

# FALMOUTH WHEELERS MAGAZINE 2025

## Chairman's Xmas Message

**A**s 2025 began, I certainly didn't have "write the Falmouth Wheelers Chair's Christmas message" on my bingo card, but here we are! Somehow, I've ended up with the privilege of writing the front page of the club's magazine, and I'm delighted to use it to wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas.

Before I look back on 2025, I'd like to start with a big thank you to Ian for his time as Chair. His 18 months at the helm gave us all a chance to reflect on who we are as a club, how we ride, and what we want from our group rides and socials.

Under his steady (and occasionally very patient) guidance, our membership grew, our rides flourished, and we somehow managed to keep most of the group pointing in roughly the same direction and upright — an achievement worthy of an award on its own. Thank you, Ian!

Ian's resignation in June took us all by surprise and left the club in search of a new Chair. After considerable banter (most rides!), a few persuasive arguments, and the occasional strategically timed free coffee, I eventually put my hat in the ring and 'volunteered' myself as Caretaker Chair.

As well as thanking Ian, I'd also like to thank the whole club for the support you've given me, before and during the EGM and since my appointment. It's made stepping into the role far less daunting and far more enjoyable than it might have been.

Onto the year...

2025 was another really busy year for the Club, and as we look back, it's fantastic to see just how much support we've given to charities, each other, and the local community.



Whether we're backing the Walking and Cycling campaign, helping our three chosen charities, joining UK-wide initiatives, or throwing our weight behind all manner of fundraising rides, the Falmouth Wheelers are never found wanting. This year we also extended our support to include Introductory Rides, giving new riders the chance to discover the joys (and occasional hills!) that we all get from cycling. It's been wonderful to see fresh faces joining us and sharing in the fun.

Over the year, Club members have raced, toured, and taken part in Audax, Sportive, and Charity events both near and far. Between us we've raised over £5,000 for the Cornwall Branch of The Motor Neurone Disease Association, The Mid Cornwall Branch of Parkinson's UK, Cornwall Hospice Care and St Peter's Hospice. Thanks to Paul Parkinson we've also donated much-needed equipment to The Cornwall Bicycle Project CIC.

Through the Walking & Cycling Campaign we've helped promote safer cycling, boosted people's confidence on the road and raised public awareness of both cycling and the Falmouth Wheelers. We've welcomed visitors, encouraged new members and shared plenty of miles and smiles along the way.

We end the year with 70+ members and a thriving, friendly and active cycling and social club, one with plenty to look forward to in 2026.

I've only been in the Chair for two months, but I've already seen the green shoots emerging from the seeds Ian planted. There's more structure to our group rides, better communication across all club activities, and club nights have a real 'buzz' about them again.

None of this would be possible without the support of the Committee, the members, and everyone who has volunteered their time, from organising socials to acting as Road Captains to posting ride destinations. I thank you all.

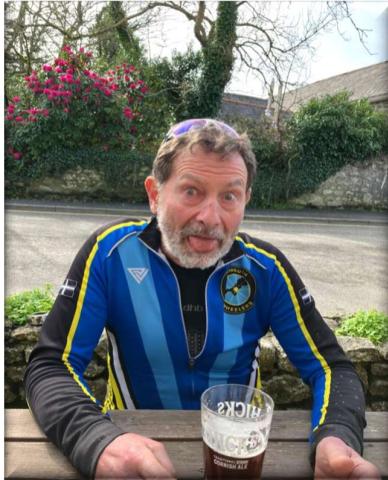
May your days be filled with good company, good rides, minimal punctures and plenty of coffee stops. Here's to a happy, healthy and wonderfully wheely 2026!

# Former Chairman's Xmas Message

For me personally this has been a funny old year. Don't know if funny is the right word, perhaps weird or worrying would be better! In July I was diagnosed with prostate cancer, which was a bit of a shock even though I'd suspected it. On top of that, I was informed, just before my prostate surgery, that I needed a full knee replacement! Obviously the prostate took precedence, and I had a radical prostatectomy on November 5th. I'm now writing this little piece in a state of incontinence!

That's enough about me. Oh no it isn't. Earlier this year I decided to relinquish the club chairmanship. It wasn't because of the above health reasons but a matter of principle, which I'm not prepared to expand on here, because, as you all know, I wouldn't want to upset anyone!

Right, enough of that stuff. Let's crack on with the club. My main ambitions within the club were to improve ride safety and to bring the club together. With regards to ride safety, last year we had numerous nominations for the 'brake award', and if I remembered correctly, Damien came out on top. What a great effort that was, and he had to do some serious damage to claim that award! I've got to say, it's good to see him back on his bike again enjoying cycling. Up until writing this, I'm not aware of any serious mishaps, but I could be wrong, and hopefully nominations will be as close to zero as possible. I do, though, remember a minor incident involving myself, and I must thank Paul for enabling this!

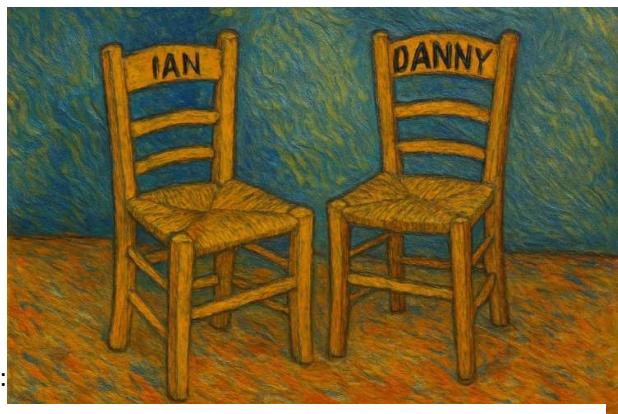


What do I mean by bringing the club together? During my time in the Wheelers, I've seen splits in the club, although not major but still divisive, and I hate the words "them and us". I'm not going to harp on about this. All I will say is that whether you're a Sunday rider, an OGIL or a Wanderer, you are more importantly a Falmouth Wheeler.

The club has now moved on from my chairmanship of shock and awe! I'm glad to see the club is now in the safe hands of our new chairman Danny. There are already small positive changes, including structured Sunday rides. Danny has posted the short and medium rides, and Robin has taken the reins for the long ride. What I will say is we shouldn't leave it all to them. Lots of us are capable of posting routes and now and then should put our hands up! It's great to see the photos Denise has posted on our WhatsApp page. Is she now vying with Sarah for the position of club photographer? Keep them coming Denise! Danny is also giving us a greater presence on Facebook with regular posts highlighting what we do. I urge you all to give him all the support you can, and you will have a club to be proud of.

That's enough of me banging on. Finally I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Great New Year.

P.S. Hopefully I'll be riding with you again towards the end of January or early February after I've seen the consultant. As long as it's not raining. Or cold!



2025: THE YEAR OF TWO CHAIRS

# Treasurer's Report

As we near the end of another cycling year, here is an update on the club's finances. We have a healthy balance in the bank and have managed to raise £934 during 2025 for our charity fund, which is expected to increase to over a £1000 with revenue from the Christmas Raffle and the Bike Jumble Event. Our chosen Charities are:-

Motor Neurone Disease Cornwall Branch in memory of former member Vanessa Carpenter donation = £500.00

Donation to Parkinson's UK in Cornwall in memory of former member Steve Hudson =£500.00

We will present the cheques to the charities at our club AGM meeting in February 2026.

Our club Audax organised by Phil Conroy, with many of our members helping on the day or riding in the event, is our principal money-raising event for the club's charity fund. This year we raised £852.12

The membership has increased to 74 during 2025 with the new household membership now in place.

By extending the new members discount to all club members, we have managed to reduce the club kit stock and have ordered a new batch of ladies & gents club jerseys.

The purchase of the new projector screen has given the club meetings a more modern vibe and has been well received by members.

The only cost we have incurred from Lloyds Bank is the monthly account maintenance fee of £4.25. The account terms and conditions have changed over the last twelve months, so we will continue to monitor bank charges.

Wishing you all safe and happy cycling in 2026.

Steve Lightfoot, Treasurer

# Charities

## True Butterflies Foundation



The True Butterflies Foundation is a Cornwall-based charity dedicated to supporting survivors of domestic abuse through long-term, trauma-informed care.

Founded to empower individuals and families affected by domestic abuse, the True Butterflies Foundation offers a comprehensive suite of services across the South West of England. Its mission is to support, rebuild, and empower those who have experienced trauma, helping them regain confidence, independence, and stability.

## Falmouth Age Concern

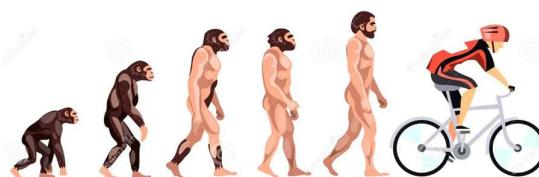


Falmouth Age Concern is a local, independent UK charity dedicated to supporting older people in Falmouth, Penryn and surrounding villages through befriending, social inclusion and wellbeing services. It aims to alleviate loneliness and isolation among elderly individuals by fostering meaningful social connections and improving overall wellbeing.

## Falmouth & Penryn Food Bank



Falmouth & Penryn Food Bank provides emergency food and support to local people in crisis, ensuring that no one in the community has to face hunger alone. The food bank exists to combat poverty and hunger in the Falmouth and Penryn area by offering three-day parcels of nutritionally balanced food to individuals and families experiencing financial hardship. It operates under the umbrella of the Trussell Trust, a UK-wide network of food banks.



# Cycle France 2025

It was almost a year ago when Phil asked me if I'd like to join him on the charity cycle ride in France in aid of Cornwall Hospice Care that September. It seemed like a good idea at the time. Lots of time to prepare and get cycle-fit to ensure I was up to the mileage – not that I had a clue how far it would be yet. Knowing how Phil loves cycling in France, I said "Yes. It'll be fun."

