



Vegpatch

June 2011

*Newsletter of the
Vegetarian Cycling and Athletic Club*



Have you renewed your VCAC membership for 2011?

If you intend to but have forgotten please send a form in or contact the Membership Secretary as soon as possible.

Multisport – Steve Coote



Steve Coote (in blue) makes a splash at the start of a tri

With the exception of Steve Wigglesworth, who has been as prolific as ever (see his report below), the triathletes in the club have been largely keeping their powder dry whilst waiting for the season to get in full swing. Plenty of races entered and plans laid, but not too many completed as yet.

Jo Starr got her season underway in the middle of May with a 9th place overall and 1st in the F30-39 category at the Roadford Sprint Tri. Much more expected from Jo as the year progresses and she tackles her first Olympic distance events. Paul Kerrison took on the Wattisham Sprint Tri in late May as a sharpener for a whole raft of races he has in July. Jon Zigmond has recovered from a cycling accident during the winter and has entries in for both the Bala Middle Distance and Cleveland Steelman; his 5th appearance at both events.

As well as the below-mentioned Oulton Park Duathlon that Mick Wigglesworth and I completed as a relay team (this may just get another mention, too, if I can sneak it in – I'm not used to winning at anything) my racing has been limited to taking part in the

one mile Great Salford Swim. Okay for a first wet-suited outing of the year, even if the weather did it's best to spoil the day that started with many thousands taking part in the 10km run and finished with Tyson Gay narrowly missing Usain Bolt's 150m record on the track erected on Deansgate.



Steve Wigglesworth demonstrates how veggies can put in the miles for the National Vegetarian Week

So to Steve Wigglesworth. First up, my thanks to Steve for coming along to ride the Watt bikes at the National Vegetarian Week event in Manchester. For the rest, a mixed start to the season by Steve's standards, even if most of the rest of us would give our hind teeth for such a set of results.

"I've been waving the flag at multisport events for a couple of months now and it's been a funny season so far.

My first triathlon of the year was at East Leake (Swim 400m / Bike 23K / Run 5K) where late March temperatures made themselves felt. Coming out of a pool swim into a harsh northerly breeze for the bike leg in just a tri suit was not for the timid. The bike course was tough and being breezy gave advantage to cycle-strong competitors. I felt good even though it was the first proper effort of the year. I was happy to win my age, and finish 7/350 overall; even if I did the 5K run with absolutely no feeling in my feet.

The weekend after was the Oulton Park Spring Duathlon (Run 4.3K / Bike 21.6K / Run 4.3K) where it was great to witness Steve C and my brother all toggged up in veggie gear thrashing round the circuit. We did alright too with Steve and Mick winning the Olympic Distance relay prize (just under twice the above distances) and me winning my age and being 5/90 overall in the wimps' event.

The day after I came down with a cold, that turned into a chest infection. I didn't strike a bat for two weeks, but did have a splendid holiday gadding about in a boat on the Norfolk Broads where we heard Bitterns booming every night for a week, which kind of helped put a cough and runny nose into perspective.

By the next event I'd entered – the Peterlee Sprint Tri on 17th April (Swim 400m / Bike 21K / Run 5K) – I felt better, but perhaps wasn't. I went into it with some confidence, having assured myself the enforced rest would have done me good. Well, it might have, but I reckon I still had the lingerings of

the illness and finished a disappointing 9th Vet. Weird because I felt much as I always do in races but simply covered the ground at a much slower rate. Bit of a confidence knocker that one.

Speaking of which, my irritatingly fit brother has kept training on the bike. Having dragged himself from lazy and well-padded to mile-cruncher and lean for the Oulton event, he surprised everyone by not returning to pie-eating sedentary mode immediately after crossing the finish line. He's muttering about doing the Trans-Pennine Trail in one push - which will mean something like 30 hours in the saddle and no sleep. Utterly bonkers, but it means he's still regularly on the bike and focussed. This is where the confidence knocking bit comes in. I've been out on a couple of training runs with him both on and off road and I was genuinely and unexpectedly stretched. On the back of Peterlee, for the first time in a long time, I found myself harbouring unproductive thoughts about my cycling.

Anyway, a few days after my worst result in ages I went off to Spain to race in the first ever ITU World Cross Triathlon Championships (a fully off-road triathlon). I'll write this one up separately but suffice for now to say that my cycling confidence was not restored.

Until yesterday (15th May), when I raced in the Newmarket Sprint Tri (Swim 300m / Bike 22K / Run 4K). I'd specifically targeted this event back in the dark winter months because of the unusually short swim and run, and slightly longer bike. It went to plan. My swim was the usual embarrassingly average affair but as soon as I got on the bike I knew I was at peace with the world. The bike leg had many long straight undulating sections of road with strong head and crosswinds; the kind of conditions where you can actually see cyclists mentally giving in. The trick is to know that everyone is suffering, not just you, and just to relax and get on with it. No matter that maximum effort is only rewarded with painfully slow progress; it's the same for everyone. This seems to defeat many triathletes on the cycle leg and you can see

that they sit up and aggressively fight the wind exactly when they should be doing the opposite: I did the opposite. A confidence-restoring bike section set me up for a reasonable run leg and I was pleased to win my age and finish 3/160 overall.

I have more sprint events to come and, as long as I can keep coming up with plausible excuses not to train with my brother, I hope to go OK.”

Oulton Park Duathlons 3/4/11 - Steve Coote

Once in a while it really feels like you pluck one out of the lap of the weather gods. I had driven through a couple of heavy showers en route to the venue at Little Budworth in Cheshire, sat watching a beautiful bright rainbow arcing across a black sky while drinking a cup of coffee and huddled out of the rain in one of the guys' camper vans after meeting Mick and Steve Wigglesworth in the venue car park. That was the last rain we had for a good three hours, much to the relief of those intending to cycle fast on a slick motor racing circuit.

Almost inevitably, it seems, we were informed of a 30 minute delay to the start, and so it wasn't until 1010 that we attended the obligatory and even more pointless than usual race briefing - those in front were being deafened, those at the back could hear nothing clearly, then headed off to line up for the start on the main track outside the pit area.

