras in the three videos there at all. You'll have to look carefully for the rider pulling off the road immediately after some barriers. In fact in the third video there all you'll see of Don are the wheels of his bike at the top of the screen.

NOT QUITE DODGING THE RAIN

By Dane Maslen

Saturday 12th September: Forecast for Wednesday's club ride looks awful but Tuesday looks not too bad, so I mention to Bob McLeod that I'll probably go for a ride on Tuesday and then cower indoors on Wednesday as befits a fair-weather cyclist. Bob thinks this sounds a good idea (Bob has started to show signs of being sensible of late, but why has it taken him well over 70 years to do so?) so we provisionally arrange to ride together, subject to the subsequent evolution of the weather forecast.

0655 Tuesday 15th: Forecast for today not as good as it once was – likelihood of rain in middle of day – but still much better than tomorrow's, so I phone Bob to confirm that I'll meet him at Bookham station.

0950: Bob's train arrives. I'm pleased to see that he is wearing a waterproof. Maybe that will keep the rain away.

1110: After our coffee stop at Walton-on-the-Hill Bob comments that the sky is brightening up, so takes his waterproof off before we get underway again. Five minutes later it starts to drizzle! Then the rain becomes heavy enough to induce Bob to put his waterproof back on. This has only part of the desired effect: after a few minutes the rain eases off to a drizzle again.

1150: The normally excellent views from Farthing Down are spoilt by the drizzle and low cloud.

1200: At last the drizzle peters out.

1235: Lunch! Bob has bravely said he doesn't mind if we stop at a café rather than a pub, but I'm not a vindictive man so don't deprive him



After the earlier rain we could certainly have done with a serving of summer
(photo by Bob McLeod)

of his liquid sustenance just because he made it rain by taking his waterproof off. The Bell Inn at Outwood always used to have an interesting sandwich menu, but on my previous visit last year it had gone down-market somewhat. Now it seems to have changed hands again and an appealing veggie sandwich has appeared on the menu. It's quite a mouthful to order an aubergine, spinach, mozzarella & sun blushed tomato sandwich though.

1335: The day is definitely showing signs of improvement as we set off again and soon there are significant patches of blue sky. What a pity it wasn't like this when we were on Farthing Down.

1420: Ignoring impassioned pleas from me not to do so, Bob once again takes off his waterproof. Despite this provocation the weather remains pleasant.

1610: I arrive home dry, but the rain radar suggests that Bob might have copped a shower on his way home from North Camp station (in fact he didn't). There's still heavy rain forecast for tomorrow, though now due to arrive somewhat later than previously predicted, so despite the brief spell of rain this morning it seems we made the right decision to ride today.

0715 Wednesday 16th: Emails from Nick and Laurie cancel today's ride, a very wise decision given last night's forecast (is there hope for sanity in West Surrey CTC after all?), though the latest forecast is now suggesting that the heavy rain won't arrive until after noon.

0900: Having consulted two different forecasts and the latest rain radar, I conclude that getting to Bocketts Farm and back before significant rain arrives should be possible. When the ride to Dorney was cancelled a few weeks ago Anne and Jo nonetheless went there and got absolutely soaked in the torrential rain on the way back, so I strongly suspect that they (no danger of sanity here) won't have been deterred by the cancellation of today's ride. Therefore I make the last-minute decision to venture forth and have to dash around getting ready. Twenty minutes later I'm en route.

0945: As I arrive in Ripley, I espy three riders. As one sets off alone towards Bocketts Farm, the other two – Anne and Jo as expected – sheepishly tell me that they are going across the road to Pinnocks for coffee. I can understand this of course as without the likelihood of torrential rain on the way back, there's nothing to encourage them to go any further. Suddenly Paddy turns up on foot – he lives less than a mile away –

to let anyone who hadn't received the emails know that the ride has been cancelled. He joins Anne and Jo for coffee in Ripley, while I head off in pursuit of Paul Gillingham.

1025: Paul and I encounter Alan Mayger, already on his way back from Bocketts Farm. He'd decided that an early start was the best way to ensure getting home in the dry.

1030: At an almost deserted Bocketts Farm I am faced with temptation. After a brief struggle with my conscience I opt to accompany my hot chocolate with a Mars-bar cake rather than a toasted tea-cake.

1100: Time to head for home! Paul is bravely going to loop south via Newdigate to return to Guildford, whereas I have the advantage of heading away from the approaching rain to get back to Woking. To avoid the monotony of retracing my outbound route I make the possibly questionable decision to put in a small loop via Cobham.

1115: I've been making good speed, spurred on by a few spots of rain in the wind – there's nothing like approaching rain to persuade my leg muscles to work harder – but these now turn to a very light drizzle. Although barely heavy enough to dampen either me or the road, it's presumably a warning of worse to come. Further south Paul is probably already experiencing it. An email later in the day informs me that he had indeed encountered heavy rain, but had managed to keep dry thanks to his rain cape. Maybe I should get one. But how often am I rash enough to cycle in heavy rain?

1130: As I pass through Chobham the drizzle has become heavy enough to wet the road. Did I spend too long chatting to Paul at Bocketts Farm?