Time moved on, and before long we had filled in the forms and secured our places on Cycle France 2025, joining 29 other cyclists. Phil and I decided to self-fund—chasing sponsorship is far too time-consuming—and although it was expensive, I reassured myself it was for a worthy cause and would double as my summer holiday. In the weeks and months that followed, I steadily built up my mileage, even managing a training ride of more than 80 miles. We set up a Just Giving page on Facebook, setting ourselves the ambitious target of raising £1,000. Our team name? The "Senagers". Phil's idea, not mine.

About a month before the charity ride, we were invited to a meeting at Mount Edgcumbe Hospice. During the visit we were given a tour and shown how the funds we were raising would be used. Construction was already underway on a new Crisis Intervention Suite, four single-patient bedrooms, a Clinical Therapies Hub and a redesigned patient entrance—all part of a wider effort to ensure the hospice remains fit for the future.

On meeting the other cyclists, I was struck by how many men there were. I had expected the group to be mostly women, but in fact there were about twice as many men as women. I remember thinking, "Wow...why is that?" Everyone looked super fit, and I suddenly felt somewhat inferior in both cycling ability and knowledge—especially when I learned that most of the group had already done a similar charity ride two years earlier in aid of Cornwall Hospice. I tried to put those feelings aside, but it was hard. We met our support team who would accompany us to France: John, a bike mechanic from Clive Mitchell; Ben, the physio; Janie, head of fundraising; Tracey, one of the van drivers; Frazer, Director of Income; and another Ben, who took photos and videos.

Phil had given the bikes a good check over, so I was confident that my bike would be ok, even if I wasn't. We had our routes loaded onto our Wahoo

computers as the route was self-navigating. Obviously, I would rely on Phil to navigate, and I would chip in, if and when required. Everyone was chatting and seemed excited. I felt nervous and anxious. I was asked several times by various people: "Are you looking forward to this?" Each time, I replied, "with trepidation!" Soon after, 29 of



us piled onto a coach for the long journey from the hospice to Portsmouth ferry terminal. The support staff travelled up in their three vans, and our bikes were carried on a huge open trailer, although mine and Phil's rode on the roof of the vehicle towing the trailer. We had a couple of comfort stops on the way up, arrived at the ferry port in good time and took possession of our bikes. That was the end of the road for the bike trailer. From now on, it was just us and our bikes with our support team. We all proceeded to cycle to the designated waiting area. By now, it was cold and dark. We had to wait for over two hours before we could board the ferry. The only blessing was that it wasn't raining. We started putting on extra layers of clothing and eating all the snacks we had on us. Bags of sweets were passed around, but I wasn't going to share mine. I didn't know when I might be desperate for them. There was nowhere to shelter from the cold wind, and I began to wonder what I'd let myself in for. And we hadn't even started cycling yet!

When called, we proceeded to board the ferry and wheeled our bikes to a corner, where they were stacked against one another and secured with a thin rope. Although Phil had warned me about this, the sight of my lovely shiny blue bike wedged in a corner with a bit of rope tied around it made me even more anxious. What if the crossing was

choppy? What if my bike got scratched? We proceeded to find our cabin, where I promptly took a sea-sickness tablet and two Nytols [a herbal remedy to aid sleep] and went straight to bed.

We were fortunate to have a fairly calm crossing and arrived safely in Caen. After a brief meeting with our support team, we wheeled our bikes off the ferry and regrouped just beyond passport control. The weather was good, and we were treated to an amazing sunrise. Yes, sunrise. We were up and off the ferry whilst it was still dark. So, bike lights and high-viz jackets on and we all set off to complete almost 80 miles of cycling in the lovely French countryside, each at our own pace. Our support team, travelling in their three vans, provided mid-morning, lunchtime and mid-afternoon stops, serving food and drinks under a pop-up gazebo or out of the back of a van. 79 miles later, Phil and I arrived at Flers, where we had accommodation and an evening meal booked. I felt elated that I'd completed the first day of cycling without incident. Whatever I was eating had fuelled me really well, and I now felt confident about what Day 2 would hold in store.

Rested and well fuelled, I felt ready for the second day of cycling. This was to be my longest ride ever – 90 miles – from Flers to Dinan. As I prepared my bike and filled my big orange saddle bag with all my essentials, the realisation that I was about to cycle 90 miles hit me. People often ask what I carry in that bag. It contains everything I might possibly need: snacks, a tool kit, a spare pair of socks, a first aid kit and jackets. Yes, jackets. I usually carry a gilet, a wind cheater and a waterproof jacket. [As Sarah once said to me, "You do love your layers".] These days my first aid kit also includes antihistamines and paracetamol—precautions born of experience. I've been stung by a bumblebee twice: once inside my lip whilst running, and once inside my ear whilst cycling. So now you know what's in my saddle bag.

The day started well, but about seven miles in, I noticed Phil's rear wheel wobbling ever so slightly. Thoughts went through my head. Was this normal? Did his wheel always look like that and I'd never noticed? Should I say something? We were



pedalling up a steep hill at the time, so I shouted to him that he ought to check his wheel when we get to the top. We stopped at the crest, and Phil looked at his wheel, only to discover not one but two broken spokes. Out came the tape to secure them together and strap them clear of the others. While we worked at the side of the road, lots of other cyclists came past and asked if we were ok. Only one group actually turned back to see if they could help. It was time to call our bike mechanic, John, for assistance. We phoned the emergency number and were asked for our What3Words location. This was both time-consuming and frustrating. When we told John we were seven miles from the start, we presumed the support vehicles would be following the same route as the cyclists, making it easy to get to anyone in trouble. Not so. Apparently, they were taking faster main roads and could only find us with the help of What3Words. We were told to stay put and that they were on their way. Phil told them we would continue slowly along the route. With a 90-mile day and having suffered a setback so early in the day, we were determined to keep moving and make some progress.

With Phil's rear spokes taped together, we carried on, slowly at first. After a while, we found a suitable place to stop and wait for the support vehicle,



and John soon arrived. After he'd done some major surgery on Phil's bike, snipping the two broken spokes shorter and twisting the ends together so that they wouldn't cause an obstruction as the wheel spun, we were on our way again. I was distracted by Phil's rear

wheel, petrified it would fall off and he'd end up in a heap in the road. Still, only 80 miles to go, and the weather was glorious.

We had no idea if, or for how long, his wheel would hold out. It could fail at any moment, and that would spell the end of Cycle France 2025 for him. Where would that leave me? Of course, I would have continued without him. I had no doubt about that. Putting those thoughts aside, we pressed on, looking forward to our mid-morning snack stop. We knew it had to be close, yet there were no indications that we were in the right place. No flags on the road side. No-one directing us. So, we carried on and eventually caught up some other cyclists, only to learn that we had missed the snack

van. They'd parked up a side road, and we hadn't seen them. There was no way we were turning back, and as we were famished, Phil insisted they come and find us on route with snacks and drinks, which they did.

The remaining miles passed by, and at last Phil and I arrived at our accommodation in Dinan. I had just completed my longest ride ever. I felt a great sense of achievement, and I know Phil was very proud of me. We went to bed shattered but happy.

Our third day of cycling took us from Dinan to Lannion. Jamie, the physio, was in great demand. Lots of cyclists were having treatments on route, emerging from the van with limbs strapped and taped. Phil and I didn't require any physio support, but it was fantastic to know Jamie was there if needed. Phil's wheel held out, and we completed the 85 miles without incident.

We had an early start on Day 4 to make sure we all reached the ferry terminal at Roscoff in time for the afternoon sailing. Today's ride was a mere 41 miles. We left Lannion in darkness and thick fog, taking the busy main road full of work traffic. It was a horrible journey to our first snack stop, and we all arrived there very cold. This time, one of the support team directed us at a junction, as again, the van was parked around the corner off the route and would have been hard to spot. Phil and I didn't linger there more than a few minutes. We crammed in some snacks and had a comfort break, then hit the road



again. On route, other cyclists overtook us, then we'd see them sitting at a cafe a bit further on. I didn't want to stop. I just wanted to get to Roscoff. The weather gradually improved, and the remainder of the ride was warm and sunny, so much so that I soon shed all my outer layers. Phil and I arrived at the ferry terminal in good time, and the others

gradually cycled in over the next hour. It wasn't long before we were all queueing up to embark. The crossing proved a little lumpy, so it was a seasickness pill for Phil and me, just to be on the safe side. Once in Plymouth, we had a short ride in the dark to reach our hotel. We stored our bikes in a garage nearby and went straight to bed, whilst others stayed up drinking.

Our fifth day of cycling took us from Plymouth to Mount Edgcumbe and included the Torpoint and Boddinick ferries. Only a few miles from the start, the weather started to deteriorate with heavy showers, fog and then constant heavy rain. It was just 40 miles back to the hospice, but they were the longest, most miserable 40 miles I've ever ridden. The roads were flooded and the traffic heavy. Normally, we'd never cycle in such horrendous conditions. We had one brief snack stop at Looe Fire station, then quickly got back on the road. The hills were relentless, and I just wanted to finish. We eventually arrived at the hospice driveway where there was a small welcoming committee. As we turned in, there were more supporters lining the short route to the finish line. There were flags waving and people cheering and clapping. As my wheels crossed the line, I felt a huge sense of relief. We had done it! Cold, wet and hungry, we grabbed chips and a hot drink before cycling two miles to our car. We then had to return to the hospice to collect our luggage. Other cyclists were now arriving, but I was too cold and miserable to stop and chat. I had achieved my personal goal of completing the challenge and was just too drained to cheer the others in. At this stage, there was little comradery left in me. I had given my all to get back to the hospice, and I had nothing more in me. I just wanted to go home. And so, home we went.

