

Chair Comments

I'm so glad that we can look back on 2022 and say that it has been business as usual for us all, in cycling terms at least! All the events we have become famous for have returned in 2022, in addition to the socially distanced events we managed to keep going in 2021.

To that end we have run another full hill climbing and TT season, a 25 TT, the return of the Parkinson Road Race and an early version of the annual Supacross event. To keep this momentum going in 2023 we are always in need of additional help, so please consider stepping up to help in any way you can, you rarely need any special skills and it's a great way to meet new people and further integrate yourself into the club.

Of course, it's not all about racing, the strength of the club is the social aspect of cycling and it's pleasing to see this also now recovering from difficult times, with a number of regular rides each week on various days, distances and terrain. If you haven't returned to these rides yet or are still to try one since recently joining, then check out the club calendar or keep your eye on the club's Facebook page for a ride which suits your needs.

Finally, the Committee and I are keen to continue to develop the club in the future, some of which will be covered in the AGM on 1st Nov so please come along and participate.

The club belongs to us all, so it would be great to see and hear from as many of you as possible at this slightly earlier AGM.

Thank you all for your continued contributions, see you out on the road!

Membership

Current membership is at 273, slightly down on 2021 but still at a very healthy level and making Macclesfield Wheelers one of the largest clubs in the region. Membership makeup is 63 female and 210 male including 13 life members.

For various reasons there are always members who no longer wish to renew their membership and with no lost members in 2021 due to membership being free there were 59 non-renewals in 2022. However, 42 new members in 2022 has kept overall membership at a similar level.

One plea/gentle reminder: unless you are a new member who has joined from 1st October onwards subscriptions are due on 1st January and a prompt renewal is appreciated.

Our Rides

2022 has seen a strong and steady offering of rides, with many options now available to all levels of rider within the club, also attracting new riders to the club.

Rides are available every Saturday and Sunday, as well as both social and training rides Tuesdays and Thursdays through the year, plus extra summer evening training rides. Throw in the Hill Climbs and Club 10s and there's almost too much to choose from!

Following the club survey early in the year, a Saturday 10 am ride was re-started, which attracted some riders for a few weeks, but proved too difficult to secure leader availability every week due to club members' other commitments at that time. However, thanks to Fred Wardle, a Saturday 1pm option has been running every fortnight since early summer, which has proved very popular, including the traditional club social post ride drinks. This ride alternates every fortnight with the 10am Saturday Social, providing an inclusive social ride every Saturday.

On Sundays, the Easy Ride grows from strength to strength, with Katherine and John Jackson providing a very popular ride from Wilmslow or Macclesfield, with some summer specials heading to locations such as Chester and Tittesworth. Katherine has also started up an easy Thursday daytime ride through the summer and weather permitting, which has had a good following.

Alison has continued to lead the Tuesday JAR and occasional pop-up Thursday JAR rides, with some great routes, often up in the hills. The flatter faster option on a Thursday being Fred's 6.30 training ride, which continues to attract participants new and old.

For the speedier members, the faster evening training ride took part through the summer, replaced by the winter Sunday morning training ride.

All in all, the club provides a wide range of rides, varying in distance and speed. These are all led by volunteer club members, who give up their time for the enjoyment of others. The club is extremely grateful to them, and to anyone who is considering stepping up to fill any gap that may exist in this provision.



Sportives and Audaxes

A number of club members compete in Audaxes and Sportives through the year. Many enter these on their own or in groups of 2 or 3. However, a key event for the club is the Wild Wales Annual ride.

Starting in Bala this ride tests the legs and lungs of even the hardest rider. This year the club won the Harold Kewish trophy (after a gap of too many years) for having the most finishers on the long route. We had 26 members sign on with almost all completing the full 86 miles and roughly 10,000' of climbing. Three riders made the decision at the lunchtime control to opt for the shorter version, still a tough ride in itself.

The highlights include the Trawsfynydd Mountain Road and although it was hard getting up, the road past the Cregennen Lakes, followed by the final climb up the infamous Bwlch y Groes beat it. About a mile and a half, no false flats, just relentless steep getting steeper, not one to skip up after 75 miles and 8000' of climbing already and no shame on anyone who couldn't quite manage to keep the cranks turning over.

The celebrations continued onto the night with the trophy and appropriate refreshment. Are you entering next year??



The local Venetian Nights Audax attracted a good turnout, this is a 200km ride starting and ending from Siddington Crossroads, when it's that close how can you not enter?

Club rides are also featuring in the long-distance stakes, the ever popular Three Loops (100 km, 100 mile, 200km) was well supported and ridden in great weather this year.

There is the Richard Elliot trophy for the furthest distances ridden in Audaxes and Sportives in 2022, watch the media channels to submit and ensure your events are counted for the awards night in January!

Community involvement

At the 2021 AGM it was agreed that we would support Just Drop-In charity in Macclesfield for our fund-raising efforts this year.

