



Newsletter September 2023

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Riding insanely long distances in semi-darkness edition

Going the Long Distance: 24hr TTs and More

Tim Welsh

Tim Welsh's bronze medal in the 2023 CTT National 24-hour championship was the best performance of recent years by a club member in a Senior National Championship since Ken Platts was in his pomp. Failing to learn from the horror of the experience, Tim came within an ace of emulating the feat in the National 12-hour championship, then followed that up by riding the 1200km Paris-Brest Paris.

This summer was an active one for me, particularly in terms of the number of long-distance cycling events I participated in. The main event was the National 24hr TT Championships, hosted by the Mersey Roads Club near the Welsh border. My commitment to the event began in spring when a few stars aligned, granting me plenty of time to train in April and May to



tune up my base engine. Having competed in one 24hr TT before (in 2021), I had my eyes set on one simple goal – covering 500 miles. I had come agonizingly close in 2021 with a distance of 487.7 miles, mostly impeded by the 40+ minutes I had to spend off my bike in the middle of the night with stomach issues. This year, I was determined to find those extra

12.3 miles without any issues. Training in spring and early summer went well; many of my longer rides were completed by entering audax events (2x400km, 1x600km) where I often found myself riding solo for long stretches, thus spending a lot of time in the TT bars. Coming into July, I felt as ready as I could for the physical and mental task ahead of me.

A week before the 24hr TT, I decided to check the forecast. Given the poor conditions in the first part of July, I was cautiously optimistic that the weather would improve in time for the TT – I was wrong. Instead, we had 10+ hours of rain in the forecast and temperatures in the teens the whole time. Despite this, I was excited for the race, and the added factor of weather would only make for an even more interesting challenge.

On race day, we drove over to Whitchurch and encountered blankets of rain falling from the sky along the way. Miraculously, the start location was bone dry, and indeed, we had 1.5 hours of dryness during the first section of the race, which we rode from the start to the main course. Once the rain hit, however, it came down in buckets and resulted in numerous parts of the course having substantial sections of deep standing water. Nevertheless, I was able to maintain just under 23mph for the first 6 hours of the race, putting myself in good standing for the rest of the ride. Crucially, despite being soaking wet, I was able to keep my body warm by not taking any stops greater than a minute or two and by keeping the pace in an endurance zone where my body still generated plenty of warmth.

Unlike many shorter TTs, the 24-hour event has a unique set of challenges beyond physical fitness. The most important of these is the struggle to ingest and digest 600+ kcal per hour for 24 hours straight. To do this, I used a mixture of homemade carb drinks (maltodextrin and fructose), energy bars, gels, and homemade rice cakes (filled with sushi rice, egg, bacon, and soy sauce). I pretty much had a drink, bar, gel, and rice cake every hour. By hour 10 or so, eating felt like more of a chore, and the desire to eat was low, but by staying on top of my fueling, I was able to ride through the entire 24 hours without any stomach issues.

One of the other complexities of a 24-hour race is riding at night. Luckily, I've ridden through the night a few too many times to count now (mostly in the context of audax rides), so I know what amount of light I need and what pace I can reasonably expect in the dark. Given the darkness and wetness at night, I was only able to average a speed slightly under 20mph during the night section – meaning I had covered a total of about 330 miles by the time the sun came up on the second day. With 8 hours left at that point, I knew I still had some work cut out for me. Luckily, the weather improved significantly in the final 8 hours, and we even had some sun to help wake us up in the morning.

With about 3 hours left, we began to transition from the main circuit over to the finishing circuit where our final distances would be tabulated. Up until this point, I had been feeling

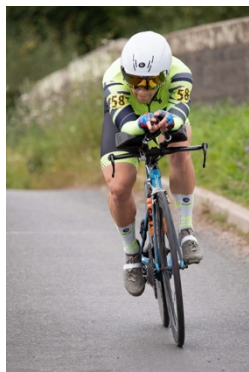
reasonably good and had succeeded in one of my main goals: limiting stoppage time. In the first 21 hours, I spent less than 9 minutes stopped on the side of the road. These stops were only for nature breaks and to put on my lights/extra layers for the night section. However, on the transit to the finishing circuit, I spent 2 minutes (which felt like an eternity) stopped at a temporary traffic light, adding 20% to my stoppage time total. Despite this, I carried on to the finishing circuit and maintained a speed just high enough to surpass my 500-mile goal. In the end, I covered 501.45 miles in the 24 hours, which ended up putting me in 3rd place on the podium, behind a first-place ride of 519 miles and a second place of 511 miles.



