

The Signpost

Darley Abbey

**Magazine of the
Derby Mercury RC**



**Issue 149
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Derby Mercury RC President - Derek Wilkins



Editorial

By the time this issue of the magazine comes out it always seems a bit late to be wishing people happy new year but better late than never! Happy New Year.

This issue is delayed by a further week in order to include photos from the annual Prize Presentation and Buffet but I make no apology for that. Once again a good time was had by all so many thanks to Bette for organising the do for goodness knows how many years now.

The AGM was held in November and was notable for several reasons. Firstly, Dave Banks stepped down as chairman after twelve years of doing a brilliant job. Jim Crew takes over. That's a tough act to follow Jim so no pressure!. Secondly, the membership fees for seniors and families were increased. However, they've been unchanged for many years and it's still a bargain. Thirdly, additional committee posts were created to cater for cyclo-cross and mountain biking. This reflects the needs of an increasing membership and is good news for the future of the club.

Also good news for the future of the club is the recent confirmation that the Derby Mercury is now a 'Go-Ride' club. There will be more about what that means in future issues of the magazine.

The Christmas Party was a double celebration this year. The other birthday boy was our president. Derek turned 80 in December and there are some photos on page 10. Happy birthday Derek and may you enjoy many more.

On a sadder note, November saw the closure of the Elton Cafe. This popular stop for both cyclists and walkers will be greatly missed. Simon, where will you go on a Sunday morning now?

As usual, this issue includes the results of the photo competition. John Horrocks swept the board and, in recognition of his obvious talent, maybe we should invite him to be the judge next year!

The proposal to provide an electronic version of the magazine to those who wanted it was met with a virtually zero response and so the idea will be dropped. However, the magazine will be available to everyone as a pdf document on the club web site. Paper copies will continue to be distributed as usual.

Good luck to everyone in the coming season. Enjoy whatever activities you take part in and, if you're racing, be safe as well as quick.

Dave Ellis

Cover Photo: The cafe at Elton, Derbyshire.

Getting Down And Dirty

By Nigel Martin

There I was lying in the dirt and leaf litter, feeling spaced out and thinking "what the hell just happened there?!" It was the first round of the National cross country mountain bike championships at Sherwood Pines and half way through the second lap of a seven lap race. I was just off the lead group of riders, when, trying to cut the margins tight and utilise all possible lines on the course, I had cut one corner slightly too tight and had failed to spot a small tree stump in the leaf litter which had sent me flying over the bars, doing my best impression of superman! (Although the only thing in common was tight Lycra).

The start had been the usual chaos; when the gun goes off and you're surrounded by fifty or so Elite riders sprinting as hard as they can, trying to get to the first section of single track in the highest possible position. How there aren't more crashes at the starts is a testament to the bike handling skills of all the guys. With the pace we set off at you would be forgiven for thinking that we were only racing for half an hour but at the Elite level we'll spend around two and a quarter hours like this! My preparation had not been as normal as I had spent three months working in Berlin with no bike and only managed two hours of swimming per week to try and keep myself in some sort of shape. After the chaos of the start and the fight of the first lap I was trying my best to keep that self-doubt out of my mind; "I can keep this pace up, god it hurts like hell though, I'm breathing through every orifice possible!"...

... and then I was on the ground. By some miracle I'd had a soft landing. Quick mental self-check; all body parts in order and no sight of blood, right where did my bike go? Pleasantly surprised everything was still working after such a big wipeout,

but no time to dwell on my good fortune, I hear a shout from behind. It was the next group of riders, so time to jump back on-board and tack onto the back of this group. The next half a lap was a case of finding my rhythm again, after which I decided it was time to go to the front of the group and get the hammer down to see how many riders I could catch through the race, never say die!

Sherwood Pines is the flattest possible course for a 'mountain bike' race, so it tends to result in tactics as used on the road, but don't be fooled, just because it is flat it is not an easy race, far from it. When racing, it is completely relentless, there's no time to rest. If you're not hammering through bumpy single track then you're powering along rolling fire roads.

