



On the Rivet

The North Bucks Road Club Newsletter

Aug-Sept 2005

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National 24

La Marmotte:

Leigh Smith tackles the giants
of the Alps

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The North Bucks Road Club

August/September 2005

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Editorial

This issue sees a continuation of a series of articles about our non-racing activities. In July, Leigh Smith rode one of the French events similar to L'Etape du Tour - la Marmotte - a seriously challenging but photogenic event.

On the racing front, Steve Abraham took 7th place in the National 24 hour time trial championship, an excellent result and club record to boot. He has written an interesting account of this event, which he rode on fixed and without support.

In addition, I have been trying to spruce up the layout of the newsletter, to try and make it a bit more exciting! I would welcome continued support from club members, in the form of articles and especially photos.

Hopefully, this edition of the newsletter will be distributed before the end of August - I am

off to ride the Duo Normand with Gerry on 4th September. It's my last hope for something good from what has been a disastrous season for me. I'm already looking forward to a winter training for next season.

At least one of our stars from the past, Tony Parks, has had a good season, with an excellent return to form and a series of excellent results and some new club records. Hopefully he'll continue and improve still further next season.

Announcements!

NORTH BUCKS ROAD CLUB

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2005

The annual general meeting of the North Bucks Road Club will be held on Wednesday 28 September at 7.30pm in Harley Hall.

Members are invited to submit agenda items for the forthcoming AGM. The agenda items have to be in writing with any supporting documentation with the Club Chairman by Saturday 3rd September.

Bryan Scarborough
shangbandk@hotmail.com

A Good Day's Ride

by Steve Abraham

Thursday was spent mostly in bed. I had just finished testing the Audax UK's London-Edinburgh-London route on the Wednesday. Since the previous Saturday I'd ridden about 950 miles.

The usual last minute preparations were made on Thursday evening. Two independent lights were needed on both front and rear, along with a rear reflector. Anyone seen to not comply were going to be stopped from racing until daylight or until their night equipment was satisfactory.

I had intended to ride without mudguards this year, but the only rear reflector which was possible to fit to my bike was on a pair of mudguards. Although my rear diode lights each had reflectors on them, I wasn't going to risk having an argument with the officials, possibly while my 24 hours were ticking away. There were the panniers to load.

Preparation was paused by sleep, and resumed on Friday morning. My plan was to set off at 0900 Friday morning, arriving at the pre-booked hotel in Chester in good time.

So at 1100 Friday morning (somewhat later than planned) I set off on my Dave Yates, complete with a pair of loaded panniers, up the A5.

I was pleased with my progress and it wasn't long before I reached the halfway point at Tamworth, with my average speed, including stops, at over evens. At Tamworth, I turned off the A5 on the A51.

I was just below evens by the time I reached 100 miles, but considering the panniers and the slight headwind, I reckoned I was in good form to carry out this year's strategy for the Mersey Roads 24 hour.

I arrived at the hotel just after 1800, having ridden 135 miles (over 1000 miles since Saturday). I was sharing a room with fellow rider and AUK (Audax UK) rider Danny Fisher, of the Willesden CC.

I'd heard that Danny had been training on his turbo for this ride and that he was keen to improve on his ride of last year. I think that he was a bit upset about not getting over 400 miles last year (he did about 360) and had even given up his fags. I reckoned from what I'd heard about his riding this year, he'd be on for about 420.

He was being a bit cagey about what he thought he'd do, and wouldn't stick his neck out to say he was in for a good ride. I certainly thought he would beat me. He had also spent quite a lot in the bike shop on energy drink and yucky bars and had his theories of eating so many per hour and not needing anything else to get round. Like me, he was riding without a support crew. Another addition to his strategy was a radio taped to his tri-bars to keep him amused (us AUKs are an odd bunch).

Danny wasn't the only one being cagey about how well they were going. I told him that I left home about 9 or 10-ish. We shopped over the road in Sainsburys for our tea, had our feast and went to bed.

We both had a lay in and leisurely breakfast, then rode to the race HQ to make our bikes ready for the race. Panniers and rack removed, lights fitted with new batteries, numbers on jerseys, waterproof and reflective vest for the night section. Then stuff pockets with energy bars from the goody bag given to each rider, discard the horrible "Go" gloop which I can't stomach, then scoff all the jelly babies. You don't want jelly babies in your pockets in a 24 hr - your hands get sticky enough as it is, and besides, you can guarantee you will miss a few and end up with a sugary mess in your jersey when you take it off at the end.

I was surprised to see El Supremo milling about at the start. (El Supremo from

You don't want jelly babies in your pocket in a 24hr

AUK, famous for organising good audax events and doing his bit for the obesity crisis by trying to overfeed Audaxers when he runs the controls.) He takes a keen interest in what is going on and knows what people have been getting up to. He asked me "What are you going to do? 400 and...?" Considering I'd just finished the LEL route in the week and that the last time I rode the LEL the week before the Mersey event I'd ridden my worst ever 24 hr distance of 360 miles, I reckoned that anything over 360 would be an improvement and I was going to be happy with 400. 400+ seemed a bit too optimistic to me. In my favour, the year I'd ridden LEL immediately before the 24hr, was a very bad year for me. I wasn't really recovered from the year before. I was actually spending most of the year





whether or not I still wanted to be a cyclist. While I was riding then, I was wondering what I was doing there. Add to that I had started working shifts that year and wasn't really all that adjusted to it. Quite a lot of people blamed my performance on riding the LEL too close to the Mersey 24. This was my chance to disprove that by doing what I would think of as a reasonable ride.

It was soon time to make my way to the start, which had been moved down the road because of roadworks. I sat on some grass and waited for my starting time. I was a bit more nervous than usual while waiting to start and saw that as a good sign that my brain was ready for this.

