

# CTC SHROPSHIRE MEMBER GROUP

## ANNUAL REPORT 2012

### **INTRODUCTION**

During the past year, the Shropshire CTC member group has continued to provide a wide range of rides. Car assisted rides have given members the opportunity to explore areas beyond Shropshire. Interesting and challenging Audax events have been enjoyed by many, as have various social meets. A huge ‘thank-you’ is due to all rides’ leaders, organisers and volunteers, without whom the club could not function.

### **GROUP RIDES**

#### Shrewsbury Midweek Rides

Sally Ralphs has been the organiser of the Midweek group this year.

The year commenced with a highlight on the calendar: the mid-week Christmas dinner on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December, held at the Hand and Diamond, organised by Richard Newey. A jolly party of about 40 cyclists and spouses, some of whom cycled to the event, enjoyed a delicious and hearty carvery lunch.

Variable weather conditions this year have affected support for rides. The number of riders out on a Tuesday and Thursday, since November 2011, has been mixed. Some of the largest groups of riders were out on the odd day in November (20 riders), February (22) and March (23) but, as with so many events during this significant summer, rain stopped play.

Comments in the Section record book paint a very clear picture: “Too wet – didn’t go” or “Very wet, local flooding!” However, when the sun appeared, so did the cyclists. “Dry” was recorded in August and the grand total of 23 riders cycled out on 24 July with the comment, “Hot summer’s day!!First day of summer!!”

As well as the usual suspects cycling mid-week, we have had several cyclists dropping in for a few rides when they have been able to, including Robin, our regular visitor from Hawaii, who usually comes out twice a week, rain or shine.



*Christmas dinner at Alberbury*



*Robin at Much Wenlock*

Again, this year, car-assisted rides were scheduled on the Mid-week calendar, but, perhaps because of the weather or because many people seem reluctant to ride outside the area, numbers were down. However, John and two others rode round Herefordshire; in April, Peter and two riders had a very wet ride (with hail) from Newport to Stafford; three cycled on the Elan Valley ride; only five rode the Mawddach Trail and the annual Lake Vyrnwy ride saw three cyclists on the flat route whilst four tackled the Hirnant Pass which became an epic in hot sun!

In July, Malcolm offered to lead an overnight trip to Wilderhope YHA, but unfortunately, there was no interest.

The Olympic Games were marked with an extra ride on Wednesday 30th May to celebrate the progress of the Olympic Torch through Much Wenlock, home of the Modern Olympics. Paul Charlesworth, Robin and Sally had a memorable, sunny day in Wenlock, enjoying the atmosphere.

We all look forward to the next 12 months' riding.

### Wrekin Cycling

The organiser of the Wrekin group is Steve Holloway.

Wrekin Cycling, CTC Shropshire, continues to extend a warm welcome to any new or experienced cyclists, asserting a 'group attitude' that no one gets left behind.

The group meets every Sunday morning outside Wellington Leisure Centre and over the last year the rides' programme has offered a variety of routes to various destinations across the quiet back-lanes of Shropshire.

The average number of riders venturing out is about 8 per ride, so we remain a relatively small riding group at present.

A statistical snapshot of the rides program over the previous twelve months indicates:

- During the autumn/winter months:  
A rides = 0%, B rides = 29%, C rides = 63%, D rides = 8%.  
(C rides most popular)
- During the spring/summer months:  
A rides = 4%, B rides = 52%, C rides = 44%, D rides = 0%.  
(B rides most popular)



Social evenings are also included on the programme, every couple of months. These 'grub nights' are well-liked and often attract more people than the rides! That said, they are a good opportunity for non-cycling partners to attend and join in the conversation; at least until some wheeler-wag mentions what size chain-set or rims they are thinking of changing to. Thanks must go to Rita, who generally co-ordinates and books the restaurants.

We also had a Christmas lunch at Roden and although it was a very cold ride out, the event attracted well over a dozen. Good organisation by Paul Rapson has resulted in a return event, by popular demand, this coming Christmas (2012).

