

Chronicles of a Sunday Cyclist

2014

A collection of short stories by Barney Mulholland



Chronicles of a Sunday Cyclist - 2014

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Sunday Cycle 12th Jan 2014

There was a good crowd out this morning - about 20 cyclists. We debated heading out in 2 groups but concluded that we would stay together for the first half of the ride anyway.

Our route took us to Kilrea, Cullybackey, Ballymena and out the Whiteside Road. At the crossroads, we made our split, with those opting for a shorter ride home heading for Portglenone, while the others went off down Roguery into Toome, and then Ballyronan, and into Magherafelt, where another split meant half going home via Tobermore, and the rest going via Desertmartin, Draperstown, Tobermore and then back to Maghera.

The weather was gusty, but mostly fine, until the last half hour or so when it did start to rain accompanied by a temperature drop. Nevertheless, a pleasant ride was had by all - well done.

My performance was, I thought, a wee bit down today on what it had been this past couple of weeks. I mentioned this to my wee wife and she laughed and said that it must be due to the lack of her home-made Christmas mince-pies, to which I had been partial to over the festive season. "Oh darlings", says I, "You're such a tease". But then I cudjuated on this for a while and thought that she could be right. Mince-pies are full of fruit and sugar and carbs and suet, nothing that you would not find in one of those gels, all the good stuff needed to keep the front wheel tight to the boy ahead (and induce the boy behind to leave a good gap).

So, I'd be interested in hearing if any other cycle-nators out there experienced a similar peak in performance recently, induced by mince-pies, or Christmas pudding or cake.

Now, given that the Giro is coming here this year, it would be good if we would embrace the Italian culture and language - say we learn a new word or two each week. This week's word is

A-reeve-a-ditchy

which means good by. Try weaving it into your everyday conversation, eg:

Tom: "Hi Fred, is that a new bike you have?"

Fred: "Tootin right it is Tom, I treated myself to a new one, after all, I have been a good boy recently".

Tom: "Well Fred, how much did it cost you?"

Fred: "I was lucky, the bike shop was having a clear out of red bikes, as white is the "in" colour for 2014. When the shop owner said that he would sell it to me for 300 pounds, I was like, give me that bike".

Tom: "Now that was a real good a-reeve-a-ditchy there Fred".

(I suspect most of us country boys wont be fit to get the Italian accent quite right).

BM

Sunday Cycle 19th Jan 2014

Today's route was, in general, Maghera to Coleraine, via Garvagh and Ballerin, and then back home again via Ballymoney and Kilrea. A total of about 50 miles.

There was a fantastic turn out of cyclists this morning. We split into two groups, with the racers/elites heading off a few minutes before the group of aspirationalists.

The weather held up well, with only a wee skift of rain as the "main" group approached Maghera.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 2nd Feb 2014

Even though the wind and cold were not conducive to a nice cycle, I was determined to be on the Sunday Cycle today for two reasons.

The first reason is that I was well carbed-up and energy-loaded following an excellent and delicious meal at the Shepherd's Rest on Friday night, and I was sure I'd be fit for a good ride.

The second reason is that I had missed last week – the rain and wind were that severe that I was sure no-one would be out. Missing the Sunday cycle was bad enough, but, as it turned out, I had also missed to opportunity to play my part in an absolute epic tale of cycling heroism.

Let me explain. On Sunday evening of last week Jim posted up on the social broadcasting interweb that 7 cyclists had braved their way up to Greencastle and back. Hardy blokes I thought. Then on Friday night, when we all met up at the Shepherd's Rest (for the annual Carn Wheeler's club dinner and presentation night), there were people congratulating Jim on his intrepid cycle run. I formed the image in my head of Jim being a good champion for the cause of the local cycling enthusiast.

The word soon spread, and as we sat down at the tables for our meal, folks would come around wanting to speak to Jim and hear directly how he had led the team on that day, and soldiered his way up over the Six Towns with the rest of the team in tow. In my mind, Jim was now no longer just a champion, but more like a returning hero who had just conquered Everest.

The evening wore on and even more people congratulating Jim and shaking his hand and asking about training schedules that they needed to be following in order to keep astride of great man himself in the weeks ahead. By the time I had finished my tea, Jim was a legend.

Throughout the whole evening though, Jim stayed modest "Boys, aah was just out for a wee spin on may bike, nawhin wyle epic about it atall", he said.

And so onto today's cycle. The wind was coming from the south. Now normally we would start off into the wind, and so give ourselves an easy peddle on the homeward leg, but that usually means suffering the pain of a shock kick-start to the lungs and legs (and the humiliation of not being able to talk for lack of puff for the first 10 miles). So instead, someone suggested that we would try something different – ride with the wind for a bit first so we get warmed up gently.

And so with the bold Anthony (hold on to I just check my spelling, yes, I have spelt it right, b-O-I-d), with the bold Anthony on the whistle, we set off, with a peloton of 19 riders.

Our route took us out to Swatragh (passing Jimmy's house, and for the second or two it took him to ride past the end of his lane, Jimmy was the vice-chairman), Garvagh, Kilrea and Portglenone. Then

crossing over into County Antrim, down the Largy Road and then turning off down the Loughbeg Road to Toome. From there it was onto Magherafelt, Tobermore and home to Maghera.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 9th Feb 2014

A good attendance of cyclists today for what turned out to be a fairly good dry day for road biking. Too many for a single group, so we separated ourselves into 2 groups. The first group, which some people would call the "fast" group contained the racers from the club. I was tempted to join them myself this week, but then reconsidered, as the thought of Cathal and Johnny taking turns on the derry made me think that I maybe need another week of intense personal training before I could hold pace.

Now, to elaborate a little of how we name ourselves when there is more than one group. There is the natural tendency, and very politically incorrect, to refer to the fast group and the slow group (or even the less fast group). This can be offensive to those folks whose skills on the bike have been honed to emphasise the less financially rewarding aspects of cycling.

And so, I propose that in future we label our teams via a colour. So, today, we had the yellow jersey team and the green jersey team. This, I think, worked particularly well today because, as the yellow team left the car park first, they would be back home in the shortest time. And more about the green jersey team later.

Padraig had assumed Tommie's wind-watching duties for this weekend, and called out the proposed route. We would go to Bellaghy, Newbridge, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Coagh, Stewartstown, Cookstown, where the cyclists could decide if they wanted to tackle Lough Fea or home via Moneymore.

With the wind in our backs to begin with, us in the Green group started off at a wyle fast rate -- so fast that I was sure we would be able to land Johnny and Dessie (who were a wee bit late in arriving) onto the back of the Yellow team.

The pace did slow a bit when we turned the corner in Bellaghy.

It is funny how rumours start.

At one stage, when cycling in the middle of the peloton, the rider to my right said "Hi Barney, where do you buy your carbo-ethanol-vitamins from? The boys here are all saying that you think its great stuff for muscle development and improving your cycling prowess".

Now I was a little taken aback, and it took me a few seconds to respond. You see, I had been talking earlier to another chap about carbo-ethanol-vitamins (CEVs), but I was not exactly complimentary about the product. The rider on my right had asked the question in all seriousness and so I could not quite compute what he was at. I mumbled some sort of reply, and so I'm sure he thought I was a right unsociable git.

Later, when we stopped for a wee break/sugar intake (there's a song there), I asked a few questions and put two and two together. What had actually happened was this.

When I was at the front of the peloton, myself and the other boy up front were talking about CEV products (or Turbo-Carbs, as some folks refer to them). I said that I had tried a certain brand once and that it had not agreed with me, the sight of it was revolting, and that I thought it tasted like shite.

Now, one of the riders directly behind heard this, and he repeated this to the chap beside him, but, because he was a good-living sort of guy, he would not use the word shite, but rather he said manure (ie "Barney says he tried it and he thought that it was revolting and tasted like manure"). The message then went back to the third row, and it then got passed on that Barney thought that the product tasted like fertilizer.

The next row picked up on the word fertilizer and passed on the word that the product was good for growth and development and added that it gave you a great jolt (I assume, a mishearing of the word reVOLTING).

By the time the story had reached the back of the peloton, the word was that Barney swore by this product and that it had improved his cycling capability immensely, particularly his speed out of the blocks. And people came up with evidence to support this, saying "Have you noticed the way Barney seems to be taking a lot of the 30's these days".

Anyway, we rode on, and half the green team went up Lough Fea and the rest taking the flatter route home via Moneymore.

