



Riding home from Mallorca

At the end of Tim Williams' 2018 Mallorca Training Camp in March, instead of heading for the airport like everyone else I packed up my panniers to ride home. There is admittedly a lot of sea in the way, but I planned to take the ferry from Palma to the mainland at Valencia, then to ride some 800 km north-west across Spain in about 10 days to Santander, and catch another ferry to Portsmouth.

I hired a road bike for the week of group rides on Mallorca, but flew out from Stansted with my tourer. It is a 15 year-old Dawes Sardar steel frame with 26" wheels, weighing around 15kg, and has very low gearing which comes into its own on hills when I may have nearly the same weight in luggage, but in the hotel bike store it stood out amongst all the light carbon like a carthorse at Newmarket I said my last goodbyes on the Sunday night, and on Monday rode the short way round the bay into Palma. It is an attractive city with a busy streetlife, and that evening I followed a Holy Week procession through the alleys of the old town. The next day I caught the ferry for the 8-hour sailing to Valencia, where I stayed all Wednesday. I would have gone for an afternoon ride along the coast but for a good lunch and temperatures in the 30s, and retired to the hostel roof for a siesta instead. I knew my approximate route, but worked out the details as I went along. I don't use GPS but would pore over maps each morning, and fix the appropriate sheet to my



handlebars. I took a sleeping bag and bivi bag to give me the option of camping, but also used hotels and hostels, often booking just an hour or two before arrival on my smartphone.

My tour began for real on the Thursday. Leaving Valencia I rode at first past orange groves on wide cycle paths frequented by groups of road cyclists, until after 30km the hills began. I topped a first summit at 711 metres, then that evening another at 900, where I found an ideal bivi spot on a picnic site with sweeping views. It was a beautiful night under bright moonlight, and I broke for the first time a Spanish law that outlaws most wild camping.

On the Friday – Good Friday – the road continued to climb, and the Mediterranean forests gave way to sparser landscapes where spring had not yet arrived, and the temperature dropped markedly. This area, the Maestrazgo, felt very remote despite the arrival of tourism in some of the prettier old villages. Near sunset I crossed a 1560 metre pass into an icy gale near Alcalà de la Selva, and realised that camping would be a poor choice. The hotels were full of Easter visitors heading for a nearby ski resort, but by a stroke of luck I found the last room in town. It was a 3 star, my one night of luxury, so I enjoyed a good meal and was thankfully in a warm bed when it snowed in the night.

Over the next few days I crossed many more hills, but with fewer prolonged ascents than



on the ride up from the Mediterranean, and I stayed at altitudes of 900 metres or higher almost to the north coast. The weather changed every day or two with times of rain, cold, wind and bright spring sunshine. The days could reach a pleasant and sunny 10° to 15°C but the mornings were always chilly, and some nights close to zero. At the end of day three, I set up my bivi inside a derelict chapel outside the village of Pancrudo to avoid the worst of the chill – having first ascertained at the one bar that there was no accommodation – and was surprisingly comfortable despite the distant muffled beat of the all-night village Easter disco.

My worst time was that afternoon, when I took nearly 4 hours to ride 30km into a relentless 50kph headwind, then was blown across a main road as I changed direction. At other times I took any rain and cold in my stride, but needed all the layers and waterproofs that I'd brought with me. The good days could be glorious though, and the ride was never dull. Touring at this pace allows you to appreciate the gradual changes in the lands you pass through, and I enjoyed noting the variations in landscape, architecture, produce and climate along the way.

On Monday afternoon, descending a hill I felt a thumping from my back wheel. I found a bulge in the rim, and knew it was a goner. It took 30 careful kilometres using the front brake only to reach Soria, where I went straight to a bike shop. I picked the bike up again next morning with its new wheel, just relieved that it had happened here rather

than on the wintery passes a few days earlier.

I did some cultural tourism too, exploring Valencia, Soria, and the great cathedral of Burgos. Burgos hadn't been on my plans, but bad weather made me divert around the mountains, which was fortuitous as it is a good stop too for food lovers, particularly carnivores, and I had some tasty raciones

along with a rioja or two in bars there.

Finding food was a little erratic on this tour. Deepest rural Spain is not like the overflowing tapas strips of Madrid or Barcelona, and a village bar – generally there are only bars – may have no food, or just a dry sandwich or plate of cold anchovies. On several days I survived on a mix of reasonable-enough bar snacks, along with bread, cold meats and cheese that I carried with me.

