



JUNE 2012

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As I write this it's July 1st; blimey, where is the year going? OK, so it's the June newsletter and you're reading this in July but I was just waiting to get some quality material from my roving reporters! I have to say, until the last week or so, it's been rubbish for riding so bring on the good weather for the rest of the summer please. The club is getting ever stronger with riders competing and riding in just about every discipline and as the cycling boom continues the Stowmartians are right at the forefront.

Finally a get well soon to all those injured riders, it seemed for a while that someone was getting injured every day, so, to Laura Sampson (collar bone), Matt Toone (infected elbow), Gavin Moore (knee), Jonny Shuster (collar bone) and anyone else injured or ill, may you all get back on the bike very soon.

Aldeburgh to Aberystwyth C2C. 27th - 30th May 2012.

Myself, Paul Wright, Jon Reynolds, Paul Bryant & 53 others left Aldeburgh on a lovely Sunday morning looking forward to 4 days & 400 miles in the saddle.

The ride started easy with a fairly flat 93 miles from Aldeburgh to Cambridge. With the sun & wind on our backs we made great progress and we're sat with our tent up & recovery shakes in hand before 4pm.

Day 2 began with breakfast & tent down before 7am. We were soon on the road for the longest day of the ride. 106 miles to Stratford-Upon-Avon. Again the weather was on our side but when the Garmin reads 31 degrees you know you need to drink plenty. We planned a stop off in Stratford & the Aspath Cider & ice went down a treat.

Day 3 to Brecon was going to be the start of the hills for this ride. At 88 miles the day was shorter but after lunch at 50 miles it was just hill after hill. Within the last 10 miles we had 2 very hard climbs to get over but knowing there was a proper bed at the hostel made it worth it. The climb to the hostel just seemed to go on forever though..

Day 4 was our last day and looked to be the hardest at 89 miles. Over 8000 feet of climbing but a 1.1mile hard climb just after we set off soon got us up to speed. When in Wales you expect some rain & it didn't let us down. You could see it blowing down the valley. It was a hard day but also the most

beautiful. The Elan Valley reservoirs are stunning and defiantly the highlight of the trip. The last 5 miles were nearly all down hill but descending out of the low cloud & in the rain was not easy and a dozen cattle grids didn't help. We were soon at the finish & off the bikes but we did have a chance to relax & sink a few before the coach home the next day.

The ride was organised by the Bobby On A Bike charity based in Ipswich & all the money raised went to the RNLI. It was a superb event and all over far too soon.

Our ride was hard enough but massive credit goes to the 3 guys who attempted the ride non-stop. Unfortunately Neil had to pull out at about 250 miles but the other 2 guys completed the whole ride in 39 hours. Amazing... =



Dan
Reynolds

Olympic Road Race Ride Sunday 11th March.

Paul Wright, myself and a few other guys decided we fancied checking out the Olympic road race circuit around Box Hill in London & assessing Mark Cavendish's chances of a Gold medal.

We set off early at 6am to make the most of a 'sunny' Sunday but as usual it was very chilly. After a quick detour for breakfast, we got to Box Hill at 9am. A quick change in the car park and we were away riding before 9.30am. Straight away you could see it's a Mecca for cyclists as riders of all ages & sizes were out on the hill or the winding roads of the 10mile course.

We decided we would ride 4 circuits before a coffee & cake lunch at the lovely cafe at the top. The climb itself is about 2 miles long & a

steady rise up of about 250m so a challenge but no Alp! The first few ascents were great through the picturesque National Trust countryside but by the 4th we were in need of an energy boost.

A great choice of cakes & pasties were very welcoming at the cafe and the sun finally coming out made the lunch stop all the better. With bikes everywhere there was plenty to look at but the queue for food seemed as long as the climb itself!!

We set off again after lunch for more laps but it was obvious from the start that some of us would not be riding many more. The sunny weather & sunbathing crowds were too big a draw!! Paul decided

half way round the 5th lap he was feeling good and set off on a flying 6th and final lap! I was more than happy to let him go..

It was a great days riding & enjoyed by all and the weather & scenery made it even better. My highlight of the day was meeting & chatting to Mr & Mrs Freddie Flintoff at lunch. A bit of banter out on the road & a great view riding up behind Mr Flintoff was good but passing & dropping him on the next hill was even better.. Eat SDCC dust Freddie!!

Dan Reynolds

NEVER Say the 'P' word before a race!