Now, as we were the Green jersey, I'll list the sprinting achievements today. Hopefully I have not missed out or misplaced any victories.

Big Pete took one 30.

Dean had one, maybe two 30s.

Anthony Bradley, the self styled "stealth warrior" had two, but at least half of these were very dodgy, we all thought. Anthony was really out to impress the judges today. He still thinks he has a chance of winning the new cyclists award for 2012.

And finally me, green jersey winner with a massive four 30's, all hard won and fairly fought. This is a feat which I think I will find hard to repeat, so I'll probably not be challenging again next week (I might, secretly, do a couple of lead-outs). My long term ambitions for this year don't really include the green jersey anyway.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 16th Feb 2014

A very large crowd out in the car park this morning.

A lot of the discussion before we set off was about the weather and how cold it had been during the week, with somebody saying “Boys, it was that cowl I had to put on two jerseys, a cap and a huddie”. “Sure that’s nothing”, was the reply, “If you lived where I lived, the only way to keep warm was to be on the turbo”.

Anyway, with a frosty start, we knew we had to stick to the main roads to keep from skiting. So, we split into two groups with the route being straight up to Dungannon, and the straight home again.

After an hour or so the temperatures rose a little and any signs of frost along the side of the road disappeared, and it was a lovely day for a cycle.

Well done to all.

I made the comment last week about “... those folks whose skills on the bike have been honed to emphasise the less financially rewarding aspects of cycling”.

People has asked me “Whattayamean, surely going fast and getting there first is what biking is all about”.

Well there are a few other skills associated with the sport that can, with dedication and effort, be perfected in order to become the complete cyclist, eg

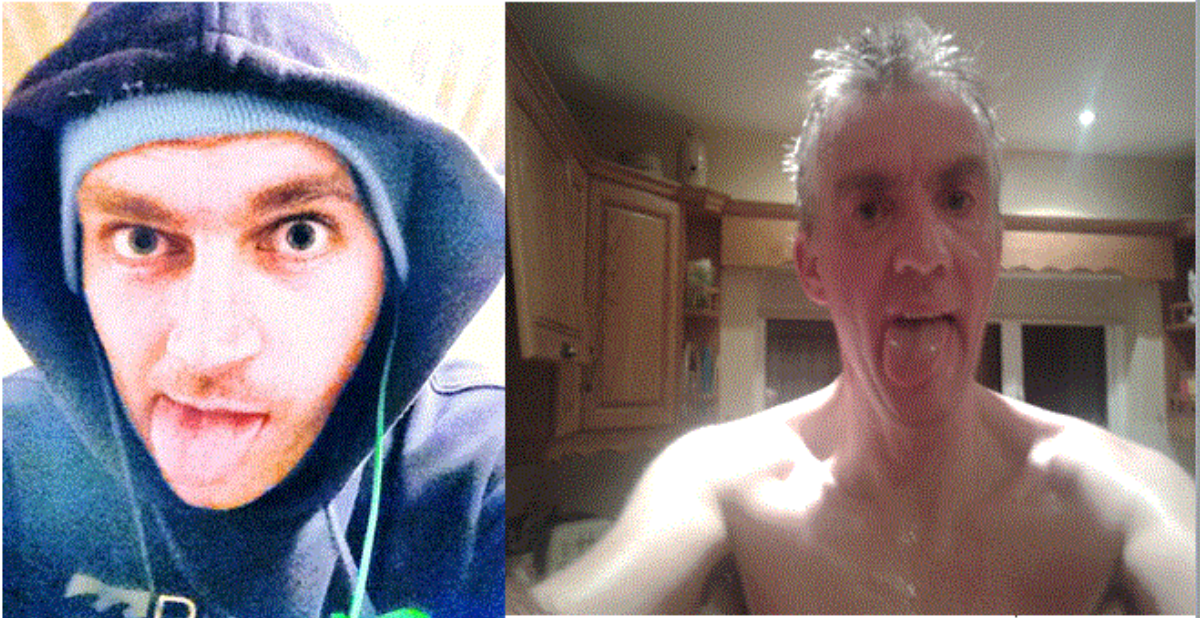
- Puncture repair man

The consummate puncture repair man will come to the cycling meeting with tools and enough tubes and tyres, not only for himself, but for any team member who befalls a flat. He will keep handy a pair of surgical gloves, not just to keep his hands and the inside of his cycling gloves clean, but also to ensure that no oil or grease fouls the rubber.

He will forsake the handy CO2 canister as this can inject the wrong sort of air too fastly into the recipient inner tube. Instead he will use the trusty pump, on which he will have practiced endlessly out in the garage.

- **Whistle blower**
 Anyone can toot on a whistle. But to do so while riding a bike and you potentially out of breathe and not swallowing the device is a real skill.
 Two pea, one pea, or pea-less, our man can use them all.
 The trained whistle blower will quietly, but effectively, monitor each member of the peloton and administer their time allocations at the head of the group taking into account such things as hill conditions, rider age/experience, wind conditions, etc (all factors that the unskilled tooter would simply ignore).
 When he has reached peak competence, our man will let the whistle do the talking in all circumstances, giving both encouragement or chastisement with the tone of the toot. You'll never hear the impartial whistle blower shout things like "Hi!!, let the brake ave youse boys at the front", or "He's been showing ave all day, let him sit there a while".
- **Wind checker and Route planner**
 Knowing what way the wind is blowing can be tricky, and knowing what way it will be blowing in 3 hours time can be near impossible. But, with the aid of a high mounted fleg, and years and years of experience, anyone could potentially soon master this skill.
 It is also important to gauge the appetite of the peloton for a ride-out into the wind, or if they want to keep that as their treat for the homeward journey. Having gauged that appetite, the wind checker, due to his status within his peer group, will choose the way he wants to go himself.
- **Pushee – that is, he/she onto whom a pushing force is exerted.**
 A few riders who want to improve their lower body strength (and as a bonus, help their balancing skills) will often employ the use of a pushee in order to increase the resistance training.
 Most of us will be happy to just ride up a hill by ourselves, but these pushee chaps are willing to risk being shoved off-line by inexperienced pushers, in order to help improve the skills of their colleagues.
 NB, very few people actually master the full act of the pushee, and generally give up after a week or two. I did see it executed to absolute perfection once on the Glen2Glen cycle run, when the pushee actually stopped pedalling completely in order to give their pusher the full benefit of the incline.
- **Jelly baby supplier**
 Share the sugar, don't be trying to slip one out of your pocket when at the back of the peloton.
- **Lead out man - someone who cycles up front, maybe for miles, and then generously lets the boys on second or third wheel make the sprint for the 30. Sometimes these selfless chaps will pretend to make a go for it, whilst ensuring that they are pipped at the post – thus**

further boosting the ego of the sprint winners.



Which of these two boys is using the turbo correctly.

Sunday Cycle 23rd Feb 2014

A few road/MTB races on this weekend, so a smaller turn out for the Sunday cycle that what we have been enjoying recently.

A few of us had planned to go do a charity event in Greencastle, but the howling wind and prospect of heavy rain to come persuaded us not to go (yes, yes, I know, we are weak in the face of adventure...).

I work in I.T., so basically I sit on my arse all week, and so it is a great release for me to be out in the open air and as far away from the office as possible. I pity the boys who cannot let go of their work to relax (I genuinely do know how they feel). Take for instance Pat, so determined was he to re-create his working environment at home that he turned his bicycle into an office swivel chair.

And anyways, the dozen or so cyclists set off for Bellaghy, Newbridge, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Coagh, Stewartstown and onto Cookstown.

In Cookstown, some folks went home directly via Moneymore, while others headed for Lough Fea. I think everyone who went via Lough Fea did so for a different reason, for example:

- Young Patrick wanted to test his young legs for the new season
- Jimmy wanted to keep an eye on Patrick
- Tommie wanted to learn the rest of us how to climb as a group
- Anthony wanted to check the effect of a double portion espresso-flavoured energy gel on the bike's ability to get up the hill quickly (did you eat it or rub it onto the chain?)
- Adrian had not been on this route before and so was keen for exploration
- Ali wanted a good time so that he could compare with his new bike (when he eventually gets the bubble wrapper off it).
- Ciaran wanted to see the effects of cold turkey on Anthony when the caffeine had worn out
- Me, well I was so disgusted with Strava's elevation calculations the last time, that I wanted to give it another chance (otherwise I'd be mapping my ride using some other alternative GPS driven geographic locating application).

Well done to all.

