



Nomads News

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The news letter of the Hitchin Nomads Cycling Club

Editorial

The Olympics have lifted the profile of cycling sky high, which is good news. Are we ready to accept the rush of new members?

I would be interested if any of the membership has a point of view on the Olympics.

I had a call from Rene asking me to put a report in the News about the Hitchin Museum Nomads Exhibit.

Thanks to Neil Ross for his report of the 2008 edition of the Marmotte. Having been in the area this year I can empathize with his struggle. Congratulations Neil on gaining a silver medal for your ride, I know that I would have stood no chance of finishing. My climbs were modest compared to the Marmotte.

The Norlond event on the 21st September is being run by David Ledgerton. David would like to hear from you if you are able to assist with this event

Clive

Results Finsbury Park 25 10th August

David Ledgerton 1:08:40
Winner
Chris Lodge 1:00:18

David, a good ride on a tough day with your back brake binding.

Briercliffe 10 19th August

Andrew Saunders 25:10
James Spence 26:55
David Ledgerton 27:31
Clive Collins 28:05
David Summerell 31:50

Timekeeper: Ann Collins
Pushing Off: Left Foot

Aylesbury CC 21 23rd August

David Ledgerton 55:52

Winner

Wouter SyBrandy 44:15

Hitchin Museum Nomads Exhibit

I went to see our exhibit at the Hitchin museum last week. Ours was the most comprehensive of the five clubs that were exhibiting. The exhibit covered our early years very well with input from our founder member Rene Stacy and Jamie Tomlin, and with photos of current and past members, including our Vice-President Dave Renney.

Rene contacted me to say that she had been to the exhibition and felt that the exhibit had covered our early years very well, but that we had missed a trick by not following through with a review of the recent past and bringing the story up to the present day.

CTT Reminder

13 th Sept	Northants & Dist CA 25	N1C
14 th Sept	Icknield RC 10	F1B
20 th Sept	Cambridge (T&C) 25	E2
21 st Sept	Norlond TT Comb 25	F1
5 th Oct	Lea Valley CC 25	E1B
5 th Oct	Team Cambridge 10	F16

September Clubruns

7 th September	Hare Street
14 th September	Willington Danish Camp
21 st September	Forest Centre Marston Moretaine
28 th September	Saffron Walden

Neil's Marmotte Challenge

With the season now in full swing few will be looking back to last winter, but at around 1pm on 5th July that's what I was doing and wondering what I had done. At the time I was winding my merry way (aka struggling)

up the Col de Gablibier in the 2008 Marmotte.

It all started back in February when I was planning the coming year's focus. At the time Pro Cycling landed on the doormat with a write up of this extremely difficult challenge. In a, not unusual for me, fit of madness I signed up – it involves 174 km covering over 5000 m of climbing – with some serious “hills” – Col de Glandon, Col de Telegraphe, the Galibier and, just to finish the 14 km of Alpe d'Huez. I can do that I thought – hills around Bedfordshire can be the training!! Not having been to the Alps before, I didn't really know what I had let myself in for. Come July I was to wake up with a shock. Spring training merged into summer and I had a few miles under my belt – mostly hill work and a few 10's. However part of my planning was to do 2 back to back sportives – the Chiltern 100 (actually 107 miles and 2700 m of climbing) and the Victor Ludorum 125 miles (with 3400 m of climbing).

Before the Chiltern 100 I felt good, but after about 60 miles and some of the serious “bumps” the course organisers had thrown in I was struggling big time. Confidence dropped through the floor. For the Ludorum I pushed hard but struggled again. After a review I thought what had I done – and came to the conclusion I was unlikely to survive the first climb in France, let alone the entire ride.

Fast forward to late June and the Fraser's, with caravan, are working their way through France towards the Alps and our base at Borg D'Oisans (situated at the base of Alp d'Huez). On arrival I was awestruck by the scale of the hills – Borg sits at over 500m and is higher than most hills in Bedfordshire, indeed higher than most local “mountains” in Scotland, and Borg was at the bottom of these monsters!! Things looked serious (dire is probably more apt).

First training ride I set off up the reverse slope of the Col de Tourmalet for a 1-2 hours “light spin”. After spending all of the allotted time climbing and still not seeing the top of the hill the light bulb in my head flashed on – “oh my god, what have I done”. But legs weren't too bad - at least with the long hills

of France there is an opportunity to get into a good rhythm.

Second day saw me decide to tackle Alpe d'Huez and its fabled 21 hairpins – only 14 km so can't be too bad, can it? Plan of attack – hit the bottom corner flat at speed to get up some momentum looked good. Just to make things a little tougher I decided to do it in the middle of the day (when I planned to reach it in the race) – at which time it was over 30°. In practise my plan lasted all of about 50 yards – those hills are as steep as they look. 1 Hour and 7 mins later – all of which spent in the little ring of the triple and I eventually reached the top. For the record Marco Pantani did it in 35 mins and the Tour riders did it this year in about 40mins – bit more training needed for me I think.