Steve W, who was doing the full sprint tri by himself as a sharpener for the World's X-tri Championships in Spain later in the month, rapidly decided that with a strong wind blowing down the straight his best bet was to find a group up at the pointy end of the field in which to find some shelter. I didn't have a clue how to play it. I was running the standard 2 lap distance whilst many would be on the one lap sprint; this was a world's qualifying event so you could bet on a higher class of field than usual in the standard distance; relay teams weren't differentiated in any way from the rest of the field; and I'm pushing 53 now. Against all this was the simple fact that I wasn't going to have to cycle. I finally stilled all the rubbish in my head by just taking it in the spirit of the vast

majority of time trial triathlons in which one has little idea until afterwards who one was racing against - you just do your race as hard and well as you can.

The whole race went off as one, with Steve W obviously well up there - the long sweeping curves which can be such a frustration of running on motor racing circuits as you seem to be doing a lot of running without getting anywhere and good sight lines letting us see the front of the race for some time. I wasn't going over well, it takes time for me to get into my stride these days and there were some nasty little hills on the course that weren't helping the process. The thought of doing it twice to complete the 9.2km first leg, knowing what was ahead, troubled me more than it should have.

Steve W, after completing the sprint distance of one lap of running, came through on his bike sometime early in my second lap, looking fast and with the race face totally on. As I headed down the pit lane I felt like apologising to Mick for my performance, even though in retrospect I had done sub-seven minute miles which is about as fast as it gets for me over any distance these days - it just felt so slow.

Mick congratulated me, ripped the timing chip off my ankle to affix it to his own and ran off down the line of very high spec bikes. He sort of knew - without being absolutely positive as there was a lot of confusion going on and I was too blown to do other than slump down with a drink for a while to notice - that there were only two relay teams in the field, and he had got out ahead. Mick has done a lot of cycling in the early part of this year, cranking it up to over

700 miles in total as he took to doing this event. It showed as he powered round the circuit on his first few laps with 7 minute splits. I couldn't help thinking that knowing you had 9 laps of this challenging circuit to do, it must be nearly as tough mentally as physically to keep the speed up.



Suddenly Steve W was bearing down on me through transition having completed his 5 laps. I scrambled and just managed to snap off a photo and shout encouragement. Then he was gone again and I started pacing up and down and doing a little jogging to try to keep loose. In no time - 16+ no doubt very tough minutes - Steve completed his race. 1st in his age group and 5th overall, a brilliant achievement that we perhaps are getting almost too used to acknowledge as highly as we should.

Mick still looked strong, though evidently starting to hurt as he went into his 8th lap. Steve had joined me in transition and Mick flashed a grin as he heard his encouraging shout. I started to strip down as the rain started up gently. Mick riding his laps so well to time made it easy for me to be ready to snap a photo of him running towards me in transition. Just under 70 minutes, sterling stuff.

A short-lived squall greeted my emergence back onto the main circuit but contrary to all logic in having sat or stood around for over an hour I really felt good. The only pressure insomuch as I knew the only other relay team was a lap and more behind on the bike, was from knowing that everyone round me had cycled and I should be passing them. I won't claim to have enjoyed it but it was my fastest lap of the three I did in 19:04.

So two VCAC firsts on the record books, and even if our relay victory may have seemed a cheap one by there only being two teams in the race, as we were racing ourselves rather than the opposition I can only say that it didn't feel like it.

Many thanks to Mick and Steve for turning out and making it a day to remember!

River Dart 10km Swim

Those who use our Yahoo club page will doubtless know that I was approached by Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's production team with a wish to film some VCAC athletes in action in an event in the south-west as part of a HFW on vegetarianism River Cottage programme. Chances are that at the end of the day we will be but a very small part of the programme but it seemed too good a chance to pass up to publicise the veggie cause and hopefully do the club a bit of good.

I offered several options, of which the 10km swim in the River Dart organised by the Outdoor Swimming Society on the 3rd September was eventually chosen. There are at least four, possibly five, of us due to take to the water, with HFW even having entered himself (I could have phrased that better). Anyroad, part of the deal is that a veggie meal will be cooked and served up for us afterwards, any other VCAC members in the area most welcome. More details as we get them.

Extremadura World X-Tri Championship – Steve Wigglesworth

Purely by chance, whilst sitting in Bradford City library in late January, I idly noticed that the International Triathlon Union had sanctioned the first ever world off road triathlon championship to be held in Extremadura, Spain, in late April. With a lake swim of 1000m, a mountain bike section of 20K and a 6K cross country run to finish, I equally idly thought that those were distances I might be alright with. The trip to the library was a one-off, driven by a combination of factors utterly unconnected with racing. I quite enjoy that tumbling-through-life-and-grabbing-chances thing that sometimes happens and, rather less idly, started to ponder.

Within a couple of days I'd mentally checked off the logistics and couldn't find a reason not to have a go at gaining a place in the national age group team. I'd been wondering what to do to fly the VC&AC flag at something fairly high profile this year and it seemed like fate had lent a hand. The selection process was fairly straightforward and within about a week of realising the event existed, I was part of team GBR.

Researching the bike course from the organiser's website it seemed to me that a bike set up for out-and-out speed and fast handling would be the steed of choice. I figured that off road slicks and no suspension were going to be the winning combination. Luckily that was the configuration I'd stored my MTB away in, having most recently raced it last October in a fast off road duathlon. This was proving far too easy! A few off road training rides just to get my eye in with the dirt again proved all was well with bike and rider, and a few decent early-season multisports results saw me heading off towards the ferry terminal with my confidence levels reasonably high and the sat nav set for a very long way away.

Arriving in France the usual differences were apparent, there's never anyone around and everything's always tidy. I have a thing

about civic pride and though it's a sweeping generalisation, France is pretty good in this regard. What I don't get though is why the French, having mowed all their communal grass, tended their village flower beds, watered their hanging baskets and swept the streets, then lock themselves away in shuttered houses allowing les rosbifs, or in this case un roslegume, to potter along in blissful solitude enjoying the fruits of their labour.

