

Anfield Circular

Journal of the Anfield Bicycle Club (formed March 1879)

Runs List

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 (Committee 1130)
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Closing date for next issue 27 August

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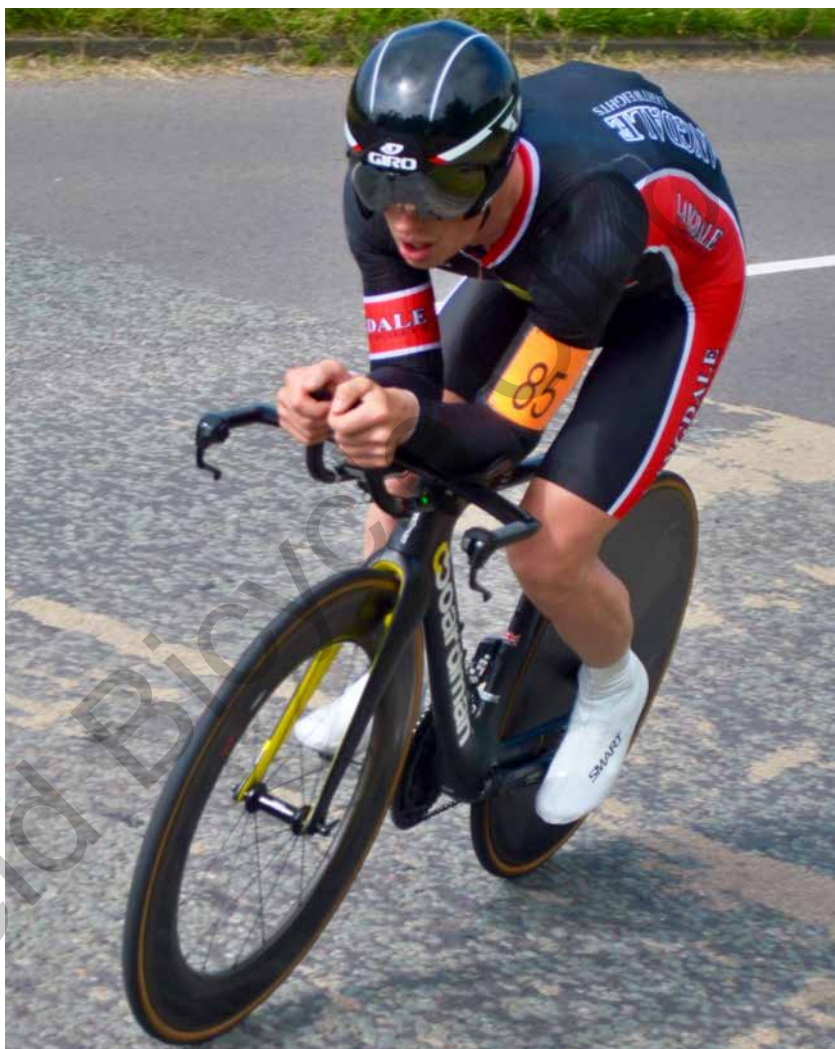
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Hon Treasurer: Phil Mason

Anfield 100 Event Record - 3:33:20



The 2016 100 was a once-in-a-generation occasion, with two riders smashing the old event record and a third a hair's breadth away.

Ryan Perry (Langdale Lightweights RT) (above) took almost eight minutes off Andy Bason's 2011 record in spectacular style. A perfect summer's morning, wind drifting from the north east, spectators were privileged to witness history in the making.

(Left) Jessica Rhodes-Jones fastest lady.

(photos - Chris Pickles)

Diary dates

- **John Moss** will be 'home' from South Africa at the end of July for a month. He hopes to be on his bike at the Plough Christleton on 30 July and invites as many as possible to join him. Drinks on him?
- **Autumn Tints** - our annual visit to the Cain Valley Hotel, Llanfyllin and the Lake Vyrnwy hills is planned for the weekend of 14 - 16 October. To reserve your place, Social Secretary Tecwyn Williams is taking bookings.

Racing Round-up

Chester Road Club Hilly 14, 27 February 2016:

When I arrived at Broxton there was uncertainty as to whether the event could go ahead. Geoff Chaplain had seen a mini digger come off a trailer on Platt's lane. He was checking out the hilly 22 course instead. It was clear so riders faced a hilly 22 instead of 14 miles.

