

## WELLS U3A CYCLE GROUP PROGRAMME 2020

Reports and some photos from the Wells U3A Cycle Group rides in 2020 are presented here in date order. Rides were originally scheduled for the 2nd and 4th Thursdays of each month, but could have been moved because of, for example, bad weather. The details of the ride were circulated by email around a week beforehand. In normal circumstances all active group members would be asked to organise at least one ride during the year.

However Covid-19 appeared and all rides after 12th March were cancelled because of the lockdown rules. Four months later, being one of the U3A groups that meet in the open air, the group could cautiously start running rides again with strict guidelines on social distancing and group numbers. The first ride was on 30th July, followed initially by just one a month, organized by a volunteer. Groups on the road were restricted to a maximum of six cyclists with no "intermingling". There were usually two groups on each ride and therefore there were occasionally two reports!

In the following reports, the leader of each ride is given after the date. As this is a public document, members are referred to by their first names only (with the first few letters of their surnames to avoid ambiguity.)

🚲 10TH JANUARY 2020, GRAHAM

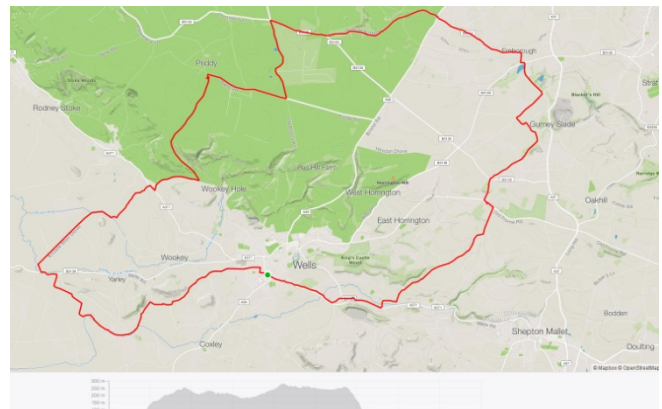
### ***A Lumpy Ride to Priddy and Back***

This ride was postponed from Thursday 9th because of the forecasted wind and rain, but despite the change of date, 8 of us assembled in the intermittent sunshine and cold breeze at Wells Lidl's. We set off along the cycle path to Dulcote and then on to Dinder in order to tackle the hill up Sleight Lane, Crapnell Lane and Thrupe Lane to Maesbury. This is a climb of 605 ft in 2.4 miles with steep sections requiring the occasional use of a "2 foot" gear.

One more joined us at Rocky Mountain café, and suitably re-energized we made our way generally downhill to Binegar and Emborough. We continued downhill to cross the A39 above Chewton Mendip. The steady climb up Torhole Bottom brought us to the busy B3135 "Mendip motorway" where we turned right. All 9 survived the traffic to turn left past Stockhill and Priddy pools and then right at the Hunter's Lodge. While one headed for home, the rest called in at the Queen Vic in Priddy for a well-appreciated lunch.

After lunch, two took an alternative route to return home via Stancombe Lane to Westbury. The remainder set off to Deer Leap and cautiously descended the road past Ebbor Gorge. The panoramic view across the levels was splendid as ever in the low winter sun. We all agreed to do the proposed extra loop, and so we carried on down to Easton (where one more left the group for home) and then rode across the levels to Bleadney, and back to Wells via Fenny Castle and Burcott, while navigating around puddles, mud, and the increasing number of potholes along these lanes.

*Graham*



10/01/20 - DISTANCE 45.4 KM, 28.2 MILES; ELEVATION 502 M, 1647 FT

🚲 23RD JANUARY 2020, PETE W.

Twelve riders met at the start at the Shute Shelf picnic area in good time, on sadly a rather dull day. We set off to follow the Strawberry Line past Winscombe, where we stopped briefly to wave off Roger who unfortunately had taken a tumble on the way to the start. The rest of us ploughed on (literally) as the track was more like the Glastonbury Festival site especially where we exited at the Thatchers site. Leaving the mud behind we made for Puxton and our coffee stop at Hewish at Carriages café which was well liked.

A short sprint down the A370 took us to Wick St Lawrence but our attempt to get to Sand Bay was thwarted by tree felling and so we joined a traffic queue through the narrow roads of Kewstoke and on to our lunch in Weston super Mare.



