

# blah

NORWOOD PARAGON APRIL 2008



*With the success of the world track championships in Manchester last month I thought it appropriate to have a track themed front cover showing a few familiar faces. I hope you find it as entertaining as I do.*

*I was recently on a chain gang led by a local club and after a mile their members were getting dropped and surprisingly the groupetto carried on up the road without a care for those going out the back! Conversely, while away recently on one of the best Mallorcan training camps yet we always rode as a cohesive group looking out for each other and only piling on the gas when pre-agreed. In fact, the camaraderie that I've seen across our club this winter and early season has been the best ever. I was racing round the Chertsey circuit last weekend and the Paragons in my race were continually looking out for moves and when we went up the road we were policing the bunch as is the way. Long gone are the days of chasing down your club mates, although this can't be ruled out with the handicap races commencing in a few weeks!*

*Our members have been getting into their racing as you'll read in the race results section. Easter racing on the road (in the snow) was quite a challenge with some events being cancelled due to excessive amounts of the white stuff.*

*The next few weeks are a busy time for the club as we have our open road race and time trial promotions to look forward to. Both events can always do with more support so please come and join in be it to race, help or simply support your club. Additionally we have the club BBQ after the road race so please let John Cleeve know if you'll be along.*

*As ever, if you have articles or content for BLAH then please pass this on to me.*

*Stephen Roach*

*April 2008*

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## **Race results**

Do you race? Did you finish? If the answer to these questions is yes then **we need to know** so that they can be compiled for press reports. Information can be as long or short as you wish provided we get something from you. Please inform Marcus via phone, text, mail, pigeon etc

Evening 10 **Mile time trials** are run on Tuesday's during April to August. They count towards the Evening TT Series overall award. Best four finishes count for the overall prizes. Points are awarded: 1st 10, 2nd 8, 3rd 6, 4th 4, 5th 3, 6th 2, 7th - last 1.

## **Cyril Melhuish** (by Johnnie Dennis)

An unfamiliar name to most Norwood Paragon club members today - Cyril Melhuish (an old member) who lived for many years in the south of Spain recently died from cancer just short of his 94th birthday. When I joined the club

Cyril's name was on the notables list as tandem partner of Bert Chapman. Although I never met Cyril I spent many hours 'evening training' with Bert before he died prematurely, write John Dennis. The tandem exploits of Melhuish and Chapman were rivalled only by the famous Mills and Paul combination from the Addiscombe CC who established and held on to the World one hour tandem record for more than 50 years.

**La Marmotte** is one of the hardest Alpine cyclo sportives on the calendar being run on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July this year. A few of us are planning to participate so if you'd like to join in then please let me know.

**Night Rider.** Each year a few of us choose to pedal off road to Brighton through the night. It might sound a bit daft but is actually good fun and a considerable challenge. The proposed date is Friday 5<sup>th</sup> June and as is customary the ride starts at a local pub where we like to build up some Dutch courage with the assistance of alcohol. If you'd like to come along for all or part of the ride then you're more than welcome.

**Question of the month.** Which club member recently came off his folding bike due to the securing pin being inadvertently de-attached as he approached a central London speed bump while heavily laden with champagne & chocolates from an office party?

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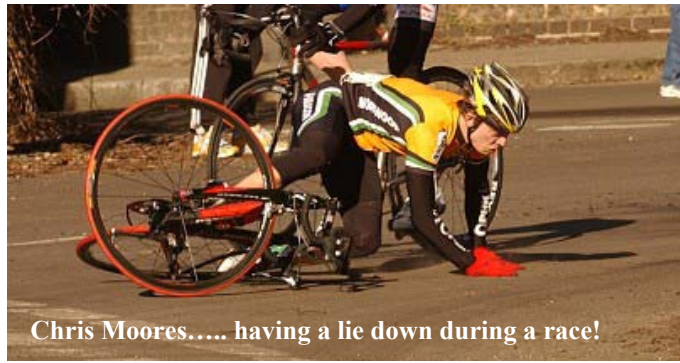
## Race Reports

### **Moores Imperious**

Chris Moores has raced almost every round of the Imperial Winter Series at the Hillingdon circuit. He has been joined by various team-mates throughout, with new member Rudie Marais putting in some strong rides and netting a few results himself along the way. Moores won Round 4 of the series, with Marais 22<sup>nd</sup>. In Round 5 he led in the bunch to take fourth place behind a leading break. This placed him at the top of the series. The following round, Moores was back on the podium in third place, assisted by Marais who was sixth and first second-cat rider in the race. Round 7 of the Imperial Series saw Moores taking a break as he tried to shrug off a cold. Marais was nonetheless in the thick of the action and although he missed the winning move of VC St Raphael's Colin Parry, he was in the top 15, taking 13<sup>th</sup> place and more BC points. Round 8 saw a new leader for the series as Paul Pickup (Private) took the win and Moores finished eighth, with Marais in the bunch. Pickup cemented his lead the following week with another victory just ahead of Moores in second place. Fellow Paragons Ben Moores and Justin Lomas were on hand to help Chris, and did a sterling job to string out the field on the last few kilometres, setting up their team-mate for a clean sprint.