Jayson Rees - Hughes - 59:07; Graham Thompson - 59:40; Geraint Catherall - 1:09:43

Birkenhead North End CC Hilly 22 25 April 2016

Graham Thompson 52:06; Jayson Rhys - Hughes 54:09; Geraint Catherall 1:11:19

West Cheshire TTA 10 3 April 2016

Graham Thompson 23:30; Jayson Rhys - Hughes 24:51; Geraint Catherall 29:56

WCTTCA '30'

It was a crisp, clear morning at Espley Island where Dave Eaton and I were marshalling. It was an uneventful morning with a steady stream of riders encircling the island. Graham Thompson started the race, but his machine was having mechanical problems and abandoned. At one stage, Jayson was 5 minutes up on the field. Unfortunately, this was because he had inadvertently taken a short cut. Instead of crossing Muller Island and going on to Market Drayton Island before returning to Tern Hill, he encircled the Muller back to Tern Hill, so cutting out several miles. Thus his time did not stand. No such misfortunes befell Geraint and he completed the course in 1:31:06. Back at HQ, Graham and Jayson's Team Manager, Ben was providing support.

The 100 - a big thank you

This year's 100 was a wonderful achievement for Event Secretary Peter Catherall and Chief Marshals Nigel and Alison Fellows. Without their loyal support, hard work and problem solving, there would have been no event. Likewise we would be lost without timekeepers Gill and Brian Morrison and their assistants whose job is so difficult such are the complexities of the course. We appreciate their level-headedness. Finding volunteers for the marshalling is another worry, this year more fraught than usual. But we succeeded in covering all points. And so we delivered a safe, friendly and enjoyable event. Thank you one and all for generously giving your time and support. Last, and not least, we are exceedingly grateful to the ladies who provided the tea, and endless supply of delicious cakes and sandwiches at HQ.

Anfield 100, 30 May 2016



(Left) Ryan Perry receives the WR Donovan Trophy from Peter Catherall. In recognition of setting new event record, Peter announced, to acclaim, doubling 1st prize from £100 to £200. (Right) Fastest lady Jessica Rhodes-Jones received the Elaine Hancock Cup and £100 donated by Alyson France & Co.

This was one of those special Anfield 100 days – alongside Lloyd's smash and grab ride in 1982 and the Wilko modernisations in the 1990s.

What about today? Well what a field – for both men and women. On a normal day we would be impressed with Steve Irwin just missing event record, despite, if reports are accurate, problems with drinking bottles – bad luck. [Not wishing to rub it in - at the unsupported-riders' drinks station we had 100% success – not a single bottle dropped.] But Steve was eclipsed by 30 mph man Bideau who smashed the record by five minutes. What a ride!

Yet that, as we know, was only good enough for second place. At about 40 miles Ryan Perry was three minutes up on Bideau. Too fast, we thought. And a lap later this seemed to be confirmed, with that lead reduced to 1½ minutes. But a further lap later the gap was two minutes and in the end Ryan's advantage increased back to three minutes.

3:33:20, on the Shropshire roads! It's hard to believe. And, for the first time, that's less than half the time of the first fastest rider in this event, Wilson's 7:11:00 in 1889! 127 years to double the speed.

(Report by John Thompson)

Top results

1	Ryan Perry	Langdale Lightweights RT	3:33:20
2	Richard Bideau	Pendle Forest CC	3:36:18
3	Stephen Irwin	N Lancs CC	3:42:10
4	Mark Turnbull	TORQ Performance	3:52:18
5	Harry Walton	Cheltenham & County CC	3:52:29
6	Matthew Davies	Rhino Velo Race Team	3:53:48
7	Nigel Haigh	Strategic Lions	3:54:01
8	Aaron Ward	Team Bottrill	3:54:38
9	Tony Cullen	Total Tri-Training	3:56:47
10	Ian Holbrook	Stone Wheelers CC	3:59:17
40	Jessica Rhodes-Jones	Beacon Roads CC	4:32:47 (Fastest lady)

Clubruns

The Plough, Christleton

27th February 2016

It was a bright, bitterly cold day when Nigel and Alison picked me up for the journey to the Plough. The run was well attended, with David and Mary Birchall (and Wilber), Geoff Sharp, Ben, Peter Jones, Dave Bettaney, John Lahiff, John Courtney, John Whelan, Dave Eaton and Jim Gibson as well as we three. Also in attendance were Pickles & Son, By Appointment to the Anfield, Purveyors of Fine Clothing to the Cycling Gentry.

