

Joining The Wheelers

I got back into cycling about 18 months ago. I had never really left it but it had dropped to a very occasional activity. The reviews of the Decathlon Triban 3 were hard to ignore - as was the sub £300 price tag. So a trip to Stockport was organised "it's cheaper than joining a gym" was my excuse to the wife. Of course in reality I was never going to join a gym anyway... The ride back from the store was the first time I had been on a road bike since 1984. Where better to reacquaint oneself with serious riding than along the A6 on a Saturday afternoon?

It was January and the weather was a bit nippy but numerous my rides across the Peak and in the Cheshire Lanes were a joy. I rode mostly alone although I did occasionally meet up with friends. Naturally enough I saw plenty of clubs out but I never really paid them much attention.

I was getting fitter and fitter and being overtaken was getting to be a rare occurrence. I was also going further and by this summer I was riding across to Chester, Llandudno and even Holyhead (admittedly I usually got the train home). I was really enjoying the sheer speed that I could go at. However, I had the niggling feeling that club riders somehow went faster.

This feeling was confirmed when one day I was approaching a junction and a Seamons "peloton" streamed by. I sprinted to catch them and tagged on the end at a respectful distance. They were shifting and I noticed that they were adding about 2 to 3 km/h to my normal speed.

They were all chatting and enjoying their ride. Maybe I should consider joining a club?

I left it for a few weeks. To be honest I was perhaps a bit nervous. I felt fit but would I be able to keep up? Also my gear was, well how can I put it? "not that of a real cyclist". I knew this because a real cyclist had told me exactly that the previous summer.

Fast forward to the Tour de France. I knew James Russell had taken to cycling "rubber-side up", so I called in to see how he was faring. In chatting he said, "why don't you have a try with the Wheelers?". So I did.

The first try was a Thursday night chain gang. Eeek. It was like no cycling that I had done before. For a start I had never ridden close to other cyclists so I was very nervous. I just about kept up but it wasn't quite what I was looking for from my cycling.

Undeterred, I looked at what the next thing was. "An easy ride to the Roaches, cafe stop"; now that sounded more my sort of thing. It was a nice sunny day and the ride was great fun. The pace was fast enough to be fun but slow enough to chat, much more type of cycling.

I knew I had only one more "free" ride so next I picked the Thursday "Just a

ride" to try. This was a slightly crazy circumnavigation of Macclesfield. In a moment of over-enthusiastic pedalling up a hill I managed to break my chain but everyone waited patiently while I fixed it - no-one even complained! In fact I had seen this willingness to wait on the Roaches ride where several folk had punctures, It was very reassuring. But the best thing about "just a ride" was that it ended in a pub: perfect.

And so the next day I sent off my £12 and looked forward to the Saturday ride to Delamare as a member. More fun ensued and the pace was brisk but not too intimidating. I admired all the lovely summer bikes and thought that perhaps my rather tired Triban 3 with mountain-bike pedals looked a bit out of place. This proved to be an expensive thought - but that's something for another time.

So to sum up:

I got a warm welcome which made it easier to enjoy the rides.

I tried a variety of rides and found what suited me.

I was encouraged that no-one got left behind.

I am looking forward to many more rides!