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## The Club welcomes offers of help to organise rallies.

If you have an idea for a venue please contact the Touring Events Coordinator, e-mail: [touring-events@tandem-club.org.uk](mailto:touring-events@tandem-club.org.uk)

Agreed reasonable expenses will be paid to organisers; please ask for details.

Suggesting a venue does not mean you will be asked to organise the whole event unless you wish to do so.

**CREDITS:** Photos within articles by authors, unless otherwise stated.

**Front cover:** Glyn and Helen Foley exploring Holland's cycleways and waterways.

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## All copy for the next issue by 22nd May please.

Opinions expressed in this journal are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the Tandem Club. Acceptance of advertisements does not imply endorsement.

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cheques payable to  
**The Tandem Club**



Methinks I should avoid writing editorials. Last time I embarked on this preamble, there was a blanket of fresh snow covering the garden. Two months on and nothing much seems to have changed. Once again everything outside has a white mantle and once again I am indoors when I should really be out, pushing pedals.

Still, the needs of the Tandem Club Journal beckon and for some inexplicable reason, I'd rather be sat at my workstation with a hot coffee than out among the hills of Hampshire with blustery snow falling and cold tootsies.

Earlier in March, between the Arctic spells, we finally got to go out for a ride on the Beast with the Thamesway Group. The weather was abysmal and we had 'ummed' and 'arred' in the days leading up to it. And even though it was raining on the day and we had said we'd just drive to the pub if that were the case, we still loaded the beast into the car and headed off to the start location, so eager were we both to get out! Joining the others in the nice warm cafe for a pre-ride coffee while it bucketed down outside, we weren't so sure.

Doctor says Karon can ride the tandem but mustn't 'push' up any hills and fortunately, the planned ride – or rather the bit between the starting point and the pub – was flat. So while the others went off in search of hills (???) we took the direct route to the pub. Even the worst of the weather held off, so while it was damp to say the least, we were in good shape as we pulled up just ahead of opening time. The same can not be said of the other four pairs that looked rather bedraggled and wet when they joined us after riding the full route.

So, down to business... First off, a big thanks to all our contributors for providing this month's collection of stories, articles, journey accounts and little 'fillers'. Without you the magazine would be very dull – and probably only a few pages long! Once again we panicked in the lead up, thinking we would be short, but a late flurry of content means we actually have a couple of bits left over. Sorry if yours was one that didn't get in this month – rest assured it will grace the pages in the next edition!

This issue continues with a couple of stories or riding abroad, started in issue 246. Keeping with the continental cycling theme there's also an account of a splendid cycling/boating holiday in the Netherlands. Closer to home but staying close to the water (too close), there's the story of a rather unusual ride along some of England's working waterways.

Next weekend is Easter and that of course means the Easter Rally and AGM. By the time you read this, it will all be done and dusted for another year but hopefully we'll have met a few more TC members by the time it draws to a close. We'll be taking the 'Beast' but our riding will be limited as Karon continues to recover.

*Bob and Karon*

## For an Interesting Day Out

Consider visiting the National Cycle Museum, Llandrindod Wells, Mid Wales.

It is run as a charitable trust and is the leading bicycle museum in the UK. Please see <http://www.cyclemuseum.org.uk/> or tel **01597 825531**. Lots of cycling memorabilia and history on display as well as over 200 bicycles of all ages and types.

## The Bishop's Castle Tandem Triathlon

The Bishop's Castle Tandem Triathlon is (probably) the only event of its type in the World, set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the rolling Shropshire Hills.

It is a fantastic event for fitness enthusiasts or those just wanting a fun day out. There is a 1K swim, 35k tandem ride and a 10k run through the woods.

Whether you want to compete hard or simply dawdle round in fancy dress, calling at the pubs and cafes en-route, it is a great day out, with plenty of facilities in Bishops Castle for entertainment, accommodation and refreshment. Bishop's Castle annual carnival takes place on Sunday.

The event is organised by the local community and there is a Junior Challenge Event for 8-14 year olds.

2013 will be the event's 28th year with prize categories ranging from fastest to best fancy dress competitors. We will be adding more details to the website soon.

The event will be taking place on 6th July and details and registration etc. can be found on the website at <http://www.tandemtriathlon.org.uk/>

## Caption Competition

Norman Taylor sent this picture in, suggesting we use it for the caption competition. I'm sure with all the snow we've had lately, there would be several choice words that could be said about it!

Captions to Norman at [nrtaylor1937@btinternet.com](mailto:nrtaylor1937@btinternet.com)

The one he finds the most amusing will be published in the next TCJ.





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## Tandem Friendly Bike Shops

John and Ruth from JD Tandems are constantly being asked by fellow tandem riders for recommendations for bike shops to undertake maintenance and repairs on bikes.

They regularly see people travel hundreds of miles to a shop for repairs. They thought it would be a good idea for The Tandem Club to ask members, through the TCJ, to make recommendations to their fellow riders as to experienced, tandem friendly bike shops that are proven destinations for riders looking for maintenance and/or repairs. Seems like a very good idea. Once compiled it could possibly reside on the website too.

So, if you know of a good tandem friendly bike shop you wouldn't hesitate to recommend to other members, email the details to [editor@tandem-club.org.uk](mailto:editor@tandem-club.org.uk)

## Letters



Dear Bob & Karon,

We've read with interest part 1 of the article 'Planes trains and automobiles' in the February/March magazine as we cycled along (a small) part of the Canal du Midi whilst staying on a campsite at Serignan last year and are returning for more of the same this summer.

We were surprised to learn from the article that we should have had a permit from the French Water Board – indeed, we didn't see any signs along the canal informing us of this fact. I can find only one online reference to anyone else having obtained such a permit and am therefore struggling to find a link to obtain one. Would it be possible for you to forward Pat & Dave Watson's e-mail address (with their prior permission of course) please so we can ask them for details.

*Many thanks, Jan & Pete Hook*

Dear Editor,

In reply to Charles M Smith's letter in TCJ 246 regarding his problem with their tandem on the Oban train. I, too, have long-since come to the conclusion that Scotrail's policy on tandems is just 'plain prejudice'.

As Rail Liaison Officer I spent three years corresponding with Scotrail management and conducting loading trials with them, and every time they came out with the mantra 'It is Scotrail policy not to carry tandems'. When pressed for a reason they would give feeble excuses such as 'What would you do if a couple with a tandem went to board a train and there was already a bike on the train?' When I put the question back to them 'what would you do if a couple on solos

(say a father and young son) went to board a train and there was already a bike on the train?' The answer to both questions is, of course 'They would wait for the next train!' However, Scotrail's response was (you've guessed it) 'It is Scotrail policy not to carry tandems'!

This was a few years ago now, and I have recently learned that Scotrail now have a new Managing Director, so let's hope that our new Rail Liaison Officer can get the new Scotrail management to see that their policy is nothing more than 'plain prejudice' and to allow tandem riders the same right to cycle in some of the most beautiful parts of the UK as is taken for granted by their solo-riding counterparts.

*Peter Simpson – retiring Rail Liaison Officer*

Hi Bob and Karon,

You will not know me in person but I am one of the founder members of the club...

My reason for contacting you is that I have a complete collection of all the magazines (except for the first three) in mint condition and would like to find a "good home" for them. I do not want any money for them but if anyone does want them, they would have to make their own arrangements to collect. They are tied up in four bundles about 10 inches high each.

I live in Croydon and there are members of the South East London section who live quite near, Tricia is one of them who lives three miles away. I should make it clear that I have not met any of them before in person. I give below my address etc so that if anyone is interested in them they can contact me directly. If no one wants them perhaps you could put a small advert in the next issue of the magazine ? Many thanks.

John Swain, 33 Craigen Avenue, Croydon, Surrey. CR0 7JP. Tel **02086544479**.

*Best wishes John.*

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### **If you have a fire is this the fire engine that will turn up?**

Built by the well known fire engine maker Merryweather in 1895 the galvanised box contained hose & stand pipe for first aid fire fighting until a larger appliance arrived. This is one of a series of 50 cigarette cards on fire fighting equipment issued before 1939 by John Player.

*Phil & Janice Morris*





*Camden Lock, photo by Oxyman on Wikimedia*

Our son lives in London at Camden Locks where a sign by the canal proclaims 'Leeds 312 miles'. This sign provided the inspiration for our plan to cycle from Yorkshire to London utilising canal towpaths, which as everyone knows, are nicely surfaced and easy to cycle!!! Rather than start in Leeds we determined that our starting point (still in Yorkshire) would be Huddersfield, which for us was easily accessible by rail.

We arrived in Huddersfield after lunch and after a quick tour of the town (how hard can it be to find a canal?) picked up the towpath on the Huddersfield Narrow Canal. This was a great introduction to towpath cycling, the surface was reasonable, the narrow locks very quaint and the scenery increasingly attractive as we climbed lock after lock towards the canal summit at Standedge Tunnel. We had tea and toast at the café at the Marsden tunnel portal and chatted to the British Waterways staff about their role in managing the tunnel traffic and our best way over the top. We also talked about our plan to follow the canals all the way to London and this met with their collective approval but some disagreement as to the best route! We took the tunnel keeper's advice and followed the road over the moor that passed close to some of the air shafts serving the tunnel below.



The road back down to the canal in Diggle was closed to motor vehicles because of the Brass Band competition being held in the village. We had the road to ourselves and descended at more than 40 miles an hour taking the bends in the road in wide sweeps, only slowing when we saw the crowds gathered to watch the marching bands.

We stayed at the very convivial Railway Hotel in Diggle and after dinner spent a couple of hours on the show field listening to the bands as they each played two pieces. We were intrigued to learn that the judges were housed in a large horsebox and were unable to see or otherwise identify the individual bands when awarding their marks.

Our next day's ride began with the long descent towards Ashton-under-Lyne where we picked up the Peak Forest and Ashton Canals, which led us via Marple Junction to the Macclesfield Canal and our destination for the day of Congleton. It was on this leg of the journey that the condition of the towpath deteriorated somewhat. It became increasingly rare for the towpath to have a reasonable surface and increasingly common for it not to have a made up surface at all; we were often cycling on grass. This was pretty much the pattern for the next 200 miles and we really only found well-surfaced towpaths on the sections through towns. The canal architecture on this stretch was interesting, particularly the 'snake bridges' which took the towpath from one bank to the other in an elegant spiral and were a feature of the Macclesfield. We had a couple of attempts at cycling over the snake bridges but were defeated on the tandem by the steep curve and wet and slippery cobbled surfaces.

