

# New horizons

Take your cycling somewhere new in 2009. Seven cyclists describe **holidays, sportive rides, competitions** and **events** they've enjoyed with CTC



## Take a week in Provence

Martin Brice escaped to the south of France with CTC Cycling Holidays

**T**here comes a time for us all when we simply have to get away from the winter, the city, the rain. We need to go south – perhaps beyond the M25 and maybe even south of the English Channel. My escape was through the CTC holidays website. A fortnight after deciding to escape, and hardly any time after leaving gloomy Gatwick, I was at Montpellier airport. It was 18 degrees and sunny.

Two short cycle rides and a train journey later I was at St Quentin La Poterie where Doug Stoddart runs his self-guided CTC holidays. All week we had days where the temperature was between 18 and 24 degrees, with little wind and absolutely no rain. We woke to a large Continental-style breakfast, did runs of between 50k and 70k on deserted country roads and stopped for lunch at delightful restaurants that charged 12 Euros for three courses with a glass of wine and coffee included.

Doug has a huge number of laminated CTC-style route cards for dozens of runs of all distance and difficulty. Some days we rode on flat rural roads, other

days through hilly country where some descents went on for five miles and we would be suddenly drowning in the rich scents of a sunny Provençal afternoon. In the late afternoon we'd return to the villa to a substantial meal cooked by Doug's partner, Lynn.

One morning, I had the delicious sensation of travelling at a number of kilometres in excess of both the speed limit and my age as we hurtled downhill through a deserted village with the wind streaming through what little is now left of my hair. Life was good. I'm going back next year.

*For more details about CTC Cycling Holidays, visit the website [www.cyclingholidays.org.uk](http://www.cyclingholidays.org.uk) or to request a brochure phone 0845 045 1121*





## Attend a cycle rally

Gareth Rainford went to the York Cycle Show once again with his young daughter

**F**or most of the year I commute in Birmingham and feel like a second-class citizen: cars cutting me up, pedestrians walking into my path, and once having to dodge a bottle of Yakult thrown at me. But for two days a year there's the York Cycle Show – two blissful days when cyclists come first.

In 2008 we visited the event after a break of some years. We took the train and camped. It's still just about possible for a family to train it to York. Camping is the best way to soak up the atmosphere of the event, especially if you pitch in the cyclists-only area.

It rained a lot and then the wind got up, blowing the expensive Nokia stand to pieces. Some events were cancelled. But we had a brilliant time. Bikes definitely came first – waking up and seeing hundreds of little tents with bikes outside seemed perfectly normal. Being in the packed congregation at York Minster, all dressed in cycling garb, made the regularly-dressed worshippers look positively odd. The parade from the Minster to the Knavesmire, where the show is based, holds up the traffic for an hour – it's great.

There were also racing and vintage events on the grass track and the retail show, as well as a stunt team and children's entertainments. The city of York itself has lots to tempt the visitor from further afield.

I think that the acid test of the success of a trip is whether a three-year old girl enjoys it. Mine certainly did – despite getting very wet. She won the Likeabike race and came away enthused about cycling. That's what York is all about.

*For more about York Cycle Show, visit [www.yorkcycleshow.co.uk](http://www.yorkcycleshow.co.uk) or tel: 0844 736 8456.*



## Try competitive touring

At 17, Amy Juden won the CTC Tourist Competition as best junior girl

**I**'ve always done a lot of cycling and in 2006 I noticed that I'd placed 'second junior girl' in the CTC Tourist Competition. In 2007, my last year as a junior, I thought I'd go for it. It would also be an achievement target for the Duke of Edinburgh award.

I planned which events to ride using the website, [www.ctc-competitions.org.uk](http://www.ctc-competitions.org.uk). For a good score you have to do a mixture of different sorts of events: some tests of strength and skill like hill-climbs and map-reading; an off-road ride; and a bunch of different-length endurance rides. The furthest I thought I could go was 200km.

I did most of the rides with my dad. Our campaign opened at home with the West Surrey 'Bicycle Icicle'. It's easier to see the point in sloggng uphill in

freezing rain when there are points to be gained! 2007's Annual Dinner came down our way and my dad led a ride that ticked the off-road box for me and for that year's junior boy winner Richard Delf.

Not wanting to travel all over Britain point-hunting (you get more for 'away' events), we realised the Welsh Festival of Cycling was a one-stop DATC treasure trove. I did pretty well in the competitive events, but my best ride of the year was the 200km audax over all those Welsh mountains. It was awesome! I was so pleased to be receive the Rally first lady award – me just a junior.

These long rides also boosted my fitness for some actual touring that summer. And the following year a big



shiny cup was presented to me at the National Dinner in the Stormont Northern Ireland Parliament building. Result!

*For more information about the CTC Tourist Competition, visit [www.ctc-competitions.org.uk](http://www.ctc-competitions.org.uk) or phone CTC national office.*

Photo: Chris Juden

# Ride a CTC sportive

Dan Joyce has ridden all three of CTC's Challenge Rides

**R**iding through the English countryside in summer, on an efficient bike with a light load, is reward enough in itself. It's what those blue-sky days are for. The added appeal of a sportive ride is that it's a definite goal – a 100k or 100-mile ride that you *will* do, not that you might if the fancy takes you – and that you're doing it with scores of other cyclists, giving you company and camaraderie on the road. It's not so different from a shorter audax ride, and indeed some CTC Challenge Rides can be ridden as audax events.

CTC sportives are different from other events in that they raise money for cycling – £40,000 and counting so far. That money is ploughed back into cycling via CTC's campaigning work. Then there's the fact that they've been going for years now. They're established. If you didn't make Winnats Pass last year, you can try again.

