



Pedal Power 2019



MATLOCK CYCLING CLUB
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WELCOME

Welcome to Pedal Power 2019. Very special thanks to everybody who contributed articles and helped me put this edition together.

Thank you to our sponsors Chubb & Co. and Stanley Fearn Cycles for their continuing support of our Club.

Many thanks to all Committee Members, helpers and volunteers who have given their time over the past year.

I wish all Members a successful year and enjoyable cycling.

John White, Editor



FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Each year it seems almost impossible to add more superlatives to the achievements of British cycling, but yet again our cyclists have eclipsed themselves with fabulous performances in the Giro de Italia - Chris Froome Tour de France - Geraint Thomas, and in the Vuelta - Simon Yates. Plus the success of the events in Britain, the tour of Yorkshire in Britain. I believe we are now beating the Continentals at their own game, may it continue.

However, as I continue to spell out, it is doubtful if this same measure of success would have been achieved without the support of clubs like ours who at grass root level encourage so many to become involved.

Reading through last year's Pedal Power it was fantastic to read of the activities and successes of members of our club. My congratulations to each of you. I look forward to reading this year's edition.

This year in June, I had the opportunity to visit my little god-daughter, Joanne in Nairobi. She is now 4 years old, she still loves the bicycle and has her honorary membership of MCC certificate displayed at home. She now as a little brother named Len, perhaps the bike will be passed onto him.

As always it is a pleasure and a privilege to thank all our club officials without whom what the club has achieved and continues to do so. Any club or organisation is only as good as the officials who make it work, in MCC we are fortunate for the officials who are dedicated to making things possible. Once again thank you for ensuring Matlock Cycling Club continues to prosper and give pleasure to so many people.

My very best wishes to all and many happy years of pedalling.

Len White

Len White – President



Cromford to Cholet (the long way round) by Ewan Mackie

Since I started cycling I've always wanted to cycle up the mountains made famous by the Grand Boucle and so has my Dad. With Dad retiring and the completion of my GCSE exams there was one obvious choice, to ride my bike for 12 weeks. We added 2+2 together and came up with 422 (miles cycling round France and driving over 2,000!). Clint our mate joined us because 3 is always better than 2. We kick started the trip with a 01:15 am wakeup call and arrived a little while later in the Vosges mountain range, at the foot of the Grand Ballon. After setting up camp we walked around 2 miles before we found a small eatery, it was very French and we soon learned I would be the foreign affairs correspondent of the trip, (Dad and Clint's vague Allo! Allo! and pointing didn't seem to quite cut it). We woke up early for our first taste of some proper hills. The Grand Ballon is a 16.1 km climb @ 6.1% gaining 974 altitude meters, not too bad to break us in.

We did a total of 56 miles with 5,800 ft of ascent in under 4 hours that day so, a nice introduction to French roads and Jambon et Fromage baguettes (soon to be a favourite delicacy).

The next day we proceeded to Rochetaillée in the Alps. I only did 11 miles but was a nice 40 min spin to experience. The day after was the Iconic 21 bends, a day I had been looking forward to for a long time. We cruised to the foot of the climb and then I waited at the top. I wanted to give it some beans so did an effort up the climb trying and succeeding to impersonate Romain Bardet (I had won a full AG2R kit and glasses so had to wear it).

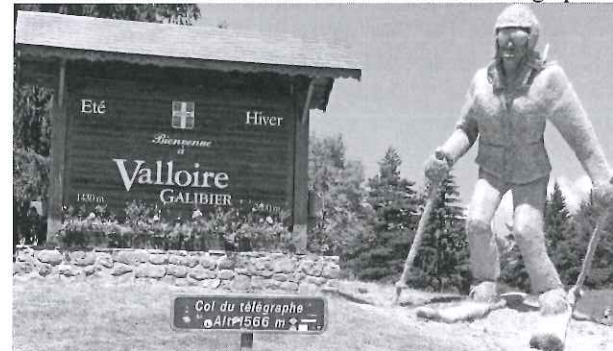
Riding up the climb I had a lot of shouts from random French people, this included; 2 families in cars beeping their horn, then stopping a few bends ahead where they got out and started cheering to the chorus of "Allez Romain!" and filming me. I then over-took a fair few cyclists on the mountain one sat on my wheel after an effort to get on then popped, then another French cyclist rode next to me shortly. It sounded like he was asking me if I was doing the tour! I answered in an English accent "no". To this he pulled a disgusted look after finding out my nationality and swung away, deeply out of breath. I did the climb in 56 mins for the Chrono course and 52 mins to the last village. After lunch, we then rode back down and as if fate had it, Romain Bardet was riding up the hill on his recce of



the Tour's Queen Stage, I proceeded to say bonjour and managed to get a wave of a French pro! That day we did 40 miles, 5,430 ft of ascent in 3 hours.

The day after the Alpe was a monster. No other way to describe it. 116 miles and 11 hours including stops, in 35 degree heat (7-8 hours riding time approx.) I loved every minute of it. We did 15,951 feet of climbing over 3 major climbs. The first mountain of the day was the Croix de la Fer. The Croix is a 29 km climb from 546 meters altitude to 2067 meters at an average of 5%. The climb starts through a dense pine forest and was cool as it was early morning, after 6km there is a slight descent until the climb up to the dam. On the climb I was riding next to a French chap called Romain. We quickly made friends (as most of you know I like to chat). We exchanged many words and some of my small knowledge of French was tested. Our conversation topics ranged from riding in England to the sheep and cows on the road, from my Everest challenge to his ride from the Alps to Venice! And of course the topic of the inhaler. By the top of the climb it felt like I had made a good friend, we took a selfie at the top of the hill. After waiting at the top for 10 mins I turned round back down 5km to find Dad and Clint, here I rode back with them enjoying the scenery.

After some baguettes and coffee we descended and rode along the valley floor for 20 miles. We then started to climb the Col du Télégraphe. This climb is 11.8km



@7.3. My original plan was to take this one easier but at the start of the climb a Brit rode past us sweating and looked fit so I had to follow my competitive streak and rode next to him the whole way chatting whilst

riding at zone 4 and sweating buckets. I got to the top and said goodbye to my new mate and went to the café. I was getting worried and rode back down the hill with 2 cans of coke and 2 bottles of water. After 3km I came across 2 MAMILS who looked exasperated, I then realised it was my Dad and Clint ;-). (Sorry if you read this) the delivery went down well and we rode back up and had more baguettes and coffee at the top.

