

# ANFIELD CIRCULAR

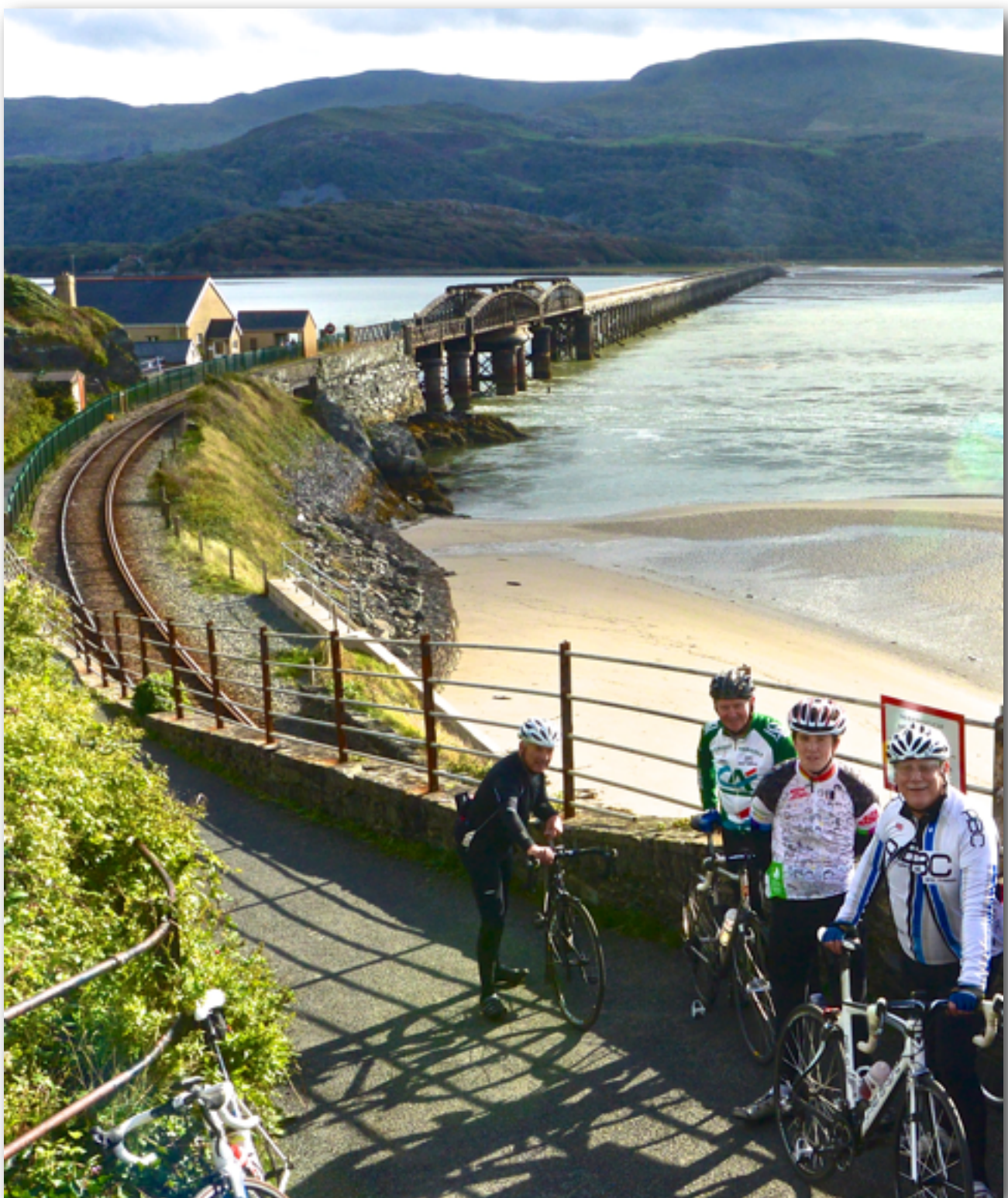
*JOURNAL OF THE ANFIELD BICYCLE CLUB*

*(formed March 1879)*

[www.anfieldbc.co.uk](http://www.anfieldbc.co.uk)

December 2013

No.947



Barmouth Bridge, Mawddach Estuary

## Autumn Tints - high roads and low roads



*Keith Orum, Dave Bettaney, Chris Pickles, and Hugh Dauncey 1000 ft above the Barmouth Bridge ...*



*.... and after a rim burning descent, crossing the Mawddach to Barmouth and lunch.*

## ~ *Runs List* ~

[www.anfielddbc.co.uk](http://www.anfielddbc.co.uk)

