



Macclesfield Wheelers Cycling Club

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

CHAIR'S REPORT

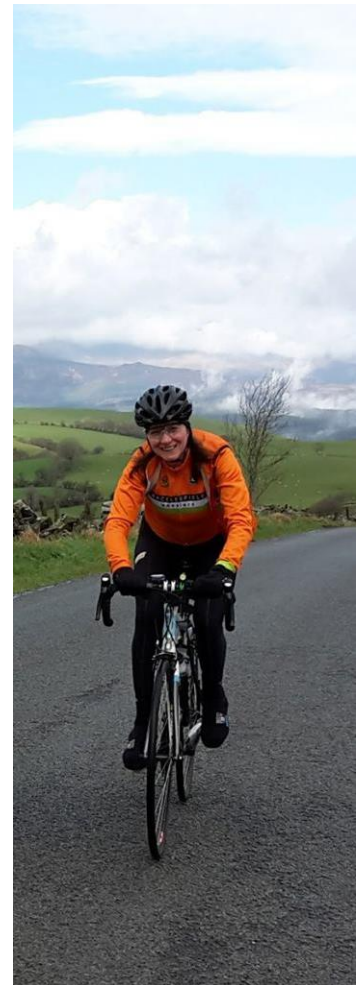
It's been a privilege to have been Chair of Macclesfield Wheelers for the last two years. This is a great club that has taken on new ideas and grown stronger over this time, with its **250 members** pedalling across an astonishing range of rides, races, events and trips, from 20-mile introductory rides to our annual 200km Three Loops Ride, devised by former club chair Richard Elliott, and which we ride in his memory.

The club's strength lies in the commitment of its dedicated volunteers working to ensure that our rides and races run smoothly and safely. Working together and solving problems in a team to put on a successful event is a great way to get to know each other and make friends. Just help out at our premier public event, the Supacross in South Park on Saturday 30 December to see exactly what I mean.

The bedrock of any cycling club is its calendar of rides and I want to thank everyone who has contributed by organising routes and leading rides. It's been particularly exciting to see the enthusiasm with which members have welcomed Monica E's new fortnightly Sunday morning winter training ride. Long may we continue to introduce new rides as needs change, so if you fancy starting a nine-mile Tuesday evening unicyclists' ride with no right-hand turns and two café stops, we'll be right there to support you.

It's the club's 70th anniversary in 2018 and I am very grateful to the "twenty-three interested people" who attended its inaugural meeting on 20 July 1948, "including two young ladies" (!). They have bequeathed us a club to be proud of and to cherish, and I wish my successor as Chair every success both as guardian of that inheritance and as the agent of change they will need to be to develop and build the club to hand it on to the next generation of exciting and talented U23s that we are already lucky to have riding with us.

Jill



Jill W

SAFETY

- Our Club Welfare Officer, Graham W, took a Saturday out to attend a training course, approved by British Cycling, designed to enable him to help the club to keep children, young people and vulnerable adults safe.
- We've published (and continue to develop and refine) two key documents: 'Riding with us on the road' and 'Riding with us off-road'.
- We've bought three video cameras. If you would like to borrow one of these, please contact Dave Harb.
- We funded a Saturday morning First Aid Course delivered by the Red Cross, attended by 15 members. If you are interested in attending (or organising) a similar course in 2018, please talk to Chris C.
- We've amended our membership form to ask all members if they have medical training or an up-to-date first aid qualification or have recently attended a first aid course.
- Ride leaders now all have access to our membership database, so they can use a Smartphone on a ride to access members' emergency contact details and medical information.



First Aiders
Standing L to R: Andy J, Matt Y, Jamie H, Simon R,
Jill W, Mick O'C, Roger W, Pete M, Dave Harb,
Chris C, Martin J, Nigel B, Dave Hal.
Front: Paul D, John J.

TRACK RACING

We have two Velodromes (Manchester and Derby) within easy travelling distance and the club has a small but keen group of track riders. Chris Higgs has continued to represent the Wheelers with distinction and this year added two European titles (Scratch and Points) and one National (Scratch) plus a silver in the National Individual Pursuit to her already large collection. Pete J competed in the LVRC National Championships at Derby and Oliver J has been a regular at Manchester. John J has been riding the Friday night league at Manchester where he and Martin J provide the photo finish and results service for the Monday night league. We've held some brilliant taster sessions at the Manchester Velodrome in other years and need someone to organise one or more in 2018.