Our weekend cycle tour to Clun YHA in April must get a mention. It started off wet, continued to be wet and got even wetter; traversing 3ft floods along the old Roman Road cannot be forgotten! However, the group of nine, consisting of both new and experienced cycle tourers have all said they enjoyed the trip. We met a couple of fellow cyclists at the YHA doing the LEJOG. Indeed, on entering a pub in Clun on the Saturday night, we were greeted by the landlord who stated, "You must be the cycling lot staying at the Youth Hostel."

"Yes, how do you know?" we asked.

"You've got a mention on our Facebook page," the landlord said.

It seems that the two guys on the LEJOG had been in for a meal before us and had uploaded a comment on Facebook, recommending the pub. They also mentioned something about having a hellish night at the YHA....something to do with a capacious rapture of snoring in the dormitory...apparently!

My sincere thanks go to all regular riders of Wrekin Cycling for volunteering to lead rides and for contributing at our rides' planning evenings.

### **Freewheelers**

The Freewheelers group is organised by Bill Dorrell.

On Sundays during the last year we have put on 11 A rides (max 90 miles), 32 B rides (max 70 miles), 17 C rides (max 50 miles) and 28 D rides (max 30 miles).

Attendance averaged over 16 each Sunday, with a maximum of 26. A rides had a maximum of 13 attending, B rides 16, C rides 13 and D rides 10, almost exactly the same as last year. The B and C rides again proved to be the most popular, averaging 9 riders each ride.

Three of our rides were car assisted and were well attended. The Stapeley Stone Circle and Oswestry Hill Fort picnic rides were also popular. Other special days were the B and C rides to Marehay Farm Open Day and an invite to John and Jenny's Golden Wedding anniversary celebrations in Wem.

Wintry weather only caused the cancellation of one ride. However, heavy rain in March, April and June stopped three rides. More rides were cancelled due to the weather in the summer than in the winter!

Through the year we have seen 20 new faces, 9 continuing to ride regularly with us.



*Car assisted ride to Snowdonia*

Our latest programme of rides started at the beginning of October.

Many thanks to all our volunteer ride leaders. Thanks also to Oz for his help in setting up the programme and to Ken for turning it into the finished article.



*Pedal power on the canal bank*



### **Thursday Evening Rides**

Alice Stanley organised the Thursday evening rides around Shrewsbury.

The popular Thursday evening rides continued this year with 16 rides in the programme and a total of 89 individual 'rides' by both new and old members. The average number of riders was 5.5, however, the daunting weather in June meant that on a few rides no-one except the dedicated leaders turned out. Taking these rides out of the equation gives a healthier average of 7. Out of the 16 rides, new riders were seen on more than half, with some returning for other rides.

This year the rides were organised by 'remote control' from the exotic locations of Sicily and Telford and although, thanks to the commitment of the leaders and the wonders of the internet, things ran fairly smoothly, the programme really needs someone 'on the ground' to take control, especially in terms of promoting and distributing leaflets and perhaps introducing new destinations or meeting points. The actual amount of background work involved is quite small, with the rides' programme taking no more than an evening to prepare, with some tweaks as leaders confirm their availability. It would be such a pity if this programme was allowed to lapse from the lack of someone on the ground to put in what is really such a small amount of effort. I would like to thank all the leaders for their cheerful willingness to lead rides and also to thank John Nowell and Ken Knight for their help in preparing and printing the leaflet. Finally, greetings from Italy; I raise a glass of crisp Italian white to you all! Ciao!

### **Saturday Casuals**

The Saturday Casuals are led by Martin Beardwell.

The Casuals continue to meet at 9.30. a.m. at the Red Barn car-park. We have met on approximately 47 of the last 52 weeks, only occasionally deterred by atrocious weather at start time or, less often, the absence of the regular riders.

Our numbers are small: there is a nucleus of four riders, but this is augmented happily to nine or ten on perhaps a dozen occasions during the year.