And well done to Strava, you have redeemed yourself for now.

Folks, I'd like to gather up, for publication, any advice/signs that you may have that you are getting too attached to cycling, so that they can be published in the Sunday Cyclist column (a paper by the people, for the people, etc).

I'll start the ball rolling with an example from Adrian Glass.

"You know you're too addicted to cycling when you go out for a drive in the car, by yourself, and you start shouting "Hole!!", "Water on the left!", etc.

Send me your experiences by text on 07989400672, or email, barney.mulholland@btinternet.com

Sunday Cycle 2nd March 2014

19 cyclists turned out for the Sunday cycle today, on a bright, dry and cool morning. Unfortunately the weather was to turn very wet for most of us before we had completed our run. In one way I was glad because this means I did not have to wash the insides of my mudguards when I got home.

Our whistler failed to turn up. We need to put some processes in place to avoid this sort of disaster in the future. For example, if the whistler cannot go out on the Sunday cycle, he should still turn up at the rec so that the whistle can be passed on to someone else. And if the person taking over the whistling duties has not whistled before, then the current whistler needs to ride with the team so that the new whistler can observe the old whistler first, then the new whistler will take over and be closely monitored by the old whistler. Later, as the new whistler's confidence grows, the old whistler can take a slightly more rear seat view of things before finally signing off on the new whistler training programme, and the old whistler can return home. Now I would not expect any new whistler to have really grasped the ropes in under 50 miles (I guess it all depends on the expertise of the old whistler and his training techniques).

Anyways, off we set heading out the way of Tamneymullan. The clutch on George's back wheel gave up at the very start and as he has an old model with no differential lock, he had to retire early.

Now us Sunday cyclists have gotten ourselves into a real bad habit lately, and that is we are starting off at a wyle pace, before people's legs have got properly warmed up.

Ronan refers to this as not so much a warm-up, more of a boil-up.

In fact, we started off at such a pace today that Tommie very nearly had to put her into the big ring to keep up.

So let's be careful out there next time (and I suppose my kettle is as black here as anybody's pot).

Off we went to Garvagh, Kilrea, Portglenone, Bellaghy, The Elk, the Newbridge, Magherafelt and Desertmartin. Then most folks went home via Tobermore, while others took in a few extra miles with a diversion to Draperstown.

Tommy Evans was out with us today. Now Tommy is a great man to go for a cycle with. See when you stop for a wee break, and you start of again, I would always be looking around me to make sure the rider behind is on their bike and properly seated and ready for the go. No need to do this with Tommy. You see Tommy, even though he's a fresh enough young man yet (only middle aged), he still makes that old man "eeuuch" sound when he sits down. It does not matter if he is sitting down to his dinner, or sitting down to watch TV, or sitting down to drive or cycle. When you hear the "eeuuch" sound, you know Tommy is in the seat and pedalling away.

I must say us Carn Wheelers are brave and good at disposing of our rubbish when on the road. In fact I would say that for 90% of cases, we Leave No Trace 100% of the time. Of course, some people go that little bit further wrt environmental friendliness. Take Jimmy for instance. You won't catch him throwing his fig-roll wrappers into the same public bin as his banana skin. Oh no. Jimmy takes a self addressed envelope with him and puts all his rubbish in there, and when he gets to a post box, he posts the rubbish home. By doing so, he can make sure his organic waste goes into the brown bin, and papers get into the blue bin, and the plastic sweetie wrappers are disposed off properly in the black bin.

For the past two or three weeks, a few of us have been baffled by the figures that Strava had been recording for our rides. In addition, Anthony has become very frustrated, because, if he and I went on an identical cycle run, Strava always ended up showing me as having climbed more than him. Well, it has now dawned on me why this would be so. Simple really. You see, Anthony's bike is a small frame and mine is a medium. This means that when we are at the top of a hill together, I am sitting at a higher elevation.

Folks, keep your responses coming in for the "You know you are too addicted to cycling..." collection, so that we can get them published soon.

"You know you're too addicted to cycling when you go out for a drive in the car, by yourself, and you start shouting "Hole!!", "Water on the left!", etc.

Adrian Glass

Send me your experiences by text on 07989400672, or email, barney.mulholland@btinternet.com

Sunday Cycle 9th March 2014

A dull, dry, calm and cool Sunday morning, and 24 bikelists gathered at the rec. Somebody called the route, and we were off.

The route this week was Tobermore, Curran, Knockcloghrim, Gulladuff, Culnady, Inisrush, Clady, Portglenone, Largy, Randalstown, Staffordstown, Toome, Newbridge, Bellaghy, Gulladuff and home to Maghera (pew, it took me near as long to type that in as it did for us to cycle the route).

A total of just over 50 miles, and lots great wee roads with some fine stretches of newly laid tar, which all made for an enhanced pedalling pleasure.

Well done to all.

Have you noticed, Canice is going well at the moment.

Now I don't know all the members in the club, but I reckon Canice is the fastest granddad in a Carn Wheelers jersey. This accolade used to sit with Gerry Kelly, but we have not seen Gerry out on a club cycle for a while (I have a sneaky feeling we might get a sharpish Wednesday cycle soon to sort this matter out).

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the "You know you are too addicted to cycling..." collection. The full list is printed below:

You know you're too addicted to cycling when you go out for a drive in the car, by yourself, and you start shouting "Hole!!", "Water on the left!", etc.

Adrian Glass

You know you're too addicted to cycling when you and the wife are going to Cookstown to do the shopping, and going through Tobermore you look up at the flegs and say "We'll have a good tail wind on the way home"

Ali Gribbon

You know you're too addicted to cycling when you scowl the waynes, and the wife, for eating your jelly babies. You tell them, "THESE ARE NOT SWEETS, they are cycling energy capsules".

Barney Mulholland

A wee reminder to anyone who is free for a couple of hours on the afternoon of Sunday 23rd March, that we still need a few more marshals for the Carn Wheelers Classic road race.

If you can help out, and you have not already done so, please contact Gerry Kelly on 07813845155 and let him know your availability.

Remember, in the interests of safety, the race will be cancelled if we don't have enough marshals, which would be a great pity.

Sunday Cycle 16th March 2014

A dull, dry, and blowy Sunday morning, and a cupla dozen bikelers gathered at the rec. Somebody called the route, and we were off (the logic being that as the wind was blowing in a longitudinally manner, we would transverse this and travel in a roughly latitudinal course).

The route this week was Tobermore, Magherafelt, Loop, Coagh, Ardboe, Stewartstown and onto Cookstown, where the group split – some heading up Lough Fea and some heading for Moneymore.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 30th March 2014

About 20 cyclists this week, left the rec sharp at about 9am (ish).

The group increased in size as we sped along our way, picking up cyclists en-route. This happening reminded me of the joke about the rabbit running race. There was 8 heats of 10 rabbits each, with the top two in each heat progressing through to the quarter-finals, then the semis and then the final. After the heats were finished there was 16 rabbits through to the play-offs. Somebody counted and there was 16 rabbits in the quarter-finals, 12 rabbits in the semi-finals and 33 rabbits in the final (boom boom).

The route this week was Tobermore, Magherafelt, Ballyronan, Newbridge, Bellaghy, Portglenone, Kilrea, Garvagh, Swatragh and back to Maghera – a total of about 50 miles.

Well done to all.

NB, next week's Sunday cycle will leave the rec at 8am sharp.

Sunday Cycle 6th April 2014

Definitely a day for the low profiles.

A tremendous group of 30 cyclists turned up today for the first of our 8am Sunday cycles this year.

Five boys wanted to “keep her flat and fast” so they zipped away off themselves --- well, only two were on zips, one on Fulcrum-Racing, a fourth on Mavic (I am nearly sure), and the last boy was away out of sight before I could take note of his wheels.

The rest of the group all decided to join in with the Wicklow 200 training programme and take in a couple of hills. We headed out of the rec carpark in two groups, however, the chasing instincts of the second group were too strong and we all merged again after about 6 miles.

Our route was to Swatragh, Garvagh, Ballerin, sharp left onto the Belraugh Road and onto Dungiven. Then up to Altinure and turning left for Moneyneeny. Then Draperstown, Tobermore, back to Maghera and a lap of the town to give us a nice round 50 miles.

The morning was mild, wet and very breezy, with head and side winds hitting us hard on the upslopes. But, as Pat Purvis would say, “It’s all good training”.

Well done to all.