As is usual on this type of jaunt a camper van was to be home for the duration and is by far my preferred method of getting to races. They offer a huge amount of independence and, once you get your eye in, can get you to some truly superb overnighting spots. And so it was as I eased south through France, I stumbled upon some great open water swimming in warm shallow lakes giving me a chance to refresh my sighting techniques and work on the slight stroke modifications needed when using a wetsuit.

These were fun days with massive feelings of well-being, helped in no small part by my first ever sighting of a Wryneck and, at one camp, being treated to an all night symphony of the most bizarre squeaks, squeals, grunts and croaks imaginable courtesy of a local amphibian population clearly driven to all matters spawn. I'd read about such noises, which are reportedly fairly common in central southern France, but was alarmed at the reality. More like mammals or birds than frogs, I was transfixed for ages before drifting off to sleep. Had it not been for the last of my cheap rum, I'd have happily listened longer.

Crossing into Spain I couldn't resist returning to a place called Lumbier that Emma and I had chanced upon a few years ago whilst motorhoming. It was a slight diversion but well worth it. There's a gorge at Lumbier that supports ridiculously large populations of Vultures, as well as other raptors and – to Spain – fairly common birds

like Choughs and Crag Martins. Watching the stunning aerobatic displays of Choughs tumbling from the sheer gorge faces with huge Griffon Vultures circling as a backdrop isn't the worst way to bumble towards a world championship event.

Ah yes, the event, having bumbled rather a lot I realised I was a bit behind schedule and headed off through the vast tracts of barely-populated Castilla y Leon with only Black Kites and the occasional trucker for company. Following many hours of solitude, it was a bit of a shock when I hit human settlement again at Segovia, where entirely because of clamouring tourists, I intentionally missed the much celebrated not-to-be-missed aqueducts. It wasn't a total loss though, as I found a quiet Lidl in which to buy some supplies. Ah well, another one to add to my list of snubbed cultural attractions. Don't get me wrong, Segovia seemed nice as cities go and at some point I'll probably regret choosing to head out of there as fast as I could in order to sit alone by the side of a quiet river eating freshly scored grapes, or maybe I won't.

As I reached Extremadura I felt ready, I'd managed a few runs and swims, and felt strong, I was also at race weight; the grapes had helped. I quickly found the venue and registered with just under 48hrs to suss-out the bike and run courses. It was a superb area and the sense of occasion led to a really good atmosphere. The comings and goings of racers of different nationalities is quite something and is at once inspirational and scary.

Feeling on the scared side of inspired I did what makes me feel more in control, I got on my bike and headed for the course. The bike course was 2 x laps of 10K which was essentially out and back along the perimeter of a lake. For the first 'out' 5K I was smug. The course was fast and had plenty of passing chances with only a few sections of really tricky stuff to negotiate. So far so good. The 'back' 5K though soon killed off my ill-founded smugness: I honestly thought there was some mistake. We'd been told to always keep the course marker tape to our

left but doing so meant riding right on the lake's waterline, and sometimes even below it. This was seriously tough as the going was incredibly rocky and the only breaks in the pounding, torturous terrain saw the course run through equally energy sapping deep and rutted bike-swallowing mire. In several places competitors checking out the course had voted with their wheels and had broken through the marker tape to ride instead on a perfectly reasonable footpath that followed the lake's perimeter. Why the organisers hadn't used that option was lost on me, and clearly many others. This didn't bode well. It was becoming obvious that my slick-shod and rigid 'fast' bike was not the smartest choice I'd ever made.

Still, positive mental attitude and all that, and at least the swim and run courses were pretty standard fare. With another recce of the bike course the day after I convinced myself that if I rode smartly I wouldn't be at too much of a disadvantage as long as the weather stayed fine and allowed me to make good time on the faster 5K section: then it started to rain.

It rained and rained some more, right up to the morning of race day and though I took the start line intending to give it my all, I was worried about what state the bike course would be in. The swim went about as well as could be expected, which means I managed to hold a straight line and survived, and in just under 20 minutes from the off I was through the soggy-as-the-swim transition, and cycling.

It was bad. Having lost minutes to the fast swimmers I gave it everything, but for the opening few kilometres was constantly baulked by slower riders and those struggling to simply stay upright on the by now treacherously muddy 'fast' part of the course. Several competitors were laying strewn around the place with bikes at jaunty angles half hidden in undergrowth. At one stage I saw a racer doing what I thought was a victory salute with arms held aloft, only when I focussed on him, perplexed as to why he'd want to be doing such a thing, did I realise that the limbs aloft were actually his

legs. He had somehow elegantly inverted and was hanging by his trisuit off the front of his handlebars. He was still moving forwards and the pose seemed to last an age. I have absolutely no idea how he managed to achieve such a position but am pretty certain it can't have been intentional. It really did evidence the fact that this was tough going with riders capable of qualifying to represent their country simply unable to stay on their bikes.

I passed many racers but, as feared, once on the rocky 'back' section suffered horribly. The pounding was relentless. I was riding with the minimum tyre pressure I dared (30psi), but it was like being run over by a 40,000 strong herd of bison. Predictably, riders of suspension equipped bikes who I'd left for dead on the 'fast' part re-took me on the rocks with some ease. This is something that rarely happens and I was passed by more riders during that one 5K section than have overtaken me on a bike in the last 5 years of racing. By the end of the first lap I was already struggling with fatigue and though I held concentration and got stuck into the second loop I just couldn't gain ground on those ahead of me. I stayed upright to the end but it's the first time in ages that I was actually pleased that the bike section was over.

The run brought 6K of cloying red soil and slippery rocks but it was a piece of cake compared to the bike. Once again, mindful of the level of the event I raced to the very best of my capability and ignored the pain and fatigue determined to stay light on my feet to the very end.