1145: The roads in Ripley are quite wet, suggesting recent heavier rain here, but fortunately I've missed it and the drizzle is easing off again.

1200: Approaching the outskirts of Woking the drizzle has stopped and the roads are almost dry. My fears of a soaking are receding – it's starting to look as though I'll get home merely slightly damp.

1207: Home! The drizzle starts even as I put the bike away in the garage. Soon the rain is heavier than anything I had suffered during the ride back from Bocketts. The fair-weather cyclist has had a narrow escape and thanks to Paul's discretion no one will ever know that I succumbed to temptation and had that Mars-bar cake.

HOW FAST?

By Dane Maslen

Within an hour or so of using my Oregon 450t for the very first time in 2012 I'd discovered that a GPS is not very good for measuring the average speed while cycling. It was a Sunday morning and as usual I'd had to make haste to get to the start of that day's ride in Farnham. On arrival there the GPS was displaying pretty much the same speed (moving average) as my cycle computer, but by the time Clive had arrived and we set off for coffee at Lasham the speed shown by the GPS had dropped by several tenths of a kilometre per hour.

In my previous articles I've discussed various potential sources of error that can affect the measurement of distance by a GPS. I hope it's obvious to you that these must necessarily also affect the measurement of speed, which is distance divided by time, but for a GPS to calculate the average speed it must also measure the time spent moving. Some models of GPS don't even attempt to do so. The Garmin Edge 705 for example starts recording elapsed time when the user tells it to do so and continues until told to stop doing so. Consequently it can only calculate the overall average speed, i.e. inclusive of time spent stopped. I'm convinced that Peter Hackman's impressive cycling ability is a consequence of his efforts to get his Edge 705 to report the same sort of average speed that everyone else was claiming from their cycle computers.

Let's consider the good old cycle computer for a moment. It can easily detect that a bike has stopped because the magnet mounted on the wheel stops passing the sensor, though the exact moment at which it came to a halt is uncertain by a couple of seconds (roughly the time for one revolution of the wheel at 4 kph). It's similarly easy for the cycle computer to detect that the bike has started – the magnet passes the sensor – though there's the same uncertainty about the exact moment. Except in the rare circumstance that the bike comes to a halt with the sensor by the magnet and the rider then fidgets the wheel back and forth, thereby inadvertently simulating wheel revolutions, the cycle computer will not measure any of the stationary time as moving time.

Let's consider the same problem from the point of view of a GPS. It seems simple enough – the bike is stationary if two consecutive measurements of position are the same, moving if not – but there's a complication: as

explained in a previous article, the error on each measurement is typically at least 3 metres (and potentially much worse in tree cover, etc) so how is the GPS to decide whether two consecutive measurements are the same or different? In principle the software could ask itself the question "Is the difference between the two most recently measured positions significant given the current estimate of measurement accuracy?" but if the GPS is measuring the position every second, the answer would always be "No" for a pedestrian or slow cyclist. Therefore the software has to do something more sophisticated. I suspect that it's something along the lines of determining whether there has been a significant change in position during the course of several seconds and then, if there has not, attempting to deduce when motion most likely stopped.

If you get your GPS to display the moving time, you will see that it doesn't always correctly detect periods when you are stationary. My experience is that (a) it usually takes the GPS a few seconds to notice when I come to a halt and (b) while I'm stationary it occasionally incorrectly believes I'm moving. The latter seems to occur more when there is tree cover, i.e. when the error on measurement of position is greater. On one occasion while preparing this article I was stopped at a T-junction for over 30 seconds while waiting for a gap in the traffic and noticed that the GPS counted the whole time as moving.

If the GPS overestimates the time in motion, it will of course underestimate the average speed, but by exactly how much will depend on the nature of the ride. If you hardly ever have cause to stop, the average speed will be nearly accurate, but the more times you stop, the greater the underestimate of speed is likely to be. While preparing this article I found that my GPS underestimated the average speed of my rides by between 0.1 and 0.4 kph compared to my cycle computer, i.e. the underestimation was sometimes amounting to nearly 2%. My guess is that in stop-go traffic it would have been even more severe.

From the above it should be apparent that even a poorly calibrated cycle computer might well give a more accurate measurement of the average speed of a ride than a typical GPS, but some models of GPS, particularly Garmin ones aimed at the cycling market, can have a wheel sensor as an accessory. I have no experience of such models, but I assume that just like cycle computers they use the signals from the wheel sensor to determine whether the bike is moving, rather than attempt to deduce it from the

positional measurements. I would therefore expect such models to calculate average speed at least as accurately as cycle computers.

For those of us whose GPS lacks a wheel sensor there is, however, still a glimmer of hope. It is usually possible to analyse a GPS track file so as to get a better estimate of time in motion and hence average speed. The trick is to assume that the bike was stationary during any period for which the speed was below some suitably low value, e.g. 3 kph. Admittedly this will tend to exclude a very brief period of motion each time the bike started or stopped, but the effect of this is usually small. Various websites and PC programs will do this sort of analysis for you. One such website is ridewithgps.com. You might well already have your own favourite website or program. The comments I am about to make about [ridewithgps](http://ridewithgps.com) might or might not also apply to your favourite.