Next week’s instalment in the continuing Wicklow 200 training epic can be seen at <http://carnwheelers.co.uk/news/details/?id=895>

I had two cycling shocks this week, both wheel related (That probably explains my acute observational skills wrt what other cyclists are shod with).

Shock number one. As any friends on facebook may have noticed, I managed to bust open the rim of my road bike rear wheel. Last Sunday, the bike had started making a bit of a thumping noise when breaking. I thought it was just the rear break being a bit sticky so I continued on home. On Tuesday evening before I went for a wee spin I centred my rear break, being confident that the noise would disappear. But at the first Give Way sign the noise continued. I horsed her on away and finished my ride. It was only on inspection afterwards that I noticed the damaged rim, and I was

shocked to think that I had gone up, and down Glenshane, Coolnasillagh, Lisnamuck, Ranaghan and Slaughtneil with the wheel in that state. How the tire stayed in place I do not know.

So I bought a new set of wheels on Saturday. As I drove home from Cicli-sport, I imagined how vastly improved my riding was going to be on my new Mavic Aksiums. In my mind's eye I could see myself scooting up them hills no bother, no loss of revs, no increased breathing rate. On Saturday afternoon when I actually tried out my new wheels on my bike, came shock number two. I found that even on a gentle hill like Brackareilly, I still had to pedal the damn bike!!

BM

Sunday Cycle 13th April 2014

Another large group of about 30 cyclists turned up today for our 8am Sunday cycle.

There were even a couple of mountain bike men amongst us. Gareth and Darren were heading to Banagher Dam and wanted to pedal along part of the road with us. These boys were riding magnificent big 29-er steeds and both immaculately clean. I was not surprised at Gareth's bike being so clean as his bikes are always spotless. However, based on his normal road bike presentation, I was amazed that Darren's mountain bike was so clean --- until he admitted that it was not his at all and he only had the load on it.

We headed off, as a single group, through Tobermore, Draperstown, Moneyneena and then taking the road to Feeny. At the top of the hill we paused to regroup, and the mountain men parted.

The rest of the group headed to Feeny (careful not to disturb any church services we may have passed), and then onto Dungiven.

In Dungiven the group split. Some folks opting to take the direct route home via the Glenshane Pass. Others headed for Garvagh, Kilrea, Culnady and back to Maghera.

The rest of us took the Tour Of Ulster Day 2 stage route, heading for Limavady, Ballerena and onto Downhill where we stopped to take in the sea air the views of near vertical roads. Then up we proceeded along the Bishop's Road, back into Limavady, then Drumsurn, Dungiven and back to Maghera via the Glenshane Pass.

This Day 2 stage is a really great route. Well done to whoever designed it. It has it all, some climbs, some drags, some flat bits and some fast descents.

Having checked the route out today I'd just have a couple of minor warning for anyone participating in the ToU. On the flat bit between Limavady and Ballerena, there are a couple of left hand bends where there is a badly positioned gully trap about 18 inches from the side of the road – tell the rider on the inside to be sure and shout "Hole". Also, at the start of Bishop's Road (and sorry about this), we left a pile of tyre marks on the road as we burnt rubber heading up that brae (maybe the rain will have washed it away before 4th May).

The morning was generally mild and dry, but very breezy, with head and side winds hitting us hard at times.

Well done to all.

BM

Sunday Cycle 20th April 2014

Another large group of about 30 cyclists turned up today for our 8am Sunday cycle, on this bright sunny, but initially chilly Easter morning.

On a nice morning like this, it was inevitable that we would head for the port. There was talk about making it "a fast one" and so Anne shared out the gels (or Turbo Carbs as somebody refers to them).

Making a slight alternation to our normal route to the port, we headed via Kilrea. When we got to Coleraine, a few of the group needed to be home early and so headed for Garvagh and home. The rest of us stourred on through Coleraine town and out to Portstewart. Then onto Portrush where, another first for the group, we did a tour of the town. By this time it had warmed up nicely, the waves and sea air was lovely, and the town was beginning to fill up with tourists.

Then back to Coleraine and Garvagh, where the remnants of any dust on our bikes was thoroughly shaken off by that terrible road surface on the A29 Road.

Garvagh, Swatragh and back to Maghera with 60 miles on the clock, and I think it was Tommy Evans average mileage that we agreed to go with -- 18.9 mph

Well done to all.

As many of youse will know, I have studied turbos and turboing techniques. One turbo plan I have recommends that to finish off the session, you should do a quick 15 seconds of pedalling using only one foot at a time (it improves stability, allegedly, and increases leg power). It's hard enough to do even in the flat confines of the front room. Top marks then to Helen who brought this technique outdoors with her on today's run, and demonstrated it for us on quite a steep wee hill in the middle of Coleraine. Well done.

BM

Sunday Cycle 27th April 2014 Copeland Charity Cycle

Such a wonderful sight to see a group of similarly dressed cyclists hasting their way along the road, in a strict side-by-side formation.

This was the spectacle available to anyone who saw the 30ish Carn Wheelers as we made our way from Maghera up to Cookstown for the, now annual, Copeland charity event. Once there, we treated ourselves to a wee cup ave tay, and some sugar based energy substances – just in case.

Due to time restrictions, etc, some folks weren't able to actually do the charity cycle run itself. Those that did undertake the run were treated to a grand run around the roads of Stewardstown, Coalisland, Arboe, Coagh, and (the perfect wee finish) a pull up to Orritor and back to base in Cookstown, where a lovely tea with sandwiches and buns and pastries awaited us. So good was the fare that Tommy Evans had to be pulled off a large cake so that we all could get on our way back to Maghera (as an old neighbour of ours used to say "You're better to eat an extra slice cause you never know when you'll get your next bite").

Thanks to Copeland for arranging this event for a very worthy cause, in aid of Steps.

Well done to all.

BM

Sunday Cycle 11th May 2014

After the excitement of seeing and watching the Giro for the past couple of days, it was back to the grind for the Sunday cyclists. 8am saw a dozen or so very wet boys huddled under the tree at the side of the rec carpark, for such was the ferocity of the falling rain. Big Pete Kelly commented that it was only rain, but Paddy Donnelly had noted that this rain was very wet. What we did not know at that stage was that Pete had a wee trick up his sleeve (or more precisely, up his gansay).

With only a slight easing in the downpour, and we were off, heading for Tobermore, Magherafelt, Ballyronan and into Toome. Our "Up-N-Overs" became "Back-N-Overs" as Pete was training for the Iron Man and so assumed the front left position and stayed there (I did not hear too many complaints).

It was in Toome, when we were stopped at the public toilets that Pete pulled off his masterstroke. Having warmed his hands in the blow dryer in the gents, he wheeked out a dry pair of dry gloves from his back pocket and was ready for the road. The rest of us wrung out our sodden apparel and cursed the wet and the spray as we started off again.

We headed up the Lough Beg road, onto Portglenone, Kilrea, CrossKeys, Swatragh and back to Maghera. Pete's heart monitor told him that he still had 1 hour 12 minutes left to do before he was allowed home (to change into his running gear), so a few of us accompanied him for a few more miles -- to Magherafelt, Curren and back to Maghera. On this leg of the journey the rain actually stopped and temperatures did rise, but the wind did not ease any for us.

Well done to all.

BM

Sunday Cycle 16th May 2014

Another wet Sunday, another wet Sunday cycle.

But the crack was good as the 10 cyclists left the rec car park as usual at 8am.

Our route was -- starting in Maghera , we headed to Draperstown via Tobermore. Then, a wee lung opener as we ascended the Cahore Road. Then descended down the Drumard Road and continue through Desertmartin and on towards Moneymore. Then up to the top of Slieve Gallion and then down again, heading for Inishcarn and then up Cullion. Down the Lough Fea road to Shippy's, then onto Moneyneeny and then onto Dungiven via the Burren. In Dungiven, head out the Garvagh Road and onto the Legavallon Road. Right hand turn onto Temple Road. Up the hill and then down into the Glen. Up the Legavallon Road and then down the Plantation Road. Over to the Curraghmore Road and up Matties. Down Drumbane Road as far as the Halfgain Road, and then (our final climb) up the Laganes Braes. Down the Gortinure Road for an easy spin of the legs for the last couple of miles back to Maghera.

A total of 78 miles and over 6300 feet of climbing for those who completed the circuit in full. Good training indeed.

Well done to all.

BM

Sunday Cycle 25th May 2014

A fair good turn out today for the Sunday cycle. The morning was dry, if a little cool.