## **Pulling together**

Round 10 saw Moores taking fifth place while Pickup scored another victory. Marais led in the bunch in 12th place having worked again to support and protect his team-mate. The 11th round on Saturday January 26 saw the arrival of Paragons Russell Painter, Marcus Brueton and Jason Humphries alongside Moores and Marais. There was a large, strong field which gave the Norwood Paragon plenty of work to do in order to help support Moores, now lying second overall. They duly delivered, and although Pickup escaped with High Wycombe CC's Clive Nicholls to stay clear over 30 seconds ahead of the bunch, the Paragon worked hard to mark Moores' rivals.



Chris Moores..... having a lie down during a race!

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Sigma Sport's Golla and Bye are lying third and fourth respectively in the series and Moores' team-mates did their best to ensure they didn't get away from the bunch. On this occasion Moores broke clear with three others in the last few laps and they stayed clear of the main bunch with Moores leading them in for third place while his fellow Paragons finished safely in the bunch and Nicholls took the win.

## **Man of many talents**

Young Moores didn't limit his racing exploits to the road over this period, as he also raced in the National Cyclo-Cross Champs in Sutton Park, Birmingham in December. This took place the day after one of the Imperial Series races, so he had tired legs. Moores finished a respectable 47th as Roger Hammond was crowned the new national champion.

## **In the army now**

While the majority of the racing in the UK has taken place at Hillingdon, there have been a few other road races in January, including the Army sponsored Upavon series in Wiltshire. Norwood Paragon's Dave Kennett and Mike Hawkins have been testing their legs on this tough windy circuit with notable success. In round two of the series, Kennett broke away from the bunch in pursuit of the leading break to take third place with Hawkins fifth and VC St Raphael's C Parry taking the win. Round Three saw Kennett away ahead of the bunch again, hoping to close the gap on the leaders. Sadly a slow puncture robbed him of speed, but he still hung on for eighth place with Hawkins behind in ninth place, with Justin Hoy (Felt) winning the race.

## **Down but certainly not out.....**

Special mention must go Norwood Paragon's Andy Waterman, who raced in the London League Cyclo-Cross race at Dartford on Saturday January 26. After an early crash he pulled out the ride of his life — read his account of the race in the

separate story (see page...)

### Racing in brief

The Norwood Paragon has had a busy spring with lots of racing despite the wet and windy conditions conspiring against them on a regular basis. Here is a round-up of results since the beginning of March.

**March 1:** Simon Warren rode the Wally Gimber, but had to pull out on the last lap with a broken spoke

**March 8:** Dave Kennett, Mike Hawkins, Dan Sullivan and Justin Lomas rode the Crowhurst Surrey League 2/3 race with Dave finishing sixth, Justin 16th, Mike 50th and Dan pulling out, suffering in the cold wet conditions.

Mark Perry (Bournemouth Arrow) won. Paul Davies was eighth in the Merrell Mudman Duathlon, continuing his duathlon campaign.

**March 9:** Jason Humphries, Andrew McKie and Dave K raced at Kirdford where Dave got into the winning break only to finish behind the bunch after another puncture. Jason was 12th and Andrew 25th with Mark Perry (Bournemouth Arrow) taking another win.

In the Jock Wadley Memorial RR, Simon Warren had another mechanical and punctured, forcing him to chase the bunch on his own for 40 miles in the rain, whilst Andy Waterman stayed in the fragmented bunch to finish 52nd.

**March 15:** Lee Valley Youth CC Series – Andy W put in a strong ride to finish fifth.



Mike Hawkins



Mr Simon Warren

**March 16:** Dunsfold 2/3. Dave K raced, but punctured again on the wet roads. Jules Birks (Kingston Wheelers) won.

Hounslow Spring RR. Simon W finished in the bunch and was happy to keep his bike trouble-free!

March 21: Simon W rode in the Good Friday track meet riding well, especially in the Golden Wheel where he was in the thick of the action but just missed out on a result.