Yes, it was a fitting occasion. Team Pickles had samples of our new kit to try for size. Given our numbers, we were spread over several tables. Round mine the conversation was technical. Mr Whelan was experiencing problems recabling (go electric John), whilst Peter Jones' concern was fitting mudguards to his road bike.

The excellent food and drink having been consumed, and apparel tried on and ordered, it was time to leave. For Nigel, Alison and me, it was a nice warm car. For those on two wheels, it was put on more skins than an onion to counter the cold journey home. PC

The Cross Foxes, Overton Bridge

5th March 2016

Saturday 5th and it wasn't snowing, but it was cold. I picked up Peter in the car and we headed to Overton Bridge and the Cross Foxes. As we drove past Wrexham on the bypass the sun came out. We got to the Cross Foxes bang on twelve, was that good timing or what? Peter Jones was in the bar and glad he wasn't on his own. So we sat down, ordered food and drink and talked about cycling, what else. About fifteen minutes later Billy came in and joined us, that's after he'd been for a swim that morning, good on you Bill. Peter and I left after an hour and a half and came home in beautiful sunshine. Thanks to all for a lovely day.

Nigel Fellows

The Miners' Arms, Maeshafn

12th March 2016



With 326 completely flat miles in my legs since the Tints, I thought a hilly club run would be a nice idea. Leaving the car in Maeshafn, I made my way to the Mold - Ruthin road, meeting les régionaux de l'étape Chris and Tony Pickles on the drop down to Loggerheads. The route then took us - in weak sunshine - through Tafarn-y-Gelyn up to the top of Bwlch-pen-Barras, down over the cattle-grids to Llanbedr-dyffryn-Clwyd, along the A-road towards Ruthin for half a mile, then

onto the B-road towards Grainrhydd and Pentrecelyn. At Pentrecelyn, we rode straight on up a C-road towards the junction at the top of the Nant y Garth, turning left to reach Llanarmon-yn-Ial. From Llanarmon, we chose to go up the hill at Eryrys, then down back to Maeshafn, covering the last couple of miles in fine cold drizzle. For me, a mere 19.7 miles at a wobblingly slow average of just under 10mph, and 2300ft of climbing, but for Chris and Tony, riding from Sychdyn, slightly more. When we arrived at the Miners' Arms, we found Nigel Fellows (who had ridden 12 miles from Mynydd Isa), David Birchall and Peter Catherall (in the car, as they were visiting nearby relatives of historic Anfielder 'The Mullah' Turnor) and Peter Jones (who had ridden from Chester). Many thanks to and Chris and Tony for their company on the ride, and to the other attenders for a convivial lunch.

Hugh Dauncey

Red Lion, Parkgate

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19th March 2016

It was a raw day, a cold wind drifting from the north east. On Burton marshes there were twitchers galore, binoculars trained on rare spring visitors. Also on the marshes, riding to the Red Lion, were Peter Jones, John Whelan, Dave Bettaney, Team Pickles, Geraint, and DDB. Some of us even spotted Keith Orum, well wrapped up against the cold, red jacket, red bike, heading purposefully in the opposite direction to us. Like the Scarlet Pimpernel, blink and he was gone, although later he did look in briefly on the club-run. Others enjoying the day were Chris and Elaine Edwards who pottered down from Hoylake; Geoff Sharp, on his Clifton (now a shopping bike), a short ride from Neston; John Courtney who'd pedalled from Irby; and Jim Gibson on his Suzuki. A good turnout - and we were all on two wheels.