Then my number was called and I went to the push-off. I started my computer with 4 seconds to go. I use a Cateye computer without autostart/stop - this means that my average speed is true to the time spent in the event and is a better way of monitoring stop times. To get 400 miles you need 16.6 average. So when you stop, keep an eye on your average speed and if it gets to 16.6 (presuming you're already above that) then it's best to get going if you want to get a 400 ride. The other advantage of this is that when my computer says I've been riding for 24 hours and four seconds, I press stop and look at my distance to see what I've done and I know that I can stop at the next timekeeper on the finishing circuit. Last year I was on the finishing circuit between the last two timekeepers doing 25mph. I pressed stop when my time was up and kept going at 25mph to the finishing timekeeper. My computer read 400 miles, but unfortunately it was reading over distance by 1%, so I only did 396 DRAT!!!

Usually I start steady on a 24 and aim to keep the same speed up all the way round. The first 100 miles drag on a bit but I consciously up the pace a bit every 6 hours if I feel that I can, this tends to keep my speed pretty constant all the way round.

This year I was going to do two things different. Firstly, having spent half of the preceding week sleeping rough while riding the LEL route I was expecting a bad night. So I decided on trying to do evens for the first 100 miles, then let my speed drop right down. The at night, I'd try not to lose too much of what I'd gained from a quicker than usual start. Lastly, to try to regain as much as possible in the last 6 hours, presuming I was in a fit state to do it.

I had also decided on a change of riding style. Normally, I aim to keep as constant an effort as possible, whether going up, down or on the flat. This year, I had spent

a few weeks touring on a mountain bike which when loaded with camping gear weighed 50lbs. Slooing that lot over the Welsh mountains and freewheeling down the other side got me to thinking that I was now more used to putting in a good effort followed by a good rest. Besides if that didn't work, I could always go back to my constant effort style.

So, I set off aiming to get my average speed up to at least 20. Within less than a mile I had it. It wasn't long before my average speed dropped. I was going uphill for a few miles. It didn't concern me because I was comfortably doing 18 and already had someone in my sights. By the time I got to Whitchurch, I'd regained evens and as starting to work my way up the field. The person who started a minute behind me was long gone.

My riding style was working well. I wouldn't let the speed drop below 16 going uphill. On the flat, if it dropped below 20 I'd give it "a little push" to put things right. Going down hills, I gave a little push at the top and just let the pedals of my fixed wheel go round while I relaxed as much as I could.

I just let my fixed wheel go round...

I enjoyed watching my average speed creep up as I turned at Telford. We had to retrace to Prees Heath, then return to Telford. I could check up on how the people behind me were doing. Danny Fisher had gained on me. This wasn't actually true - I'd lost my waterproof jacket from my saddle and had to tie the strap up to stop it going in my back wheel.

I was glad that I hadn't lost much time to Danny because I was convinced that he would beat me anyway. Robert Watson, a strong Audax rider, was gaining on me. I knew that he had been doing some time trialling this year and expected him to do 430-ish, so I was glad he hadn't caught me yet. He only started 10 minutes behind me. Marina Bloom, who started 15 minutes behind, was looking very strong and I seemed to be holding her off. The next one I wanted to check up on was women's end to end record holder Lynne Taylor. She is very easy to spot because of her riding style. There are lots of very good riders on the Mersey 24 - they look as though they are floating along, but Lynne looks as though she is floating by magic.

I was just starting to wonder if I'd missed her when there she was. But something

was different this year. She was still floating along, but not quite as well as usual. Something I couldn't put my finger on. Could it be that she was a bit slower? Something not quite right there.

But me, I was still going well and still feeling good. When I stopped after losing my jacket I was averaging 20.7, which dropped to 20.5 when I got moving again. I had eventually regained my 20.7 and was on schedule for my fastest ever first 100 in a 24. I was going to break evens if I kept at it, and I eventually did.

After the 100 mile mark, I had decided before the ride that I'd slow right down. But I didn't feel like it now. "I'll slow down on the next lap" I thought, though I did wind down a little.

It was now my first 6 hours up. I tend to break a 24 into four lots of 6 hours. Being without back up, I try to ride for 6 hrs without stopping for food, drink, or a pee. If it is really necessary such as a hot day and my bottles are empty, I will stop, but I always aim not to. When I do stop, I aim to make it a good one because I want to keep going another 6 hrs before I stop again.

I stopped at Prees feeding station and asked for my bottles to be filled. Meanwhile I gulped down as much liquid as I could. I'd had to ration out my drink in the first 6 hrs, so I was thirsty. I drank about a litre and a half on the spot. Then I lay down and counted to a hundred.

After that I drank some more, stuffed some energy bars in my pocket, and set off again for the next 6 hrs. I was pleased that my computer was still reading over 20mph average.

The brief rest had worked. Before I stopped, I'd been noting my speeds at various points around the course - they had dropped by a mile or two, now they were back up again.

After a few laps of the day circuit I kicked myself a little because I would soon have to stop to put on my night clothing. I could have done this at my 6 hr stop. It wasn't all bad news because I was getting through my drink very quickly and what I had wouldn't have lasted this "quarter". So for the remainder of the lap, I drained my bottles before stopping to put on the night gear.

I stopped and got my bottles filled as I rushed to put on my night gear and ran into the trees for a pee. Danny Fisher was there too so I asked how he was going - he was going OK.

I was soon off again, confident that I wouldn't stop again in this quarter. My average was 20.0. I still felt good, so I still kept my pace up, gladly breaking my promise to myself to slow down after 6 hrs. I knew that I would drop below 20 sometime and was pleased I'd held on so long.

It was getting dark. This would be what makes or breaks my ride. After my performance so far, I reckoned I could have 3 bad night hours and

still get 400 miles. It all depended on how much sleep I'd regained over the previous few days. The reason for my starting at faster than usual speed was that I didn't have any confidence that my night ride was going to go well.

When it got dark, I decided to forget what my average speed was, and just concentrate on keeping moving. I was going to try and enjoy myself as much as I could because that helps to keep you awake.