When I did hit the finish line it was in a disappointing 15th place, my worst ever performance at this level, and the only triathlon I've ever done where the bike section had been my undoing. It was also the only triathlon I've ever done where my arms, shoulders and neck were the most painful and fatigued parts of my body.

The rain and miserable weather continued for my drive back to the ferry port at Santander appropriately mocking my dud bike choice and reflecting my spirits. The event itself had been a good one and the concept of fully off road multisports racing is engaging and exciting. The first thing I did when I got home was to check out the prices and current tech in full suspension racing MTBs but at anything up to £5,000+ for the best available, my off road racing career on anything other than fast open trails is most definitely on hold!

Cycling Report - Noel Molland

Road Racing

In December 2010 Mike Betts took part in the 40k Hillingdon Winter Series where he finished 9th!

British Cycling are once again offering free or reduced membership to VC&AC members who've not previously been BC members.

Audax and Cyclo sportive

Audax and Sportives continue to be the main cycling activity of the Club with a number of members either having already taken part in these non-competitive rides or where members are planning in taking part in an event later on this year. Rides completed so far include Nik Windle riding the Moreton DIY Perm Audax, Winchcombe DIY Perm Audax, Slaughter Badby Perm

Audax, Brevet Cymru 400, The Dean's 300 and the Faffer's 400 (well part of it anyway). Noel Molland has ridden The Cornwall Tor Sportive with plans to take on The Dartmoor Challenge, The Twinings Pro-Am Tour and the Cheddar Cyclo sportive. Whilst Steve Coote and Nik Windle have indicated they intend to ride this year's Anthony Maynard Sportive and Paul Kerrison is planning to tackle the Norwich 100.

Utility and Commuting

A number of Club members, including Nik Windle and Peter Simpson, have been using bikes to cycle to running events, doing their runs and then cycling back home again. People who do this are not always achieving race PB's, but they are describing the ride, run, ride as rewarding experiences.

Vegetarian cyclist and VC&AC supporter, Sally Newham, along with her work partner (also called Sally who is a vegan) have been funded by Derbyshire County Council to create a touring museum that will travel to isolated rural locations in the county that have little or no access to culture or contemporary art. They are hoping to promote the use of cycle as a mode of transport and help to encourage slow travel as a way of getting around and seeing our heritage and beautiful countryside.

Meanwhile, following the birth of his baby daughter, Freya, Noel Molland found that he was unable to commit as much time to cycling and going to the gym as he wanted, so he decided to incorporate an aspect of cycle commuting into his daily commute to work. Parking at the park & ride on the very edge of Plymouth, Noel finishes the last 6 miles of his journey by bike. Noel has found that by ditching the car for the urban leg of his commute he can accurately predict his journey time and is helping to keep up his fitness levels.

Publicity

Writing as a VC&AC member, Mike Betts has had a letter published in Cycling Weekly magazine in their 120 years Anniversary Collector's edition! (The letter was about Mike's attendance at a Training Camp in January).

In addition the Club has been able to gain more publicity by registering on a newly launched site called Club Velo <http://www.clubvelo.co.uk/> which is for cyclists, runners and triathletes and we've also registered ourselves on the British Sports website: <http://www.britishsports.com/>

Devon and Cornwall Group News - Noel Molland

The Devon & Cornwall group have invited the film crew from the Ch.4 program River Cottage to join them for an informal bike ride in Devon. However there is a problem as the TV crew want to do the ride during the week, when the Devon & Cornwall group say they can only do the ride at the weekend due to work commitments. However despite it looking ever more likely that the bike ride isn't going to happen, the film crew are intending to film the 'River Dart 10k' swimming race which is taking place in September and where at least 4 VC&AC members have indicated they

might take part. It would be great to have as many VC&AC members taking part in this event as possible, so if anyone is interested in competitive swimming please do sign up for this event. For more information on the River Cottage filming and what you need to do to register to take part in the swim please contact Multi-Sport Secretary, Steve Coote.

The Devon & Cornwall group are sad to announce the closure of one of their favourite food stops, The Owl Vegan Cafe in Barnstaple. The cafe was sold as a going concern and it has been relaunched as Cafe Libri Vegetarian Cafe. The new Cafe Libri has limited hours for serving main meals, but they still serve a nice selection of tea and cakes (including vegan cakes!) and so they are still recommended for people to stop at if they are cycling The Tarka Trail.

Brevet Cymru - Nik Windle



I decided to ride the Brevet Cymru 400k audax as an attempt to tackle a properly hilly long ride on fixed rather than deliberately selecting flatter rides for the 'pignon fixe' as I usually do. I've ridden it 3 times before, last time being 2003 I think, and always found it tough going even on gears. The route - from Chepstow to the Welsh seaside at New Quay and back - is pretty, often stunning, and includes a double crossing of the Cambrian mountains.

In an attempt to minimise my pre-ride sleep debt I arranged to camp 3 miles from the start at Upper Sedbury House which proved to be a good move though not 100% effective as I was later to learn. There were several other cyclists camping and I reckon I managed 5 hours kip before waking at 4:45am in time for a veggie pasty and banana breakfast then

off to the 6:00am start at Bulwark allowing enough time for getting lost on the way as almost expected.

Off to a good start I enjoyed the 100m climb out of Chepstow, chatting briefly with GY Jon from the veganfitness forum, and was happy to let all the faster freewheelers whizz past on the descent into the lovely Wye valley where I took turns into the wind with a bunch till Monmouth. We hit the lanes here and a series of noticeable climbs, the steepest being the short haul up to Grosmont where I stopped for a mid-stage nibble. My eating strategy consisted of cramming the savoury content of Holland and Barrett's fridge into my rack-pack along with a load of energy gels and some other bits - a lot to lug around a hilly course.

The route flattened out a bit as we rode through the Golden Valley to Hay on Wye enjoying the sunshine and quiet roads. I'd made sure I drank both my bottles of water and had an energy gel a few kilometres before. A chat with the organiser, Mark Rigby, refill my bidons and a veggie sausage roll from the rack-pack, then I was on my way to Llandovery. A couple of riders had packed at Hay due to the onset of injuries and I was thankful that so far nothing hurt.