After a short descent into Valloire we started the Col du Galibier, 2646m, 18.1km at an average of 6.9%. I told the lads I'd meet them at the top. I set off at a steady pace and was soon out of water, I opted to refill my bottle with fresh sheep and grass infused mountain water to make the most of France, 20 mins later I found a café and quietly cursed my luck. The climb steeply ramped up to 13% and then opened up to the wind as the valley sides grew further apart, after the steeper bit

I arrived at the top very happy. Here I met an Englishman riding the climb 70 years after his grandfather who would have done it on 1 gear only, which is hard to contemplate with our modern day technology. I took 2 more waters for my Dad and Clint who was suffering from severe cramps at this point. He got back on his bike and finally we all made it to the top together. But on the descent we stopped at a road side hotel where Clint decided to stay the night as his cramps were too bad to continue. Dad and I enjoyed the 34 mile descent home thoroughly happy and extremely tired out. Dad said this was his biggest challenge on a bike to date!

The day after this was a rest travel day to Bédoin for Ventoux. We were all incredibly excited to ride such an iconic climb, 21km at 7.4%. We set off at 7:30 and as I felt slightly tired this day and took it easy to start with and did the climb at around zone 3 finishing in 1 hour and 36 mins. After stopping for the compulsory fridge magnet we started our descent on which Dad had two blowouts and we were almost bitten by a snake.

The next day we travelled to Salechan to stay at Chateau de La Lanette with Russ and Heather (Heather is from Holloway). The Chateau is ideally situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees only 10km from Luchon (where Froomey won his stage after his mad descent in 2017). Within 10km you could be at the base of the Col du Peyrosourde, Col de Ares and the Port de Bales (Contador infamously attacking Shleck when Shleck's chain dropped). With large comfortable rooms, a swimming pool and a basement for the bikes it was a perfect change to the Campervan's confinements. Also Heather is a fantastic cook and we enjoyed amazing food every night of the stay.

The day after we had arrived and settled in we headed out for the Peyrosourde, a 15km climb at 6.1%. I decided to give this climb some beans and ended up doing it in 37 minutes, this put me 268th of all time on the strava segment out of 12200 and ahead of a few pro's times, I was pretty happy. Later I rode with Heather's son 18 miles up the Col de Ares and down again.

The day after we were all feeling a little fatigued, so Clint went for a ride to a lake for a swim, whilst Dad and I tackled the Port de Bales, 4500ft, with long stretches over 10% (most of it being my personally hardest climb).

Arguably we saved the best Col until last in terms of climbing - the famous Col du Tourmalet the next day. The climb is beautiful with, picturesque views and a steady gradient 7.4% for 17.2km. There was a Strava segment for the finish so I



did the last bit again managing to get 8th out of 30,000 on Strava, I was well chuffed ☺. But I had broken a spoke, we cut our planned ride to 22 miles with 4000ft of climbing. This meant the climbing of the trip was over ☹ however, we still had the Tour to watch.

Thanks to Sir Dave Brailsford, we were kindly invited to watch a Stage of the Tour and get a VIP wrist band thing to go backstage and around the various team bases at the Tour. I chose the TTT (Stage 3) as personally I like a good TT. This was an amazing experience and we got to meet some of cycling biggest stars (including Froomey, who according to Mum I seem to look like on a bike, gangly and lanky as).

To start the day we shared a taxi with an awesome Welsh couple who were going to watch the stage too. Ray (the Welsh man) was very happy to see G doing well. He took his camera and managed to snap some really cool shots of Sky smashing it up. Thanks again Ray, it was nice to meet you.

When we arrived in Cholet it was 30+ degrees and we headed straight to the start area. Here we were told to call the Sky carer called George, who gave us our wrist bands, a t-shirt each and a bottle! We hung around the Sky bus and also took a look at the Cannondale, Scott and Bora buses too. When we were lurking around the Scott bus as the riders were arriving, I managed a cheeky selfie with Adam Yates. Shortly after this Sir Dave arrived in a team van and got out to speak to us, we were shortly approached by a Gendarme as Sir Dave was not wearing a lanyard to say he was him! This was quickly sorted out!



Then the team arrived, but we only managed a glimpse of them as they entered the bus. The riders after a briefing were to set off for a course recce. Before they set off Sir Dave came out of the Sky bus next to Froome, they then walked over to us! This was really great as I look up to Chris as a rider and to meet him was out of this world. Also there was the

Shimano official photographer, Wouter Roosenboom who took some pics of us all. After the team set off, Sir Dave came back and introduced me, Dad and Clint to Rod Ellingworth, who offered us a tour around the team's set up. We looked at the mechanics truck, here Dad was very excited. We were then invited onto the team bus! We stepped aboard the Death Star and sanitised our hands before looking around, to the personalised seats through to the showers and toilets and finally the "business centre" where all the tactics are made. We then got off the bus and watched the riders warm up which was a fascinating spectacle.

After this we had a look at all the other team buses and got to the Quick-Step bus where Alaphalippe was standing right next to us hugging his mates. Then we then headed for Team Dimension Data where I bagged a selfie with Cav!

We heard about the Tour Village which offered free food and Champagne, hearing this we headed there promptly with our wrist bands. We didn't fancy being at the buses the whole time so we headed to the finish to catch Sky complete the stage along with AG2R and a few others. The day itself was over as soon as it started and unfortunately we had to go for the taxi after heading back to the Sky bus to see the team head off. Feeling the hunger, we headed to a bakery nearby. Now this was embarrassing on many levels. I ordered a baguette and a drink in French. Then it was Dads turn I'll repeat what he said. He pointed to a baguette and said "that please" then said "euuuu" in a deeply French offensive accent associated with Allo! Allo! Pointing to a bottle of water which in French is "d'leau"!!!

Tired and happy, we returned back to the campsite to eat, as all places in town were shut and we had to wait 20 mins for beer, 30 mins for water and 1hr30mins for a mildly disappointing pizza, all much to the annoyance of 3 hangry (bi)cyclists.

The day after we drove up to Northern France for our last full day. We set up shop at a campsite in Albert then headed out for a 26 mile ride around the Somme Battlefields. We visited the Thiepval War Memorial to pay our respects and see the Hawthorn Crater. Riding around I could sense a foreboding atmosphere which made me feel unsettled and uneasy, almost like the land has not forgotten what happened. Being the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1 it meant a lot to see the Somme.

It was also the night when France beat Belgium to get through to the final. This meant a huge deal to the locals and when we stepped out the pub there were many cars driving past with flags and horns out the windows and people running in the street, like a town party, it was immense!

We then headed back to Cromford to complete the trip back in time, by Mum's orders for my birthday.

Everesting by Ewan Mackie

I set myself the target of ascending from High Peak junction to Black Rocks 63 times in one day to achieve 8940 metres of climbing for my Everest challenge. It was on Saturday 14th April, and I started at 05.30, and after a mammoth 17 hours of riding successfully completed the challenge at 22.30 that night. I was aided by Steve Heading who rode with me almost all the way. I was totally physically and mentally drained after the ride.

I would not have been able to complete it without the amazing support of my friends, family and Matlock CC members who were there throughout the day. My Everest challenge raised £2651 for Cardiac Risk in the Young and CLIC Sargent.