The format remains the same: we do not publish a runs list but determine the direction of the ride in accordance with the Friday evening forecast of wind direction. Apart from during the depths of winter, we cover around 30 miles before the lunch stop and then return with a tail wind. On some winter days we will stay out only for the morning, back home for lunch.

Our speed is adjusted to ensure that no-one 'falls off the back' and so that we all enjoy a good social ride with an appropriate physical challenge. Sometimes a rider will 'go off the front' and we never see them again until the following Saturday. That is their choice.

We welcome all riders.



## ***CYCLE EVENTS***

### **Audaxes**

**The Longmynd 45km, 100km and The Marcher Lord 200km rides** were organised by Andy Seabourne. They took place on Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> March, starting from Lydham Village Hall. Over 100 riders participated in the three events. Generally, the weather was good, sunshine mixed with a few rain showers.

The day was not accident free. One rider sustained concussion and a fractured collar bone, the result of a fall during the descent to the Bog Visitor Centre. A number of riders finished outside the time limit in all three events and there were a number of riders who did not finish. Thanks are given to the helpers, without whom the event would not be possible. The HQ kitchen was staffed by Jenny and Graham Milne, ably assisted by Kate and Sue Collinson. Refreshments at Picklescott were provided by Ken and Marion Knight. John Nowell, Bill Dorrell, Martin Beardwell, Arthur Broadhurst and all participating Shropshire CTC members are thanked for their help and support.

On the road, thanks goes to John Franklin and Marie Cook for manning The Anchor control. Mike and Alex, mine hosts at The Anchor, provided teas and coffees. Thanks also goes to 'all those nice people' at The Thomas Shop, Pen y bont, The Granary at Hay on Wye and Saverys, Leominster.

A big 'thank you' to Carol Griffiths at Lydham Village Hall.

The event was enjoyed by all and made a financial profit.

A big thank-you to Andy Seabourne for his organisation.

**The Two, Three and Four Rivers events** were run at the usual time, on the weekend before the Spring Bank Holiday. This year the date was 26<sup>th</sup> May. Once again, the weather was very good, despite a strong headwind on the return.

Entries were considerably up with a total of 91 for the 3 events, all starting from the Wem Sports & Social Club which was very convenient for organiser and helpers alike! Catering facilities were not quite as good as at the Scout & Guide HQ last year but still adequate to give refreshments to returning riders.

Facts and Figures:

4 Rivers: 215 Km : 26 entered; 21 qualified

3 Rivers: 170 Km : 28 entered; 24 qualified

2 Rivers: 130 Km : 37 entered; 28 qualified

The routes for the 3 & 4 Rivers were the same as last year. The 2 Rivers event was new and very well supported. It went out to Vyrnwy as on 3 Rivers, then across to Hirnant and Pen-y-bont Faw, returning to Wem as the other routes. There were no accidents this year and no riders returned outside the qualifying times.

The events made a combined surplus of £244.20p after a deduction £21 for next year's AUK registration of the three events.

Once again thanks goes to those who helped run this year's events. Without the willing and very able help of volunteers, they would not be possible.

**2013 Events:** the three events will take place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> June. There isn't a suitable weekend available in May.

Thanks go to Edwin Hargraves for organising the events.



**Kidderminster CTC's *The Elenith*** has been well established as an Audax UK classic over its 26 year history. But after 26 years of organising, Dave Pountney decided to hang up his organiser's hat and pass on the baton.

It was with some trepidation that I embarked upon a new chapter in the event's history, taking the classic route from the edge of the English Midlands, across the Marches and deep into the green deserts of mid-Wales. A few twists of our own were added, to create Yr Elenydd. The event took place on Saturday, 14<sup>th</sup> April.

Over the years the old Elenith attracted a reputation for varied weather. This year was no different: heavy rain early on, snow on the hills over to Builth Wells, hail, sunshine and showers, plus a headwind all the way back from Tregaron. We had all four seasons. Heading out past Fforest Inn with the temperature at 2°C, together with driving rain and snow on the Radnor Hills, it looked like it was going to be an epic event. However, by Beulah conditions improved; there was no snow on the road to Tregaron and the sun came out by mid-afternoon.