March 22-24: The Easter 3 Day was beset with atrocious weather seeing both the 1/2/3 cat and 3rd cat events reduced to just two shortened stages:

1/2/3 Cat:

St1, Milland Hill: Chris Moores made the most of his climbing speed to finish second behind Glendene's Matt Talbot with Mike 19th and Justin finishing behind the bunch after missing the start. The race was shortened as a tree fell across the road!

St2, Dunsfold Aerodrome: This was run over a shortened course due to concerns about ice in the freezing conditions. Chris missed the main break of the day, but Mike, Chris and Justin worked hard to limit their losses and finished in

the bunch as Glendene's Ben Thompson won the stage.

St3: This was cancelled due to snow! However, Chris had done enough to finish second overall with Mike 16th. Matt Talbot took the yellow jersey.

3rd Cat:

St1: Stephen Roach, Jason and Russell all rode well on the hilly Milland circuit, finishing in the top 20 with Jason 14th, Russell 17th and Stephen 19th. Private Ben Wilson won the stage.

St2: Dunsfold was cancelled due to ice on the course.

St3: Lingfield saw all three Paragons in various moves, with Jason and Russell successfully breaking clear with four others including the Yellow Jersey. Wilson took the stage with Jason second, Russell sixth and Stephen 21st.

GC: Jason and Russell's sterling efforts on the last stage pushed them up to second and sixth respectively behind the winner Ben Wilson. Stephen finished 16th marking a strong return to road racing this year.

**March 29:** Addiscombe RR at Henfold Hill saw a full field of 80 riders and some controversy with the race stopped with barely five miles to go and just the break allowed to finish. Luckily Mike was in that break and finished fifth behind the winner Ben Wilson.

**March 30:** At the Barcombe cat 3 race Stephen Roach and Andy McKie rode together, with Stephen getting in a two-man break for several laps. However, he was caught later on and had to settle for 11th with Andy in 12th. VC Meudon's Mark Gibbs took the win.

Simon Warren rode the Jack Granger Memorial race, but unfortunately crashed heavily on the first lap, and wrecked his clothes and bike!

The Dengie Marshes Tour covered 76miles on road and farm tracks, making it exceptionally tough and muddy. Andy pulled out in the closing stages with mechanical problems, while Jason hung in there to finish 32nd. Sportbeans' BJ Whenman won the race.

**April 12:** MOD Chertsey saw 10 Paragons in action across the different categories. In the 1/2/3 race Steve Calland rode strongly, then punctured to finish a lap down, while Mike was 18th, Rudie Marais 19th and Justin 20th. Jerone Walters (Sigma) won the race.

Sarah Davies rode well in the women's race to finish ninth, with Lucy Chitternden (East St Cycles) winning the race.

Novice Racer Alex Mackmin was looking good in the fourth cat race until he was leant on in the sprint and dropped back to finish in the bunch with club-mate Anthony White. Dulwich Paragon's Richard Meinesz won the race.

Whilst in the Cat 3 event Andy M was 11th, Stephen R 15th and Russell was in the bunch with Niall Pugin finishing a lap down. Old Portlians' Philip Watkins won the race.

On the MTB circuit, Paul Davies rode the first round of the National Points XC

Series at Thetford Forest, however a knee injury forced him to pull out after an hour's hard racing.

**April 13:** Rob Douglas finally managed to open his 2008 TT account after two cancelled events in previous weeks. He rode the Redmon 25 on the Kingsfold course in cold windy conditions which saw most riders well behind their 2007 times. Rob finished in 1-00-40, just outside the top 10. Agisko's Laurence Harding won in an incredible 53-47.

SERRL Brenchley 1/2/3: Simon, Chris, Marcus and Mike raced on this hilly circuit with all four riders featuring in moves so there was always a Paragon up the road. Warren spent most of his race in the lead break, but then suffered in the closing stages and pulled out. Meanwhile Chris punctured, but was helped back on by Mike and Marcus and duly broke away to finish in third place, while Marcus was 17th and Mike 19th as the bunch was blown apart and almost half the 60 strong field failed to finish.

It's good to see so many of the Paragon racing despite the variable conditions and also to witness some fine rides across the board with the Easter Three-Day double of second placings on GC in both events standing out in particular. New member Alex is showing early promise and Rudie is continuing to prove to be a powerhouse and I'm sure his first win of 2008 is not far away.

As a result of these rides, we currently have the third highest ranked first cat in the country in the shape of Chris Moores and the Norwood Paragon is in the top 20 overall in the national team rankings.

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### Dishing it out in Dartford

London League CX, Dartford

By Andy Waterman

What a bloody race.