The group headed off for Gulladuff, Portglenone and then onto Ballymena.

In Ballymena we stopped -- there were four members of the group who wanted to put in a few extra miles in preparation for the Wicklow200, and so wanted to head on out by Broughshane, hi.

The rest of the group headed for Galgorm, Cullybacky, Kilrea, Culnady and home, a total of about 50 miles, all achieved in dry conditions.

Before the two groups parted, Jimmy kindly donated his water cage to Anthony. Anthony's fancy carbon cage had failed badly, and even though there was a terrible colour clash (Jimmy's red cage on Anthony's white bike), it allowed Anthony to continue on in an hydrated manner.

The four Wicklow boys stoured on out by Broughshane and onto Carnlough, up the coast to Cushendun, over Torr Head and onto Ballycastle where we stopped for a welcome soup/coffee. The rain had been torrential from just after Broughshane all the way to Cushendun. The Torr climbs warmed us up a bit, but the descends were killers, leaving us wyle cowl.

Out of Ballycastle and a welcome tail wind home via Ballymoney, to leave us with the ton up by the time we reached Maghera.

Well done to all.

I am now seriously concerned about this trip to Wicklow. You see, if it is a good day for the sportive, I'm not sure we will be fit to handle it as all our training has been under wet conditions. Come on Angie, either give us one last good Sunday next week for our final session, or else be sure it rains in Wicklow.

BTW, I would advise caution now when viewing the attached photos -- maybe best to slip on a pair of dark glasses. Adrian is wearing a pair of intense jet white florescent Cannondale shorts (there's confidence for you).

BM



Sunday Cycle 1st June 2014

First of all, congratulations to Tommie McGrath for making his welcome return to the club cycle after a period of enforced offage. He could have picked an easier day to return, but the old legs proved they still had got it. Well done.

With the number of cyclists in the mid-teens, we headed off via Tobermore and onto Draperstown. A couple of the group, Helen and Phil, were for doing a charity cycle in Magherafelt and so split off from the group here, while the rest of us headed on out by Straw and the Sixtowns.

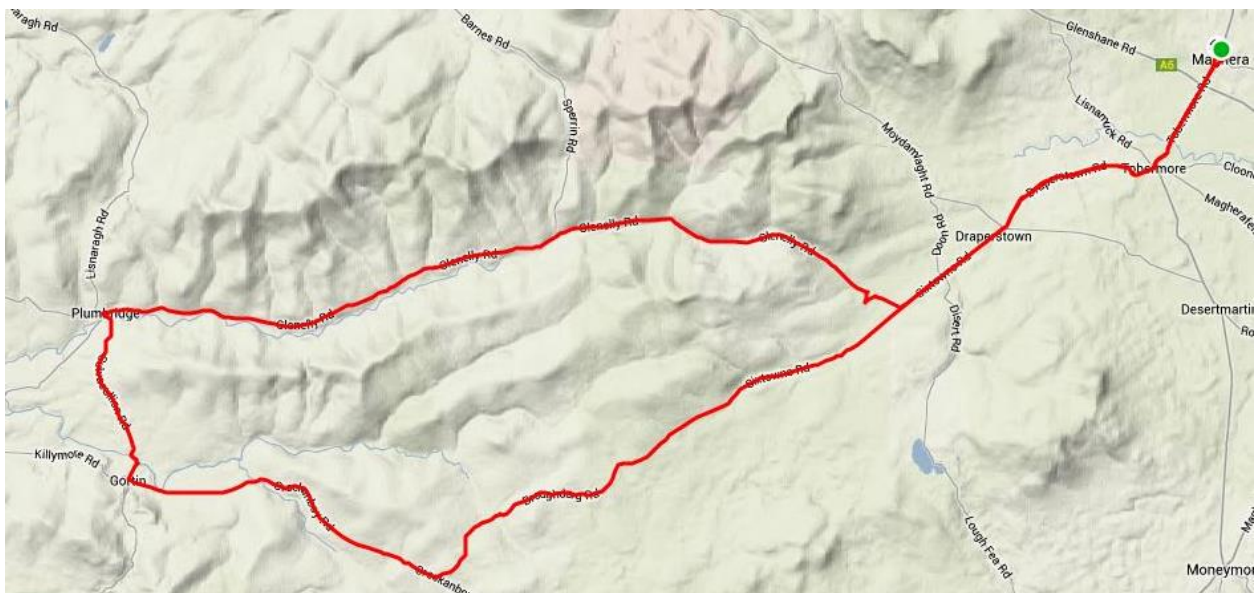
Up near Broughderg, and Decky's back wheel sprung a leak and a change of tube and fresh air was required. This was indeed a very difficult puncture repair procedure as we were literally eaten alive by the midgies.

Off again, and we descended down into the OwenKillen Glen, where another wee split had Gareth heading solo towards Cookstown. The rest of the group proceeded down into the glen proper, and then up the steep ascent of Neddy's Brae and onto Greencastle.

A few miles then of roughish pot-hole roads, but then we hit a stretch of fresh tar and it was a lovely ride onto the Plum, where we had a quick break before facing the long push home via Glenelly.

60 miles on the clock, and well done to all.

BM



Carn Wheelers at the Wicklow200 in 2014

The word Wicklow comes from the Viking language and means Viking Meadow, so after our Roman adventure in Inishowen last year, we decided that we should go Viking in Wicklow. (viking -- biking, get it, eh, eh).

In the old language, the county name is Chill Mhantáin, which means the church of Mantan, who was a disciple of Saint Patrick -- it's nice to visit other places that have an association with our great saint (i.e. this author's own people are also linked to a disciple of Patrick).

Actually it was George Mimmagh that started the whole thing off, telling us we would just have to do the Wicklow 200 this year. It was therefore really unfortunate that George could not actually do the run himself. He had to pull out at the very last minute, having suffered a hamstring blow while out waltzing and quickstepping his bike around Torr Head. (Here's wishing George a speedy recovery.)

I always thought that Wicklow was just a wee county south of Dublin, until I discovered that the Wicklow Mountains range is the largest continuous upland region in Ireland, and on Sunday we got to see most of that upland close up.

We had trained hard for this event, with lots of long and hilly outings, done mostly in the rain. As it turned out, those wet days were the ideal preparation for the meteorological conditions we faced in Wicklow.

In Viking mythology, Ragnarök is the story of a great battle held up in the mountains and ended up with the world being submerged totally in water. I closely monitored the 5 day forecast from Wednesday onwards, and it predicted that there could indeed be a damp Ragnarok in store for us on Sunday. In a way I was glad because we had not put in much practice in sunny weather and I was afeared we might not be able to cope with a build up of sweat and sunburn. But, as it turned out, we did indeed have to battle with great hills and had our feet (and other parts) drowned in water.

But enough about Wicklow history and geography and onto the cycling.

With an early start required in order to complete the gruelling 125 mile, 9300 foot cycle, we decided to travel down the night before, staying in Bray. We were all that excited that none of us got much sleep on the Friday night. On the Saturday morning before we left Maghera, it turns out we were all suffering from excitedness -- pacing up&down, cleaning the bike, pacing up&down, shining the bike, pacing up&down, taking the baby wipes out to the bike again. The excitement continued and our Saturday night in Bray offered little more meaningful kip for most of us, apart from Adrian, who

slept like a baby. My old mother used to say that there is no pillow as soft as a clear conscience, and so it is, I believe, the fact that Adrian knew he had all his training done that he could rest easy, turn up on the day and just do it.

Off to the starting point in Greystones at 6:15am. The huge crowds (3000 entries) meant a slight delay for us getting parked, and checked in, but we were ready for the off at about twenty five past seven.

I must say, we looked an absolute beautiful spectacle as we stood for the pre-cycle photo, with our Carn Wheeler kit on, and our gleaming bikes. We even had a supply of wee paper Carn Wheeler flags which we mounted onto the back of our saddle bags and helmets. With great joy and collective excitement, we hit the road.

About 500 yards up the road and we had our first downpour. Our bikes became dirty with road grit and brake pad debris, and our wee flags disintegrated.

Throughout the day we had, I would reckon, half a dozen really good downpours in between the showers, but I must say, at no stage did I hear anyone muttering that they wished they were anywhere else.

Our support vehicle (Tony's van, driven by Fiona and co-piloted by Sinead) was an invaluable asset to us. As an example, when we reached Baltinglass, there was an official food-stop. But we were able to cycle past the long queue, right up to where the van was parked, and immediately get tucked into our own sandwiches, tea, etc. Brilliant.