If I was in for a bad night, there was nothing I could do about it now. I've read a good book about sleep and have over a decade's worth of experience of sleep deprivation, so I have a good understanding of how it works. You can be ultra fit, but if you haven't been sleeping well in the previous few weeks and are carrying a large sleep debt, then you will be reduced to a crawl when the sleep drive hormones kick in. The worst time is the last three hours of your usual night's sleep, when you would normally be in your deepest REM dream sleep phase. If you are badly sleep deprived then your 8 hour night could be finished. I knew from previous experience that I wasn't in for an 8 hour grovel, but I suspected that I might be dead on my wheels for 3 hours.

When my 12 hours came up, I checked my distance. I made it 235 miles - I called it 232 because my computer was still over-reading. That would be either my 2nd or 3rd best 12 hr ever. Only 12 miles short of my best, and I still felt strong. I was telling myself this to give me a mental lift and cheer myself up to get through the night. In truth I couldn't believe how well it was going for me. I was almost tempted to ride along with my fingers in my ears waiting for it all to go bang!

I was also pleased that I had ridden over my second quarter and hadn't stopped yet. This gave me two possibilities. Either a short quarter in the early hours if I do have a bad 3 hrs, or a short last quarter, which I may be able to attack if I had anything left.

I hoped that I would keep going to Prees Heath feed, but my speed was dropping and drink was running low. Coming back from Telford I quite literally talked myself into stopping at Hodnet instead of pressing on another 15 or so miles to Prees. I was going to stop anyway, I'd done my 6 hrs and more. Stop now, and then I'll go much better. I liked the idea of pressing on and making the 3rd quarter short because it is always the hardest for me. But I decided that if I was on for a good ride, I couldn't afford for my speed to drop too much and I was down to about 17 on the flat now, where I was doing 20 plus in my first quarter. If I could keep 17 up in the third quarter, it would put me in with a chance of a 440 mile ride, and I didn't want to mess it up. I played safe and stopped at Hodnet. This was my longest stop of the ride. I sat in a chair and drank coffee with my eyes shut. My bottles

were filled and I had a custard tart. The I repeated. It was a long 20 minute stop and I promised myself that it was to be my only stop until my last quarter (a promise I always break, but tonight felt strange - I was feeling better than usual).

The night section can be good if you are going well. Front diode lights have come on a long way in the last few years and some of the riders have great setups, especially the trikies, one of note had flashing lights everywhere, front and rear!

At some time during the night, I saw an apparition in a high vis vest at the roadside. When I passed I could hear it say "Come on Steve!". It sounded remarkably like the Master (Gethin Butler). Then when I came back the other way, it was there again. This happened quite a few times. I wondered how he knew it was me. Well, I don't think of him as the Master for nothing, I suppose! Maybe I was hallucinating - after all it's usually the Master who passes me! This 24 was very strange indeed. First I'd done over 100 miles before any of the Walsall ladies team had caught me, secondly Lynne Taylor didn't seem quite herself and hadn't actually caught me ("yet" I thought at the time), and now I'm seeing Gethin Butlers at the roadside, giving me encouragement!

However, my 20 minute rest had worked, and my speed was up again. On to Prees and back again, where I began to start feeling drowsy. I played mind games and looked for things to laugh at and make jokes out of, to keep myself awake. My speed did drop for about 3 hrs, but I was expecting much worse. I was very pleased and thought that if I held my own, I'd get 430, but that if I picked up I might reach 440. I kept it steady till the end of the third quarter. A SE wind was picking up and I hoped that I would be marshalled off the night circuit onto the day circuit, not just because of the wind conditions, but because it would fit in better with my 6 hourly stop. I was looking forward to it, so I probably needed it. As I made my way to the feed station at Prees, I was directed to the day circuit, so I pressed on instead of stopping. I did a 13 mile lap before I stopped. My speed checks from yesterday were off pace, but I would be stopping soon.

I stopped with under 6 hrs left to go. I got my bottles filled with orange juice (up till now I'd been using energy drink). I also had some coffee and hot dogs. I decided against removing longs and thermal top, just removing my reflective vest. I lay down for a minute or two then got

going.

Back on the day circuit, my speed checks were almost as good as my first few circuits and I was probably averaging more or less evens again. I decided against attacking. I've done it in previous rides, and it never seems to pay off. I decided on trying to maintain 18 to the finish, which should give me 430-435. It would be my personal best, and a club record to boot. As time went on I thought that I wouldn't do it, I quite often get a sleepy relapse in the late morning, which messes up my last quarter and I thought that I had one coming. But it turned out to be a false alarm and I was actually speeding up. I still decided against launching a full scale attack. I would have had to keep stopping to refill bottles, which deplete faster with the effort. Also, I wasn't confident I'd be able to keep it up till the end.

I made a finals top halfway through the last quarter to refill bottles. It wasn't an easy decision because I felt good enough to keep going, but I was drinking a lot. I had to decide whether it was worth the mile I'd lose to refill. I played safe and did - I think this was the right decision. We were sent onto the finishing circuit late because of a large vehicle travelling at 8mph up the A41.

We had a good tailwind to the finish circuit, where we were mostly sheltered from the wind except for one short section. Unless I'm having a bad ride, I tend to go very well on the finish circuit (I put this down to having a lot of miles in my legs). I caught Marina Bloom on my second lap. She had put some miles into me at the beginning, and we'd been passing each other for the whole ride after the first 6 hrs. She had too much on me for me to beat her. Along with myself and several others, including winner Nik Gardiner, we were all on for PBs.

When my time was up, I topped my computer and got 446. I reckoned on 440 with my computer over reading. After the finish and ceremony, Danny and I made our way to Chester, stopping in a pub on the way to celebrate our new PBs. Danny didn't beat me after all, but I told him that even if I'd done what I hoped and then some more he would have. I think that from our point of view it definitely was a **good day's ride**.