### *Saturday runs (lunch at 1215hrs)*

December	7	Goshawk	Mouldsworth
	14	Dysart Arms	Bunbury
	21	Britannia	Halkyn
	28	The Plough	Christleton
January	4	Red Lion	Parkgate
	11	Old Ma's Cafe	Gatesheath
	18	The Druids	Llanferres
	25	Carden Arms	Tilston
February	1	The Pheasant	Burwardsley
	8	The Harp	Denhall (Neston)
	15	The Griffin	Trevalyn
	22	Committee Meeting	Coddington Parish Rooms (1130hrs)
March	1	Cross Foxes	Overton Bridge
	8	Dysart Arms	Bunbury
	15	The Plough	Christleton
	22	The Druids	Llanferres
	29	The Buck	Bangor on Dee

**CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT CIRCULAR: 22 February 2014**

**President:** *Bill Graham*

**Hon Secretary:** *Peter Catherall, 49 Elm Grove, Buckley, Flintshire, CH7 2LU*

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**Captain:** *Geraint Catherall*

**Editor:** *David Birchall*

### **2013 - 2014 Subscriptions**

*21 and over £15; Junior £7.50; Family member £1; CTC 3<sup>rd</sup> party insurance £16 – by Standing Order*

**Hon Treasurer:** *Phil Mason*

## **Committee Notes**

New member: **Tom Williams**

At the Committee Meeting on 16 November, resolutions of sympathy were passed to Bill Graham on the death of his brother, and to David and Delia Bettaney, and their family, on the tragic loss of their youngest daughter Ellen at the age of 26. Amongst the many attending Ellen's funeral at St Mark's church Connahs Quay the Anfield was represented by David and Mary Birchall, Nigel Fellows, Ben Griffiths, Tony Pickles, Keith and Pippa Orum, Geoff Sharp, John and Jane Whelan, and Brian and Pat Whitmarsh.

## Mull of Galloway and Portpatrick April weekend



*Thanks to Jim Gibson and our SV-CC friends, the 2014 Spring weekend will visit the seascapes and quiet countryside on the north side of the Solway Firth.*

*The weekend has been arranged for Friday 25th April to Monday 28th April - 3 nights - at the Portpatrick Hotel, near Stranraer.*

*The price is £129 per person for the 3 nights (dinner, bed and breakfast), based on 2 people sharing a twin or a double room. Sea view rooms, superior rooms, and a small number of single rooms are also*

*available at supplementary prices (details from David Birchall) - to be allocated in date of paying deposit order. Bookings, please, by 10th January with £25 deposit per person. Final payment by 28th February. Cheques payable to Anfield BC to Phil Mason please.*

## Annual General Meeting

In charge of the meeting were Bill Graham (President), Phil Mason (Treasurer) and Peter Catherall (Secretary). Also in attendance were D Birchall, G Catherall, C Davies, D Eaton, C Edwards, N Fellows, C R Griffiths, J Lahiff, A Orme, K Orum, M Twigg, S Twigg and J Whelan. The Minutes of the last AGM, Secretary's Report, Treasurer's Report were all accepted. The proposed amendments to Club Rules were accepted. The current President, Hon Treasurer, Hon Secretary and Vice Presidents were re-elected unanimously, as were the Captain and Editor.

### Secretary's Report

It has been a notable year for the Club. Firstly, we were successful in obtaining Lottery Funding and have embarked on the task of digitising and recording Club Circulars, photographs etc. Much praise is due to David Birchall who inaugurated the project and has been the driving force behind it. Many thanks also to those Club Members who have been able to devote time and effort to helping with the project.

On the racing scene, Ben, Geraint, Graham and Jason have been active. We have seen two club records broken, the '25' by Graham and the '10' by Jason. Geraint rode in both the 12hr and 24hr events.

The 2013 '100' was a great success and the Club received considerable praise from both competitors and spectators.

Last year's Autumn Tints was enjoyed by all, as was the extended President's Weekend when we were joined by members of the Scottish Veteran-Cycle Club.

Several new Members joined the Club this year and we hope that they will enjoy their Membership.

On all fronts, it has been a very good year for the Club.

Peter Catherall

## **Obituary: Robert McNamee**

Sadly, we record the death of Bob McNamee on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 peacefully at Bebington Care Home. The service of cremation at Landican was attended by his two daughters, Karen and Trish together with their families and friends, and many from cycle-sport.

Born in Birkenhead, November 1929, he was an electrician by trade working for Lever Brothers. From early teens a keen club cyclist, racing and touring, an enjoyment he was to share with his wife. Later, he focused his attention more on timekeeping, and became a respected senior timekeeper to the RTTC and RRA. Bob timed the Anfield '100' through the latter part of the 1990s until 2009, when illness became apparent after his wife's death.