I was incredibly pleased with this performance, and it certainly wouldn't have been possible without my partner and friends who stood out in the rain for 24 hours, handing me bottles, gels, and food (and at times putting up with it being chucked back at them).

While I was still buzzing from the performance in mid-July, I decided to see what I could do in the National 12hr TT 3 weeks later. Needless to say, I don't think my legs were fully recovered in 3 weeks, but I decided to give it a good try anyway.

Having never done a 12hr TT but having completed two 24hrs now, I didn't really know how to pace it. I think because of my 24hr mindset, I went out a bit too easy (easy to say in



hindsight), considering I still had a lot of energy to give in the final 4 hours and even managed to increase my average speed during that time period. Still, I think the experience of riding long miles and knowing how to fuel properly let me put in a good performance, covering approximately 283 miles for a provisional 5th place overall (*although the results are still not published due to a dispute over 1st vs. 2nd). Maybe I'll come back next year on a faster course and see if I can cross the 300-mile mark, as I seem to have an affinity for nice round numbers.

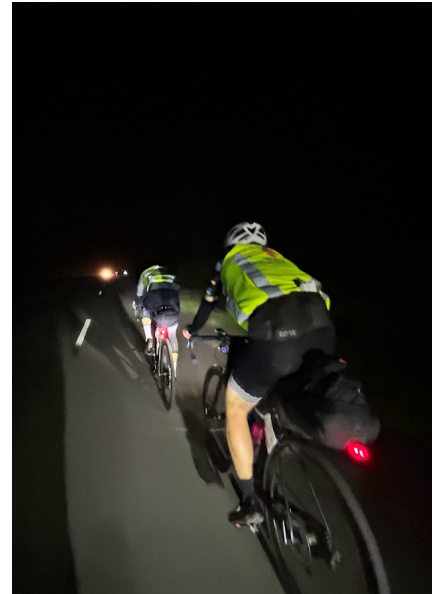
Since the 12-hour TT obviously wasn't enough of a challenge, six days later I found myself on the Eurostar headed to Paris to take part in the famous Paris-Brest-Paris 1200km audax.

PBP had been an ambition of mine since 2019 when I started doing Audax rides, and I certainly wasn't going to let a crowded calendar of time trials prevent me from taking part.



PBP was a totally different experience from any ride I'd ever done before, with 6800 other riders from all over the world taking part. In my particular wave, starting at 5 pm, there were 272 of us. As I lined up, I was excited to see

how the ride would go and the people I would meet along the way. I had no particular time goal other than maybe 72 hours so I could get back to my friend's house in time to sleep before catching my train. Those time goals quickly changed when I suddenly found my group doing 25mph+ at the beginning of a 750-mile ride. The group was a big mix of Italians, Americans, Brits, Germans, and all kinds of nationalities, but the language barrier didn't seem to matter because most people were already riding so hard that they could barely speak if they wanted to. The pace tailed off a bit, but I still managed to cover about 220 miles before the first sunrise.



A bit further down the road, I started to take things a bit more easily and actually spent some significant amounts of time in the checkpoints where I could be found eating numerous bowls



of pasta and croissants. Eventually, I found myself with a solid group of riders, and we took turns pulling and discussing all kinds of random topics that the mind would conjure up after 30+ hours of riding. On the second night, I began to feel a bit tired, having ridden about 32 hours with no sleep, so I found some incredibly comfortable folding chairs at the next stop and had 1.5 hours of quality sleep before continuing. That little nap (and a lot more

caffeine and pasta) got me through the next 20 hours of glorious riding in the French countryside, and eventually, I made it back to Rambouillet 55 hours and 45 minutes after I started.

The experience of PBP was one I'll never forget, getting to meet so many riders from different parts of the world who also enjoy riding long distances – and I'll surely be back in 4 years' time. For now, though, my legs are pretty tired from the July and August I've put them through, and I look forward to having a bit of a rest month in September before thinking about the next challenge.

Summer Social

Social Secretary Ramona Loveridge reports from a rainy Primes Corner

Sunday 30th July was a typical British summer's day - warm when Bev and I turned up at Chris and Paula's house to help set up and then slowly, as the sun slipped away and rain started to fall, it all started to feel a bit chilly.

However, before all that the hog roast company arrived on time to set up and 50 + people turned up to feast on rolls filled with delicious pork, with stuffing and sauces followed by a plate piled high with profiteroles or fruit salad, washed down with beer and wine. Together in the perfect setting it was a successful afternoon. There were lots of compliments about the food.