After Cycling out to IBC Open 10 at Crowfield, before getting my number and signing on I went straight to the start line for a time check. There I met Peter Beard yet again calling me Chris, I reminded him of the easiest way to remember who's who is that Andy is the good looking one ;-). Anyway, continued conversation went on about that I rode out, where as Peter, although only living 10 minutes away drove out because of the fear of getting a puncture.....SShhh!, never say the "P" word before a race, let alone before you put you bike safely in you garage at home. Peter continued to say the "P"

MTB Race Reports



Thetford Winter Series Round 4

The sun was shining for the morning of the last race of the series. Although it was the winter series we had been very lucky and not raced in a single drop of rain.... let's just hope it doesn't all come during the summer!

It was great to see other Stowmarket riders racing, Wil Kitcher, Matt Flynn and Graham Berry.

The last round was back to Mayday and we were hoping that the course went down the double shocker, unfortunately not, so another four hour race to endure with some sharp climbs. The starter gun went off and it was a fast start, riders all trying to get to the front so not to get caught in the bottleneck.

We both raced our Orbea training bikes and after four hours we really felt it! The course flowed fast with the ever increasing warmth of the day. Andy was 2nd overall in the series up to this point so had to race hard to keep his position.

I finished the race 1st, with a lap in hand and Andy finished 5th,

securing his first series podium position coming 3rd. Well done to Matt, Graham and especially to Wil for finishing the race without having a mechanical!

British National Round 1 - Sherwood Pines

We left very early in the morning to make the trip to Sherwood. The clocks had gone forward an hour which meant we were leaving at 4am in the morning!! We were able to get a couple of practise laps in around the course before it was closed.

I was racing first in the morning in the expert cat and Andy midday in the sport cat. All the women/junior categories were starting together so it was a fast pace once the start gun went off. The course followed a different route this year which meant that in a lot of places the ground was loose. There were plenty of exposed roots, one of which I caught wrong and came off. The problem with the Nationals is that the competition is always very close so one mistake and you lose about six places. I had to work a little harder to get back near the front. There were log jumps and a fairly steep drop off to keep you alert! I had to complete 3 laps and it was constant high pace the whole way round. I finished the race 1st with a lead of 1.09 mins, very pleased with this result.

Andy had a good place on the starting grid, third line back. Wil Kitcher is also competing in the Nationals, sport cat. He's race prep leaves a lot to be desired!! out drinking the night before, late night, McD's for breakfast on the way up to Sherwood and deciding to swap his bars

just before the race!! It was great to see you there Wil and well done for your race.

The starter gun went off, with a field of 70+ men all eager to get to the front it's bound to end in disaster. There was a huge pile up, luckily not affecting Andy or Will. They both had to complete three laps. The sun was blazing by now and it was hard to take on drink as there was not much fire road. As the first lap riders came past the start/finish line you could tell who had come a cropper and fallen off, the loose dirt was dark and peaty and stuck to your skin and clothes. Andy finished the race in a fantastic position of 14th. Wil in 53rd.

Next race is the Eastern region, Mud, Sweat and Gears at Tunstall Forest. The kids will be taking part in the coaching and races and looking forward to wearing their Stow tops!



A SUNDAY IN HELL

Each year some friends and I head to the continent to ride a sportive, normally in the Alps. This year was to be different, this year we were going to ride Paris Roubaix, well, Wallers Roubaix actually, as we had opted for the short, or as I prefer to call it, intense version.

I dusted off the winter hack, crowbarred some 28mm tyres on, pre-booked a bed at Lille Accident and Emergency and I was ready.

The evening before the ride we decided to do a little trial run over the infamous Carrefour L'Abre section, dinner that night was a quiet affair.

In the morning, over breakfast, the mood in the team hotel was pensive, the atmosphere only broken by gallows humour and some hastily scribbled notes to loved ones.

On the way to the start, we spotted one of the early starters hunched, crab like, over the front of his machine. As we got closer, the problem was obvious, his saddle had snapped off and now he was faced with getting it mended or tackling the Arenberg Forest bouncing on his crossbar, I

remember thinking, I hope he has already fathered his children.

We registered and we were off, within 400m we were into the Arenberg, before the start I had promised myself that I would do the whole section on the cobbles, this promise was rapidly broken. I managed about half on the cobbles and I told myself that was a good effort.

What followed was a lovely flat ride, peppered with 5 -10 minutes of jack hammering about 4 times an hour. Each section of cobbles was met with a fear of puncture or mechanical breakdown. Every section seemed to have 4 or 5 riders at the side mending something.