So there I was dragging a group of around eight riders who were able to sit in my slipstream on the fire roads, now if you're a road racer you'll be thinking, 'god he must be stupid, you should be sat-in saving your energy'. Well, that's not my thinking when I'm in racing mood on the MTB, and in single track sections there isn't that advantage so I knew I would be able to drop some riders out of the back of the group. Plus, the race is in front of me and I'm not interested in playing games this early. Slowly the group got whittled down and we had started to catch some of the riders in front who had started to blow, but there were still a few riders I couldn't get rid of. "Damn, how am I going to beat these guys?" I dropped back though the group thinking "Are any of them looking weak, who looks fresh, (if that's possible this late into the race)? When and where should I attack? I was sure someone else would launch an attack soon so on the last lap I decided to put out one last massive effort to try and drop the four others still with me. I timed it well, choosing to give it everything going up a single track 'climb' and into the following technical section in the knowledge that if I

broke the guy directly behind me the others wouldn't be able to get around him until the next section of fire road, by which time I should have got enough of a gap that I'd be gone.

One problem, it didn't work! They were just as determined to beat me, as I was to beat them, touché.

OK, plan b, recover and wait for the sprint at the end. Unlike in road racing it is typically better to lead out in a mountain bike race, however, that isn't what other people had planned. Others decided to launch attacks, but my legs were too battered at this stage of the race to respond to two of the guys. They remained only a few seconds in front right until the finish, but you never lose hope though. It's easy to make a mistake when at your limit and the majority of oxygen is going to your muscles and not your brain, verging on the brink of unconsciousness. They could have easily slipped back into my clutches. It was not to be the case though; I finished the race in a sprint

against one other guy and was placed eighteenth.

I had a mix of emotions, moribund from the effort I had just given, 49 km off road in two hours nineteen minutes. "Damn that was fast", I didn't even come out of the big ring all race! Happy from how good my legs had felt and dismissing the doubts I'd had about my lack of off-season preparation giving me a real morale boost for my performances the rest of the season. But despondent, oh what could have been a much better result if I'd not crashed, I could have been in the front group where it would have been me slipstreaming others.

The next week after a mountain bike race is general spent recovering, the efforts are so vicious that it really can take three days to a week for your legs to start feeling better depending on how your 'form' is.

If you fancy giving racing a go the cross-country scene is really showing a renaissance at present and there are categories for all standards of ability and



Action from the Sherwood Pines race

racecourses for all preferences. Including everything from the cross-country distance, to marathon racing (typically 100KM), to 24 hour racing, which can be done as a team or solo if you are mentally inclined! Also the first round of the Mountain bike World Cup is being held in Dalby forest in April this year, a rare opportunity to see the world's best riders fight it out. Ticket details are on the British Cycling website. The best web sites for information on events are the British Cycling and xcracer.com the main hub for XC racing in the UK, where you can enter on-line for just about every race in the UK

and know that you are instantly in the race without having to wait for a start sheet to come. The main series I race are the National Points series and the Midlands Series that has been growing in popularity each year. If you want any more advice just get in contact with me through the club.

I just have to say thanks to Leisure Lakes bike shop for all the support they give me towards racing!

Happy trails.

Photographic Competition

The annual club photographic competition was held on 1st December and once again was very well attended.

The judge this year was Bill Hall from the Rolls-Royce Photographic Club. There were 24 entries in the club related activity section (14 prints and 10 digital) and 14 in the open category (11 prints and 3 digital). Bill took the time to discuss each one and his inciteful comments were much appreciated.

Entries from John Horrocks came out winners in both categories. Of his winning photos John says: The Heath Spotted Orchid was a lucky find. I was driving to the lighthouse at Ardnamurchan Point when I stopped simply to photograph the view: The background shows the islands of Rum, Eigg and Muck with Skye further back. Clambering down a grassy bank from the road I was delighted and surprised to discover just three orchids,

one of which was an eminently photographable specimen in good condition. Ardnamurchan point, incidentally, is the most westerly point of mainland Britain (yes: further west than Lands End).

The cyclo cross was taken last Saturday in atrocious lighting conditions which demanded the use of a big flashgun.

Runner up in the club activity category was Clive Lockwood with his portrait of Chris Bradley in which Clive has neatly included himself reflected in the shades.

Second place in the open category went to Chris Blount for his picture of his daughter, Hannah enjoying the surf near Lagos, Portugal.

The four photos noted above are reproduced on the following pages.









Xmas Party and Derek's 80th

The annual Christmas party was held at the clubroom on 15th December and a jolly time was had by all - even the carol singing with the now essential vocal warm up exercises led by Scott Savage went down well.

This year there was an extra cause to celebrate with our president, Derek Wilkins, turning 80 on the 17th. A cake was provided which we all helped him to eat (photos on the opposite page).