At the start of the proceedings we paid our respects to a well-respected member of the touring ride, Ian Gooden, who had sadly been killed in a road traffic accident, leaving behind his wife, Gyonjul and two very young children. Our hearts go out to them. We have fond memories of the children playing by the fountain in the garden. Ian had attended every year and brought his young family. In fact he was the first person to put his name down for the event this year. May you rest in peace Ian, taken too soon.

The summer social has taken place for the last three years in the Dyasons' beautiful "garden".



It really is a lovely sight to behold as they have a business selling day lilies and there are many different varieties grown and created there. We have been very lucky to be able to hold the event there and we are very grateful for their generosity.

I joked that I was pretending it was my garden for the day and but when they reminded me I'd have tend to the flowers I suddenly decided there was too much work involved.

Chris has offered to host the summer social again next year 😊😊.

Bev and I were excited to be organizing the summer social but we had a few stressful moments when there was some objection to the cost of the food quite late in the proceedings. Luckily, the voice was a lone one. Then two days before, Chris asked if we wanted to cancel due to the weather forecast, worried the marquee would fly away. We decided the cycling crowd wouldn't let the weather spoil the occasion and it didn't. They still turned up, even though for the last hour we huddled together for warmth in the marquees, finishing off our puddings and trading cycling stories.



There was a lot of praise for the event and people were able to go home with extra helpings of pork so no food was wasted. Thank you to those who stayed at the end to clear up, made easier by recyclable plates and cutlery and by using a professional catering firm who were self-sufficient, took everything away with them and were a pleasure to do business with.

Here Be Dragons

Adrian Brasnett

In June, a number of club members braved the journey to Wales to participate in the feared Dragon Ride sportive. Among their number was Adrian Brasnett, who had bought a new, light, bike for the occasion, which he'd been trying out by ripping everyone's legs off on club runs. What he hadn't bought was a club jersey with sufficiently large pockets, hence the embarrassing appearance of an Espresso Library jersey in this newsletter, for which Adrian apologises profusely.



It's a long way to the Alps, but only a few hours down the M4 to the Brecon Beacons – or Bannau Brycheiniog as they're now known – to ride up the Black Mountain. You can almost hear the cow-bells as you grind up one of the UK's most scenic and alpine-like climbs. It's not the toughest of ascents, but rewarding since the fairly consistent 6% gradient allows you to get into a steady rhythm as you enjoy the scenery unfolding around you.

Sign up for the Dragon Ride and you'll get to do this, along with another 3,500 metres of climbing on one of the oldest and most iconic sportives in the UK. With a slightly unpromising

weather forecast, 10 intrepid Cambridge riders took to the start line along with about 4,000 other riders. We had all signed up for the 215 km Grand Fondo course, the most popular of the 4 route options available.

Having arrived early and parked up in the spacious and well-marshalled Margam Country Park, five of our number waved off the 300 km Dragon Devil riders as we waited for our turn to enter the start pen. Setting off with Susanne Hakenbeck, Anna Wienke Wagner, David Morrow and Ben Sunderland, we rolled out together towards Port Talbot on a fairly flat start, keeping our pace steady as we contemplated the hills on the horizon. Lucy Matthews, Ramona Loveridge, Ann Knights, Marino Guida and Matt Polaine were not far behind.

18 km in was a short sharp test – our top tube stickers did warn us, but hitting a 19% ramp at the start of the day was quite a warm up. A short and fast descent put us back on a flat course all the way to a more gentle climb ahead of the first feed station.

The feed stops on the Dragon are a cut above the average sportive, with well-laid-out stalls, rapid bidon refills and – in addition to the usual gels, bananas and cereal bars – hot baked potatoes! A welcome contrast to more sugary calories.

Back on route, the hills start coming though in steady succession. The Black Mountain, the Bwlch Cerrig Duon, the Bwlch Bryn-Rhudd and ‘The’ Bwlch. Somewhere in the middle of this, the organisers put in the novelty bonus climb of the Devil’s Elbow, kicking up to 25% round the middle bend.

The steep and fast descent off The Blwch brings you out of the Brecon Beacons and onto the final 20 km of gently falling false flat to the finish line. I was fortunate to pick up 3 riders with good legs and we blasted the run-in in an amiable chain gang.

Back at the park I came in at 8h:17min of Strava moving time, and 8:46 of chip time, just ahead of Lucy on 8:49. The other finishers came in between 9:30 and 11:30, all more than earning their medals and inevitable Erdinger recovery drink on the finish line. As an added bonus, the rain just about held off, only hitting the later riders as they came off the hills.





It's a long drive back and I was glad to have made a last-minute decision to splash out on a second night's stay at a spa hotel where a warm pool, sauna and well-stocked bar awaited David, Ben & me. Ramona & Ann also stayed over in an AirBnB and managed a dip in the sea on Monday morning.