Mike W



Chris H (centre)

OUR FANTASTIC YOUNG RIDERS

We have a good number of members under the age of 23 regularly representing the club to a high standard in racing, competing at regional and national level in hill climbs, closed-circuit road racing, mountain biking and cyclocross. And they're wearing club kit that is the envy of other clubs.

This year Louis T-M, aged 18, and new member Olly S, aged 14, have started racing in the North West Cyclocross League and are showing great potential. Kate G, aged 11, returned to the North West Cyclocross League and completed the Coast to Coast challenge as well as competing in the mountain bike national championship.

Joe T, aged 14, has been racing on and off the road and recently took a win at the Haig Hall Cyclocross Supercross, while this summer Robert R, aged 15, won his first race at Bebington Cyclocross amongst numerous podium finishes in this discipline as well as showing himself to be a promising time trial 'tester'.

Away from racing, our training rides are well-supported by younger members, and our slower social rides are a useful introduction for youngsters looking to join the club or progress.



Joe T



Louis T-M

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following 42 members joining us in 2017 (if you're coming home after 20 years, Claire, Neil, you're as good as new):

Geoffrey H, Graham B, Tom Y, Dave D, Christian S, Rachel G, Gwen S, Tom G, Hannah B, Mark P, Adam S, Jim M, Jan L, Lynda C, Ben P, Rick B, Marc B, Phil K, Shaun E, Duncan A, Rhys B, Christopher T, Jon C, Lucia W, Karl T, Adele R, Nicholas O, Lee C, Carl F, Thomas M, Rob S, Robert R, Claire D, Olly S, Simon R, Neil D, Victor O, Mark B, Vicci J, Robin J, Mark M, John B. Sorry if we've missed anyone.



ROAD RACING

The following 15 Wheelers took part in road races this season, mainly under the auspices of TLI Cycling (which is particularly strong in the North West), but also in British Cycling (BC) and League of Veteran Racing Cyclists (LVRC) events: Anthony B, Mark B, Jon C, Lee C, Monica E, Tom G, David H, Simon H, Matt L, Louis T-M, Mick O'C, Mike S, Dave R, Joe T and Ben T.

The club successfully promoted two TLI Cycling road races on the local Siddington Circuit. This year the JF Parkinson Memorial Road Race also incorporated the TLI Cycling National Road Race Championships for age categories under 50. Both races had full fields and received positive feedback.

The best results of the season have been Ben T winning the second round of the Dave Astles Road Race Series and David H the final event in the Audlem RR series. David also won a bronze medal in the TLI Cycling National Circuit Race Championships held at Oulton Park. Louis T-M and Tom G both secured second places in our Evening Road Race, as did Joe T in the Barnsley Town Centre Races. Matt L was third, and Simon H sixth, in the very tough High Peak Road Race held around Monyash and Chelmorton.

We're looking for volunteers to join a small team organising our two road races (Tuesday 22 May and Sunday 2 September) as Jill W and Anthony A are stepping down after five years (many thanks to them both for their efforts). We also want to do more to encourage and coordinate participation in local races, including the TLI National Championships, which will again be held on the Siddington (U50s) and Holt (O50s) courses, and at Oulton Park. TLI Cycling also has a new (sponsored) road race league based on North West races.

We're currently updating the road racing section of our website with more information on how to start road racing and - good news for those with disc brakes - BC, TLI Cycling and LVRC have all just announced that they will allow these in domestic races in 2018.



Mick O'C



David Hi



Simon H, Matt L

WEEKENDS AWAY 2017

- March - Blean-y-Nant, Trefriw, Wales, accommodation in a climbing hut
- May and September - Bishops Castle, Shropshire, ride there, ride back
- August - Wild Wales Challenge, the toughest, but the best, way to spend Bank Holiday Sunday
- October - Gearstones Lodge, Ribblesdale, Yorkshire Dales
- Ghent 6 day - a weekend of watching the art of track racing in Belgium

TIME TRIALS

The Wednesday evening 10s continue to be at the heart of time trialling in the club. We had a great turnout this year, with 48 club members testing themselves over the gloriously smooth dragstrip that is Congleton Road (cough). We also welcomed 56 guest riders, showing just how much local cyclists value these events.

