

Chair's Report 2024/2025

This last year has been one of mixed fortunes. Overall, the picture remains similar but the success and otherwise of the Club has been differently distributed.

The Club has lost two of its members who died in the last year. Gail Riekie and Anna Bagi. Gail had moved away from London but for many years was active, leading rides and walks. Anna was one of the mainstays of the 1* section, leading on many occasions. Both will be missed. Fortunately, unlike last year, there have not been any serious bike related accidents this year.

Turning to the various sections, there has been a varied picture with some thriving whereas others are struggling.

The 1* group has really struggled to attain a critical mass of riders and leaders and barely functioned for much of the year, as only 15 rides were held, attracting an average of 4.7 riders with a maximum of 10. The fortunes of this group have been transformed by our new 1* coordinator, Monika Zerebska who has been in post for only a couple of months – 6 of the 15 rides having been organised through her since the end of February. The 1* offering has changed slightly with more emphasis on themed rides, and rides to attractions and places of interest, thus broadening the appeal.

The 2* midweek group, under the stewardship of Nick Bloom are in good health with a pool of regular riders. 41 and 48 rides taking place on Mondays and Thursdays respectively, with Thursdays being slightly more popular than Mondays. Both groups attained a maximum 13 riders and the Mondays attracted an average of 5.1 and Thursdays 7.1.

The 2* weekend section has been very successful. 47 rides were held, attracting 11.4 riders on average with a maximum of 18. The group is in some danger of becoming a victim of its own success in that rides are often oversubscribed, which could deter newcomers that we need if the club is not to wither and die! This group is the entry point for most new members. In my view there is ample scope for having 2 rides per weekend, especially in summer. There is a limit to the number of riders that can be accommodated per ride due to the necessity of booking lunches and the difficulty of wrangling up to 20 bikes onto a 3 – 5 carriage train. Many thanks to Richard Jaggard for his efforts in coordinating.

In contrast, the 3* section has imploded recently. The section has lost at least 6 regular ride leaders in the last 2 years with 2 more likely departures in the upcoming year. A number of riders have moved out of London. Most of the losses can be attributed to

relocation, but some riders and leaders have migrated to the 2 & 4* groups. David Kurtz has tried valiantly to keep things going. That being said, 44 rides were organised, with an average attendance of 3.7 and a maximum of 9. The Regent's Park subgroup attracts a loyal following, with an average attendance of 5.2 and a maximum of 13.

The 4* section though small, is in good health with 4.4 riders turning up on average per ride of which there were 46 and 13 showed up on 1 occasion. A few of their members have joined CUK clubs to enable them to race and take part in sportives. Julia Moye has done an excellent job of badgering the limited number of leaders to lead, and they have responded with enthusiasm.

The Tours section has gone from strength to strength under Jenny Hung's capable leadership. 4 tours were organised last year, with a total of 44 riders taking part, and a maximum of 15. Next year promises to be even more successful as 3 out of the 4 tours are already full and the 4*s have organised an epic weekend of two 100 mile rides with an overnight stop!

The overall top male and female riders were, as last year, Colin Hartridge-Price and Inez Thorn respectively, both by considerable margins.

I must thank all the Committee members that I haven't already namechecked. In particular I would like to thank Richard Philpott who has quietly and very efficiently held down two jobs (registration and publicity) for the last 25 years. The registration job involves maintaining the website, which is possibly the most onerous job on the Committee. Javier Carmona has come on board as Publicity Officer. Tom James is standing down as Treasurer, Baska Karch as Secretary and David Kurtz as 3* coordinator. Thanks to all of them for their efforts over the years. The new Committee will have some fresh faces and a better balance of gender than previous iterations, and I'm sure that they'll play a part in enabling the Club's continuing success.

There have been a few changes for next year. The annual social at Much Hadham Golf Club has been discontinued due to declining numbers and will be replaced by two or three picnic/cafe meetups in Richmond and Regent's Parks in the warmer months which will enable members to socialise with riders they rarely meet. The monthly Zoom meetings, set up in the pandemic have been discontinued due to dwindling attendance. The various Whatsapp and Signal groups serving the various sections are all thriving and serve a useful social function as well as allowing arrangement changes etc. to be distributed instantly and effectively. The only section without a group is the 1* and I'm pretty confident that that will soon change.

Finally, may the wind be at your back, and keep it rubber side downwards!

Paul Foster

Chair.