"Border Collies" France into Spain and back by Alastair Sneddon

Nothing much changes except the cyclists get older, the bikes heavier and the organisation ever more casual. We managed to board the 0.45 hrs ferry to Calais and by mid afternoon had completed the 700 miles to Gan just South of Pau. The usual story – assemble bikes, abandon the car, try to memorise where we left it and set off. We had done about 20 miles in a cool damp run along a delightful river when we arrived at Laruns and after a night with virtually no sleep decided to find supper and a bed and restore ourselves. I should add at this point that the trip was inspired by "unfinished business on the Tourmalet" on our previous visit about 10 years ago.

Day 2

After a false start (even a small village seems difficult to escape from on the correct roads these days) to ensure we did enough climbing, we set off heading for the Col de Portelet 1,794m, a long drag up a fantastic valley with sheep, sheepdogs, cows with bells, wild flowers and vultures. The Pyrenees were looking greener than ever, having had 4" of rain in 24 hours the week before. We took refreshments at the top then headed down into Spain stopping at Biesces for a drink in a shady garden. I abandoned about half my cargo to gain maximum benefit and we set off again fuelled by bread, cheese, and ham plus half a melted toberlone – an unwise purchase in 30° C.



The last run of the evening was 20 miles in about 1 hour with a following wind arriving in Boltana – an amazing old village on a hilltop. We enquired about "habitation" (rooms) at the bar in the square where the proprietress promptly rang "Silvia" who was glad to rake our 20 Euros per head even though it was 8pm and she had to enlist her ancient mother to change the beds. Supper in the square by the church with very loud bells. Food chosen somewhat at random was squid, whitebait, and meatballs- a lucky escape when we translated the other dishes they were brains, tripe, frogs' legs and pigs ears! Supper was followed by the treat of the day. As we sat on the veranda outside our room, digesting our meal we were serenaded by nightingales, the first I have ever heard, to end a decent day - 75 miles

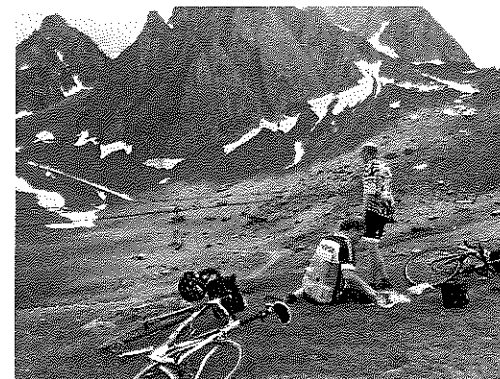
Day 3 Boltana to Vittel

No breakfast included, so we travelled some 5 miles to Ainsa for our first feed of the day - Spanish omelette and strong coffee. Not breakfast as we know it, but better than nothing. By this time the sun was cracking the pavements and it was up and over the Col D'Foradada, a long, hot tedious climb. Then downhill

on a big wide road trying not to go too fast. We arrived in Campo for lunch – guess what- omelette sandwiches, followed by a spectacular ride through a gorge overlooked by vultures on their nests. We hit the main road back to France just as James' "freewheel" decided to freewheel in both directions, this was cured by a sharp tap. Yet again the evening hunt for a billet presented itself. We tried a roadside hotel which proved to be deserted except for a blue and yellow Macaw which spoke to us- presumably in Spanish. A peer through the window revealed no humans. So it was back on the road heading towards the Vilaller Tunnel with no idea whether bikes were allowed through. The next village was Vilaller where we spotted a sign for 2 star Habitation which looked dodgy but proved to have well-appointed accommodation. A clean and recently refurbished room for 60 Euros for the 3 of us all festooned with pot plants. The bikes were allowed into an enormous barn complete with ancient Renault and some classic road bikes. Supper in local bar was just what was needed. The days run a sweaty 55 miles.

Day 4

Early start foiled by the fact we could not extract the bikes without summoning the proprietor. We took coffee – but nothing else at a bar and set off up the valley in near freezing temperatures, we began to get worried that fuel supplies were running out. Eventually a man in one of the villages, sent us across the valley to yet another village Annetto. After poking amongst the buildings, we eventually found a very swanky bar hidden in a hilltop village with no signage. It appeared to be a virtually deserted hamlet – we met a man with 2 geese which he was driving with 2 dogs. We should, however, have spotted the Highway maintenance vans. Inside we had a most memorable breakfast – language difficulties aside- (we were still in Spain). We ordered omelettes with ham and cheese. An instruction that was taken literally – omlettes (plain) appeared accompanied by a plate of ham and a plate of cheese – what could make more sense? We were also supplied with bread covered with tomato and coffee- the bill 24 euros for the lot. Suitably fortified and having extracted from the road

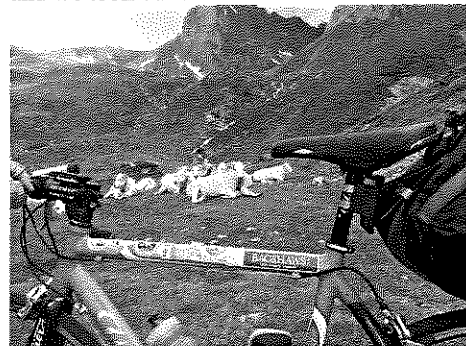


menders news that bikes were allowed through the tunnel as long as we had lights – we pressed on. The tunnel was 5 km long and luckily downhill for us so we swooped through at 20 mph hopping from one refuge to the next. Motorised traffic being courteous and respectful, thank goodness. Down the valley to Vielhar, then off up the Col de Portillon which was very

hot and our progress was very slow. At the top we met English Classic Car enthusiasts from the TR5/6 Club – cars fitted with early fuel injection systems that did not like changes in altitude. Downhill to the Bangueres de Luchon, a Spa Town twinned with Harrogate and an average age of the residents over 70. Onwards and upwards to the Col de Payresourde calling at a bizarre shop/café about to close down and with 1 packet of biscuits left and a bottle of tonic water. The proprietors were ancient and the rather odd son was doing something with the compost heap across the road. It was a decent evening's ride, a little cooler and at about 8pm we were on the lookout for somewhere to stay, this took the form of a semi derelict farm with trout ponds, a large number of rather noisy donkeys and a selection of aged vehicles growing into the undergrowth. Regardless of the run-down appearance of the establishment we were ushered in to a recently refurbished room, so recently that the pots of distemper had to be removed. We were in the Afrique suite, a themed room with a four poster for John. Even the WC had a giraffe painted on the seat. Supper was superb. Soup, fried trout and strawberries from the garden, all on the table within 30 minutes of arrival with no notice, most English establishments would have shut their kitchen. The supper was much appreciated after 60 miles and 2000 metres of climbing. A quiet night in the Afrique suite undisturbed by Bedouins or anyone else except the donkey.