*Marple Junction, photo by Alan Murray-Rust*



*Inset shows Snake Bridge no. 76 on Macclesfield Canal, photo by Ray Fowell, both on Wikimedia*



Cyclists we met whilst stopped for coffee at a canal-side marina suggested we take the 'Middlewood Way' into Macclesfield. This was a multi use route along an old railway line and gave us a fairly quick run to the outskirts of Macclesfield where we rejoined the canal. We came across a bunch of rough looking youngsters on bikes and half expected trouble as they were blocking the towpath. In the event the lads wanted to talk bikes and speculate as to the cost of a tandem, we in turn admired their BMX skills. We cycled together for a while like a battleship with a destroyer escort.

We had to leave the canal before we got through Macclesfield as the towpath was closed. It's probably worth explaining at this point that we were relying on Nicholson's Canal Guides to find our way. The guides are excellent and packed with useful information, but are in effect a very long strip map. Consequently if you stray even a little way from the canal you 'fall off' the edge of the map. This generally meant that if we left the canal we would know that it was 'somewhere over there' but have no clear idea as to where we were.

It took us a while to 'rediscover' the canal, eventually finding it as it crossed the road on a tall aqueduct. The climb up to the canal, on a steep and narrow flight of steps festooned with nettles, carrying the tandem, reinforced the point that this was not an easy ride. Later as we passed a couple of anglers they called out, 'Have you ever seen an American crayfish'? We hadn't so we stopped. Their American crayfish was a whopper, much bigger than the native crayfish we see in our local river and judging by the way it raised its claws clearly not going to the pot without a fight. We resumed our journey and spent a pleasant night at the Lion and Lamb in Congleton after covering a modest but tough 43 miles.

The following day was Jubilee day and as most people will recall somewhat wet! After a leisurely start we rejoined the canal and headed south towards Kidsgrove and the junction of the Macclesfield and the Trent and Mersey Canals. The towpath was extremely slippery in the rain and in places sloped quite steeply towards the canal. The back wheel was regularly slipping towards the water and a fall into the canal seemed a real possibility. The sensible option, which we were to take on several occasions, was to try and find a road route that would get us past particularly difficult bits of towpath. We were, however, keen to cycle as much of the canal as possible and rejoined the towpath just before the junction with the Trent & Mersey.

The canal junction at Harding's Wood is interesting as the Macclesfield passes

*Harding's Wood Junction, photo by Roger Kid on Wikimedia*



over the Trent and Mersey and then runs parallel to it before the canals eventually join just a few hundred metres from the Harecastle Tunnel.



*Harecastle Tunnel, photo by Maurice Pullin on Wikimedia*

We rolled up to the tunnel entrance and were met by the British Waterways Tunnel Keeper. We had a chat about the best way over the tunnel and were very kindly given a photocopy of a hand drawn map that showed the route for cyclists over Harecastle Hill via Bathpool Park. Once over the Harecastle we were quickly into Stoke on Trent where the canal was very busy with dozens of narrow boats that were all gaily decorated with flags and bunting with everyone clearly intent on celebrating the Jubilee. The towpaths around Stoke were the best surfaced towpaths of the trip. If this was how things were going to be for the remainder of the journey it would be a breeze! Sadly somewhere near Barlaston the good surface stopped. We then made steady but slow progress to Stone which, despite the miserable weather, we liked enormously. We took shelter in the Star Inn, a very quaint canal side pub situated right next to a lock, but it was a brief halt as our destination lay some miles on at a farmhouse B&B at Kings Bromley. Our wet afternoon's ride was a mixture of poor towpath and on-road sections. Many of the villages we passed through were holding outdoor Jubilee celebrations and people were gamely trying to make the best of the day despite the appalling weather. After another long day we arrived at our Bed & Breakfast at Common Farm and gladly draped our soggy socks around the lip of an old well in the conservatory while our shoes were put to dry by the Aga.

We awoke the next day to sunshine and after a hearty farmhouse breakfast headed to Fradley Junction where we joined the Coventry Canal and took the obligatory photo of the picturesque pub called the Swan but known to boaters as the 'Mucky Duck'.

The Coventry Canal towpath was fairly mediocre and we spent a lot of time on grass, however the sun was shining and we made reasonable progress, especially around Tamworth where the towpath was again surfaced. It was, however, in Tamworth that we came across barriers on the towpath that were impossible to get the tandem through. We eventually settled on the 'hanging over the canal' technique which was a high risk strategy, but easier than lifting the tandem over the barriers.



*Hawkesbury Junction, photo by Oosoom on Wikimedia*

We followed the Coventry Canal onwards through Nuneaton and Bedworth to Hawkesbury Junction. This was probably our favourite junction of the trip, the weather was warm and drinkers at the Greyhound pub were being entertained by a trio of buskers who gave us a good-natured rendition of 'Daisy Daisy' as we set off along the Oxford Canal. The towpath ran out very quickly leaving us ploughing through sticky mud so we resorted to the road, finally rejoining the canal at Newbold on Avon with just a short run to our hotel in Rugby. We stayed at a Premier Inn and were touched when the staff offered to let us put the tandem inside, but it was so muddy we settled on leaving it in the locked bin store.

The following day dawned bright and as the tandem transmission was making nasty mud related grinding noises we decided a bike clean was in order. We had noticed a hand car wash nearby and called there in the hope of borrowing a bucket of water. In the event the tandem was given a very gentle wash and brush up by the attendant and we pedalled off on a very shiny and quiet machine. As it turned out this was not to be the only wetting that the tandem had that day!

We made our way along the Oxford Canal to its junction with the Grand Union Canal. As the towpath was good we were able to make reasonable progress. Just before Braunston Tunnel there were a few overhanging branches but we were able to duck under these in unison without too much trouble, until the pilot failed to duck enough. A branch lodged under Andy's helmet and we were both thrown into the canal! Falling into the canal is obviously not a unique experience, but for us it was a first and as the canal at that point was five feet deep with sheer banks it was a touch unsettling. Things got slightly worse as we surfaced because the Tandem



was in the process of sliding off the towpath and landed on top of us. We were able to prevent the bike sinking and wedged it on the bank but then struggled to get out of the canal. Once out we found the panniers were full of water and the handlebar bag had flipped open. We had lost our camera in the canal and our mobile phone was flooded, an empty water bottle had floated away whilst a full one sank and was lost. However we were OK and the bike, although scratched, was otherwise undamaged. Andy tried to find the camera and recover its memory card by diving in the water but was eventually dissuaded from this endeavour by the descriptions of the various deadly water-borne diseases that passing boaters predicted he would catch. However, when we explained our predicament, we were offered tea and biscuits and lent a net to trawl the bottom. We recovered various items of interest, but alas not our camera. We eventually abandoned the search, found some dryish clothes in the bottom of one of the bags, got changed and pressed on. In truth although we were pleased not to have come to harm, it was a little while before we recovered our sense of humour.

We stopped for a strong coffee in the first pub we came to and discovered our wallet was full of water and our money soaked. Laying lots of wet £20 notes on the table to dry out proved a good conversation starter and when we explained how our money came to be so wet we were offered the use of a mobile phone so we could let our family know we would be out of contact.

It was inevitably a long, slow ride to our overnight stay at Elm Tree Farm near Stoke Bruerne, but to our delight the accommodation included washing and drying facilities and we were able to wash the canal out of our clothing and generally dry out.

We had a lazy start the next day but were quickly into and then through Milton Keynes. We were then on and off the canalside several times as the towpath was poor. We used the road for various stretches as we headed towards our hotel at Kings Langley where we had arranged to meet our friend Jane for dinner. We stayed at another Premier Inn and again the staff found a secure place for us to store the tandem. Jane (bless her) had managed to get us a cheap mobile phone that worked with the SIM card salvaged from the phone we had ruined the day before. We enjoyed a lovely meal and a glass of bubbly (to celebrate not drowning!) and retired for the night ahead of the final push for London.

Our 'push' started with the canal towpath being closed and we made our way by road to Watford where Andy tried to buy new trainers as his were quietly disintegrating after their soaking in the canal. Here we received good advice from a member of the staff at the Cotswold Outdoor shop who directed us to the Ebury Cycle Way, which took us swiftly to Rickmansworth where we rejoined the canal. We found a reasonable towpath but as it was raining heavily it was extensively flooded and more or less underwater for hundreds of metres at a stretch. We learnt subsequently that the local papers referred to the weather on this particular day as 'the monsoon'.



Despite the weather we were in good spirits, as we had convinced ourselves that as we approached London the towpath would improve and we would glide effortlessly to our final destination in Camden. However when we reached the junction with the Paddington Arm of the Grand Union Canal we found a narrow and very soggy towpath. Keen to avoid another 'swim', we decided to follow the road for a while. In the event we lost the canal and our way and had an exciting journey into central London along the A40, eventually re-finding the canal at the back of Regents Park.

The rain stopped, the sun came out and we cycled gently along the last two miles to Camden Lock where we met our family, who cracked open a bottle of champagne to celebrate our safe arrival.

We had travelled almost 300 miles over the course of seven days which would have been fairly leisurely under other circumstances. The weather and the route we had chosen did, however, make our trip somewhat more difficult than we had anticipated. The towpaths were often tricky on a tandem, the frequent towpath obstacles a pain and the absence of a surfaced towpath for many long stretches quite a challenge. On the other hand, the canals were interesting, we passed through some beautiful countryside, our accommodation was good and we were, without exception, well received by the British Waterways staff and canal users that we met along the way.

After a day off the bike we went on to ride the 100km London Nightrider, but that, as they say, is another story...

