

Chronicles of a Sunday Cyclist

A collection of short stories by Barney Mulholland



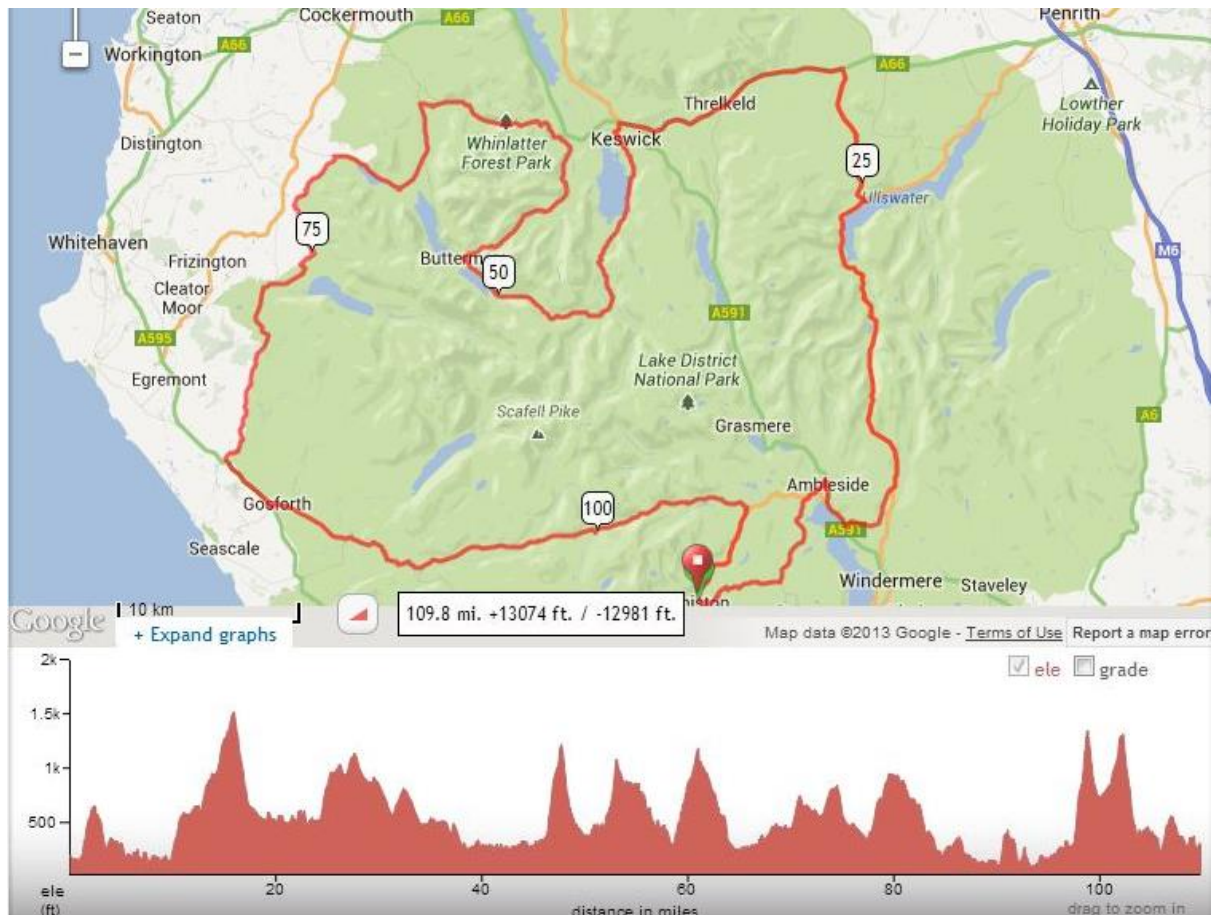
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The Fred Whitton Four Seasons Cycling Challenge

as taken by Barney Mulholland. 27th May 2013



Having dibbed my dibber, starting off from Conistone at about 8:15am, it was a nice, dry, calm morning.

About a mile into the route and, welcome to the Fred, the first climb of the day, Hawkshead Hill. A minor climb in the grand scheme of things (like going up Lisnamuck).

Down again, rolling, and then onto the Kirstone Pass, a long drag of 5 miles, with a couple of steep bits. At about a mile from the top of the pass, ie about 14 miles into the journey, it started to rain. And it certainly did rain, and blow wind, all the way to about the 70 mile mark, when the rain stopped but the wind got even worse. The wind did die down at about the 100 mile point.

Top of KIRSTONE Pass, and a wee tea break with the road team, and then off again in the rain. The descent down KIRSTONE would be pleasant on a dry day, it's a fairly good road with only a few sharpish twists.

Then rolling along the side of Ullswater lake, then a left turn and climb up Matteredale (like going up Ballypriest), down the other side and then join the A66 road for the 9 miles into Keswick. This was a horrible part of the route. The A66 would be like the Castledawson Bypass, single carriageway with a half metre hard-shoulder. And it is seriously busy with fast moving traffic. By the time I reached Keswick, the second pit stop with the road crew, I was thoroughly drenched and shivering badly. A hot cup of tea, a peanut butter and honey sandwich, a change of socks and gloves and pull on the winter tights and overshoes and I was off again.

Next big hill was Honister, seriously steep at the bottom and the top, with a less steep bit in the middle. The bottom section would near be on a par with Benbradagh, steep-wise, but not as long. On the bottom section I had a serious wind in my face and was really drained when I reached the top of it. When I reached the very top of the pass, I stopped and took a mini-Mars bar out of my pocket, and as I leaned my head forward to take a bite, and the water from my helmet streamed down in front of my face, a car passed by the and driver gave me the thumbs up. I thought that was a really nice gesture of him, so I was smiling as I took off again.

Taking off from the top of Honister is scary - like coming down the far side of Mamore Gap. Then down onto the Buttermere valley, then take a right and up the Newlands Pass - which is a bit like the Birren from Dungiven - steep at first and then a long hard drag.

Down NewLands, and then immediately up Whinlatter. Now Whinlatter does have a couple of steep bits, but mostly a drag, and the road was good, wide and well surfaced and so not a hard ascent at all. I met the road crew at the top of Whinlatter – more hot tea and food, dry socks and a pair a brand new waterproof winter gloves which proved invaluable (as I was still shivering when on the descents and at the pit stops).

Down Whinlatter, and then a long stretch of wee-winday-uppy-downy roads, which included the hills of Fangs Brow (like going up Lisnamuck) and Kelton Fell (like going from the Glen Road to top of Urbalshinny). After Kelton I noticed, whay-hay, no more rain, just stormy winds. The climb up Cold Fell was a struggle into this wind. It was like going up the Plantation Road, then it levels off for a good bit before another steep wee bit to the top. Cold Fell is a desolate place, not good for the soul. On the descent you can see Sellafield to the right and I wondered if they would sell nuclear powered energy gels.

At the bottom of Cold Fell, a meet up with the road crew for more dry socks, the last of the tea from the flask, and snack bars. Then set off, knowing I had the "big one" ahead of me.

Now full marks to the road crew here, they noticed that as I left Calder Bridge I was still shivering like mad. So they charged ahead to the next village, Gosford, and had a hot mug of fresh tea from a pub waiting for me when I arrived. It did the trick, I was not cold for the rest of the day.

Shortly after Gosford there is Irkton Pike which is like Ranaghan Lane. Then a longish slow ascent up the Eskdale valley, past the Woolpack Inn and onto the foot of Hardknott Pass, having now covered a total of approx. 100 miles.