**23/01/20 - DISTANCE 44.7 KM, 27.8 MILES; ELEVATION 299 M, 981 FT**

Our ride then continued along the prom to Uphill and following the cycle route to Bleadon, Loxton, Barton where we decided to come back by road direct to Axbridge rather than back via the cycle track and its mud. This and the Sand Bay diversion shortened our route slightly to about 27 miles.

My apologies for the state of everyone's bike and trust that Roger is now recovered.

*Pete W.*

## 🚲 27TH FEBRUARY 2020, PHIL

Phil came up with this local ride but unfortunately was unable to lead it due to an ongoing knee problem so I took on the responsibility. The forecast for that day earlier in the week looked decidedly dodgy, but as it got nearer the date things looked mildly improved. In fact it rained overnight enough to make the lanes extremely mucky, but by the time we left Wells there were actually blue patches which stayed with us all day with warm winter sun at times.

Eleven hardy souls gathered at Lidl's and set off eastwards via the old railway track to Launcherly attempting to avoid the numerous potholes in the back lanes. The two and a half miles of Long Drove against the North-Westerlies proved a struggle for some (unless one had an ebike!) and on to Glastonbury Rural Life Museum for tea/coffee. We split to ease the potential wait, with five riding on to Heaphies in the town centre, where two of us were told in no uncertain terms that locking our bikes to a sacred memorial tree was not the done thing!!

We rejoined forces where one of our group headed back home but was replaced by another who cycled over to join us; so numbers remained the same. Lunch was the next objective at Sweets Emporium about twelve miles away, so the first part of the Glastonbury to Highbridge old railway trackbed was used, but at Ashcott Corner at the old level crossing the lanes to Shapwick were taken, past the still operating peat works - very mucky. We then rode back towards Westhay and Sweets where our group met up with three more of the Cycle Group who were just in the process of leaving.

Lunch was in their new spacious room, warm and cosy, where we were able to stoke up for the seven miles ride back to Wells with the wind behind us, such bliss, so a fair pace was the order of the day with folk peeling off in all directions heading for home. I clocked up almost 30 miles, so a good ride in generally great weather, enough to fight off the winter blues.

*Arthur*



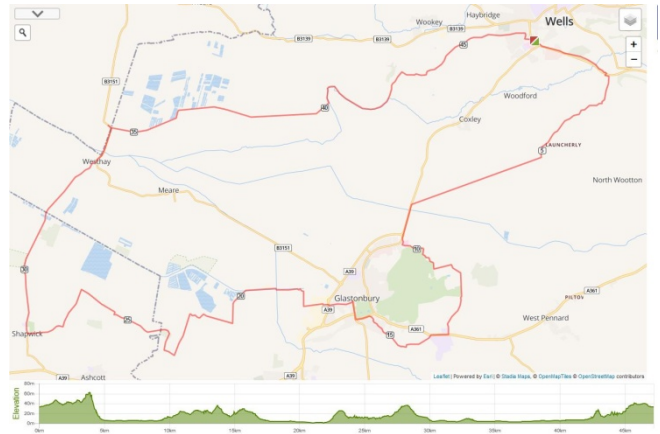
**27/02/20 – LE PELOTON**



**27/02/20 – LA LANTERNE ROUGE**



27/02/20 – LUNCH



27/02/20 - DISTANCE 47.2 KM, 29.3 MILES; ELEVATION 298 M, 978 FT

🚴 12TH MARCH 2020, STEVE

### ***Run from Burrow Mump***

We (7) started off in sunshine from Burrow Mump at 10.30 prompt, arriving at North Curry cafe 5 miles later, after admiring the very full elevated river running by the road, and the copious potholes. A while later we went out into the just-started rain and wind to Hatch Beauchamp, by which time it was back to sunshine, and on through Curry Mallet for a good lunch at The Crown at Fivehead. The sun was coming out again when we left for the return through quiet roads to Hambridge and Curry Rivel, then down the very steep hill onto the moor and back to the cars.

Total miles were 26, fairly mud free, for once.

Steve



12/03/20 – ST ANDREW'S CHURCH, CURRY RIVEL



12/03/20 - DISTANCE 42.9 KM, 26.7 MILES; ELEVATION 312 M, 1024 FT

🚴 30TH JULY 2020, ARTHUR

Our first run since March was a good day out in ideal dry and sunny weather. We were split into two teams of no more than 6 to comply with social distancing rules, and, as planned, five in Team 1 set off from Lidl's Wells by 10 am before any of Team 2 had arrived. Later, Team 1 also employed other tactics to avoid mixing with Team 2 ....