*Andy and Lynn Skelton*



*Sorry. Couldn't resist it (ed). As the photographs of this memorable trip are lying somewhere on the bottom of the Grand Union Canal, we raided Wikimedia Commons for some replacements. This is a database of freely usable media files.*

# New members



## A very warm welcome to the following new members:

Richard Barltrop, Mette Berg, Oscar and Astrid Barltrop from  
**Witney**

Charles Barraball from  
**New Malden**

David Blight, Vicky Poole and Georgia Blight from  
**Poulton-Le-Fylde**

Stewart and Sue Clark from  
**Clitheroe**

Iain and Dorice Davidson from  
**Ormskirk**

Jonathan, Karen, Harry and Zara Dronsfield from  
**Poole**

Bruce and Christine Elkins from  
**Southampton**

Duncan Faulkes and Nicola Key from  
**Bristol**

Gerry and Elaine Fuller from  
**Penzance**

Greg Haigh and Wendy Robinson from  
**Rochdale**

Paul and Vicki Howe from  
**Northallerton**

David Hume and Kim Summers from  
**Loanhead, Midlothian**

William and Beryl Lloyd from  
**Portimao, Algarve, Portugal**

John, Denise, Austen and Nathalie Lomas from  
**Robertsbridge**

Neil Lomas and Anita Hall from  
**Cheadle**

Roger and Mary Paddey and Angela Carter from  
**Fareham**

Oliver and Anna Sutcliffe from  
**Stratford-Upon-Avon**

John and Barbara Thorne from  
**Nottingham**

Mark and Joanne Travis from  
**Penzance**

Carol, Barry, Isobel, James and Maple Unwin from  
**Barnet**

Chris Williams and Lucy, Andy and Joseph Faire from  
**Leicester**

## Photos and stories

The editors are always glad to receive ride reports and stories along with photos for the magazine. Anecdotes and little 'fillers' are welcome too. Contact details for the editors and other useful information can be found on page 3.

For those of you who would like to know what the E.B.E. is all about I am writing this article to tell you of my experiences. When I first considered using their services I was quite nervous of committing myself because I didn't know anything about them other than what it said in their brochure and some feedback from the Tandem Club discussion board. I have since used them twice and hope that other T.C. members will benefit from learning of my experiences.

### **Brochure and website**

These are pretty comprehensive and tell you exactly what services E.B.E. provide, routes, destinations, timings etc. Their online booking is very easy and when you phone them they are very helpful – but try not to call before 10am as they use the hour before then to contact their coaches.

### **Meeting and Boarding**

My pick up point is Lakeside at Thurrock. Give yourself adequate time to get to your pick up point, especially at the weekend – it sometimes takes quite a while to get through the Dartford Tunnel in heavy traffic.

The actual pick up is in the main bus stop at the services and you wait nervously for the bus to arrive, but if they are going to be delayed they will call you on your mobile. Having said that, it's a relief when they come into sight. Tandems go on the top of the trailer and solos go on the bottom, along with panniers etc. You are directed to your seat and suddenly off you go.

### **The Journey**

The seats are quite comfortable but I am over 6 feet 2 inches so life for me on most forms of transport is never that easy and if you're travelling to the southern destinations it's 24 hours on a bus. I take water and snacks with me and all my valuables, paper work etc. in my bar bag. Dress for warmth – with the air conditioning working it can get quite chilly, especially in the night. The Channel crossing is easy enough and once in France it's motorways. The standard of driving is simply superb – very smooth and within the speed limit. You pre-order your hot meal which is tasty and good value; the attendants come round regularly with offers of refreshments and as the sun goes down the blinds are drawn and the lights are dimmed. You can watch a movie or listen to their music selection. The toilets are adequate, designed for travellers who are less tall than me – but there are regular comfort breaks and driver changes so you have the opportunity to stretch your legs. As the journey progresses fellow travellers disembark at their destinations and you are warned by an attendant about 20 minutes before your drop off point.

## Disembarking

This is where you need to have your wits about you, especially if you have travelled all night as it can be a bit of a scrum. Your bike will be taken from the trailer and handed to you, then you need to collect your panniers. Be careful and methodical when loading up and make sure you've got everything. If you need to fill your bidons the stop will be close to a garage, café or super market and the drop-off map will enable you to orient yourself with your proposed route etc. Don't forget to ride on the right!

## Finally

I now have no qualms about using European Bike Express; they represent good value for money and they get you where you want to go safely and in reasonable comfort.

*Brain Grindall*



*Photo by David Storey*

Having enjoyed riding a tandem for many years, the purchase of a new Orbit machine, coupled with more time available for cycling since retirement, spurred my wife and me to undertake our first overseas adventure with the bike.

Where to go? No great problem there – Holland, with its flat terrain and renowned cycling set-up, seemed ideal for a first venture. Reading *Bicycle Touring Holland* by Katherine Widing gave us lots of ideas and practical advice and our initial plan was to tour using B&Bs, carrying everything on the bike. But a better plan emerged – combine our cycling and waterways enthusiasms by staying on a barge which toured the Dutch waterways.

Eventually our plans came to fruition – a week in September, starting from Amsterdam on a boat exploring the waterways of Northern Holland. We booked with Boat Bike Tours direct, and got a much better price than via their UK agents, especially when they applied a hefty discount for late booking (about a month before departure). They normally provide bikes, but we were determined to take our bike of course.

So the next problem was how to get to Amsterdam with the tandem. The Hull-Rotterdam ferry is expensive, as an overnight cabin is necessary. But the prospects of flying with bike did not appeal, and Eurostar don't take tandems, so ferry it had to be. In fact this turned out to be a relaxing prelude to the holiday, with a decent cabin and nice meal on board. But our first problem was how to get to Hull, from our Sheffield home. The nice, very foreign, lady on the Northern Rail helpline said, 'That's no problem, you can take a tandem on the train. By the way, what is a tandem?' Enquiries by email gave us a different story: 'We are a very bike friendly company,' said the Customer Relations Officer. 'No tandems.' So a visit to the local station was called for, and a chat with a train guard: 'No problem – you can put it here'. But one of our team wasn't happy with this anarchistic approach, so further enquiries led to a friend of a friend who said we could leave our car at their house near the ferry.



So, front panniers were purchased, to add to our existing rear set, and experiments made to reduce our luggage to a respectable minimum. In the end we travelled with 7.5kg on the front, 14kg at the rear, and a top bag of 2.5kg – a total of 24kg, which certainly made steering interesting as we set off for the couple of miles to the ship, fully laden for the first time.





*The Angela Esmee in a typical Dutch scene*

'It'll be flat' we had told ourselves about this holiday – but the ramp up to the top car deck of the huge ferry was anything but, and a test to our pride watched by various crew and passengers. That hurdle over we were pointed to a slot where we could tie the bike. One of our team proceeded to lash the bike within an inch of its life to the railings – 'there's a strong wind forecast' – and we waddled off with our five panniers to find the cabin.

We docked in Rotterdam nice and early and bowled down the aforementioned ramp into a misty morning. Our plan was to catch a train from Rotterdam to Amsterdam – they do allow tandems on Dutch trains we had been told by the nice Dutch tandem club man – 'of course'. So where's the station? Ah! It transpires the port, the largest in Europe, is about 15km from Rotterdam! Luckily, we were helped by an English cycling couple who had travelled this way before and we followed them along the canal – very atmospheric, with huge wind turbines appearing out of the early morning mist – to a suburban station at Massluis. This was an adventure in itself, involving a small ferry and a massive lift bridge, which took road, cycle track and railway over the canal. Watching the whole middle section rise to allow boat passage was an impressive introduction to Dutch waterways, with their huge barges making light work of moving cargo.

The automatic ticket machine at the station defeated us, and also several Dutch locals who tried to help, so we bundled the bike onto the train and were soon in Rotterdam Central. Not quite so easy to get to the Amsterdam platform – down and up a huge flight of steps with a fully laden bike isn't easy! We knew we had to look out for the cycle symbol on the (express) train, so when it arrived we found our spot and made our assault for the designated cycle spaces. Having got on board, just, the train speedily departed, and our problems began. This being a Saturday morning, the double-decker train was full. Very full. The space where cycles should happily rest – a sort of lobby / corridor – was full of pushchairs, and the space next to the door was occupied by a young woman with two very large suitcases, which she was determined not to move. Until you've been in a cramped space in a foreign county, with all sorts of people wanting to clamber past, you've no idea how much space a tandem, laden with luggage front and back, takes!

An hour later we're in the bustle of Amsterdam and cycling a couple of km to the boat. Cyclists are everywhere and care is needed to avoid disaster. Huge bike parks display row after row of bikes, much like our multi-storey car parks.

Our boat is bigger than we expected. 70 passengers and 12 crew, with rows of bikes stored on top. Our bike goes up a special ramp – the crew scoff at our lock and run a long wire through all the bikes. The cabin is a disappointment – two banks of bunk beds make it more cramped than necessary and the shower draining arrangements owe a debt to Heath Robinson. We learnt later that many

cabins had been refurbished and were much nicer than ours. Still, there's lots of storage and we shan't spend much time in here.



The passengers are mostly German, with a dozen or so British (mostly booked via HF Holidays), a few Americans, and no Dutch! All are of our vintage, except for a young Italian couple. Let's hope they like the company of older folk! We are soon sailing out to our overnight mooring, in Zaandam and getting to know our companions. Most are not serious cyclists. Nearly all were using the bikes provided, which were of the 'sit-up-and-beg' variety, with back pedal coaster brakes, which apparently took some getting used to. A couple of elderly Germans had brought their own electric bikes,

which gave them more confidence that they would complete the necessary distance each day. The next morning all the bikes had been unloaded on to the quay by the very efficient crew and we did rather stick out on our gleaming tandem. We'd had a briefing from our very helpful guide the previous evening – first in German, then in English. Our guide did cycle the route each day, but this is a self-guided holiday – each day we were given a designated route, with easy-to-follow maps. The routes were easy, around 35-50km, although we were free to vary these and plan our own route of course, to meet the boat at the end of each day. Cyclists formed small groups, or pairs, and new formations would coalesce

*The Dutch cycle paths take some beating!*



during the day, as we met our fellow travellers at a coffee or museum stop.

Most of the time we cycled on our own but would regularly meet our companions during the day. So a daily pattern emerged. Make a packed lunch from the breakfast ingredients, then aim for morning coffee and apple cake, a Dutch speciality, at a café.

Onwards, to find a quiet spot for lunch, then aim for a mid-afternoon arrival to find our boat, and a welcome cup of tea and chat. Sometimes the boat would move on while we had dinner, other evenings were spent exploring the pleasant small towns which abound in North Holland.

Most of the routes were on magnificent cycle paths, well maintained, usually tarmacked and some even with white lines forming two lanes. We would wander through small old villages and picturesque towns, past windmills and museums, often by canals, with plenty of boating interest along the way. Sometimes the paths ran atop the ubiquitous dykes giving good views; others wandered through fields and forests. Several times we stumbled on Dutch curiosities – the most unusual being an entire village celebrating a ‘glitz and glamour’ festival, where everyone dressed to the nines to accompany a cavalcade of old tractors and classic cars!