Derek and Bette have been stalwarts of the Mercury since the mid 1940s, providing support and continuity to the club and all its activities. Happy birthday, Derek and may you keep the pedals turning for many more years.

Annual Prize Presentation and Buffet

On Friday, 22nd January, 100 members and guests gathered at the Rugby Club, Haslams Lane for the 70th annual prize presentation and buffet, organised once again by Bette Wilkins..

Guest of honour was Bob Laxton, MP for Derby North and once a keen cyclist, being a member of Derby Wheelers in the days of Ray Booty, Derek Woodings et al. He recalled riding a '10' at Little Eaton (in around 22 mins, he thought) as well as taking part in hill climb events on Holly Bank and Winnats Pass and some hair-raising escapades going downhill on the back of a (track) racing triplet! Bob still has five bikes, including a carbon fibre job which he keeps in Tenerife and on which he intends to climb the mountain on Tenerife one day.

Bob presented the prizewinners with their trophies which this year included a special award to Dave Banks in recognition of twelve years as club chairman. As well as being an excellent chairman, Dave is always there whenever anything needs doing and his efforts are much appreciated.

Photos of some of the winners receiving their trophies are included here. Sorry there isn't room for everyone but all of the photos taken are posted on the club website.

Photos are as follows:

- A Dave Banks - special award (see above) and also Clubman of the Year.
- B Clive Lockwood - Open BAR
- C Mark Shardlow - Club BAR and Senior Evening TT Series Winner
- D Hilary Johnson - Ladies 25 Mile TT Champion
- E Rosie Blount - Track Champion
- F Duncan Putman - Road Race Champion and Performance of the Year Winner
- G Andy Eagers - 25 Mile TT Champion
- H Nick Scott - Vets BAR Winner





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Farewell to the Elton Cafe

By Simon Pedley

Elton village stands at the confluence between the limestone and gritstone plateaux of the Peak District and is one of the highest and coldest places in England.

As you make your way over the hill of the B5056 at the crossroads halfway along the Via Gellia, up the high level road and then drop down the other side into Elton, you happen upon a B&B on the right which was once a thriving weekend cafe and a regular haunt of many a cyclist and walker.

Unfortunately, after many years being run as a shop and post office, and then as a weekend cafe from the 'front room' of their house by Chris and Jenny Hirst, who also run four other guest houses in the village, it closed its doors on the 15th of November, 2009.

The shop and post office closed many years ago, leaving just the cafe, the interior of which is home to a marvelous collection of vintage metal advertising signs and also a wonderful Grandfather

clock. The cafe opened at weekends and was very popular with walkers and cyclists. But, sadly no longer!

As well as the collection of signs, which is quite well known, the cafe tasted fame when, a few years back, the front room was taken over by television crews and converted back to the former post office for an episode of Peak Practice.

The establishment has been helped out by a number of waitresses, one of the longest serving being Josie who, over the years, has been a friendly and welcoming face and acquaintance during the many visits and hours spent in the establishment feeding myself on their lovely homemade soup and granary bread rolls whilst sitting in front of a gorgeous, roaring log fire sipping tea.

Alas no more. I am certain that many customers, like me, will miss it dearly, but at least they have reclaimed their front room!

Thank you Elton for many happy years.

Mercury World Champion

Following the last issue of the magazine, I received a letter from Dave Orford congratulating the club on the progress that it is now making and, incidentally, including an account of his World Championship rides in Austria in 1995.

Dave can still be seen riding up the A6 to Matlock and back most days. Although not currently a member of the Mercury, Dave has been a member on and off since the late 1940s and has ridden, and

won, many events in Mercury colours over the years.

For one reason or another, Dave's achievements in the UCI Veterans World Championships in 1995, whilst a member of the Mercury, perhaps did not get the recognition they deserved and so I hope that this item will put that right.

For the record, Dave won both the 20km Time Trial and the Road Race Championships for his age group of 65 to 69 years.

I am aware of a number of other major achievements of club members from the past that are perhaps unknown to newer members and would be of interest. Maybe this will be the first in an occasional series recalling past glories.

This is Dave's account of his trip to the World Championships:

In preparation for the World Championships in Austria, I first went to Belgium where I rode four road races. Enid (Barker) came with me, together with her trusty stopwatch. I knew that the Championships would be timed by computer and I wanted a reliable back-up!

