

Cyclists' Touring Club
Hertfordshire District Association
Annual Report for year ending 30th September 2008

This is the 80th annual report for the Herts DA of the CTC.

The total number of CTC members in the County on 30th September 2008 was 1488 (In 2007 the total was 1435).

We celebrated the 80th anniversary of the DA this year with the focus on the President's Ride held on 27th July. Members from all four Sections gathered at Vanstones Garden Centre for refreshments before joining Anne Jarman or Brian Jackson for circuitous rides along the lanes around St Paul's Walden, Preston, Breachwood Green and some of the other picturesque villages of Hertfordshire to meet at the Bell, a mile or so down the road as the crow flies from Vanstones. The sun sent most of the fifty-odd diners under the large umbrellas on the patio seeking the shade. Many 'old' friends joined us to mark this auspicious occasion. The Bell was a very suitable venue as the DA was formed in a pub, that is no longer a pub, just across the road.

In September we joined the folk of Colney Heath to help them celebrate the 70th anniversary of their village hall, and our clubroom. Albert Jarman and Ian Gow invited a number of prominent people in the cycling world to come along and bring some remarkable examples of cycling history including a wooden bone-shaker and an ordinary, their owners appearing in period costume. Many members helped make this occasion a very special event. It was a privilege to be asked to contribute to a tremendous evening looking back over the history of the village.

This Summer, like that of 2007, has not been as sunny or as dry as some of us would have hoped. Despite the weather, the Sections have had good support for the Sunday Wednesday evening and other regular rides. These rides are our mainstay, the reason we have a cycling club and the Section Secretaries have worked hard to provide the rides and other events the members enjoy so much. The Section reports, written by the Secretaries form a later part of this report. However, we do need to thank Peter Southworth for his dedication to the Western Section who is standing down after eight years in the post. We send Peter and his family our best wishes.

A number of members have again been adventurous with their overseas touring trips. Europe is naturally the most popular – Spain, France, Greece, Germany, Slovakia have all featured. Angela Feaviour has continued her North Sea Cycle Route ride completing the Swedish section this year. We would also like to congratulate those who completed the 'end-to-end' this year. Richard Stubbs rode from Lands End to John O' Groats in June and Marc Savitsky road solo from John O'Groats to Lands End over 10 days in August, despite some really awful weather. Well done to you both!

The DA ran 10 District Association Touring Competition (DATC) rides this year, most of which were also registered with Audax UK. Peter Southworth ran the Ring of Herts (200Km) and East Herts Loop (100Km) rides again this year with increased numbers riding. Peter will not be able to organise the rides next year, so we are looking for a volunteer to take these rides on. Bob Corbett organised two off-road rides, the Stevenage Semi-circular Off-road Ride (50Km) and the Greenwich Meridian Challenge (50miles). These rides are now becoming established in the regular events of the DA. Many thanks Bob. Alan Baxter and Bill Hayes kindly stepped in to organise the Cecil Cooke Trophy. It was a very successful event and we are very grateful to Alan and Bill. The Committee wish to record its thanks to the organisers of all these events; Paul Boielle, Jim Brown, Peter, Alan, Bill and Bob. The Committee is equally grateful to those who marshalled these events. Without them, we could not run these rides, so a huge vote of thanks is due to you all – thank you!

We could not offer such a broad and diverse programme without these people, but we always need more. Please volunteer, as the more helpers we have, the lighter the load on each.

Those who ride these events accumulate points that contribute to the winner of the DATC Competition run nationally. With a few results still to be added, the leading Hertfordshire riders are Eric Johnson in 37th place, Leonard Kirkland currently 147th and Jill Anderton and Bruce White both in 154th place. Hertfordshire are in 17th position in the team competition at the moment. Many people thoroughly enjoy these events and we thank the organisers of the events and competition and congratulate all those who have taken part.

The DA will be awarding medals to Hertfordshire-based riders who have taken part in the DA's rides. With the results of the Summertime Reversed ride from Stevenage to Saffron Walden to come, there are 5 silver and 4 bronze medal winners. Just over 100 different riders rode these events, many of whom have expressed their thanks to the organisers, marshals and other helpers who make these events possible. Such expressions of thanks are really appreciated by all concerned and help to make all the hard work that goes into running these events worthwhile.

Photographic Competition

We seem to have a couple of specialist photographers. Dave Dickenson took a clean sweep in the prints competition, first, second and third and Barrie Wood took first and second place with two of his slides, with two of Albert Jarman's slides coming third equal. The subject, 'The Village' was very creatively interpreted with images from home and abroad. Well done to the winners and all those who took part. There is no subject for the 2009; it is an open competition so select your best pictures of whatever you want to photograph.