In retrospect, I was probably being a bit cocky when I barged my way to the front of the non-gridded riders at the London League Cyclo Cross at Dartford on January 27. I was just behind Kevin Knox from Dulwich on the start line, who'd kindly given me a lift down there, despite me faffing and being late.

Soooo, the commissaire, blows his whistle and off we go — except Kevin slips his pedal and nearly falls off. "Hahaha, loser! See ya later!"

Except I then did exactly the same thing. Only someone rode into the back of me at my moment of minimal balance, and I ended up on the floor, bike on top of me and chainrings whizzing past me, dangerously close to my face.

Drat and double drat.

I picked myself up and looked at my bike: right hand STI was bent in, front wheel had been knocked out of true in the dropout, and my back brake was rubbing. I manically sorted these minor problems and set about actually doing some pedalling.

By this time the leaders had probably 600m lead on me, and there were about 60 riders — of varying degrees of nodderdom (although none of them had fallen off trying to get going...) — between the leaders and me.

The laps were short with lots of grassy pitchside stuff, so I set off riding like a man possessed on the wider stretches to overtake as many people as possible, taking a breather and getting some recovery on the singletrack where passing opportunities were minimal.

Within about four laps I was back in the top 20. As I entered the final circuit of a rugby pitch I could see the leaders exiting the same section and they weren't gaining on me from lap to lap. Well, maybe Darren Barclay was, but after that, I reckoned I was catching.

Another lap or two later I caught Kevin's group. I was back on par. Kevin has been racing cross all season and has had numerous top fives. He's not great on the technical stuff, but this course was far from technical so I expected him to ride well.

I sat on the back of his group of four for about 30secs as they rode into the wind to catch my breath.

Before I knew it, almost involuntarily, I had attacked, hard, out the saddle and up a short rise into the twin barriers. I picked up my bike, took two long strides, put the bike down and resumed pedalling.

183bpm.

Pain.

My number was flapping having been dislodged in my crash. Each lap I had to shout my number to the timekeepers at the finish line. Most laps I enunciated clearly, conscious that I wanted this hard work to amount to something. This time I just grunted.

"uhuhxine"

Two riders and numerous lapped riders separated me from Matt Seaton, my cyclo-cross nemesis. So I ploughed on, past the London Dynamo, past the guy from Cambridge Uni who hung doggedly to my back wheel for almost a lap. On and on.

The final stretch of singletrack, the penultimate lap. This stretch was about 100m long, steeply off camber and littered with treacherous roots.

With one foot out the pedals I threw caution to the wind and left the brakes alone.

In one reckless last gasp I gained 50m on Matt Seaton. I had his wheel.

He knew I was there. He looked round. He looked again. He put his head down and pedalled. You're a gent Mr Seaton. He kept going, all the way into the head-



Andy in full flight!



wind and beyond, but he was cooked and I knew I could do better. We approached the barriers; back down the cassette, I attacked. Off the bike and over the barriers, the gap was made, and I was away. I had no idea what position I was in, but I had to stay clear of Seaton. What could be more embarrassing than being repassed? The final lap was a blur. Not as reckless as the last but still on the rivet to maintain the gap. Constant droning pain. Coming back onto the playing fields, my tyres squirming alarmingly in the corners with less than their minimal 28psi to support me, I could see Stuart McGhee from Evans.

The final carrot to chase. I carried on but couldn't get his wheel until we were on the barriers. As a former GB rider, making time on him here, where technique is paramount, was impossible and with only 50m to the finish through a series of switch-backs, I conceded victory to the better man.

Victory? Well, third place.

From dead last to fourth place in a little over an hour, I was chuffed when I crossed the line. This is my first season of cross and this was only my 6th race. In that time I've moved from barely scraping a top 20 to being in the top 5. This is a great side of cycle sport and it's a real shame there aren't more Paragons participating. It's fun, it's friendly and it's bloody hard racing — it would be great to see more of you at the London Leagues next season!

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## **A day trip to Belgium**

by Stephen Roach

Most day trips to the Continent are associated with the over-70s on coach tours, or whizzing over to Calais on the cheapest ticket possible to stock up on lager, wine and smelly cheese. Alternatively, you could pop across the channel and ride your bike for 120 miles and watch one of the most exciting professional road races on the calendar. Gent-Wevelgem is such a race, falling on the Wednesday between the Ronde van Vlaanderen and Paris-Roubaix. The event was first run in 1934, and its early-season date means riders are often tested by wind and rain, while the route also takes them twice over the difficult cobbled climb of the Kemmelberg where key splits often emerge.