Bob was a member of the Birkenhead Victoria Cycling Club, President of Liverpool Time Trials Cycling Association and Vice President of the WCTTCA. He was extremely knowledgeable about the sport, willing to share his timekeeping skills, and encouraged others to take up the stopwatch. He will be remembered with much affection.

Keith Orum

## **Fancy a Time Trial by new Anfield BC Member, Tom Williams**

I'll start with a confession: I am a triathlete. Some of you will be tutting. Some of you will have stopped reading. Many of you will be wondering why you would want to ruin a good ride by bookending it with drowning, and being chased by men with no sleeves (I usually ask myself this question about 4km into the 10km run). However, I have expanded my horizons and also come to love cycling and all it involves. This year I started Crit racing and always meant to try a TT. So when Graham Thompson, a friend from work asked if I fancied doing a 10 mile 2-up TTT with him, I jumped at the chance.

On reflection this was an interesting choice. Graham and I had ridden together once, an evening cruise home from work (ironically almost exactly ten miles). So going from this to a full-bore TTT was going to be an experience. Especially given that my entire knowledge of TTTing comes from watching the Tour de France on TV.

Then I had a look at the start sheet...and understood very little of it. I am aware that codes are used for TT's, but wasn't quite expecting this. Did the pioneers of TT nip down to Bletchley Park after the war for a spot of advice?! Apparently we are ABC CT, no STD or CP at D10/19. Obviously. In the absence of an enigma code-breaking machine I interpret this as turn up, ride as fast as possible, see what happens.

So on Sunday morning I meet Graham and am handed a brand new skin suit donated very kindly by Ben, whom I also meet (thanks again Ben). I hadn't expected Graham's warm-up routine to include acupuncture, but can only assume that's what he was doing as he inserted several pins in me whilst attaching my number. I don't complain, I figure I may need all the help I can get. We then did a warm up proper and headed to the start line.

The large friendly bearded chap clinging onto my saddle on the start line was a new one for me (beats running out of a cold lake and jumping on). We got away and started working well together. In the interests of self-preservation I decided not to follow Graham's line at the turn onto the dual carriageway. Whilst I'm sure using both lanes of a dual carriageway is quicker,

the fast moving traffic in the outside lane put me off a bit. I instantly regret this as I have a crit style kick out of the corner to get back on his wheel.

From there it seemed to go well. I was doing my turns on the front, albeit slightly shorter than Graham's. The spectator with the cowbell at the turn was a nice touch. I also noticed a figure standing on the bridge, stopwatch in hand; Ben keeping a knowledgeable eye on us. As we turn off the carriageway and near the finish, Graham has the hammer down. As the line hoves into view I use my last vestige of energy to sprint upsides with Graham, and we cross the line together. I have no idea if this is actually faster, but its what they seem to do on TV.

As we cross the line my legs are screaming, my heart is making a concerted effort to jump out the front of my chest, and my lungs are about to explode.

“20:48” Wheezes Graham.

“Is that any good?” I gasp between breaths.

“Pretty quick.” He gasps back.

Once my heart rate drops below a level that in other circumstances would be considered a medical emergency, we chat on the way back to HQ. Graham tells me it's the fastest he's ever gone. I'm elated. I was useful.

Back in the HQ I'm made up to find we were the third fastest CT (I'm learning). It's also great to meet other members of the club and the TT fraternity. One chap asks me where else I've raced. I explain its my first ever TT. Not sure he believed me. I said I normally do triathlons. He didn't talk to me after that.

As a first TT, it was a great experience. I'm only disappointed it's the end of the season, so I'll have to wait to do another. I'll definitely be doing more and wearing the ABC suit with pride.

Massive thanks to: Graham, for inviting me to race; to Ben for his support, wisdom and the suit; and to BVCC for a great event.

## **A P James and the NRRA Tandem Record 1908**



Glynn Stockdale recently came across this Anfield BC medal. It was awarded to member A P James on 3 October 1908 for his part in breaking the Northern Road Records Association's unpaced tandem record. His tandem partner was “Baron” Fulton, and they broke the record twice in quick succession. The medal recognises the faster ride - 2hrs 32mins 36sec.

It seems James's ABC membership got off to a flying start. He was elected a member in 1907, and in his first two years he attended every clubrun. He seems to have been the model committee man too - by 1908 he was Hon Sec, a post which he filled “most ably” for four years. In addition he was a very successful competitor - four times NRRA record breaker on single, and tandem tricycles, a strong rider at all distances - 24 hrs, 12hrs, and 100 miles. He won the first 50 miles of the 1908 season. His commitment and energy led to an appreciation, a unique accolade, in the 1908 Annual Report.