Water was never far away. After a couple of days we reached the North Sea near Bergen, after a delightful descent through woodland. The seaside cafés here are built on stilts over the sand, with Perspex panels offering protection from the wind. We'd been warned that what Holland lacked in hills it made up in winds, but here they were in our favour, sweeping us north along a huge sea wall at 38km/hour, with tandem power speeding us past allcomers to the substantial port of Den Helder. We discovered we could maintain a steady 18km/hour without pedalling – heaven!



*Waterside reflections in Medemblik, on the IJsselmeer coast*

Den Helder is the base of the Dutch navy and the large ships came as quite a surprise after our rural isolation.

One of the week's surprises was crossing substantial tracts of water, notably the crossing to the island of Texel, noted for its birdlife. The waters here were surprisingly choppy and occasionally demanded all hands to assist the crew to prevent urns and crockery upheaval. The tiny port on Texel at Oudeschild had a very attractive northern European feel, with several big sailing ships, used as training vessels, making a very pleasant scene. Sadly our arrival coincided with a 90% chance of rain, and it wasn't long on the next day before we 'enjoyed' a good soaking, with no shelter to be found. So the warmth of the boat proved too great to resist and a dignified retreat was made, but not before we'd noticed the island's simple beauty, and quite a few birds too, including spoonbill, common sandpiper and snipe. A place to which we shall return. A cycle to the local brewery here, and a subsequent visit to a cheese factory, were the only times we formed a long snake of bikes, and the only occasions we had to go at the (slow) speed of the group. The evening cruise back to the mainland was enlivened by the most spectacular sunset and cloudscapes.

The return journey to Amsterdam ran along the coast of the inland sea, the IJsselmeer, formed in 1932 when a vast area of water was isolated from the sea by the building of a huge dam. Its 'seaside' towns and villages are attractive and prosperous, with distinctive architecture and atmosphere. Having enjoyed the winds pushing us north a few days ago, it was inevitable that we had to endure them, head on this time, on this leg going south, with some rain thrown in too for good measure. This was September after all.

A treat for us was arriving in the larger town of Enkhuizen, and enjoying an evening with our niece and Dutch husband! The pretty towns of Hoorn and



Edam, with typical small canals dominating the landscape, provided a contrast to the tourist trap of Vollandam, on the outskirts of Amsterdam, for our last overnight port.

One of the pleasures of the trip was the companionship, when desired, of like-minded cyclists on the boat, and the friendly Dutch residents, always ready to offer advice when we stopped to puzzle over a map or point us to the nearest bike shop – we did suffer a couple of punctures, requiring the purchase of more supplies. Our fellow passengers, and Dutch guide, were all interesting and entertaining, and definitely added to our holiday.



*One of many interesting bikes seen in Holland*

As expected, cycling is popular in Holland. Our first full day out was a Sunday and the Dutch were much in evidence, either on their bikes or pootling about on the canals in small boats, enjoying the sunshine with family picnics. On that day we saw four tandems, but they proved to be the last we met. On our travels we saw lots of bikes of course, many used for transporting various items, much like the adaptations of assorted boats in Venice. One strange delivery bike had a large wooden box in front of the steerer, with the front wheel mounted ahead of that. So handlebars and front wheel were 1.5m apart! But the strangest bike we saw by far was a very long recumbent tandem, where the two cyclists faced in opposite directions, one to the front, one to the rear!

So, after a week on board, we left the Amsterdam port on Saturday morning, and had a day to spare before our evening ferry back to Hull. We headed back by train to Rotterdam, aiming to explore this substantial city. Unfortunately we couldn't find anywhere to leave the bike that would secure our bags, so we chose to cycle to the port rather than take the suburban train. This was the only time the cycle path numbering system failed us, with the direction numbers evaporating occasionally, so it was good that we had plenty of time. We found our ship in late afternoon, and this time sailed up the incline to the car deck – no problem!

*Glyn and Helen Foley*





## Our bike and us



**Thorn's designer, test pilot and touring Guru, Andy B. (pictured above with partner Fiona) share the experience of riding their very own Thorn Raven Discovery tandem.**

"I have owned many tandems. Some have cost, in real terms, twice as much as our Raven Discovery yet I can honestly say that "this is the best tandem I have ever ridden"

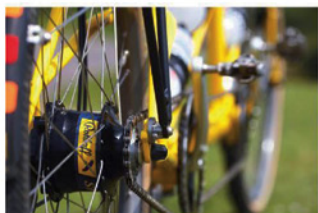
**"this is the best tandem I have ever ridden"**

Fiona and I prefer to take long cycle camping holidays together, on our solos but we also enjoy the immense exhilaration of riding a tandem together, consequently, as you can see, the "banana split" is set up for Audax riding, where the ultra rigid, yet very comfortable, double marathon frame allows us to make the most of our efforts... it also allows Fiona to "fidget" on the back without unintentionally steering the machine. The frame handles so

well that it allows us to out-corner the solos. Although we use ours for Audax rides, we could simply add a front carrier and some big bags and it would be more than ready for one of our major tours.

The Rohloff hub is a revelation for tandem use! When you need a low gear... it's there! If you stop in the wrong gear... you can start in the right one... without fuss! I would hate to have to use derailleur gears on anything other than a cyclosporitif solo bike again.

The XTR V brakes are very powerful and the tandem's long wheelbase allows us to take full advantage of them... we can out-brake any solo.



### About the Raven Twins

The Raven Twins are a family of three different tandems; they all use the ultra reliable 14 speed Rohloff hub, which offers many advantages for tandems. They all use our exclusive Thorn 969 (cold drawn, seamless, heat treated double butted) mega size 41.30 Cro-Mo tandem-specific tube set, with Reynolds 531 tandem gauge, twin plate crown, forks. The comprehensive cable guides, which allow multiple brake options, are stainless steel, as are the 6mm bosses provided for front and rear carriers. All the frame sizes are available with or without S+S couplings, in a choice of three colours.

**Rohloff** 

14 speed internal hub gear

## Advantages

- > **Minimum maintenance...**  
hub totally sealed from grime
- > **Low running costs**
- > **No weight penalty!**
- > Rohloff state that nobody has **yet worn out**, or experienced a **total failure** with one of their hubs... that's over ten years & 50,000 hub units!
- > **14 usable gears** (even spaced @ 13.6%)
- > **Excellent gear range** (52.6%)
- > Perfect chain line = less wear
- > Dishless rear wheel & shorter spokes make a much **stronger wheel**
- > **Quick, easy, wheel removal and fitting...**  
No Tools or adjustment required
- > Super **quick** gear change
- > Change as many gears as you want at any time even without pedalling
- > Indexing mechanism within hub so **cable adjustment is not critical**
- > No derailleurs to collect grime, get bashed or cause the chain to come off and jam... **No chain suck!**
- > **Chain slip can't happen** with our frame!
- > Service life over **160,000km**
- > Much **cleaner** & easier to clean
- > [www.rohloff.de](http://www.rohloff.de)

\*available on all new complete Raven tandems.

Because the brakes are so good and the bike handles so well, I am confident to let it roll on most descents... so we don't need the optional disc brake. The optional S+S couplings enables the bike to easily fit into most medium sized hatch backs, bus holds, solo airline bike boxes or bike racks on trains." Andy Blance July 2006

Arrange your test ride on a Raven Twin tandem today with Thorns 100 day 100% money back if not delighted guarantee\*

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Our stay in the Hotel Family in Meyrueis was for two nights, so on the second day a walk around and about seemed like a good idea. The Tourist Office lady provided a leaflet describing a 12k route up to the top of the cause, along a bit and back down via a forest trail – estimated duration under four hours. Five hours and at least 16k later, we only just made it back in time for a late bar lunch. But the weather and scenery were good. However, the staff in this hotel were the only ones we encountered in our entire holiday who didn't understand what vegetarians did and didn't eat. Supper on the first night consisted of a small salad, followed by a plate with a spoonful each of lentils, haricot beans and pureed carrot. On the second night, omelette followed by apple tart. Breakfasts, however, were more than satisfactory.

Wednesday, day eleven, started with a pleasant ride to the Col de Perjuret and then onwards on a gradual climb to Mont Aigoual where there is the one and only remaining mountain top meteorological station in France, and more importantly, as it was by then very cold and windy, a cosy snack bar in which a basket of chips, cheese sandwich and hot drinks were most welcome. No other cyclists there but we did spot a weary runner staggering around. This place has an average rainfall of 2.25m per year, the wettest in France, but was dry for our visit. We eventually prised ourselves out of the café onto the windy forecourt. Whilst preparing to leave, the tandem, in particular the Shimano pedals with SPD on one side and open cage on other, aroused the attention of interested tourists.

Once underway we were soon out of the wind and losing height fast on a pleasant, winding descent to the Col de Sereyrede, followed by a complete change in the landscape in the Vallee de la Dourbie – low, rolling hills and very few trees, in sharp contrast to the forest covered slopes of Mont Aigoual.



The village of Nant and the Hotel des Voyageurs was reached 21k later, making a total of about 72k for the day. This time there was no garage or shed for the tandem, just the front garden and an hotel owner's wife keen for us to lock it to the fence. But having no lock, we didn't and it was still there in the morning. The strange thing was that there was a notice on the gate saying "No bicycles in the garden".

*Hotel des Voyageurs, Nant*

Breakfast on Thursday was delayed until the boulangerie across the road opened and in the event was barely sufficient to keep a tandem team going until elevenses. Stoker, however, usually has emergency rations stashed somewhere, so I knew we wouldn't go hungry. Today's route would take us due south past La Couvertoirade, a walled village erected in the fifteenth century by the Knights of St John, to Le Caylar, then eastwards to the Cirque de Navacelles, before heading north to our destination, Breau-et-Salagosse, only 20k as the crow flies from where we started.

Our first stop was at a café in Le Caylar where we were approached by a local gentleman who asked if he could take photographs of us for his "slow travel" collection. In 2011 he had organised a week long series of events/lectures in the village on the theme of "slow travel" in a world where speed always seems to be imperative. He intended using the photos of us in some future event. This particular café stop had lasted longer than usual but we eventually managed to leave, at a sedate pace, of course, and head east through St Michel, Soulagets, Les Besses and St Maurice-Navacelles to the Cirque de Navacelles.