Let me describe Hardknott Pass. I have never been on a mountain like it on a road bike. Benbradagh does not come near. Hardknott Pass is the steepest road in England. There are 3 basic sections to Hardknott -- a brutal lower section with steep hairpins, followed by a nice flattish bit (to catch your breath), followed by an even more brutaler bit at the top containing a “ladder” wedged in between a sharp left then a sharp right turn.

On these steep parts of Hardknott, the tar is very uneven, very rippled.

Now I have heard people talk about going up a mountain and their front wheel lifting on them. This had never happened to me before on the road bike. But it happened to me on Hardknott, several times.

We did not take that many photos of me on my way round the Fred, but I would have liked a couple of me making my way up Hardknott, but that was not to be. You see, on the Sunday before the cycle itself, I took one member of the road crew, who will remain anonymous to protect them from embarrassment, up Hardknott and Wrynose in the car. When we got down again, and they were able to let go of the car door arm rest, the crew member said to me, “Barney, I know you are my husband, but I will never, ever, go up there again”.

Well anyway, I got up Hardknott, slowly, 3 mph on most of it.



Down Hardknott has to be taken slow and easy with the full brakes on – it's like dropping of the inside-rim of a bucket.

Down the valley and then up again for Wrynose – probably a bit steeper than going up the Birren from the Moneyneena side.

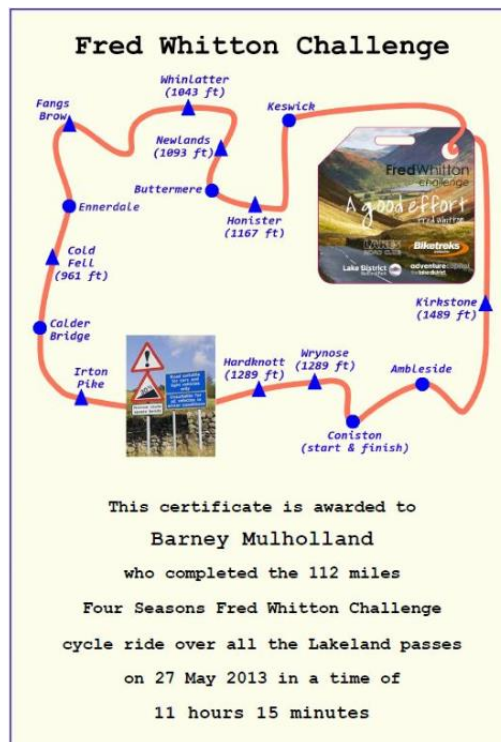
At this stage you think that all the work I done, but after the descent of Wrynose (which is not as bad as the descent to Hardknott), Fred throws in a few more wee punchy lifts, (there was one road sign warning of gradients of 12%, and after coming over Hardknott and Wrynose, I had to have a wee chuckle to myself "Call that steep?"), before finally easing off for the last mile or so back into Coniston. I don't mind telling you that on this last mile I did get a wee bit emotional with myself. I thought of the generous people who had sponsored me on the cycle and the worthy cause that the money is going to. I thought to myself that I had suffered a bit today, and it might take a day or two for me to recover, but there are some unfortunate people who suffer everyday and whose recovery is not guaranteed.

A big thanks to the road crew, Attracta, Dorothy and Brian without who, I would never have made it.

Also thanks to Gareth Skelly who had the bike going in perfect working order.

And thanks to all those who sponsored me on this run. All proceeds go to Marie Curie Cancer Care. If you would still like to sponsor me, you can do so by visiting my JustGiving website <https://www.justgiving.com/barney-mulholland/> and donating what you can.

My official time as measured by Fred himself was 11 hours and 15 minutes. My actual cycling time, according to my bicycle speedometer, was 9 hours 40 minutes.



A confession.

You either cycle up a hill or you don't. In short, I did not cycle up Hardknott.

I could have told youse all that I did make it, and maybe get away with it in this life, but then I would fear that my purgatory for doing so would be being forced to cycle up, and down, Hardknott for all eternity.

After having negotiated the "ladder" mentioned above, I was sure that I would make it to the top. The road then drags up at probably 20%, then eases off for 5-10 yards, then another kick of about 25-28% for about 60 yards, before finally easing off for the last couple of hundred yards to the summit. I was 40 yards into that last 60 yard steep bit. I was suffering badly for sure, my heart rate was high, my chest was heaving and my leg muscles half cramped. The front wheel gave a leap and I was off. Bitterly disappointed, I just could not believe it. I am convinced that there was more in me to make it to the top, but whatever happened the front of the bike, I just lost control. And there was no way of starting to pedal again at that slope (28% according to GPS). So I cursed Hardknott, walked the 20 yards to the lesser slope and proceeded to cycle to the summit.

Thinking of it afterwards, my mind tells me that if I had not emptied the tank so much in that gale getting up Honister, I would have had the energy to negotiate all of Hardknott. But who knows.

(A challenge for another day, perhaps).

Some other observations.

Them wee Herdwick sheep on the Fells are great. Good strong back legs, and very tame. They stay calm and still as you cycle past. Not like the raherays on the Birren who wait till you are 3 feet away from them then dart across the road in front of you.

Driving throught Scotland, it is definatley Massey country, whereas the north Lake District would be more your John Deere type farmer.

I heard a woodpecker for the first time ever – do we have woodpeckers in Ireland?

On the steep part of Hardknott, the tar is very uneven, very rippled. I wondered did the sun do that, eg the sun melted the tar and the slope was that great that the tar slide down the hill. But then I thought about how they tarred the road in the first place and thought that it would be impossible to get a lorry load of tar up them slopes, far less a steam roller to level it out. My only conclusion is that they must have used a helicopter and hovered over the road while men shoveled the tar out of the helicopter and it landed in big uneven splats on the road, and that is how it is still laying there like that.

Sunday Cycle 23 June 2013

A wet miserable Sunday, 8am, and the car park at the Rec was not its usual bustling self.

Only five people were gathered, and two of those were road sweepers, in for a bit of shelter.

Jim, Pat and Barney were there from the Wheelers, but Pat had not brought his bike. He did however, give the other two lads a grand rousing speech before sending them off. With the sounds of “character building, men from boys, no such thing as bad weather, fiery steel, tear down that wall, temporary pain, don’t conquer the mountain conquer yourself, once more unto.....” the two near-veteran cyclists speed off out that Moneyshavin Road into the cutting wind, only easing off whenever Pat was out of view.

The route took the lads through Swatragh, Garvagh, Aghadowey, Kilrea, Portglenone, Bellaghy, Hillhead, Magherafelt, Desertmartin, Draperstown, Tobermore and back to Maghera. Lots of 30s which the lads shared, so both are expecting to be well in contention for the club Green Jersey at the end of the season.



To the Plum Sunday Cycle 30 June 2013

A lot more people in the rec car park this Sunday morning, but not a word from the two old cyclinators, Barney&Jim, about fair weather cyclists.

Dessie asserted, "We'll go to the Plum, sure there is only one climb between here and there".

The planned route was 5-Mile-Straight, Moneyneena, up the B40-Glenedra Road to Park, Plumbridge and back through Draperstown. People immediately started taking off layers, in anticipation of the tough climb out on Moneyneena.

The numbers were too big for a single group, so we split into two, Dessie taking the first group with a 5 minute lead over the second group which was whistled by Anthony.

The climb out of Moneyneena was, as expected, hot. But, to misquote Kieran Doherty, who had kept on his base layer, winter jacket and gillet, it did stop him from getting the cold which he already had anyway.