So, there we have it! 29 of us cycling 335 miles in five days, climbing 16,000 feet and raising over £50,000. In the past, people have told me that when a physical challenge gets tough, it's your mental attitude that will get you through it. For me, that isn't the case. If my body's not fit and strong enough for a challenge, my mind won't fix that. Thankfully, for this challenge I was fit enough, and that was purely down to physical training. "Thank you, Phil" for supporting me throughout this huge challenge. It was a fantastic adventure to complete together. Would I do it again? Yes, I would. Just not quite yet.

– Ruth Holding

# THE OGIL by

## Sir David Attenborough

I have long been intrigued by the rumour and myth of the OGIL. I needed to find out more, but first I had to build myself up for such an arduous task. So I first took on less taxing scientific excursions to the Amazon Rain Forest and the Kalahari Desert. In the meantime, I sent in one of my researchers undercover to investigate on my behalf. This has been ongoing for twelve years!

Now the time felt right, and armed with information from my researcher, I decided to go in quest of the elusive OGIL. My journey took me to the southwestern reaches of Cornwall, to the town of Falmouth. I knew OGILs were in fact a subspecies of a group known as Falmouth Wheelers! There are other words with the prefix "sub" I could use to describe them, subnormal and subhuman being two! I believed these OGIL creatures to be wild, but in fact they have been kept in captivity for a long while.

There appears to be a ritual every Wednesday morning when OGIL keepers release them from their cages. Most of the cages are padded for obvious reasons! They mount their bicycles, their chosen mode of transport, and make their way to a gathering place known as Union Corner. Some dismounted their bikes and to, to my surprise, could actually stand upright on two legs! I move a little closer to observe them in their natural habitat. I can hear them talking, but it's a language I'm unfamiliar with. As I understand, it is a local dialect known as "talking bollocks"! I won't get any closer – not because I might spook them, but because they might spook me, as their behaviour can be totally irrational.

After a while, they mount their bikes and move off slowly but erratically, and I follow at a safe distance! I now understand why they are native to Cornwall. The high Cornish hedges alongside most roads are ideal for them to follow a route, and it makes it easier to corral them. This is why an open road or a junction throws them into complete and utter confusion! They have to stop, scratch their heads, talk more bollocks and eventually move on again.

As you can see from the accompanying photo, OGILs are easily identified by their vacant look and posture,



with the one at the back gesticulating that he thinks they might be about three feet away from a main road!

Having left Union Corner, their journey takes them to another gathering place, where there are more OGILs waiting. I'm still confused by this, as I thought the OGILs were only native to Falmouth! Could these be feral OGILs who have escaped captivity and now live in the wild? This begs the question: why don't all OGILs escape? A number of autopsies have shown that the OGIL brain is no larger than a walnut! Consequently this would make it very difficult for them to survive in the wild and explains the need to remain in captivity. This is also why they make excellent pets!

The OGILs now move on, but must first decide on their feeding ground for the day. This can be quite convoluted with various destinations shouted out. On this particular occasion, Portreath is settled upon. They mount their bikes and are about to set off when one OGIL shouts out, "so which route are we taking to Porthleven," and everything grinds to a halt! This particular OGIL, a *Caponeis michaelis*, Latin for "scaley old lizard" [Editor's note: A common translation error. It is actually Latin for "young gazelle."], is justly barracked for not listening! When I say not listening this is due to the OGIL species having poor or nonexistent hearing.

Their ears only serve an aesthetic purpose and to keep their glasses on!

I won't bore you with the journey to the proposed destination, but, needless to say there are near misses with other road users and each other due to the OGILs' lack of spacial awareness, and a lot of stopping as they also lack any sense of direction! Eventually they arrive.

Here at a cafe, the OGIL feeding ground, they must order their food. This creates a problem, as the OGILs can no longer talk bollocks and have to communicate with humans! After ordering, they usually sit around a table and – you've guessed it! – talk more bollocks or grunt for their food! When the food does arrive, it causes great confusion, as not only are OGILs deaf, they also have a limited memory capacity. Having fed and after what has been a stressful experience – for the cafe staff – it is time for the OGILs to leave and find a way home to their owners.

On arrival at home, they are given a pat on the head for being good little OGILs and are placed back in their cage until the following Wednesday. The more troublesome ones have to be cajoled back into the cage with a hefty kick up the arse!

In conclusion, mankind is fortunate that OGILs are confined to a small area of Cornwall! If they were to breed or spread, I think responsible governments would have to order an immediate cull to protect the human race. For me, this has been a daunting and alarming adventure that I never wish to repeat. Thanks go out to my researcher, Ian, who has become severely traumatized by this experience and has taken to recreational drugs and excessive drinking. Hopefully he will benefit from his time in rehab!

– Ian

## Cycling in Brittany with the Wednesday Wanderers – July 2025

Six of us set off on a week-long cycling adventure through Brittany. With our panniers packed and batteries fully charged, we were ready for the off when the ferry slid into Roscoff early in the morning. The general idea was simple: hug the coast west and southwest, steering clear of the busier stretches (like Brest), and make our way to Lorient. And that's exactly what we did. Over the course of the week, we covered about 285 miles, stopping overnight in Brélès, Plougastel-Daoulas, Crozon, and Pont-l'Abbé before finally reaching Lorient. Each stop had its own distinct character. It was unforgettable. It happened to be Bastille Day when we arrived at Plougastel-Daoulas, and we soon found ourselves swept up in the celebrations—traditional Breton dancing one moment, the can-can the next. In Lorient, we gave ourselves a

break from cycling and stayed two nights. A water taxi carried us across to Port Louis, where we lingered over a leisurely lunch before making our way back—first by water taxi, then by

bus. The bus ride turned into its own comedy of indecision, as we spent far too long debating where to get off. The return journey was more direct: through Huelgoat, then Morlaix (where a beloved cake stop awaited), and finally back



to Roscoff. The weather was roasting, the company was great and everyone pitched in to make the trip a joy. We ate loads of picnic baguettes during the day—because, well, you have to—and savoured delicious meals in the evening. And we all came home still the best of friends. Oh, and the cycling was good as well.

– Jane

# A year with the Falmouth Wheelers

Eight o'clock on the morning of 15th December 2024 found me leaving the warmth and comfort of home and pedalling off towards the Business Park. With nerves jangling, I introduced myself to the group, half-hoping for a gentle spin—something slow and scenic, perhaps a loop around Pendennis Point ending at Gilly Beach cafe. Not a chance! Instead, the route to Porthleven via Breage had me rummaging through my pockets for emergency snacks long before any cafe stop came into sight.

Ride protocols were explained and names quickly exchanged. As expected, the riders seized the chance to probe the newcomer. Quite how they managed it, I'm still not sure—but before long my past seemed laid bare, while my companions revealed absolutely nothing of their own. Hmm! The ride wound up near Crane garage, but before we went our separate ways, I was invited and encouraged to join the Christmas social that weekend.

In the weeks that followed, I met many more Wheelers on various rides, always feeling at ease in their company. It's that sense of welcome which prompts me to write this now—coincidentally just a day or two after the Truro Cycling Club's Dave Bennett Memorial ride.

Dave was my colleague, friend, and riding buddy for many years. I grew complacent in retirement, content to let him take the lead in suggesting rides, social gatherings, and even trips abroad. Gradually, our numbers dwindled. Some moved away, others drifted as old work connections faded. After Covid, it was often just

the three of us riding together. We even had a name: The Randonneurs.

Fortunately, I've always been content in my own company, so I kept riding even when the group shrank to one. The Marazion–Hayle–Portreath loop became a particular favourite, as I was determined to notch up at least 100 miles each week—though at an ever-slower pace. Last year I bought an electric bike and quickly realised how many of my carefully honed routes had cleverly avoided the worst of the hills. So distances became shorter, as I instead sought out and explored the broken lanes around Perranwell and Truro.

At home in early December, I realised that I probably had not spoken to anybody nor been out of the gate for nearly a week as I pottered round the garden, sawing up logs and doing whatever chores seemed important. Not good methought. So at eight o'clock on the morning of ... oh, you already know that bit.

This is my chance to offer my heartfelt thanks to all those who have welcomed me into the Falmouth Wheelers. Great company, Great rides. A very sociable cycling club.

Looking forward to another year with the target of doing a ride on my 'mortal' bike.

Pendennis anyone?

Happy New Year to all.

– Steve Hills

## Words of wisdom

"Bicycling is a big part of the future. It has to be. There's something wrong with a society that drives a car to work out in a gym." – Bill Nye

"What a computer is to me is the most remarkable tool that we have ever come up with. It's the equivalent of a bicycle for our minds." – Steve Jobs

"I want to ride my bicycle, I want to ride my bike." – Freddie Mercury

"The bicycle is the noblest invention of mankind." – William Saroyan

"Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race." – H.G. Wells

"Give a man a fish, and he will eat for a day. Teach a man to cycle, and he'll realize fishing is stupid and boring." – Desmond Tutu

"Cars run on money and make you fat. Bikes run on fat and save you money." – Anonymous

"The bicycle is the most civilized conveyance known to man. Other forms of transport grow daily more nightmarish." – Iris Murdoch

"The bicycle is the most efficient machine ever created: a human on a bike is faster than a cheetah." – Anonymous

"Cycling is the joy of discovering that the journey matters more than the destination." – Bradley Wiggins

# Off the bike – my Hadrian’s Wall Walk

After breaking my wrist in August 2024, it was clear I wouldn’t be back on my bike anytime soon, so I started making other plans. I decided to sign up for a two-day walk along a section of Hadrian’s Wall.

This trip was with a company called Global Adventures. I had originally signed up with them for the Vietnam/Cambodia tour that Jan completed, but for me it wasn’t to be. Luckily, the deposit I’d already paid matched the cost of the Hadrian’s Wall trip, so without reading too much into the details, I signed up and looked forward to a couple of days’ walking in June. Having only recently completed six days of hiking in Spain along the Camino de Santiago, I thought this would be a breeze.