The Bikeathon organised by Just Drop-In and our member, Darren Allgood, has been a fixture in our club calendar now for a few years. 2022 was no exception and this year more than 230 Wheelers and other cyclists raised £5000 for the centre.

An amazing effort and let's see if we can top this in 2023!



Our General Secretary also put Just Drop-In at the centre of his charity efforts in cycling from Lands' End to John O'Groats. This is something of a test piece for the average club cyclist and 1000 miles over 14 days is, it can be confirmed, hard work. However, the sum of £2,400 was raised to support the charity. Many thanks go to everyone in the club who supported this effort, but this won't be happening again in 2023...



Cycle Racing

The Wheelers partake in a range of racing disciplines, with particular events attracting a strong contingent from the team in orange. One of the earliest events of the year was the Eddie Soens Memorial circuit race, held in March near the Aintree racecourse, which would see Monica Greenwood take the win in what would be one of her last races (for now) in club colours. We wish Monica the very best in her next chapter, racing for Team BoomPods.

As always, the club fielded a strong turnout in the Buxton Mountain Time Trial, which was held on Good Friday and featured the seemingly endless climb up to Flash Bar Stores from Longnor. In July, a similar team turned out for the Manchester Hilly Time Trial on the Morridge course, which started just down the road in Warslow. The hilly TT team were delighted to welcome Alison Dockney; taking 2nd female in the road bike category in the spring event and outright win on the Morridge circuit.

We have a small but strong field of circuit racers who this year were joined by new junior member Joe Tate. Thijs, Shaun and Greg, to name a few, regularly made the journey over to Darley Moor to take their chances against the bunch and the crosswinds that seem to be a permanent feature of this course.

Off the road, in April Matt Lawton took the Expert win in Round 1 of the National Mountain Bike Cross Country Series and opted for the Vet 40 class in the National Championships, where he took second place on the podium in the forests of Galloway.

The cyclocross season is now well underway and it kicked off with the return of the Three Peaks Challenge, which takes in the summits of Ingleborough, Wharfedale and Pen-Y-Ghent. The course is punishing and riders are at the mercy of the weather; so much so that it is mandatory for them to carry a whistle and foil bag. Faithful as ever to the event, Brian Renshaw and Ruth Gamwell attempted to make it their 21st and 22nd completions respectively, but it was not to be for the Peaks legend that is Renshaw who this time was thwarted by crank issues as opposed to cramp. Newcomers Paul Cockshott, Matt Yardley and Tom Bowers got to experience this iconic event, whilst old hats Mark Messenger and Matt Lawton added another completion to their names.

Hannah Williams, in just her second year of racing, turned her hand to MTB cross country in 2022 and chalked up a mix of podium positions in the Sport and Open categories, plus an excellent 7th in the National Mountain Bike Marathon at Kielder Forest.

Parkinson Road Race

After a break for a few years Chris Quin organised the club open road race on 18th September. This is a major undertaking and saw almost 80 riders compete in 3 races on the day. The race was successful, and we received, as a club, positive feedback, however, it was slightly marred by injuries to three riders on the day. Our organisational team led by Chris coped with this admirably and allowed the race to be completed. We hope to run this flagship event again in 2023 however, we will look to spread the organisational load more widely in order that we can run these events in safe manner.

25TT

The 25TT was run on 9th April this year, with a new face at the helm, Mark Dixon, our Treasurer. Three days before the event he was wishing he was elsewhere when United Utilities closed Seven Sisters Road necessitating a last-minute change of course. However, the dramas continued on the morning of the event with a temporary works in place on the back up J4/8 course. These issues were navigated, and a great event was run for our entrants. Sincere thanks to all who turned out to marshal and assist on the day.

SupaCross returned (twice) for 2022!

All good things come to those who wait and this was most certainly the case with the SupaCross which ran both in January and October this year. A firm favourite of the North West Cyclocross Association calendar, the SupaCross has attracted some big names from the world of cycling across the years: Ian Field (a 5-time British cyclocross champion), Roger Hammond (a former pro and current member of Ineos Grenadier's management staff) and Nick Craig (an ever present force in the world of cyclocross), to name just a few. Having been part of the cyclocross calendar for almost 40 years, the SupaCross was sadly not held in the 2020/21 season due to the Coronavirus pandemic; we were therefore delighted to bring everybody back to our traditional South Park venue for 2021/22 season. A number of factors, not all under our control, made the running in October for the 22/23 season event a necessity, however the weather and daylight hours made it a really successful event. It may well stay in this slot for 2023!



Annual Report 2022

The January event saw excellent performances from Ruth Gamwell and Matt Lawton coming in 15th and 11th respectively in their classes in what was a deteriorating course in South Park. The images don't really convey how tough it was in January.

The images below show the much improved conditions that the competitors found in October with less mud and the course holding up well. Ruth and her team were rewarded with a strong field competing and special mention to Matt Lawton for taking the crown in the V40 class. Top effort Matt!



This event is very important to the club and could not happen without the large group of volunteers led by Ruth Gamwell to make it a success. Thank you to everyone who helped at both events!