Entries for 2024 will open in the autumn. If you've not ridden in that part of the world before, it's well worth pre-registering now and having a go. Accommodation is available in Swansea and Bridgend – the Premier Inn in Swansea waterfront is bike friendly and was full of other riders, so book early.

If 3,500 metres of climbing in the Brecon Beacons in daylight doesn't appeal, there are sportives to cater for every taste, including riding flatter routes in the dark. Rob Hale reports on...

The Dunwich Dynamo

Rob Hale

The Dunwich Dynamo is a paradox, a mass cycling event of 112 miles where around 2000 people follow the same route on the same night but where little or no central organisation is evident.

Every year the date is published – believed to be by someone at Southwark Cyclists – and everything flows from there. Pubs and other venues arrange to open at night for en-route refreshments, and mysterious good souls set down mini electric candles at junctions in the dark sections through rural Suffolk. These days most riders download gps routes (careful, there are slight variations out there!), although route sheets are sporadically available at the



start. Then people just turn up and go – no registration, no winners, no time limits.

The ride starts by the Pub on the Park in London Fields, Hackney, then leaves London via Epping Forest before crossing Cambridge's clubrun territory at Great Bardfield and Finchingfield, and continues through deepest Suffolk to finish on the shingle beach at Dunwich, a small village (and site of a long-vanished mediaeval port)

equidistant between Southwold and the Sizewell nuclear reactors. The atmosphere at London Fields is party-like, and people start to trickle out by early evening, with the largest

numbers leaving either side of 8pm. The fastest riders aim to get to Dunwich at 4.30am for dawn, but others continue to arrive for hours into the new day.

Most Dynamos I have ridden in small groups of fellow Cambridge riders. The camaraderie is



great, the thrill of whizzing through the night together, and the shared elation on reaching the finish, but this year I rode it alone after the first food stop – I had started out with friends from another club but we soon realised our speeds were different so I pushed on ahead solo to make the sunrise. This too was an

elating experience, for on the Dynamo you are never truly alone as you follow, pass or are passed by an endless flow of riders. Sometimes you talk, often not, but you are all in it together. Several times I jumped onto a faster group that was passing, including one from London Velo who gave me a welcome draft for 20 miles around Sudbury.

This is the thing about the Dynamo – the buzz of doing something joyous but slightly crazy with many others. Riding at night makes the mundane mysterious, as you follow a stream of red lights through the dark. By 2.30am the first pallor appears in the eastern sky, and if you are lucky with the clouds you ride straight towards the rising sun. At the finish, little groups settle on the shingle and a few dip in the sea to celebrate, before heading for the beach café for breakfast, served from 4am.



I have generally done two food stops. Until about Finchingfield almost every pub seems to be open and welcoming cyclists with hot food and drink, but after Sudbury (in 2023 no stops there) things become sparser. Needham Lakes is always a busy stop, and a little further on Gosbeck Village Hall is a new but very good option. By 2am here I could see the tiredness on faces as we pulled on extra layers and bantered about the distance to go, but I find that when on the bike I never feel the pull of sleep, or at least not until the next day.



The final challenge of the Dynamo is getting home. Southwark Cyclists arrange coach transport back to London but places rapidly sell out, and Greater Anglia bans all cycles on its trains north of Ipswich that day as it is otherwise overwhelmed by demand. Some people make private arrangements for lifts home, and others ride back. The ride to Cambridge is around 80 miles - luckily the trains from Norwich or Ipswich will take bikes, but even these

get full, so the earliest trains will always be the best bet. I have tried all of these options – the ride home gets me back in early afternoon just as the need for sleep is really catching up with me, but have found the best, as in 2023, was to ride the 32 miles to Ipswich and jump on one of the first trains from there.

Dunwich Dymano 2024 takes place on July 20th to 21st. It is a unique experience, and almost on our doorstep. Why not try it?

Time Trialling Round-up

The Wednesday evening club time trial series has seen a real revival of interest this year in which the initiative of a Time Trial WhatsApp group has played no small part. In the end, though, it's down to people volunteering and, as Colin Lizieri said on the aforementioned WhatsApp group after the last event of the season: *Huge thanks to Jan, Mick, Ian, Ken, Davey and to everyone who has stepped up to help over the season - we can't run these without all those volunteers.*

To that list, we can certainly add Colin himself and probably a lot of other people I've overlooked. I won't, however, overlook Ramona for arranging periodic after-event socials in local pubs and/or refreshments with Kate, which have done a lot to create an enjoyable sense of occasion beyond old-school hardcore "testing".