Oranges were plentiful and cheap and added variety and sweetness to this mix. On Friday afternoon I crossed the Cantabrian mountains at the Estacas de Trueba pass (1154m). It was a gorgeous sunny day, and both the gradual climb to the snow-flecked summit and the abrupt descent to the north were magnificent. On Saturday I arrived in Santander in the drizzle. It is not that exciting a place, having been completely rebuilt after a fire in 1941, but it has beaches, and looks better after dark when its bars and restaurants come alive.

I had one day spare before my ferry, and spent a superb last day riding along the scenic north coast, returning via a loop into the hills, where on the final climb I got a





tantalising, hazy view of the Picos de Europa away to the west. That is something for another trip.

We sailed from Santander on Tuesday afternoon in a rainstorm, and it was still drizzling on arrival in Portsmouth 24 hours later.

I can recommend riding in Spain. Driving is

mostly respectful with wide passing distances, and the minor roads are very quiet. Add to that the scenery, the history, good-value accommodation, the weather (mostly) and the food (when you can get it) and it makes a great touring destination.

Rob Hale

More Records Re-written

Veteran time-triallist Andy Grant (below) continued his assault on the record books on 3rd June with a trip down to Wales and the fabled R25/3H course based on the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road where Marcin Bialoblocki set the current competition record.

In warm, dry, conditions and a gentle easterly - weather conditions entirely uncharacteristic of that part of the country - he recorded 50:37, the first ride

under 51 minutes by any 65-year old and a 1 minute, 25 second beating of Roger Iddles' existing mark that had stood for 9 years. Unfortunately, his status as new record-holder lasted precisely 4 minutes and 59 seconds, until Yorkshireman Peter Greenwood, who is 66, came in with a time 1 second faster.

Staying closer to home on the Tring-based F11/10 course, a fortnight later Andy contented himself with shaving 4 seconds off his own East Anglian VTTA 10 mile record for 65-year olds with 20:06 and then, on 15 July, rode his first 100-mile event for 37 years in the East District Cycling Association

Championship on the Attleborough-based B100/4 on the A11. In light winds and gathering heat, he recorded 3:47:07 to beat his antique PB by over 35 minutes and

relieve club mate Ken Platts of the East Anglian Group and club age records at the distance.

Andy's exertions in the 100 evidently caused no long-term ill-effects. On Wednesday, he returned to the same stretch of road in company with Chris Dyason, Ken Platts and Colin Lizieri, for



Photos: - Dominic Austrin

the East District 15 mile Championship, promoted by CC Breckland. On an evening that saw individual and team Competition Record broken, Andy updated the National Age 65 record to 31:28, setting a new club senior record in the process, taking seventh place and winning the veterans' award on standard by a minute from Ken Platts, whilst Chris, in recording 34:00, trimmed seconds off the Age 70 record which had been broken just minutes before by another competitor in the same event.

A fortnight earlier, Ken, giving his sleek new Time Trial bike an outing in the ECCA 25 on the 25-mile version of the same course



recorded 53:14 for a new East Anglian record for age 66. This included a brief stop to re-position his slipped handlebars and an uncomfortable ride which initially had him complaining about the new bike, and pining for the ancient and famous Lotus, but which he later discovered was down to a saddle which had also slipped. Far be it from me to cast aspersions on the bike-assembling skills of a PhD in engineering, but... Nevertheless, his time, combined with Andy Grant's 52:24 for third individual place and Colin Lizieri's 54:12, allowed Cambridge CC



Chris Dyason

to carry off the team award. It was one of three Cambridge team successes in the last month: in the Whitewebbs CC 10 on 30th June, Adam Fisher - so not-a-veteran that he still holds the club junior 25 record (albeit set in 2000) - took third place overall and led home Andy and new signing Bob Watson, whilst in the East Anglian VTTA 10 on the E2 on July 12th, Andy, Ken and Bob took the team honours on Vets' standard.