I was awoken, as usual by Radio 4, at 0415, which was a bit earlier than usual for a Wednesday morning but as it was a day off work I thought I'd make the most of it and get up. The plan was to get to John Masters' house for 0445 and then drive to Dover unload the bikes, getting the 0630 ferry to Calais and pedal the short (!) journey to Belgium and watch the race. The plan was progressing nicely until I pressed the snooze button on my alarm clock and subsequently didn't arrive at John's until 5am! We then drove quite quickly to Dover and even got a short escort by the police (and their blue light).

As we approached Dover I asked John what ferry we were on, and soon realised that he hadn't in fact got me a ticket. Having unloaded the bikes I then had to pedal around the port to purchase a ticket and then sprint back. I was on the ferry in time — only to find John wasn't there.

Clutching my £8 return ticket with thoughts of "How am I going to fill the day before

getting the 8pm ferry home” crossing my mind, I saw John approaching warily down the gang plank towards me, if only the police from earlier this morning could see him now. Not only was I pleased that he was on the ferry, but also that he had negotiated the ramp from terra firma without falling off and going for an impromptu swim.

Moments later we were happily ensconced in the P&O restaurant tucking in to an athlete’s fry-up, whilst looking at the white cliffs of Dover on the mill pond that is the Channel. The weather was fantastic, with a crisp dawn first thing and clear blue skies for the rest of the morning. It was quite chilly though, but this is a small price to pay for a fantastic day!

Before long we were off the ferry and onto the wrong side of the road. Navigation can often be a concern when in foreign parts but I was soon re-assured as John knew the day’s route like the back of his hand and we were heading off up the coast toward Oye Plage without any interruption.

The first thing John looked for were the industrial cooling towers of Calais to see the wind direction and reassuringly the pollution (or is it steam?) streaming vertically which made us feel a lot more confident. Two hours and many quiet roads later we were approaching the hilltop town of Cassel, where we dived into the nearest bar for coffee and a well deserved breather.

I perused the map to see we only had another hour or so to the Kemmelberg and our target for watching the race and, more importantly, lunch. The last few miles to the Kemmelberg saw us on the race course and the fans already by the roadside with their table, chairs and wine waiting for the race. As we approached our destination and restaurant we were passed by coaches that had just dropped off the hoards of corporate clients to the luxury ‘Fortis’ marquees just down from the climb. They heckled us as we passed and I was surprised how they knew we were English, but I guess it’s reassuring to know we stand out amongst Johnny Foreigner.

We then reached our destination for the race where we met John’s Redhill club-mates (NB, they drove over!) and joined them for lunch, a few Leffes and a most enjoyable couple of hours. The race passes the restaurant twice so each time we popped out and then dived back in to watch it on live TV.

Unfortunately, it was soon 4pm and we soon had to leave for the 8.10pm ferry. We said our ‘au revoirs’ and were off down the road. I soon noticed that I only had half a bottle of water and am ashamed to say that I never filled it up for the 60 mile ride to Calais, which resulted in a very tired Stephen suffering mildly on John’s wheel for a good 20 miles of the ride home, though the rising headwind did have a part to play.

We stopped for Pepsi-Cola sustenance a few miles from port which helped me no end, but when we left the bar it was freezing, which made the first few miles hard work.

We reached Calais at about 1940 to find the ferry was delayed. John and I got chatting to a lonely long distance lorry driver whilst in the toilets of all places, and much to John’s dismay. When the time came to board the ferry, we rode to the front of the long queue of cars with their occupants sat warmly in their automobiles

cursing us for jumping in front. We were the first on to the ferry and made our way to the restaurant, where we consumed delights from the Indian culture and drank more beer. We arrived back in Blighty at 2030 our time, bikes back in the car, quick ske-daddle home and I was back in bed by 2300. The day could only have been bettered by the company of some more club-mates and their rear wheels, so if you'd like to join us next year you'll be more than welcome.

## **Mayhem and mud**

T-Mobile-Giant Mountain Mayhem

Eastnor Castle, Nr Ledbury June 23/24, 2007

Riders: Rachel Croggan, Stephen Roach, Marc Ravetto, Steve Watkins, Dave Mascal

Following on in the Paragon's usual tradition of maintaining an entry in the UK's premier 24hr mtb race, it was back in March I found myself eagerly awaiting the midnight release of this year's entry form. Once the form is released, it's downloaded, printed and every one of the team has their details entered and their signature falsified. Every year the event is oversubscribed and it's thanks to this one individual who burns the midnight oil and forges said signatures that we regularly manage to secure our position (edit: apart from 2008, where Marcus's team 'forgot' to – the 'A' Team are currently awaiting entry confirmation, while the 'B' Team are in!)