After a couple of hours we arrived at the first feed stop, I climbed off and wandered in nursing early onset of arthritis in my hands. Garlic sausage, brie, proper bread, cakes and beer, now that's a food stop, not a power bar in sight.

After another couple of hours we agreed we were getting the hang of it, my fingers didn't hurt anymore, because I couldn't feel them. The pain was now

concentrated in my biceps, each cobble sending a shooting pain from bicep to brain. Surprisingly, arse and legs were fine and amazingly the bike was still in one piece. In fact apart from losing a couple of water bottles and the entire contents of my saddle bag (the vibration somehow unzipped the bag and spilled the contents on the fields of northern France) we had a trouble free ride.

We rode into the Velodrome feeling very pleased with ourselves. We parked the bikes, collected our free sandwich and beer and wandered around taking in the atmosphere. The velodrome was reassuringly shabby, the showers just as I'd seen them on TV and just for a minute I was Roger De Vlaeminck.

So if you fancy it, the next one is in 2014, the website is <http://www.vc-roubaix-cyclo.fr/site/>

My only advice would be don't ride your best bike, don't pump your tyres up too much and pray it doesn't rain.

Richard Hunt

Upcoming Events

Road

Glendene Summer RR—8/7
VC Norwich Summer RR—8/7
Whitewebbs CC RR—15/7
Iceni Velo RR—15/7
Ike Saul RR—22/7
Diss CC RR—5/8

Others

Gas Hill Gasp—6/7
Mildenhall Cycle Rally—25/26/27 August
Tour Ride 199km ride following the ToB route from Ipswich to Norfolk Showground—Sat 8th Sept

MTB

National MTB X Country Series
Round 5—Langdon Hills—
14/15 July

TT

CC Breckland 15—4/7
Norwich ABC 10—7/7
Norwich ABC 25—8/7
East District 100—15/7
Diss CC 25—22/7
SDCC 10—29/7
CC Breckland 12hr—5/8
East Anglia VTTA 10—11/8
Kings Lynn CC 25—11/8

TT Reports

Race report from the Gt Yarmouth CC 25 on 18th March.

I didn't have the best preparation for my opening event of the season having caught a chest cold a couple of weeks ago and done little riding so was ready to call this one training rather than racing. The rain on Saturday saw me nip over to Lifecycle to get some kneewarmers in anticipation of the next day being less than balmy. Sunday morning started dry but cold as I went for the most layers under a skinsuit record. The two lap sporting course around Somerleyton had lots of standing water and there were punctures aplenty including Peter Beard who got his at the HQ before he'd even started. I got round in a 1:09:06 slowed by two horses and a queue of cars at a garden centre (not very

sporting) and after using my garmin to correct the timekeeper. Peter did 1:18:03 and Michael Jones was fastest Stow rider in 1:08:47. Joint winners were Liam Gentry and Stuart Pryce both finishing in 1:00:03. I did however manage to go under the hour later only taking 50 minutes to clean the bike. Looking forward to warmer/drier/faster days !

Simon Boyle

It's been a challenging year so far for the testers! Several races have been called off or abandoned due to the weather. My own hopes of a first 50 were dashed because of rain and the championship 25 at Swaffham was abandoned half way through. Chris Leggett is still smashing it up and is currently leading the Spoco East series. Andy has done a cracking job of juggling new born twins and racing and is currently sitting 3rd in Spoco

east. Chris, Andy and John Adams are also competing in Spoco South East.

It's great to see a few new riders competing in the TT's. The ICA evening time trials have seen a few less riders mainly due, I'm sure, to the poor weather on Tuesday nights, but it's been as competitive as ever. Dave Clark is leading the senior category with Ben Caisey sitting third. The vets category is dominated by Stow riders with Kev Norman sitting 2nd, Chris Lacey 3rd, Chris Leggett 4th and me 7th. It's great to see Emma at the head of the ladies and Rob Ormond heading the juniors.

Let's hope for some favourable conditions for the rest of the season and some super quick times for everyone!

Welcome to some more New Members

Dan Horne, Ryan Ostler	Feb
Joshua Brett, Robert Smith	Mar
Jon Reynolds	April
Allan Stribling, Paul Bryant, Keith Tilley, Stuart Rogers	May
Jason Eccles, Christopher King & Gavin Carter	June

Welcome everyone. I hope you enjoy riding with the club and if you ever need any advice, help or guidance, just yell, there's plenty of us with years of experience.