All three rides go through some great countryside: the David Duffield Ride takes in rolling Wiltshire hills; the Ron Kitching Ride goes over the glorious North Yorkshire Moors; the Phil and Friends Ride links up some classic Peak District climbs.

Ah, the climbs. Go on a bike with a triple chainset or a compact double. When you're cycling, you accept that scenery is often bought with sweat. But 100 or 150 kilometres in hilly terrain is hard enough without strained knees or cleats worn out from walking. I did the Ron Kitching on a singlespeed, but wouldn't have swapped the triple chainset I used in the Phil and Friends for anything. My other tip is to let others take



Photo by Stephen Bunn

the photos – racing to get ahead of and rejoin the group you're with is less fun than simply enjoying the scenery and the company of your fellow riders.

*More details on the Challenge Rides at [www.ctc.org.uk/challengerides](http://www.ctc.org.uk/challengerides) or by phoning CTC national office.*

## Do the End to End

Simon Reynolds rode from Land's End to John O'Groats last year

**I** got back into cycling when I lost my driving licence for six months. It was one of the best things that's ever happened to me. I bought an electrically assisted bike and began commuting 20 miles to work on that, progressing to a normal bike after a few months. It felt great.

As a goal to keep me motivated, I decided to do the End to End, which I worked up to by trying (at a slow pace) some longer distance rides, many organised by the British Heart Foundation. When I started my E2E in August 08 I had lost five stone in about 18 months. I was down to 27

stone and was fitter than I had been in years. I hadn't used a special diet. I just ate a bit healthier and let the exercise do the rest.

The ride itself was fantastic, even though it was very wet (remember last

August?). I did not do the shortest or the

flattest route. I live in Nottingham and came home and had five days rest in the middle. It took me 23 days in total, 16 days riding to do a total of 1,082 miles.

I would recommend it to anyone. If you have the willpower, determination and motivation, I believe the fitness part will come together no matter what shape you are in. It's not that hard if you do it at your own pace.

I enjoyed it that much I have now set myself a new challenge of cycling from Nottingham to Russia next summer, raising money for Cancer Research UK. I also sold my car on the 1st of January – voluntarily this time!

*For more information about CTC's End to End information pack, visit [www.ctc-maps.org.uk](http://www.ctc-maps.org.uk) or phone CTC national office.*







## Seek out new rides

Helen Sandelands spent years completing the British Cycle Quest and its predecessor

in far-flung Youth Hostels. I was slowly ticking off hostels and TEA checkpoints when two things happened. The TEA became the BCQ and new questions were set, so I would have to revisit places I had already been. Secondly a car hit me, breaking my ankle

Inverness the long way round, arriving at 11pm after 135 miles!

Finally, only Orkney and Shetland remained. I wanted to finish on Midsummer's Day at the most northerly checkpoint: Sullom Voe on the Shetland Isles. Question number 402: 'What animal is depicted on the road sign?'

My son's grown up now, and I'm cycletouring more than ever. If it hadn't been for the TEA/BCQ I would never have visited many of the places I've seen. It gave me a reason to travel far and wide in my own country. What now? Well, I've already made a start on the French Brevet de Cyclotouriste National...

For details about the British Cycle Quest, visit [www.ctc-competitions.org.uk](http://www.ctc-competitions.org.uk) or phone CTC national office.

**I**t started on a rainy October Sunday in the 1980s when I was 24. The morning after a party in Liverpool, I rode down to the Liver Building to answer the first question in what was then the Touring Explorers' Award. Then I took my bike on the Mersey ferry to tour the Wirral.

A few years later my son Mark was old enough to come hostelling with me. I took on jobs as a volunteer warden

and putting paid to my sporting life as a long-distance runner. I became hooked on the BCQ, planning more and more cycling trips away.

Riding to Dorset and back for the 2003 Birthday Rides finished off England for me and I'd done Wales, but I still had most of Scotland to cover. Over the next 12 months I undertook four tours north of the border. One day I rode from Tomintoul Youth Hostel to

## Celebrate CTC's founding

Anne Worsley attended the CTC Birthday Rides for the first time last year

**I**d always intended to go to the Birthday Rides but I'd never got round to it until last summer. I loved it from the very beginning – the welcome when tea and cakes arrived even before the room keys were distributed. The accommodation was excellent, but the best bit was that everyone (whether sleeping in tents or en-suite rooms) acknowledged that we were all just cyclists out to explore someone else's patch.

It was fantastic to potter through the quiet Cotswold lanes seeing fellow cyclists on both longer and shorter runs, all easily identified by Birthday Rides frame numbers. The days offered different challenges and pleasures: from an audax to a sumptuous spread at local Women's Institute; from the tour of a National Trust property to the Birthday Tea at an Indian-style mansion opened exclusively for our visit.

More than 500 of us saw youngsters on the rides enjoying Bo the clown and the magician. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie among us. Every night there was cycling-themed entertainment and the chance to talk over the day's adventures in the bar. One of the best evening events was the coach trip to Hook Norton Brewery. My only disappointment during the whole week was being beaten by an eight-year-old in the freewheeling competition!

It was a great week. I felt I had been part of a great cycling tradition yet I could ride when and how I liked on routes planned by people who knew just what to see and where to go. I can't wait for August.

Visit [www.cyclingholidays.org.uk](http://www.cyclingholidays.org.uk) for details on the 2009 Birthday Rides or call event co-ordinator Max Scott 01536 712507.



Left: Chris Juden. Above left: Michael Pitt-Payne