

CYCLING TIME TRIALS, LONDON WEST DISTRICT COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2007-2008

DISTRICT COMMITTEE

At the annual general meeting on 7 October 2007 the following members of the District Committee were elected: Chairman, Paul Newby (3), (Secretary (Vacant), Treasurer, Mrs. Maggie Smith, (4). Assistant Secretaries: Events, Andrew Small, (7). Courses (South), Brian Rogers, (2). Courses (North) and Webmaster, Mick Fountain, (4). Traffic Counts, Alasdair Oakley, (0). Committee Members: Don Ashton (5) and Mark Ashton(2), , Michelle (5) and Peter Ayres (5),. Trevor Gilbert, (1). Auditors Ron Osborne and John Wills,. National Council Delegates, Maggie Smith, Don Ashton, Mark Ashton and Trevor Gilbert. Meetings of the District Council were held on 15 October (Not quorate), 25 November, 10 February, 14 April, 9 June, 11 August and 8 September.

No Hon District Secretary emerged at the 2007 AGM and there was a period when the Committee agreed to cope with this situation only until 31 December 2007 when it could be necessary to disband the District. In order to avert this, Chris Hart, Oxonian CC, 6 of 6 offered to try to perform this task again and organised the District Council's usual mandating meeting on 25 November for the National Council delegates. At a short meeting of the District Committee which followed that meeting he was co-opted to the District Committee as substantive District Secretary. John Glaysher (5) and Steve Davis (4) of Agisco-viner.com were also confirmed as Members then. As Mark Ashton was unable to attend the National Council AGM Chris Hart was nominated as a Deputy Delegate. Subsequently, at the meeting on 10 February 2008, Ian Lakey, Newbury RC 4 out of 5), was co-opted to the Committee. (*Attendance numbers are listed alongside the names of the Committee Member above.*)

Jim Burgin, although not serving as in many years past as a Member of the District Committee, prepared the Districts Police Notification booklets with Andrew Small and also the traditional District Year Book. Jim forecast this season's almost certain winner of the BBAR, Nick Bowdler, Farnborough and Camberley CC, by choosing his picture to grace the front cover. 77 tooth chain rings are a novelty as yet. Nick must have very strong knees! We are very lucky to have had Jim's support and Andrew's ingenuity and hard work which has made the District Secretary's work much easier, as has that of our Treasurer, Maggie, in handling our finances and address lists so ably. Mick Fountain provided much useful information on our website which some other Districts need to emulate.

Our Chairman, Paul Newby, has recently been suffering from prolonged ill health and has been unable to attend recent meetings. He therefore intends to retire from a post he has filled with great distinction since 2004. Alasdair Oakley is also stepping down as Assistant Secretary, Traffic Counts after several years during the last of which the amount of traffic has at last ceased to increase.

One initiative has reduced administration costs. This is that when all our clubs were asked on 31 October last year whether they would agree to the despatch of District Council papers to them by e-mail only one club signified that this would not be possible. Now only one member of the District Committee needs communications by post. This move promises to save over 1,000 sheets of paper each year for the AGM alone, plus the cost of postage and envelopes and the District Secretary is most grateful to Member clubs for agreeing to it. Unfortunately not all their e-mail addresses have worked and a further postal appeal that working addresses be submitted has failed to provide them.

COURSES. The main problem for the District has been the lack of fast roads. Riders' ideal would be dead smooth, lots of traffic "float" and a steep "gift hill". Instead there has been no new construction but a good deal of questionable "traffic engineering". For instance much of the A4 west of Reading remains rough but instead of re-surfacing it many new traffic islands have been built plus a senseless junction on the only bit of dual carriageway just before the 10 and 25 finish. Pedestrian-controlled traffic lights at Woolhampton might have been a problem but few pedestrians have been seen to use them at event times.