Four of us in Team 2 set off via Wookey Hole to Easton where our fifth member joined us. We then cycled to Cheddar bypassing the main road where possible by using the (more hilly) back lanes through Westbury, Rodney Stoke, Draycott and Bradley Cross. In Cheddar we picked up the Strawberry Way path, continued through Axbridge and along the popular shared path through the tunnel to Winscombe. We stopped for a break in the shade at the station picnic area, surprised not to see Team 1 already there. 10 minutes later Team 1 rolled past on the track. They had experimented with a different route through Cheddar and had stopped at The Pantry in Winscombe for their coffee break.



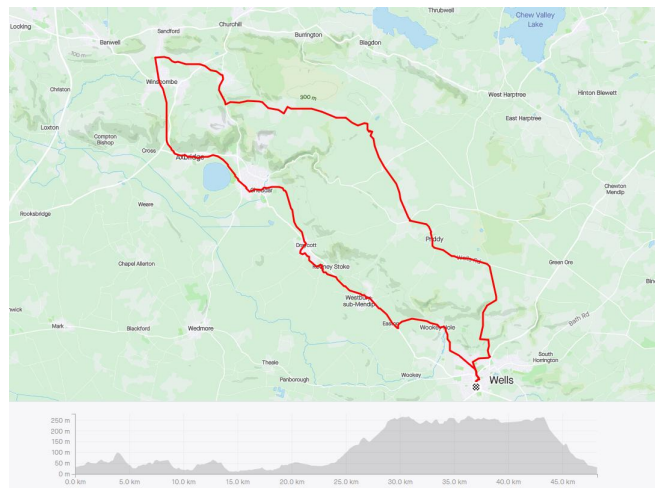
A good time after Team 1 had disappeared up the track, we set off again, turning off to start the steady climb up to Shipham. We turned right towards Cheddar then left up Long Bottom towards Charterhouse, several sensibly opting to walk the steep section at the top of the climb. Taking a rest to admire the view, we watched as Team 1 appeared, coming up the hill behind us! They had enjoyed an extended ride along the Strawberry Way having missed the turning off.

Again we set off at a fair distance behind Team 1 to meet up again at Velvet Bottom for lunch, sitting in the warm sunshine on a grassy bank in our distinct groups (see photo). After lunch the two teams headed off separately along the undulating route to Priddy and back to Wells down the teeth-rattling Old Bristol Road.

*Graham*



**30/07/20 – SOCIALLY DISTANCED LUNCH AT VELVET BOTTOM**



**30/07/20 - DISTANCE 48.2 KM, 30.0 MILES; ELEVATION 693 M, 2274 FT**

#### 🚲 26TH AUGUST 2020, GRAHAM

This ride was brought forward at short notice to the only day in the week forecasted to be dry. Unfortunately, only six could make the change so we combined into a single team. Four of us set off from Glastonbury under a threat of showers and against a strong westerly wind along the old railway track to Ashcott Corner and on to Shapwick Road, dodging a couple of trees brought down in the overnight gales. Two more joined us at the coffee stop at the Marshes Hub.

Setting off again we climbed up through Shapwick to the A39 and down Pedwell Hill. We turned off the A361 in Greinton, climbed through the village of Moorlinch and dropped down towards Sutton Mallet and the levels.

The original plan was to take the cycle track to Bawdrip alongside the river but this was closed for resurfacing. So we looped back through Stawell and the Tower Road climb up to the A39. All appeared unscathed from the 20 yards along the very busy and narrow main road to descend to Chilton Polden then down through Catcott and across the levels to Burtle. At last with the wind behind us and the sun shining we sailed back to Westhay and on to Sweets for lunch where we met Arthur (suitably socially distanced) and could take advantage of the 50% "Eat Out" reduction (it being Wednesday).

We then split, some taking the planned route back to Glastonbury via Meare and Ashcott Corner for a total of 32 miles, while others headed home to Wells or Easton.