The series has been notable for the emergence of some new (and young) fast men, including most notably Time Welsh, as featured above, and the fastest of them all, the fearsomely quick Piotr Zulawski.

Piotr is our new men's 10 mile champion, and winner of the September Plate (wittily held in July – this is, after all, Cambridge where May Balls take place in June) who recorded a searing



19:50 on an unpromisingly wet E33/10 to come within 5 seconds of GB International Harry Tanfield's course record. Later in the season he got three seconds closer.

Runner up, over two minutes in arrears, despite being no slouch himself, was Chris Owen, while Lucy Griffin, riding a road bike, took the Ladies' championship with 27:06.

Piotr was flying at the distance all year with a number of open wins in local events and earlier that month on the F2A/10 at Hardwick, equalled

David McGaw's club record of 18:58 set on the legendary – and now lost – V718. He closed his season with an outstanding 12th place in the CTT National 10 mile championship, always the most competitive of the championship distances. *Photo of Piotr by Davey Jones*

Lucy Griffin took a clean sweep of club women's championships, adding the 25 and the Hill Climb (on a new course at Brinkley) in which Tim Welsh and Will Burton respectively won the men's championships (see below).

24th June saw the first of the Club's open time trial events, the Viking 50, promoted by ace organiser Chris Dyason on the 50-mile (and four lap) variation of the familiar F2 course based at Cambourne. As Chris points out in his result sheet notes (below)

<https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/.../Viking%2050...>, this was the first time this year the course had benefited from the supposedly prevailing and favourable south westerly wind though that brought with it hot and humid afternoon conditions that weren't the pleasantest for riding 50 miles on a dual-carriageway. The leading times were nevertheless extremely quick. The CTT report can be found here: <https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/race-report/25154...>

Particularly noteworthy from our point of view was the outstanding 1:44:21 for 15th place by in-form Tim Welsh, who recorded the fastest 50 by a Cambridge CC member for a number of years.



Tim was clearly in the middle of a real purple patch: only four days later he made himself

men's Club 25 Champion for 2023 carrying a one-year lease on the John Brown Cup, with an exceptional 54:52 on the testing E33/25 Bottisham - Six Mile Bottom -Stetchworth circuit on Wednesday evening. Women's champion Lucy Griffin produced an impressive 1:09:04 on a road bike. Full results here: <https://www.cambridge-cycling-club.org.uk/ttresults.htm> *Picture of Lucy by Davey Jones.*

Our second open event was the 15 which was playing host to the Veterans' Time Trial Association National Championship. It was due to be held in July, but had to be postponed owing to strong winds and torrential rain. The rescheduled date provided merely torrential rain, which was, of course, much better.

Chris noted: *The re-scheduled event took place with a higher number of entries than for the postponed July 15th date: 119 tandems and solos.*

Unfortunately about 40 minutes after the start there was torrential rain falling and many riders who hadn't started decided not to ride – in total 32 non-starters. Those that did ride generally were happy with their results, the fastest rider finishing in 28:00 which is close to the course record.

Marshals, timekeepers and other outdoor helpers got a soaking, so huge thanks to all of them. After reaching the usual 'desperate for volunteers' stage, the pleas for help to our WhatsApp groups saw me end up with more offers of help than I needed.

Results here: <https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/race-results/25161#anchor>

One of the riders particularly happy with his result was Chris himself. His traditional organiser's selflessness in putting himself off first was rewarded with just about the only dry solo ride of the day and an excellent National age record for 75 year-olds of 34:39. This is also, of course, a club and East Anglian record.



The VTTA were most complimentary about the event: ★ *The main champions today were the East Anglia Group and the Cambridge CC who ran a textbook event today, expertly stewarded by Chris Dyason. Chris also rearranged the entire event after (even worse) rain stopped play last time. The VTTA are very grateful for the time taken to rerun the event so successfully. ★*

Flying the flag for the gerontocracy that, until this year, has had things mostly its own way in club time trialling, Chris has had a good season, coming within seconds of the corresponding National 10 mile age record a couple of weeks later and taking a couple of open wins on Age-adjusted time.

Ironically, though, earlier in the season Chris was relieved of the club and East Anglian 10-mile age record for 70 year-olds that he has held for the past 5 years. In one of his rare appearances this year, on a fleeting visit to the F11/10 at Tring, Andy Grant recorded 21:23.

Our Open events seem to have attracted extremes of weather this year: at the time of writing, our final promotion, the Open 25 for the John Brown Memorial Trophy, has just taken place on the hottest weekend of the year and we are grateful to all marshals and other helpers who braved the conditions.

Provisional full results: https://www.questronics.co.uk/2023/CAMBRIDGE25_1009.html#Top