The Provisional result published in Cycling Weekly: Winner Nik Gardiner covered 493.32 miles. Steve covered 430.89 miles, while his mate Danny did 363.51. Time to update the club records, I think! (Ed.)

Seen it before?

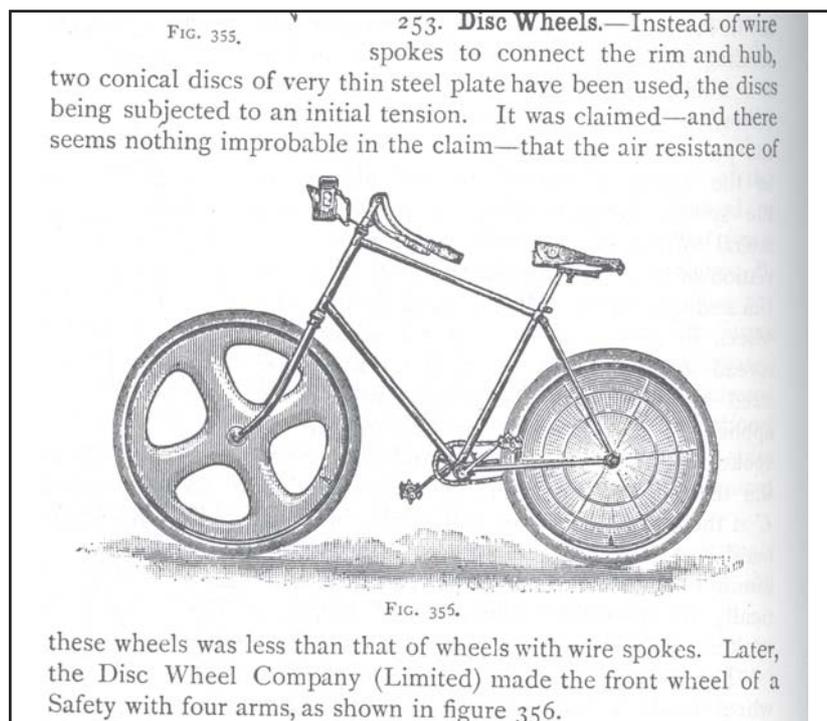
Quite a bit of fuss has been made during the 2005 Tour de France over Bobby Julich's decision to ride oval chainrings. Of course most of us will remember Shimano's last attempt to revive that idea in the form of Biopace rings, but that idea, along with L-shaped cranks is one that has repeatedly resurfaced every decade or so since people started seeking advantages over their clubmates.

I recently picked up a reprint of Archibald Sharp's *Treatise on Bicycle and Tricycle design*, and was amused to see this description of disc wheels. In particular, the front disc wheel with four holes, which reminds me of one of Campagnolo's forays into aero wheel design from a few years ago.

One wonders what pressed steel disc wheels were like to ride...



Above, Joseba Beloki riding in the 2002 Vuelta a Espana. Below, disc wheels pictured in 1896 in Archibald Sharp's classic treatise on bicycle design.



Rumourmongering

This from our spies on the road...

There is a rumour club cyclist Simon Moss has been out on the bike. Averaging 1 ride per week. One eagle eye rider has noted the lack of definition in his legs and failure to do up quick release wheels and crank arms properly before riding. The ever confident Simon is still saying how good he WAS!

We here on the Newsletter Editorial hope to see Simon back in the TT series in 2006 giving us a good old trouncing!

Racing Reports

Claydons 22 mile time trial

Ian Stokes reports on the Open time trial he organised on 23rd July.

I was very impressed by the efforts and the courtesy and road manners displayed by all of the riders. Obviously the smaller entry than anticipated was a little disappointing, but there appeared to a number of events on in the same area on the day.

A great ride by the winner Danny Axford, to take one minute and 16 seconds off the record for this version of the two lap course.

The North Bucks Road Club greatly enjoyed putting something back into the sport and we hope to see you all again at our promotions next year. The dates for next year's promotions on this course will change. We shall be running a round of the Northampton and District CA series on 6 May, and then a National Round of the Rudy Project series on 16 September. We hope to see you all at both events.

Ian Stokes

PS. I did hear that one rider noted that he was a veteran, but that it hadn't been noted on the start sheet. That was because it wasn't shown on the entry form, I checked!

Many thanks to the following, who all contributed to the success of this event :-

To the timekeepers John Pick and Mary Hartley, ably assisted by Tony Parks and Bryan Scarborough

To Russ Page of Prontaprint for producing the Start Sheets

To Phil Corley for providing prizes for the event

To the Preston family of Botolph Claydon for the free use of their field for car parking