Wanted

If anyone has a good quality boys 16" wheel bike I'd be interested. Let me know on 07939204227 or paulrmoss@gmail.com

Calshot Velodrome—3rd June 2012

The date – Sunday 3rd June 2012; the time – 1pm; the place – Calshot Velodrome; the reason – TO HAVE A CRACKING TIME!

On the 3rd June 11 riders made their way down to Southampton to have a day on the track. With all riders having previously attended, the session was to be one of skills progress rather than starting from scratch (something I think we were all looking forward to). As on previous visits we had a different (but still really good) instructor who was willing to listen to what we wanted to do, acknowledged our strengths (and weakness – yes believe it or not we do have these [actually quite a few it would appear!]) and most importantly allowed us to have fun! I would also like to thank him for not instantly giving up on us as his first comment to me was “I know I’ve got my work cut out with you guys, you’re the only club I’ve ever coached who gets on their bikes and start riding round in the wrong direction!” We did many exercises throughout the day concentrating on different skills including speed, bike handling and endurance. After being given time to warm up and get used to the bikes again (yep, I can’t believe it either but their mechanic still hasn’t got round to putting gears or brakes on the bikes!) our first proper exercise was a simple one - 2 teams, starting on opposite sides of the track, the team which caught the other won. I mean how difficult can that be?! The answer = very. Not least because it requires brains

rather than brawn. Something I hadn’t realised when I picked Matt F and James S for my team (not saying you’re not brainy guys!) Needless to say we lost. Well done to Team Ormond however for showing us how it should be done. After this we moved onto an exercise designed to develop bike handling (and the browning of shorts!) It required riding around the track all together, up on the blue line with 2 bike lengths between us. The last rider was then to make his way to the front, weaving in-between the other riders as he goes. Now, I’m not going to lie, there was not a single rider who envisaged this going well. I mean we doubted our ability to do this on bikes with brakes, let alone on ones without! But, despite this, we did ok. No one crashed and everyone managed it (to a surprisingly good standard actually). This exercise was followed by the first of 2 flying laps. These were done slightly differently to last time with all riders riding up above the blue line and the racing rider dropping down to do his lap when required. This exercise taught us 2 things. Firstly, it emphasised the importance of cornering, particularly entering the corner high and then sweeping down to exit, and secondly, that we were no good at doing this! Well actually, no one but Duncan H was any good at this. We were therefore given a quick theory lesson on cornering and then given the chance to put this theory into practice. One of the other exercises we did was one we tried last time but failed abysmally due to not

having a clue what we were meant to be doing. It was called ‘hunters revenge’ and this time we got a much better understanding due to walking it through on the flat first. Basically, you are in 2 teams, riding on opposite sides of the track above the blue line. The front rider of one team then drops down, flies around the bottom and under the other team. The front rider from that team then drops down onto the wheel of the bottom rider. Both riders then go round the bottom until the first rider gets back to his team where he pulls up onto the back. The now lone rider (from the second team) riders under the first team where the new front rider drops down onto his wheel and they then ride round the bottom of the track until they reach the second team and the front rider goes up onto the back of his team. So, as Alexander would say – *Simples!!!!* Like all these things it becomes clearer the more you practice and actually we did do it really well by the end. We then completed the final exercise of the day – our second flying lap. A time to beat our previous time and prove we have got better at cornering. Something which the majority of us managed to do. Yet again well done to Duncan H for not only doing the fastest time again but also managing to beat his already impressive time. Well, I think that’s all I’ve got to say. Apart from I would like to thank everyone for their support with the trips, both those that said they sadly couldn’t come but would love

Calshot Velodrome—3rd June 2012 contd.

to next time and those that actually came on the day. It is no secret that I love riding on the track but these trips would not be possible without everyone else coming along to.

If you haven't yet come with us but think you might like a go I am planning another visit in November so keep an eye on your emails for details.

Happy pedalling everyone.

Miriam

<u>Rider</u>	<u>1st Lap</u>	<u>2nd Lap</u>
Leondri F	11:92	11:95
Mark O	11:58	11:32
Paul	12:82	12:54
Rob S	12:06	11:61
Jim S	11:16	10:54
Matt F	11:57	11:29
Duncan H	10:52	10:06
Rob O	11:92	11:86
Adam K	11:13	10:95
Stephen S	13:09	12:64
Miriam E	11:86	11:42

Ipswich Cycle Racing Series—Trinity Park

This years series started on the 13th June and runs until 18th July on a Wednesday evening. If you've never been, it really is worth a look, whether to spectate on some really cracking racing or to have a go in the Go Race for novice riders or the main race for the more experienced road racers.