I do remember it actually NOT raining in Baltinglass, and I do remember our of the lads saying that surely that was the rain over for the day, and that he would put on a dry pair of cycling socks. The rest of the squad joked at him but really they were inwardly jealous, and him gloating with his dry toes. Well anyway, off we set and before we had hit the 30 out of the town the rain was on again and his feet were soon as wet as anybody elses.

Here is a list of just some of the hills we encountered:

- Glen of the Downs
- Kilmacanage
- Wicklow Gap
- Slieve Corragh
- Carricknamweel
- Slieve Maan
- Glenmalure
- Avoca Glen
- Ballindarrig and Ballinacor

Some great wee drags in there, e.g. Wicklow Gap at near 5 miles, Slieve Maan about 4 miles and Shea Elliot Glenmalure Assent being 2 miles at 10%.

I think I'd have to give the Polka Dot jersey to Tony. He flew up them hills like that famous Wicklow speedster, Eddie Jordan.

I would swear that Jim got stronger as the hills kept coming. He was telling me he wants to lose a wee bit of weight to help his cycling, but today, he was definitely punching above his weight, like that famous Wicklow warrior, Katie Taylor.

(I know a few other famous Wicklow people but I just can't be weaving them all into this story).

Down into Avoca and Barney had to get the whole crew halted while he got his photo taken outside Fitzgeralds – the Ballykissangel pub. He was saying that the whole inside of the pub had changed since the days that Assumpta used to pull one for Father Clifford.

I think the smell of the stout coming wafting out of Fitzgerald's door was enough to give Vinney the wee iron boast he needed at the time. On Saturday evening, he had very successfully negotiated the fine line between consuming too little Guinness (and not getting the full benefit of its strength and iron absorption) and consuming too much Guinness (and ending up being drained of all iron and anything else you might have inside you). That couple of lung fills, and Vinney was ready to take us out of the Avoca Glen and on towards the finish line. The rest of us just sucked on one of George's gels.

Now, even though I had not mentioned the Viking theme to anyone during the cycle run, I know that at least some of the others were thinking along the same lines.

With 100 miles done Anthony roared "I, am Thor, sitting on this bike!". I was thinking that, even though doing a century is always a big milestone and cause for a celebratory outburst, it was a wee bit pompous of Anthony to be comparing himself to the mighty Thor sitting on a big white steed. I did not quite get Ciaran's comment "More shammy cream, perhaps?".

Over the last climb and the heavens were eventually empty, and with no more rain we engaged the famous Carn Wheeler tight, two line, up&over formation and we had a pleasant and triumphant 20 mile run back to the finish line and that was us.

Into the leisure center to clock-off and pick up our certificates and medals. The medals are said to be made of pure gold, with just a thin veneer of stainless steel for durability purposes. As I watched the lovely assistant place the medal around his neck, I knew Decky had just got himself another great sporting award to proudly rest along with his two All-Irelands for Tyrone.

Not all participants this year were as determined as our lads – see the below report from the Irish Times where quite a few cyclists seem to have cut short their 200KM trip:

<http://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/record-turnout-for-wicklow-cycling-events-1.1824972>

Well done to Adrian, Anthony, Barney, Ciaran, Decky, Jim, Tony and Vincent on completing this challenging pedal. A huge thanks to the support team, Fiona and Sinead, who shadowed our route and were on hand with food and water, and to Clare and wee Dáithí who were there with us to make this a really great and enjoyable weekend.

Well done to all.

PS, I would highly recommend the Martello Hotel (<http://www.themartello.ie>) to anyone wanting to stay the night in Bray. The rooms have everything you would need, the food is both delicious and reasonably priced, and the staff are extremely friendly and helpful. Bray itself is a lovely place, but if you should wish to travel further afield, the hotel is only a short walk away from the train station, so very handy for taking the Dart into Dublin.



Sunday Cycle 15th June 2014

At last, summer has arrived and we all enjoyed a warm, dry Sunday cycle.

About a dozen and a half cyclists turned up, and off we headed for the port via Kilrea.

Home again via Ballymoney, with 65 miles on the clock.

Well done to all.

BM



Sunday Cycle 6th July 2014

A great turn out of about two dozen cyclists this week.

We first travelled to Tobermore. The original intention was to then head to Draperstown, but Pat said “Nay, we’ll horse her on into Magherafelt”.

And so we did.

Then the back road to Toome, up round Lough Beg onto Ahoghill, then Ballymena, Cullybackey and onto Kilrea, where a passing band offered the speedy hill-climbers a wee chance of a breather before Pdraig came along with his sneaky plan to get up through the seedy backstreets of the town.

A wee split in Kilrea, with some folks heading straight home while the others went to Garvagh, Swatragh and then back to Maghera.

With nearly 60 miles on the clock, well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 13th July 2014

A great turn out of over two dozen cyclists this week. Too big for just one group, so we set off as two.

The general route was Garvagh, Kilrea, Portglenone, Bellaghy, Hillhead, Castledawson, Magherafelt, Destermartin, Draperstown, Moneyneena, Tobermore and home to Maghera, although some intrepids did take a detour via Lough Fea (did I hear someone mention Inishowen100).

Good to see young Shay Gribben out with the group, and also a welcome Sunday cycle return for PC, Rory O'Connor and Ciaran Doherty.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 20th July 2014

Great turn out in the car park this morning which saw 25 riders keen to get their Sunday Cycle underway. Too many for a single group, so we split. Pat took one group and Anthony took the other.

Pat's group completed a 50 mile loop with some riders finishing on just over 60. The chosen route accommodated some relatively new cyclist which the club welcome. This group ride from Maghera, Tobermore, Magherafelt, Ballyronan, Newbridge, Bellaghy, Hillhead, Castledawson, Curran, Tobermore, Swatragh, Upperlands, up through Slaughtneil and back home. Well done to our young rider John, great effort. Thanks to all who supported the efforts of all new cyclist to the club. Great club ride on what turned out to be a lovely morning.

Anthony's group took a more altitude-based route by heading for Garvagh and up the Plantation Road. Then left up the Belraugh Road and then left again up "Canice's Hill" to the transmitters. Down into Drumsurn and then up again and onto Dungiven. From there onto Park and up over Sperrin, and then up again and over to Broughderg. Then a speedy descent down to Draperstown, Tobermore and home.

Tommie "needed" to do 80 miles today to make up the Gran Fondo challenge on Stravas, so he and some others detoured from Tobermore towards Magherafelt, Curran and back to Tobermore, then returning to Maghera, leaving Tommie with 82.5 miles.

King of the Mountains today goes to young Patrick Lagan. He was never far away on any of the ascents, and as he was also first to the county-march on Sawel, and first up to the gravel on the road to Broughderg, he secured himself the polka-dot, proving that its not all about fancy carbon bikes.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 27th July 2014

A massive amount of Carn Wheelers out and about this week.

The mountain-bikers embarked on an epic Sperrin classic, with Eoghan, Stephen and Vincent taking in some great landmarks like Coolnasillagh, The Priests Chair, Moydamlagh, Banagher Dam and the Derrynoid.

Well done lads.

The popularity of the beginners (road) cycle has grown from last week, with about 20 novices and returning cyclists, ably assisted by some dedicated old hands. The route took in Upperlands, Kilrea, Portglenone, Bellaghy, Newbridge, Ballyronan, Magherafelt, Tobermore and back to Maghera -- a grand total of 40-odd miles at an average of about 15.5 mph (great for beginners).

Ali took another group of road cyclists out to Tobermore, Magherafelt, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Coagh, Stewardstown, Dungannon Road to Cookstown, Lough Fae, Draperstown, Tobermore and home to Maghera. A total of 55 miles with an average of just under 20 mph.

Ali fleeced us up that road to Magherafelt (with manies a new Strava PR getting generated). He said it was best to go hard at the start and get nicely warmed up and then you can coast on a bit. Well, Ali must have been wearing one of them anti-thermal vests because the pace did not ease up much all day (which was great).

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 3rd August 2014

Beginners Group

A good mixture of riders in the clubs new beginners group headed off for their week 3 Sunday cycle with a wee bit of extra on the cards. Out of Maghera and into Tobermore and straight on to Lough Fea. The twist in the tail was the climb then over Ballybriest. Splitting into twos and threes with plenty of encouragement at hand all climbed well.