The ride down into Altinure (Banagher) should have been fast and easy. But with a fierce side wind, it felt like we had to "corner" the bicycle the whole way down the straight bits. Not a day for big rims.

Into Park and the start of the rain. Nothing unusual there then.

<schoolBoyHumor Alert>

Despite the rain and the wind, the spirit of the riders was good and humor levels were high. There was great merriment in the group when Jim laughed "Did you see the name of that road there, it was called Stranglewilly". Actually the correct name is Stranagalwilly. I think Jim might have been taking a liberty there, because the road is not called that at all, it is the townload that is called Stranglewilly (I mean Stranagalwilly). The road name was Swallowilly, (which is much less humorous altogether.)

< /schoolBoyHumor Alert>

On down into the Plum, and a wee break. The rain got heavy as we started off again. "How far is it to Draperstown from here", someone asked. "It's like going over the FiveMileStraight" says Pete.

Well there were some similarities I suppose, but Strava tells me that this road was 4 times longer and 4 times more climbing than the FiveMileStraight.

The road was very uppy-downey, which lead to constant gear changing and some terrific sounding rattlers on the back sprocket. Best prize goes to Big Pete who managed to generate an ungodly sounding clatter and him with his electronic shifter. I suppose if you're gonna rip your gears, those electronic shiftinators will help you do it quicker.

"How come your gear changes are always so smooth", someone asked Barney.

"It has been perfected over the years of driving the wee Massey with their notoriously rippy gearboxes up and down the hills of Slaughtneil" was the reply.

Back into the rec car park at approx. 12:30, with 60 miles done and an average of 60 feet per mile of elevation gain (our new stats man wants us to forget about high average miles per hour readings and concentrate on more tangible cycling data). Another day with wet feet.

<productPlacement Alert>

Are you, like me, fed up with getting your feet sodden wet every time you go out for a cycle? Are you concerned that long term exposure to hyper-hydro conditions may have a real detrimental effect on your efficient pedaling stroke?

If so, why not get your feet checked out by a professional foot health practitioner.

Ring Attracta (glad sponsor of the CarnWheelers – Tour of Ulster) on 07596780239 and book that appointment right now. Attracta will treat ingrown toe nails, corns, calluses and hard skin (which really soaks up the rain). All treatments can be done the comfort of your own home.

This offer is open, not only to cyclists, but anyone who has experienced rain, either on or off a bicycle.

</ productPlacement Alert>

(Footnote, a few liberties may have been taken with the production of this summary, and the facts adjusted slightly to pad out a good story. So please accept that no offense has been meant to anyone and take the story in the humorously factual nature that it is intended for).

The start of the mountain season. Sunday Cycle 7th July 2013

With the Tour in the Pyrennees, and the wheef of Inishowen the air, a couple of the lads today were unanimous that we should be doing a bit of climbing.

So off we went towards Garvagh, taking a pleasant diversion through Craigavole. Through Garvagh and up the Plantation Road, where body temperatures soared as well as the elevation. A cooling run down into Drumsum, before a left turn and the drag back up again to the Legavallon Road.

Another respite as the peloton sped its way down into Dungiven. Then another drag into Feeney, followed by the Gledra Road (towards Moneyneena) with its 6 miles and 700ft of climbing - topping out at 10% gradient.

A chance to spin the legs as we headed from Moneyneena to Draperstown, Desertmartin, Magherafelt, Castledawson, Hillhead, Knockcloughlim and back to Maghera.

A lovely summer's day for a cycle, total of 63 miles with an average of 54.8 feet of elevation gain per mile.

Oh all right then, 17.7 mph.

<productPlacement Alert>

Are you, like me, fed up with getting your feet heated up and sweated every time you go out for a cycle on a hot summer day?

Are you concerned that long term exposure to hyper-persperant conditions may have a real detrimental effect on your efficient pedaling stroke?

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This offer is open, not only to cyclists, but anyone who has experienced warm weather, either on or off a bicycle.

</ productPlacement Alert>

Sunday Cycle – 14th July 2013 Pat's Return

With the good weather continuing, there was a large turn-out on Sunday --- too many for one group. So we split, one group heading off for Greencastle-Cookstown, with the other group, which included this author, heading off with Dunloy in mind.

We went to Bellaghy, Portglenone, then taking the Hiltonstown Road to Culleybackey (a change from the usual route up Ballynafie).

From Culleybackey we then headed for Dunloy where we had a wee sugar replenishment break before taking the steep incline out the Tulahans Road. This brought us out onto the Ballymoney-Kilrea line, where we turned right for Ballymoney, then onto Garvagh and then up the Tirkeenan Road. Yes, for the first time in living memory, the group was heading up Mattie's Bray. We conquered the ascent admirably and so, chuffed with our performance, instead of taking the soft road into Swatragh, we headed up the Halfgayne Road and into Slaughtneil land. Then over to Ballyknock, making sure Ali and Kevin actually did go home, then in the Glen Road and back to Maghera.

Over 60 miles done with an average elevation gain of 45 feet per mile travelled ---- humm, that is well down on recent weeks so best to do something to fix that stat.

The remnants of the Greencastle-Cookstown group, ie Marc, seemed pretty relaxed and not too tired when we arrived back at the rec – obviously our group had the tougher ride.

It was indeed good to see Pat back with the group, keeping the lines straight and tight, and lavishing praise for good work done to all who deserved it, apart from Jimmy, who, although Pat did recognise him for his puncture fixing skills, he just had to constructively criticise the slack way in which Jimmy was leading us up the slopes of Portglenone. Hi Pat, you just have to keep at these young boys or they will never learn.

(PS, I think Jimmy deliberately only half fixed the first puncture so that he would win praise again from Pat when he would have to fix the second puncture).

Ascention Monday - 22nd July 2013

Yes, to my mind, a first for the club with a formal group gathering on a Monday evening of Carn Wheelers intent on doing a bit of climbing.

We had 3 route options:

- 1) up to Broughderg via Davagh Road,
- 2) up Slieve Gallion, or
- 3) Up Cullion.

Mairead didn't fancy Broughderg as this is an often pedalled route for her, so with no argument, this option was discounted by the group.

We just could not pick between the other two routes, so we opted to tackle both, with the planned course of Tobermore, Desertmartion, towards Moneymore but turning right up Daisy's Hill and onto Slieve Gallion. Then down Slieve Gallion, round Inishcarn and up Cullion. Then over the top and down the Lough Fay (Desert) road into Straw. Then Draperstown, Tobermore and home.

Out of the rec carpark like young calves being let out of the byre for the first time in late spring, we sprang and bucked our way down towards the traffic lights. But tragedy struck our first rider as Nicky suffered a spoke failure, and so had to limp his bike off home, while the rest of us tore on out the Tobermore road.

Nothing too important to report about the road to Moneymore, apart from that big lump of rock with its pointy thing sticking out of the top of it, which shadowed our right hand side.

Then turn right on to the Tullynagee Road where it is glasses off, one last jelly baby and settle down to a bit of low-power but high-torque grunting.

As I struggled up past the Targan crossroad I could hear a bicycle coming up behind me and about to overtake. No real surprise there, but what was surprising was whose bike it was. It was Nicky's bike, and Nicky was riding it. He had gone home, changed the bad wheel and charged off down the road again like a fireman on a call-out to a grouse fire. Good work.

