



# Nomads News

[www.hitchin-nomads.net](http://www.hitchin-nomads.net)

The news letter of the Hitchin Nomads Cycling Club

## Editorial

We are moving towards the close of the season where the defying gravity specialists come out to play by galloping up hills at an unreasonable rate of knots (a few mixed metaphors there). First we have the Interclub Hill Climb on the 5<sup>th</sup>, then the club Hill Climb on the 19<sup>th</sup>. I hope the members will be able to support both events.

The Interclub HQ is in the Chequers pub Streatley, where post the hill climb event you can order a meal and sit and enjoy the company of Nomads while chewing over the events of the day and the season.

The club Hill Climb will be at the usual venue and then post the event we will take the annual club photograph and then onto the Windmill at Charlton for a pint and if you wish they also do Sunday lunches.

It's nice to have two contrasting articles with Toby's Enduro challenge and David's Lake District ride, which is no less challenging but as David said in his article you can always stop and take photos.

My thanks to David Rossall for his article about his ride in the Lakes, I think we can all empathise with his ride, I know that some years ago I hired a bike with low gears and had problems trying to get traction on some of the hills.

That's the sponsored ride over for another year; the stoker has submitted a full report for the News.

According to Richard's article we need to go to the pub on a regular basis to get inspiration, I can concur with that, there is always inspiration within easy reach of the News.

Clive

## New Members

We welcome Patrica and John Read to the Nomads. You are both most welcome and we hope that you enjoy many hours of cycling with the Nomads.

John was a member in the 1980's.

## October Events

October 5 <sup>th</sup>	Interclub Hill climb Streatly
October 19 <sup>th</sup>	Club Hill climb Chalton

## October Clubruns

October 5 <sup>th</sup>	Toddington Garden Centre
October 12 <sup>th</sup>	Garden Centre Melbourn
October 19 <sup>th</sup>	Emily's Tea Rooms Whitwell
October 26 <sup>th</sup>	Ware Café to be confirmed

## Results

### Norlond TT Combine

21<sup>st</sup> September

Clive Collins	1:03:30
Ex Nomad	
Steve Cotton	0:55:51
Winner	
Dave Kendall	0:53:51

### Race Report

#### Norlond TT Combine 25

21<sup>st</sup> September

I think the racing members will agree with me that from a weather point of view, we haven't had much luck this season. Either it has been raining or we have had strong winds, in fact I have had two good days this season for the opens that I have ridden, first the 12 hour then last Sunday for the Norlond 25 on the F1.

I am thinking on the way to the start that maybe, just maybe I could beat the 1:5:46 that I recorded in our middle-markers event at the beginning of August. Result, a 1:3:30, which is a season PB and my third best ride ever and only 40 seconds off my lifetime PB.

This ride is the end of the season for me as I am going into hospital on the 2<sup>nd</sup> October to have keyhole surgery on my right knee.

So the target for next season provided the knee is ok, has to be to try and improve on my 25 PB.

Clive

## **Norlond Time Trial Combine**

There has been some discussion and speculation around the club about the origins of the name of the Norlond recently, as I used to be the Norlond General Secretary I had recollections that it was not the obvious but something obscure but couldn't remember what exactly. At the CTT London North AGM I saw the current secretary Hazel Anderson and her husband Ron who have been involved with the Norlond for many, many years so I asked them the question.

In 1941 a group of cyclists from several different clubs had met in a pub in Enfield and were moaning that they couldn't get in any events and so to get around this problem they thought of forming a combine of the clubs and to restrict entries into their events to members of clubs affiliated to the combine, that agreed they then had to think of a suitable name for this organisation, looking across the road from the pub they saw the "Norlond" builders merchants and that was that!

Richard Bland

*And there I always thought it was an acronym for North London.*

Clive

## **The Bontrager Twentyfour12 Enduro**

**26<sup>th</sup> July 2008**

It all started very well as most of these things do – one of my friends suggested that as we were doing a fair bit of mountain biking, it might be fun to enter a team enduro event.

We found a good looking event taking place in Newnham, Plymouth on an estate that has staged a round of the MTB world cup and from the short video clips on line it seemed to be an exciting looking circuit.

Everything was looking good, training was going well and we had a good strong team of four – right up until two days beforehand when one team member dropped out! All our carefully worked out race strategy was out the window and with no hope of finding another rider at such short notice we just decided to get on with it and head off on the long drive.

With the prospect of four hours racing each in the 12 hr event on Saturday we decided to take in one nice steady sighting lap to suss out the course on Friday afternoon. It soon became apparent that we were going to struggle. The course seemed to have far more than its fair share of up and we are all the wrong side of thirteen stone. Anyway we soldiered on for a couple of miles uphill until the course levelled up and entered a forest with some amazing fast smooth single track. I was just starting to think that the race may not be so bad when I ran wide at one of the bends and crashed into a tree and ended up landing heavily on to a heap of logs. This was now a problem. The rest of the nine-mile lap went past in a blur of pain and terror, the hills were punishing and the descents were littered with boulders the size of loaves of bread.