Following on from this, there usually follows a flurry of emails suggesting team rides and other lesser events which can be undertaken in the name of training. These are usually accepted, then forgotten about and unfailingly amount to nothing before the mild panic in the days before the event, whereupon it's realised that one (or worse, several) of the team are now unable to attend due to a family tragedy of monumental proportions which naturally precludes this member from any and all 24-hour mountain bike racing. Somehow, we always get this and yet we always manage to arrive on the start line with a useful team!

2007 was no different, Steve Watkins had been laid low with \*Steve Watkins mystery illness\*. Doubts had been cast by many, myself included, about his ability and the likelihood that one of the team might be required to head out into the wilds of Eastnor Castle grounds to recover the baton from Steve's dead body just so we could get on with the race. However, somehow he managed to persuade us and more importantly Phillipa, that this wasn't that likely and that he would try to pace himself sensibly. Yeah right, Steve.

However the rest of the team were fit, willing and able, if a little bit daunted by the awful forecast. But it was hoped this might even play to our strengths with most of us more than used to a little of the slippery stuff on our regular Wednesday night rides. Another flurry of emails ensured we had the correct kit and food for the weekend (thanks Stephen) and that everyone packed a set of mud tyres. Quite incredible seeing as regular top organiser Brueton was absent, busy chasing First Category road points in the Surrey League Jaunts. This, however, didn't stop him trying to put his oar in on a couple of occasions, but we managed to ignore him without too much effort.

## Perfect pitch

We arrived at the venue and managed to blag an excellent camping pitch actually on the course itself. This was a bit of a result as it provided a superb view of the action being sited on an uphill straight so we could see/cheer/heckle/abuse racers as they zipped past. Previously we'd been miles away from the action and in our own little world. This year, as the event progressed, we realised there were a real pro team of hecklers pitched opposite us. More of them later.

Before we knew it, our (and everyone else's) site had been pitched and a site resembling an upmarket refugee camp had materialised. We scoffed dinner (thanks Phillipa) and enjoyed the fireworks. We caught up with friends and called home to say we'd safely arrived, and we were then off to sink a nervous beer or two whilst kicking a few mud tyres, prior to turning in for a restful night in readiness for the off at 1400 the next day.

The last thing I can recall that night was one of our riding buddies, thankfully not in the Paragon, shouting something about badgers into a loudhailer on the other side of the campsite. This was met soon after by a co-heckler who sounded surprisingly insistent on ensuring he had a peaceful night's sleep before the race. Ah, happy times.

Before long, we'd awoken and it was time for the last prep before the event. We'd pre-ridden the course as a team (which turned out to be our only ride as a team prior to the event!) and were all nearly raring to go. Stephen had 'volunteered' for the first lap which involves a traditional 'Le Mans'-style half-mile run to the bikes, followed by a lap of the course before handing over the baton (in whatever form it comes) to the next team member. The rest of the event is organised relay-style so at any one time a member of the team is out on course.



Morning Campers



Dave Mascall

There are a few rules. Bikes must be mtbs (no 'crossers), each team member must ride at least two laps in the 24 hours, the baton must be handed over only within the designated transition area at the start/finish and you cannot accept outside help once out on the course. Teams are made up of four (single-sex teams) or five (mixed teams), or solo riders. In recent years other categories have appeared, teams made up of a pair, plus singlespeed bikes (no gears). Some even chose to ride solo AND on a

singlespeed...! These crazy individuals had special number plates and could be spotted from a distance quite easily. This was good as supporters and our pro team of hecklers could recognise them; every time a solo singlespeed came past they would all chorus, "Solo?" "Singlespeed?" "NUTTER!"

When a Charge bike was spotted they screamed "CCHHHHHHHHHHAAAAAAAARRRRRRGGGGGGGE"! Classic!

At various points in the event, they came out dressed in gorilla suits and there was even a comedy giraffe who was 'supporting' riders too.

### And they're off!



Marc Ravetto

2pm rolled around all too quickly & Stephen eagerly nudged his way onto the startline. Following a short scuffle with Jenn (stropky cow) O'Connor, the start gun went & Stephen trampled Ms O'Connor into the mud before returning to collect his bike and head off for the first bike lap. The rest of us, positioned back at the campsite halfway around the course, were ready and waiting to heckle as soon as riders were sighted. Sure enough, it didn't take long before the lone leader from Giant virtually sprinted his way through the **\*tunnel of noise\*** (nearly) and out to the long Kenda climb and the following woods. The rest of the field followed hot on his heels with those keener than others closer than some; the field was already well spread out despite being only 20 minutes into the event.