According to Strava, from the start of Tullnagee Road to the top is 5.4 miles and is a Cat 2 climb. So well done to us all on getting up to the top (we have photographic evidence to prove this, we don't just talk a good hill).

Off then down the hill, which contained a couple of sharp tricky turns, but this gave Kieran the opportunity to practice his “leg out” cornering technique.

And onwards to the next challenge, Cullion, a mere Cat 3. Again, good work all round. Then across the lumpy, (but mostly lumpy-downhill) road to the end of the Cullion Road and then down the Ballypriest Road, and onto the fast descent of the Desert Road.

We then continued the fast pace home.

A good evening’s ride, having done 40 miles with an average of 75 feet per mile.

Awards

The Polka Dot jersey goes to Stephen Law, who won this by a (vertical) mile. From a distance, Stephen could be mistaken for Nairo Quintana. Quintana is small, but Stephen is far away, far away on up that hill there.

The Green jersey and the White jersey both go to Marc. This is despite the fact that his bicycle sounded like he had strapped a Rover biscuit tin half filled with 4 inch bolts onto his back wheel.

The Yellow jersey – a close call here, but I think Mairead got it. The way she came screeching up past the Meeting House meant that she was intent on crossing that line in a serious manner.

We don’t have a best Descenter jersey, so I will introduce the “Thor Hushovd” award. Now by descenter I mean the person who can drop elevation the quickest (and not the person who is the nyerkiest). I am not best placed to judge this category, as usually I only get a view on the winner from afar, but I think Tommie has it this time (and anyone who disagrees will be accused of being nyerky).

Roll on Inishowen.

Please note, no animals or birds, particularly grouse, were actually hurt in the fire, which did not happen anyway.

As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense to anyone. BM



Sunday Cycle – 4th August 2013

A lovely fresh Sunday morning and a couple of dozen wheelers took to the road.

Route was Tobermore, Magherafelt, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Arboe, Clonoe, Stewardstown, Cookstown, Moneyneena, Desertmartin, Draperstown, Moneyneena and the 5 Mile Straight. Nothing wyle spectacular there you would think, all very quiet with the calmness only really being broken by the creaking of Martin's chain. Until someone had the idea of going up Coolnasillagh, so up we went.

Now I cant say for sure who that exact someone was, but Roanie and MickeyS seemed to be agitating for a hill all day -- there was a suggestion that when we got to Moneyneena that we would have to leave Ronan home via the Burren, so I suppose the "Col de Sillagh" was a fair compromise.

Then down the Glenshane Pass, over the quarter road and back into Maghera.

Ride stats: 67 miles, 3471 feet of elevation, 52 feet per mile, 18.6 mph average.

BM



Monday Cycle 5th August 2013

The popularity of the Monday evening cycle continues, with 5 hearty chaps meeting at the Rec at 6:30 for a bit of climbing. "We are heading to the Pot", declared Barney (something about his grandda used to play a fiddle up round there).

The planned route was up Tirkane, over Slaughtneil, up Corlecky and Knockoneill, up and then down into Glenullin, over Betty Anne's Road, then up the Legavallion Road. At the Pot bar, take a 90 degree left turn, and a 15 degree front wheel up-turn, and we are off up the Temple Road. A sharp wee climb, then a geronimo of a descent down into the Glen again. Then heading for home via the beloved Mattie's Brae, then Lagan's Braes and then a wee diversion through Grillagh and Tirnonny and back to Maghera.

After Sunday's cycle, I was worried about the legs. There were sore and tired at the start of the ride, but once we had cleared Jim Dengel's brae, they had regained their form again.

I started to list the names of the five chaps who were on the cycle, but for whatever reason, a song keeps coming into my head:

There was Ali G, The Bradleys three
Vincent, Ciaran and Anthonee.
And with Barney M, The group's momentum
Was high till they reached their destonee.

Da da daa da daa
De daa da daa daa.....ehem

Ride stats: 32 miles, 2736 feet of elevation, 85 feet per mile, 16.2 miles per hour.

BM



Team Cycle - Sunday 11th August 2013

It was one of those “It’s hard to know what the weather’s going to do” sort of morning as the dozen and a half or so Carn Wheelers gathered in the usual place for the Sunday team cycle.

Tommie checked the flag pole and identified the route we should take. And so, with the emphasis very much on “The Team”, we headed out the car park and towards the town centre. Some people at the back had barely time to get clipped in when Tommie called for a halt so he could pull on the rain coat that he had only a minute earlier taken off and folded up so neatly (like the purveyor of fine apparel that he is) and stuck into the back pocket. I cant recall if this stop was long enough for Ali to get a wee pee break in or not.

Quickly back into the saddle again and the team are off to Tobermore, Magherafelt then Ballyronan. By now the skies were brighter and the team stopped to allow the rain-wear to be condemned to the back pockets again. Ali definitely did go for one this time (and Barney too, after blaming it on the fact that Ali had already gone, citing some scientific proof about cows in a byre).

Back in the saddle again and onto Ballymcguigan, Newbridge and Bellaghy. Then on the road to Portglenone, the team had another wee stop for fuel and hydration and some people, including Ali getting rid of some liquids (you know what I mean). Ciaran had to adopt the Power Guitar Stance as he found himself pointing in the wrong direction and things starting to flow back his way.

The team then proceeded onto Portglenone, Rasharkin then Ballymoney. Was it Ali that called for a pee stop when the team was on its way to Garvagh, I cant rightly recall.

The team then went onto Garvagh and Swatragh. With the heated sprint to the 30 into Swatragh, Roanie paid dearly for his surge in torque as he snapped one of his back wheel spokes, resulting in a wobbly wheel. Now, some groups would have left him there to limp the bike back home to Maghera, but not our team. Canice, the team player that he is, sped away off to Maghera to get the car and pick Ronan up. Then Barney, the team player that he is, volunteered to go help Canice speed into Maghera, and then Mark, the team player that he is, refused to let Barney do all the work on his own whilst trying to catch Canice. Young Eoghan and Stephen were team playing their way onto Mark and Barney’s tails as well. You see, we are all one big happy caring team.

When we got back to Maghera there were a lot of the team making the comment that their backsides were sore. The reason for this is very simple – NOT ENOUGH CLIMBING. We did not spend enough time out of the saddle grinding up the hard slopes.

Ride stats: 60.7 miles, 1588 feet (26 feet per mile), 18.1 mph average; Ali – 4 litres.

Please note: As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense to any member of the team. BM

Inishowen 100 18th August 2013

Sunday Cycle 18th August 2013 Inishowen 100

It's a bit of a War&Peace entry this week, so for those who don't have the time to read it all, the executive summary is that a few of us went down and did the Inishowen 100. The full details will now appear below.

=====

Well, the long wait, the weeks of hard slogging up the local mountains, the nose-holding whilst downing the beetroot juice and the Ascension Monday sessions had all been completed, and today was the day to take on the challenge which is the Inishowen 100.

An early rise, and we all made it over to the Templemore Sports Complex for the start of the cycle. It was when we were all in the carpark waiting to set sail that I noticed Tommie was behaving particularly anxiously. There was a look of sheer panic on his face and then I realised the reason – there were no flags flying in the carpark. The look of panic changed to one of excitement as Tommie caught sight of some woman's tea-towels flapping from her clothes line in her back yard. But the look of excitement was only temporary, to be replaced by one of utter dread. The flapping tea-towels indicated that we would be coming back into a head-wind, something that our strict training regime had not contemplated. It was too late to request the sportive organisers to alter the course.