The general impression was that the new route was considerably harder than the old one. The final climb of the Long Mynd at 270k certainly made an impression (gratuitous according to one rider), as did the descent in the pitch dark afterwards (at -2°C for the later riders). On the plus side, Picklescott has fewer drunks to dodge than Bewdley! No-one finished before 8:30pm (14½hrs), and the last rider turned up at 2:15am. That compares with the "record" of 11hrs 55mins for the old course. Maybe on a day with better weather...

The final total was 107 entries: 75 starters (a disappointingly high number of DNS on the day) and just 2 retirements, both deciding there was a strong chance of miserable weather encountered on the way to Builth, continuing. All but 1 rider managed to finish within the time limit. Congratulations to Simon Daws & Jackie Sayer on the tandem; our local CTC Councillor, Dan Howard (who went on to run the Worcester Marathon the next day in 4hrs 14); Steve Abraham and the other fixed wheelers who went out to make a hard ride even harder. The trophy for first recumbent remains unclaimed for another year...

Thanks to Sally Ralphs, David Cannell, Edwin Hargreaves, Peter Mathison, Martin Beardwell, Peter & Anita Crofts, the members of Tregaron Bowls Club, the staff of the cafes at Shobdon Airfield and The Strand in Rhayader, plus the Old Wheelwrights, for staying open until gone 11pm to look after the last riders.

**Discovering / Beyond Shropshire**, the traditional season closing events, once again provided a scenic and "undulating"<sup>TM</sup> day out in Shropshire's 'blue remembered' hills. A record 151 riders entered in total for the three events. Over the years, these rides have gained a reputation for good weather... (how things have changed since the days when Jenny Leese ran them from Clun!) and somehow this managed to continue with Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September the only dry day in a week of rain, floods and gales!

The events also have a reputation for cake, further enhanced this year by the addition of a stop at Jessamine Cottage on the shortest 'Shropshire Lad' distance. Ray's Farm and Acton Scott did their usual sterling service and Linda spent the week baking to make sure riders didn't go hungry at the finish ("Never knowingly underfed" should be our motto) and maintain the standards riders have come to expect over the years.

Thanks to Sally Ralphs, Bill Dorrell, Graham & Jenny Milne, Martin Beardwell, Simon Daws, Andy Seabourne, Lisa Spurgeon of Beacon RCC and the cafes at Ray's Farm, Acton Scott & Jessamine Cottage for helping to make these events possible.

**Dates for 2013 Audax events are:**

Long Mynd rides Sat 6<sup>th</sup> April

Yr Elenydd 300 Sat 13<sup>th</sup> April

2/3/4 Rivers Sat 1<sup>st</sup> June

Discovering/Beyond Shropshire Sat 5<sup>th</sup> October

A big thank-you to John and Linda Hamilton for organising the events.



**Easter Tour**

Twenty two members ventured across to the Essex-Cambridgeshire border to spend Easter at the rather lovely Crown House at Great Chesterford. Some snow-inhibited preparatory work by John and Hazel and a good measure of help from Nigel Deakin of CTC Cambridge enabled us to put together a selection of rides and some cunning little route guides. We started on Friday afternoon with a gentle group ride to Clavering Lakes, passing near the highest point in Essex on the way (not very high at all!). Saturday, Sunday and Monday morning sent various groups various distances in various directions, heading for Houghton Mill, Anglesey Abbey and Cambridge itself. We mostly managed to meet together at afternoon tea, sometimes even at lunch! We experienced the new 'Guided Busway' to St. Ives: a dozen and a half miles of converted railway designed to take adapted busses on concrete tracks with a quality cycle track alongside and some very advanced 'station' architecture. It's a little unnerving at first because the busses approach rapidly from behind, without the slightest change of engine note that might indicate that they have seen you. But of course, they are alongside and in no danger of even passing closely. Once the track ends on the outskirts of town, the busses take to the normal road, driven in the usual way. The long weekend brought a distinct change of scenery; some new roads to explore and as if the Genome Way, the beauty of the Abbey and the grandeur of Cambridge wasn't enough, Rita and Ronnie went flying from nearby Duxford Aircraft Museum in something that appeared to be made from paper and sealing wax. Thanks go to Ken Knight for organising the tour.