Soon we swung north towards Builth Wells and the wind was really starting to make its presence felt. Riding with Barry now we noted the answer to the info and, instead of the usual 4WD and horse-box festival I was amused to find Builth had been invaded by not-so-young mods having some sort of scooter gathering. Riding south west now we were fortunate to have the wind behind again for the long, long haul over Sugar Loaf. I was on my own and on the brakes for most of the descent that followed to the control.

Chips and beans in the West End cafe we were 7hr 30m and 150k into the ride and, I was pleased to see, slightly ahead of the rather ambitious ride schedule I'd scribbled out. The first part of the next stage included a couple of steady 200m climbs which were just fine for 67" fixed, the gradient being suitable for my 50 turns of the cranks in the saddle 50 turns honking then repeat strategy. After the info at Lampeter though we turned direct into the wind and think we all struggled that 10 miles to the Tregaron control where I drank lots and ate a porkless pie from my stash. This was halfway though - feeling good and only slightly behind schedule.

A strong tailwind for the next section didn't help me much as I walked up several unreasonably steep hills, I'd been warned this was a tough section on fixed. Most of the rest of the ride was on well graded old coach and drove roads now evolved to wide Welsh A roads - this bit was more a series of short steep corrugations, one even had a '16% Low Gear Now' sign which wasn't useful advice for me considering my mount.

Aware that the next control at New Quay was followed immediately by a long, double-header, climb of about 300m which had been known to leave over-stuffed riders retching by the roadside I played clever and ate moderately a couple of k early. I was in need of a sit down though and was most chuffed when the vegan girl on the cafe checkout let me have some of her soya milk for my cup of tea, very unexpected in a not very right-on fish cafe called the Mariners!

I walked the first, very steep, bit out of town then gently rode the climb away from the sea and back into the mountains. I passed a couple of small groups of riders at junctions, possibly making sure they'd got the route right or maybe shedding layers as it was shorts and sunglasses by now. We were to head back east for the next 100 miles and the wind was now strong and mostly in our faces. I was a good half hour behind schedule but nowhere near the time limits. As the evening went on though I started feeling tired, sleepy tired, and was soon distressed to find a full blown dose of the sleepies upon me!

Now I expect to have to stop for little power naps on any overnight ride, it's not uncommon and the dark early hours of the second day of a long ride curses many riders with the need for 40 winks in a bus shelter. But it was only 9:45pm! Still, remembering that I took a brief nap around midnight last time I rode this, foolishly forgetting to get off the bike first but fortunately landing safely on the soft A40 verge, I know not to ignore those little micro-sleeps when the bike suddenly lurches and you are aware your eyes have shut for a moment.

I walked some hills I'd usually have ridden as a short walk would wake me up a bit. I slowed to a crawl - later analysis showed a 13.4mph riding speed for the first 150 miles followed by 11mph for the rest. Darkness descended, in my mind my schedule was revised to just making sure I left controls before they closed, then to making sure I just reached controls before they closed. A stop for a 5 minute nap on a nice grassy bit which I later noticed was the entrance to a rest

home, very appropriate. Everybody passed me.

Somewhere around here a large polecat slunk out of the bushes onto the road just a few metres in front of me, spotting me he turned and slunk back into the undergrowth with belly close to the ground - I think he was hoping I hadn't seen him.

The sleepy 200m descent back to the Llandovery was not a good experience but the large coffee was very welcome and I nibbled some chips and chatted with fixed rider Paul who arrived just after me. Paul's approach to the ride seemed to be more casual than mine, he's finished it before on fixed, and I took on board his point that we had till 9am which was ages yet.

I had a brief chat with the long suffering proprietor who has been serving as a control on this ride for the last 20 years, it seemed there were a couple of outstanding names on the check list he'd been given but his approach was that they'd be there cleaning up for a while yet. Leaving shortly before the control was due to close - Paul, John and a couple of others still eating - I set out for the next climb on the seemingly endless 46k to Bwlch where basic sleep facilities were offered.

Before leaving Llandovery, still on the A40, I was aware of a rider with no lights on my right saying something. I hit pause on the iPod and turned to see a lad of about 12 on a BMX, unusual after 1 in the morning even in Wales. 'I beat you' he repeated. 'Ah but I'm going to beat you to Chepstow' I replied. 'Yebbut you can't do this' - he did that trick where they stand on the saddle while still holding the handlebars and freewheeling along. Then he dropped behind. This did happen I think, it was just too complicated to be a sleep-deprivation hallucination.

The coffee kept me going for half an hour, then a powernap and later a caffeinated

energy gel. I was surprised to find Peter Holden, organiser of last week's 300, controlling at Bwlch Village Hall. The volunteers behind audax put in many, many hours to make these events work. I found a vacant sleeping mat behind the stage curtain and laid down in the dark for 30 minutes shuteye. 5am and I ate my last porkless pie then, 15 minutes after the control closed and with only 2 more riders still there, I set off for the last 60k back to Chepstow.

Only half an hour but that sleep really did the trick, instead of a continuation of my stop, start, crawl of the night before I was happy and strong again and enjoyed the early morning ride along the A40 through Crickhowell and Abergavenny. The remaining 2 riders passed but I seemed to be OK for time as long as I didn't puncture or anything.

I knew about the sting in the tale, the 200m climb between the Usk and Wye valleys, which awaited in the final few miles of the ride. I climbed it no problem though, a brief walk halfway up to relieve my back as it was too steep to ride seated. As is proper on a Welsh ride the rain came down and I honked through the woods and the downpour traumatising the world with a rendering of Pink Floyd's Shine on You Crazy Diamond, which I was fortunate enough not to have to hear as I had the iPod earphones in, accompanied by the grunts and creaks I was no doubt also emitting.

I finished with 50 minutes to spare and was awarded the Lantern Rouge which I shouldn't go on about too much as audax events are not supposed to be competitive. A couple of hours kip in the tent before it got unbearably hot in the morning sunshine and then an easy drive home to laze away the rest of the Bank Holiday weekend. All in all a great rides with many extremes of experience - I'm not planning to take the fixie back to Wales in the near future though. That was tough!