During WW1 he served in France with the Army Cycle Corp. His obituary recorded that he returned from the war wounded, his health so impaired that he was never able to resume his activities to any great extent. He died at the age of 46 in 1930.

DDB



## Amazing Anfielders

Since our last report, the project has progressed steadily. The digitisation stage has been finished. This means the complete history of the Club is now stored electronically freeing the "paper" archive both for conservation and also as the permanent record, without the risks of its future dispersal or deterioration. There is more work to do - cataloguing, and putting everything on-line, but the archive is now a secure treasure trove for anyone interested in the development of the bicycle, cycling, and sports clubs.

Amongst the discoveries are essays written by founder club members about their early bicycling years. From George Barker Mercer's documents we have been able to date and name photos from the 1880s. Another unexpected find has been F H Koenen's papers and photos. Based on personal experience his notes describe the development of the bicycle from penny-farthings to pneumatic tyred "safeties". He rode (and raced) them all, and was knowledgeable about their design subtleties, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. His collection, now brought together from lost corners of the archive, also includes photos of track racing in Belgium and at Bellvue in Manchester.

One of the most important records is the Club scrapbook, a page from which is pictured above. The book covers the first twenty years of the ABC. It is crammed full of press cuttings, photos, magazine articles, and ephemera about the individual Anfielders who were amongst the elite of cycling in the pioneering years of the sport. How wonderful it would be to produce a high quality facsimile of this unique treasure.



*Track racing at Bellvue, Manchester (from the F H Koenen collection)*

Also scanned are each of the Minute Books, Annual Reports, and every Circular from issue no. 1 March 1906. While scanning the Circulars, unexpectedly we stumbled across a set of itineraries for early Easter Tours, August Weekends, and All-night Rides to destinations far and wide. Also rediscovered are monthly runs lists from the 1880s and 1890s, and Menu Cards for the elaborate celebration dinners so enjoyed by members in those years.

It is not just about the earliest years. Evocative photos from the 1930s through the 1940s and 1950s have come to light and have been scanned, and many more from recent times provide a record of contemporary activities.

DDB



*Trike riders George Parr and Bill McWhinnie chat to Arthur Birkby. (from the Eric Reeves photos collection - place unknown, date - probably Whit 1953)*



## Clubruns

### Calveley Arms, Handley

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31<sup>st</sup> August 2013

Beeston Castle, high on its rock, has kept a watchful eye on the distant Welsh Hills for thousands of years. Today it looked like it was readying its ancient walls for the arrival of Autumn, the approach of which has been all too apparent this week. Mist greyed out trees one morning, and, on a mid-week ride, there was the evocative sound of migrating geese flying low overhead.

It was a cool start for the clubrun. The ride began in Christleton, and, with about an hour available, evolved into an exploration of the lanes eastward to the Shady Oak. A tail wind made for easy cycling through Waverton and Huxley, but turning westward from Beeston Castle to Tattenhall came eight miles into it.

Inside the Calveley Arms a chatty bunch of Anfielders was settling down for lunch: Ben Griffiths, Geraint, Dave Bettaney, Jeff Lewis, Bill Graham, Peter Catherall and Nigel Fellows. Nigel had brought with him a 1941 Golden Jubilee souvenir issue of *Cycling*, a 1930s pamphlet about how to be a "proper" cyclist, and a Raleigh booklet on Rossiter's End to End 1930 Record: absorbing stuff, a neighbour's attic find apparently.

### The Buck, Bangor on Dee

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7<sup>th</sup> September 2013

A splendid turnout for the first run of September: we were all, 100%, on bicycles, and wearing club kit. The weather was not misty or mellow though. With an Irish Sea low hovering just beyond Liverpool Bay, rain bearing clouds were scudding over Cheshire.

It was a headwind from Kelsall, where I started the ride. The air was clear. You could see every tree, every field boundary, and every tussock of heather on the Welsh Hills, twenty miles away; and in the far distance, 20 miles further, the unmistakable silhouette of the Berwyn ridge, just that bit higher than the Clwydians.

Homeward we rode as a group to Holt. Here Geraint turned westward for Sychdyn, leaving Davids Birchall and Bettaney to make their way to Chester. And therein lies the truth: a splendid turnout though it was, we numbered just three.

### The Red Lion, Dodleston

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14<sup>th</sup> September 2013

This weekend was Cheshire's celebration of architecture, history, and culture. But you wouldn't have guessed it from my journey across the county. Riding to Whitegates the lane from the River Weaver leads through a lovely little wood. So who dumped the shopping trolleys, builders rubble, plastic bags, kitchen cupboards, and beds? And why? At Oulton Park, once upon a time a great country estate, the countryside was alive with ... the sounds of racing cars and tannoy announcements; and the adjacent lanes were busy with speeding traffic.