It's funny/odd how the mind works. As we cleated-in at the starting line, my mind took me back to a big cycle I had done earlier on in the year, in England. The Romans had been active in that part of England, and built many wee towns with Roman sounding names. I started to think about the Roman Legions marching across the countryside, nothing stopping them. These legions were led by Centurions. And then look at us today, about to set off to cycle over 100 miles, which is known as a century. I started to think that we are all Centurions. Yes, I had Canus Major, the rising star of the north-western constellation, on my left, and Jimius Bradlius Maximus, commander of the legions of the Gaul Plantation, directly in front. I could hear our supreme leader, Primus Tomayus, second down on the left, still talking about the wind direction (no Tommie, we would not be allowed to go round Inishowen anti-clockwise). From a distance you might even think we were wearing that famous Roman army headgear. I said a secret prayer to Colleus Navigatus, the Roman god of hilly travel, and asked that we all have a safe journey.

Now if you talk to anyone about the Inishowen 100, they are sure to mention two items - the climb up Mamore Gap, and the ascent off Kinnego Bay. Mamore comes fairly early in the ride, with less than 20 miles on the clock. The weather was unkind to us as we turned left onto An Mam Mor Road and it started to rain. By the time we were half way up, there was a serious wet gale battering us from the left. But, on up we went.

The ascent of Kinnego Bay was achieved in more pleasant climatic conditions.

Now I must apologise to the good car drivers of Donegal. You see, these “idiots” of drivers kept trying to squeeze past us on narrow roadways, and would slow up and holler what sounded like abuse at us as they passed. I held my tongue, but inwardly was calling on Malum Charioteerus, the Roman god of careful drivers, to cast a stingray around their wheels at some inconvenient location. After a few episodes of this, I noticed that these bad drivers all seem to drive the same sort of car -- wee black slopey back cars (as my mother used to describe them). Later I realised that it was the same car everytime, as I saw that it had a short number plate. Well I must say that I was embarrassed with myself when I finally realised that this one bad driver was in fact our own Pat Purvis, accompanied by Fiona. They were stouring ahead and grabbing photo opportunities as we cycled past, then they would overtake us again and repeat the process. The problem was that, even though I had placed my spare tube and packed the peanut butter and honey sandwiches into the boot of Pat’s new car earlier that day, I still associated Pat with having a big “square back” car.

A near disaster threatened to spoil the day for us once. We had just hit a slight incline and Adrian was on the front. With the added gradient he tried to knock her into a lower gear and pump harder with his legs. But nothing was happening. The bike shuttered to a halt. TommyE, as would be his profession, immediately lay Adrian on the grassy verge and proceed to do the full anatomy check, fearing that Adrian had somehow angered Uncertus Genibus, the Roman god of wonky knees. Having established that this was not the case, our attention turned to the bike. A quick tug on the right hand cable confirmed that the bike had contracted “broken rear-derailleur cable” syndrome, and an amputation and replacement was needed. By lucky hap, the previous night, TommyH had been visited in a dream by the Roman god for good foresight, Predictus Bonum, who told him to pack some spare gear cables and a tool kit. Quite simply, if Tommy had not said “Here I am, your humble servant”, it would have been the broom wagon for the Cannondale.

TommyH and Gareth then set to task at changing the cable. This was a most impressive operation for us less mechanically minded folks, and was achieved without even removing the handlebar tape.

Adrian gave an offering to Horologium, the Roman god of smooth gear changes, and was back on the bike again.

“Did you see what happened there”, said Jim. “Aye”, says Canice, “them boys impressed me with the good repair work done”. “Sure”, says Tony, “even more impressive was that Adrian got away without having to pay the call out fee”.

And on we proceeded.

Although the route has the two big ones (Mamore and Kinnego), there is lots of other climbing to be done throughout, as testified by Strava. In the flat lowlands between two of these “wee hills”, at about 65 miles done, Ciaran quizzed us all “Is this the calm before the storm?”. Anthony probably got it right when he said “No, this is the storm before the storm”.

There was some really nice periods of sunshine throughout the day, and it was during one of these sunny spells that Ali whooped “Boys, will yees look at that!”. Eoghan and Marc – aaahh the innocence of youth. The two youngsters then started discussing the outstandingly beautiful sandy beaches, the lovely heather and peat crested mountains and how this was a truly magical place to go for a bicycle ride. Ali and the rest of us, meanwhile, were googly-eyed starring at the two cutie pies jogging ahead in front of us in their tight fitting running shoes.

It was on the first bend of the Kinnego ascent, the one that occurs just after the rapid descent over the bridge, that the angry Dura Tubus, the Roman god of over-pumped tyres, struck out with a lightning bolt at Gareth’s back wheel. Such was the fury that he unleashed that two things happened:

- Gareth’s wheel was still red hot to the touch when changing the tube
- The shock waves sent Vinney’s bike into a tizzy, causing him to have to perform a power glide halt – impressive control was indeed demonstrated

I reckon I can measure just how far the gods, or specifically, Dura Tubus, is from us here on earth. You see, before the lightning comes the thunder. I heard this thunder about 1.5 seconds before the bolt struck. At the time I just thought it was the mighty rumble of Vinney passing me at high speed.

Speaking of Gareth, did any of youse ever read the epic saga An Tain. It’s about Connor MacNessa and the warriors of the Red Branch, and the hero is Cu Chulainn – the Hound of Ulster. It tells of how Cu Chulainn went to Cooley one day and wrestled a big brown bull. That night, he ran across the whole width of the province to the land of Tir Connell to fight off the invading Queen Maeve from the west and her with her owl white bull. Well, this weekend, our very one Setanta in the mortal form of Gareth did the business in Da Cooley Thriller before then completing the Inishowen 100.

The route that the Inishowen 100 takes offers the naughty opportunist lots of scope for taking shortcuts. For example, you could bypass Mamore Gap and head straight for Ballyliffen. You could turn left at Carndonagh and bypass the whole of the Malin area altogether. You could turn left after the first tea stop and save yourself about 7 miles. Or you could turn right when you come down

into Greencastle, instead of doing the loop around Shrove. Indeed it was the last of these deceitful ideas that exercised the minds of some folks. Thankfully, the prospect of receiving a certificate that says “Inishowen 98” was enough to banish all fraudulent thoughts from the would-be felons minds.

And so, with tired limbs, but delighted spirits, we got back to Templemore. A first Inishowen 100 for a lot of the lads, indeed, a first century for many as well – well done, youse certainly picked a tough one to set the counter going. A nice cup of tea and a chance to slap each other’s backs and recall the efforts of the day. I know am only speaking for myself here when I say that everyone will look back on this day with fondness and sure the driving rain on Mamore and the blustering headwind from Greencastle to Derry only adds to the folklore that was indeed Inishowen 100 – 2013.

Later that evening, when I had got home, showered and fed, I treated myself to a nice bottle of red. Yes, the old beetroot juice, liquid ambrosia (ambrosia is the food of the Roman gods, not the creamed rice pudding from Devon).

Lots of other tales to be told but really, what happened in Inishowen, perhaps should stay in Inishowen.

Just a wee aside here, I think if I was asked “Barney, who is your favourite Centurion”, I’d have to have Sempronius Densus (who saved his emporer from multiple would be assassins), and Chris Boardman (100KM world time trial champion), in my shortlist. But my favourite centurion would have to be John Wayne. I just admire the way that this centurion spoke in his drawl American accent “He trully was the son of Gawd”.

Nostrum vehentem magnus cyclum.