If you ever think you might like to have a go at road racing this series will really give you a feel for what it's all about. It's a fully closed road circuit using the perimeter roads of the Suffolk Showground, it's a tremendous thrill and a wonderful introduction to road racing for any riders.

3 rounds to go at time of writing and we have a number of riders up there at the front of the main race.

Paul Wright is showing the way with David Page, Mark Yale, Wil Kitcher, Justin Fisk, Dave Clark and Kev Curtis all showing themselves in the races.

In the Go Race series Gavin Carter, Neal Hughes, Rob Smith and Adam Keeble are all competing and Miriam Edwards and Emma Beard have been active in the ladies.

Go Race starts at 6:55pm and the main race at 7:30pm

David Page and Paul Wright have now gained 3rd Cat licenses. Well done guys. Stow train rolls on!

Mrs Flynn is doing the Snowdonia Challenge in aid of Regain, which is not a hair replacement charity, but in fact a charity that aids the recovery and rehabilitation of injured sports persons. I think bearing in mind that we all love our own sports you can appreciate the necessity of such a charity. She is undertaking this feat on 7th July, it entails 20 miles on the bike before a hike up and down Snowdon, on foot of course, followed by another 10 miles on the bike, then a paddle round a lake before a final 10 miles on the bike which includes a 2 mile climb at 20% up what seems to be little more than a gravel track!!!

She is doing this with a team of work colleagues, I was not considered good enough to join them..... Any way I'm sure that you can all appreciate it will be a pretty tough challenge so if any one feels so inclined I attach the link to their just giving page below. Anything donated will be very much appreciated.

www.justgiving.com/teamcultura

Dunwich Dynamo

After several years of saying “I must ride the Dunwich Dynamo (Dun Run) one day”, it’s now another boxed ticked off the things to do list.

For those who don’t know the DD is an overnight ride from The Pub in the Park, Hackney to Dunwich; originally organised by London Couriers looking for something different to their normal daily routine and so the Dunwich Dynamo was born.

On this ride I was joined by Clive Sparkes of IBC and two other cycling friends, Jill Southgate and Marcus Catlin and agreed we would not go for a time but enjoy a more comfortable pace.

We travelled to London on an £8.00 ticket with several other cyclists all taking part and between us managed to fill the last carriage up with approx 30 cycles. On reaching Liverpool Street Stn we unloaded the bikes and carried them up the elevator cyclo cross style and made our way to the start where many hundreds of riders were already gathered including members of Ipswich BC, Ipswich TC and Plomesgate CC. As this is not an event you need to enter you can leave any time you wish and we eventually left at 8.45pm but only averaging 12mph for the first 10m owing to the sheer numbers of riders who for once ruled the road (makes a nice change).

By the time we reached Epping Forest it was time to turn lights on and as far as the eye could see were hundreds of twinkling rear lights attached to all types of bikes from top end road bikes down to recumbents, MTBs and Mary Poppin style steeds.

During the early part of the ride and once past Epping, most village pubs appeared to be doing a roaring trade from passing riders. Once well into the ride if you were out of site of other riders at each junction for the first few miles tea lights in jam jars guided the way. We eventually reached the official feed stop at Sible Headingham village hall after 52 miles to be greeted by the site of about 300 cyclists and with a steady stream of more arriving or departing all the time. After waiting in a queue for 30 minutes had a midnight snack of veg soup and roll followed by banana, leaving after about 50mins.

From Sible Headingham we were now heading for Sudbury achieving my highest

speed of the night, 37mph descending Ballingdon into Sudbury which in the dark feels a hell of a lot faster. It was at the start of Sudbury we found the first of the late night revellers giving lots of inebriated encouragement. On leaving Sudbury a newly opened bike shop (Torque Bikes) had set up an area effecting repairs etc as well as giving out free cereal bars. The ride from here on was fairly uneventful apart from large groups gathering at junctions not because they were lost but just taking comfort breaks or general socialising, this and riders in twos and threes stretched out on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere just taking in the night air but despite passing all these riders if we stopped we were soon passed by what seemed a couple of hundred regaining their advantage. At Barking church we came across the first unofficial feed stn offering bacon butties, tea or coffee for a small fee, the next one of these was found on the Gosbeck to Helmingham road and this one I have since found out raised £850.00 for East Anglian Air Ambulance.