To Kevin and Mark Stokes for setting out the (many) course markers

To Tony Farmborough for providing the back-up and collecting the course signs

To Chris Hartley for doing the pushing off

To Gilbert Wheelwright for sorting out the signing on

To Marshals Julian, Chris, Rob 1 and Rob 2

To all of the other members and friends of the North Bucks Road Club

1	Danny Axford	Arctic Shorter Rochford RT	M	44.22
2	Richard Pettinger	SRI Chimnoy Cycling Team	M	46.28
3	Leigh Smith	North Bucks Road Club	M	47.37
4	Jason Gurney	Team Milton Keynes	M	48.50
5	Nigel Williams	Python RT	M	49.00
6	Carl Bond	Kenton RC	M	49.14
7	John Bourton	Oxonian CC	MV	49.16
8	Greg Ashley	Team Lutterworth CC	M	49.26
9	Bruce Caldwell	Aylesbury CC	M	49.55
10	Ian Marshall	Team Milton Keynes	M	50.23
11	Richard Webster	Team Welwyn	M	50.32
12	Julia Freeman	Easterley RC	WV	50.39
13	Richard Moule	Bossard Wheelers CC	MV	51.18
14	David Matthews	Aylesbury CC	MV	51.29
15	Dave Birch	Welland Valley CC	MV	51.58
16	Frank Pressling	Maidenhead & District CC	MV	52.52
17	Malcolm Jenkins	Verulam CC	MV	52.56
18	Richard Somerset	North Road CC	M	54.06
19	Louise Schuller	Finsbury Park CC	WV	54.08
20	Duncan Emery	Twickenham CC	M	54.19
21	Clive Faine	Team Milton Keynes	MV	56.25
22	Warren Stokes	North Bucks Road Club	MJ	56.35
23	Andrew Porter	Welwyn Wheelers CC	MV	56.53
24	Robin Tuddenham	Finsbury Park CC	M	57.12
25	Andrew Murray	Bicester Millenium CC	MV	58.32
26	Peter Ellett	Unity CC	M	59.11
27	Roger Bentley	Ratae RC	MV	1.00.24
28	Joanna Spragg	Aylesbury CC	W	1.09.07

Ramblings from the Chairman's Desk

It has been a good year for the club so far. We have run 2 very successful and popular open time trials and, by the time you read this, 2 excellent road race productions.

Club members have produced decent results both locally and nationally and our overall performances seem to be on the up. What about Steve Abrahams in the National 24? What a performance! Seventh in what I think must be a personal best distance – and all that with mudguards on his bike, and on fixed wheel. He is a real throwback to the old days of time trialling. Well done Steve. You must come and tell us all about your adventure soon.

This year's club dinner will be held at Splinters Carvery at the Wavendon Golf Club on Saturday 12 November 2005 at 7 pm for dinner at 8. Food will comprise a 3 - course

carvery with vegetarian options at £15 a head.

Tickets have not yet been printed but you can book your places through me (01908 379285 or 07734 176779) or any Committee Member. Maximum number of places is 70, so book now to avoid disappointment.

Our increasingly popular Wednesday evening club events continue to attract decent fields of about 20 riders on all three courses and have been responsible for introducing several newcomers to the sport to have a go. Most have performed with distinction and success and they keep coming back to seek new personal best times. You are all now officially hooked! Thanks once again are due to AWF for his excellent organisation and results service.

The club Annual General Meeting takes place on 28 September at 7.30 pm. All Committee posts are up for re-election so please let us have your nominations as soon as possible (but before 5 September), along with any agenda items you would like to be included for discussion at the meeting. We need your participation to help us get it right and make the club even better!

The nights are fair drawing in now, aren't they? See you all soon. Keep pedalling!

Bryan

August 2005

NORTH BUCKS ROAD CLUB ANNUAL DINNER 2005

Saturday 12 November 2005

7 p.m. for 8 p.m.

at

Splinters Carvery,
Wavendon Golf Club

Menu: 3 course Carvery

Vegetarian option

bar

Tickets £15 per head. To book please contact Bryan Scarborough on 01908 379285 or 07734 176779 or any Committee Member

La Marmotte - Conquering the giants of the Alps

by Leigh Smith



This summer, Leigh rode one of the great French bike rides, taking in some of the classic climbs of the Tour de France, including the Croix de Fer and Alpe d'Huez.

Preparation

After weeks of training, doing long rides on the bike 6hrs+ most Sundays, I thought I was in good shape for the hardest ride of my life. My original gear selection was going to be standard: 39t on the front / 26t on the back as bottom gear, but after riding the circuit of the Cotswolds two weeks beforehand, I realised this wasn't going to be low enough for the likes of the Galibier and Alpe d'Huez. I decided to go for a compact chainset at the front, which is 34t/50t. I thought this must get me up the hills...

The riders I was joined by were Roy, Spencer, Jason and Paul, two of which had ridden the event before so knew the ride in hand. After an early start, we arrived at Geneva airport around 10.30am and then took a further 1-1/2hrs to get out of the airport.

We finally arrived at Alpe d'Huez at about 4pm, having tackled the famous 21 hairpins in the car, which seemed hard enough. It was amazing how many cyclists were battling their way up the climb as we were driving up, calling words of encouragement. We quickly had something to eat, and then built up the bikes, so we could go for a little ride to loosen the legs ready for tomorrow.

We rode down to hairpin number 4, and then turned around to ride back up the famous climb. At this point I thought "I'm so glad I put on the compact chainset".

We then went to sign on, in the square in Alpe d'Huez - it was packed with cyclists doing the same - collecting their number and timing belt.

The La Marmotte ride itself is a 174km ride with 5000m of climbing taking you over the Col de la Croix de Fer (1924m), Col du Telegraphe (1570m), Col du Galibier (2642m) and the Alpe d'Huez (1860m), taking in some fantastic views as you could imagine. *(See below for a route profile - Edd.)*

La Marmotte: Judgement Day

The day began with a 5.30am alarm call, followed by a pasta breakfast. We hit the road to the start about 6.20am. We had to ride down Alpe d'Huez to the start at Bourg d'Oisans in the valley below, which took about 25mins and it was cold especially with that wind chill, it was a bin bag over the jacket job!

Once down at the start, the lads went into their

various groups. I was number 2074, so I was in the second group off, in all there were about 9000 riders taking part and they were going off in groups of about 1500.

I discarded my bin bag and squeezed in a last minute bit of food to lighten the load.

There was a cheer down the tightly packed streets as the first riders went off, but it was about 15mins before we got to cross the starting mat, which automatically starts the timer with my timing belt round my ankle.

The pace was quick considering we had 174km to go, but I thought "just go with the flow". I got chatting to a guy from the lake district, who was riding on a 39/23 gear, I wonder how he got on because I would have been walking most of the hills in that gear.

Within about 5km we went up a small double hairpin climb about the same as the biggest climbs in the Chilterns and from then on, you seemed to be either climbing or descending.