Nor was there any nod to heritage at the next stop. Just north of Tarporley, Utkinton Hall is a grade 1 listed building. Its history is ancient and rich. But the building is on the *Heritage at Risk Register*. English Heritage describe it as "a manor house of complex design and evolution now used as a farmhouse". They say "Discussions with the owner have not proven successful and no long-term solution has been identified". Cheshire Heritage weekend or not, by now I was wondering what possesses people to turn their backs on heritage.

From Utkinton the route dropped steadily through Duddon, over the River Gowy, to Waverton and Christleton, where the cycling component of my day ended.

Next it was a quick change, and off by car to Dodleston for lunch. Here were Nigel and Alison Fellows fresh off Eurostar following a holiday in southern Germany.

Completing the party were Geraint, Ben, John Whelan, and Dave Bettaney. The Red Lion is more restaurant than pub. We found a table big enough for all of us in a corner of the large dining area. The service was ok and the food too. As a new ABC venue it passed muster. And it goes without saying that the friendly craic was up to ABC standard too.

Then for me it was a hurried return to base, in time for a behind-the-scenes tour of Chester Station, like Utkinton Hall a grade 1 listed building, only with a more secure future hopefully. And Wilber the Club mascot became a rail Rover for the afternoon.

**The Raven, Llanarmon-yn-Ial** - **21<sup>st</sup> September 2013**

As Nigel and I entered the village, it became apparent that there were a lot of people in Llanarmon today. It transpired that a "horse table" sale and a cross country race were being held, the latter having its headquarters at the Raven.

As we crossed the road to the Raven we observed Mr Birchall slowly approaching on his bicycle. Very slowly. David's rear disc brake had seized up, virtually locking the rear wheel. Nigel and David went off to put the bike back in the car whilst I went into the Raven to order an excellent pint of real ale. Inside was Geraint and I persuaded him to come and sit outside in the warm sunshine.

We had a brief chat with former ABC man John Stinton, and Roger Squire of Fibrax Wrexham who had taken up the heathen practice of running for the day. Next to arrive were Chris and Tony Pickles followed shortly by Dave Bettaney (all on their bikes).

After a pleasant chat and refreshments, it was time to make our way home. An excellent lunchtime at this charming village.

Peter Catherall

**The Pheasant, Burwardsley** - **28<sup>th</sup> September 2013**

No report received. The President, the Captain, and John Whelan attended.

**Old Ma's Cafe, Gatesheath** - **12<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

Today there were grey skies. But it was surprisingly mild. Starting from Christleton following the direct route there are only eight miles to Gatesheath. So I headed through the lanes to Beeston Castle in search of more. Having been off the bike for three weeks it was good gently to stretch the legs again, and in the loveliest countryside.

Old Ma's is a pleasant and calm alternative to the manic Ice Cream Farm two miles down the lane. The food and service were good. John Whelan's comment was we should visit such places more often. Dave Bettaney, and Geraint Catherall completed the disappointing turnout of four. We all rode back towards Chester together, at Christleton leaving me for a solo last mile back to base. But the ride ended in embarrassment, with a headlong fall on a lowered kerb. Luckily no lasting harm was done either to bike or rider. Pride was the main casualty.

### Farmer's Arms, Kelsall

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26<sup>th</sup> October 2013

Cheshire's hedgerow oaks glowed golden in pale sunshine this autumnal morning. The ride began in Christleton, and led through lowland Waverton to hillside Willington. From here the lane climbed through Kelsall to the Farmers Arms. One bike outside. Inside was Geraint. The only other supporter was Nigel Fellows. Disappointing for our first visit here for several years. The Farmer's Arms, now under new management has returned to its roots. For a time it was called "Th'ouse at Top", then it morphed, thankfully briefly, into a Chinese take away. Now happily it has reverted to its proper name and role. The sandwiches and beer were very good.

The wind was against us for the return to Christleton, where Geraint left me to continue his lone ride back to Sychdyn.

### Sportsman's Arms, Tattenhall

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2<sup>nd</sup> November 2013

For this the first Saturday of November there were more grey skies, with rain in the air and a gale from the south west. Through the lanes, from Christleton, it is only eight miles to Tattenhall. Today it was into the wind all the way. Reaching the village before midday, extra miles were in order. So, dodging the debris of wind-blown twigs and leaves, I continued towards the autumnal Peckforton Hills, Burwardsley and Harthill.

It is a long time since the ABC last visited the Sportsman's Arms where once Mike Twigg and Tony Pickles presided over committee meetings. Not much had changed in the small snug except for an over-large TV, dispensing unwanted *Porridge* and *Yes Minister*. The beer and the sandwiches were ok.