Day 5

Wonderful Breakfast – homemade jam and coffee like creosote. A lovely start to the day with a steady run up the Col de Aspin which soon settle to about 9.5% and we took our time. There was a herd of cows at the top greeting cyclists and



nibbling their bikes as their riders took photos by the summit sign. Then down to St Marie-Campan for an indifferent Pizza Lunch served by an odd woman who had had a good deal of facial surgery and was assisted by a dim-witted sidekick. With lunch over and ensuring that it was the hottest part of the day we set off to toil up the Tourmalet – a steady start but quickly to 8.5 to 9.5 %

eventually reaching the far from charming ski resort La Mongie. Not liking the look of the place, we headed on up, stopping for our habitual bread ham, cheese and tomato picnic joined by a very old and shaggy donkey and observed by maintenance men on the chair lift. There then came the final push for the summit to discover the Col had been taken over by Team "Westland", a Dutch cycling club with disco film crew and DJ and literally dozens of Netherlanders who were enjoying an impromptu party with singing and dancing in the middle

of the road. After photographs it was downhill to Argeles Gazost.

Accommodation was in a holiday apartment with no soap and we had to make our own beds, but 60 euros for 3 so no complaints. Supper in the square with waiters surly and un attentive – we were in France – walked home and turned in 55 miles for the day.



Day 6

Up and doing at 7am. John worried about a tick dislodged from his back. We rode into town for breakfast and spoke to a group of Dutch cyclists who told us that the "Aubisque was ferm'e" and that Gendarmes were in position to prevent anyone including cyclists getting through to Eaux Bonnes. This was due to road repairs necessitated after the recent landslips

caused by heavy rain. We therefore headed up the Col De Soulor which was steep from the start. We stopped for supplies at a general store meeting a giant Dutchman in his 20's on an enormous touring bike with hub gears and belt drive (he did not like oil on his trousers) he had started from Strasbourg and was riding 100 cols. He was in the company of an English man from Colchester on a state of the art Trek Tourer with all the trimmings. Having seen them we had no more complaints about our very limited baggage. The Soulor is very pretty and after a quick drink and a photo of the vultures wheeling overhead we headed North avoiding the Aubisque – which we could see, descending gingerly – still plenty of gravel plainings to assist a septuagenarian Swiss rider with a puncture problem: John did the honours with a spare tube and we said our farewells after James had nearly expired pumping it up to his desired pressure. There followed a lovely run down 1000 metres alongside a glorious river and a quick sandwich at a seedy café. The Jambon de Pays was ok, but John was unhappy with the way that the butter had been spread. It was then rolling country back to the car, plenty of ups and downs finishing the day at about 50 miles and 1500m climbing. We set off home about 5pm and after some navigational difficulties around Pau headed steadfastly North catching a ferry early the next morning. Breakfast was in Sussex some 800 miles later and I regret to have to say not up to the standard that we had come to expect. That was with the exception of the tea – a commodity the continentals have yet to perfect. So, 6 days, 313 miles and about 9,000 metres climbing. Italy next year we think.

Kenya Without a Bike by Len White

Bikes and Kenya are not a natural mix, and unless you are using it as part of a training programme for Cyclo-X or Mountain Biking, I would strongly advise not getting involved with them.

My Kenyan trips begin when I arrive in Nairobi, a mad bustling city awash with vehicles of every description, of the range luxury cars, taxis, the ever present "MATATUS", these are 12 seater mini buses packed with passengers, which force their way through traffic with complete disregard for every known rule of the road, together with lorries, two stroke motor cycles, pedal cycles and horse drawn carts with enormous loads. Traffic islands are quite an experience, traffic does flow but it is no use being a timid driver.

Fortunately my stay in Nairobi is short, usually a one,night stay in town with friends. I pick up the car and we commence the 350 miles drive west, through the Great Rift Valley on a mix of tarmac and dirt roads through the agricultural heartland to Naivasha, a large town where something like 90% of the cut roses we buy in the U.K. are grown in vast greenhouses as well as many of the winter vegetables, string beans, peas etc. we buy in our supermarkets. Along the valley we pass the Lakes Naivasha and Nakuru with their massive colonies of pink flamingos, quite a magnificent sight.



After several hours driving we arrive in the regional centre town of Kisil, which is a busy bustling city with reasonable shops and a very good supermarket Tuskys, the major group in Kenya, you could just as well be in "TESCOS", but better. We stock up here with all our additional provisions before completing our journey to our destination, Rongo, to meet up with my friends the Obonyo's in the family compound.

Everything here is very basic, no running water, flush toilets or electricity, water is drawn from the well in buckets for washing and general use. For drinking we

use bottled water. Showering, we use special bags holding 20 litres of water, which on one side have a solar panel, left in the sun for 2 or 3 hours. This provides plenty of hot water. Toilets are basic, but adequate. Cooking is done on charcoal braziers with chicken, goats' meat and various local vegetables. Lighting in the evening is done by pressure lamp supplemented by torches.

A major reason for returning to Kenya is to visit the Joyceland Primary School, which I am privileged to be involved with. This all started 11 years ago when my friend Tom Obonyo, the founder and principal of the school realised the need to try and bring the many vulnerable, destitute and orphan children into the educational system, ages from around three and a half to six and a half. Living in isolated communities, many walking several kilometres each day to reach the school. I spend a lot of time helping out wherever I can and thanks to the support I have received from friends at home in Beverley, I have been able to provide items to give some improvement to their quality of life.

Not being too far away from Lake Victoria a visit to Homa Bay is always on my itinerary. It is around 50Km from Rongo. Commercial fishing on a fairly large scale is a major activity in the area. I had never realised Lake Victoria is the same size as Ireland. Kenya is a major tea producer and passing through that area and the surrounding hills and forests always reminds me of its size. However I have only travelled part of it.

I did say Kenya was not really cycling country, but an Information Guide quotes the following:

"Kenya's climate and varied terrain make it challenging cycling country. But if you are up to it its the best way of getting around. With a bike you can get to parts of the country that would be hard to visit by any other means. Except perhaps on foot. It is also one way you will get to see wildlife outside the confines of Kenya's game parks". A Club tour perhaps?????



climb is not very steep compared to the peak district but is quite long at 6 miles. The beauty of it was the twinkling of tail lights though as cyclists meandered up it ahead. It really was a beautiful sight. Martin was first up the climb and as I neared the top I was sure I could hear bag-pipes carried on the wind. As it was nearly midnight at this point I dismissed the idea and told myself it must be tiredness setting in. Sure enough though as I rounded the final corner there was a piper playing us up the climb, amazing. He must have been cold in his kilt, his young son also accompanied him. Perhaps we need to introduce this on our Bank Road/Riber double header.

Martin and I waited a few minutes for the girls as we donned our jackets and long gloves. The girls did the same on their arrival pulling out numerous garments from their numerous bags. Remember how I mocked those bags earlier? What follows is probably the second coldest 40 miles I have ever been on a bike in my life. The 1st being the now infamous February 2017 youth ride to Hartington where a collective gaggle of teenage riders and parents literally cried their way through the hail and ice to Hartington tea rooms.