The fastest club 10 ride of the year was 21:12 by Chris Q. Will K, now at university, still managed to get back up north and ride two club 10s, the fastest of which was 21:33. Over the course of the TT season, Dave H won the scratch competition, Peter J won the handicap competition, and Jamie H continued to make gains finishing in the top three in both competitions. Simon H and Mark H both went under 22:30, meeting the club's 'gold' standard for a 10-mile event. Special mention goes to our younger riders showing great promise in the TT discipline, with Olly S, Robert R and Louis T-M all putting in storming performances throughout the year; long may that continue.

The club's open 25, organised by Mike S, proved to be another success, with 97 riders taking part, and Mark T (Torq Performance) winning in 53:28 on a tough, windy day. Will K was the fastest Macc Wheeler in 56:54, therefore winning the May White Trophy.

This year Congleton took the Karl Austin Interclub Challenge 25-mile TT (best of two legs) in a combined time of 5:52:16 compared to our 6:20:28. We will be looking to take this one back next year.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to everyone who helps to make our TT events happen, in particular this year Paul R, Celia E, Rob F, John B, Greg R, Sue R, Roger W, James R and Mike S. Thank you all for your dedication and selfless contributions throughout the year. We're looking for a new organiser to co-ordinate our Club 10s in 2018.

In other open events, Warren J did a 55:34 on a course on the A11; Ruth G did a 4:42 in the classic Anfield 100; and Matt Y sneaked in a 54:01 on the notoriously quick Etwall (A50) course. In addition, the following participated in various TTs throughout the year: Matt Bu, Paul C, Rich D, Paul F, Marcus F, Chris G, Chris H, Matt L, Clare L, Wayne M, Sian H, Bill R, Lynne S, Richard T and Mike W (apologies if we've missed anyone). And finally, two of our very fast veterans, Mike S and Roger W, raced earlier in the season before having injuries; hopefully both will be back to full strength for next season.

In hill climbing, Jo H posted some excellent results including winning her vets category in the national championships at Hedley on the Hill, and best ladies veteran on the prestigious Monsal Hill Climb. A number of other Wheelers took part in hill climbs this year, including James R, Dominic S, Simon H, Simon R and Tom G. Will K and Jill W took the honours in the club's own hill climb championship on Pym Chair and a shortened course (due to roadworks) on the Cat and Fiddle.



Jo H



Matt Y



James R

For next season our new TT Secretary, Matt Y, is itching to help members follow the efforts of the club's valiant testers through more regular posts on our website and social media pages. He's also keen to encourage greater participation in time trials, particularly in open events, across all distances and formats, male and female, including team time trials: is there a finer sight than four riders clad in tangerine and green tearing around Cheshire lanes in tight formation?



Paul C, Matt Y, Ruth G, Roger W

For newcomers to the club, or those who've not tried any form of racing before, TTs offer the easiest route into competitive cycling, and you certainly don't need a fancy TT bike to take part. It is, after all, a race against your own personal best, and one where you can genuinely track how your training leads to better performances. On this point, we're considering whether we have a new category of results for the club 10s for riders on normal road bikes.

There's a vast amount of TT experience within the club which we can all tap into. If you have any questions about taking part in TTs (courses, pacing, equipment, or simple things like needing a lift to a race), please talk to Matt Y or one of the club's many seasoned testers who will be happy to share their knowledge and experience, a common theme of which may be:

The time-keeper counts you down ... '5-4-3-2-1-go' ... after 30 seconds your legs are starting to burn, and after 60 seconds you're thinking to yourself how much you hate this.

Don't worry, this is quite a normal physiological response! Stay with it: after a few minutes things will settle down, you'll get into your zone, and nothing else but racing will matter.



Ruth G

SATURDAY SOCIAL RIDE

Brian E and Paul AJ ran six Saturday Social Rides over the spring and summer. Proudly billed as the slowest ride the club leads, these attracted up to 15 riders: a mix of newcomers and existing members who just wanted an enjoyable morning on the bike. Riding up to 20 miles on the scenic lanes and occasional tracks around Macclesfield, riders ended each ride with coffee and biscuits at Paul's Ride and Repair workshop. There'll be more of these rides in 2018; please watch our website and Facebook pages for dates.