I have a friend in Newcastle, so visiting her was the perfect excuse to stop there before the walk. Determined to keep costs down, I managed the journey for under £25—though it did take 17 hours! After a couple of wonderful days in Newcastle (I do love that city), I caught the train to the charming Northumberland town of Haltwhistle. There, a group of us were met by the organisers in a minibus and taken to our campsite, which would be home for the next couple of nights.

This was the point where reading the blurb would really have helped. I knew we’d be camping, but I imagined big communal Scout-style tents—or at least something you could more or less stand up in. But no, they turned out to be the two-man pup tents—as mentioned in the information pack. Since I was keeping costs down, I hadn’t paid for single occupancy, which meant sharing with a complete stranger. As it happened, my tent-mate also hadn’t read the pack and

missed the option not to share. So there we were—two slightly bewildered hikers squeezed into a minuscule tent. Luckily, she was great fun and absolutely lovely, and we ended up having a good laugh about it all.

We headed off to the pub for dinner, a perfect chance to get to know the other walkers. It was a wonderfully mixed bunch – mostly younger people, with a few of us slightly older folk sprinkled in. Since the walk was over the weekend, most of them were still working, and it made for a refreshing and lively crowd. My roomie and I soon palled up with a couple of others: one chap who does voice-overs and a bit of acting, even playing Father Christmas for big stores, and a fun-loving lady who works in a furniture store. As it turned out, my tent-mate runs a chain of charity shops, and later she even had the voice-over chap do some promotional work for the charity. It was a great mix of people, full of stories and laughs.

After a better night’s sleep than expected, we had a quick stand-up breakfast—there were no home comforts on this trip—and then piled into the minibus to reach the starting point for the day’s walk. The plan was to hike back to the campsite.

The forecast wasn’t promising, but at least it was dry when we set off... for about an hour. In the end we covered 15.3 miles with 2,000 feet of climbing, and they were tough miles, with far more hills than I’d anticipated. Battling wind and rain made it hard to fully appreciate the countryside, though the company was excellent and spirits stayed high. Still, the thought of sorting out all that wet kit in a tiny tent was not exactly appealing!

We arrived back at the tents wet and cold—still no home comforts, not even a chair in sight. Then,



thankfully, someone discovered a boiler room tucked behind the showers, and before long it was crammed with an array of soggy boots and socks. The promise of dry footwear in the morning was enough to lift everyone's spirits. That evening we rewarded ourselves with another trip to the pub, rounded off with a pie and a pint.

The next morning, I poked my head out of the tent and was greeted by a completely different day. The sun was shining, and the hills that had been shrouded in mist now looked glorious, showing off the countryside at its very best. And—joy of joys!—our boots and socks were dry. All was well with the world again.

The plan that day was to set off from the campsite, with a bus arranged to bring us back afterwards. The route took us past the spot where the Sycamore Gap tree had once stood—a rather sad sight, though there

were encouraging signs of new growth. We covered just over ten miles with a climb of 1,638 feet, and the hills felt tougher than the previous day. The heat didn't help, especially with only one planned stop along the way. I'm not entirely sure where the finish line was, as it turned out to be a car park on the military road, but I do know we were somewhere close to Haydon Bridge.

After the bus ride back to the campsite and a quick shower, I headed to the train station and caught a train to Edinburgh for a couple of days of sightseeing.

Looking back, it had been a really lovely weekend with some great people. It was certainly tougher than I'd expected. And next time I'll be sure to read the information pack a bit more carefully!

—Kath

## Triggers Broom

I have a pair of wheels that I've been using for over fifteen years. They're a, top-of-the-range wheel set and have a reputation of being bulletproof, so I tend to use them for long Audax rides and on my traditional winter bike. And I suppose it's for that reason that I've regularly serviced the wheels rather than replacing them when I felt they'd worn out. Besides the regular greasing, tensioning and cleaning, some of the wheel components need replacing from time to time. First it was the rear rim (I know: if I used disc brakes I wouldn't have to do this – maybe a discussion for another time?) closely followed a year or two later by a new set of spokes, and then a new rim on the front wheel too. A few years later, I replaced the bearings in both hubs and shortly after that, I fitted a new rim on the rear wheel. Recently I replaced the bearings once more in the rear wheel, but this time there was little improvement, indicating that the cups and cones were worn. Was this the moment I would finally ditch the wheels and admit that things had become a little more complicated than Triggers Broom?

Maybe not. Before spending £400 or £500 on a similar quality set of wheels (actually, it's almost impossible to buy traditional, high-quality, lightweight, 32-spoke racing wheels suitable for rim brakes), I invested in a complete hub servicing kit. It cost me £50 and included the bearings, cones and replacement cups. It turned out to be a simple operation. I was guided in the main by helpful information I got from a bike forum, and the job required no specialist tools. Now, fifteen years on, the wheels are just like new and are silky smooth to spin. After a wash and a polish and with new cables and brake blocks fitted, my bike feels no different from the day I first rode it.

Sadly, we are all lured into regularly buying new and ditching the old – the next shiny thing through the post! The consequence of this is the mountain of "waste" we all needlessly contribute to. Once it is at the dump, our old stuff is someone else's problem. Take the small yacht that lies abandoned on the shore of a Fal or Helford river creek. It was likely originally bought new by someone who was relatively well off. Many, many years later, and after maybe several owners and some lack of care for the boat, it presents itself as a liability, as no one any longer seems interested in buying it. It is then offered for free (a poisoned chalice) and attracts a new owner who is optimistic but penniless. In time, the onerous task of boat ownership sinks in – at about the same time as the unwanted vessel sinks into the muddy beach and fingers are pointed, not at those who brought the vessel into the world, but at the unfortunate soul who was given it for free.

We condemn the expansion of landfill sites and the illegal dumping of waste but rarely give a thought to who is guilty of creating it. Rich people more than poor, but it is a problem the world over. We are so reliant on the use of plastic that it dominates every aspect of our lives – from the time we wake until the time we sleep. I struggle to think of one thing any of us do that doesn't feature plastic. Naked swimming maybe? Will we ever get out of this mess?

Robin Snelson

# Braking tips

**Brakes on your bike are a pretty essential piece of kit, but how much thought do you give to which brake lever you're pulling – and when?**

In the tips below we're referring to bikes that have both a front and rear brake, though of course some bicycles like a BMX may just have one (and some bikes like those you ride on a velodrome, have none!). The aim is to supercharge your bike handling skills, for safety, fun and efficiency.

## Choose the correct brake

On a standard British set-up – whether a road, gravel, cyclo-cross or mountain bike – your front brake is on the right and your rear brake is on the left. It's important to know the difference between the two.

**Front brake:** This is the more powerful of the two brakes, giving you more stopping power. However, it should be used in partnership with your rear brake in order to provide balance and avoid your weight moving forwards over the front of the bike.

**Rear brake:** Use your rear brake to control your speed while riding, ahead of any corners, features or mid-descent. Use it together with your front brake when coming to a stop.

Whether you're buying a bike or hiring one (particularly abroad where the brakes are set up the opposite way around), be sure to check which brake is on which side.

## Brake positively

Don't drag your brakes continuously, as this can increase wear. Instead aim for clear phases of even braking as you move towards a feature, corner or stop.

Braking affects the maneuverability of your bike. Doing all of your braking before changing direction or navigating a feature allows the wheels to spin freely, which will help you to control the bike, like maintaining a smooth line around a corner.

## Be your own brake light

Unlike motor vehicles, bikes don't have brake lights, so it can be difficult for others in a group or someone following you to anticipate a change in speed. A simple "Slowing!" or "Stopping!" shout will give others a heads up, plus you can signal that you will be slowing down by giving a 'pushing down' motion to the side with a flat palm or showing the rider behind you your palm by lowering it to the side if you're about to stop.

## Cornering

When approaching a corner, try to do all of your braking before you start to turn. Applying your brakes in the corner can risk losing traction, causing your tyres to skip and slide out.

## Descending

If you need to reduce your speed, apply both the front and rear brakes. Your front brake should be slightly favoured unless the gradient is extremely steep or the surface slippery.

If you ride with dropped handlebars, braking with your hands in the lower position (in the drops) will give you greater power over the brake levers while lowering your centre of gravity, which will help with balance and manoeuvrability.

## Move your body

As mentioned above, your body position can have a significant impact on brake effectiveness. Shifting your weight back over the saddle, particularly on a descent or loose surface, will help to provide grip and avoid the feeling of your weight moving forwards.

When riding off-road on technical terrain, it can help to drop your heels and apply pressure downwards to increase traction under braking. Try to keep even weight over both wheels to avoid the front washing out.

## Conditions and terrain

A wet surface, potholes, loose gravel, mud-clogged tyres and off-road terrain will all have an impact on your speed and how readily you can slow down and stop. Consider these elements continuously while you ride, looking for areas of better traction where braking will be more effective.

## Emergency braking

If you do need to stop in a hurry, straighten your arms to push the front wheel down (allowing it to grip better) and force your body weight back, dropping your heels to stop the back wheel rising off the ground or skidding. The more extreme the stop, the further back your body weight should be. If the back wheel starts to skid, release the pressure on the back brake briefly.

Put whichever foot is most convenient in the circumstances onto the ground first to bring yourself to a complete stop. It can be useful practising with both feet regularly, to avoid losing muscle memory on the side you don't normally favour.

## In summary

We've covered the essentials here, but there is so much nuance to the skill around braking. The best thing you can do is spend time on your bike(s) to develop the experience and muscle memory to know how it will react in any given situation. That doesn't sound like bad homework to us!