Andy Grant

Wednesday Rides

Wednesday club rides at an intermediate pace take place regularly throughout the year. There is sometimes a café stop - depending on the weather/time available - and distance varies from 40 to 65 miles. Starting at 8.30am prompt from Rupert Brooke, Granchester (later start time in the winter). If you're interested in being put onto a distribution list for these rides, which currently are not on the website calendar, email clubruns@cambridgecc.co.uk

CCC Recovery and Rehabilitation rides

Despite the title, all are welcome, especially those with some kind of illness/injury which prevents long(er) distance cycling, which was the original thought behind these rides. You can get to the café by bike/car/microlight/boat or any other means you can come up with. We visit selection of cafes within a 15 mile radius of Cambridge and all you need to do is turn up at that café at 11am. Simple! These rides have been in place for the past four months or so and have proven to be very popular. It's a great chance to meet and chat without the pressure of keeping up (or not) with fellow cyclists. Plus the bonus is you get to choose your own route. If you would like to go on the mailing list for these rides, email clubruns@cambridgecc.co.uk

Annual Social Saturday 10th November

Save the Date. New venue: - Meridian Golf Club at Toft 7 to 10pm
with guest speaker Michael Hutchinson.



Bank Holiday Ride to Lowestoft

Lowestoft - the most easterly town in the UK and birthplace of the composer Benjamin Britten. More pertinently to a CCC club rider, reasonably direct routes to it from Cambridge are close to 100 miles in length, through some of Suffolk's finest country lanes. Lowestoft is

one of the few places to find reasonably priced B&Bs which will take one night bookings over the busy August bank holiday weekend - and so a small group of us assembled in Quy at 9am on the Saturday morning to start our ride. Sue, Ken, David, Grant and I were joined by Phil who would ride with us on the first leg of our journey. Comparing my packing strategy with everyone else's, I was worried I might have made a schoolboy error. Ken and Grant had crammed everything they needed for the weekend into rackpacs and David had managed to squeeze everything he needed into a large seatpost bag. I was glad to see Sue had opted for panniers, as I had, but she had sensibly used two small panniers whereas I had a single large pannier on one side of the bike - although I preferred the way this kept the weight lower on the bike, it did make it rather keener to lean over to the left than to the right. Oh well, too late to do anything about it now, I thought, and with that we were off.

The first leg was on familiar roads to Maglia Rosso. I was glad to find that everyone seemed happy to ride at an easy pace, made even easier with a good breeze behind us. We made it all the way to Six Mile Bottom before our first mechanical of the day

- no amount of sealant in the tube was stopping the air exiting the valve core on David's back wheel. Soon fixed, we carried on to the café where they were clearly not having a good day - orders for teas went missing and a 40 minute wait for hot food

meant we had to stick to cakes, although there was a good selection of those. Ken was also not having a good day at this point, having been stung by a wasp which had got stuck in his glove. As seasoned cyclists, none of us had

thought to pack anything as useful as a tube of antihistamine cream. Grant suggested vinegar would help, and we then all helpfully listed other condiments that might improve matters - mayonnaise, ketchup etc. We left Phil nursing his second cup of tea and pushed on towards Stowmarket and our second stop at the aptly named Lakeside Café. Here they were definitely having a better day and food arrived speedily, which we ate sitting out in the sun.

We were now quite definitely on unfamiliar roads - although one pretty Suffolk country



Grant, Sue, Will, David & Ken





lane looks very much like another if you ask me. At around two thirds distance it was Grant's turn to puncture, a traditional Suffolk flint hampering progress for ten minutes before we reached our third tea stop of the day, at the Weavers tea room in the attractive village of Peasenhall. I made a quick visit to Emmett's Store here, which has a rather good line in chocolate - I recommend the chocolate coated orange and lemon peel in particular. Leaving Peasenhall we now had to turn more northeasterly to reach Lowestoft, so our tailwind became more of a crosswind and my legs started having a bit of a grumble, but the distance ticked down and before long we were heading through the outskirts of Lowestoft towards our B&Bs on Marine Parade.

I insisted on going to find Ness point - the most easterly part of the most easterly town in the UK. It wasn't that easy to find, tucked away round the back an industrial estate and hidden behind the sea wall, but having gone past it once Ken and I finally located it, and once photos had been taken we headed back to the B&B to freshen up and go in search of food.

Over dinner we discussed plans for the next day. Saturday had been mostly sunny, but the forecast for Sunday suggested quite a lot of rain was on its way, so we decided our best option was to make as early a start as possible without missing breakfast, which worked out at an 8am start.