A new route to most of us was through Claggan and Lissan, and into Cookstown. From here the group worked hard to Moneymore and on to Desertmartin. A game of catch up took place with half of the group heading on to Draperstown and Moneyneany and the other half giving themselves a chase. Well done to all. Good team work and chat and with the wind helping on the Fivemilestraight it was straight for Maghera.

Please note all club members need to take their turn with the new group. It's great to see new riders out. Please feel free to attend.

Pat

Old Hands.

The more experienced cyclists headed to Kilrea, Ballymoney, Bushmills, the two Ports, Coleraine and back to Maghera. A total of 74 miles at an average of 18.6 mph.

A few of these folks then went on to secure their "August Gran Fondos" on Strava (ie 130KMs in a single cycle).

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 10th August 2014

Biking with Bertha.

In years to come, people in the Maghera area will still, no doubt, know about the Carn Wheelers cycling club, however, they may not remember who Bertha was.

Bertha, or to give her her full title: "The ex-hurricane Bertha" was a hurricane who started off life in the Caribbean, and having gathered up lots of rain and moisture, hooked into our Strava GPS coordinates and headed straight for the Sperrins on Sunday morning.

The legend of Bertha will live long in the memories of those who battled her cruel merciless artillery on this day.

A few feardie-cats did not venture out this morning, but there was still a good contingent of keen cyclists who ignored the rath of Bertha and met up as usual at the rec for 8am. Tommie showed total disregard for Bertha by wearing dark glasses and a peaky cycling cap to keep the sun out of his eyes.

We decided to stay as a single peloton and selected a route to suit the full range of experiences of those gathered. Our route took us to Portglenone via Culnady (a wee change for the usual concrete road). Then up the drag of Ballynafie Road towards Ballymena. Then Galgorm, Cullbacky and then another drag up the Craig's Road hill and then down to Kilrea. From there it was back to Maghera.

Well done to all who braved the elements -- sure doesn't it make the hot shower afterwards more pleasurable. And well done to Tony O'Doherty for his Herculean work in keeping the peloton moving together on the inclines.

We also had to endure what seems like more than our fair share of mechanicals today – two chains thrown and three punctures --- on the plus side, Aidan McMullan now has plenty of spent tubes for tying up the tractor arms with.

Well done to all.

Inishowen 100 17th August 2014

“That weather would fair clean the mate ave kettle the day.”

Mid August means a trip to Donegal and the Inishowen 100.

Today, there were six of us – Conall, Sean, Aidan, Barney, Adrian and Harry (an honorary Carn man for the day, who wore the green and black with merit).

To put it mildly, this was a wyle day for a bike – very windy with severe gusts, and heavy showers. Today, there were cyclists literally blown of their bikes by the wind. Luckily, none of us suffered any severe damage/pain and all bikes and bones remained in-tact.

We persevered on with great valantry – sometimes just the six of us together sharing the workload, sometimes other cyclists would join us for part of the route.

The scenary in Inishowen was spectacular as usual, lovely beaches and really impressive waves and surf at Malin Head, prompting someone to observe that “No need for soap if you were to go for a wash at Malin Head today”.

Mamore and Kinnego aren’t getting any easier for an old dog like me, and its good to see fresh faces taking on the challenge. It’s also good to have a fresh perspective of the route from the novices – eg observations of farming methods employed in the area compared to home.

Full compliments to the Foyle Cycling club for running this event. The registration was efficient, the road markings were grand, there were marshalls at all the hazard spots, and on completion, there was a certificate and Tee-shirt labelled with your name on it for all those who pre-registered. And the tea-stops were the best I have ever witnessed. None of your usual cheese on cheap white bread sandwiches today. No, a full range or tasty sandwiches, PLUS, pasta, bananas, oranges, apples, Nature Valley oaty bars, java cakes, swish roll, chocolate cake, tea cakes, plus tea/coffee/water. I did suffer a bit after both the on-route tea-stops as my belly was too full for normal cycling. Well done to Foyle.

Although it was a rough day, and at no time did I ever think that I wanted to quit or to be somewhere else, that poem by Padraic Colum kept coming to my mind:

...oh the crying wind and the lonesome gust.
And I am praying to God on high
And I’ve been praying to him all day
For a little shelter, a wee bit ave shelter
Out of the wind and rain’s way.

Well done to all.

Giants Causeway Coast Sportive Saturday 13th September 2014

Today, Adrian, Aidan, Anthony, Barney, Ciaran and Tony completed the Giants Causeway Coast Sportive. The GCCS is a 116 miles, 8800 foot cycle which starts and finishes in Ballycastle, and takes in the north coast and some of the Glens of Antrim, culminating with a spin out over the Torr Head Road.

Barney had done the GCCS before, and so he was sure that he could use this insight to guide the others through the itinerary. However, a couple of changes had been made to the route layout from previous years - one by design, the other by cruel devilment.

Adrian had planned a weekend break in Ballycastle, so he was able to collect our bike numbers and timing chips on the Friday evening, saving us the hassle of registration on the morning itself. The rest of us agreed to meet up at the rec at 6am, which should have given us enough time to get to Ballycastle and be on the road on the bike at the earliest possible kick-off time, which was 7:30am. However, one of the team somehow managed to sleep through the excitement of such a momentous day ahead, only stirring from his slumber when he received the phone call at ten by six "Whirr yee yat?".

We hot tailed it down to Ballycastle, and managed to get started the cycle just before 8am. Out of the car-park starting line, and the first change to the route. Instead of heading out through the town for a gentle few miles of a warm-up, the route turned immediately right and up that big brae round the back of Ballycastle. The steep pull, and the cool morning air, left us a bit rattled after only a few miles. But we soon settled down into the famous "Carn Wheeler Sunday Cycle formation" (2 abreast, up&overs, sharing the load).

There were lots of direction signs pinned to telegraph posts and road signs to ensure the cyclists did not get lost. Barney remarked, "See if this run was happening at home, you cud be sure that every wan ave them signs would be changed round". The others replied that surely the good people of Antrim would never do that.

We kept up a good pace and before we knew it, we were back in Ballycastle having completed the "wee loop".

Here we stopped off at the van, shed our baselayers (as it had warmed up nicely), a wee bite to eat, and then it was off again, out of Ballycastle towards Glenshesk for the "big loop". After Glenshesk we did (the back side of) Glenann, and then Glenballyeamon, before a flat bit around the coast road from Glenarm to Cushendall. Then the short road to Cushendun (short as in up over the mountain rather than around it).

In Cushendun we stopped for a wee minute and got our breathe before taking on the Torr Head road. Barney told everyone that there were four lumps to this road and so we would ride up each one at our own pace and regroup at each summit. At the top of the third peak, Barney confidently asserted that we only had one more climb -- we would first have a tricky descent and then a short bit of climbing at the bottom but it levelled off to then just be a long drag.

But at the start of the forth climb, instead of following the road sign for Ballycastle (as usual), the route directed us off to the right. "Ah, a wee variation from the previous year", thought Barney, "no

real odds anyway, we'll just go down here a wee bit and rejoin the Ballycastle road a bit further on". But this was not a planned alternative by the organisers – this was where some wee skitters had changed the signs. Worser still, they put up another sign later on and herded us all down a wee narrow road, with poor tar covering, screelings and gravel and lumps missing of the surface. And to top it all, the road did an ascention up some serious hairpins at around 30% gradient.

But anyway, we persisted on and made it to the top. Only six miles left, all downhill into Ballycastle. A nice wee spin of the legs to finish off (and clear out any cramp that had set in).

A great cycle run, performed with great company. Well done lads. Bring on the next one.

You'll notice from the photos that Barney was not wearing his usual Carn Wheelers Back&Green. Instead, he was in the yellow&white colours of Marie Curie. Thanks to everyone who has donated, helping Barney raise over £500 for this worthy cause this time. You can still donate, either on-line at www.justgiving.com/BarneyMulholland, or you can donate directly to Barney himself and he will ensure that the money gets sent to Marie Curie.



Tour of South Derry Sunday 12-Oct-2014

Over the years the Tour of South Derry organisation committee have honed this charity event into a very popular cycle run. This year we again intended to adhere to our winning formula (Stick strictly to cycling, plan a safe but challenging route, marshal it well, feed and reward the participants with a memento of the day).

And so with months of preparation behind us, the club once again hosted a very successful Tour of South Derry. The weather played its part, and over 450 cyclist took to the roads, helping to raise much needed funding for Macmillan Cancer Support.