The 20 km time trial took place in the Graz area of Austria. There were 50 riders in my age category (65 to 69 years), starting at 30 second intervals and I started near the back of the field. During the ride I caught five riders and after the finish went for a twenty minute warm down. When I returned to Enid, she told me I had won by 15 seconds. Later that evening, checking her list against the computer, she was spot on with all the times, so the computer was OK after all.

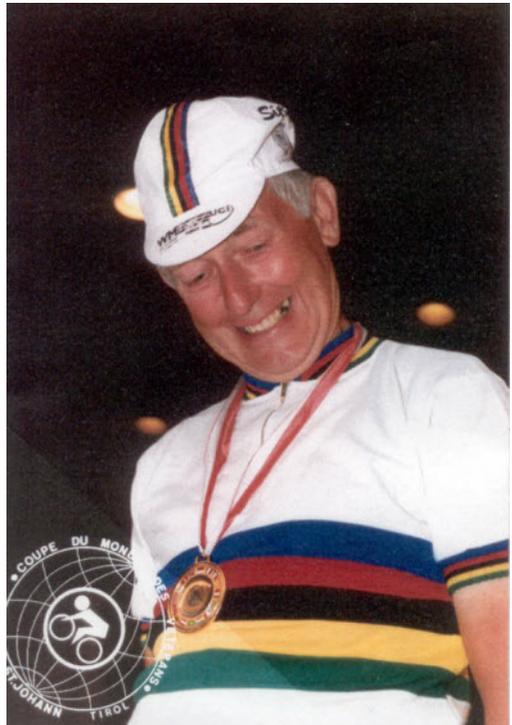
For the Road Race, we moved to St Johann in the Tyrol. There were 71 starters in the 65 to 69 age group race. Although the race was only over 40 km, there were two difficult climbs. The field split up on the first one with five riders going clear. I was in a group of around ten riders at the top of the climb but losing ground on the break ahead.

We were not going fast enough and so I went ahead alone. It took 9 km to catch the leaders, just at the start of

the second climb and I was dropped again. I chased again and caught them after 3 km.

There were three Italians, one French and one Swiss in the group and I expected the Italians to work the rest of us over. But in veterans road racing there is no teamwork as we are all individuals.

At the finish, the strongest of the Italians started the sprint from 500 yds out, which is a long way out of the saddle! However, he split the group in two. Another Italian then took over, but I went past both of them to win by a length. Enid and I celebrated accordingly that evening. Then all that remained was the long drive home with just a rest on the ferry.



Diary

Events at the Club Room, St Matthew's Church Fellowship Room, Darley Abbey

Date 2010	What's Going On	Time
Tuesday 2 nd Feb	Natter Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 9 th Feb	Rollers	8:00 pm
Tuesday 16 th Feb	Pancake Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 23 rd Feb	Natter Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 2 nd Mar	Quiz Night (by Sarah Todd)	8:00 pm
Tuesday 9 th Mar	Natter Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 16 th Mar	Bring and Buy	8:00 pm
Tuesday 23 rd Mar	Natter Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 30 th Mar	Film Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 6 th Apr	Natter Night	8:00 pm
Tuesday 13 th Apr	TT Series, Event No. 1, Long Lane	6:30 pm
Tuesday 20 th Apr	TT Series, Event No. 2, Long Lane	6:30 pm
Tuesday 27 th Apr	TT Series, Event No. 3, Long Lane	6:30 pm
Tuesday 4 th May	TT Series, Event No. 4, Windley	6:30 pm

Club Rides

Autumn Tints: 50 miles or less, easy pace, with lunch stop. Sundays at 9:45 am, meet at either Allenton (Arden News nr Spider Bridge) or Alvaston (Mercian Cycles) or Mickleover Nag's Head). Contact Derek Wilkins 01332 661613.

Club Runs: 60+ miles at a medium pace. Sundays at 9:00 am. Meet at the A38/A6 roundabout, Derby. Contacts: Dave Banks, Clive Lockwood.

Training Rides: Tues./Thurs. 6:45 pm, Little Chef, Little Eaton. Contact Tom Butcher.

Mountain Bike Runs: A couple of hours thrashing around the trails in the Ticknall / Ingleby area. Monday evenings, 6:30 pm. Meet at the John Thompson, Ingleby. Contact: Dave Banks.

DERBY CTC CYCLE JUMBLE SALE **Thursday 4th February from 8pm** **Friends Meeting House, St Helens Street, Derby**

Open to all cyclists. Come along with bits to sell or money to buy. No entry charge. Refreshments available to buy.