Back at the campsite we decided that the best strategy for Saturdays race was to do two laps each, our thinking was that would give us a decent recovery time between stints. The laps would take us about 47 mins each and we reckoned that we could each put up with 1hr 35 min at a time. At least that was the plan.

It was at this point that Mark let on that in a fit of confidence he had entered us in the open team category (the really fast one) and not the just for fun category that I was assuming we were in.

Anyway, midday Saturday was the race start and we decided that as it was a mass start of over 200 riders, we would put Dan (the "stig" of the team) in the hot seat first. As the race start approached, the temperature climbed rapidly to 30 degrees! This was going to be just about the only really hot day of the year – great.

The start of the race was a real sight – there were about eight different categories of race all starting at once and it took a couple of minutes for all of the starters to get over the line. Then it was just a matter of waiting near the tent – we knew it would take about 46 mins for Dan to do his first lap and Mark and I were keen to see him come over the line for his second lap. Just as planned at the predicted time he appeared and as we cheered him on he just had time to shout "this f\*\*\*\*\* hurts!" as he started the second lap.

It would be Marks stint next so I tried to relax as I had a little while to wait for my first turn. I met up with Dan as he rolled out of the transition area after handing the baton to Mark. His first words were “keep it in the granny ring on the climbs and pace yourself or we’re never going to make it to midnight.”

These words were playing over in my head as I stood at the transition to take my turn. As Mark came in to hand over to me he also reminded me that we have a lot of racing still to do and to keep it steady. So with this in mind I decided to latch on to the first quick rider who passed me and tried to hang on for dear life! What a mistake! It was still about 30 degrees, I had miles of climbing to do and we had nine hours of racing ahead of us. The first lap seemed to go ok but as I started the second, things got really bad and I had no choice but to take it easier as I cramped up and struggled round.

Back at the transition after my two laps I sat in a heap and could not imagine that I would be able to go out and do another two laps like that in three hours time. And judging by the grim faces of the team we were all having the same thought. We decided to speak to some of the other teams and they all seemed to be doing just one lap each, so it was time for a change of tactics. As I set off for my first one lap stint I felt much better, just knowing that I only had to do one lap was easier on the morale. As it turned out I was so much quicker that Dan was not even at the transition when I got back, so a very quick angry call on the mobile was in order!

From this point in the race everything started to come together and settled into a good rhythm. Lights were a requirement after 8.30 and this was my favourite part of the race. The sensation of speed through the forest sections as it was lit up only by the lights on your bike was awesome, and as the race carried on into the night we all really enjoyed it and the whole event seemed to develop a real buzz.

Our last lap of the race was completed at about 12.20am and as the results were posted on a screen almost straight away we were very happy to see that we managed a respectable 18<sup>th</sup> out of 29 teams which exceeded our initial goal of not finishing last

by a considerable amount. And we immediately agreed that we would give it a go next year with a full team of four and a bit of experience to try and do a bit better.

There is a web site with a few pictures and a video clip of the event if anyone is interested at [www.twentyfour12.com](http://www.twentyfour12.com) if you watch the film carefully you will see a very slow moving nomad!

Toby

### **Sponsored Churches Ride 2008**

This year the day of the sponsored ride dawned cloudy with a chill in the air as we set off on the tandem, but a sunny day had been forecast and the weatherman was right! A squirrel walked across the road as we arrived at All Saints’ in Willian, and the day was somehow filled with promise.

When we arrived at St Paul’s Letchworth we met another tandem ridden by a father and son and later in Baldock we met the rest of the family whose young daughter was being sponsored to go round the churches in her wheelchair. After visiting all the churches in Baldock we cycled off to Radwell church, which was open again this year. It is such a privilege to see inside these lovely old churches. Each one is special. From there we cycled through Nortonbury where two black squirrels were foraging on the grass verge, and on to Norton church, after which we called at the remaining churches in Letchworth. At one of these a young lady offered to take our photo inside the church. At our last church before lunch we met three ladies in the churchyard having a picnic. One of the ladies had a somewhat elderly bike, which Clive went gooey eyed over. Another of the ladies had always wanted to have a ride on a tandem but she had never had the opportunity. This was to be her lucky day, and she thoroughly enjoyed her ride. By now the sun was out and it was a glorious day.

After our lunch we cycled to Great Wymondley church, and then through the country lanes to Hitchin, visiting St Faith’s and then on to Ickleford. From there we continued to visit the Hitchin churches. At one of them the sheet that we had to sign had been attached to an automatically opening door, which caused some merriment. At another church we watched a lady arranging the flowers and at our last two churches in

Hitchin we again had offers to take our photo, which is lovely because we usually take pictures of the churches but they rarely have us in them. It was a marvellous day, visiting 25 churches, meeting lots of people and visiting such a variety of inspiring and beautiful churches. And not forgetting those scrumptious home made biscuits.↓



We would like to say a very big thank you to everyone who has so generously sponsored us. You have helped us to raise £790.50 for the Beds and Herts Historic Churches Trust half of which will go directly to All Saints' Willian for the Restoration Fund.