*Leaving Le Caylar*



*It's a long way up! (Navacelles)*

This impressive canyon with 300m limestone cliffs was created by the river Vis carving its way through the land during which process an oxbow lake was formed. The abandoned loop in the river is now fertile land with the village of Navacelles at its side, a popular tourist attraction. After a quick look round, we walked up the steep hill, and cycled down the road to Blandas onward to our destination,

Breau-et-Saragosse. This hamlet was not that easy to find but when a group of smiling locals sat on a seat by the roadside announced in unison "You're nearly there!", we knew it was not far away. Our hostess at the Auberge de Quatre Saisons understood the needs of weary travellers and, once the tandem and panniers had been safely stowed, offered tea or beer by way of refreshment – we

opted for the beer and a dusty bottle of excellent local brew was produced. It had been an energetic day.

On Friday we walked through the surrounding woods, visiting some of the small, almost deserted villages hidden on the slopes, including one called Mars. It rained almost incessantly but we stayed fairly dry under the canopy of trees. This Auberge turned out to be the best of our tour. The landlady had run a restaurant in Edinburgh for 18 years. Meals and accommodation in Breau were brilliant.

Saturday morning we descended from the peace and tranquility of Breau and headed for Le Vigan and the D999. The locals were doing their weekly supermarket shopping, so the road was fairly busy. After 8k of easy cycling we turned left up a fairly steep hill to Sumene and on to Ganges for tea/coffee in a roadside café – once again crowded with shoppers. Suitably refreshed, it was onward through a gap in the dual carriageway to the D4 which ran alongside the River Herault. Here several canoeists were lazily making their way downstream in the sunshine. We just managed to squeeze into yet another café, this time in St Guilhem-le-Desert, for an excellent ice cream. Tourists, having been ejected in the car park further down the road from their luxury coaches, were out in force in the narrow streets. The attraction was an historic church and abbey complete with museum but we didn't linger. Next stop was Pont du Diable where lots of people were swimming from a beach and taking photographs. We walked onto the medieval bridge which is overshadowed by a plain modern one. Our holiday was fast coming to an end. Our last overnight was in Aniane at the Hostellerie Saint Benoit. After settling in, with tandem stabled in foyer, we wandered around the narrow streets of the older part of the village, complete with baroque church and ancient tower, before enjoying an excellent supper in the hotel dining room.

Final day to the pick up point in St Jean de Vedas, a suburb of Montpellier, started with undulating hills, lots of gun men, each with coloured gilet, waiting by the roadside, dogs off road, and a few speedy cyclists who showed no interest whatsoever in us tourists. Weather was cloudy but dry. Our route took us through La Boissiere to Montarnaud and under the motorway to St Paul et Valmalle, then parallel with a busy road for some time before a final ascent on the D114 and down to Cournonterral where a useful cycle path led to Pignan, Saussan, and eventually the main road (D613), reaching journey's end at about 1.30pm. A leisurely lunch was had in the nearby baked potato café before the inevitable wait in a deserted car park for the bus which was due at about 4.15pm. We were joined by three fellow travellers and exchanged holiday highlights until the punctual arrival of the Bike Express.

We reached our home in Wester Ross on Tuesday afternoon, almost 48 hours later (cat not forgotten!). The tandem cycling, more than 800k, had been challenging but enjoyable – so much so that 2013's French trip is already well in the planning stages.

*Bruce and Pauline*



## PLANES TRAINS AND AUTOMOBILES (NOT JOHN CANDY!) BUT PAT & DAVE WATSON PART 2

The canal after Somail actually splits, Midi canal continues to Beziers and to the right as the Junction Canal to Narbonne. We took another adventurous route and crossed an old railway viaduct with a very steep exit ramp and headed to Narbonne (as per Midi guide book) we followed Canal Robine for about 5 miles then used back roads to Narbonne.

**Day 11 Wed 26th.** Rest day. Narbonne very pleasant, quite cold when we were there. Explored some old parts of Narbonne and found some really nice restaurants.

**Day 12 Thurs 27th.** Onto Beziers from Narbonne and just before the village of Capstan a nasty dog came out of a house and chased us hard along the road. I can't tell you the speed we were doing!! Using the Canal Midi and side roads we continued to the famous nine locks and the aqueduct over the river Orbe. These



locks are something to behold! What an amazing feat of engineering but very slow process for the boats. For the technically minded they either have to ascend /descend 22 metres from lock one to nine! Unfortunately at the end of the day's cycling we had a very, very, very steep climb to our hotel. Beziers was ok but would not re visit.

**Day 12 Fri 28th.** On to Sete using the cycle path for about 10 kilometres to Villeneuve, from there we used a mix of cycle path and side roads. Roads were really good and took us to the Mediterranean then the cycle path was fabulous! It was uninterrupted for about seven or eight miles and took us all the way to Sete along the coast line.

We also had another very, very steep climb to the hotel and on top of that we had our first bad meal in a restaurant. It was awful!!

We had a dilemma and Dave wasn't keen but I persuaded him to pick up some bubble wrap and pipe lagging in Sete so we could package the bike to fly home and not to leave it until we got to Montpellier to purchase.

I must have had a premonition as the next day Dave was so, so pleased that I had persuaded him to pick the bubble wrap up in Sete and you will appreciate why!

**Day 13 Sat 29th.** Onto Montpellier armed with two rolls of 10m bubble wrap bent in a shape very similar to toilet seats & strapped to the back of the bike. Then we headed out into the cold, drizzly weather on to the final stage of the journey. However what was drizzly rain turned to torrential rain and I mean torrential. I couldn't see very well and on top of that we had another head wind along with thunder and lightning!

We had no option but to press on. It was really cold because of the change in weather. I was very disappointed as we were originally going to cross over the Med to Montpellier with water on either side which would have been fabulous (the Tour de France did this part of the route this year). We had to abandon the route. We literally just picked a very small village and it was the highlight of the day. We took shelter in a friendly bar and had some lunch. It was typically French – no tourists, all locals – the atmosphere was great even though we were dripping wet, I could not feel my shorts they were so wet. Just like skin when coming out of the shower!

Luckily we had our Gortex jackets with us and our upper halves were completely dry. The locals were amused at the tandem at first and then we told them where we had started from. They thought we had done some of it by car!! They were very impressed we had cycled that far and that we were English as well!!!



We stayed there for about two hours but the weather was deteriorating and it was obvious there was going to be no let up with the weather at all. With only seven miles to go Dave asked me whether I would like to get the train, I said Definitely NOT!!

From that point on we used a new route and some roadside cycle tracks. Unfortunately the last three miles was along a very busy road into Montpellier.

**Day 14 Sun 30th.** Final rest day and then we fly home tomorrow. It had rained all night but the sun was out today which was good news. We liked Montpellier. Again lots of old places and some of the architecture was lovely. A nice square to sit and relax in and we had two really nice meals in the evening sitting outside. Lots of open spaces, nice parks and they even had their own Arc de Triumph. There are some really nice shops on the side streets. The bonus was the tram which I wish we had here. It stopped right outside our hotel and was cheap to use.

## To summarise

- Weather 1st week sunny and warm max temp was mid 20's ideal for cycling, the second week couple of cold starts one with drizzle and the last day torrential rain!
- No punctures or mishaps.
- French were really helpful.
- Accommodation in three French bed & breakfasts in private residences – La Reole & Lagruere absolutely fabulous; would definitely recommend. However the one in Carcassonne would not recommend.
- Nine hotels booked; 2 excellent in Toulouse and Sete the others were very good/good.
- What a pity this was September as the sunflower fields that were around every bend would have been a magnificent sight to see when they were in bloom. The plus side was riding past lots of vineyards with an abundance of grapes and wild blackberries (at least that's what we think they were along the stretches of the canal.)

Finally if anyone decides to undertake this route or any part of it we would be happy to supply you with details of maps, accommodation, logistics involved.

All I would say is that I thoroughly enjoyed it, still not keen on panniers though. However I amazed my husband with my patience and the fact that I unpacked and repacked both panniers every day and night and of course my GHD's (hair straighteners) were intact and used frequently!!



Finally, a special thank you to Andy/ Lynn Skelton for giving both of us the inspiration to do this after reading their account in a previous issue, of their trip which ended in Narbonne. Another special thank you to my husband Dave for looking after me.

*Pat Watson*

## LA REGION

### Ride to Bowness Sunday 10th March



The weather forecast for Sunday 10th March told of freezing winds which proved a very accurate description on the day. To be positive, when I looked out of the window first thing, there was no snow on the ground, but as we left home a couple of hours later, on the tandem, we quickly realised, within just a few yards of leaving home, how very cold it was!

Four tandems left Kendal leisure centre, taking the cycleway through the town and on to Burneside, and then to Wilf's café at Staveley for coffee. Although we had only travelled around seven miles at that point, no riders complained about having to stop too soon! Having warmed ourselves with steaming coffee and tea, and other refreshments, we hit the road, (well cycleway actually), to head to Bowness for lunch.

The afternoon was spent in the pretty Lyth valley, passing through the villages of Crosthwaite and Brigsteer where we were rewarded with brief spells of sunshine. At Levens village we turned to return home via Sizergh and Sedgwick, crossing the river Kent on the footbridge for a change. Although we had only covered around 30 miles we were generally in agreement that this was far enough due to the extreme conditions.



*Paul Rodman*



### February Ride Report

The January ride had to be cancelled owing to weather conditions and no report was filed.

Roger and Jenny's February ride was a mystery tour par excellence, blessed with an almost perfect February day. The sun shone from a cloudless sky and the route took us through Worcestershire lanes not shown on ordinary maps. It was lucky that coffee was available at the start, because it was 17 miles further on that we pulled into Gheluvelt Park café in Worcester for coffee, rather confusingly at nearly lunchtime. Then it was onwards for lunch in the Prior's Parlour in the cathedral along an exciting and partially flooded riverside cycleway.

We returned to the start after an exacting navigation of the Diglis Basin following which it was plain sailing all the way. Tea was taken before members headed for home with the sun still out in the westering sky.

*John Dodwell*

*See also the back cover.*



## Tandem ride with a difference

At the end of September, six of us joined Phil and Jan Morris on a narrow boat trip down the River Nene on the 'Pride of the Nene'. We started near Ringstead and travelled down to Wadenhoe where we had a picnic lunch by the pub. At this point we had travelled about ten miles. Phil encouraged all of us to steer the boat in turn, although some, notably those normally at the front of the tandem had more success!