Thanks to all the cyclists who turned up on the day to join in on this event. As you read this, you might be feeling tired, legs feeling a bit sore after pushing hard out the Moneymore Road, or struggling up the Lough Brae. If so, remember, in all likelihood, you will recover in a day or two. But spare a thought for those unfortunate people who suffer everyday and whose recovery is not guaranteed - the people that Macmillan Cancer Support do so much to help. Your donation and efforts today are greatly appreciated by Macmillan and we guarantee that every penny of your entry fees goes to Macmillan.

Also thanks to the Macmillan staff themselves who assisted us with registrations, catering and ensuring all cyclists were well accommodated.

Thanks to the Magherafelt GAA club for the use of their facilities and for the folks who helped with car parking, marshalling etc.

Thanks to the ambulance crew who were on-hand if needed, fortunately they were not called into duty.

Thanks to the Carn Wheeler club members, and others, who helped out with registration, marshalling, catering, broom wagon and general support.

Thanks to the ladies who spent all Saturday morning preparing the sandwiches (a tough few hours buttering!).

Thanks to our sponsors who helped us fund this event. (The list of sponsors is given below).

And a huge debt of gratitude to Mickey Donnelly who, as in previous years, was the driving force and organisational principal behind the ToSD. Well done Mickey.

Check out the photos from todays event at: <http://www.carnwheelers.co.uk/gallery/tour-of-south-derry-2014-141>

The final amount raised by the Tour of South Derry is yet to be counted. We will, as per previous years, have a formal presentation of the money raised to Macmillan, so watch this space.

List of Sponsors

O'Kane's Chemist	Hutchinsons Feeds	Blow-Tech
Corramore	H&A	Sportique
Genesis	Modern Kitchen Supplies Magherafelt	Kellystone
Conway Group	Cloane Construction	SDC
T McGrath Menswear	C.K Car Sales	Time bar + Venue
S McPeake&Sons	Hughes Steel Fabrications	Oakland Insurance
Springhill Carbodyrepair	Attracta Mulholland (Foot Health Practitioner)	

Sunday Cycle 2nd November 2014

I don't think the Global Warming police work at the weekends. Good job, otherwise Bushmills could have been in serious threat of loosing their Blue Flag status. You see, there was a serious and sustained leakage of CO₂ (which is the worst of the greenhouse gases) in the town this morning, and it was caused by the Carn Wheelers. The only saving grace was a strong wind, which helped disperse the hole in the ozone and allowed us to escape ahead the townfolks became suspicious of our louterings and before they succumbed to the lack of good oxygen in the air.

And the reason for the CO₂ spillage? Well, we had a few tubes to pump up. That is a slight exaggeration. We had one tube. But we filled it and emptied it, and filled it again, and emptied it again. Half an hour we spent on that one wheel trying to get it just right. Eventually we did, and with much cheering and back-slapping, we were able to continue our journey.

To go back to the start of the morning, a large crowd gathered at the rec as usual. Two groups were required and the route planned. Adrian Glass noticed he had a puncture, which he managed to get fixed with the minimum of fuss and only a small delay in getting the peloton on the road.

The route was Kilrea, Ballymoney, Dervock, Bushmills, Coleraine and home (although I do believe one of the groups went home from Coleraine via Ringsend).

A strong wind from the south made the homeward leg tough, but sure that is all good training.

Well done to all.

Teide 8th November 2014

It was away back in early spring time that Tommy's wife Sharon came down to visit with my wife. They concluded that we needed to have a sunshine holiday this year and asked me for my preferences. I said that I didn't mind where we went, as long as I got one day cycling and one day at the water park.

And so it came to pass that we went to Tenerife, which only has the longest continuous ascent of any cycling road in Europe. Well, me and Tommy just had to have a bit of that.

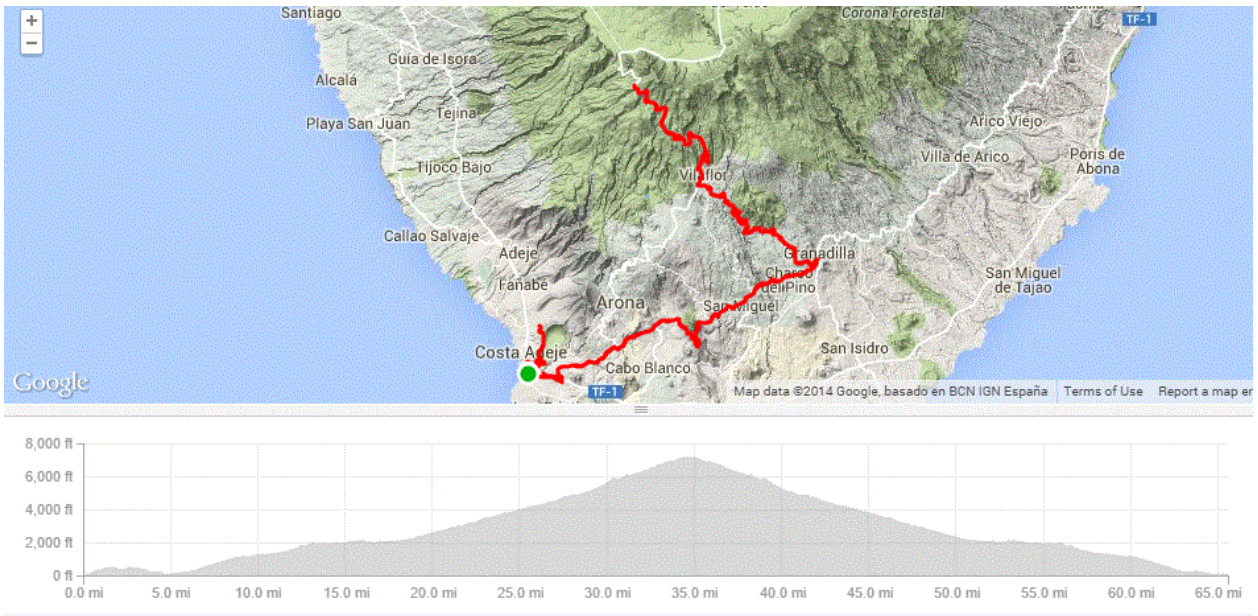
The road is about 30 miles of continuous "up". The surface was generally very good, with only a few hundred yards of less perfect tarring. The going was tough and relentless, and even though it was November, the sun was shining bright and the temperatures were hot. But we ground it out and eventually reached the highest point on the road, which, to be truthfull, was a bit of an anti-climax at first. You see, there was no big lead up to the top, no signs saying 5KMs to go, 1KM to go etc. Just a sudden change in slope from the road going uphill to it starting to go downhill. After a minute or so we realised that we had made it and the elation then set in – what an ascent!!

It did not quite take us as long coming down. Our wind jackets were essential as the descending temperatures were cold on the thighs. Now I'm not a great descender, but it was a delight to go back down that hill again, with its smooth tar and sweeping bends (there were a couple of tight corners, so please beware).

We had hired the bikes from Bike Experience Tenerife (<https://bikeexperiencetenerife.com/en>). We had called into the shop a couple of days beforehand, and everything was ready for us on the morning of the cycle itself. We opted for the Specialized Tarmac SL4 which were fitted with Ultegra all round – lovely bikes indeed. We had brought our own pedals and helmets, but it is possible to hire these as well. In fact, anyone thinking of hiring a bike for more than a few days can email their dimensions (eg taken from a professional bike fit) through to the shop, and Ferdi will have the bike setup perfectly for you. It was a really good bike hire experience and I would recommend Bike Experience Tenerife to anyone visiting Tenerife. NB, as well as road bikes, they also do mountain bikes.

The second of my holiday desirements can true a couple of days later when we visited Siam Park - one of the best water parks in the world. Brill.

Well done to all.



Santa Cycle 21st December 2014

A fantastic gathering of Carn Wheelers this morning for the now traditional Christmas time Santa Cycle.

From the very young right up to the spritely veterans, this Cutterment of Clauses (plus one pixie) made it way to Tobermore, Draperstown, Desertmartin, Magherafelt (where we got stuck on a revolving roundabout, to the delight of all town centre motorists) then onto Tobermore and back to Maghera for a victory circuit of the town (again to the delight of the locals). Then back to the carpark where we had mulled wine, mince pies and other festive treats.

Thanks to Vinney and the boys who got the Santa suits for us (its an old cliché, but it really would not have been the same without them).

Well done to all. Together we raised over two hundred pounds which (as always) will be donated to the Foyle Hospice.