These flagship competition events really serve to keep our club in the forefront of local and regional cycle competition, its important to us as a premier club in the region and going forward we hope that members will get involved as competitors and marshals.

Club 10TTs

A successful series of club 10s again this year run in conjunction with the Westmead88 club with a total between us of 17 races. Unfortunately, our last race had to be cancelled because of road works on the course but MWCC 10s attracted 139 riders over the season. A little down on last year but this reflects a downturn in participation generally. It is anticipated that we will continue to run a joint series with Westmead88 next season along the same lines. It is particularly pleasing to see new riders to the discipline appearing strongly in the prizes at the end of the season. It goes to show you don't need lots of fancy and expensive equipment to do well!

In conjunction with Congleton CC we also revived the Karl Austin trophy - our inter club time trial competition. Although the events were well attended (being open to all riders on the night with only our respective club members times counting towards the trophy result) they were not well supported by MWCC riders and marshals and we will have to decide if the competition is viable in the future. Dust down those TT bikes in 2023 and show Congleton what we are made of!

Cont'd

Annual Report 2022

Looking to next year, we are hoping to try at least one different type of event in the club races to encourage participation – one possible idea is a season opener mixed 2up road bike TT. Watch this space!

A number of riders took part in the Manchester & District TT Cheshire series this year. Congratulations to Pete Jackson who placed a 11th overall, the best Wheeler and as a club we placed 4th overall in the men's competition. Louis Thomas-Messenger went from strength to strength in the time trials, achieving a PB for the 10 mile discipline in a time of 21:50 and taking second overall in the Frodsham Wheelers Open 10 in a time of 22:03.

Hillclimbs

Our Hillclimb series goes from strength to strength with participation increasing each year. Over 16 weeks of competition we had 604 entries in total. There were slightly less different competitors than last year, but many people returning for multiple events. Cat & Fiddle remains a highlight for many, bringing 61 entries alongside 3 National champions and other big names. That's why we do it twice!

The use of previous PBs from Strava was a new feature for 2022. It enabled some form of seeding on the hills to ensure an event spread of competitors. Also, for the data geeks enabled riders to see year on year improvements. A popular innovation all round.



2022 also saw a brand-new hill added to the mix to keep everyone on their toes. Barlow Hill, coming out of Wincle, was a difficult one to pace and almost nobody felt like they got it right. Thanks to the help of member Graham Wood, the local community there were informed and there were no issues with some of the narrow lanes involved.

We have two competitions; one for our members and another for guest riders. The club hillclimb champions are Bhima Bowden, Alison Dockney and Tom Gamwell (U18). The guest champions are Ashley Wilcox (Congleton CC), Faye Sharpley (Holmes Chapel Velo) and Jacob Bradbury (Manchester Wheelers) (U18).

Although the U18 jerseys have not been made yet, the other 4 champions above have already been seen racing in our championship stripes during the traditional hillclimb season.

Annual Report 2022

At the time of writing, we are 7 days out from the National Championships, being held on the Old Shoe hillclimb course in Wales. We have 8 Macclesfield Wheelers racing:- Alison Dockney, Benjamin Brown, Bhima Bowden, Christian Atkinson, Hannah Williams, Thijs Geurts, Thomas Turton and Yasmine Cooper.

This level of participation in the event is unprecedented. Some of the names involved have only started taking hillclimbs seriously this year and are already keen to get stuck into the big races. This trend is continuing and more of us are learning to enjoy the epic hills on our doorstep. For 2023, we will see even more of us in the more traditional hillclimb season around this time of year.

Also new for 2022 is the Hillclimb Academy. Racing this year has generated more discussion than ever about how to be in the best shape. A new ride has been created for this purpose where the aim is to, slowly but surely (and measurably), nudge fitness up every week so that we can have more of the team consistently in the top 10s next year. Check out our social media if you want to be involved.

Finally, the Saturday before Christmas will see us run the gravel hillclimb. Known as the "off-road hillclimb" in previous years, this was traditionally at a secret location, revealed on the day and could be very challenging.

Last year we experimented with a more beginner-friendly gravel climb in the forest and announced it in advance as a less serious and fun event, free of charge. It went well and got a lot of interest after the event from others who couldn't make it.

We hope to see you there!

The Final Word from our President

Well, we have certainly exceeded our expectations for 2022 by running our full programme of events and re-establishing the Saturday club run along with the social side of the club looking very healthy. We are back on track with face-to-face socialising and I'm looking forward to plans being discussed amongst members for 2023.

To celebrate a successful year, I hope you will join us on Saturday 21st January 2023 for our annual dinner and party at the Pack Horse Bowling Club. As you all enjoyed last year so much, we are doing the same format for you again. Save the date in your diary and look out for tickets sales which Louis will launch on our media channels when available, it's going to be popular so don't miss out.

Hope to see you soon on one of the many club rides we offer!

Macclesfield Wheelers Committee