Courtesy of British Cycling

# Man Adrift

**A**s my three teammates disappeared down the road towards Provence, I looked forlornly at my bottom bracket. It had just suffered a hernia. Ball bearings slowly rolled across to the verge. The timing could not have been worse. It was 4.45pm on a Good Friday afternoon in France. No bike shop would be open now. My immediate thought was to abandon the ride, get a hotel and somehow reach Provence in the next few days. Not only was I *en panne*, but the trip was going down the pan too.

I was part of a team of four AUK riders who were riding the Flèche Vélocio to Provence. The idea of the FV is for teams of riders on three, four or five machines to ride, as a team, for 24 hours to Provence at Easter. Then everyone meets up on the Sunday at a particular location, always in Provence, decided by the organising club, ACP (Audax Club Parisien). The minimum distance is 360 km or 225 miles. Teams choose their own start point, route and distance, and controllers pop up at points on the team's route to check progress. The event first ran in 1947 and commemorates Paul de Vivie, who wrote as Vélocio and published *Le Cycliste*. He also developed the early derailleur gears and is seen as the father of French *cyclotourisme* and *randonneuring*.

We were down to ride 400 km. We had started from Dôle in the Jura mountains, and our finish point was Bollène in the Rhône valley near its junction with the Ardèche. Until my mechanical, we had been making good progress and the sun was out. But at Poncin I discovered a town not renowned for its bike shops. There was a shop that sold bikes, but their line in lawnmowers was better. The little old lady behind the counter picked up the phone and dialled. But it seemed her mechanic was not prepared to be disturbed for the rest of the weekend. Perhaps *Monsieur* could try the garage at the top of the street? There, the young mechanic was keen to show his resourcefulness. He quickly disappeared into the workshop to find a spanner that might fit something in the offending area.

After several fruitless attempts, he gave up, rather shamefaced. By now I had begun to recover from the shock of what had happened. I approached the young receptionist doing her nails. Did they have a *Pages Jaunes*? She and the mechanic looked at each other and then through the directory without conviction, until someone I suspected to be the boss appeared. *Non, Monsieur*, there is no bike shop here. The nearest is at Amberieu. That's 18 km distance. (It seemed a bit far

to jog with the bike, and panniers.) Yes, it would still be open. No, the last bus has gone. I could ring for a taxi, *Monsieur*? An instant surge of hope. It was now 5.10pm. In five minutes the taxi was speeding down the RN84, the driver silent but seeing the francs click up before his eyes.

At 5.25pm we arrived outside the bike shop in Amberieu en Bugey. It was still

open. In my haste I nearly left my panniers in the taxi. Yes, *Monsieur*, what can I do for you? In similar fashion, I tried to explain and point and mime the details of the problem to the very pleasant madame behind the counter. Well, yes, we can repair that, no problem. Could Monsieur come back in the morning? Well, madame it's like this, I'm doing the *Flèche Vélocio*, and ... Just a moment, *Monsieur*, I'll speak to the mechanic. The bike disappeared into the backroom. I glanced anxiously through the doorway. The bike was already up on a stand and the mechanic was gutting the bottom bracket. Forty minutes later he reappeared without a word with the bike as good as new. He was gone before I could thank him. Madame gave me a detailed examination of the offending parts. After many thanks and loaded up again, I set off.

With morale more than restored, I quickly got into a good rhythm and began to have high hopes of catching the others by midnight. I met up with a French team heading for Aix-en-Provence but the rules meant I could not wheel suck them. But progress was fast on the very smooth surface. At Loyettes I caught up with another four-man AUK team who I knew. They looked very relaxed without any bags. I was told this was in their "fleet of team support cars", which seemed to be



zooming up and down the road. This was explained when after two kilometres it turned out they had taken a wrong turning, and we quickly said goodbye as they did their U-turn.

At Colombier there was no news of the others as I got my brevet card stamped at the only cafe in the village. I pressed on till I reached the N6 east of Lyon at 8.30pm. I stopped at the first restaurant I found at St Laurent de Mure. Having ordered, I settled down but suddenly had a nasty thought. Was there some rule that you must retrace to the point where you left the route i.e. Poncin 56 km back? I got out the map. I calculated the difference between the team's official route and my own to be 12 km. I was jolted out of my mental arithmetic by the waiter inviting me to help myself from the table of hors d'oeuvres. All matters of conscience were forgotten as I loaded my plate with seven varieties of cold meat, eggs mayonnaise, tomatoes, beetroot, coleslaw, fennel, gherkin, olives, potato and carrots. The main course followed with fish, boiled potatoes and *haricots verts*. Cheese followed by *mousse au chocolat* finished things off, all washed down with a restrained *pichet* of rouge and plenty of water. I felt well set up for the ride through the night but it was already 10pm. I could not expect to meet up with the others till dawn now.

I reached the secret control at Givors just across the Rhône after midnight, where I was welcomed by the ACP controllers. Our team captain, Alan, had obviously told them of my problems, and my card was endorsed *incident mécanique*. They told me the others had estimated I would be an hour and a half behind them and it seemed this was exactly so. I set off even more determined to ride through the night without stopping to sleep. Conditions were ideal. It was a warm, clear night with a good moon. There was no cold mistral blowing as there often is at that time of the year. There was plenty of interest on the far side of the Rhône with the moving lights of the traffic on the autoroute and trains on the main line. Occasionally, the deafening clatter of goods trains on the line next to the road jolted me out of my drowsiness. In one village in the early hours an old van pulled into the curb ahead of me. An Italian couple were enquiring the way to Nice. Well, you follow this road for about 300 km until you reach the sea, then you turn left. Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of one of the ACP roving controllers, a little suspicious no doubt of what was happening here. He quickly took over so I could get on my way.

I had two short stops to stretch my legs. I could feel I needed sleep. Still, my night glasses were proving very effective at keeping the cold air off my eyes, and I didn't begin to suffer until after dawn. To stay awake I

tried to sing at the top of my voice and grip the bars tightly. There was at least one half-hour period I could not recall at all.

Then, quite suddenly, the drowsiness lifted. It was 7am. My pace picked up rapidly, and at 8.20 am. I reached Rochemaure. There I met up again with the same AUK team as before. How had they overtaken me, I wondered. They had seen the rest of my team who had left a short while ago. They would be waiting for me at Pont St Esprit until 10 am. After a very espresso coffee, we all set off. It was 8.30 am. I had 90 minutes to do the 45 km. I was feeling pretty good by now and soon went off the front (which I was also obliged to do, since I was not in their team). The country was becoming a lot more rolling as the Rhône valley opened out. Just in time, I remembered to collect a stamp at the 23<sup>rd</sup> hour mark (it's an FV rule!), which cost me 10 minutes while the barman found his stamp. The kilometre posts went by one by one as 10 o'clock drew near. The traffic built up as I got nearer Pont St Esprit, and I had to take to tearing along the dotted line in the centre of the road to overtake the slow moving traffic. The town sign flashed by and I flew into the dusty, crowded main square. It was 9.56 am.

I was immediately hailed by my two team mates, who proceeded to ply me with giant strawberries and oranges. I was hungry! I was very relieved. They too were very relieved to see me, as our fourth member of the team had gone off the front some hours earlier and had not been seen since. This reduced the team of four to only two. Not good team work I thought. So at the eleventh hour, or was it the 23<sup>rd</sup>, we once again had the minimum number needed to qualify as a team. Re-united, we did the final kilometres of our Flèche to finish successfully at Bollène. But was I one kilometre short? After another very tired bit of calculation, I remembered going wrong briefly during the night and having to retrace. All in all, I felt I could put my card in at the concentration next day with a clear conscience.

The next few days were a cycling paradise of touring amidst the blossom of Provence. But first we enjoyed relaxing at the very colourful big get-together of all the teams at Sault in the warm spring sunshine and exchanged memories of the 24-hour event. We celebrated with a gastronomic lunch in the company of the ACP teams. From Provence we crossed the Rhône again to explore the Cévennes and the spectacular Gorges du Tarn.

Taken from my account of the *Flèche Vélocio* 1987

Simon J.

# Poetry

## Mésalliance

Jack and Jill went up the hill  
Their tastes were quite eclectic  
Jack was on a Cyclothon  
And Jill was on electric.

Jack knows The Rules, needs Body Fuels  
To finish for his medals  
When Jill's knees ache, she eats some cake  
Goes easy on the pedals.

It should have been a passing scene  
But time became quite static  
By happenstance they shared a glance  
His pulse became erratic.

Before too long it wasn't wrong  
To see them out together  
At cycling club or down the pub  
Depending on the weather.

Jack and Jill had had their fill  
Of dating some old random  
They found they like to share a bike  
And went and bought a tandem.

Each well-worn call, they've heard it all  
I think they've reached their red line  
And so it's time to end my rhyme  
To meet the Annual Deadline.

— Margaret

## When *Vogue* met *Vogue*

**I**t was a quiet Tuesday in the hamlet of Vogue, Cornwall—the sort of day when the most dramatic headline might be “Sheep Invades Car Park at The Star Inn.” That is, until the post arrived.

Landlord Mark Graham slit open an official-looking envelope with the casual air of a man bracing for a gas bill. Instead, he found himself staring at a letter from Condé Nast, the publishing powerhouse behind *Vogue* magazine. The letter was polished, polite, and utterly perplexing. It suggested—ever so delicately—that his pub might be infringing on the trademark of the world’s most glamorous fashion publication.

It began: “Dear Sirs, It has come to our attention that you are operating a business in the United Kingdom under the name *Vogue*...” Yes, dear reader, the lawyers of *Vogue* magazine had discovered the existence of a pub called The Star Inn, located in a village called Vogue, and feared that thirsty patrons might confuse it with a glossy fashion magazine.

Because, naturally, when one thinks of haute couture, one immediately imagines muddy boots, overalls, and old farmer Trevor from down the lane. Perhaps the lawyers pictured a sign reading *Vogue* in glittering gold script, with locals in Gucci wellies sipping espresso martinis. In reality, the villagers are far more likely to use the word ‘catwalk’ to describe the waddling gait of Mrs Trebilcock’s rotund tabby.