From the top of the Beeftub we descended into a valley which offered, a) no respite from the chilly Scottish wind and, b) no climbs on which to warm up. With only our Autumn/spring gloves on and our light rain jackets, Martin and I were freezing. Our fingers and toes were numb. The girls were fairing a little better due to previously mentioned garments removed from the previously mentioned and previously mocked bags.

By now it was pitch black and all we had were our collective headlights and the fear that any minute the batteries would die on us. My light flickered every now and then, Martin's light varied between showing nearly flat and OK, the girls lights were pretty good throughout, there is a theme developing here.

We pushed on into the night and were soon greeted by a cyclo-rave at an old abandoned inn. Here the organisers handed out bananas and refilled water bottles, what we really need was a hot drink. There was a fire pit but it was pretty busy and we were getting colder, so we headed off pretty quickly.

We quickly slotted back into formation with Martin and I leading and the girls taking turns on the front as we forged our way through the pitch-black night. Despite it being pitch-black the horizon never went Dark and almost looked like dawn for the whole night.

As we made good pace through the valley with our cold extremities there was a discussion about "what the hell are we doing?" and "whose idea was this?" which was probably the low point. It was around 2am at this stage. Not long after this Julie's dodgy stomach kicked in and she announced she could do with a toilet break. There was nothing around us so she would have to wait unfortunately until Edinburgh which was some 30 miles away at this point.

At around 3.30am we entered the outskirts of Edinburgh which gave Julie hope of a comfort break, it was some 7 or 8 miles later that we finally found an all-night petrol station which provided the facilities she needed. Martin and Louise

took in some much needed caffeine whilst I chatted to a few other riders. By now we were approximately 8 miles from the finish line and the light was just starting to creep up. We knew it was going to be close to arrive before sunrise.

As we entered Edinburgh city centre we were surprised how many people were still around, most of them drunk and heading home after a long night of drinking. One chap rather jovially asked us if we had a light for his cigarette as we waited at some traffic lights. A few girls even gave us a wave as we passed them, it must have been Martin's boyish looks that did it for them.

We pushed on with our pace increasing a little as we now had finish line fever which always gives a little energy boost regardless of how tired you are.

As our bike computers approached 100 miles we headed down a cobbled road which at the very last minute revealed a beach with a crank* (collective term for a group of cyclists) of cyclists all gathered around a grassy knoll watching the sun creep over the headland.



We arrived at 04.28 just as the sun broke. It was a little cloudy but the sun was still visible. It was an amazing sight, as good as any vista I have seen. We were over the moon to have arrived, very tired but elated. The ride had far surpassed Ride London for its enjoyment and challenge. Our small team of four had added another epic ride to our pal-mares.

We did the usual group hug and photos and were then interviewed by the organisers on camera. We are yet to see the footage but were promised it would appear on the website at some point.

At this point the smell of bacon wafted through the morning air and we headed off to find the source. A local scout group had kindly set up a kitchen with a mound of bread rolls and bacon and copious amounts of tea. It was by far the best bacon sandwich we'd ever had. At this point, DS Parker arrived and we waxed lyrical about our adventure. An hour later we were in the van heading south and all asleep, bar Dave, within minutes.

This truly was an epic ride and adventure and one we all vowed to do again in the future. We can highly recommend it. Just remember to take cold weather gear and midge repellent.

The Good, Bad and the Ugly by John White

My tour of Bulgaria and Romania began at 3.30 am with an unsettling taxi ride, the driver probably had had a heavy night, the taxi lurched round bends, unpleasant smells filled the cab and had I not intervened we would have gone through a red light. Manchester airport was heaving but I arrived at Sofia airport on time. An unruly crowd surged to passport control, I visited the filthy evil smelling loo, taps gushing permanently. Whilst assembling my bike I was reprimanded by a cleaner for making a mess. Blue skies and hot sun contrasted the grubby shanty town near the airport. I had to use SatNav to negotiate my route on nameless roads, there were 3 miles of appalling pave and 1 mile of dowdy apartment blocks to my hotel in the northern suburbs.

The very sparse buffet breakfast was being ravaged by hungry guests, a long queue developed waiting for the snail-paced toaster, one guest spreading his butter with a fork. Soon I was on Route 81 heading for the Petrohanski Pass (1400m), this was a sparsely populated region, a quiet road but many stray dogs. There were several 200m climbs and descents, villages looked in a poor state and virtually no wildlife. One village was well kept and many residents were selling honey and yogurt at the roadside. A new drainage system was being installed on the final climb, barely active workers heads appeared out of huge concrete pipes whilst another group were enthusiastically harvesting nuts from a roadside tree. At the pass was a "restaurant", a derelict building and an empty reservoir. A short



downpour made the multi-hairpinned and pot-holed descent hazardous. A tailwind then hurtled me to Montana at 30mph. My hotel was next to a well kept park and a pedestrianised area. In their

restaurant I was served an unrecognisable cut of roast lamb, I was worried about food poisoning.

The city centre was crowded with shoppers as I set off for Vidin. After a couple of hours on minor roads I had no choice but to ignore a road closed sign and cycle 6 miles on a road that had been dug up for resurfacing. In the afternoon I descended into the Danube valley, where in an isolated layby I saw a scantily dressed prostitute with a small dog. Later in a bar a sour faced woman served me an orange drink in a bottle – no glass offered. Back on the main highway I passed by a mile of abandoned derelict factories, amazingly in the middle of this was a

brand-new Citroen dealer. Now in Vidin my hotel was on the riverside where riders were gathering for a 600km Audax to the Danube estuary. Vidin had a glass fronted multi storey shopping mall, most shops remained unlet, only McDonalds brought people in. Next morning I watched the sun rise over the road bridge over the Danube.

On the main road to Romania I was shocked and dubious to see a blue cycle route to the bridge sign. As I expected there were no more signs, SatNav put me on a road parallel to the bridge, I took a dusty track, I was stopped by a policeman in a van. I had to follow the road and there was the second blue sign, and amazingly



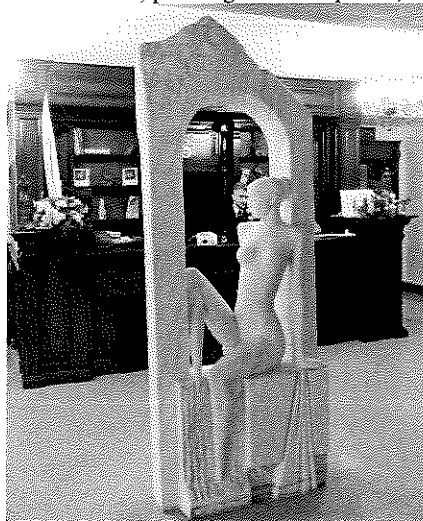
it led me to a dedicated cycle track attached to the bridge. Back on the main highway I had some close calls with large trucks. I turned off onto a road with dozens of secondhand vehicle compounds, likewise there were many car transporters on the road. I bounced over multiple flattened dog carcasses, was overtaken by a 2 horse and cart and then by 2 lads on mtb's who hurled abuse at me. I returned to the E70 a 4 lane dual carriageway which split the city of Dobreta Turnu Severin, my hotel, flanked by a casino and nightclub, was on this road lined with the familiar dismal apartment blocks. A few blocks

away "normality" returned, here was the city's park, fountains, theatre and a pedestrianised zone crowded with families enjoying the warm evening. I was woken during the night with countless dogs barking and cocks crowing.