My experience is that [ridewithgps](http://ridewithgps.com) almost always calculates an average speed that is either the same as or just 0.1 kph faster than that calculated by my cycle computer. I do, however, know that [ridewithgps](http://ridewithgps.com) makes one blunder in these calculations: it fails to exclude the stationary periods when calculating the total distance. Fortunately the consequences are usually minor, but perhaps enough to explain why the average speed is often 0.1 kph faster than that from a cycle computer.

Occasionally there is 'bad' data in track files. An example of indisputably bad data is a trackpoint without a timestamp, something I have seen very occasionally on my Oregon 450t, presumably because of a bug in its software. In such an instance [ridewithgps](http://ridewithgps.com) cannot calculate the speeds immediately before and after that trackpoint. It handles the anomaly by treating the speed as zero and so omits the periods immediately before and after the trackpoint from its calculation of the moving time. Unfortunately because it doesn't omit the corresponding distances from its calculation of the total distance, it can finish up with a significant overestimate of the average speed if there is enough 'bad' data in the track file.

So far I've only discussed the average speed. What about the current speed at any given time? If you were to get your GPS to display the current speed and then you carefully watched the display as you cycled along, (a) you'd notice the speed oscillating up and down, perhaps quite significantly, and (b) you'd probably crash because you weren't paying enough attention to the road ahead. To save you from this fate I have carried out the experiment for you – is there no end to the lengths to which

I will go to bore you? – and have found that with an unobstructed view of the sky the oscillations in the speed are a few tenths of a kilometre per hour on my Oregon 450t, but increase to as much as a couple of kilometres per hour under tree cover.

To calculate the current speed the GPS has to divide the distance travelled in some relatively short period (a few seconds?) by the time it took to travel that distance, but because there is a random error on each measurement of position, there is also a random error on the calculated distance. That random error is independent of the speed at which one is travelling, so the percentage error on the calculated speed will be smaller the faster one is moving, but does depend on how poor the accuracy of the position measurements is, so the percentage error on the calculated speed is greater under tree cover than with an unobstructed view of the sky. While grinding my way up a hill at about 6 kph under tree cover, I found the speed reported by the GPS oscillating wildly between about 4 kph and 8 kph. A cycle computer certainly does a much better job.

A website or program analysing a track file to display a plot of speed against time faces the same problem, but to a lesser extent because the time intervals between pairs of trackpoints are often large enough to reduce the random error on the calculated speed to a minimal level. The interval between trackpoints can, however, be as little as one second, in which case there could be a huge random error on the speed. To avoid this happening *ridewithgps* smooths the calculated speeds. Any website or program that fails to do so will produce a plot of speed that includes spurious spikes and dips and will potentially therefore report a spurious maximum speed.

MY FIRST CLUB RIDE

By Dane Maslen

This is an idea I'm shamelessly stealing from Robert Cable, editor of the CTC South Bucks magazine *The Beech Leaf*, in a probably forlorn attempt to encourage people to reminisce about their first club ride and thereby help fill the magazine. Don't, however, take the title too literally. For example I'm not going to write about my first ride with West Surrey DA, but rather the first time I ventured forth on a Wednesday.

On 10th October 2001 I joined a mass of cyclists at the Mimbridge bus

stop and was pointed in the direction of the one in charge. He explained that there were three groups of various speeds. I asked about the length of the ride and the average speed of the fastest group. The answers, 50 miles and 13 mph, encouraged me to believe that I would be able to cope even though I'd not done anything longer than about 25 miles since February. So it was that I set off in a gaggle behind Rico en route to coffee at Savill Garden (some of you might remember the pleasant small café that used to be there) and lunch at Shurlock Row (in a pub that has long since closed).

As we (or rather they) sped back from Sunningdale towards Chobham that afternoon, I found myself tailing off quite badly. My cycle computer was showing an average speed of about 14 mph. So it was that I learnt my first lesson about West Surrey rides: everyone underestimates their speed.

Other than Rico I remember Jeff Banks, Phil Hamilton and Peter Clint from that first ride; probably also Ken Travis and quite possibly Bob McLeod, who I seem to recall had a home-made rear-view mirror (made with a beer-bottle top?) on his helmet or glasses. It might, however, have been on a later ride that I first made Bob's acquaintance. He is the only other person still riding with that Wednesday group. These days it does at least admit to averaging up to 15 mph, but some things never change: I still tend to tail off the back and I'm still riding the same Dawes Street Spirit.



Deadline for next issue: December 1st. Get your cycling stories in to the editor now: editor@westsurreyctc.co.uk

The editor welcomes contributions of all types, e.g. articles about cycling holidays, anecdotes about events on club rides, letters (serious or humorous) to the editor, product reviews etc. Short items are useful for filling the gaps left by longer articles and are very welcome. If you have photographs that could be used to illustrate your article, feel free to send them too. Whether they are used or not will depend on space constraints. All contributions will be acknowledged when received.

Front cover: Deepdale on the May Day tour organised by Derek and Anne Tanner (photo by Derek Tanner).