One of the joys of the trip was watching the Red Kites flying above the river. I had suggested that we should rename our group from Milton Keynes to the Red Kite group as we encountered Red Kites on most of our rides. Alan Piggott took his Nikon DSLR camera and took some great shots of the Red kites as they took off when our boat closed in.

The river was flowing fast, but it was still possible to turn the boat around to retrieve Colin's cup of tea that Phil accidentally knocked into the river!



## Oct 14th Ride

A very select group of tandem riders turn up for the Piggott's Ride to Bromham (just outside Bedford). Six of us set off on a very cold morning. We cycled about 18 miles loosely following the Great River Ouse, stopping at the Swan for a lovely meal. After lunch we cycled a further half mile to Bromham Mill! We had a good look around the mill. Then we had a cup of tea and cake before we set off back to Alan and Linda's house in Newport Pagnell. We were cycling through old country lanes where my husband Barry cycled as teenager. He still manages to get lost though!



*The Knowltons and Piggotts racing up Marston Hill at Cranfield.*

## Tandem Club Ride Saturday 9th March

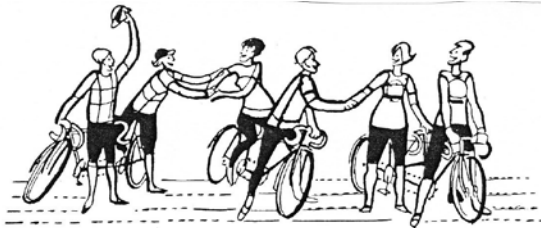
We were feeling lucky about the weather, as there was no sign of the rain that had been forecast earlier in the week, just a dull, still & relatively mild morning. It appeared that others were waiting on the weather too; as we received two more phone calls & a text message from members during the morning as we were preparing to leave, letting us know that they too would be joining us for the ride. That made it 17 of us at the start (seven tandems with three solos).

We set off from Bitton Station (charity Steam railway) and started our route by going along a section of the Sustran's flagship Bristol to Bath rail path. After leaving the cycle path the route wound its way southwest, climbing several hills towards our planned coffee stop at The Old Stables Coffee Shop, on the south east of Chew Valley Lake. Unfortunately progress was slowed by a couple of punctures in quick succession. This made the lovely selection of cakes & drinks on offer all the more appreciated when we got to them. At coffee we were joined by Neil who had ridden across from home to join us for the next section of the ride, and Janet & Tony recently returned from their round the world holiday and feeling out of practice on the tandem!

The ride to lunch had to be rushed along at a bit of a faster pace, to try and make up some of the puncture delay time, so as to arrive at the pub before they stopped serving food! So we hurried up hills and down with a little less looking at scenery or chatting than we might have preferred. It all ended well though arriving at "The Apple Tree" as the clock reached 2pm, where the 20 of us filled the dining room & ate our fill from the menu.

Full of lunch and without the pressure of a deadline the return ride was taken at a slightly slower pace. This was due in part to a couple of significant climbs we had to make, starting with a 1 in 7 as we left the pub, in order to get over to Bath and rejoin the cycle path back to Bitton. The intention when planning this route back in the autumn had been to return under Combe Down trying out the new "Two Tunnels Cycle Route", unfortunately the opening date for this new cycle path is April 6th, 4 weeks too late for us! On arrival back at Bitton we had done 41 miles, enjoyed good company, lovely scenery & managed to avoid rain.

*Jackie & Stuart*



## Tour of the (West Country) Lake District Sat 5 Feb 2013

Bit of a gamble these winter rides sometimes. On the reconnaissance trip for this ride during January - the time of all the ice and snow - we rode the tandem confidently into a puddle thinking it was just a couple of inches .... read feet; the puddle was a deep pothole with the road completely washed away. Bike in water up to the axles, wet feet all round. But when it came to the day for the actual ride, despite a poor forecast we had a better time of it.

Five tandems from the West of England Group came including Catherine and Bill Barnes who have just moved to our area from Devon. Going from Gatcombe Mill farm shop the route was quickly up to the high ground around Bristol Airport and then down to the village of Chew Stoke and to Chew Valley Lake, where we stopped at Woodford Lodge on the edge of the water. From Chew the route went east along quiet country lanes with views across Blagdon Lake towards the Mendips. This is a quiet and little-known corner of Somerset. Lunch (excellent) was at the Plough Inn at Wrington, where Malcolm and Grace Gammon joined us for discussions about the National Rally that the West of England Group is organising later this year. A level return trip via Claverham and Backwell. 32 miles in good company; I don't think we noticed the rain much. *Peter Weeks*

## WESSEX

### January 2013

A sunny Sunday with springtime temperatures in late January found seven tandems and a solo gathered at the cafe of Eastleigh's Recreation Centre for pre-ride coffees and map briefing.



*Unveiling the route*

The now annual Flower Pots ride took us, led as usual by David and Ann Friend, through the Hampshire lanes and over a few hills (with some great downhills following) to the Flower Pots Inn at Cheriton, known for its good ales, tasty bar lunches and roaring log fires. En route we spotted snowdrops and daffodils, and even a hawthorn bush and wild clematis just coming into leaf.





A brief shower during our leisurely lunch was followed by more sun as we wound our way back over the hills. Sheila and John Ward, spurred on by comments in the Journal about boring photos of regional rides, tried to pull ahead several times and take interesting and dynamic photos with Sheila's new smart-phone.

However Sheila was fighting the technology and losing, and the views, while fine, were distant and behind a leafless hedge. Jane was doing better with her free Strava app, which records her rides, and immediately afterwards could report that we had climbed 1,260ft and our maximum elevation was 590ft at Beacon Hill. The total distance was just over 30 miles in all and it was a good day out.

## Feb 2013

Alison and David Martin chose a lovely sunny day for their ride from Romsey, attended at the start by three other tandems. First we circled round through Rownhams to the Broadlands estate which we traversed on a rather muddy estate road. Then we followed pleasant byroads to East Wellow to see the burial place of Florence Nightingale in the churchyard of pretty St Margaret's Church.



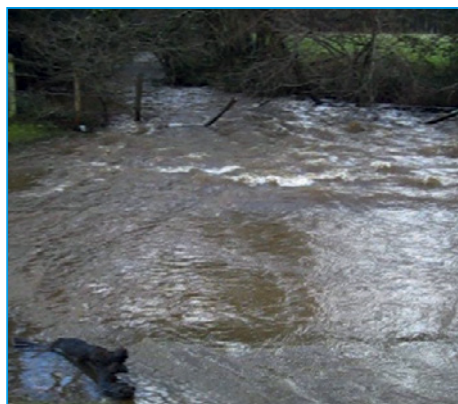
After this we went on over the hills and down into Broughton, and across towards Sherfield English for a late coffee and cake at Gilberts Garden Centre. Here we met Neil and Victoria who had cycled down from Andover and who accompanied us to Stockbridge for a picnic lunch at the recreation ground. Afterwards they set off back to Andover while we pedalled over the hills and far away back to Romsey. The highlights of the day were the scenery, sunshine and the drifts of snowdrops everywhere. On the downside the recumbent tandem trike got three punctures (blamed on the muddy conditions and having three times the risk with three wheel tracks) and even Neil and Victoria were stricken likewise on their way home. But tea and goodies afterwards at the lovely new home of our leaders made sure that we only recalled a grand day out.

### March 2013

A dire weather forecast meant that only four tandems and two solos turned out for a short morning ride in the Avon Valley led by John and Sheila Ward before the Wessex Annual Lunch at the Alice Lisle pub, Rockford, in the heart of the New Forest. Several of us had been thwarted by a swollen stream pouring over a ford en route to the pub, which required a diversion of several miles to all vehicles except 4x4s. However the rain held off for the morning and we enjoyed a gentle ride along the western side of the Avon Valley before climbing up the not-too-steep escarpment beyond to the 'Sticky Buns Café' at Wolvercroft Garden Centre. Sadly with a large lunch ahead we nobly restricted ourselves to coffee.



*The intrepid cycling party admires John and Sue Sutton's refurbished Thorn tandem*



*The swollen stream at a ford north of the pub*

After a long coffee stop we dropped down into the Valley again, through Fordingbridge, across the swollen Avon and southwards along the eastern side of the Valley, avoiding the ponies and donkeys which linger in the middle of the road. We even saw some watery sunshine. Shortly before we reached the Alice Lisle we encountered another ford made impassable by a swollen stream, but being on bikes this time we could use the footbridge to cross it. The total distance was all of 11.6 miles!

At the pub we met up with twenty-three more members to enjoy a substantial and leisurely lunch with us. It was a particular pleasure to welcome some longstanding members who don't ride much these days, also two new members. Sheila Ward presented the clock award for the tandem couple attending the most events on the Wessex programme in the previous year to Josh Muir, who was delegated to accept it by his parents Dave and Clare Muir. During our lunchtime chat we agreed that we should use our e-mail group more to try to arrange ad hoc local rides when the weather forecast is promising, in order to enable those members who have no means of transporting their tandems to rides to get out and ride with other local members.



*Hungry members anticipate their lunch*



*Sheila Ward presents the clock award to Josh Muir*





Please send all items for inclusion in this section to the Editor by the deadline date, which is the 22nd of the month prior to production. Contact details and publication dates can be found in the front pages of the Journal. If adverts are not typed or emailed, please write clearly. Copy will be edited to ensure that first line of advert will be highlighted and the advertiser's name, telephone number and location included.

## Rates

	Adverts up to £100		Adverts over £100	
	Members	Non-members	Members	Non-members
<b>For Sale</b>	FREE		10p per word	20p per word
<b>Wanted</b>	FREE			
<b>Accommodation</b>	30p per word			
<b>Add a photo</b>	£1.50 per photo			
All cheques should be payable to <b>The Tandem Club</b> please				

### TOURING TANDEM

#### GEORGE LONGSTAFF

Gents 22/Gents 21. 24 speed TA chain set, 2 hub brakes, 2 rim brakes, British Racing Green. **£1200.**

**Mrs Marion Rowlands 54 Holington Road, Upper Tean, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. ST10 4JT**

**Tel 01538 723028 Mob 07966097485**



### LONGSTAFF TANDEM

Hand built by George.

Front 23" rear 21", Triple chain set, Hope hubs, XT group set 27 gears, Front and rear pannier carriers.