All hail the centurions:

The four Bradleys – Anthony, Ciaran, Jim and Vincent. The two Heaneys – Marc and Tommy. two more Toms - Tommie McGrath and Tommy Evans. Eoghan Harkin, Tony O’Doherty, Canice O’Kane, Adrian Glass, Gareth Skelly, Ali Gribbon and myself Barney Mulholland.

The day would not have been such a success without our support car team of Fiona Glass and Pat Purvis. With timely interceptions of big pumps, tool kits, food and drinks, and lots of photographic memories, we simply would not have made it round without them.

Ride stats 104.5 miles, 7374 feet (70.5 feet per mile).

On a day like this, the real meaningful stat is that we counted 15 cyclists out, and we counted 15 cyclists safely back in again.

Please note: As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense to any member of the team.

I may have gone overboard slightly this week with attributing words/actions inappropriately. If there are any girlfriends/wives/mothers of the centurions reading this article, I know I definitely did over-exaggerate the whole cutie story – in fact, I don't think I even noticed what sort of running shoes they were wearing.

BM



Sunday Cycle 25-Aug-2013

Sunday Cycle 25-Aug-2013

Before I start this week's report, there is something serious that I need to publicise, so that I can maintain a clear conscience - I don't want to be accused of thievery. Last week, at the Inishowen 100, the cyclists had a wee whip-round to give to Pat to cover his car fuel expenses, which was presented to Pat in the Templemore. When I got home and was clearing out my kit bag, I found 10 pounds. After a bit of head scratching, I then remembered who had given me the money, and why I'd put it in the bag. The ten pounds should have gone to Pat along with the rest of the collection. Having realised my oversight, I immediately SMSed Pat. Pat says to just buy sweets for the lads with the money. Now, despite Pat's wishes, I would be reluctant to be buying sweets for athletes, I'd rather give it to charity (more of that later), but if it is the desired wish of the centurions that they want their energy gels and bananas garnished with sugar based cow bone marrow, then that's what we will have.

Now onto the report proper.

A good turn-out of 15 cyclists made it for today's run. Pat arrived at the Rec, and I thought that he really is going to be spoiling us if he is offering to do backup car this weekend as well. Turns out he was not going to be accompanying us, but he did tell us about a very enjoyable cycle run (ie on the bike) he had yesterday (Saturday) at the Tour de Frank (hopefully someone will write a wee report on that event for us).

After a few photos, and we were off.

Today, we managed to get the Carn Wheelers cycle run initiation sequence absolutely correct, leading to the group heading off in perfect formation. For those of youse not familiar with this set-off choreography, it consists of Tommie manoeuvring himself into second on the left, and everyone else arranging themselves randomly around him.

The route was Kilrea, Ballymoney, Bushmills, the two Ports, Coleraine, Garvagh, Swatragh and home. A total of 66 miles which we did at an average speed of 18.6 mph. No real hills of any consequence so no need to mention the elevation gained.

On the way out of Kilrea there was a shout to halt as there was a serious mechanical problem reported by one of the cyclists. The cyclist was Ali, and he claimed to have a totally dysfunctional rear braking system. Ali was just a wee bit embarrassed, I think, about calling for a pee stop so early on, so (I watched him), as he just rubbed a bit of dust of the back of the bike he said "Lads,

saying as how we're stopped here anyway, sure we might as well take advantage of the situation and have a wee leak".

We started off again, and unfortunately, the good sequencing that we had demonstrated leaving Maghera was not to be repeated again. In fact, so indiscriminate were we, that Tommie ended up at the very back of the group. I had to console him by saying that because we had an odd number of cyclists, that meant he would have two turns at the back of the group.

We had a few wee shifts of rain as we made our way along, but nothing too bad and the socks managed to remain dry.

As we cycled along, I had 3 major thoughts going around in my head which hopefully I've been able to fuse into something potentially good. The thoughts were:

- I'd really would rather give that 10 pounds to charity instead of buying sweets with it.
- Are the rest of us not drinking enough or is Ali just over-hydrating
- Is there (another) fun type event that the ordinary Sunday cyclist could engage and compete at.

To elaborate a little on the third point above. Road bike cyclists have their road races and time trials, century sportives and big hill climbs. Mountain bikers can test their skills by hopping over roots and rabbits. Cyclo-bikers can test themselves in the clabber and muck.

So, my proposal is that we should organise a cycle competition someday whereby the riders would set off and the first person to stop for a pee break would be deemed the loser, and the last person to stop would be the winner. We could have spot awards for the capacity delivered during the course of the run. Care would have to be taken to consider such dilemmas like - would someone who had two short stops (ie two wee wee-wee breaks) be better than someone who only had one long break.

Now, some competitors may be willing to do themselves, their bodies and their kidneys damage by seriously de-hydrating themselves prior to the set-off. To avoid this I would propose that the competitors meet at 9pm the evening before, and drink 2 litres of spring water, and then just before the set-off on the morning of the event, all participants would have to drink another litre of spring water.

Participants can ride road, hybrid, cyclo or mountain bikes, it does not matter as neither max speed nor distance travelled is not important. What is vitally important is that all cyclist travel at the same speed and stay within sight of each other (no sneaking off the back for a you-know-what).

What would we call this great competition. Suggestions are:

- “Aqualibrius” – the Roman god of free flowing water
- “Ali Geeee, I need a
- “Don’t spend a penny, give it to charity instead”

I’d appreciate your thoughts/ideas on the rules, prizes, competition name, suitable dates, etc. Post them to me on facebook.

Please note: As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense to any member of the team. BM

Termoneeny Charity Cycle – Sunday 1st September 2013

The Termoneeny Cycling Club held their charity event cycle today, and we decided to incorporate this into our normal Sunday cycle. We met at the Maghera Rec at 8am as usual. The official pedal-off time for the TCC event was 10am, but, with the motto of "better one hour early than one minute late", we headed straight for Gulladuff.

The TCC folks were most accommodating and allowed us to set off as our own group after we had all registered. Now I knew that as we were heading out so early and so far ahead of the official start, that I was concerned that the TCC tea ladies might not be ready for us on our return. I thought about the tale of a cousin of mine and the episode he had when a new tea-boy arrived on the building site (I won't recall the full story here, suffice to say that my wise old cousin was sure to get his hot cup of tea). So, before heading off, I suggested to the tea ladies to only quarter fill that big kettle with water so that it was sure to be boiled by the time we got back.

The weather was fine, perhaps a wee bit windy, and, fuelled by lots of good craic, we had a pleasant cycle around the towns of south Derry and east Antrim.

I need not have fretted because the kettle, was indeed, well boiled by the time we got back to the TCC base, and a welcome cup of tea and a wee bun was enjoyed by all.

Thanks to the Termoneeny Cycling Club for organising such a great event - see youse all in the Tour of South Derry.

Can I leave youse with this thought:

Give a man a fish and feed him for a day.

Teach a man to fish and feed him for a lifetime.

Teach a man to cycle and he will realise that fishing is stupid and boring.

Please note: As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense anyone.

BM



Spires Charity Cycle – Sunday 8th September 2013

The Spires Cycling Club held their charity event cycle today, and there was a huge turn-out from the Carn Wheelers, from the young up to the veteran category. Most of us incorporated the ride into our normal Sunday cycle, meeting at the Maghera Rec at 8am as usual and pedalling off to Magherafelt.

The weather was fine, perhaps a wee cool to start with, and, fuelled by lots of good craic, we had a pleasant cycle around the towns of south Derry and north Tyrone.