There was a vast derelict factory near the city. I rode some lengthy 8% climbs to another zone of derelict factories then I stopped for a coffee and orange drink at a bar. Opposite was an apartment block with a red carpet leading to the entrance, there were some tables nearby and a violinist began playing traditional music at a furious pace, possibly the start of a wedding celebration. Soon I was in Targu Jui, one-way streets made it difficult to find Hotel Anna. The porter put my bike in a garage and then escorted me to the recently refurbished annexe, here he demonstrated the gadgetry in my lavishly furnished room where I could adjust the seat and water temperature of the electronically controlled bidet/too. The buffet breakfast was the best on this tour.

Next day was hilly, I saw the picturesque Murui Capatariel mountains in the distance. I passed through a village of garishly designed houses with showy

elaborate railings at their entrances, many houses remained unfinished. Despite the apparent wealth, I saw a man with 2 cows and a woman with a flock of chickens and ducks. Later in a bar an inebriated old man recounted tales the other customers had heard many times, he left shaking everybody's hand including mine. Afterwards I passed through a touristy village, every shop selling identical traditional costumes and souvenirs. Then I met a French student cycling from Paris to Japan. I rode into the modern centre of Ramonicu Valcea. At my hotel, and after an argument my bike went into the lobby behind reception. An entire art collection, paintings and sculptures, had been acquired to decorate the hotel.



Next day was a rest day, I was lucky as it was the first day of school term, the streets full of immaculately dressed and groomed children carrying flowers. There was a great atmosphere in the city centre, cafes packed with children and parents.

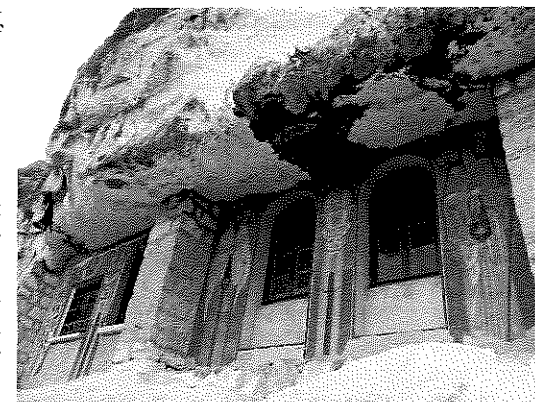
I left town and was soon on a minor road with light traffic, even so I was almost taken out by a SUV. There were fields of fruit trees and ancient tractors towing carts piled high with potatoes. I had to use Sat Nav to confirm I was in Pitesti, outside my hotel an enthusiastic porter took my bike inside before I had even been to reception.

In the morning I had to ride on tar humps for 5 miles. I passed vast fields of cereals being harvested by an ancient combine. Two near misses followed, a grandmother pushed her grandchild into the road without looking, similarly a priest in a long black robe with silver embroidered collar. I arrived in Targoviste, a city ideally situated for next day's ride into Bucharest.

Soon I was on a minor road lined with polytunnels growing brassicas and tomatoes. In a small village two priests were visiting a house, watched by several very worried looking elderly women peering over their garden gates. I rode into a traffic jam caused by 3 horse and carts carrying scrap metal, one carrying a complete car body. I joined Route 1A, a lorry pulled out in front of me and I ended on the other side of the road, I gave the driver an earful. As I neared Bucharest traffic gradually picked up, it became very busy when I finally entered urban areas, fortunately countless pedestrian crossings slowed traffic. SatNav guided me to Hotel Mansion located in the Historic Quarter. The bike taken to a downstairs office and I was escorted to my themed room. Mine was Vintage, brass fittings and taps in the bathroom, there was even a brass waste bin.

The Historic Quarter is a pedestrianised area of narrow streets filled with bars and restaurants. I took the Metro to the northern suburbs, walked down a wide boulevard lined with embassies, passed an electric bike hire station and entered the historical museum. This was a lakeside area of several acres where traditional buildings had been relocated, there were windmills, houses, a church and some massive presses. There was also a stage where dancers and musicians in traditional dress were performing to an enthusiastic audience. Back in the now busy Historic Quarter, 3 policemen with guns, truncheons and bullet proof vests were patrolling the streets and young girls were hassling pedestrians to visit their restaurants.

Even early on Sunday morning roads were busy and streets crowded with shoppers. I was soon on Route 6 a 4-lane dual carriageway, I was able to turn off on to a minor concrete slab and tarmac road. I was in a vast plain with corn and sunflowers to the horizon. Farmers here had large shiny tractors and their combines looked vaguely modern. Eventually I arrived at the bridge over the Danube, built in 1954 it was totally inadequate for modern day traffic, thankfully traffic was light, for cyclists the hazards were the steel expansion joints. Following passport checks vehicles had to drive over a totally inadequate spray of disinfectant to enter Bulgaria. A quiet road with an obsolete pipeline for 3 miles then narrowed as it passed the now familiar gloomy apartment blocks. My hotel in Ruse's pedestrianised shopping district. Here I discovered the Happy Restaurant chain, an upmarket version of Wetherspoons offering good food, with excellent service and prices.



I left town on a 6-lane dual carriageway but soon I took a minor road. I went to a rock monastery, I was surprised to see a priest in the souvenir shop, it was £1 to get in. Back on route it

was a day of short climbs and descents. I passed through Cenovo, a smart town with a new children's playground and two women were painting the kerb stones white. Further on villages were very poor and the road likewise. My hotel in Svistov stood out starkly against the rest of the run down town.