The Goshawk, Mouldsworth

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26th March 2016

Good Friday had indeed been good. A lovely, sunny, balmy day, just right for cycling. The forecast for Saturday however, was dire. It was dull and overcast when Geraint picked me up (it must be dire if Geraint resorts to four wheels instead of two). The journey to our venue was uneventful, though I did remark that the A55 was quiet for an Easter Saturday. Nigel had already arrived and the three of us entered and were ordering refreshments when David Birchall arrived. Looking around for a suitable table I decided matters by occupying the large, comfy sofa by the fire. I was enjoying my pint of Balderdash, so called because after a couple, that is what you talk. We were joined by Team Pickles and our conversation revolved around broken bottom brackets and the ever increasing size of rear sprockets. All too soon it was time for Geraint and I to leave. Everyone on four wheels today, such was the forecast. The heavy rain did in fact materialise later on in the afternoon but that did not spoil our enjoyable gathering.

PC

The Nags Head, Lavister

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2nd April 2016

'Rain clearing mid morning' was the forecast. But the forecast was wrong - the rain looked set in for the day, and it was cold. Only Peter Jones braved two wheels, although Joseph, age 7, had his Isla bike tucked away in the back of dad's car for an afternoon ride at Christleton cycle-track.

Until a few years ago, the Nag's Head was a tired 1930s road-house. Now, after a make-over, it is transformed - more comfortable restaurant than pub. The menu is great - imaginative and excellent value - and the staff are friendly and welcoming.

Actions speaking louder than words, the run was well supported: Geraint, Dave Bettaney, Peter Jones, Peter Catherall and Nigel, Jim Gibson, John Whelan (who'd been to Wrexham to drop off a wheel for repairs), Tony and Chris Pickles (with a lovely, light-as-a-feather mountain bike - 29-er, 11 speed, full suspension), and three generations of Birchalls - Adam, Liz, Joseph and Editor.

Dysart Arms, Bunbury

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9th April 2016

John Lahiff on his small wheeler was the first to arrive, closely followed by Nigel and Peter Catherall carrying maps of Shropshire. With some shuffling to seat the Editor, Mary and Wilber. it was certainly getting crowded round the small table we favour next to the fire, and even more so after Chris and Tony Pickles rolled up. Outside were their latest state-of-the-art road bikes, sparkling with electronic gizmos and carbon fibre, and they were keen to keep an eye on them.

Last in was Bill Graham who'd pottered through the lanes from Kinnerton. Hogging the conversation was the loss of the 100 course, thanks to new traffic lights on the circuit. It always happens, but this time happily there's an alternative, slower than the old, on quiet roads in the Whitchurch - Ellesmere - Wem area. We didn't know it at the time, but it was an unfounded rumour. Completely wrong, how could such duff information have gained traction?

Old Ma's Cafe, Gatesheath

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16th April 2016

There was snow on the hills when I first peeped out, but luckily, none in Buckley. It was a cold, clear day. I travelled to Old Ma's with Team Pickles, and when we arrived, there were plenty of bikes parked up outside. Included in them were those belonging to John Whelan, Peter Jones and John Lahiff. Jim Gibson was loading his trusty Brompton into the back of his car.

Inside, it was hunt the table, I've never seen the café so full. Food and drink ordered, we managed to find a couple of tables next to each other and occupied them. Shortly, we were joined by David and Mary Birchall accompanied by Geoff Sharp. The conversation around the tables was varied, but Geoff and I discussed our forthcoming trip to Scotland. Last but not least to arrive was Billy Graham. The food at Old Ma's is excellent but don't go there if you are in a hurry. When the place is heaving, be prepared to wait.

Messrs Whelan and Jones were first to leave, though Peter reappeared several minutes later. 'I forgot to pay' he said. Peter must look particularly honest. The rest of us normally have to pay when we order. Soon it was time for the rest of us to leave. Another good Club Run. PC

The Red Lion, Parkgate

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23rd April 2016

For those not on the Scottish weekend, the alternative was the Red Lion. John Whelan, Dave Bettaney, Peter Jones and Keith Orum attended, 'all on bikes, a very cold day' said Keith.