Touring

Keeping up the tradition of the Easter tour, a few members of the DA spent an interesting time at Easter exploring new ground based at a Youth Hostel in the tiny village of Clyffe Pypard in Wiltshire. Following the glorious Easter of April 2007 at Castle Hedingham, a more southerly location was chosen for 2008 due to Easter being in mid March. It proved to be a good choice as icy winds bore snow down from the Arctic into the north and east of England. The hostel was handy for the village pub. In fact the hostel kitchen and dining area was recently converted from the pub's skittle alley and a door takes you from there straight into the bar, where the warden serves you a pint. Although it is listed as a bunkhouse, it was carpeted and heated and there were sheets, pillows and duvets for the bunks.

Good Friday's run was planned to be a short one due to the late start, but proved even shorter than expected when, after a brief 1 in 6 climb up the Marlborough downs and a very long fast descent with a following wind into Marlborough, Peter's rear wheel exploded as the Mavic rim blew apart. So, rather than visiting Coate Country Park, the rest of the day was spent hunting for a replacement wheel, which Peter picked up on Saturday morning in Marlborough, joining us for lunch at Cirencester. At least he avoided the rather muddy disused railway track we took after leaving the warmth and comfort of the Cricklade café.

After a few flakes of snow, but fortunately on ice-free roads, Easter Sunday saw us visiting the ancient stone circle at Avebury and exploring the Vale of Pewsey. Wiltshire certainly provided some memorable cycling and with its sweeping vistas over rolling down land scenery, proved to be a good contrast to our local area. The Committee wish to record a vote of thanks to Jon Crosby for a very successful tour and this report.

A group of seventeen including CTC and 40 Plus Club members enjoyed another successful touring trip to France organised by Anne Jarman. This time the location was Loches, in the Loire Valley. Specialist cycle transport was provided by Yorkshire Bike Liner, which, with a local pick up

couldn't be more convenient. There was some very good weather except for one rainy day and Anne had organised some varied and interesting cycling in the area; one ride including Amboise, where Leonardo da Vinci died. The Committee would like to thank Anne for organising this very successful trip.

Finance

Stuart Hammond, Hon Treasurer, reports that the DA is in a healthy financial position.

The Sections:-

North Herts Section (Jim Brown)

The Section organises a very wide range of rides including on-road, off-road, rides for starters evening and Sunday rides. During National Bike Week there was at least one ride every day including a bike to work breakfast and a teddy bear's picnic. These rides are lead by a small army of leaders who deserve our thanks for providing such an imaginative programme for the Section's membership. Many have attended rides despite the wet weather we have had during the past year.

In addition to the regular programme of rides, the Section has organised the customary Audax events which attracted a considerable number of riders. The Start of Summertime rides in March, attracted 315 riders; the Stevenage Circular Cycle saw 119 circumnavigating the town; there were 32 riding the off-road rides; 12 took part in the Cecil Cooke Trophy and there were around 276 riding to Saffron Walden when the clocks went back recently. We owe a great deal of thanks to the organisers of these events and to their helpers, without whom these rides could not take place. As well as the rides programme, the Section also arranges a number of social events and thanks are due to Tina and her helpers for the annual barn dance. An event that brings cyclists and non-cyclist together for a very enjoyable evening of dancing and socializing. Tina has also been very active in helping revise the Stevenage Cycle Map which is now, at long last, available to show how all the cycleways of the town interconnect; an excellent job, well done.

We have been involved in some highly significant events this year. Foremost being the handing over of the Olympic flag on Sunday 24 August. Lots of towns organised events to coincide with the handover to London 2012 in Beijing but few involved cyclists. A pity as it was clearly one of our most successful Olympic sports. We were delighted to be asked to start the proceedings by riding the 2012 flag round Stevenage. Several ideas on how to safely cycle with a 2 metre by 1 metre (that's big) came and went. Eventually I hit on a telescopic decorator's pole and lots of cable ties. It was 99% successful except that it was a bit too entertaining getting through some of the underpasses and I couldn't afford to slow down too much as I didn't want to risk getting the flag in the block. It provided a very good picture in the local paper and there are lots more on the website.

We own our thanks to Alasdair Massie who has been working tirelessly on our behalf campaigning for better cycling provision. He has been especially active in Hitchin, Baldock and Royston. Work of this sort behind the scenes is often forgotten and it is appropriate that we thank Alasdair, and all the other Right to Ride Representatives, across the County.

St Albans and Hatfield Section (Richard Stubbs)

Our programme of organised cycle rides has continued over the last year. All rides are lead by a CTC registered leader who arranges the ride to suit the capabilities of the cyclists who turn up. We have a published programme for a regular weekly Wednesday evening ride and a longer Sunday trip. In addition we have had special one-off rides for Bike Week and for a number of introductory cycle rides designed for women.

The 'Night Owls' rides on Wednesday evenings, organised by Steve Brazier, have been the most popular of our trips. They have attracted quite a few new people over the year who have gone on to

become regular attendees. This type of cycling seems to have more appeal these days than the more traditional longer cycle trip at the weekend. Maybe it fits in with modern life more conveniently. It may mean riding in the dark in the winter but at least a chunk of your weekend is not swallowed up. The rides all start from St Albans and, taking a route of about 15 miles, finishing at a pub.