*Landing window at the Crown House.*



**Birthday Rides**

The CTC Birthday Rides were held in Shropshire this year. The Club would like to acknowledge the help given to Peter Mathison by Ken Knight, John and Jenny Leese, Bill Dorrell, Alex Grant and all those who helped with route planning.

### *National Certificate of Merit*

The National Certificate of Merit was presented to Ken Knight in recognition of his dedicated work for cycling, over many years. The presentation took place during the Birthday Rides.

### *Social Events*

#### *Summer Buffet*

The 2nd buffet took place on Saturday July 14. A total of 48 tickets were sold, 42 of which were to members and 6 to non- members. The club subsidised tickets for members at a rate of £3 per head. A number of people rode to the buffet in 2 separate groups. They braved the elements and had a good soaking as a reward!! As usual the Royal Hill did us proud and satisfied the appetites of all. It was a good social occasion as members of the various groups came together for a good chat.

Many thanks to Jenny Milne for organising such a popular event.

### *Publicity and Communication*

Peter Lobban has done a lot of work on the Member Group website ([www.cycleshropshire.org.uk](http://www.cycleshropshire.org.uk)) this year and it now has a more streamlined look with some useful, easier-to-use features. Members who have registered their e-mail address on the website have access to a useful service, keeping them up to date by e-mail with current news, forthcoming rides and events. All the rides' programmes and the latest newsletter are available to print off from the site and many members now receive all their information this way. The "café and pub list" of recommended cycle-friendly lunch stops is available on the website. Changes should be sent to Peter to keep the list up-to-date.

Rob Fris, editor of our newsletter, "Cycle News," is battling illness and thought he would be unable to continue this work. However, by smuggling his laptop into hospital, Rob has produced the last two issues from his hospital bed. They have been well received. The October issue was again printed by Ken Knight. Rob sends his thanks to the contributors to the regular columns in "Cycle News" (and occasional stories that other members have sent in. However, he is aware of two things: the dependence on just a handful of dedicated contributors; and Cycle News not quite fulfilling the true role of a newsletter- ie. keeping everyone in the picture as to what's going on in the club (no matter how minor).

To address the 'news' problem, especially in view of his restricted mobility, Rob needs a few contacts in the club whom he can phone or email to enable him to gather information. He feels a contact in each section would be ideal: a self-evolved 'sub group'. Rob will do the writing. He just needs contacts to pass on information to allow "Cycle News" to become a vibrant main channel for helping keep the club united: a newsletter for members, by members.

Contact Rob at [cyclenews@ymail.com](mailto:cyclenews@ymail.com) or 01978 821379 day/eve.

Paul Charlesworth took over from Ken as editor of "Wheelmarks" magazine and wishes to record his thanks to Ken for his help with the handover and to Sally Ralphs for her many hours of expert word processor tuition. Paul has made remarkable progress developing his



computer skills. He has just successfully put together his second edition, "Autumn 2012", which has been enthusiastically received. Thanks to our advertisers: "The Bicycle Hub", "Stan Jones Cycles" and "Dave Mellor Cycles." The club requires a volunteer to administer Wheelmarks subscriptions and distribution.

Although the website is increasingly used by members and interested newcomers, printed publications are still seen as important both for those members who do not have easy computer access and for wider publicity. Ken Knight has arranged our printed publications for several years, but is now stepping back from this role and wishes to pass on this task to someone else. The latest "Wheelmarks" was printed by Shropshire Council printing department and we will have to budget for considerably higher costs of printing rides' programmes, newsletters and other publicity materials if we do not have a volunteer to take on the printing role from Ken.