Brian E

SUNDAY EASY RIDE

Our weekly Sunday Easy Ride caters for cyclists who enjoy a social non-competitive ride and is particularly suited to new riders or those returning to cycling after injury or a long break. Usually covering between 25 and 35 miles (you can see the routes on our website) and going at the speed of the slowest rider, the rides take in an all-important café stop about halfway. The start point alternates between Wilmslow and Macclesfield and the ride attracts anything between 6 and 22 cyclists depending on the weather and the destination.

The ride leaders are usually John J, Martin J and occasionally Katherine J, who have also organised several longer intermediate rides, such as a popular one to Chester (with a choice of start and finish points for those not fancying the full distance). And the Easy Riders enjoy an annual weekend of sociable cycling to and around Bishops Castle in Shropshire and a week in Majorca with a mix of easy and intermediate rides. Some of the riders who start with the Sunday Easy Rides move onto other club rides as they become fitter, while others prefer to keep their cycling easy! Everyone is welcome.



*Clockwise from front left:
Danielle B, Paul G, Mr X,
Alison G, Kevin T, Lucia W*

OFF-ROAD

The club continues to field a healthy population of off-road 'muddies' who, each Saturday, migrate eastwards into the Peak District where they descend on their favoured feeding grounds like a murmuration of starlings, albeit diminished in numbers and synchronicity by comparison. Favoured feeding sites continue to be The Roaches, Longnor, Buxton, Hayfield and, in particular, Morrisons Café in Chapel-en-le-Frith, where cakes can be found reduced to half price or less after 4pm.

A peak-count of 15 muddies was recorded on 24 June on their annual migration to Langsett in South Yorkshire. With 8,000 feet of altitude gained and the peaks of Cut Gate and Woodhead passed, the muddies battled their way back home against nagging but not unexpected headwind. With the inexperienced and weakening tucked safely within the skein, they made good progress (often forming 'V' formations) to arrive at their traditional watering hole in Poynton in a time of 7hrs 30mins with a total of 80 miles covered.



*MTB Hill Climb – the podium:
Robert R, Matt L, Mark R*



MTB Hill Climb – the field

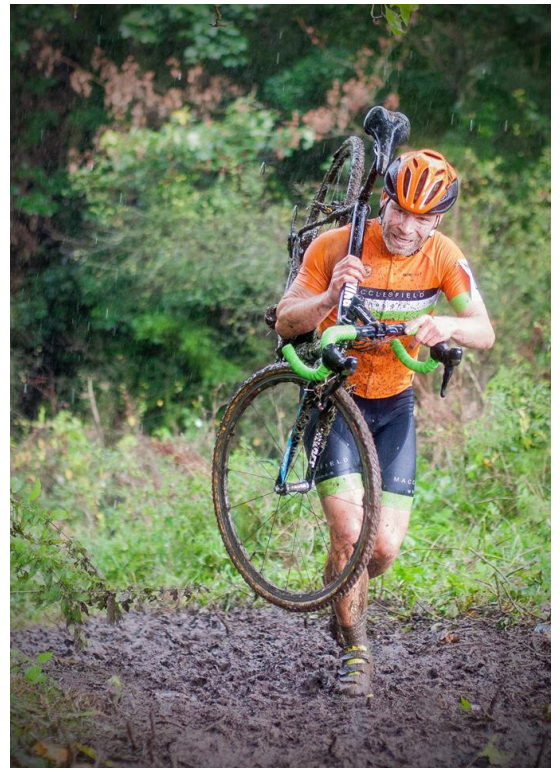
CYCLOCROSS

Cyclocross proved to be highly popular in the Wheelers in 2017 with 7 to 8 members regularly riding cross week in week out and attending all the North West Cyclocross League events. Robert R won his first race at Bebington Cyclocross race and regularly placed in the top five all season. Dave T and Joe T returned to the Wheelers after an absence to be a key part in the cyclocross drive.

Greg R (no relation) raced six of the eight North West Cyclocross League races so far this year (missing two while on back-to-back training camps in Denia and Majorca) and on each occasion he beat his arch (and only) rival in the V70 class, Alan S from Weaver Valley Cycling Club. His cyclocross prize money combined with a run of good luck on the football pools at cross HQ The Ship Inn makes him the Wheelers' top earning cyclist for 2017.

Paul H, Cyclocross Secretary, writes: "Greg is the hub of cross, holding all us together. He is there for us and has been there for us even when not racing himself, travelling the country to stand in the pits cleaning and fixing bikes so as we can do what we love. He is always there to help in any way he can."