The letter asked whether the pub might consider changing its name. Mark, ever the gentleman, penned a courteous reply. He explained that *Vogue* was not a branding stunt. It was a village. A real one. With real people. And real pints. He even invited the lawyers to visit, promising they’d be warmly welcomed and unlikely to encounter Anna Wintour.

Suitably chastened, the lawyers at *Vogue* magazine apologised, admitting they hadn’t realised there was actually a place called *Vogue*. (Apparently, geography isn’t taught in law school.) Peace was restored, The Star Inn returned to serving pints, the village slipped back into its quiet rhythms, and somewhere in London a team of lawyers sheepishly wiped egg off their faces.

— MC

# How would the cycling giants of the 1960s and 70s fare today?

“Single minded”, “driven”, “focused” and “obsessed with winning”. In his time, Eddy Merckx was totally dominant, repeatedly breaking away from a peloton fifty or sixty miles from the finish in an escape that was rarely, if ever, caught. It seemed he had an insatiable appetite for suffering, repeatedly attacking and ultimately wearing down the opposition. He could sprint, climb, time-trial and consistently perform well in both Grand Tours and Classics. He was a formidable figure in cycling and was described as “half man, half bike” by the French journalist and writer Antoine Blondin. However, across the English Channel there was a cyclist equally as obsessed and dominant in cycling as the Belgian.

Beryl Burton’s cycling career coincided almost exactly with that of Eddy Merckx, though hers was considerably longer. The same words used to describe Merckx are often used to describe Beryl Burton - “driven”, “ruthless”, “single minded” and “focused”, and someone spurred on solely by the need to win. She claimed seven world championship gold medals and records in the 25, 50 and 100-mile time trials. She became the only woman ever to break a men’s endurance record, the 12-hour time trial, and quite amazingly she held that record for over half a century!

People have asked how today’s superstar Tadej Pogačar would fare against Eddy Merckx if he had to use the same bicycle and clothing as used in the 60s and 70s, but nobody has put this to the test. Xavier Disley, one of the world’s leading experts on aerodynamics, therefore decided to run an experiment to discover exactly how fast Beryl Burton would be today.

I was lucky enough to meet Xavier at the Newport Velodrome when he and his partner Jess were using the track for training. He had studied aerodynamics at university and was looking to start a business helping cyclists get faster by being more aero. This is the wonderful thing about the velodrome: you share the track with interesting and quite often extremely talented athletes during the twenty to twenty-five minute warm up – and in some of the fast training laps if you’re up to it. 😊

Xavier mentioned his interest in aerodynamics, so I’d pick his brains about the hierarchy of aero “add ons” in relation to speed. We cyclists are around 80% of the problem, and I was pleased to learn the actual bike frame was relatively low down on the list. I mumbled that I was interested in going for the 65-69 age category hour record. Far from laughing, he confided in me that he was thinking along the same lines for his much younger age category. By the time of my attempt, Xavier had started his business Aerocoach and offered trackside and wind-tunnel testing. As the bike frame really wasn’t that important, I decided to invest the little money I had in being wind-tunnel-tested by him instead! So, accompanied by Simon Jones, I visited Xavier at Chris Boardman’s facility in Evesham in the runup to my attempt, something I have written extensively about before!

In order to establish how much quicker Beryl would have been today, a similar bike, clothing and athlete had to be found. Fortunately, Beryl Burton’s original T1 Raleigh has been maintained to an immaculate standard by frame builder Dave Marsh, who was happy to grant permission for it to be used in the wind-tunnel testing. Xavier was also able to source a replica pale blue Morley Cycling Club jersey. That only left him needing to find someone to be Beryl Burton for the day, someone who could hold Beryl’s low tucked position. Fortunately, Jess fitted the bill perfectly, being of a similar build and a world amateur time trial champion herself. Jessica has long hair, so a short curly wig was procured and trimmed to the classic Burton look!

Using the wind tunnel facility at the Silverstone racetrack Xavier first wind-tested Jessica wearing the wig and jersey and riding Beryl’s original Raleigh complete with the single 56-tooth chainring and the 13/17 rear cassette she always used. Then after a short rest, he tested Jessica again, this time on her own Cervelo P5 time trial bike complete with disc wheels and wearing her drag-resistant skin suit, aero helmet and long socks.

So how much of a difference was there between the old-school kit and the modern alternative, and exactly how quick would Beryl Burton be if she was racing today? The aerodynamic drag or drag coefficient (CdA) was measured in the wind tunnel at a speed of 45 kph (equivalent to a 21 min 30 sec 10 mile time trial).

An average club cyclist on a road bike would have a CdA of around 0.30. It was found that Beryl Burton had a CdA of 0.2430. (My CdA was 0.2199, but in an optimised position on a time-trial bike wearing an aero helmet and skin suit.) Jessica in full aero kit was just 0.1781!

The results below were truly astonishing.

Distance	Beryl's previous record	Beryl, new time on modern set-up	Current record	Difference to current record
10 miles	21 min 25sec (29-Apr-1973)	19 min 29 sec	18 min 36 sec Hayley Simmonds	Beryl down by 53 sec (but her record would have stood until 2016)
25 miles	53 min 21sec (17-6-76)	47 min 52 sec	49 min 28 sec Hayley Simmonds	Beryl still up by 1 min 36 sec (after 46 years)
50 miles	1 hr 51 min 30 sec (25-Jul-1976)	1 hr 41 min 6 sec	1 hr 42 min 20 sec Hayley Simmonds	Beryl still up by 1 min 14 sec (after 56 years)
100 miles	3 hrs 55 min 05 sec (04-Aug-1968)	3 hrs 33 min 16 sec	3 hrs 42 min 3 sec Alice Lethbridge	Beryl still up by 8 min 47 sec (after 54 years)
12 hours	277.25 miles (17-Sep-1967)	305.23 miles	290.07 miles Alice Lethbridge	Beryl still up by 15.16 miles (after 55 years)

Jessica noted just how uncomfortable it must have been for Beryl Burton to take the 12-hour record. "Beryl's bike was overwhelmingly less comfortable. You can basically lie forward on a modern time-trial bike, whereas Beryl would be really tensing her triceps and core. How she sat in that position for 12 hours, I just don't know."

With the adjusted times in the table above, we can see that it is highly likely that if Beryl Burton was competing today, she would dominate in exactly the same way she did 50 and 60 years ago. And there are myriad other reasons besides bike and clothing why cyclists can expect to go faster today. The training is more targeted, there is a better understanding of nutrition and recovery and there are considerably better road surfaces.

Beryl Burton, like Eddy Merckx, was simply an exceptional athlete.

Robin Snelson

## Potholes Revisited

### Welcome to Pothole Land: The Theme Park Nobody Asked For



Residents of a village in Wales have become so fed up with the state of one of their roads that they have turned it into a pothole theme park. A sign at the entrance to the road in Pontfadog, Wrexham, boasts that "Pothole Land" features "the deepest, longest, widest potholes in Wales and that it offers visitors the chance to enjoy two kilometres of award-winning potholes with very little actual road to spoil your fun". One resident quipped that "every journey is an expedition". The council has now begun work to fill in some of the potholes.

A carpenter managed to get his local council to fill in a large pothole near his home in Cambridgeshire by sticking a pair of fake legs upside down in the puddle it had formed. James Coxall, 41, fashioned his "pothole person" using a pair of his daughter's old jeans, shoes, rags, wood and a brick to weigh it all down. Photos of the legs were soon circulating on social media, and within days, Cambridgeshire County Council had fixed the road. Coxall says he is now being inundated with requests to borrow the legs, but that for his own next pothole mission he might try "something else – like the Titanic or a submarine".



# A ride to the sun

There's nothing like the first cold snap of November to make us think about plans for riding somewhere sunny and warm in the coming year. There's something about a chat with mates over a pint or two in the pub that can often turn into the beginnings of a plan that gets firmer and more committed the more amber nectar gets consumed. I have to admit to finding myself in this position on more than one occasion. Usually the rides have involved BIG distances of 2,500 km or much more.

Just to sidetrack for a moment, it reminds me of an April day in France when a much, much shorter distance than that just mentioned was the subject of discussion. A group of British Audax riders were kindly invited by members of the Parisian Audax club (ACP) to join them for lunch at their hotel at the foot of Mont Ventoux. After a wonderful three-hour meal with wine, there were speeches. This was when the French threw out a challenge to us: after our meal who could get to the top of Mt Ventoux first. I admit I was one of the five Brits who rashly, or some would say recklessly, jumped on our bikes to join the French without any, let alone a second thought. I began to have one or two thoughts as I descended to Sault in the cold air before the 26-km climb began. We did do it, but not ahead of the French. We then had to descend as it got dark and ride home to our hotel without lights. Luckily there were no *flics* around!

This is the time of year when I get enquiries about my long-distance audax rides. As you may know, I am the AUK organiser of a number of these rides. They are known as "permanents" and can be ridden at any time of the year. Apart from the Tour of Kernow (450 km), the other rides I organise are all in



Europe, with the furthest going as far as Istanbul (4,000 km). One ride that continues to attract interest since I rode it and set it up in 2000 is Roscoff-Nice (1,480 km or 920 miles). There are two different paces or standards at which my audax permanents can be ridden. Of the thirty riders who have successfully completed this ride, most have



ridden at *randonneur* standard. This requires a minimum of 200 km or 125 miles to be ridden per day. But a number have ridden at the steadier *touriste* standard. This gives the rider 14 days to complete the distance in one, two or three stages over a period of three years. So the daily average is about 105 km or 65 miles. If you ride this as an audax event, there are six controls along the route where you get your brevet card stamped – a rather nice hardcopy memory of the ride to keep. There is also a medal! [If you are getting interested, it may be time for that second pint!].