It was disappointing that the run was supported only by Geraint and me. Still, two is sufficient a number to make attending worthwhile. Then it was time to go, and the sun was shining. But as we were walking out the front door who should appear through the back door? Phil Mason no less. He too had battled into the wind on his bicycle from Christleton. With news of rain in torrents in the Wirral, the bad turnout was explained, at least, in part. Anyway Phil's arrival provided more than enough justification for another beer, a chat, and a return ride in company. Oh yes, and the gale was on our backs all the way to Christleton.

### The Druids, Llanferres

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9<sup>th</sup> November 2013

My trips to Anfieldland are usually multi-purpose and so involve multi-packing and multi-info gathering. That, I think, is how I came to believe the run was to Bangor-on-Dee. Fortunately, on the Saturday morning I'd forgotten the name of the pub, and a quick check showed it was not Bangor after all, but Llanferres. Where was that? A search across Sheet 117 OS (Crown copyright 1978) map revealed nothing with that name, so, disconnected from the internet, I had to call the Editor. He put me right; my destination was just a mile to the east of my map.

This was my first opportunity to take the new cycle route from Burton into Wales. The views across the marshes were spectacular, before entering the zombie zone of windowless boxes that cover what was once the steel works. Navigation was easy with lots of signs, though up to the point where the Dee is crossed, at Hawarden railway bridge, I don't know exactly where they took me. Just inside Wales I caught a couple of cyclists going the same way as me, into the lanes by Northop Hall and round the back of

Mold. I tagged along, enjoying their company, pleased not to have to interpret a 35 year old map, but as the road went up I pulled away and we said our goodbyes. Later I bragged 'this morning I dropped Boardman, no problem', but this fooled no one. 'Which Boardman?' was the immediate riposte. I had to admit it was Carol.

At the Druids I found Nigel and Alison Fellows, then in rolled our Editor and Dave Bettaney, soon to be followed by Geraint Catherall and Chris and Tony Pickles. At this point team Pickles had not started pedalling, but the very serious looking mountain bikes on the roof of their car pointed to their intentions. It seems that Pickles senior may be turning pro, possibly next season. It rather depends on how many people want to buy an Airbus A380.

All too soon it was time to make our ways home. Geraint and the Davids were going my way and we set off to retrace the route we had all taken on the way out. Not ideal, all routes should really be circuitous, but given the limited daylight, and the need to avoid the worst main roads, this was our only option. Soon I was back on the marshes and into the Wirral lanes, ending a great day out.

John Thompson

Nigel Fellows adds:

Saturday morning, bright and a bit cold but a lot better than all the rain we've been having. Alison and I went to Ruthin to do some shopping and called in at the Druids on the way back as the clubrun was there this week. John Thompson was in the car park as we pulled in, so in we went and ordered food and drink. Not long afterward Messrs Birchall and Bettaney joined us, then Geraint and team Pickles followed.

After food and a chat, team Pickles went off the Llandegla and the rest made their way to Mold and on to their homes. Thanks to one and all for a nice time.

### **Coddington Parish Rooms, Committee Meeting - 16<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

With Wilber the Jack Russell on duty in Chester today his role as Club mascot was usurped by a little brown dog which befriended us outside the Parish Rooms. Was he lost or abandoned? With no collar, he wasn't saying and we didn't know. We shooed him out when the meeting started, but he bounded down the road to greet us again as we left. He proved to be a local - "Not one of ours" said Mrs Jones, who looks after the key, in a tone which suggested she knew where he lived, and more.

Committee business was presided over by Bill Graham, with support from Secretary Peter Catherall and committee members Dave Eaton, Tony and Chris Pickles, Ben Griffiths, Nigel Fellows, Geoff Sharp, and David Birchall.

Sandwiches and tea followed the official business, and then it was back into the autumnal Cheshire countryside and home.

### **The Buck, Bangor on Dee - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2013**

Another nice day, makes a change from the wet weather we've been having. The club run was at the Buck, so I drove to Bangor on Dee and arrived at about 12:15pm. As I got to the door I noticed a bike and thought at least I won't be on my own.

In the lounge of the pub were Billy, David Birchall and club mascot Wilber. With a heavy frost earlier in the day, David had decided that a walk rather than the bike was the safe option. So he and Wilber had been exploring the River Dee upstream from the

village. Billy and Dave had ordered food, but as I had already eaten I settled for my usual lime and lemonade (a Frank Marriott trait I picked up years ago). As we were chatting I put Wilber on my knee. After a bit he was calm but started making a low noise. I looked at David and he said "He's crooning", that's a new one for me I thought, a singing dog.

No one else turned up, so having put the world to rights, Billy headed to the bar to watch the Liverpool v Everton match on TV, and we decided to go our separate ways.