I had arranged with my Bulgarian cycling friend George to meet on the road at midday. I was on time and 10 miles from Nikopol George appeared. We descended 250m to Nikopol and a café where we met his cycling friend who had

worked in England as a strawberry picker and more successfully as a decorator, he got into cycling and bought a bike which he brought back to Bulgaria. George and I cycled to his house in Shiakovo, George has never been very house proud but now things were a lot worse. His 95 almost blind and unable to walk mother occupied 2 rooms, leaving 2 rooms for him and his 11 year old son. There is also a bathroom and his honey processing room which held his 2018 harvest of 2 tonnes stored in 25kg tins. Food was somewhat repetitive with toasted mince served at every meal, interspersed by a boiled egg for breakfast and yogurt for dinner. A mouse in my room disturbed my sleep. Next day, after his son was taken to school, we cycled to Gigen, on the way, stopping at a tiny petrol station where George's girlfriend Vaska works. At Gigen there are the remains of a large Roman town, some excavation work had been carried out to reveal mosaics but the remainder of the site was strewn with broken pillars and building blocks, some carved. Back at George's house, George collected the government supplied meal handouts for his mother and son. George's pension is less than 100 euros per month, he is reliant on selling his honey at a reasonable price to get by.

Next day George, Vaska, and I cycled back to Nikopol to see a viewpoint over the Danube and a Roman tower. On the return journey we were halted by a huge wind turbine blade carried on the back of an equally sized truck. We came to a village where the road was just potholes, apparently the villagers had closed the road for a weekend and had now been promised a new road.

My tour now over, George took me to the local station in his 20 year-old Fiesta, a screwdriver holding up the passenger window. The station was just a block of concrete, a modern looking train arrived on time. The conductor hand wrote my ticket and duly stamped it, I had to change trains at Pleven where passengers had to walk over the tracks for the train to Sofia. The train chugged into the station, it must have been 50 years old and covered with graffiti, from previous experience I had booked first class, these carriages had been "refurbished" offering some comfort. We passed countless derelict factories before some pretty scenery appeared as we followed a river gorge. The platforms at Sofia had been rebuilt. I took the Metro to the city centre and found my Hotel which was located on the main pedestrian boulevard. It was ideally located to visiting the main sites. I visited the Nevski Crypt, a couple of churches with murals, and museum displaying Icons and traditional Bulgarian textiles and clothing. In the side streets there were some upmarket shops, and a boulevard lined with shops selling designer clothing and shoes. The final day in Sofia was a public holiday, cafes were bursting, the main boulevard was packed, then at 15.00 a strong wind blew leaves, parasols rocked, within 15 minutes the street was deserted and the temperature 15 degrees lower.

A bit of fun by a Matlock Mum (alias the Bard of Wirksworth)

In our house, there are four boys.
They never seem to play with toys.
Instead they play with wheels and hubs,
Bottom brackets, chains and tubs.
They all have several cycles each -
At least one for every day of the week.
They like to ride where it's muddy.
Their mum, she doesn't think it's funny,
When all their washing she has to do -
It leaves no time to go to the!! (shops).
Our house has turned into a cycle shed
With bikes above and below all beds.
In every room bike parts can be found,
But tools! well, they are never around,
Especially when needed by big boy Harry.
The cost of all these he has to carry.
A free weekend? There aren't any of these -
Never one when I can do as I please.
All over the country the four of them travel
To find a race and a path of gravel.
The rougher the course, the more they like it,
They just go anywhere they can bike it.
They do return home at the end of the day
But seem to need more than a bag of hay!
Steak, chicken and pudds are what they all like -

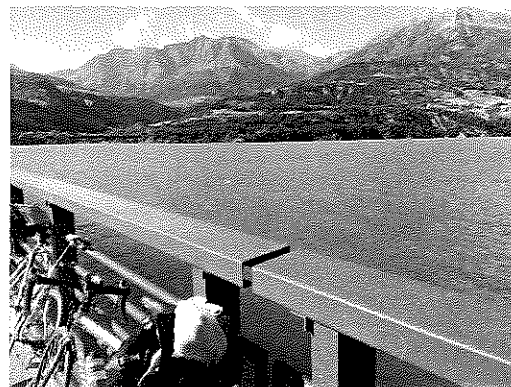
IT'S A REALLY GOOD JOB MUM HASN'T A BIKE !



Cooking in Provence by Alastair Sneddon

It was the same old story the increasingly old and feeble Sneddon brothers and their faithful companion John off on another misguided tour of foreign territory. Last year it was a trot around Normandy setting out on the day after the referendum. This year with Mrs May almost as misguided as our intrepid cyclists, we set off the day after the General Election but headed for higher ground. For some reason we thought that it would be a good idea to ride a few Tour de France Cols and so after an all-night drive from Calais we parked the venerable people carrier outside the police station at a village not far from Gap and saddled up at around 2.30pm.

The afternoon's ride in 30+°C heat around a stunning blue lake ended after 40 miles at the village of Jausiers. Our accommodation, a slightly seedy ski chalet run by a man with a very bad back. We took supper at an indifferent restaurant where the seating area was bounded by a partly demolished breeze block wall.



Day 2

Dawned hot and clear and we enjoyed a decent breakfast presided over by our host so crippled with back pain that he remained prostrate on the sofa. The breakfast room clearly had to double up as the entertainment area and we were surrounded by a drumkit and other musical instruments.

The day's task was to crawl up the Col de la Bonnette 2,715 metres, the 1400 metre climb took 4 hours most of it in bottom gear. The phrase Granny's Bonnette summed it up.

We lunched at a busy cyclists/motor cycle café on the way down so busy that they had ran out of everything except a zucchini flan and pickled mushrooms, needs must when the devil drives.

Then downhill into a 32°C headwind leaving us thoroughly cooked until we stopped for supper at a roadside café run by a Belgian couple whose trio of pasta repaired some of the damage. Our Belgian friend had no rooms, but booked us in with someone else in the next village. A rundown Auberge, which had recently changed hands and was awaiting renovation.

We settled down for the night with James suggesting that his eminent medical counterparts might also be holidaying in Provence, but were more likely to be staying at a Michelin starred restaurant discussing the wine list with the Sommelier. Whereas we who had done ourselves in climbing the Col de La Bonnette, were concerning ourselves with bedbugs and the only reference to a Sommelier were John's socks.

Day 3

Monday morning brought us a serious problem.

James – a cardiologist is not immune to heart trouble himself and during the night had detected that he had slipped into Atrial Fibrillation, a condition which means that the heart does not regulate itself properly – and normally needs to be shocked back into normal rhythm. We wondered about performing such a procedure with a Garmin or phone charging cable, but thought the better of it, and headed out for breakfast for John and I. James was not allowed any in case he had to go to hospital.

Thankfully, whilst we were enquiring where the nearest Doctor or pharmacy might be, his heart righted itself. What should we do next? The answer was an urgent need for some anticoagulant drugs to regularise the situation.



This involved a steady 14km run down the Valley to where an obliging chemist provided the necessary (James knew what he needed) – no questions asked, circumstances impossible in the UK. It would appear that the condition had come on as a result of heat and dehydration possibly resulting from upset innards following the pickled

mushrooms.

So rattling with pills and 70 euros lighter James obeyed his own doctor's orders and off we set again. Light duties only of course, which involved the Col de Vars, 2,109 metres, a 1200 metre climb involving a long drag into a very hot headwind – using our favourite bottom gear. This led us to St Andre les Alpes where we stumbled upon the Hotel Monge, a marvellous old building with a slightly down landlord unhappy about the cost of altering a historic building to provide disabled access – something that the authorities were insisting upon. Supper in the square, Burgers – with Pate de fois gras. A previously untried combination.