Ruth G and Brian R both completed yet another Three Peaks cyclocross race, each for the umpteenth time. Dave T and Matt Y also rode the event this year, officially described as the toughest cross event on the UK calendar.



Marcus F

SATURDAY ROAD CLUB RUN

The Saturday Road Club Run continues to bolster the regional economy each week by bestowing its patronage on selected partner cafes across Cheshire, Derbyshire and Staffordshire eager to enjoy their share of the pedalling pound. Numbers vary: can be up to 30 but for some inexplicable reason that will have to be the focus of further in-depth analysis we get less people out in wet weather (eg seven on our monsoon-season trip to the cycling Mecca of Great Budworth). Rides are about 50 miles each week, devised and led by Chris C, Paul H, Andy B and, on a mission to create a regular intermediate group, Dave R. New ride leaders needed please.



L to R back row: Richard R, Paul He, Gordon L, Nigel B, Fred W, Eddie G, Mick O'C, Joe B, Rob F, Steve H, Tom G.
Front: Russell H, Dominic S, Dave R, James R, Rich D, Roger W, Paul Ha, Catherine B, Chris C, Dave Harb, Dave Hal.

10 2 7 TRAINING RIDE

The Thursday easier training ride @10 2 7 developed from a self-organised initiative from club members looking for a slightly easier alternative to the regular 7pm winter training ride.

The ride attracted increasing numbers through the summer and turnout has been good going into the winter, with normally at least 5 riders and up to 13. Speeds in 2017 have varied depending on turnout and the weather but have generally been in the 15 to 20 mph range. But there is no target speed on this ride as the emphasis is on staying together as a smooth chaingang that can accommodate mixed abilities including members new to training rides and wishing to develop.

Interested? Just turn up or talk to Fred W (who will even go for a post-ride run round the track at the Leisure Centre with you if you ask him).



Fred W

JUST A RIDE

The Just a Ride (JAR) is a social, easy paced, ride starting at 18.30 every Thursday from the Cenotaph in Park Green.

This year it's attracted upwards of six riders each week: some regulars and some just looking to try a ride before joining the club. The ride is between 25 and 30 miles, generally taking two hours with varying routes alternating between flat and hilly depending on the consensus view of participants (this is a democratic ride).

The ride continues its social theme at the Park Tavern for beer, burgers and even a bit of post-ride banter.



MONDAY NIGHT INTERMEDIATE TRAINING RIDE

Jamie H, training ride enthusiast, writes: "The Monday night intermediate training rides have been generally good to attend but without a ride leader they've been more varied in numbers and pace than the other training rides. There was an occasion when only two of us turned up and another when it was just me. I believe others have experienced the same. During the summer I really enjoyed it and the pace was good; however it did increase speed on some weeks and perhaps it got a little too fast at times which might have put some people off."

Interested in helping your club by leading this ride, publicising it and regulating the pace? Come on, there's nothing on the telly on Monday night surely?



Jamie H

OTHER VACANCIES

Chair
Road Race Secretary
Saturday Road Club Run Leader, or preferably several
Club 10 TT Organiser, or preferably several
Road Race Events Team (probably have three, need a couple more)
Database Wizard to help our membership secretary
Graphic Designer to do this annual report next year

VACANCY

WHEELERS INTERNATIONAL

We continue to export the best of British cycling to countries less fortunate than ourselves with, for example, many members visiting Majorca in the spring, and planning to do the same in 2018. And this year we sent a crack(ed) team to tackle (a bit of) La Vuelta.

Mike S, Matt L, Marcus F



*Eddie G, Steve H, Andy J,
Brian R, Neil W*



*Dave Harb, David H, Graham T,
Ray S, Roger W, Mick O'C*

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Our communications are central to our club's success. We need to communicate effectively with each other and promote a positive image of cycling to the wider community.

This year has seen a continued shift in our external communications away from reports in the Macclesfield Express towards greater use of our Facebook page (585 likes) and our Twitter account (527 followers). Members are now using the Forum on our website much less than in previous years and using our Facebook Discussion Group page to report on their activities and promote 'pop-up' rides (remember that this group includes people who are not club members). We're using targeted emails more (you can unsubscribe if you want to) and even texted everyone, just to make sure they were awake on Sunday morning.