Coddington Parish Rooms

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30th April 2016

On this lovely spring day, in the Chair for the committee meeting was Bill Graham. He kept in order Phil Mason, Peter and Geraint Catherall, Dave Eaton, Ben Griffiths, John Lahiff, Nigel Fellows, Geoff Sharp, Tony and Chris Pickles, Peter Jones, and David Birchall, assisted by Wilber. Official business over we tucked into tea and excellent sandwiches before heading home. One of the best Clubrun venues - *all are welcome*, whether or not committee members.

The Raven, Llanarmon-yn-Ial

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7th May 2016

A dull but warm day, rain in the afternoon, so said the weather man. Out came the bike and Fellows headed for the Raven on the A494 over the Rainbow as was. There seemed to be a bit more traffic on the road than usual and when I arrived Llanarmon was very busy with a marquee outside the Raven and two choirs and a band playing. That was the reason for the traffic. I didn't see any bikes and thought 'Am I the only one here?' Then I saw Geraint's by the wall. He was in the bar ordering food. Seemed like a good idea so I did the same. We were eating when a team of Birkenhead North Enders came in along with John Whelan, then Team Pickles. The ham sandwich and chips went down a treat. Geraint left first, as he was working (retirement is a great, I don't miss work at all). Next was John then yours truly. As I made my way home Team Pickles overtook me before Llanferres, which isn't surprising, and I got home and it didn't rain. That I call a result. Thanks to all who turned out.

Nigel Fellows.

Nets, Denhall

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14th May 2016

What a wonderful thing is the Millennium cycleway. It's the vital link facilitating traffic free cycling between the Wirral, North Wales and Cheshire. Heavily used, today there were hundreds of cyclists, plus walkers and joggers. It was the loveliest of days, brilliantly clear, blue skies and sunshine, though the wind was chilly and from the north.

At Nets, in order of appearance, were Nigel Fellows, Geoff Sharp, Geraint Catherall, John Lahiff, John Courtney, Dave Bettaney, Keith Orum, Peter Jones, John Whelan, Jim Gibson, Brian Whitmarsh, Team Pickles, and as we were about to leave Bill Graham - a good turnout, fifteen and all on bikes.

Calveley Arms, Handley

21st May 2016

Another one bites the dust. Sadly the Calveley Arms has ceased trading, and was closed. That was bad enough, but the torrential downpour which greeted our arrival made matters much worse. Hastily we rearranged the run, reconvening half an hour later at Old Ma's. Here Peter Jones was a real asset to the conversation - today we learned about Heidi the Swiss horse which bolted with him in the saddle. Peter was ably abetted in story telling by Jim Gibson, Peter and Geraint Catherall, plus Editor Birchall, Mary and Wilber. By the time we had finished the cloudburst had ceased and the afternoon was beginning to look promising.

The Plough, Christleton

28th May 2016

Today's run was about the 100 - start-cards, marshals, and final checks. In this frenetic age of health and safety concerns and heavy traffic, I wonder how Sportifs get away with no marshals (or lack of). One with over 3000 participants was mentioned today which apparently relied on signs and a man on a motorbike. In contrast, for time-trialling (at least as we know it) there is careful organisation. And for the Anfield 100 the standard has always been set very high. Meticulous attention to detail is the hallmark. For Peter Catherall and Nigel Fellows it's hard work and a lot of responsibility. They and the loyal team of helpers can be really proud of the achievement.

It was a hot morning, oppressively so after the sun broke through. And it was a good turnout, especially nice to see Neil France and Mike Hallgarth up for the weekend. Peter Catherall and Nigel Fellows had brought copies of the Start Card and roster and were in the van hired to carry our signage. Peter Jones, Geraint and Brian Whitmarsh all wheeled past me in quick succession as I walked to the Plough with Wilber. Completing the party were John Whelan, John Lahiff, Tony and Chris Pickles and Ben. With a month to go to the Brexit referendum, unusually for a club-run, politics was on the agenda, which acted as a lively counterpoint to the 100 theme.

DDB

The Anfield Down Under



David Birchall hands Amazing Anfielders to Alan and Frances Turnor

I was happily doing nothing when an email from Australia arrived out of the blue. It was from Keith Turnor who, with his brother Alan, had been a Member of the Anfield in the early 1940s. Their father was a well known Anfielder C H Turnor who went by the nickname of the Mullah.