That's enough about the parameters of the ride. What about the route? It is nearly all on minor, quieter roads. There are some canal paths, which may be preferred as alternatives in some places. These could be ideal for a ride at the *touriste* standard. Bigger towns are avoided.

Roscoff must be the nicest ferry port in France at which to arrive. What a contrast to poor old Plymouth! After breakfast in St Pol de Léon, the route takes you up the estuary to Morlaix (twinned with Truro). From there, you head southeast across Brittany on minor

roads via Pontivy and Josselin to the first control at Redon. The controls are in places where accommodation is available. Many Wheelers will be familiar with this part of the world. The way continues to Ancenis, where you meet the majestic R. Loire and follow it for some 60 miles to Saumur (control). The riding is not difficult so far. After Montlucon



the hills of the Massif Central begin. Hopefully by now, having ridden over 400 miles, the legs will be well warmed up for the challenge! When you get to the next control at Arlanc, you are now in the beautiful region of the Auvergne. Arlanc is a small, quiet town nestling in the hills where I once stayed many years ago. The room cost £2.50, and a huge meal including four helpings of soup cost the same again. We can all remember those days, I'm sure! There is a very rewarding long descent from the Massif Central all the way down into the Rhône valley. Here you cross the river at La Voulte to the next control at Crest. From there, the road inclines gradually before dropping through a long gorge into the spectacular Eygues gorge, where you will see vultures circling high above on the thermals. Soon you will also get your first sighting of Mont Ventoux. My route skirts round the mountain but passes through the three places where you could begin a traverse over the summit. It is quite permissible to do that. There are a few Wheelers who will remember

their one ascent of this iconic mountain, as well as those who did three ascents in one day to join the Mad Dogs of Mt Ventoux club. Instead of climbing the mountain the lower, route goes along the gorges of the river Nesque. After Sault, the route undulates until it descends into the Durance valley at Peyruis (control). Now you approach what may be the most spectacular gorge in France, if not Europe. It's the Grand Canyon du Verdon. It's worth taking it slowly. You will be amazed. From here on there is one final gorge, which drops you to the Mediterranean and the finish control at Nice. [Are you hooked? Maybe time for another?]

Even as I picture the route, I think how different and probably more relaxing it would have been to ride this as a *touriste*. It still remains a challenge, of course, but an achievable one.

If you want more details about this ride, whether you want to ride it as an audax permanent or simply to use the route, I shall be very pleased to help.

I should add that having reached Nice seven days after leaving Roscoff, my cycling companion John and I caught the hydrofoil across to Corsica. We were about to tackle the Tour de Corse, a 1,000-km ride across and around the island organised by ACP. There is no time limit for this permanent, so it's perfect for a cycle tour. There is quite a lot of climbing, and the island is not called *L'Île des Vents*, the Island of Winds, for nothing. The scenery is varied and spectacular, usually set against the sparkling deep blue of the sea.

It was then, and hopefully still is, perfect for cycling.

Simon J



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# Schwalbe's Clik valve – the new kid on the block

For decades, cyclists have relied on three familiar valve types—each with its quirks and strengths. Now, a fourth contender has arrived: the Clik valve, promising to simplify inflation and outshine its predecessors.

## A brief history of the classics

**Schrader valve (SV), also American valve (AV):** The Schrader valve is a type of pneumatic tyre valve used on virtually every motor vehicle in the world today. The original Schrader valve design was invented in 1891. Schrader valves are sturdy, wide (8 mm) and easy to use with car pumps. Their durability makes them the default choice for mountain bikes and everyday bicycles.



**Presta valve (PV), also French valve, Sclaverand valve (SV):** Introduced in France in the early 20th century, the slender Presta became the darling of road cycling. Its narrow profile (6 mm) suits high-pressure tyres and lightweight rims, though its fiddly lock nut and bendable stem often frustrates newcomers.



**Dunlop Valve (DV), also Woods valve and English valve (EV):** Popular in parts of Europe and Asia, the Dunlop valve is a hybrid of sorts—similar in size to Schrader, but with an internal mechanism closer to Presta. It's simple to inflate but less common globally, limiting its appeal. Because of its size, it is unsuitable for thin high-pressure tyres.



## Enter the Clik Valve

The principle of the Schwalbe Clik Valve, winner of the Eurobike Award 2024, is very simple:

it works intuitively with a click. What does it need? The valve and the corresponding pump head or pump head adapter. With the Clik Valve, this can be clicked onto the bike valve with minimal force and removed again very easily after successful inflation.

It doesn't matter which valve and pump you currently have thanks to conversion kits for all existing bicycle valves and most pumps. To change the bicycle valve, simply replace the valve insert (Presta, Dunlop, tubeless valves). For the Shrader valve there is an adapter that is screwed over the valve.



The pump head adapter can be integrated into the pump head of current pumps (by clamping or screwing in), even with hand pumps. The Schwalbe Clik Valve can also be inflated with normal SV (Presta) pumps. Thanks to this reverse compatibility, you are never at a loss in any situation. SKS already offers its own pump.

Numerous butyl tubes with the Clik valve are now available: SCV butyl tubes Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, and 19 are equipped with the Schwalbe Clik Valve as standard – making them tubes for all cyclists, from kids, cargo bikes, and MTBs to city & tour bikes, road bikes, and gravel bikes.

## Highlights

- Makes inflating tyres child's play – can be operated with just two fingers
- More air flow
- No clamping the pump head onto the valve
- No screwing or unscrewing
- No risk of air loss and no wear on the pump head.
- Reverse compatibility: The Schwalbe Clik Valve can also be inflated with normal SV (Presta) pumps.
- Conversion kits for all common bicycle valves are available

# Getting involved

As a member of the Falmouth Wheelers, you already know how brilliant it feels to move around our area under your own steam. Whether it's a steady bimble to the Crate at Helston or a Sunday morning dash along the North Coast to Portreath, we all appreciate the freedom, fitness, and simple joy that cycling brings. But we also know that riding around Falmouth and Penryn isn't always as easy or as safe as it should be. That's why the Falmouth and Penryn Walking & Cycling Campaign is so important.

The campaign aims to make everyday walking and cycling safer, more accessible and more enjoyable for everyone, and it needs more active voices – people who know the roads, understand the challenges and care about bringing about improvements. If we don't do it, who will?

After spending a quarter of a million pounds designing a segregated cycle path from Penryn bridge to the Falmouth Rec, Cornwall Council abandoned the scheme because the road was too narrow. When they gave permission for the houses at Union Corner to be built, they failed to ensure that Kergilliack Road was wide enough for the traffic that now uses the road. Now they are about to go out to consultation on their proposals for, as they describe them, improvements for cyclists on Bickland Water Road. One or two of us have seen earlier proposals and rejected them, and I do not think we are going to see any major changes in this latest version. Cornwall Council's idea of making the road safer for cyclists is to put you on the pavement; although Government guidance in

LTN1/20 states that shared paths are not the answer. Government grants cannot be used to install shared paths in urban areas, yet this path is being built using more than £1M of Section 106 money, contributions from the developers of the housing estates from Swanvale to Eve Park. Although the plans we have seen showed some minor widening of the path and narrowing of the road in places, it will not be wide enough, and this is a path that is much used by schoolchildren going to Falmouth School and St Francis primary school. I have counted more than 300 pedestrian movements at start and finish times with parents discharging kids onto the pavement from the long line of parked cars we have all seen. How is that safe? I am also told that there is now no proposal to reduce the speed limit from 40 to 30 mph. As coordinator of the Falmouth Community Speed Watch, I can tell you that many drivers drive far too fast along there.

If this proposal goes ahead, it could become the default position for any new cycle paths in Cornwall. And those of us who exercise their right to continue to ride on the road will have to face the anger of motorists who believe that we should be out of their way on the pavement. The Walking & Cycling Campaign will be keeping a close eye on the consultation, which could come out just before Christmas when folks have other things on their mind. And we will need your voices, your responses to the consultation to stop this happening. If you don't who will?

– Dean Evans

**Editor's note: I asked AI to draw a picture of the situation. Its response was:**

**"I can't create that image because it depicts children in a dangerous and unsafe situation."**

**That just about says it all!**

# September cycle trip to Yorkshire with the Breeze Girls

In addition to riding with the Wheelers, I also join the Breeze Girls group every Friday, which is affiliated with Cycling UK.

This September, eight of us booked a cycling trip with Breeze leaders based in Gargrave. The company, Sea Fern Adventure Retreats, is run by Sarah and offers ladies-only rides across Yorkshire, the Lake District, Northumberland, and even near Alicante in Spain. They also organise walking weekends. The holiday was all-inclusive, with accommodation, meals, and carefully planned rides complete with lunch stops.

We stayed in a farmhouse complex near Gargrave, just south of Grassington in the Yorkshire Dales—a wonderful area for cycling. Four other girls from different parts of the country joined us. I drove up with Sue, and we spent a night in Hellifield near Malham Tarn, staying with an old friend. That afternoon we enjoyed a lovely walk, and we discovered that Hellifield Station still has its original cafe. You can even stay in bespoke accommodation right at the station.



We were treated to amazing catering, with delicious and healthy home-prepared food made by Sarah and Jill, one of the other leaders. Our accommodation was in two very comfortable adjoining farm cottages set in a pretty spot, with plenty of space for parking. On the final night we enjoyed a fantastic BBQ, complete with a fire pit to relax around afterwards. Everyone brought their own drinks and wine, which helped keep the costs down!

The three rides were excellent, with beautiful scenery in the Dales and fine weather throughout. It was wonderful to be back riding in Yorkshire, as many years had passed

since Robin and I last organised a Wheelers trip to Grassington.