Croix de Fer

It was about 15km before we hit the start of the first big climb up Col de la Croix de Fer. It was every man for himself at this point, with not much chit-chat between riders. I remember seeing a sign for the summit saying 17km to go, and I think that's when it hit me how hard this ride was going to be. When I reached the cloud-covered peak, I grabbed some small pieces of banana and pressed on down the descent, as it was too cold to hang around.

I took the descent very steady as I saw four riders come off their bikes lying in the grassy banks of the roadside. As the road started flattening out, I found myself in a group of about 60 riders riding along at about 25mph, I think there must have been some keen riders on the front of this group chasing a group in the distance.

Col de Telegraphe

As we just caught the group in front, we came into a small village where we took a left turn up a steepish road into the trees and that was the start of the Col de Telegraphe. The temperature was starting to rise now, although we were being protected by the trees from the sun on the way up, which was nice as this climb took over an hour. Towards the top of the climb, at about the 4-1/2hrs mark, was the first time I felt my legs starting to twinge - still with the two biggest climbs to come. Ouch!

I had a water stop at the top of the Telegraph, and then it was rolling roads for about 15km until the next stop (at the bottom of the Galibier) which was where I stopped to take food on board, I needed something different to eat other than energy bars and gels.

The Galibier!

I was about to leave the feed station when Spencer pulled in, so I decided to wait 10mins for Spencer to stuff his face before we hit the road together with the biggest climb facing us yet, the Col le Galibier (2642m).

The road steadily started to rise upwards, you could see it in the distance climbing between the two mountains with tiny little figures in a steady stream at the top. I can remember thinking I wish I was up there looking at riders in the distance, my legs were really starting to die at this point but I just kept battling on, turning those gears trying not to look up.

The pace was a lot lower than the climbing of Croix de Fer and Telegraph as people were really starting to fade, and it was just about survival and the self pride of not getting off the bike now.

As we got into the last 5km to the summit, it really did start to steepen up and this was the first point where you saw riders walking with their bikes. I was determined not to get off my bike although it may have been quicker to walk. I got chatting to a German rider who was giving me words of encouragement to get to the top along with the hundreds of people at the roadside, standing there with their huge flags and posh motor homes, they were there ready for the stage of the tour to come through over the Galibier 3 days later.

I was so relieved to get to the top where we were rewarded with another feed station, you may think I just stopped at the bottom of the Galibier but it took me 1-1/2hrs to climb this monster so I think I deserved some refreshment.

At this point we had ridden about 115km and climbed about 3700m and I was certainly feeling the pain. Spencer and I didn't stay too long at the top, as the summit was cloud covered by now and about 5 degrees. On went the rain mac, and away we went.

The descent lasted for about an hour, with some small rises along the way, and took in some wonderful views - I



Pain is temporary...

remember riding through the half open tunnel as seen on the Tour de France, I would have to say this was the most enjoyable part of the ride, probably because I had just ridden one of the hardest climbs in the Alps and survived it, and was now cruising down the other side with not to much effort whilst taking in the views.

As we made our way into the valley towards Bourg d'Oisans, I had to make a pit stop to take off my arm warmers and knee warmers as the temperature was at least mid 20's and I knew it would be hot riding up Alpe d'Huez.

The Alpe d'Huez

I finished off any gel bars I had left and a black coloured banana to try to regain as much energy as possible for the final climb.

As we entered Bourg d'Oisans the streets were lined with people cheering, it was just like being in a race but nothing like we have in this country.

I remember looking at my watch (7hrs 49mins) as we took a left turn to ride up the first slope of famous Alpe d'Huez. As I looked up it looked more like a ski ramp than a road! At this point, Spencer stopped to take in some gels, so I carried on by my own trying to find a rhythm if it was possible.

I did feel quite good for about the first 6-8 hairpins but then it all started to go wrong, it felt like my legs were slabs of meat not responding to my commands, I was rocking the bike side to side just to turn over the pedals, and it was all I was able to do. My heart rate seemed to be stuck on about 150bpm - I just couldn't push it any harder. There were people laying down on the grassy banks of the roadside, but I was determined not to get off the bike and just turn my tiny gear of 34t /26t. It took me about 1-1/2hrs to climb the famous 21 hairpins of the climb, that's about 50mins slower than Pantani's famous 37mins climb at the end of a stage similar to this. Coming over the last small rise to

finish in the town square to a huge crowd lining the fenced off roadside was fantastic, it seemed like every single person cheering you on.

Once through the finish, I found a nice grassy patch and plonked myself down, being completely shattered and energy-less, I laid there for about half an hour trying to eat my free tub of pasta and orange juice watching the other riders coming in and doing the same.

Aftermath

I managed to pick myself up off the grass, got myself back to the hotel to shower, and got changed.