Keith had been looking at our website and wished to purchase a copy of the *Black Anfielders* and *Amazing Anfielders*. Rather than post them off to Australia could we deliver them to his brother Alan who still lives in the UK in a place called Penyffordd? 'No problem' I replied, 'I only live a couple of miles away from Alan'.

So it was that David Birchall and I, after the run to Maeshafn, 12 March, called on Alan and his wife Frances and presented them with the books. We also had a long chat with Alan about his days in the Anfield and about his father.

Peter Catherall



Castle Kennedy explorers

Portpatrick weekend

From all parts we descended on Portpatrick on Friday. The weather was sunny and the sky gin clear. So clear that on the Irish coast individual houses were visible; south, the Isle of Man and the Mountains of Mourne; and north, the Mull of Kintyre, Arran, Paddy's Milestone and Argyll. What a sight. It set the tone for the weekend in this most delectable and quiet part of Scotland.

Saturday and a hearty breakfast before the day's ride. Off we set and were soon on a long climb where David, Geoff, Christine and I established a considerable gap. When Tony and Elsie Huntington hove into view, I joined them. Elsie was born on planet Krypton and rides a 1902 Rover bicycle. It weighs a ton but she calmly pedals this single speed leviathan up every hill without even breaking into a sweat. Tony rides his penny-farthing and can go into the minutiae of old bikes. He is a man who could immediately distinguish a right hand from a left hand Twix.

At one point we stopped to check the route when I heard a sound that I have not heard in years, a skylark. Nearing Corsewall lighthouse, our lunch spot, we were presented with a breathtaking vista, the deep blue sea, and rising out of it the magnificent Ailsa Craig. Eventually the rest of the party joined us, only to find that they were too late for meals. A bad day at the lighthouse.

Afternoon David and Geoff joined me. A long downhill led to Loch Ryan. But my legs were feeling their lack of miles, and after a rest I plodded on solo, grateful for the helpful north wind on my back. A final wildlife sighting was a stoat sitting at the side of the road. It clearly realised that I was knackered and presented no threat. It just watched me go by. In my mind it was sitting up on its back legs, clapping its front paws and shouting 'Go on lad, you're nearly there'. At least, it was that belief that got me back to the hotel.

Peter Catherall

Sunday: An 'A' bike, so called because of its shape, is as far from a penny-farthing as can be imagined. It is very small, made of plastic, with wheels not much bigger than castors. Expanding from a tangle of bits in a shopping bag, it is the origami of bikes. S-VCC wizard Dave MacKenzie's idea of a challenge, assembling it, was the first test, and riding it was the second.



Corsewall lighthouse hotel, lunch venue for Saturday's lucky few; and Dunskey Castle - photos by Geoff Sharp

Chris Pickles gamely accepted the challenge and it was he who pioneered the route from the hotel dining room to reception and back. Fast, and several times. An interesting diversion after dinner on Sunday evening, it concluded a day that had seen us ride to Castle Kennedy 'one of Scotland's most important historical landscaped gardens'. Significantly Mary Birchall's recce on Saturday discovered its excellent cafe, not too far for the veteran machines. Nevertheless the hill from Portpatrick en route to lunch proved tough for some, the north wind impeding progress; and the return ride was just as hard.

Climbing through the tree-zone to the tundra (otherwise the Galloway Hills) was how Tony Pickles described his plans for the day. But problems with Chris's bike intervened. After emergency repairs by Geoff Sharp, instead they joined us for lunch, prior to seeking out those extra miles around Luce Bay in the afternoon.

Melrose had been the first choice for the weekend, but the hotel let us down. Sadly the switch to Portpatrick seemed to reduce the interest of Anfield members from whom regrettably there was little support. Otherwise for those who did participate, 26 in total, it was a thoroughly enjoyable gathering. Accommodation and service at the hotel were excellent, even better than two years ago, and amazing value. A big debt of thanks is owed to Jim Gibson for his organisational skills, and to the Scottish section of the V-CC for inviting us to share this wonderful corner of their land. An excellent weekend, great cycling and genial company.