## ***Representation***

### **Shrewsbury Right to Ride**

In March 2013, we reach the end of the 5 year programme for developing cycling facilities in Shrewsbury. The programme has used the large grants obtained from Government and Sustrans in 2008. There are still projects being undertaken, including the Northern Gateway gyratory to which cycling funds have been allocated. Council Officers, Alison Kennedy and Emma Bullard, who were seconded to develop the infrastructure and training programmes respectively, are back in their old jobs in the Shropshire CC Planning Department, as is Cycle Project Engineer, Richard Harman. They will continue to have an oversight of cycling. Much of their time allocated to cycling is now being spent on developing cycling in Oswestry and Ludlow. The Project Group of Councillors, Council Officers, and representatives of various groups, including Martin Beardwell and myself for the CTC, who have been overseeing the developments, may be disbanded at the end of March. The three monthly meeting of the Shropshire Cycle Forum, which is open to anyone who has an interest in cycling, will continue.

The Council Officers were successful in bidding for and obtaining a grant of £5million from the £50,000,000 allocated to Local Sustainable Transport over the next four years. However, this is for all transport and covers the whole County. Some may be allocated to cycling projects and it is thought that some of our 15 dangerous junctions identified in The Times Survey may be tackled. Heathcotes and Emstrey Roundabouts are likely to be early locations to receive attention.

We have recently experienced a big disappointment in that Shropshire County Council has voted to remove the traffic island along Smithfield Road, which was put in last year at a cost of £19,000 from the cycling development grants. The case for removal was the traffic congestion build up extending back into Copthorne during rush hours. The fact that the average speed of motorists travelling along Smithfield Road had reduced by 5mph was considered to be of less importance. We now have to wait for the plans for the New Shopping Complex to be produced before we can try and get improved access to the opposite side of Smithfield Road. There is, however, an alternative of which you may be unaware. At the bridge end of Smithfield Road, there are two cyclists' ramps in the central reservation, which I had asked to be installed. At appropriate times during the traffic light sequence, a

cyclist can cross straight over from the bridge, onto the reservation and then continue into Bridge Street, without using the zebra crossing. He/she can then bear left into Hills Lane and on to Mardol and then cross to the contraflow in Rousehill.

So much has been done during the development period that it is difficult to convey to members how much has been achieved. The following is an incomplete list, but I hope it will give you some idea.

#### A. Major Projects

1. Smithfield Road and Welsh Bridge
2. Telford Way
3. Northern Gateway gyratory (starting now)
3. Greenfields Estate paths
4. Upgrade of R81 path



#### B. Minor Projects

1. Toucan Crossings on Telford Way, Radbrook Road, Whitchurch Road, Mytton Oak Road, Roman Road, Featherbed Lane, Longden Road
2. Roundabout improvements at Longden Road/Roman Road, Heathcotes
3. Mini Roundabout Radbrook/Bank Farm Road
4. 5 Town Contraflows.
5. 5km of new signed cycle routes.
6. Cyclist priority lines across many side roads junctions.
7. Cycle parking improvements at 23 schools (340 places), 11 work places including the station, Shirehall, Hospital (336), 10 doctors' surgeries (52), 12 shopping centres (48), town centre sites (38), 18 community centres etc. (70). Total 886.

#### C. Training and Events

There has also been a huge training programme in schools and for adults; cycle maintenance courses; a large number of cycling events, including 3 years of the Cyclefest at the cycle track; the development of a fantastic web site providing comprehensive information about almost everything Shropshire cyclists need to know about cycling in the county.



I finally remind you that there is a Campaigning section on our excellent club web site, through which I attempt to keep members updated about changes and improvements to our infrastructure.

Peter Crofts is the CTC Right to Ride Officer for Shrewsbury. A number of CTC members attend the Shropshire Cycle Forum.

#### ***Thank you***

Thanks are expressed to the President, Anita Crofts; the Vice-Presidents; Helen Gilmour for being the auditor and to all the volunteers doing their part to keep our wheels spinning!

#### ***Other Matters***

There are no other matters to report.

Hon. Secretary