Thanks to the Spires Cycling Club for organising such a great event and all for a very worthy cause - see youse all in the Tour of South Derry.



Sunday Cycle 6-Oct-2013 TOSD Reconnaissance Mission

Today's report has been brought to you in association with the Tirkane Tourist Promotion Board.

With only a week to go to the Tour of South Derry, we decided today to do a dry run and refresh ourselves of the route. Naturally, we started in Maghera instead of the usual TOSD start at the Magherafelt football pitch, which meant that today, we were keeping the best part of the cycle ride to the end.

So, we went to Knockcloghrim, Hillhead, Castledawson, Magherafelt, Moneymore, Desertmartin, Draperstown, Straw, Moneyneena, Lisnamuck, Tobermore and then in towards Maghera. It was at the 30 mph sign going into Maghera that someone remarked "This is the start of 4 good miles of climbing". Another someone replied, "Aye, we're going up Slaughtneil".

Now someone from outside the jurisdiction of Slaughtneil might well describe the next wean ave miles as being "Going up Slaughtneil", but a native of the area would be more likely to describe it as follows.

From the 30 mph sign we go up the Largantogher Hill, then up the Fair Hill, head out the Tirkane Road, up Sweeney's Hill, past the Flush, then up the brae to Bushans, and then up Spy Hill. A welcome lull in gradient before ascending up two steep wee hills - the hill of the Killelagh Lough Lake and then Kane's Brae. But the effort is well worth it as the top of Kane's brae welcomes the cyclist into the spectacular panoramic vista of sheer beauty and splendour as they see before them the "monarch of mountains" which is Carntogher, ie The Carn. Its long skyline giving the impression of stretched out arms welcoming appreciative visitors as well as embracing and protecting the local townlands and their people. It supplies the local population with turf for their fires, good clean spring water for their teapots, grazing for their animals, and offers some protection against possible invading scoundrels from Glenullin and Dungiven. The focal point of the Carn is The Snout - a challenging destination for pilgrims on foot and hardy mountain bikers. The site of the Snout instantly evokes two memories:

- firstly we recall the famous raparee Shane Crossagh O'Mullan (he of Glenshane Pass fame) who was our own version of Robin Hood (he stole from the rich but instead of giving to the poor, allegedly, he buried his gold and to this day no-one knows where, other than that it is between

two hawthorn bushes somewhere). Shane was often chased by the civil authorities who wanted to bring him to justice at the end of a noose, and Shane would run up the Carn and head for the Snout. When he had scrambled up the Snout face he would turn, and with 3 giant leaps, he would jump over the heads of his pursuers and run off down the hill again to freedom.

- The second memory would be to recall that the main road from Dublin to Derry once ran past the Snout, and it was from here that many a tearful emigrants took their last sorrowful gaze at their beloved homeland before turning and heading for Derry to get the boat to Liverpool or New York.

And so with minds re-focused back again on the cycling, we take a right at the crossroads. Now the road name sign does not say it, the OS map does not say it, the satellite navigator machine does not say it, but the name of this road is Roohan Road (it is important that these old names don't get lost). To misquote the late Brine Lachlin, "Its good to be back on Roohan". We progress on over past the Sally and up Billy's Brae where we feel a little boxed in with the high hedges. Round a couple of bends and then the high hedges give way and you can see the lovely countryside all around again -- to the left is the Carn, and to the right are the dry shores of Lough Bran (where Finn McCool walked his dog, called Bran).

Next a flattish piece of road, past Wee Barney's flax dam on one side of the road and Big Barney's mossy field on the other side of the road. Then over Roohan Bridge and the ascend of the Bridge Brae. To the left we see the playing fields - the current home of the Fr Collins' Cup. More hills then as we cycle past Doonan and ascend up Halfgain -- McWilliams Brae and the brae up by John Joe's. We reach the "owl hall" which means that we have made it to the top. A welcome flat bit of road then till we pass the old quarry at Corlecky crossroads, and then it's the fast descent down the Lagan-zis Braes, and over Tiree and Tirhugh.

So, in summary we came into Maghera, went up Slaughterneil, then into Swatragh and then back to base in Maghera.

The weather was generally very good, only a slight smear of rain around Moneymore. Hopefully the weather will be as good, if not better, next week when the real TOSD takes place.

And remember, armed with the information supplied above, you can make this year's TOSD even more sensational by it becoming more of a guided tour on two wheels (I expect youse all to be sharing the folklore of "Up Slaughtneil" amongst all our visiting cyclists next Sunday).

PS, the Tirkane Tourist Promotion Board are offering free guides of The Carn and Snout to all our readers (taca). The tour can be taken on foot or on Mountain Bike – if your guide happens to be Barney, then the tour will definitely be a mixture of both. The tour will include elaborated and particularised commentary of such themes as Shean's Lepps, the Emmigrants Carn, Togher's burial place, the Sweat House, the American airplane disaster of '42, the calm haven of the Ligadooleys, the demise of turbarry on McNamee's ground.....



Derry Slam 20th October 2013

Despite it already having been a long season for the average club player, there are still some sports to be played, and so today we headed off to Owenbeg for the Derry Slam. With a fixtures pile-up, the organisers opted for a 10am kick-off, rather than the traditional Sunday 3:30pm start. This meant that the club had to go ahead with their normal Sunday run without the services of their key county men.

We took a team over to Owenbeg which was a blend of youth and experience. We even had some dual players and least one of the team had been on the mountain bike the day before.

The pre-match team huddle was used to decide what our tactics would be. You see, normally we just ride. But today was different, today was *the championship*. This was a step up from any league game we had played this year so far.

So, should we adopt the blanket defence and not let any other riders past us?

Should we go man-to-man with each of us picking up an opponent rider and sticking to them like cow dung to a tarred road in July?

In the end, we decided that we would mark the space, that is, get into our own group and stay together.

We would review the tactics at half time, and either have a row if it was going wrong or else be dishing out the praises if all was going inspirationally well.

We mingled with the other teams before setting off. I could see some out of shape looking boys who were all geared up and heading up towards the full forward position for the start. I wondered why they were there when I had not seen them on the bike all year. But then I realized, humm, manager's sons.

With all the riders ready for the cleat-in, there was a short whistle blow and the game was on. In the olden days we used to have the services of the bishop to get such prestigious events underway. Now, sure we could not even persuade a spare co-agitator to throw in the ball.

It started off like an U6 game – riders all over the place. However, a couple of miles up the back-road to Feeny and things settled down and we had a period of good open cycling.

After Feeny we faced 7 good miles of climbing, so it was time to shorten the sticks and pull hard on the ground to get up there. Players were going to be severely punished here for over-carrying -- (over carrying too many layers of clothing that is).

The descent down into Moneyneenagh was fast and with the more skillful descenders knowing where the (30 MPH) posts were and going straight for them, we lost our shape a bit, becoming less

of a wee square and more of a large parallelogram. But as the down-gradient eased, the rest of the team were able to tackle back, and we regained our form and starting looking like a team again.

The road from Moneyneegh to Draperstown was a bit like the Swatragh old pitch – up and down with big puddles in the haulahs. Yes, I can remember me playing on Swatragh old pitch and I can still ride a bike at my age.

Between Draperstown-Tobermore-Maghera-Swatragh we had a dozen or more miles of steady play where the four man mid-field diamond of players kept the crankshaft ticking over nicely. We managed to contain ourselves to our own half, but some eejits on the sidelines were shouting “That bike’s over the line” and we’d all protest back “That bike was never out”.