Portpatrick and Castle Kennedy parkland



David Birchall

Altonaer-Bicycle-Club von 1869/80 (Hamburg)

The *Altonaer-Bicycle-Club von 1869/80* in Hamburg claims to be the oldest cycling club in the world. Initially founded in the Altona suburb of Hamburg in 1869 as the *Elmsbütteler-Velocipeden-Reit-Club* for penny-farthing riders, as bicycles made their appearance, it was renamed in 1881 as the ABC, hence the two numbers in its name, as is common with German sports clubs. But because '80 was a nice round number, they used it as the second date, rather than 1881! Until the late 1990s the club was active, in various ways and to varying degrees, but lapsed into dormancy around the millennium, before being revived by its current officers in 2013. In recent years, the club has been very active in researching its history, producing a number of studies of its early activities, in particular. They have a glossy and extensive website at www.altonaer-bicycle-club.de.

Hugh Dauncey, assisted by David Birchall is working with the young historians who are now essentially running the Altonaer-Bicycle-Club to research the ways in which 'our' ABC and the 'Hamburg' ABC developed until 1914, and comparing these case studies with the birth, rise to prominence and surprisingly early demise of a similar cycling club in Bordeaux, the *Véloce-Club Bordelais* (VCB) founded in 1876. Whereas the two ABC's have enjoyed long and successful lives, the VCB foundered in 1892, despite - or perhaps partly because of - having been instrumental in launching and running the famous Bordeaux-Paris race in 1891. Cycling in Hamburg and its region in the 1880s and 1890s was particularly popular, with a large number of clubs being founded, merging and separating, as the new - mainly bourgeois - sport and leisure pastime developed. Some clubs favoured touring, others privileged racing activities as their main focus, and most had a lively social scene. In particular though, as in Bordeaux, and unlike the development of the Anfield BC, in Hamburg, a major feature of the early history of the Altonaer BC was the building and running of a major velodrome - the 500m Grindelberg-Bahn - in 1885. But from the mid 1890s, the increasing 'democratisation' of cycling - falling prices of machines making them more affordable for working-class people - and waning interest of the middle-classes for the noisy commercialisation of (track) racing led to a decline in the bourgeois-dominated Altonaer BC membership. Motorised sport and were becoming equally, if not more attractive to the affluent Hamburgers than cycle-sport and competition, and, under the guidance of the famous cycling organiser Gregers Nissen the ABC evolved towards a greater focus on touring, until its development was interrupted by the Great War. A particular theme to research - based on David Birchall's existing work on the Anfield's experience of 1914-18 - would be to compare and contrast how the Altonaer BC lived through World War 1. David and Hugh are looking forward very much to working with the Altonaer BC's Lars Amenda and Oliver Leibbrand, who have already been very kind in providing information on their club.

Hugh Dauncey



Left - The badge of the Altonaer-Bicycle-Club 1869/80 bears the fortress symbol of Hamburg's coat of arms, and a penny-farthing, reflecting the place, and date of its birth in terms of cycling technology.

Right - In 1894, the Altonaer-Bicycle-Club was already celebrating its Silver anniversary.



Spontaneous, Adventurous and Variable – the max-spontaneity option



Sunday lunch at Alan Richards' favourite restaurant

It was Guy Pullan back in 1961 who described a good ride as being 'spontaneous, adventurous and variable'. At first this seems obvious, but, on reflection, things are not so simple. Consider 'variability'. Surely nobody wants to follow the same route every ride, and I would be disappointed if I ever went a whole year without pedalling on roads I'd never been on before. That said, when a fixed route is enforced, as it often is when commuting, the repeated

regular ride brings its own reward. One quickly falls into a kind of trance, while, at the same time, noticing the changes through the days, months and years. So now, with 365 days of annual leave and no daily constraint, I still choose to do certain set routes regularly. 'Spontaneity' and 'adventure' are also not straightforward. You can only have both in moderation, because if you are going to be really adventurous you need lots of planning. I would not, for example, recommend a cycling tour through Latin America without some preparation.

Our most recent tandem tour was not adventurous but it did maximise spontaneity. We booked a train from Westbury to Plymouth and a ferry from Plymouth to Roscoff, but where we would go, where we would return from, and when, were to be decided when we decided. There was a possibility, and no more, that we might meet up with Alan Richards, now living in Normandie, who built the lightest trike in the world for me back in the seventies.