Highlights of the year have been the substantial publicity generated by the profile of the club when Cycling Weekly magazine joined our esoteric and popular annual local ride the Barry Hyde Circuit of the Edge, attracting more than 80 members and guest riders, and our participation in Macclesfield Town Council's Cycle Saturday to coincide with the Grand Depart of the Tour de France when we created and led two guided rides for adults and children and were waved on our way by the Junior Mayor and Town Crier.

We've established links with Macclesfield's MP, David Rutley, and shared ideas at a meeting with Congleton Cycling Club (who have very good links with Cheshire East Council).

Looking ahead to the next year, it would be good to see more people contributing to the FB Group and helping to get more co-ordinated participation by members in local cycling events, whether racing or leisure. We also hope to explore other ways of communicating (such as WhatsApp) and using our contacts with our MP, the Council and other clubs to lobby for dedicated local cycling facilities and to input to the Government's review of cycling safety.

Finally, we've run a club survey to ask members what the club should start, stop and continue doing.



The Barry Hyde Circuit of the Edge



WEDNESDAY CLUB RUN

We've held a Wednesday club run continuously throughout 2017. Early in the year, in a daring break with tradition, the group made a unilateral declaration to discontinue the ride's policy of mainly flat rides in a westerly direction. This radical challenge to the status quo has taken the group as far afield as the north, the south and the east and, do you know, all riders have returned from their adventures to tell the tale.

Rides are from 45 to 70 miles and generally between 10am and 4pm, although a tailwind and efficient café logistics can mean that participants have often been home and dry by 3pm, enjoying a well-earned cup of tea, and occasionally a chocolate digestive if they've worked particularly hard. 2017 stats reveal a hard core of six or so, a minimum turnout of three and a world record of 10. Ride leader Dave Hal would love you to join them. He may even take you out west one day.



Wednesday regular Andy B

SUMMER FASTER CHAINGANG

The start of the Club 10s in early April heralded the move of the faster training ride from Wednesday nights to Thursday evenings, and encouraged its riders to reveal a little too much exposed skin than was right for that time of year. The transition from 'winter plodder' to 'Thursday night fodder' had begun.

Introducing thru-and-off riding from the very start meant we saw speeds of 30 mph or more down Pexhill, which was only to be topped on the A50 where 36 mph could be achieved if the wind was from behind. 25 mph was the average over the 30-mile route, showing that these rides were a great way to get race fit, or to get dropped.



WINTER FASTER CHAINGANG

After a shaky start with a low turn-out, the Wednesday night winter chain gangs are now in full flow with anything between 5 and 15 riders likely to tip out. The Byley circuit has become the standard route and is a safer alternative to the A50, providing you've managed to update your mental pothole map. If nothing else, the potholes act as a form of braille helping you to pinpoint your exact location on the route. The climb up Artists Lane to the Wizzard is always challenged and after a regroup at the top, a final burn up into Prestbury helps to empty the legs for another week. Average speed: 22 mph to the bottom of Artists Lane, 20 mph overall.



BEN RATHBONE

Ben Rathbone passed away in July, aged 35, after joining the Wheelers in April 2016. In his time with the club, Ben established himself as our leading long distance time trial specialist. His very first race was the National 24-Hour Championships in July 2016 (most riders would tackle a few shorter races before tackling the toughest race on the calendar!) and he finished in the top 30 with a distance of 398 miles. He followed this up with two 12-hour time trials (with a best distance of 236 miles) and two 100-mile time trials (with a best time of four hours and 56 minutes).

Ben also rode several 25 and 50-mile time trials, but was always keen to try new challenges and finished his 2016 season by entering the National Hill Climb Championships. This was held on the notoriously steep Bank Road in Matlock, with an average gradient of 10% and a maximum of 20%, which favours the smaller, lighter rider rather than someone with the power and stamina to ride for 24 hours. However, Ben made short work of the climb, completing it in 3 minutes and 27 seconds.

Following Ben's death, the club was privileged to be asked by his family if members could ride in front of the hearse and nearly 30 members answered the call, then lining up as a guard of honour on the church path and again in the graveyard.

On 22 October we ran a series of three rides in Ben's memory, raising £750 for mental health charity Mind. Ben's parents, Roger and Liz, came along to see each ride start. Paul AJ, Nigel B and Brian E completed all three rides, just as Ben would have done.



Ben Rathbone