**£1200 o.n.o 0121 503 0465**



### DAWES SUPER GALAXY

Dark brown tandem. 22"x20" Currently with butterfly bars. Original bars etc. included.

Well cared for and in VG condition.

A superbly responsive bicycle.

**£499.** Howard Marshall Cleveland TS6.

**Tel. 01642 466471**



### GEORGE LONGSTAFF TANDEM TRICYCLE

60cms Front. 52cms Rear. Quality machine in pristine condition. **£1950.**

**Reynolds 01455 844883 W Leicestershire**



## ROBERTS TANDEM

23"/18½" dg, 700c wheels, Specialized triple chainset, Campag pedals, choice of bars/saddles. Lovely bike in good condition, for sale due to purchase of ladyback tandem. **£975.**

**01278 662240** (Somerset).

[peter.merson3@gmail.com](mailto:peter.merson3@gmail.com)



## NEVADA BARRACUDA LADYBACK TANDEM

Blue alloy frame. Mudguards. 700cc wheels. 203mm disc brakes and rear caliper. 24 speed derailleur gears. Rear carrier with 'Giant' panniers. Twin front pannier frames. Water bottle, pump and small rear saddle bag. Two spare saddles. Hardly used. Bought new 2010. Health issue forces sale. **£600. 02392 371145** (Portsmouth)

## TWO LONG SLEEVED BLUE AND WHITE HOMEMADE JERSEYS to fit young teenagers.

Actual size of garments, 38" under arm, 29" length.

35" under arm, 25" length.

Free to a good home, just **£5** to cover postage.

**020 8527 2926** (eves)



## DAWES DISCOVERY TANDEM

19"/15" – 3 years careful use, meticulously maintained, Shimano 24 spd, 26" wheels. Sale only due to recent upgrade.

**£550.** John Skinner. **01726 816613**

(Cornwall)



Don't forget, there's also the Tandem Club website to post your sales and wants...

For Sale: [http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/\\_sboard.htm](http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/_sboard.htm)

Wanted: [http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/\\_wboard.htm](http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/_wboard.htm)

You can also try the discussion board for some light and often amusing reading!

[http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/\\_dboard.htm](http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/_dboard.htm)

# What's on



Club-led day rides and other activities.

Contact your Regional Officer or the Event Organiser for more information.

All welcome to come along and join in.

*If you participate in any ride organised by or in the name of the Tandem Club, you do so entirely at your own risk. The Club, its officers and the ride organisers accept no responsibility for any loss, damage to property, accident, injury or death that may occur, however caused, whether by negligence, deliberate act or otherwise.*

## GENERAL

Please let the organisers know when you plan to join a run so that they know who to wait for, etc. If you like to ride with others and are interested in organising a run in your area and would like to know what it takes or how it's done – please feel free to contact your Regional Officer. Details of all Regions' contact details and any corresponding websites can be viewed at [http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/\\_regionalgroups.htm](http://www.tandem-club.org.uk/_regionalgroups.htm)

**BIRMINGHAM** – Monthly rides most of the year of around 30 - 40 miles and always include a stop for lunch at a well-chosen venue with sometimes a morning coffee/tea stop as well. If we start from someone's house, we start and end with a bit of a chat and get-together.

If you would like to join us on a ride,

then please ring **Rob or Elizabeth on 01527 878255**

**EAST CHESHIRE** – New group has started with emphasis on family rides.

Contact **Simon Preston Tel: 01625 576319 or 07799496080**

email: [simonpreston@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:simonpreston@tiscali.co.uk)

**EAST LONDON, SOUTH & WEST ESSEX** – Regular monthly rides covering all of Essex to the west and south of Chelmsford. visit: <http://www.tandemsinessex.btinternet.co.uk/>

**HERTS** – Join us for a ride on the third Saturday/Sunday of the month. 30-40 miles. Family orientated. Pace to suit. An evening social drink at a local pub on the first Thursday of the month. **Kim and Julian Kirby. Tel: (Mobile) 07944 654213 or email: [jr.kirby@ntlworld.com](mailto:jr.kirby@ntlworld.com) or [kim.kirby@ntlworld.com](mailto:kim.kirby@ntlworld.com)**

**LANCASTER & BLACKPOOL** – Regular monthly rides of around 40-50 miles with regular stops on the way. If you live in the LA or FY postal area and would like to join us, we would be pleased to hear from you.

**Please contact me, Paul Rodman on 01539 730792.**

**LINCOLN** – (LN postcode) Barry Wilson, 58 High Street, Saxilby, Lincoln, LN1 2HA

tel: **01522 702188** e-mail: [barry99@barryandjanet.co.uk](mailto:barry99@barryandjanet.co.uk)

**NETHERLANDS** – Contact <http://www.tandemclub.nl/activiteit.html> for Dutch ride information. The site is entirely in Dutch but emails in English are answered in English.

**Marten Hoffmann:** webmaster <http://www.tandemclub.nl>

+31 343 457392 [info@tandemclub.nl](mailto:info@tandemclub.nl)

**NORFOLK (NR)** – Occasional rides notified by e-Mail. **Contact Roy Abigail for details, 01603 612104, [abigail@btinternet.com](mailto:abigail@btinternet.com)**

**NORTH WALES** – Regular monthly rides all year. **Contact Gerald or Sue Davison for latest information on 01352 752068** or see [www.tandemnwg.org](http://www.tandemnwg.org)

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE** – Regular monthly rides, usually second Saturday.

Length can vary with season. **For more details contact Pippa and John by email at: [highwheelers@gmail.com](mailto:highwheelers@gmail.com).**

**SHEFFIELD** (postcode S) – contact Chris Rust: 27 Ladysmith Avenue, Sheffield S7 1SF  
**0114 258 2892 [chris@chrisrust.net](mailto:chris@chrisrust.net)**

**SHROPSHIRE** – Monthly social rides throughout the county ideal for Tandems.

**Tel: The Tandem Shop 01952 883249.**

**SOUTH EAST LONDON** – For details of our programme of rides and activities, see our website: <http://www.tandemclub-southeastlondon.org.uk>

or contact Tricia on 020 8325 8445.

**SOUTH SCOTLAND** – Coordinators: Mike & Carolyn Fuddy, 40 Sheriffflats Road, Thankerton, Biggar, ML12 6PA, **Tel: 01899 308789**, [southscotlandtandemclub@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:southscotlandtandemclub@hotmail.co.uk)

**SUFFOLK** – Rides are first Sunday in each month.

**For details: Ken and Margaret on 01394 388344** or see our website

<http://www.tandemclubsuffolk.co.uk>

**THAMESWEY** – Monthly rides around Berkshire, Hampshire or South Oxfordshire. For details contact **Paul or Barbara on 0118 941 2994** or

**email: [thamesweytandem@googlemail.com](mailto:thamesweytandem@googlemail.com)**

**THREE COUNTIES** – Regular monthly rides in Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. **For details contact John Dodwell on 01386 553117** or

**email: [jdodwell4@gmail.com](mailto:jdodwell4@gmail.com)** or see our web-site for details

<http://www.3countiestandemclub.org.uk/>

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA** – Contact [International@tandemclub.org](mailto:International@tandemclub.org) if you are seeking information on tandem-related clubs, rides, and events in the U.S.A. Tom & Robyn Ratajczak (Asheville, NC) will work with the Tandem Club of America's Area Representatives to allow you to establish contact with TCA's regionally-dispersed tandem clubs for information and possible trip planning.

**WAKEFIELD – Des & Joyce Hampshire 01924 387365** or **email [des.hamp@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:des.hamp@yahoo.co.uk)**

we ride tandem regular with the Pontefract CC where there are several others on Tandems.

We also meet most Wednesdays usually at cafes full list on the Huddersfield CTC website.

**WESSEX** – Monthly rides all year. [www.cyclingnewforest.org/wessex-tandem-club.html](http://www.cyclingnewforest.org/wessex-tandem-club.html)

**Contact Sheila Ward on 01590 671205**, or **email [wessex-tandemclub@googlemail.com](mailto:wessex-tandemclub@googlemail.com)**

for details.

**WEST COUNTRY** – Regular monthly rides throughout the year. **Contact Jackie and Stuart Hibberd. Tel: 01179 695159** or **email [stuart.jackie@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:stuart.jackie@tiscali.co.uk)**

Also regular monthly socials. **Contact Ian & Yvonne Hopton tel 0117 9616485**,

[Yvonne\\_hopton@hotmail.com](mailto:Yvonne_hopton@hotmail.com)

**WEST YORKSHIRE** – We have a calendar of rides throughout the year, varying between easy/family - medium - hard, usually every two weeks. If you would like to join us please visit [www.westyorkshiretandemclub.co.uk](http://www.westyorkshiretandemclub.co.uk) or **contact Steve or Cheryl on 01422 356390**.

**PLEASE NOTE** As a rule, ROs should not put the ride leaders' address in the run notice on the website: it advertises an empty house.