The cottages at Newton Grange Farm would make an ideal base for another Wheelers trip. With self-catering, the cost would be very reasonable—around £100 per person per week—and you could plan your own rides directly from there.

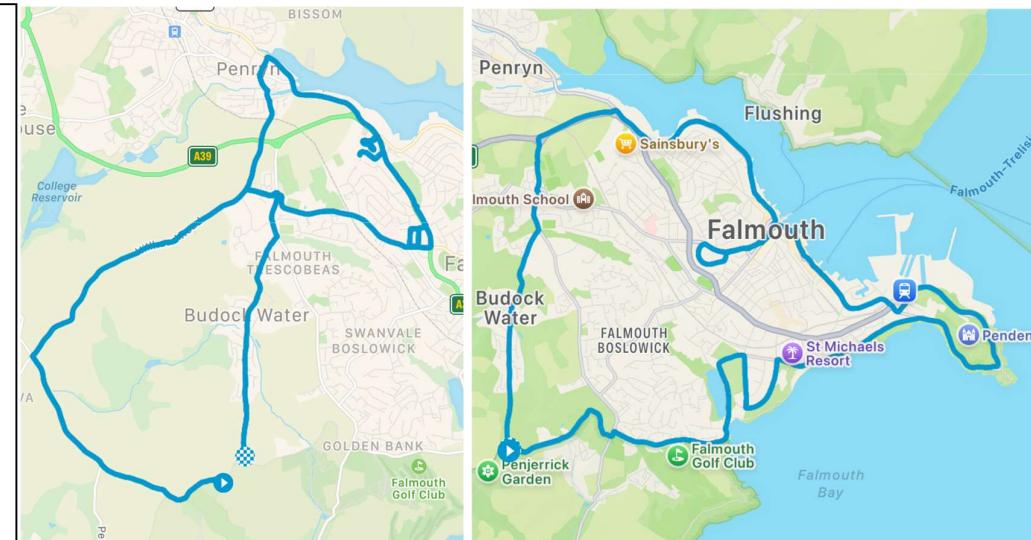
That said, it was lovely to get away with the girls, free of worries, and to meet new people!

– Paula

## Route Drawings

Here are a couple of my routes around Falmouth that map out the image of an animal: a dog and an elephant's head. An award will go out to the best route drawing in 2026. It can be any shape but must be created as a single continuous route. Good luck!

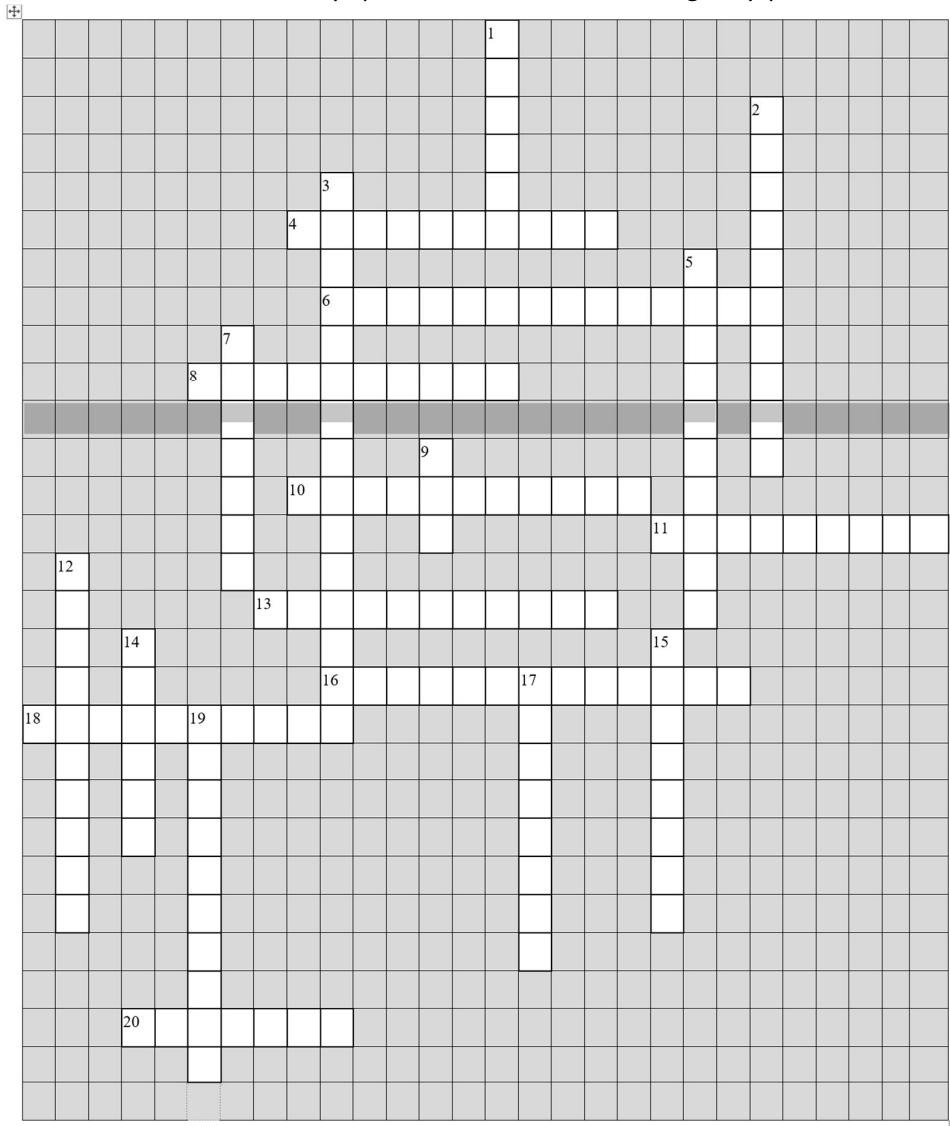
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# PUZZLES

## Steve Hill's Crossword Challenge: Wheelers Cafe Stops

answer : Greasy Spoon Cafe. enter as: greasyspoon



### Across

4	Enjoy your meal!	1	A cafe to reinvigorate
6	Somewhere to dine on a warped little grape?	2	Watch the day slip away into the waves
8	Food from the producer to your cutlery	3	Cafe at a cove with sand dunes
10	Watch the boats in an area of calmer water.	5	Had a team in the Tour of Britain
11	Eco-friendly coloured cafe	7	Water bottle for the staff?
13	Clothing for miners?	9	Eat, drink and maybe have a pea here.
16	What it is and where it is in Truro	12	You won't go hungry after this Truckstop
18	Portal to the underworld	14	A beach cafe for a tasty Marconi cheese?
20	Colourful Crow deli	15	Varied menu but no Coronation chicken
		17	Cycling here wards off the fever
		19	Little Richard's favourite

### MISSING PART

Insert the name of a bike part so that, reading down, five five-letter words are formed. What is the bike part?

C	C	D	A	A
A	H	E	T	R
T	S	I	A	N
I	E	T	S	A

### A cycling riddle

My first is in stop but not in go,  
My second is in speed, never in slow.  
My third is in road but not in race,  
My fourth is in quick, never in pace.  
My fifth is in embark but not in start,  
And my whole is a vital bike part.

What am I?

## MYSTERY SUDOKU

Complete the grid so that every row, column and  $3 \times 3$  box contains the letters AEFGHIRST in any order. One row or column contains something (two words) found on many bikes. What is it?

	R		E		F	T	H	
					R			E
					G		F	
I				T		E		
		F				A		
		A		S			T	
		H	A					
R			T					
	F	E	H		G		I	

From THE CYCLING PUZZLE BOOK BY NEIL SOMERVILLE

# Quiz

## History & Politics

1. The Treaty of Tordesillas (1494) divided the newly discovered lands outside Europe between which two countries?
2. Who was the longest-reigning Holy Roman Emperor?
3. The “Long Parliament” sat in England during which century?
4. Which U.S. president served the shortest time in office?
5. The Byzantine Empire’s capital, Constantinople, fell to the Ottomans in which year?

## Science & Nature

6. What is the second most abundant element in Earth’s crust after oxygen?
7. Which scientist first proposed the heliocentric model of the universe?
8. What is the only mammal capable of true sustained flight?
9. In physics, what does the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle state about position and momentum?
10. Which gas is primarily responsible for the greenhouse effect on Venus?

## Literature & Arts

11. Who wrote the epic poem *Paradise Lost*?
12. The character Leopold Bloom appears in which modernist novel?
13. Which painter is credited with inventing linear perspective in Renaissance art?
14. In Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, how many circles of Hell are described?
15. Who composed the opera *The Ring of the Nibelung*?

## Geography & Culture

16. Lake Baikal, the world’s deepest freshwater lake, is located in which country?
17. Which African country was formerly known as Abyssinia?
18. The city of Timbuktu lies in which modern-day nation?
19. Mount Kosciuszko is the highest peak on which continent?
20. The world’s oldest continuously operating university, founded in 859 AD, is located in which city?

*Editor’s note: This is the same quiz as last year. I just wanted to know if you lot learned anything.*

ANSWERS: Crossword: no clues Missing part: cable Riddle: spoke Spoke Spoke rows: ARGIFTHS FISHRAGE EHSAGTRI ISRTAGEH HTGEIAST GEARSHIFT SGIAERETF RAITFSHEG TEEHRSIA Quiz: 1. Spain and Portugal 2. France 3. 17th century (1640-1660) 4. William Henry Harrison (31 days in 1841) 5. 1453 6. Silicon 7. Niccolau Copernicus 8. Bats 9. You cannot simultaneously know both the exact position and exact momentum of a particle 10. Carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) 11. John Milton 12. James Joyce’s Ulysses 13. Filippo Brunelleschi 14. Nine 15. Richard Wagner 16. Russia 17. Ethiopia 18. Mali 19. Mount Australia 20. University of al-Qarawiyyin, founded 859 AD is in Fez, Morocco