There was a rough patch coming into Tobermore where one of the other team’s players hit two bounces straight after each other and he managed to get away with it.

Half time stop on the other side of Swatragh, where we enjoyed a great feed of refreshments, and had a review of how things were going. With so many mini-competitions going on within the main competition itself, the 4 man mid-field diamond of players decided to switch tactics and go for the 7-a-side shield trophy. To help us do this, we pulled in 3 ringers.

So, the start of the second half and the pace was fast but focused as we headed for Garvagh and onto Ballerin. Past Ballerin, and a sharp left and then up Belraugh mountain, a great wee climb where every man had to be able to win his own pedaling space. The skillful ones with two feet were able to dummy past the slower riders, who had to resort to cynical fouling of the slipstream. We used the two man tackle technique very effectively here to make sure we all arrived at the top of the hill together.

I found it hard to judge my braking when going down the other side of this mountain - you see the bottom of this hill had actually been brought forward 13 metres due to descent.

Turning right onto the Legavallion Road, we knew we were into the play-offs with only 6 or 7 miles left to go. It was time to press-press, and indeed we began to pull away in the last 10 minutes when we really started to convert from range. With our boys prepared to put their Oakleys in where others would not put their bicycle pumps, we kept her tight at the back and pedalled our way onto Owenbeg and across the endline.

The match stats showed that we had done 50 miles and nearly 3000ft of climbing – ***all from play.***

After the match, it was into the praviillion where we enjoyed tay and sandwiches and wee treats and talked about how the game had gone. I didn’t hear anyone mention the referee, proving that it been a good game with lots of sportsmanship and matemanship.

On the way home from the match, my auld team mate commented that he had played the game of his life and that he had pedalled over every blade of grass on the pitch. He says that the only part of

the pitch he had not been on was the Dugout but that he would remedy that before the weekend was over.

Our thanks to the Derry Slam organisers for a great day's crack. The weather could have been kinder to us, but the hospitality provided, as well as the excellent marshalling at all the major road junctions meant that we had an enjoyable and safe day's cycling.

For the records, the team sheet submitted to the referee at the start of the match is given below:

- 4 man Mid-field diamond - Canice O'Kane, Jim Bradley, Anthony Bradley, Barney Mulholland
- Full back (full of pedaling) Tommy O'Connell
- On the wings, Father & son, rare enough nowadays at senior level - Jim and Stephen Halferty
- Full forward (and well forward at that) Gerard Scullion
- Back in training for the club - Brendan Donnelly

So what next for these county men? One would naturally think that it should be onto the International Rules stage, but can I suggest that we instead go for a Compromise Rules series, say something like tug-of-war with bikes. Would it not be great to see the White Hill take on the Benedy again. Anyone know where I can buy a set of hob-nailed Continental Mountain Kings?

Please note: As usual, these wee reports are based on real events, but have been enhanced for readability purposes. No intention has been made to cause deliberate insult or offense anyone or any sporting organization.

BM

Sunday Cycle 27-Oct-2013

A very autumn like day. With the cyclists having enjoyed/thowed the extra hour in bed, about a dozen and a half of us gathered as usual at the rec.

Our route took us to Upperlands, Kilrea, Culleybackey, Galgorm, Ballymena, the Whiteside Road and onto the Largy Road to Portglenone and then Kilrea.

At Kilrea some folks headed directly home for approx. 50 miles, while others headed out the Garvagh Road to face the challenges of the Grove Road, Culnagrew, the Stoney Park and Laganzas Braes before descending home with approx. 60 miles on the clock.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 3-Nov-2013

A nippy start to the morning, but the eleven club cyclists were not long a-warming as they pedalled their way up the Lough Fea road. Then down into Cookstown, taking the road out to Dungannon and cutting off for Stewartstown. They then sped onto Coagh, Ballinderry, Ballyronan, Newbridge, Bellaghy, Gulladuff and back home to Maghera.

57 miles on the distanometer. Well done everyone.

Sunday Cycle 10-November-2013

A fresh bright morning with a skiff of frost, but that did not stop the 20+ cyclists from getting their weekly pedalling rations.

The route was Tobermore (ouch, that hill down past the High School was cold), Magherafelt, Ballyronan, Ballymcguigan, Newbridge, Bellaghy, Portglenone, Kilrea, Garvagh, Swatragh and home to Maghera – a total of 50 miles.

We had more than our share of punctures this week. The initial theory was that it was the grit on the road that was causing them all, but our last puncture was a thorn so our theory about wanting to stick to untreated roads went unproven.

Well done everyone.

Sunday Cycle 17-November-2013

I have not been as miserable on a bike for a long time. It was the weather you see, cold and wet.

But still, there were over 20 enthusiasts who turned up as usual at the rec for their Sunday cycle. The route took us to Portglenone, McLaughlins Corner, Ballymoney, Garvagh, Swatragh and back to Maghera. 45 miles to add to the Strava total for the year.

Well done to PC who joined us for his first official cycle with the Carn Wheelers.

Well done also to Stephen Halferty. You see, like most of us, Stephen takes pride in the way he looks on a Sunday. The bike is always clean, his club gear is always spotless and well pressed. "Yes" I hear you say "sure most of us are the same". But Stephen, he goes that bit extra by applying the old hair gel before putting on the cycling helmet. You have to pay attention to the bits other people don't see, as well as the bits they do see.

Sunday Cycle 24th November 2013

A good group of cyclists today, there must have been at least a couple ave dozen, gathered at the rec for their allocation of Sunday cycling miles.

The route today was Kilrea, Galgorm, Ballymena, Rougery, Toome, Ballyronan, Magherafelt, Tobermore and back to Maghera. A total of about 53 miles.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 8th December 2013

With the flegs pointing north, we decided to head southwise into the headwind, and thus give ourselves a handy pedal home.

The route was Bellaghy, towards Toome, Ballyronan, Ballinderry, Coagh, Cookstown, Moneymore, Desertmartin, Tobermore and back to Maghera. A total of over 40 miles.

Once back in Maghera, a few of the group went for some extra miles, and extra feet, by doing a quick skite out to Swatragh, then up the Stoney Park and Laganses Braes before descending back down into Maghera again.

Well done to all.

Sunday Cycle 29th December 2013

A frosty morning. Sheets of ice on the streets around Maghera. Spilled chips frozen into the pavement outside the local take-away.

But still-and-with-all, there were 8 bravehearts who were determined that the Carn Wheelers would be represented on the roads on this, the last Sunday of the year.

Someone said that on a morning like that, instead of a cold bicycle ride, what they needed was a nice glass of hot port. Someone else only have heard this and repeated, "A nice day for the Port ?", and so our destination was decided. And yes, with the smell of hot coffee and flavoursome doughnuts in the air, and the loud sound of the crashing waves, it was indeed a lovely day at the Port (Portstewart). To get there, we stuck to the main (treated) roads thru Swatragh, Garvagh and Coleraine. After Portstewart it was back to Coleraine and then home via Kilrea and Upperlands.

Now I can,t say exactly how many miles we did in total. Have you ever heard the saying "A man with one watch knows what time it is, but a man with two watches can never be sure". Well, that was our problem -- too many fancy Garmin, and Velosets and other biking computer gadgets and not one of them could agree on the distance we had travelled, our average speed, or even what temperature it was at the back of the peloton.

A happy new year to all, and remember, rumour has it that at 12 midnight on Tuesday, all Strava records will be reset back to zero. So let's have a bit of fun marking up the PBs, KOMs, achievements and Kudosos in 2014.

BM