*Graham*

#### 🚲 24TH SEPTEMBER 2020, JOHN SEA.

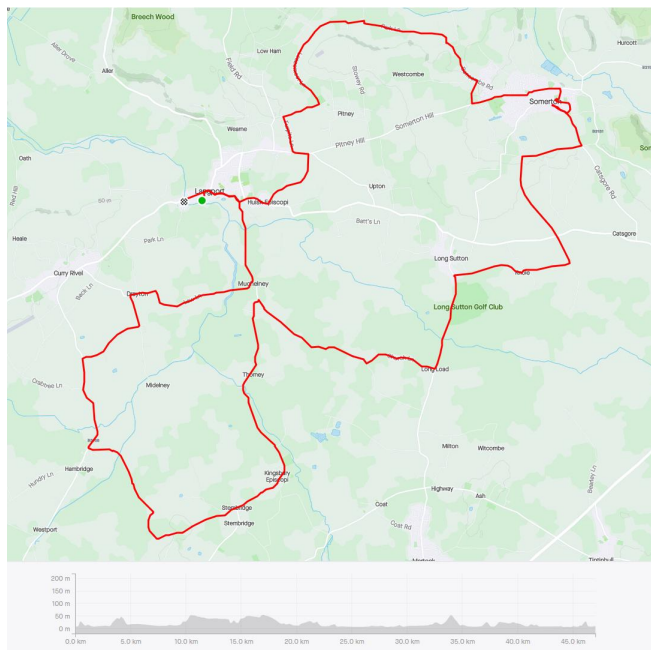
The weather gods disagreed with the forecasts a few days earlier of showers, and gave us a dry morning for our ride, with a breeze. So eight riders set off under blue skies from Langport. Due to Covid restrictions we rode in 2 groups of four, one group leaving just before 10am and the other a quarter of an hour later.

For the first group the ride to Somerton was uneventful and very pleasant through the quiet lanes north of the Langport-Somerton road. Somerton however had 2 road closures on our route. The second was known by the group

due to prior checking on the Council website (thanks Graham) but the first wasn't notified. Happily, slight diversions were all that was required to reach the coffee stop at the Buttercross. We enjoyed refreshments sitting outside, though watched the sky cloud over. But still no rain fell.

Leaving Somerton the leader got confused and we had an extra half mile tour of the town 'til he sorted things out. After that we had a good ride south along the Somerset lanes via Long Sutton and Muchelney, turning northward again through Stembridge, Hambridge and Drayton. So we returned after about 29 miles to Langport for lunch at the Bakery at the Bridge. As we sat outside enjoying a second cup of coffee, the sun came out again. Thank you weather gods.

*John Sea.*



Team 2 followed the same route as Team 1 and to my knowledge (I was with Team 2) we followed it to the letter although we also had John Wh. and his trusty handlebar map with us to keep us on the straight and narrow. En route we passed through some lovely villages, one in particular caught my eye, there in the front garden of this thatched cottage was a beautiful piece of topiary shaped like a corkscrew, I had a camera but failed to stop and capture it much to my regret. The final part of the route we followed the river Parrett in the park at Langport for a short way to the cafe to join Team 1 in the garden, socially distanced of course.

*Arthur*

**24/09/20 - DISTANCE 47.0 KM, 29.2 MILES; ELEVATION 344 M, 1129 FT**

## 22<sup>ND</sup> OCTOBER 2020, RON

The ride started at Lidl in Wells, with two groups of 4 people. Team 1 consisted of John Wh., Roger D., John Seb., and myself as team leader. Team 2 consisted of John Win., Pete M.(new member), Arthur, and Steve as team leader. We had staggered start times to ensure we kept within the government guidelines of having no more than 6 people in a group. Team 1 started at 10.00 am with Team 2 at 10.15 am.

From Wells we took the back roads to the Leisure Centre to pick up the pathway following the old Strawberry Line route into Haybridge, then onto Wookey and Fenny Castle. It was then a familiar ride across Westhay Moor Drove to Westhay and on to a coffee stop at the Avalon Marches Café. As we were about to leave Denise turned up to join our Team 1. She had an earlier appointment so could not get to Lidl for our intended team start time.