The Cornwall Tor - Noel Molland

On Sunday the 10th of April I rode the 'Cornwall Tor' sportive. Being my first ever sportive I decided to ride the "shorter" route of 44 miles.

The Cornwall Tor (originally The North Cornwall Tor) was started by Cornwall Council to show off Cornwall and demonstrate it has some great cycling routes. The sportive organisers 'Kilo To Go' describe the Cornwall Tor as "Britain's most scenic coastal sportive". Since its initial inception, the Cornwall Tor has grown in popularity and is now part of the Wiggle Super Sportive series, sanctioned by the UCI (International Cyclist Union) and regulated by British Cycling. This year's 2011 Tor attracted over 800 riders!

For anyone organising a sportive British Cycling recommends that "consideration should be given to finding a hill early in the event to reduce the possibility of bunches forming". The Cornwall Tor organisers took this literally and found a nice hill for everyone to cycle up. Followed by another nice hill. Followed by another one. Followed by another one.....



The Tor was like a roller coaster ride of steep ups followed by equally steep downs and appeared to take in every 1 in 5 hill that the organisers could find. Even at the end of the Tor, when everyone was knackered they diverted people off a nice undulating road to force us up one final steep climb. I overheard at least one person describing this last climb as "evil".

As for the ride itself, it took place on a nice sunny Sunday. I set off at just after 8am with a small group of about 8 other riders but soon we were either catching up, or being caught, by other groups and so I soon found myself in a bunch of about 30 riders.

The Tor initially took us out of Bodmin directly northwards towards the coast. Then once we hit the coast we travelled north east for several miles, taking in such pretty locations as Port Isaac (the very scenic fishing village where Doc Martin is filmed), Tintagel (the legendry home of King Arthur) and Boscastle (home of the famous Witches Museum). Then those of us on the shorter Tor split off from the others and after climbing a steep hill out of Boscastle we then joined a road due south which took us back to Bodmin. Those on the longer Tors kept on the scenic but very hilly coastal road.

As promised the views were stunning with either rolling hills or seascapes as the back drop. Pretty little fishing villages gave way to cows in fields. Welcome shade came from several wooded sections we rode past. At one point the Tor took us near to the start of Sustrans "Camel Trail" and here a small group of leisure cyclists stopped to cheer as the sportive riders whizzed past.

Unfortunately for me, cramp kicked in at about 25 miles during one of the numerous climbs. Despite my best attempts I couldn't shake it off and it remained with me for the remainder of the ride (getting worse with every upward hill). Due to the cramp I lost contact with the group I was with and so for the last 15 miles I rode solo (taking some time out to enjoy an impromptu picnic of Nakd bars and water).

However, despite the cramp, the ride was very lovely, helped by wonderful sunshine and although I don't remember having a huge smile on my face for the duration of the entire ride, all of the official photos show just that!

London Marathon – Andy Jordan

We had a fairly small turn out this year at the London Marathon but I managed to see some club members on the day.

In what felt like the early hours I bumped into Mary near the coffee stall at the blue start and we had a good chat. Out on the road where the blue and red routes merge I came out almost parallel to Jeff as he ran down the red side of the road and I the blue. And I bumped into Peter Simpson both out on the course as he took photos (I think somewhere around the 5 mile mark?) and of course I saw Peter again at the finish. It's great to have such a stalwart in the club who always turns up to support us and then wait so patiently at the finish to greet us & take our photos - thanks Peter!



Andy after the 2011 London Marathon

I had a good race on the day.

Earlier in the year I had trained to run at 7:03 pace (a 3:05 time) which would give me some leeway to get in under my 3:15 target time. My previous fastest marathon being a 3:22 I was determined this year to run a sub

3:15 good for age time to get automatic qualifying for next time round.

I had some hiccups to both my training and fitness in the 8 weeks before the race so I decided on a more conservative pace of 7:10 to 7:15 which would still get me in under the 3:15 mark. I started in pen 2 with my younger brother rather than in pen 1. I think this was the right decision as the morning proved quite warm and in the latter stages of the race I chucked a lot of water over myself to keep cool. My race report is really fairly uneventful as I ran a fairly evenly paced race and the miles just seemed to fall away. My second half was a couple of minutes slower than the first but I put this down to the increasing heat. I felt the strongest I ever have done in the closing miles of a marathon and really enjoyed the race, smiling and enjoying the spectator support rather than my usual tears and grimaces and fingers in the ears to keep out the din! It did seem this year that there were a lot of spectators and supporters all around the route (probably the sunny weather) and the support was fantastic as usual.

So my official finish time was 3:10:32 with an overall finish position of 1822nd and a finish in my age group of 233rd. I'm absolutely delighted with the result as I hit my target for the good-for-age qualifying and because I felt so comfortable at that pace throughout the race, I'm confident that I still have faster time in me for another time.

I'm now thinking of putting some emphasis into my training for road racing for the 10K to marathon distances and perhaps only running one or two ultras for fun this year.

At least six members successfully completed the 2011 Virgin London Marathon. Gert Cowling was first VC&AC lady in with a time of 4:56:39 placing her 19th of 59 finishers in the 65-69 female category. Not far behind were members Caroline Chapman 5:02:15 and Mary Davis 5:03:06.

Andy Jordan was first VC&AC man in with his time of 3:10:32, Jeff Adams finished shortly after in 3:17:32 and Ryan Procter in 3:27:29. Well done all!

Dane returns for final marathon in town where he began

By David Polkinghorne
Athletics

After 30 years of marathons, Jens Kieffer-Olsen took a final trip down memory lane as he ran his last race in the city where it all began.

Yesterday he boarded a train to Sydney after competing in the *Canberra Times* Canberra Marathon on Sunday, just as he did after he ran his first endurance test back in 1981.

Tonight he will stay in the same Sydney hotel where he saw *Midnight Oil* all those years ago.