On our approach to Framlingham we could watch the sun rise and by Cranford lights were no longer required, from here on it was an uneventful ride to Dunwich arriving at approx 5.15. only to find a fifty yard queue for the café, bikes everywhere and even a few hardy souls taking a dip in the icy North Sea. It was here I bumped into Ben Caisey who not satisfied in just riding from London to Dunwich stopping to have his breakfast which he had stashed in a hedge near Needham Mkt also rode from home to the start and was then going to ride home just to add on a few more miles.

Ride details

Depart 20.45hrs

Sible Headingham 52miles 00.15hrs

Finish approx 5.15hrs

Distance 113.24 miles

Ride time 7hrs 24mins

Total time approx 8hrs 30mins

Ave 15.3mph

Max 37.1mph

One of those must do rides, thoroughly recommend it.

John Adams

The El President and Badger Trip to hotel Funivia in Bormio, Italy

This year I was joined by the first lady and Mr and Mrs Badger

Our hosts were Danielli and Elisa Boncorsi and Daniellis brother, Giacomo. Everybody at this hotel does their utmost to make your stay enjoyable, the staff are superb !

We left for Stansted at stupid o'clock en route to Bergamo airport, where we picked up our hire car, next 180 km drive to Bormio, we elected to take the route to the south of the Valtellina valley, which meant we drove over the Gavia Pass, this a very dangerous road with not much more than 1 vehicle width in places and no barrier on the outside ! We arrived at the hotel mid afternoon and then built up the bikes for the next morning. Our hosts were pleased to see us return and we were introduced to pro rider, Danielo Nardello, dinner in the evening and then a short walk into town, to show the ladies where the shops were.

Monday morning woke to light rain, for the biggest ride of the week, we ascended the Stelvio to just below the summit and then turned down the Umbrail Pass, heading for the Swiss border, the descent here is very technical and in the wet conditions, care was required, when you reach the valley road, which skirts around the Stelvio, it is a very fast, slightly downhill ride, superb. Next we arrive in Prato Stelvio for lunch, before we ascend the other side the of the Stelvio, about halfway up what little energy I started with had all but left me, and although I had managed the last time I was there, this time it was the broomwagon for me, followed shortly after by badger and then a van full of Dutchmen ! We had to wait at various points on the mountain, until everybody was safely up, we were very pleased indeed when dinner time came round. Tuesday rest day, we drove to Livigno in Switzerland which is a duty free town, a couple of years ago, I purchased lightweight wheels a grand cheaper than the UK.

Wednesday was the Mortirolo / Gavia ride. We rode about 20 miles down the valley and about 3 km before the climb, I got a rear wheel puncture, quick change and away, minutes after we started the climb, another puncture and everybody had disappeared, very demoralising, when you are probably the slowest to start with ! Anyway onwards and upwards, until I

found the support vehicle and pumped my tyre up, the problem is that if you dismount on this climb, it's very difficult to start and cleat in again, the gradient is max 19 %. When I reached the summit, Badger and I climbed into the broomwagon again !!, later in the ride, we realised that was a wise decision, the van was full of riders in various states of distress, the heat, length of second climb and the gradient really took its toll, one guy was in a real mess, so chapeau to those that did reach the second summit.

Thursday, we repeated a trip I had done previously, drive to Tirano, catch Swiss train up the Bernina pass en route to St Moritz, this train is a brilliant narrow gauge, that climbs up by spiralling around over viaducts and is Unesco protected, we climbed out at the highest point, Bernina Hospiz and then walked back to previous station, Alpe Grum, there we had lunch with an old acquaintance, Herr Albi, former SAS trainer, now hotel owner and alpine guide, great lunch and then out came the grappa, we managed to get back on the train and then return to Bormio.

Friday, we drove over the mountains to the beautiful town of Merano, you cannot believe how fertile these valleys are in the high mountains, this is a major fruit growing area, and I remember coming here with my trucks over 30 years ago to load apples for the UK.

Saturday, Badger and I decided to go on a private ride to Monte Fosgano, which is actually the Swiss border, about 45 mile round trip and 15 miles of climbing in superb weather, lunch halfway down the descent, another beautiful day in the saddle, dinner in the evening and say goodbyes to everybody. Danielli was kind enough to get up at 0500 to see us off with a coffee, a true gentleman and friend.

I think we are so lucky with the connections we have made, we have trips to Majorca, Riccione in Italy, Tim and Di at Chez Passet in the Pyrenees and now Hotel Funivia, I cannot recommend these holidays enough and hope that some of you will join us next year.

Good riding

El Presidente