Nigel Fellows



*Bangor-on-Dee*

**Carden Arms, Tilston**

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**30<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

It was a clear, bright, sunny day, as lovely as the last day of November could offer. Nigel and I made our way to Tilston where we joined David Birchall who was tucking into his lunch. David, making the most of the fine day, had ridden through the lanes from Kelsall, round Beeston Castle, then over the Peckforton Hills to Harthill, before dropping down to The Carden Arms.

We were shortly joined by Bill Graham and Graham Thompson. A log fire burned warmly, the food was good, and the staff were as friendly and welcoming as ever. A long and varied conversation ensued and all too soon, it was time to make our way home.

After lunch, Graham and Bill set off towards Hawarden, Graham with a card in his pocket for Ben Griffiths who today was celebrating a significant birthday. Here's to good cycling in your ninth decade Ben.

Peter Catherall

*And for the New Year ... Keith Orum is interested in organising mid week rides centred on the Eureka Café, Two Mills, now there are such good cycle paths to favourite ABC haunts. More next issue ... or contact Keith direct.*

## The Autumn Tints Weekend

Cain Valley Hotel, Llanfyllin - 18th - 20th October 2013



*Penmaenpool bridge from the Mawddach cycle path (photo: Stuart Twigg)*

*Sooner or later our luck had to run out. For the last ten years more or less we have been fortunate with the weather on Tints' weekends. But the forecast for this year's exploration of the Mawddach Estuary and Vyrnwy was not good. First arrivals on Friday morning were ready for the worst. **Keith Orum** describes the ride to Bala:*

### **Rainy Day Ride to Bala**

The forecast was mist and low cloud, with the wind increasing, and heavy rain by lunchtime. It was absolutely, spot on! John Whelan, Geoff Sharp and I arrived at the Cain Valley Hotel with a route in mind that would take in Lake Vyrnwy, the Hirnant, and Bala, returning over the Bwlch y Groes, Vyrnwy and so back to the hotel.

Geoff and I started promptly, with John following some fifteen minutes later. By the time we arrived at Vyrnwy we were still two in number and decided to take on John's route as planned, with the aim of reaching Bala before the rain set in. This we only just achieved, the rain beginning to threaten towards the end of the Hirnant descent. As the weather closed in, we expected the bad conditions to remain for the rest of the day. With this in mind we decided not to stop for lunch. Instead, under trees overlooking the lake we ate part of our on board rations, while, unknown to us, John had stopped less than a mile behind with similar thoughts.

The ride resumed into a headwind and driving rain. Only a mile into the Bwlch y Groes climb, John on his stripped down 'Scott' carbon road bike caught us. We rode together

for a further mile, but, John was soaking wet and with the risk of body heat loss, and the thought of our added pain hanging onto his back wheel, thankfully, he agreed to go it alone directly back to the hotel. The drop to Vyrnwy was tricky with a strong crosswind and rain. The road was slippery with leaves, pine needles, hidden potholes and rainwater cascading over the surface. Thankfully the rain began to ease around Vyrnwy, and we reached the cafe below the dam for an excellent late lunch. The rain stopped for the last eleven miles back to the hotel. It was a good fifty-mile ride to remember with satisfaction.



*More cautiously David Birchall and Dave Bettaney opted for lunch in Llanfyllin and an afternoon ride to the Vale of Meifod. The rain fell so heavily at the start, it was tempting to leave the bikes in the shed. But we didn't, and in the lanes to Dolanog the clouds lifted and by Meifod out came the sun. It was a most pleasant 25 miles, and worked up an appetite for dinner back at the Hotel, where by early evening many more members had arrived ready for Saturday's ride. **Hugh Dauncey** takes up the account:*

### **Glorious Mawddach**

When I arrived in Dolgellau, John Whelan was riding around the car park advising unwary club members that significant savings could be made by choosing the long-stay area. This care for our pockets was also a clever way of warming up, since as soon as



we departed, the route – for us – led uphill, uphill, and uphill. Opting for the more sensible ride along the cycle-path direct to the Barmouth railway bridge were Dave Eaton, Phil Mason, Stuart Twigg, Dikki Bird and Tecwyn Williams. Choosing the

longer itinerary led by Keith Orum were Dave Bettaney, David Birchall, Hugh Dauncey, Mike Hallgarth, Mark Mason, Chris Pickles, Tony Pickles, and the nicely warmed-up John Whelan.