Having got up too late for breakfast on the boat, we first made for a boulangerie and a bar for coffee and pain au raisin. It was here that Maggie decided what the first part of our tour should be, 'I want to see plenty of coastline'. Not necessarily as easy as it sounds since roads that look as



Follow the little cycle signs ...

though they run along the coast on a map often give no views of the sea.

Suitably fortified we first made our way to the tourist information office. We already had quite large scale maps but we knew that there were ever increasing kilometres of cycle routes, both on and off road. Sure enough there was a route heading west along the northern coast of Bretagne, then hugging the coast all the way round to Brest and beyond down to Nantes. (This, I later learned, is merely the Bretagne stretch of Eurovelo route 1,

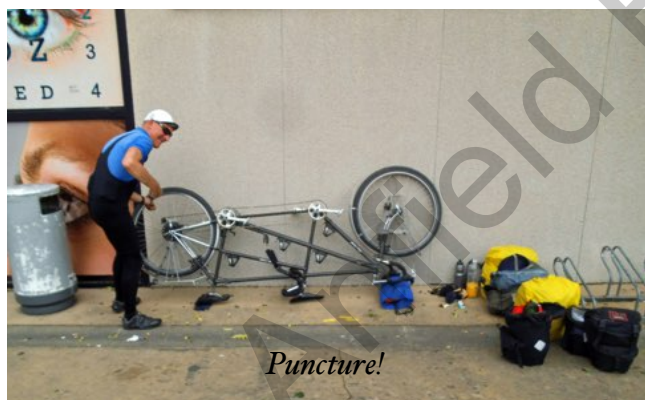
from Nordkapp to Faro.) We soon picked up the little bicycle signs. In places they took us through roads too minor even for Michelin 'local' maps, which typically have a 1:150,000 scale. 'Two strips of tarmac with grass in the middle' type roads, or even tracks, were sometimes what we followed. Because these were not on our maps, missing just one of those little signs could soon lead to complete disorientation, and this did happen from time to time, but we soon learned



First camp spot – rocks and sea – what Maggie wanted



Another inlet, another ferry. Crossing from Loctudy to Ile Tudy.



Puncture!

to be very attentive and not pass any junction without being sure a sign did not point that way. The route wiggled around, getting as close to the coast as possible, so that our miles pedalled resulted in less progress across the map than might be expected. Also, as with many coastal routes, there were plenty of short but steep climbs, as well as gale force winds blowing off the sea, so the likely overall expected route got cut down several times.

We did not slavishly follow our Eurovelo route all the time. For example, the official route went round the inlet south of Brest. The way did not look inviting so we took a foot and bike ferry to the quiet Presqu'Ile de Crozon (the 'nearly island', or peninsula, of Crozon). We soon rejoined the Eurovelo route, following the coast with the help of more foot and cycle ferries. After a few days we headed inland. Maggie had had her fill of coastline, at least for a while; the way ahead did not look so good, with big towns to negotiate, plus there was the tempting prospect of 'cycle ways' rather than just a cycle route, along disused railways and canals for most of the remaining length of Bretagne and beyond to Cherbourg for the ferry home.

It seems that the French regions are in competition with one another to create the best cycle tour networks, not only the routes themselves but the supporting freebee maps and booklets which give a wealth of information. The problem is that, in any given region, the tourist information offices only have these goodies for their cycle routes. For

'spontaneous', decide-as-you-go tourists like us, this introduces a bit of uncertainty. One of our best routes was a path alongside the navigable river 'La Mayenne', which we only found by accident. No doubt many readers will be saying to themselves, 'why don't they take a smart phone, a tablet even'. Well, looking at the route details on the web, they are not as up-to-date or as comprehensive as those we were given, and, in addition, there was some valuable extra info from usually helpful staff. In future I'll compile a list of the main long distance cycle routes we might decide to use, getting further details when and where required.

So, by maximising spontaneity we ended up using cycle routes prepared for us, rather than, as we usually do, forging our own way. A somewhat unexpected outcome.

John and Maggie Thompson

Photos by Maggie except for 'Sunday Lunch' by Alan Richards.