By chance, Sunday's race was the 42nd time he had completed a 42km race, having run 20 in his native

country Denmark, 13 in Britain, five in Australia and one each in Greece, Sweden, Poland and Switzerland.

He finished in 4hr 21min 30sec.

Kieffer-Olsen was struggling to find work in Denmark after graduating from his engineering degree until the Australian Government sponsored his move down under.

He wanted to run his last marathon in the country he called home for nine years because he feels without its climate he would never have taken up the sport.

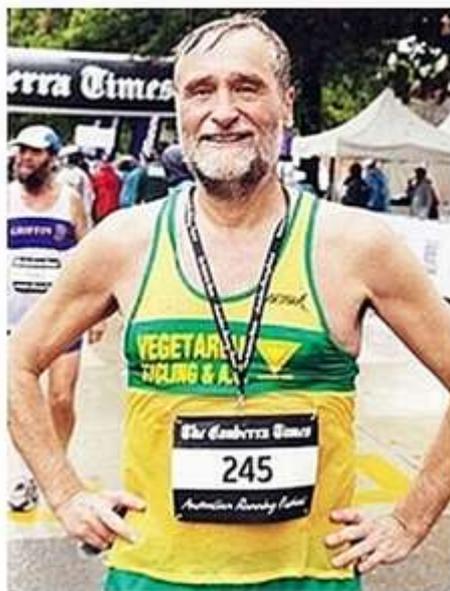
"It's a very happy day – ending it on a good note as well as starting it on a good note in Canberra," the 63-year-old said at the train station.

"It's just very appropriate because if I hadn't lived in Australia 30 years ago I would never have taken up marathon running because it's a hard thing to practice running in winter in Denmark."

After running his 41st race in October 2009, Kieffer-Olsen thought about whether he should tackle another one and came up with the idea of returning to the city where it all began.

Besides, he owed his Aussie friends a visit having not returned since he left in 1985.

The turmoil that surrounded the event last year – with two parties fighting over the rights to host the



event – left him worried he would have to delay his trip.

But just before Christmas last year he noticed that entries were open for 2011.

Kieffer-Olsen took up running as a way to prove to himself and others that his decision to become a vegetarian wasn't bad for his health.

"Whenever relatives or friends came to ask, 'How can you be a vegetarian? It's not good for you' I'd say, 'How many marathons have you done? I've done that number'.

"Basically it was a defence against people who were barking about it not being healthy."

And he showed his continued

commitment to the cause by running in his Vegetarian Cycling and Athletics Club singlet, which just happened to be green and gold.

Having been struck down by dehydration twice in the past, Kieffer-Olsen was thankful of Sunday's cool change.

He thought a repeat of Saturday's 24 degrees could've put him in the medical tent or possibly even worse.

The first time, he passed out in a 10km run in Sydney and woke up in hospital, the second he had to be forced on to a stretcher by St John's officers in the City2Surf.

"Of course I protested," he said. "I wanted to finish and I said I

could easily ... and then I would've said finish but I didn't because I passed out and woke up in a [medical] tent."

After visiting a friend in Adelaide, where he also lived for a while, Kieffer-Olsen will return to his home town of Slagelse.

There he will adjust to a life without marathons – although he will be certain to run half-marathons.

Sunday's race also saw eight new Griffins (10 marathons) inducted.

Paul Every, Rob Thorpe, Rick Patzold, Peter Thomson, Pam Muston, Jeff Morunga, Ruth Baussmann and Elizabeth Bennett have all now completed 10 Canberra marathons.

Breaking the Duck after 25 Years of Racing - Peter Simpson

I started running on the road when I was 25 years old and ran my first event in Reading, the Golden Arrow 10K, 20 October 1985. At that time cloth badges were quite common as a memento and still have my original tracksuit top covered in sew-on badges.

Into my thirties, my times for 10K were still not great, around 40 mins and occasionally as low as 43 mins when the standards were higher than today. The mid to late 1990s was the breakthrough when times went as low as 38 mins and 37.53 is my PB on a flat course in West London.

Shortly after the millennium I began to suffer regular calf strains but was not prepared to have a long break. Times of course suffered and were generally no higher than 42 mins for several years. I also found it difficult to build up enough fitness to attempt many half marathons and the marathon was out of the question. It was only when I left my desk job in 2006 and became more active during the week that the injuries reduced which allowed improvements. Times lowered to 41 mins and at the Chichester 10k in October 2007, achieved 40.55.

Competition in the V40-49 age group has always been high so chances of an individual prize have not been worth considering. It was only when I ran the Watford Autumn 5 miles off-road challenge in November 2007 with a field around 200 I began to see that a category prize was possible in the over 50 age group. Still no chance in the V40-49 group. Two weeks after my 50th in November 2010, the Watford Autumn Challenge was scheduled. I was feeling confident especially as I only had a short ride across town from the railway station.

Given the lack of competition so I thought, I lined up close to the start line and went off at a fair but sustainable pace, uphill early on. Many did pass me but they were generally young (or senior) runners. I did rein back many of these runners apart from one runner who appeared to be in my age group and finished a few seconds behind him. At the presentation I was still anticipating victory as the other runner just ahead was a V60 so not in competition for the V50 prize. Unfortunately there was another V50 runner about a minute ahead.

My next target event for the V50 prize was the Prestwood 10K, an event of similar standard and numbers of entries. I ran it in May 2010 aged 49 and despite returning from injury, still finished the course 21st, time 43.22, and noticed that the 1st V50 time was only 44 mins. I immediately thought that I must run it again when I shall be a V50.