Ann Collins

### **Making passes at the Lakes**

For climbing hills, a camera can be even more helpful than a low gear.

We were staying just north of the Lakes, and the family had agreed to drop me off at Ravenglass for a day's cycling, while they rode the Eskdale railway and visited the local castle. After a couple of miles along the main road, I found the turning and headed up a gently-climbing valley. Soon, I was riding alongside the railway; we had thought that we might meet at the top station, but in the event I passed through well before the train was due.

I met my first fellow-cyclist at the bottom of the Hardknott Pass. Given the gradients of up to 30%, it was perhaps just as well that he had made it all the way down, only to puncture as the road levelled out! Lakeland passes don't mess about with gradually-steepening approaches; one minute it's flat, and the next you're on the full slopes. I dropped into the 28" gear and started up through the trees, keeping the camera in reserve for the really hard bits.

It was on this first steep section that I had most trouble with my front wheel trying to lift off the road. It's always alarming when the tarmac is rippled from sliding down the hill. Just how do they surface such roads anyway?



*Down Hardknott – spot the Cheshunt cyclist*

A little out of the trees, and I called upon the help of the camera for the first time. Not only does everyone else believe that your rest stop is really a photo opportunity, but you can even convince yourself! I had a number of photo opportunities as the climb continued, and encountered more cyclists part way up. A pair coming down turned out to be from Cheshunt. They were making the descent look comfortable; I think I'd have been rather more nervous.

Cars were much more frequent, and sometimes struggled; even from 10 metres away, there was a powerful smell of burning clutch as two manoeuvred to pass each other. Frankly, I'd rather do it by bike! Drivers were tolerant of cyclists in spite of their own difficulties, although the one who leant out of his window and said, "It gets harder further up" was not being entirely helpful.



*Up Hardknott*

The final stretch makes one last kick to 30%, and that did for me, so I walked a few metres, before getting back on to make sure that I did not suffer the ignominy of arriving at the summit on foot. From my lunch stop there, I could see down into Eskdale behind, and also into Wrynose Bottom ahead. The descent, being a twisting 25%, was taken only a little faster than the climb; near the foot, my back wheel was bouncing and skipping on the rough surface, locking up each time it lifted because my brakes were hard on.

The Bottom is an almost hidden valley, below Scafell. As a result, I was still quite high and had the easier side of the Wrynose Pass ahead. No need to use the camera this time! Even the drivers were more encouraging; “There’s sun on the other side” was a more welcome message than the previous one. The far side of Wrynose is “only” 25% at maximum, so I suspect that it is a slightly easier climb than Hardknott, but it seemed to go on for ages even when descending.



*Top of Wrynose*



*Across to Wrynose from Hardknott top*

There is a different approach to cycle routes in Cumbria from elsewhere. We may be used to “Cyclists dismount” whenever the slightest risk appears. Here, there were two ways to Ambleside offered, one marked (challenging route). That turned out to mean, “MTB needed”, so I turned back and took the on-road option.

Reaching Grasmere via a minor pass and another 25% descent, I stopped for the second part of lunch. Then it was along the main road to Keswick, with a short stop for a puncture, curiously on the best surface of the day.

The Whinlatter Pass out of Keswick is a much milder affair than the previous climbs. Entirely tree-lined, it passes the Forestry Commission’s red squirrel sanctuary, which explains my earlier sighting of one animal back in the town. It was also a descent to enjoy, instead of hanging onto the brakes for dear life! Later in the week, we drove over the alternative, and much longer and harder, Honister Pass. Owing to a mining museum, this was the only climb we found that is topped by a cafe, and is definitely one to try by bike on another trip.

On top of Whinlatter, I met another cyclist out for a loop from Keswick, and we rode together for a few miles into Cockermouth. I had considered stopping short there, but was glad that I chose to continue back to our chalet at Silloth on the Solway Firth; the following wind and hills rolling down to the sea combined to create easy riding all the way from Whinlatter onwards. It was a surprise to find I had done 70 miles in the day.



*Silloth sunset*

I hardly knew the Lakes before our week's holiday. It's a great cycling area and perhaps one day I'll be able to go back and try Honister and Kirkstone.

David Rossall

## **Media Watch**

### **Armstrong to Ride for Astana**

Lance Armstrong announced at his press conference that he will be riding for the Astana team in 2009.

He stated that his aim in returning to racing is to get the maximum publicity and international recognition for his charity Livestrong.

Apparently Alberto Contador isn't a happy bunny saying that "It will be very difficult for me and Lance to ride together: Decisions could be taken in his favour that would damage my chances. I'm not going to do anything less than ride to win."

For certain by joining Astana with their recent drug history he will not convince anybody about his past drug free career.

He intends to use an independent anti-doping expert Don Caitlin to prove there is no room for doubt. "Beyond today, I'm not going to tell you how clean I am. I will ride my bike around the world and Don Caitlin will tell you how clean I am,"

### **But will the French be listening?**

Clive