Worse still is the threat to the A31, our only decent road, by a proposed traffic-calming scheme near the Bull Inn which will channel riders into a narrow unswept passage bounded by bollards and force motor traffic into a single lane. The CTT National Secretary has invited our representatives to a meeting with Hampshire Police on 22 September at which the District Committee has resolved to press for a solution to a problem caused by poor road design which will preserve the full width of the highway but tame traffic speeds safely. I hope to report good news at our AGM but cannot promise that it will be. We also have had problems with the very poor

surface on H25/2 and H10/2, especially down Knowl Hill, and it is evident that riders are being discouraged from entering on these courses. After an accident caused by the atrocious and ancient surface there we were assured that it would be re-surfaced properly during the current financial year and not just gritted as it has been just to the east

ACCIDENTS AND TRAFFIC LEVELS. There were 3 accidents in one event on the H25/2 and another a few weeks later on the same course when a rider crashed due to hitting a dead badger. All the accidents took place when the riders were using tri-bars. Some riders seem reluctant to prepare for road junctions and damaged road surfaces by using the full width of their bars as such places. but one was caused by a driver making a sudden U-turn from the lay-by at Maidenhead Thicket where the use of tri-bars seemed wholly justified. Traffic levels and off-peak speeds declined due to the high fuel prices and reversed the recent threat to our popular courses. But on some roads, notably the A420 and the A404 there is not much to spare in places.

EVENTS. We did not have any national promotions this year but look forward to the forthcoming RTTC National Championship Ten to be held on Whit Sunday, 24 May 2009. Ian Lakey is Event Secretary on the District Committee's and Newbury Road Club's behalf. The H10/3A course on the B4000 west of Newbury should be a fair test of ability and not just luck save around the turn at the A4 roundabout near Stockcross. We hope to have our best local riders contesting for honours and many others coming out to help in what will be a day-long series of events with juniors and women before lunch at the seniors afterwards.

This year's events showed even more that most riders just want fast courses and afternoon events. Thus we have seen excess entries on the A31 and on fast courses in adjoining Districts but poor entries elsewhere and in the mornings. It is most worrying that so few younger riders are competing in open events. Parents may not be able to afford the very expensive machines which are featured so much in magazines, very sophisticated and not suitable for other uses. Even big motorbikes and small cars cost less. But the remarkable performances the former BBAR, Andy Wilkinson, achieved on his old mountain bike late in the season up north showed what could be done without such aids. Locally Mick Fountain has achieved much on a bike built up from old parts and was only let down by several punctures at 100 miles with no more chances of finding another event. Note well that hard training, not extravagance, has been the real basis of his success. In some areas events for standard road bikes alone have appeared and clubs might consider giving prizes for those to attract Sportive and Audax riders who cannot afford a special time trials only machine. The neglect of time trials by the cycling press is worse than ever yet the standard and number of performances is very high. New Lady Stars like Corin Simmonds and Danuta Tinn have joined Michelle Ayres, Joanna Wells and Gill Reynolds in excellence. There is a countrywide dearth of events at 100 miles late in the season and in general there are far more events to ride early in the season than later on. It looks as though this pattern will continue next year too.

RISK ASSESSMENTS. CTT have warned us that if clubs do not comply with risk reduction measure recommendations in both open and in club events they will be denied insurance cover under the CTT's policy if claims arise from accidents in and around such events. We must therefore refrain from specifying measures such as the placing of warning signs where they are not essential while leaving clubs free to add more if they wish plus direction signs for open events where some riders will not know the course. Being over-zealous in writing course risk assessments could land promoting clubs in hot water and we must take care that only measures that will be taken at each event are specified. The burden of promoting club events might be reduced if more clubs copied the example of Oxford area clubs and took turns to run larger events instead of each club running its own events alone. Event promoting on the Highway is becoming a more serious business but we shall try not to make it more arduous that we need to satisfy these national pressures. As with traffic counts a commonsense approach should be our aim. We must never forget that time trialling is meant to be an enjoyable sport.

Chris Hart, Hon. District Secretary, 17 September 2008.