Leaving the car park last after fretting over the mechanical reliability of my bike, recently fitted with a triple chain-set off eBay, I almost missed the turnings in the town centre which took us into the hills. On my first outing on a bike with the Anfield for ten years, I saw that the gradient immediately turned the club-run into what I remember as the traditional club style of individual riders, strung out over some distance. Despite the unaccustomed cardiovascular challenges my body was being subjected to, I enjoyed conversation with my fellow sufferers, happy to be riding again with the Club. Most of whatever cycling I find time for in the North East is level and solitary, hugging the banks of the Tyne to spare my knees from too much stress; so a route in North Wales was both a novelty and a worry.



*The only way is up ... (photo: Keith Orum)*

The route chosen by Keith was essentially up the back of Cader Idris, eventually running along the contours – more or less – on the northern slope of the mountain, with views over the Mawddach Estuary, the railway bridge, and Barmouth itself, the venue for lunch. An intermediate destination was the hamlet of Llwyngwril, reached after a precipitous descent down to the coastal road. But before we reached the road down to the sea, however, the way was mainly upwards, complicated by a succession of gates which hindered our progress but also afforded brief moments of respite to enjoy the views. Keith maintains that these roads showed only as rough tracks on his original OS map, and that we owe gratitude to David Birchall for having forced him to purchase a more modern issue showing us exactly what we were doing. But this also means he has no excuse. As we approached the descent towards the coast road, the sun came out, bathing the estuary and its channels and sand banks in a watery light, and then, more strongly, warming the drop down to Llwyngwril and the turn northwards towards Fairbourne and then the access to the estuary bridge at Arthog.



Arthog seemed unusually busy with people as we approached, but the presence of a vintage steam roller, fired up and moving slowly soon explained the spectators, and with the sound of the roller's horn in our ears, we crossed the bridge to Barmouth. David Birchall had told us to look for 'a green building with a verandah' as the venue for lunch, but notes on colour and architectural features proved redundant - Stuart's team was already ensconced at tables – on the verandah – enjoying their meals in warming sunlight. They had been there for some time, and left before us, keen to escape the impending rain.

We took lunch inside, before a departure under light precipitation, returning across the bridge again and along the cycle-path towards Penmaenpool. After a couple of miles, the spotting rain became torrential, and – already thoroughly drenched – we were forced to seek shelter at the George III pub.

Conversation there continued the themes of the day: the merits of titanium versus 'plastic' frames, whether my gearing was low enough, why was Hallgarth's bike so grotesquely old-fashioned, why did Chris Pickles know everything about mountain bikes and claim no interest in his road bike equipment, how could John Whelan be doing so many miles, and so on. When the downpour abated slightly, we pushed on towards Dolgellau, joining the other group of Anfielders as they finished packing their bikes away, at around 3pm. Luckily for me – the numbers would have been alarming – my heart-rate monitor refused to work during the whole of the ride, but before it expired from water ingress, my primitive bike computer showed 25 miles at 9.9mph. So that makes a personal average of two and a half miles per year with the Anfield. In terms of training, that is not much, but in terms of friendship and enjoyment, it is a lot. Many thanks to Keith and David for organising things, and to all for their company.



## Taking the low road to Barmouth ...

With a combined mileage for the year less than John Whelan rides in a week, Phil Mason, Dikki Bird, Tecwyn Williams, and Dave Eaton took the wise option. They rode on the estuary shoreline from Dolgellau to Barmouth. Ably led by Stuart Twigg, our heroes are pictured near Arthog. For the record, according to Stuart's computer in 18 miles their minimum elevation was -7ft and their maximum 79ft. The ups and downs should surely have balanced, but the computer showed they gained 230ft and lost 292ft. Mileage and hills climbed are of course not important, and it was really good to see them on their bikes and enjoying it too.





*Storm clouds clearing - the view from rain soaked Penmaenpool*

### **Sunday circuit of Vyrnwy**

*Our hosts at the Cain Valley Hotel looked after us well: the meal on Saturday evening was excellent, with 5 star breakfasts each morning. Sunday dawned rainy for the traditional circuit of Lake Vyrnwy. Undeterred, three riders (Keith Orum, Mark Mason, and Editor) rode from the hotel. The reward was sunshine by the time we reached the dam. Here Phil Mason, John Whelan, and Mike Hallgarth joined us. We bowled along at a steady pace under the canopy of trees which fringe the lake. Waterfalls swollen by the overnight downpour cascaded from the surrounding hills, and spilled over the road in many places. But the water level of the lake was low - maybe the reservoir's engineers knew more about the weather prospects than the rest of us. Judging by the chattiness of the peloton, the pace was just right. Tea and toast at the café by the dam nicely rounded off the morning - and the weekend - save the final eleven miles back to Llanfyllin.*





*In the shadow of Cadair Idris: smiles for the camera from (l-r) Keith Orum, Tony and Chris Pickles, John Whelan, Mike Hallgarth, Mark Mason, and Dave Bettaney.*