*All of the Tandem Club's What's On Events are added to a computer database. The content of this database is made available on the Tandem Club's web site allowing Internet users to find out what Tandem Club events are happening and is also used for generating the What's On pages in the Tandem Club's magazine. The Tandem Club magazine editor will pull off the information from the database when needed for journal publication, so if you want a ride advertised in the TCJ, please enter it onto the database.*

*Either a Tandem Club Regional Officer or other Tandem Club member can add a What's On entry at <http://events.tandem-club.org.uk/whatsOn>*

**Disclaimer:** Participation in any of these events, or any others organised by The Tandem Club, is entirely at the rider's own risk. The Tandem Club, its officers or representatives can accept no responsibility for any accident, loss, injury or death however caused. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION MAY BE AVAILABLE ON THE WEBSITE.**

<http://events.tandem-club.org.uk/whatsOn>

Notations used for speed/distance: **E** = Easy, **Av** = Average, **H** = Hard

Saturday 20 April 2013	
Taunton	Starting from West Somerset Railway, Bishops Lydeard at 10:00. 40 miles. All riders notify organiser by 1st April. <b>Nick and Rachel Warner, 01823 339941, <a href="mailto:nickwarn@googlemail.com">nickwarn@googlemail.com</a></b>
Sunday 21 April 2013	
North East	Starting from Broompark picnic site at 09:30. 40 miles, <b>Av. Pat and Reg Marshall, 0191 3739902, <a href="mailto:pegtrat@aol.com">pegtrat@aol.com</a></b>
West Yorkshire	Starting from Crosshills main car park at 10.00AM. 50 miles, <b>Av.</b> Lunch at Whalley <b>Steve Stanger, 01422 356390</b>
Tuesday 23 April 2013	
East Solent & IOW	Starting from Rowlands Castle at 10:30. 30 miles, <b>Av.</b> Start at the leader's home for pre-ride refreshments. Leave at 11:15. <b>Ian &amp; Jill, 023 9241 2941</b>
Thursday 25 April 2013	
West Country	Last Thursday Social 8pm. Beaufort Arms, High St, Hawkesbury Upton, Gloucestershire, GL9 1AU. <b>Ian and Yvonne Hopton, 0117 9616485, <a href="mailto:yvonne_hopton@hotmail.com">yvonne_hopton@hotmail.com</a></b>
Sunday 28 April 2013	
Leicester Charnwood	Starting from Leader's home Loughborough at 9:30. 35 miles, <b>Av. Bob Tench, 01509 230926, <a href="mailto:amactench@yahoo.co.uk">amactench@yahoo.co.uk</a></b>
Wessex	Starting from Corn Exchange, Market Place, Blandford Forum DT11 7AF at 10:30. 22 miles, <b>Av.</b> Ride length of 22 or 40 miles to suit allcomers. A chance to visit lovely pastures new in east Dorset. Pre-ride coffee available from 10 a.m. at Reeves Cafe near start, or The Gorge, East St if you're early (opens 9 a.m.) Ride to Gussage All Saints for lunch (bar snacks at The Drivers), then option to return to Blandford or continue to Cranborne for longer ride. No afternoon tea stop so take flask if required. Contact leaders by 21st April if pub lunch required. <b>Ted and Jo Greenwood, 01258 471322, <a href="mailto:tedandjogreenwood@yahoo.co.uk">tedandjogreenwood@yahoo.co.uk</a></b>
Sunday 5 May 2013	
Wessex	Start 08:30 Lymington Pier for Yarmouth ferry. 62 miles, <b>H.</b> 'Round the Island'. Recommend pre-purchase of ferry tickets. Cycle Island, <a href="http://www.cycleisland.co.uk">www.cycleisland.co.uk</a>



West Yorkshire	Starting from Ilkley Old Bridge at 10.00AM. 55 miles, <b>Av.</b> Wetherby for cafe lunch <b>Steve Stanger, 01422 356390</b>
<b>Thursday 9 May 2013</b>	
Taunton	Venue TBC at 19:30. Monthly social evening of the Taunton regional group. <b>Stuart &amp; Sharon Woodsell, 01460 239339, stuart.woodsell@googlemail.com</b>
<b>Sunday 12 May 2013</b>	
Wessex	Starting from Below Lymington CAB, New Street SO41 9AP at 10:00. 31 or 62 miles, <b>Av.</b> Self-led New Forest rides route sheet. 31 mile ride has some Forest gravel track options. Booking form at <a href="http://www.cyclingnewforest.org">http://www.cyclingnewforest.org</a> Or send SAE to 34 Avenue Road, Lymington SO41 9GJ for full details, stating which distance. Entry fee (cheaper if you book ahead, and then includes car park pass). <b>John Ward, 01590 671205, johnontrike@yahoo.co.uk</b>
North East	Starting from Leaders' House, Durham at 09:30. 35 miles, <b>Av.</b> Lunch at Seaham Marina. <b>Audrey Christie and Ken Bradshaw, 0191 3844195/07523236921, bika24@phonecoop.coop</b>
West Country	Starting from Crossbows Community Centre car park, School Lane, Frampton Cotterell at 09:30. 50 miles, <b>Av.</b> Slimbridge, coffee at Tortworth <b>Keith and Sue, 01454 775500</b>
LA	Starting from High Newton village hall at 9:30. 45 miles. Meet High Newton 9.00am for 9.30am. <b>Mike and Helen Nott, 015242 61566, mike.moonsacre@tiscali.co.uk</b>
Milton Keynes	Starting from Milton Keynes at 10:00. 35 miles, <b>Av.</b> <b>Ron and Eileen Gingell, 01908-501570</b>
<b>Thursday 16 May 2013</b>	
West Yorkshire	Starting from Gargrave JD Tandems at 9.30. 65 miles, <b>H.</b> Lunch Ingleton return via Ribbleshead <b>Steve Stanger, 01422 356390</b>
<b>Saturday 18 May 2013</b>	
Taunton	Starting from Sedgemoor Auction Centre (M5 Junc 24) at 10:30. 40 miles, <b>Av.</b> Circular route including Combwich and Thurloxtton. Contact organisers in advance if riding for further route details and instructions for day parking. <b>Peter &amp; Rowena Merson, 01278 662240, peter.merson3@btinternet.com</b>
West Yorkshire	Until Sunday 19 May 2013. Starting from JD Tandems Gargrave at 9.30 AM. 50 miles, <b>Av.</b> JD Tandems Weekend Rides social events <b>Ruth Hargreaves, 01756 748400</b>

Sunday 19 May 2013	
Leicester Charnwood	Starting from Car park opposite hall, Main Street, Cossington at 9:30. 35 miles, <b>Av. John &amp; Janet Tompkins, 07515679979, Jet13@le.ac.uk</b>
Saturday 25 May 2013	
Tandem Club	Until Saturday 1 June 2013. International Tandem Rally 2013 <a href="http://events.tandem-club.org.uk/events/tci2013">http://events.tandem-club.org.uk/events/tci2013</a>
Thursday 30 May 2013	
West Country	Last Thursday Social 8pm. The Anchor Inn, Gloucester Rd, Thornbury, Bristol, BS35 1JY website <b>Ian and Yvonne Hopton, 0117 9616485, yvonne_hopton@hotmail.com</b>
Sunday 2 June 2013	
West Yorkshire	Starting from Otley Buttercross at 9.30. 55 miles, <b>Av. Thorp Arch for cafe lunch Steve Stanger, 01422 356390</b>
Sunday 9 June 2013	
West Yorkshire	Starting from Crosshills main car park at 10.00. 25 miles, <b>E. Family ride to Barrowford Steve Stanger, 01422 356390</b>
Thursday 13 June 2013	
Taunton	Starting from Maypole Inn - Thurloxton at 19:30. Monthly social evening of the Taunton regional group. All tandem club members are welcome to attend. <b>Stuart &amp; Sharon Woodsell, 01460 239339, stuart.woodsell@googlemail.com</b>
Saturday 15 June 2013	
Taunton	Starting from Chard - location TBA at 10:00. 45 miles, <b>Av. West Bay via Bettiscombe returning through Salway Ash and Broadwindsor. Picnic lunch in West Bay (please bring your own) and coffee and cake on the return leg in the Broadwindsor Craft Centre. Please contact organisers in advance if you are planning to ride. Stuart &amp; Sharon Woodsell, 01460 239339, stuart.woodsell@googlemail.com</b>
Sunday 16 June 2013	
North East	At 09:30. Ring leader for details <b>Bill Wickham and Liz Dixon, 0191 2844145 / 07710 390949, billwickham1@gmail.com</b>
LA	Starting from Cafe de Lune near Glasson Dock at 9:00. 45 miles. Meet 9:00 for 9:30am, a mystery ride into deepest Lancashire! Elevenses at Barton Grange garden centre. Bring packed lunch for dinner. <b>Paul &amp; Jeannette Rodman, 01539 730792 or 07768 647745, paul.rodman@kencomp.net</b>

West Yorkshire	Starting from Gargrave JD Tandems at 9.30. 60 miles, <b>H.</b> Cafe lunch at Ingleton returning via Ribbleshead. <b>Steve and Cheryl, 01422 356390</b>
<b>Saturday 22 June 2013</b>	
Milton Keynes	Starting from Leaders' house, Newport Pagnell at 14:00. 25 miles, <b>Av.</b> A short ride ending with a visit to the local chip shop. <b>Alan and Linda Piggott, 01908-613187</b>
<b>Sunday 23 June 2013</b>	
East Solent & IOW	Starting from Rowlands Castle at 10:30. 30 miles, <b>Av.</b> Meet at the leader's home for tea & stickies. Leave at 11:15 for a ride to West Dean Gardens. Choice of a picnic or food in the restaurant. Ride back. <b>Davin &amp; Cathy, 0239241 2026</b>
West Country	Starting from Chipping Sodbury Clock Tower at 09:30. 45 miles, <b>Av.</b> Berkley Castle, for picnic lunch (or local pub/cafe available) <b>Terry &amp; Cathy , 01454 314125, terry@beam.ltd.uk</b>
<b>Thursday 27 June 2013</b>	
West Country	Last Thursday Social 8pm Rose and Crown, 68 Parkfield Road, Pucklechurch, Bristol, BS16 9PS <b>Ian and Yvonne Hopton, 0117 9616485, yvonne_hopton@hotmail.com</b>
<b>Sunday 30 June 2013</b>	
Leicester Charnwood	Starting from The Square, Market Bosworth at 9:30. 35 miles, <b>Av. Jenny Barradell, 0116 277 3396, jennyjb@hotmail.co.uk</b>
West Yorkshire	Starting from Halifax Baths at 10.00AM. 45 miles, <b>Av.</b> Newmillardam for cafe lunch <b>Steve and Cheryl, 01422 3563909</b>
<b>Saturday 13 July 2013</b>	
West Country	Starting from Mangotsfield village car park (OS172 664762) at 09:30. 40 miles, <b>Av.</b> Portishead via Bristol <b>Ron and Linda, 0117 9561027/07941 590525/07941 006687, stinchcombes@talktalk.net</b>
<b>Sunday 14 July 2013</b>	
Wessex	Starting from Laurel Cottage, 148 Mudeford BH23 4AY at 10:00. 20 miles, E. Morning ride, to be followed by the famous Sutton BBQ? Details TBA – ring for details <b>John and Sue Sutton, 01425 273840, suesutton1@live.com</b>
North East	Starting from Morpeth Leisure Centre at 09:30. 45 miles, <b>Av.</b> Lunch at Alnmouth. <b>Paul and Pauline Fox, 01670 511995, paul@cycle-shed.freeserve.co.uk</b>



## Spring

After having to cancel January's ride, February proved kinder and the Three Counties riders took advantage of the fair weather to head out along Worcestershire's lanes, taking in the 17th century Wichenford Dovecote along the way.