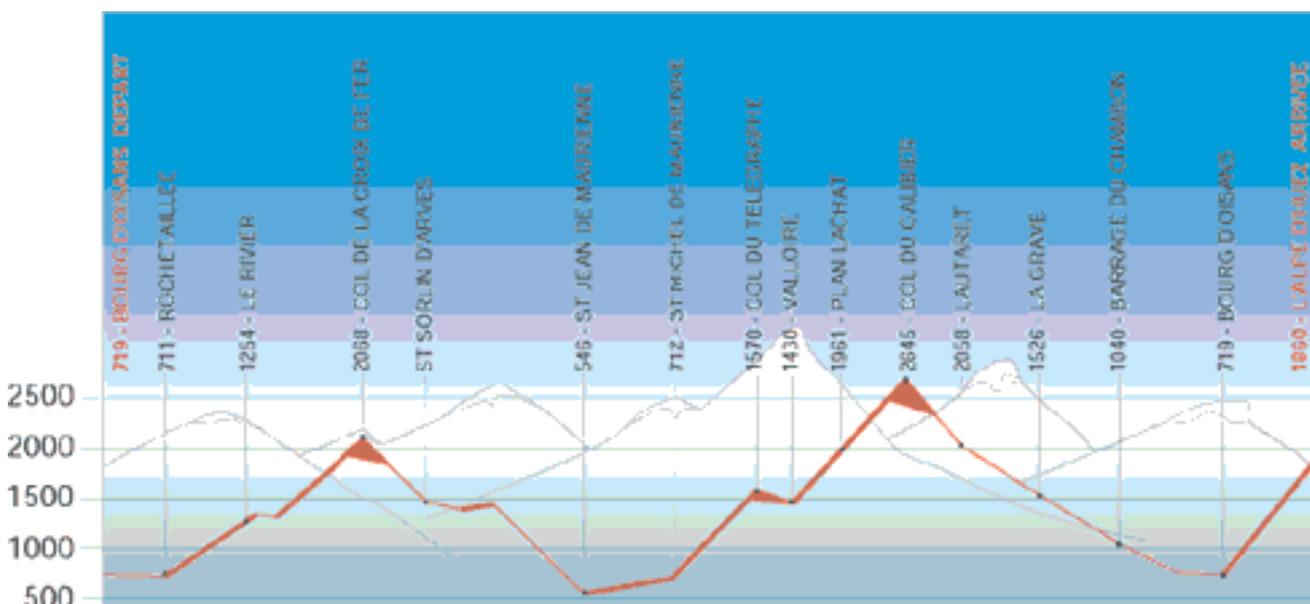
By the time I got back to the finishing area an hour later, my time was up on the board already, people were still finishing in a steady stream, some people were taking 13hrs + so I was thankful to finish in just over 9hrs.

Without doubt, this by far the hardest thing on and off the bike I have ever done and if you had asked me that day if I wanted to come back to ride this event again it would have a clear NO, but I've started to look back on the ride and at how enjoyable it was and also where I could have saved time, so if you're asking me will I ride the epic that is La Marmotte again, the answer is definitely YES! The only think I would do next time is to fly into Grenoble rather than Geneva, and remember my water bottles!

I finished in position 2261 out of about 9000, my time was 9hrs 15mins 52secs, with an average speed of 18.7kph. This got me a silver, I would have had to have gone 25mins faster for a gold.

The ride of the day out of our group was Roy, with an amazing time of 6hrs 44 mins which achieved him a 52nd place.

The winning time was 5hrs 49mins from some Italian ex pro.



Manchester Velodrome 15th & 16th October 2005

A timely reminder for those of you who are interested in the club training session at the Manchester Velodrome, which Ian Stokes has already booked in the name of the NBRC. This session is scheduled for two hours from 1 pm to 3 pm on Sunday 16th October 2005. We are allowed a maximum of 15 riders.

The costs are as follows :- Track hire, £120 lump sum. Coaching services, for the two hour period, £34. Track bike hire (recommended, fall off someone else's, not your own!), Look fitted pedals, £7.30 total. So, if there are 15 people in total, the cost per person would be £17.57 each. So far we have seven people confirmed who are Ian Stokes, Warren Stokes, Kevin Stokes, Mark Stokes, Rob Gregory, Tony Farmborough, Lindsey Edwards. Please express your interest quickly! If there are any spare

places, these will be offered to the A5 Rangers, as a few of us attended their session last year.

This is really a fun thing to do at the end of the season, and is not dependent on ability. The sessions are carefully designed to cover those with no experience upwards, so come along and have a go.

Also, why not make a weekend of it, as the night before will be one of the best ever of the Revolution series, Revolution 9. There will be at least two British Olympic champions there, all of the Senior World Track Champions, and our newest World Junior champions and medallists. At about £10 per ticket, this is fabulous value for money. There are a number of comfortable budget hotels in the area for an overnight stay. What's even better, is if you arrive early the following morning for our session, immediately prior there is a Development squad session from 11 am to 1 pm, quite a few of the riders from the night before will be there, so you'll probably have the chance to chat with them (Warren and Ian bumped into Chris Hoy several times last year - he won!).

Talk to your partner, and see if you can be let out. Please contact Ian Stokes on 01234 240140 or Ian.M.Stokes@btinternet.com to confirm your requirements.

Tips from the Toolbox

This issue, we have a tip from our chairman.

"Don't forget, when you polish your disc wheel, make sure you always polish it in the right direction. That way the air moves faster and you will do better in the time trial".

And another tip, this time from one of the new fast men from Team MK - "if you can't afford a natty new dimpled disc wheel like those from Zipp, why not arrange for a friend to drop objects on it. I have found mobile phones make a rather usefully-sized dent. Do this enough times, and you will have a fully dimpled wheel." Of course, it may not be round after all that...



Northampton and District CA time trial series 2006, a call to arms

It was agreed at a recent Committee meeting that we would promote a round of the N & DCA series in 2006. Ian Stokes would therefore like to call upon all of our riders to consider a shot at the N & DCA team championship next year. Below is the latest schedule which shows the wide variety of events that are promoted. None of the courses are drag strips, but they are all interesting, challenging courses, with little traffic. The team championship is decided by taking the 21 highest scoring rides from members of the same club (100 points for the highest placed Association rider, and downwards by one point from there). Last year and the year before was won by the A5 Rangers, with 2006 looking as though it will go to the St Ives CC.

The North Bucks Road Club has a superb set of riders, come on everyone, let's show them what we can do!!!!!!!