After a few more days training I was as ready for the Saturday ride as I could be. At 0700 I set off – along with another 8,000 other riders and realised how massive a ride this is. The ride started with a “gentle” 10-mile flat section then the first climb – a gentle starter for the day at only 10 miles of an average 8% gradient. This was the Glandon and what a beautiful climb it was. At the top a quick scrum for food and drink – this is France where the continentals don't know what an orderly queue is – and its back on the bike and a fast descent of 40 mins at around 30-40mph (without turning the pedals). Hit the bottom and its full speed ahead in a good chain-gang. An hour later along the valley bottom (still in 30 degree heat) and we are starting the next climb – the Telegraphe. It was a bit more serious – about 12kms but a lot steeper, but strangely enough my legs felt strong and we flew up it. At the top there's a flattish section where another food station (scrum) was situated. After that it's onto the Galibier –or as I rechristened it “the beast”. After over 2 hours climbing its 20km+ the end was nowhere near in sight!!! Eventually the end did appear and what a sight it was – in contrast to the rest of the climbs this one got steeper nearer the top with snowdrifts and some really tight hairpins. This was the highest for the day at 2642m. Air was thin up there.

After a quick bun fight for refreshments at the top its back into the saddle for the (very) fast run down hill to the final climb. It was

on this 50km+ descent (which took over an hour) that I topped out the bike at over 50 mph, on open roads. No wonder it is compulsory to wear helmets. But by now my shoulders were in real pain – more than my legs.

After the descent it was the final climb of the Alpe d'Huez – not the time to bonk, but that's exactly what happened and I struggled on at 4-6 mph. It passed and I eventually made it to the top 1¾ hours later, in a total time of 10½ hours and got a Silver.

The Marmotte is an awesome ride covering some beautiful countryside and some of the most famous Tour climbs. It is a very well organised race and well worth a try – just make sure you get plenty hill/mountain miles in!!! One of my most endearing memories is from the Telegraphe and the little old lady on her bike loaded with full panniers and tent – going past some of the riders in the race!!!

Will I go back – half way up the Galibier, or even all the way if the truth be know, I would have said... something totally unprintable. But on reflection - as Arnie says – “I’ll be back” – this time for a Gold Medal.

Neil Ross Fraser

Media Watch

Olympics

“Being English in the face of success I have to wonder whether we are big fish swimming in a small pond or are the other countries keeping their powder dry for the Olympics.

It will be an interesting Olympics from the cycling viewpoint.”

I wrote the above in the April Newsletter wondering if GB cycling team could deliver to the same extent as they did at the World Championships.

Well they have had wall-to-wall success with eight gold medals, and those of the GB team that could possibly be gold medallist were pushed into the silver medal slot by their own countrymen.

All the GB Olympic sports are looking at the cycling example and asking how did they do it? Its not rocket science, it was team work first and last. Started by the coach Peter Keen and the meticulous preparation of Chris Boardman for the 1996 Olympics. From there it was just focusing on the talent available and priming it to its full potential. I think if the cycling management model had

been used in athletics then we would have won more than four medals in track and field at these games.

Victoria Pendleton made a point in her interview on BBC1 Breakfast show when she pointed out the inequality for women in cycling compared to men. She said that both swimming and athletics have the same events for women and men, so why are women cyclists limited in the events that they ride.

I am going to allow myself a little bit of a gripe here.

I feel that the Olympics are getting a bit too unwieldy in so far as they have these obscure games that nobody has heard of such as goal ball. What is goal ball? Possibly at the next Olympics they will have a try out sport of **pushing a pea with your nose** over one kilometre. Rules: Pea should be made of solid wood and not exceeding 10mm. Your nose protector to be made of plastic with side flaps not exceeding the width of your mouth when shut. Neither your hand, knee or toe protectors should have wheels. You would have to train hard to win the event, but what is the point? Barmy I know, but that is how it strikes me.

I feel there is a case to be made for the Olympic movement to take a good hard look at itself and reduce the number of sports that it covers and come back to basics, and looked at the Corinthian ideal rather than what the sponsors can make out the Olympics.

Over the years the Olympic movement has grown to include the Para-Olympics where people that are disabled are able to give their best in their chosen field and within their disability. This is and always was the Olympic ideal, but it seems to me that the able bodied athletes have lost sight of that ideal.

I feel the time has come to consider the idea of age related games. As the developed world gets healthier and the developing world is catching up fast, I think there is a case for the Olympic movement to take this on board.

I know it is a small pond but you only have to look at cycling as an example and also running clubs where you have people who are seniors or vets who are putting in very good performances, despite their age. It is just a case of genetic luck with injury and motivation, because at whatever age you are your class will always show through.

Clive