Peter, Keith, Nik, Mary & Sharon at Prestwood

The build-up to the 2011 Prestwood 10K was not ideal, missing some training in April and in the days leading up to the event was not in the best of health. I still went but there were delays on the local train to Tring thereafter cycling the 13 miles or so in the Chilterns with a fair amount of luggage, leaving me only 40 minutes for recovery at the venue. Starting the race I was soon feeling somewhat tired but did not let it dissuade me from my goal of the V50 prize. Once again many runners overtook me early into the race but gradually I reined them back until there were few in sight in the last 2K or so. I was still struggling, not helped by the wind this year in the later stages. I was not sure of my time at the finish but guessed around 43 mins. I did not get too excited as at Watford last November, especially as the presentation was quite low key. The male V50 prize winner was almost the last to be announced and it was indeed me. Unfortunately like all other prize winners I was given a box of Cadbury's Roses chocolates. What followed was more pleasing when some of the audience present noticed that I was a cyclist and were interested in the double achievement.



We hear from new member Anna Szubert from Poland. Having recently returned to running following injury Anna finished the Solomon Warsaw Trail Running 10k in 50:09.

Anna's favourite 10k to date was also her first, the Warsaw Uprising Race: "The event was an anniversary to the Warsaw Uprising during the WW II and it took place in the historical surroundings of Warsaw Old Town. As we have started in the evening, there were lots of people standing, including insurgents, holding candles - what an amazing view! I have dedicated my first run to my beloved Grandmother ... always cheering me on."

With a 1:58 half marathon achieved last September Anna is harbouring thoughts about this year's Warsaw Marathon.

Fineshades Wood Canix – Steve Coot

The main trouble with Cani-cross is that there are less than 20 weekends during the 9 months of the season spread the length and breadth of the country, so unless you are one of those obsessives that appear in every field of activity there is just too much travelling involved for a 5-6km run to do many of them We usually look to combine them with something else and Corby being kind of en route to our old stomping ground in Dunstable where Di had family to visit, we took the detour.

Another problem is that there is a lot of hanging about. With a 9:30 briefing for 10:30 and later starts for the main field, and too many dogs about to be able to let Len off for a wild charge about, he's invariably totally wound up by start time, on this occasion joining in the barking and howling at full volume as he found his inner wolf. (Incidentally, if you think you're a dog lover try Inner Wolf's catalogue for a wide range of dog products you could never have thought of needing - a collapsible camp bed for your dog to keep him off the wet ground whilst on camping trips being one of my own favourites.)

The Fineshades course was flat and dry apart from an uphill finish. Len went out like a rocket as our time came, blitzing past other teams with me pounding along in his wake as fast as my little legs would carry me. A couple of kms in and he eventually realised this wasn't just a few hundred metres after a ball and he slowed, still leading out and chasing those who had started before us. Too many other teams, with start times too close together for my liking since the leads connecting dog and human harness are a couple of metres long, so unless you get your dog in check before passing it's too late if dogs take a disliking to each other.

24'04 for the 5km, 24/60 overall, and a total buzz having shared the wild exuberance of the dogs.



Visit our website or contact Peter Simpson for price and availability

Vegetarian Cycling & Athletics Club Roundup

Fragments of VCAC results and news from the last few months – a more comprehensive listing of results submitted can be found on our website:

VCAC members have participated in a fairly international selection of marathons this spring. Six members ran the London Marathon with Andy Jordan first VCAC in (report on page 15). Manuel Corriente completed the Madrid Marathon in 3:18; Jens Kieffer-Olson ran the Australian Canberra Marathon in 4:21 (see article on page 16); Paul Kerrison finished the Brighton Marathon in 4:47, well under his 5hr target, and Andy Jordan ran Edinburgh in 3:39.

A fair crop of PBs have been reported with Keith Hammond's methodical approach paying off when he knocked 38 secs of his previous 10k best at Silverstone finishing in 38:09. Further evidence of the payback for proper training (apart from his getting carried away at the Watford Half early in the season) was Andy Jordan's 3hr 10m London Marathon, easily inside his 3:15 target, beating his previous PB by 12 minutes. Nik Windle took the lazy approach and secured PBs for 5k and 5 miles on the basis

that he hardly ever ran these distances so didn't have much to beat, his MK Half Marathon PB of 1:45 was a little more deserved.

Some strong VCAC placings as well with Peter Simpson winning the MV50 category at the Prestwood 10k (see page 17). Keith's finished 7/203 MV45 at the MK Half and his Silverstone performance secured 8th position out of 102 in his category. Andy came 1822nd of almost 35,000 competitors with his London Marathon Result where Gert Cowling came 19th of 59 finishers in the 65-69 female cat. A great result at Oulton Park for the VCAC multisport contingent with Steve Wigglesworth winning his age at the sprint event and a win for the VCAC team (report on page 6). Jo Starr won her category at the Roadford Sprint Tri.

'Nothing ventured, nothing gained' is sometimes the best approach with endurance events and sometimes a heroic failure is harder work than an easy victory. Steve Coote's preparation for the 78 mile Votwo Oner ultra was sabotaged by a cold shortly before the event and foot problems and he had to abandon (as do half the field most years as it's a toughy). Nik Windle packed 90 miles into the 260 mile Faffers (Didcot – Knighton) audax as strong headwinds reduced him to a crawl and proved his choice of 71" fixed gear over ambitious.

As well as scuppering Nik's efforts strong winds in May put a dent in Jim Chesedine's time at the Tewkesbury Half though his slower than expected 1:31 still earned him a position 20 places up on last year so sounds like the whole field felt windswept. Peter Simpson promoted VCAC at a rather wet and windy Bristol VegfestUK despite a neighbouring gazebo being blown into his leading to the need for sticky tape repairs and weighing down with concrete slabs.



Mary Davis at the London Marathon

Being such a spread out club we try to target certain events to give members a chance to meet and compete together. There has been a fair VCAC turnout at the Milton Keynes Half and 10k; Silverstone, Flitwick and Prestwood 10ks and of course the London Marathon. The Oulton Park duathlons were successfully targeted by multisport members.

For future possible race meet-ups keep an eye on the Yahoo group and the [events diary](#) on our website or talk to your local contact (page 2). Cyclists in the south might want to join Nik and Steve at the [Anthony Maynard Sportive](#) on 17th July from Theale. Those in the South West please read Steve's bit on the [River Dart 10km Swim](#) on page 6, I understand the event is now full but I expect support would be welcome.