One of the key attractions of this type of event is that it permits the average Joe the opportunity to ride alongside the pros. The gulf which divides participants is quite incredible; your average beer-drinking singlespeed slacker lines up alongside the

whippet-thin, calorie-conscious racer. Their speed, as you would expect, varies wildly on non-technical ground. However, sometimes, the tables are turned when the road-trained speed merchant is out of his depth on tricky sections – for instance wooded sections where exposed roots can be treacherous for the unwary. In those conditions, our regular beer-monster can occasionally pull it out of the bag and stay upright where others can't, which might just result in a faster lap time.

Then there are people like Nick Craig who manage both speed with technical ability. Invariably, it's these individuals who consistently place as a result of having the rare gift of not only being blazingly fast, but being able to handle a bike too.

Anyway, the race progressed with us slipping easily into a seemingly



Steve dutifully cleaning Rachel's bike!

never-ending cycle of changing, riding, eating and resting. Rachel was last out and being perhaps the least experienced of the team we were keen she should get a lap under her belt in race conditions. We had tinkered mightily with her borrowed bike (it was her boyfriend's!) prior to the off and the poor girl was very very concerned about her boyf's reaction to this tinkering! We'd ripped bits off, messed about with shock pressures, etc etc, but hopefully it rode better for it. She headed out and returned unscathed a short while later giggling with excitement.

As darkness approached, Stephen and I paired up and did back-to-back laps for the first part of the night, while the others rested. Then Steve, Rachel and Doc did the second part while Stephen and I had a breather.

The only incident we'd encountered so far was when I'd inadvertently rolled a tyre off the rim on my second night lap. I'd been scooting downhill and I popped off the tyre bead on a big compression which I didn't hit quite straight. The rest of the tyre popped off on the next compression into the water-crossing, causing a bit of a comedy moment

as the inner tube bulged out! Fortunately, I was able to get it back on and re-inflate swiftly with the aid of a CO<sub>2</sub> canister, and I was soon back in the action.

We had been lucky with the weather up to this point, with it being reasonably dry. As it turned out, Stephen and I had the best part of the night as

once I'd finished my laps and handed over to Doc, I zipped up the tent door to the sound of the rain starting in earnest.

Unfortunately the course conditions deteriorated fairly rapidly after this and the others had a rough time of it. Poor Rachel face-planted the water-crossing as a result of the treacherously slippery bank preceding the water. She returned to the camp sometime later looking rather the worse for wear!

Surprisingly though, in many ways the dodgy course probably did help us to some degree. The off-camber muddy trails across a once grassy field called for superb bike-handling finesse rather than raw power. Rider after rider was seen sporting the trademark brown kit where they'd fallen foul of the conditions. I was pleased to report we seemed to have considerably fewer of these incidents than others, which further boosted our morale.



We were camped literally on the course

## Morning inglorious

As morning came around, Stephen and I dragged ourselves from our pits, the laps were ticking by with the course still getting more muddy by the minute. Some sections were now unrideable, with a combination of muddy grass and off-camber trail. There was a section of trail just prior to the descent to the finish which earned the title of the 'Somme Woods' as it was so muddy. Still we whipped around as best we could under the circumstances.

Last lap with a now very, very poor course, I was back on Paul Davies' singlespeed (SS) which I'd started the event on before switching to my regular full-suspension bike. I reasoned the SS would be easier if I had to carry (it's much lighter!). As it turned out, it was only the singlespeeds moving as everyone else's gears were clogged with mud!

As I wobbled my way through the Somme Woods, I caught an overconfident downhillier who was keen to get himself to the finish line before me. If it had not been for the fact I'd caught him and he was adamant he wasn't going to let me pass, I'd have had no problem letting him roll in before me. However, you find yourself having mini-races with people at these events, certain sections where people are equally matched lend themselves to it well, and races of only 100-200m long ensue. I'm not proud of it, but we were both racing at the time, so it was with not the slightest bit of guilt I left him extricating body and bike from a gorse bush while I sailed clear to the finish!

Doc wisely 'lurked' on the last lap for quite some time, which meant we didn't have to send a person out for yet another lap. He had taken pity on Stephen who was due (and ready and waiting) to go out again. As it was, we were only fighting for a top 20 placing so I don't think any of us were too fussed as conditions were diabolical.

As you may have seen, we came 24th out of 126 teams. It wasn't our best result ever, but given our issues it was pretty good under the circumstances. As has been the case in previous years at this venue, lots of teams packed after the bad weather overnight.