Northampton & District Cycling Association - Proposed List of Time Trial Series events for 2006 (Fifth Edition)

1st April, 2pm start 12.8 miles, Course: NC13C £6.00 Gavin Hinxman (Welland Valley Cycling Club) Eversleigh, 16 Braybrooke Road, Desborough, Northamptonshire, NN14 2LH. Tel: 01536 505887

Sat 22nd April, 2pm start 31 miles, Course: NC3 £6.00 Sue Holliday (A5 Rangers Cycling Club) 20 Link Way, Towcester, Northamptonshire, NN12 6HF. Tel: 01327 350498

Sat 6th May, 2pm start 22 miles, Course: F5/11 £6.00 Ian Stokes (North Bucks Road Club) The Hyde, 32 Kippell Hill, Olney, Bucks MK46 5ER Tel: 01234 240140

Sat 20th May, 2pm start 15 miles, Course N1/15 (or an alternative) £6.00

Sun 11th June, 8am start 22 miles, Course F15/22 £6.00 Terry Bush (Bedfordshire Road Club) 59 Ridge Road, Kempston, Wootton, Bedford, MK43 9BS. Tel: 01234 857131

Sat 1st July, 2pm start 10 miles, Course: NC14 £6.00 & £2.00 (GHS) Richard Daniells (President) 6 Matson Close, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, NN14 6AY. Tel: 01536 418075

Sat 15th July start 2pm 15 miles, Course: N1/15 £6.00 Richard Newcombe (Fenland Clarion Cycling Club) 67 Hall Lane, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6RA. Tel: 01733 706498

Sat 5th Aug, start 2pm 25 miles, Course: N1/25C £6.00 David Nelson (St Ives Cycling Club) 2 The Whistlers, St Ives, Cambridgeshire, PE27 3EE. Tel: 01480 353207

Sat 19th Aug, start 2pm 9 miles, Course NC12 £6.00 Graham Bickle (Rockingham Forest Whs) 3 Burditt Close, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, NN14 6LD. Tel: 01536 711872

Sun 10th Sept, start 10am 20 miles, Course NC16 £6.00 Wayne Holton (Welland Valley Cycling Club) 10 Westgate Lane, Lubenham, Market Harborough LE16 9TS. Tel: 07736 844473

Courses: NC13C (Middleton), NC3 (Towcester), F5/11 (Botolph Claydon), N1/15 (Stilton), F15/22(Cardington), NC14 (Middleton), N1/25C (Sawtry), NC12 (Drayton), NC16(Sulby).

(It's obvious to me why Ian "Early Bird" Stokes likes this series so much - most of the start times are 2pm!, Ed.)

Eating to Win

Much has been written lately about the right food to consume to be successful at bike racing, especially by those who study at great length and quote so called experts on the subject. What I am about to tell you will turn on it's head all these theories, and what suits one doesn't agree with others.

A few years ago at the finish of an open time trial the first three including the winner Ian Cammish were asked by a university testing organisation if they would agree to be tested for their lung capacity, and to be followed by a further more comprehensive test somewhere else at a later date. A very good friend of ours who happened to come second agreed to the first test but said he wanted to think about the second one.

Much to his surprise this test rated him far in excess of the other two, the testers were so surprised that they then started to ask basic questions about his eating and training habits and this is how the conversation went.

"What do you normally eat during a normal week before a race?"

"The same as always - fish and chips every day except Saturday's when I have pie and chips."

The sports expert looked at his assistant and smiled he obviously thought our friend was joking but wrote down his reply just the same.

"What else do you eat that helps you perform so well?"

"Apple pie and loads of cups of tea."

"And what about alcohol - do you like to celebrate after a good result?"

Our friend looked at him in disgust.

"No, never! In fact I never go inside a pub even if my friends do, I sit outside they usually bring me out a lemonade if I'm really thirsty."

At this point the university boffins thought that this guy was seriously winding them up and asked him did he have

any friends at the event that they could speak to. He pointed to a lady nearby and said that she was a good friend of his. They then thanked him for his help and moved towards the lady in a club jersey.

"Excuse me but can we have a word with you about that rider over there the one who has come second in this event?"

She looked at them and nodded. "Yes that's alright. What is it you want to know?"

"Well he's just told us he usually only eats fish and chips most of the time, is that really true?"

She looked at them and smiled. "Of course and to crown it all has done so to my knowledge for the past ten years, I only wish that I could get the same sort of results as he does"

"And what sort of training does he normally do?"

"He doesn't. Only rides to work and back about fifteen miles each way. That's enough for him because he pushes a 57-13 gear all the way and never comes out of it, you try that sometime it'll really improve your riding no end."

"What sort of gear is that?"

The lady rider picked up her bike selected a gear and offered it to the interviewer. "Try riding that up the road you'll soon find out"

The man picked up the back wheel turned the pedal round and shook his head.

"No thanks, I'll take your word for it - my cycling isn't too good these days. Anyway I'll write that down 57-13 it'll probably mean something to those that take cycling seriously. Thank you so much for your time, we wish you well in your cycling."

Now if you think this is all a bit of a windup there are a few members of this club who have met this odd character and can vouch for the truth of this tale. So when you next hear these so called experts praising good food as the path to success try and remember that there are exceptions to the rules. This rider did have more placings in the top three in open events than most over a ten year period.

Derek Taylor.

Club League Table - Final

Gilbert Wheelwright has worked hard on keeping tabs on the Club league - here is his final version of the league, based on the best five counting events. The full spreadsheet will be placed on the website.

Ian Marshall	S1	710	Dave Garrard	V2	356
Rob Saunders	V1	670	Alan Lawson	S2	320
Leigh Smith	S1	600	Jason Whittam	S2	260
Lindsay Edwards	S1	510	Gordon Batcock	V2	255
Phil Sinnett	S1	350	Dick Selley	V2	240
Ian Stokes	V1	320	Chris Selley	S2	196
Tony Parks	V1	280	Russell Page	V2	161
Wayne Maguire	V1	130	Eddy Page	S2	134
Mark Halliday	S1	110	Stuart Jardine	S2	110
Kevin Stokes	V1	110	Heath Jackson	S2	100
Chris Hartley	V2	545	Warren Stokes	J2	100
Gilbert Wheelwright	V2	485	Julian Hall	V2	80
Brian Premmit	S2	480	Martin Erasmus	S2	70
Andy Lambeth	V2	398	Peter Forster	V2	46