The number of people coming to the Sunday rides is down somewhat on last year, but those people who did come tended to ride more often, so total attendance was fairly similar to last year. Bad weather has washed out several rides over the year; there seem to have been some unusually wet Sundays. As usual, we have had different leaders who decide on the routes and stops. This produces variety and novelty in the routes chosen.

Once again the Hargreaves Trophy goes to the rider who covers the most miles on the Sunday rides. Congratulations to Peter Ridehalgh who has won the cup for the second year running with 118 points. In second place was Richard Stubbs on 110 and Judy Allfrey was third with 107 points.

Rona Wightman has continued to organise her 'Five miles to Fabulous' rides – special introductory, easy paced rides for women cyclist. There have been three of these. Attendance has been good and these events are obviously meeting a need.

Ian Smith started our first web site and has maintained it continuously since it was set up. He has now arranged to pass this on to Steve Brazier. So, many thanks to Ian for all his support and work over the years in maintaining this vital means of communication and good luck to Steve in developing our web presence.

Stort Valley Section (John Curry)

The Section's activities have continued much as in previous years. Our Sunday rides attract an average of 8 riders; with a peak of 14 early in the year. New riders have appeared. Some have stayed the course and now ride regularly with the group. Others have appeared just once or twice. I can only assume that the format does not suit them. They rarely give reasons for not returning.

Our "last of the summer wine" group meets on Wednesdays at selected hostelrys, with the joint intentions of having a mid-week ride; solving the world's problems and doing our best to keep our favourite pubs in business! Numbers in attendance are usually between 4 and nine stalwarts. Our festive lunch in December 2007 attracted 22 members of which nineteen rode on our traditional visit to Hatfield Forest en route to The Hop Poles.

A number of rides took place in Harlow during National Bike Week, organised by the Section. Despite publicity through the local media and Harlow District Council, good weather and the usual range of events on the family friendly cycle track network, turnout was poor. I will be rethinking how we can improve the event and am arranging meetings with local organisations to see how this might be achieved.

Sustrans has recently appointed a "BikeIt" officer, based at the Essex County Council offices in Harlow. His job is to promote active transport choices in schools. His brief crosses County boundaries as he will be working with schools in Cheshunt, Harlow and Bishop's Stortford. (we are meeting on 12 Nov.)

Harlow District Council has appointed Chris Lewis-Smith, one time secretary of this Section, to help with cycling matters on a casual basis. I am also advised that Essex County Council has installed a cycling officer in their West Essex area office, in Harlow. We have yet to be introduced.

Western Section (David Woodley)

Peter retired this year as Section Secretary after 8 years of sterling service for the group. We would all like to thank Peter for all his efforts for the Section and hope that he will keep in touch with the group.

There have been 40 riders who have ridden with us during the past year, some only once. We have an active core of about 15 riders who attend regularly. Since April, despite the awful weather through the summer we have seen an average of 9 riders out on Sunday rides. Over the year the only new rider to join us on a regular basis has been Michael Joseph. We extend a warm welcome to Michael.

After a titanic struggle for the attendance trophy, Roger Pask prevailed and takes the trophy with 94 with Bob Hodgkinson the runner-up on 91 points. Christine Wiech is the clear winner of the ladies trophy, accumulating 70 points. The Section ran the usual trio of competitions again this year. Jim Stephenson won the hill-climb, closely followed by Paul Kocher and Roger Pask. Roger won the speed-judging competition and David Woodley was first in the freewheeling competition.

The revised website has been running for several months now. If you haven't yet visited the new site I urge you to do so. As well as the runs list and points table it includes a photo section, distance chart, news page and an archive of rides since 2006. A few of you have already contributed to the site, thank you very much, especially to Marc who wrote the rides points entry routine. In order to keep it active I would like to update it on a regular basis so your news and views would be most appreciated.

More than 500 cyclists attended the CTC Birthday rides in August at Moreton-in-the-Marsh. Among them were Pat Longhurst, Sherry Bailey, Roger Pask, Barry Fry and Ian Hamilton. Despite awful weather and an unfortunate accident most riders enjoyed the event. The accident occurred on the first Monday of the rides, but thanks are due to Sherry, Barry and Kirsty for the help they gave Pat, Ian and Roger on that fateful day.

And Finally:-

A great many people within the DA have worked very hard to provide the rides, facilities and social events the membership has enjoyed this year. The Committee wish to thank all those who have given their time and skills for the benefit of the membership of the DA. Your efforts are much appreciated.

The DA has had another very successful year, despite another rather wet Summer. Let us hope that the Summer of 2009 brings better weather and another great year of cycling both here and abroad. Plans for tours, rides and other events for next year are already being made. We are fortunate to have a membership that not only enjoy riding their bikes but are also willing to accommodate others in their plans. We all look forward to riding next year with our old friends and with those we haven't ridden with before who will become our new friends.

By Order of the Committee

B Jackson
Hon DA Secretary.