Breakfast in the fading grandeur of the establishment involved a nuclear powered egg boiler and a remarkable variety of jam.

We set off up the Verdone Valley with stunning scenery a blue-green river and hot smooth tarmac. Little did we know that this was the start of a 30 mile climb which kicked up at the end to a Stelvio style finish.

The memorable feature being a very characterful Bassett hound which accompanied us for the last 2-3 miles nipping into the adjacent streams for a drink



and a cool off at regular intervals. This was the Col de Allos, 2,250 metres, there then followed 10 miles downhill on precipitous roads – 1000 metre drop with no safety net and a vulture wheeling overhead.

We sampled an ice cream in a dusty down at heel town re-tarmacking the road for the Tour de France, eventually we found our way to Jausiers (again).

Not wishing to put upon our sciatic landlord again, we opted for a Bike/Biker hotel which was excellent.

Our bikes were a bit outclassed by the sparkling lightweights in the garage.

There was much washing of kit and then an excellent set menu supper followed by a short walk to “clear the air”. Our room should have been cordoned off with incident tape awaiting SOCO.

We stumbled upon a superior establishment where those more prosperous than ourselves were staying. The car park boasted a McLaren, Lamborghini, Porsche and Ferrari F12, clearly some sort of Top Gear trip.

Day 4

We left Jausiers after a shopping spree for victuals all festooned around my saddlebag making my already slow progress even more pitiful.

This time we were off up the Valley of the River Vars, usual village stop to inspect War memorial, motorbike museum and cyclists accommodation recently opened by a British couple, who were delighted to show James and John the extent of

their establishment. Meanwhile I had spotted a couple of livestock trucks and assumed correctly that these were involved in the “Transhumance” – the moving of sheep up to the summer pastures.

The lorries contained sheep, goats and dogs – the ones that live on the mountains with the flock to guard against wolves.

I asked the lady in charge what the dogs ate, to be told that a helicopter delivered dog biscuits to the high pastures, I am not sure if she was winding me up but it was all a curious combination of ancient tradition and high tech.



After lunch on the slopes we struggled over the Col de Vars 2109 m, then downhill to Guillestre where we were caught in an impressive electrical storm which necessitated us sheltering in a park accompanied by a large girl in a bathing costume.

We set off up another substantial climb before the rain came again on the run in to Briançon. A hotel was located and ablutions carried out with everything wet and smelly and John making a serious attempt to flood the bedroom from an overflowing bath. A moderate supper, service slow and we were the only people not smoking.

Day 5

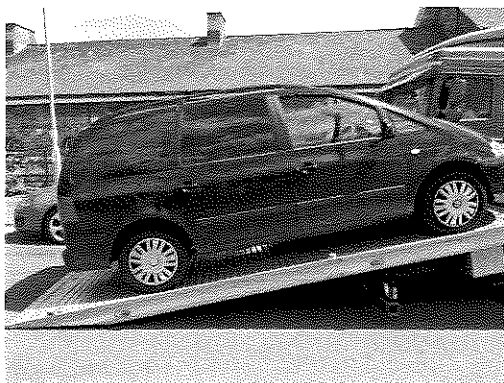
A 7 am breakfast meant we were on the road up the Izoard rather earlier and cooler than previous days. We stopped to talk to a Swiss gentleman who had met Nairo Quintana the previous day and had his picture taken at the top of the Galibier. Our Swiss friend was 68 and was on his way from Basle to Menton with luggage for a month.

The Izoard, 2,360m, was either more pleasant than earlier climbs or we were going better, but we made steady progress, had a picnic lunch and a coffee at a skiing hotel which allowed us to inspect a copy of Charlie Hebdo. It is not surprising some people take offence at the content.

We eventually made the summit, outclassed by a man who had made it to the top with his Parson Jack Russell in a dog cage on his rack.

The descent from the Izoard looks unsurprisingly like it does in every book about the tour de France – narrow and with a terrifying drop into the gorge.

We did see about half a dozen of the Sky team heading uphill rather faster than we were going down, obviously reconnoitring the course in advance of the Tour.



Another all-night drive ticked off the 600 + miles to Calais and at some additional cost an earlier boat than planned.

Drama awaited us on the other side, having cleared customs in Dover we had just filled up with fuel and were pulling onto the roundabout when a driveshaft snapped leaving us to make the last 70 miles by AA transporters.

The ancient people carrier with 238,000 miles on the

clock had done its best to get us home, but despite failing health had at least made British soil.

So to conclude an eventful trip- major Cols conquered - Col de la Bonnette - Col de Allos - Col de Vars - Col de Izoard. Distances 50 to 60 miles each day - averages on some stretches only 5 mph, even downhill did not allow much improvement.

Fabulous scenery, wild flowers, butterflies and beautiful rivers and lakes.

The bikes performed faultlessly and James' medical problems were quickly resolved. Not much traffic to worry about, plenty of motorbikes, but all courteous and respectful.

So does this constitute a holiday? Definitely a change rather than a rest.

At the end of each day we were delighted to eat supper, usually with no more than 1 beer and head for bed at little after 9pm.

This is the cost of riding the highest roads in Europe, but what is remarkable is that it is possible for non-competitive cyclists, average age about 60, to cover the same ground as the Tour de France, albeit at pedestrian pace.

Matters were perhaps not helped by the heat and a few internal problems which might have stemmed from drinking water from roadside streams and fountains. The alternative was dehydration, at least there were no De Moulin incidents although it is fair to say that at times we were on clinchers rather than tubs.

(Many apologies to Alastair, I omitted this article from last year's magazine- Ed.).

Membership Fees and Time Trial Passes

The prices for Membership Fees and Time Trial Passes will remain unchanged for 2019.

You can renew using the Membership Application Form enclosed with this magazine, a form is also downloadable from our Website.

JOIN/RENEW ONLINE.

We will be using the British Cycling website for this. You need to access "Join a Club", this can be done using:

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/club/profile/1169/matlock-cc>

or use the same link via our website homepage, click on The Club and Join Us. The link will bring you to the page showing Buy Club Membership. Click on this and complete the form. When prompted to choose a BC membership type, if you do not want this, click on *No Thanks*. Note there is a £1 admin fee payable.

The charging of a £3 fee for Club time trials will be continued for the 2019 season. Those members who are under 23 years old can ride all Club time trials without charge.

A Time Trial Pass @ £20 is available which will enable you to ride all Club time trials in 2019 with no further charge.

(Time Trial Passes will not be available to Second Claim members and those Second Claim U23's will have to pay for any Club Time Trial they ride).

If you wish to renew your Club Membership- **please do promptly.**





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