Lap times can be found here: <http://results.singletrackworld.com/team.php?id=9380> although they don't tell the whole story as the course changed a lot over the duration of the race. Steve W was 'taking it easy' and understandably so. I'd have liked to have seen his times had he been in the form he had earlier this year. Doc's lap times are well worthy of comment — pretty quick and if he continues to improve as he has over the last few years he'll be worthy of a fast team placing. (Edit: later in 2007, he showed what he's capable of with a fantastic Dusk 'til Dawn third place with Kaye).

Thanks a lot to Stephen for sorting the food and camping kit out. Cheers to Mike H for the usual massive EZUp which kept us dry. Thanks to Steve and Stephen for driving and thanks to Phillipa for food and allowing Steve to race. Here's to 2008!

**Coming up soon.....**

<b>29th April</b>	<b>Evening 10 - Newdigate</b>
<b>1st May</b>	<b>1st Surrey league handicap – Kitsmead Lane</b>
<b>4th May</b>	<b>Gorrick Enduro MTB race</b>
<b>8th May</b>	<b>Surrey league handicap – South Nutfield</b>
<b>13th May</b>	<b>Holmwood G10/42 run by Epsom CC</b>
<b>11th May</b>	<b>Club Open 25 mile time trial— Mayne Cup (handicap winner) and Imperial Wheelers Cup (fastest Time).</b>
<b>20th May</b>	<b>Evening 10 - Bletchingley</b>
<b>9th May</b>	<b>London to Brighton off road night ride</b>
<b>3rd June</b>	<b>Evening 10 – Newdigate</b>
<b>5th June</b>	<b>Banstead to Brighton night ride</b>
<b>17th June</b>	<b>Evening 10 - Bletchingley</b>
<b>21/22 June</b>	<b>Mountain mayhem MTB race</b>
<b>25th June</b>	<b>Tour of Wessex</b>
<b>29th June</b>	<b>Club 50 time trial. This is for the Fryco Cup, incorporated with the SCCU event.</b>



## Ironman South Africa 2008

Now I know that we're a cycling club, but we do have a few keen triathlete's so here is a brief report about from Ironman South Africa held just last weekend. Ironman triathlons consist of a long swim, a long bike ride and then a marathon! This year's event was won by local lad Stephen Bayliss, who is well known to many of us and always has a smile on his face.

**Official race report:** It's a double celebration for Stephen Bayliss (GBR) and his fiancée Bella Comerford (GBR) who have won the Spec-Savers Ironman 2008 in the men's and women's races respectively. Stephen has deservedly taken his first Ironman title with a course record time of 8:18:23, breaking the previous course record of 8:21:25 set in 2005 by Port Elizabeth favourite. Chabaud started his run before Tissink had entered the second transition and kept a healthy lead for most of the run. Tissink now had to play catch-up, being 5 minutes behind, with Marcel Zamora Perez (ITA) breathing down his neck. Around the 4km mark Chabaud's lead started diminishing with Tissink now 00:04:20 behind. Perez was closing in, 00:01:30 behind Tissink with Bayliss in fourth place, 00:02:44 behind Perez. The four frontrunners – Chabaud, Tissink, Perez and Bayliss – stayed relatively close together for the majority of the race. Around the 18km mark Bayliss passed Perez to move into third place with Peter Schoissengeier (GER) closing in on the leaders in fifth place. With Bayliss having an almost untouchable lead, and Tissink far ahead of third place, it was a race for bronze. Schoissengeier finally came in view of the finish line, 00:00:29 ahead of former race leader Chabaud.



**Stephen words,** *"I did my first Ironman 3 years ago in Lanzarote and finished 14th over 45 mins behind the winner. From that day I have been working so hard and have seen improvement, but it is certainly not easy to win an Ironman race. But yesterday in South Africa I pulled it off. I had a good swim coming out in 2nd and riding with one guy at the front. After 60km I was actually leading the race by over 1min after a puncture by a strong riding Austrian left me all alone up front, I was riding a bit to hard and when Chaboud and then Tissink came past I was unable to match there pace. But I limited the gap to a reasonable time. Onto the run and I didn't feel brilliant, but did as the Doc prescribed, got some food and drink in over the first 2km, then got going and gradually the gaps started coming down, I moved to 4th then to 3rd then I could see 2nd, then with 8km to go I caught Tissink and was in the lead. But he was tough and hung on with me for another 4km and then with 5km to go I gave it a surge and I was all alone and then ran as hard as I could to the finish. I didn't have to do a speech at the awards, but did a dance instead."*