The wind had turned to the south on Sunday, but was initially quite light and my legs were feeling good. The first leg to Goodies Food Hall was uneventful and our timing was spot-on as a large group of riders from Velo Club Norwich arrived shortly after us. Our next planned stop was near Ixworth, east of Bury St. Edmunds, but wouldn't be open by the time we got there. Leaving Goodies, the

wind was now picking up, and with a group of only five in a strengthening crosswind the riding was starting to get a little tougher. David would occasionally cheer us up by reminding how far we still had to ride. With about 55 miles down and about 40 to go, I was beginning to fade, and the first drops of rain were starting to fall.



Fortuitously we passed a sign to Wyken vineyard, and soon after arrived at the vineyard itself which promised a café - worth a look we decided. The café turned out to be more of a restaurant in a wood framed barn conversion, and quite busy, but they squeezed us into a corner and we refuelled. When we left, the rain had really started to fall, and the wind was still picking up, but another 20 miles would get us to Tuddenham, and from there, another 20 back into Cambridge. The ride had definitely entered the 'character building' phase, but there was still a reasonable amount of shelter from the wind to be had from trees and hedges.

We were all pretty soaked by the time we got to Tuddenham and dived into the garden centre for a final pit stop. David, who had done more than his fair share of riding on the front over the weekend, left us here to push on at his own, much faster, pace. The last 20 miles weren't a lot of fun, the more exposed countryside to the northeast of Cambridge doesn't give much respite from the elements, but we'd all been wetter and colder on other rides, and soon enough I was turning onto my home street, and that was that. All in all, it was a very enjoyable weekend; riding the same old roads week after week can get a bit repetitive, it's good to explore new ones from time to time. Routes are on the CCC web site if anyone is interested in repeating the trip.

Will Lockhart



Simon Denney's Memorial

Simon's memorial took place on 20th August at Burwash Manor's Secret Garden. Several members of CCC were in attendance along with other cycling club's members and also the Mini car club of which he was a active member. The funeral was attended by around 200 or so and was a very joyful and uplifting celebration of his life. His Mum, sister and son together with various friends paid warm and humorous tributes with many anecdotes which set us all laughing.

Simon was a keen cyclist – it was the joy of his life (along with his mini). He was a car mechanic by trade and an excellent bike mechanic. He will be remembered for his good nature, constant chatter, loyalty and ability to fix anything.

It was wonderful to see that his favoured bike, which he named 'The Germ' (dredged out of the Cam around 20 years ago), had pride of place beside the speakers. He would have loved this and would have also loved the warm and heart-felt tributes paid to him by so many. He certainly was one of those one-off characters who are irreplaceable and will forever remain in the hearts of those who knew him. The MG service dept. at which he worked closed for the half-day of the funeral so their staff could attend. Members of the Air Ambulance, who had attended his accident a year or so ago, also came to pay their respects.

RIP, Simon, you were one in a million.

Hinxworth Clock Tower Memorial

Many of you will have been to the tea room at Farrowby Farm, Hinxworth, but how many have noticed the Clock Tower Memorial which stands just a short way along the main road of Hinxworth just beyond the junction to the tea room?

It was bequeathed to the parish of Hinxworth by Major Vincent Clutterbuck who died in World War I aged 40, and it cost £250 to construct in 1920. It was restored in 1997 as a result of funds provided by Major Robert Clutterbuck.

There are just two clock faces (not four as you might expect) and three tablets on the base which give names of 12 who died in WWI and one who died in WWII. All but two of those listed on the memorial were buried abroad, mainly France, unsurprisingly. Only one was buried in Hinxworth (he died just after the end of WWI) from where almost all originated.



... and now for some curious facts about Hinxworth. I confess to not knowing (until now) that Hinxworth is home to the Hinxworth Archers (no, not the ones on Radio 4) but the bow and arrow type. One of the few Archery clubs in the area according to Wiki.

Another curio is that author, Monica Dickens (great grand-daughter of Charles Dickens) lived in a cottage in the village from 1947 to 1951 and whilst there she wrote one of her novels (inspired by her time working for the Hertfordshire Express newspaper) called 'My Turn to Make the Tea'. Well I, for one, am not going to argue with her on that one.

Sue Taylor



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