It was then on to Burtle, River Bridge and then a gradual climb up to Westham, Heath House and Sand before dropping down the B3151 to Sweets for a lunch break. Our return to Wells was to retrace our route across Westhay Moor Drove until the junction with Godney Drove, then south to Upper Godney, Polsham and back to Fenny Castle. It was then a more direct route through Burcott where Roger and Denise peeled off to return home to Westbury with the rest of us continuing into Wells. In total I clocked 31 miles, mainly flat with no Covid issues or mechanical failures.

*Ron*

Team 2 followed a similar route to Team 1 and arrived at the Avalon centre about 15 to 20 mins after the first team, we had our usual fill of coffee and cake because it looked so tempting then left about 15 mins after team 1 to keep the gap between the two teams. About five miles further on Arthur realised he had left his rucksack at the Centre so Pete found their telephone number and kindly asked them to rescue it and that it would be collected later.

We continued on to the lunch stop at Sweets emporium and found the others half way through their lunch. After lunch it was decided to vary the route back by following the old rail track back to Glastonbury after retrieving the rucksack

which made a pleasant diversion, John Wi. having previously peeled off at Westhay. In the end it was Arthur and Steve who rode back to Wells with a reading of 37 and 42 miles covered respectively.

*Steve*

## 🚲 10TH DECEMBER 2020, JOHN WI.

### Team 1

Problems were encountered by me within the first five minutes of leaving home. On turning in to the Ashcott road it was evident it was being closed for road works. My immediate thought was "how are the guys going to get to the car park?" I managed to get through on my bike and arrived there approx 9.20. Graham and Pete from Glastonbury turned up shortly after on their bikes as did Denise and Roger who mistakenly went to the opposite car park. A quick phone call sorted this out. We were now five. Arthur and Linda were deemed not to be coming. This left two teams of 4. Team one lead by myself was due to meet Steve and Ron on the Shapwick Road, but still no sign of John Wh. Graham and I left Team 2 waiting for John in the car park in order to meet up with Steve and Ron. Halfway along the river path we met up with John who had parked in the Wetlands car park on the Shapwick Road. In his haste to get to the RSPB car park he had forgotten his helmet. I made a quick call to Denise to unite them and continued to the Shapwick road where we met up with Steve and Ron and started the ride.

It was a pleasant day with some sun and it wasn't long before Team 1 were sipping coffee and cake at Rich's Cider Farm who were very obliging. Team 2 turned up as we were about to leave!! We continued on via Brent Knoll, successfully negotiating the road works at Station Road, arriving at the lunch stop (Bay View cafe in Burnham) some 8 miles later. We commandeered several benches to eat our lunches which, with exception of John Wh. we had all brought with us. John had no trouble getting food in the cafe even though the menu was somewhat restricted.

The return journey was uneventful and we did have the luxury of the tide being in! As we crossed the levels we all peeled off towards our home destinations in Team 1 and I am assuming Team 2 did likewise. So after a bad start we had a good ride with good weather for the time of year. I was back home just after 14.00hrs after clocking up 33 miles so there was no worry about it getting dark before completion.

One thing that stands out for me with this ride is the need for mobile phones to contact one another should there be any problems. Looking forward to meeting up again in the new year. Merry Christmas to all.

*John Wi.*

### Team 2

I was rather taken aback after driving to Meare and turning into Ashcott Road only to be confronted with a barrier right across the road with the information that the road was closed! So there was no easy way to get to the starting point at Ashcott Corner and it occurred to me that my team might have gone to the Avalon Marshes car park instead, particularly as this was on the route.

There was no sign of Teams 1 or 2 and foolishly I didn't have John's mobile number - all I had was the emergency numbers for my team. So I decided to cycle along the cycle track towards Ashcott corner in the hope of meeting Team 1, which I did eventually, and John was able to make telephone contact with Team 2 and tell them to meet me on the cycle track.

Then it was a pleasant ride via Burtle and East Huntspill to Watchfield for a coffee stop at Rich's and to meet the first group (at a social distance of course). From there we headed north along a charming and twisty little lane called Dutch Road. Along the way was Dutch Court Farm and at least one other property featuring the name 'Dutch'. It would be interesting to know if that had any historic connection with past Dutch expertise in draining the levels? Certainly today's ride was level - John said there were no hills but I have to point out that there were two up-and-overs across the motorway and another two over the railway line!

We passed through Brent Knoll to arrive by the seaside and our lunch stop at the 'Sea View Café, Burnham on Sea (again meeting the other group at a distance).

Once recharged we set off along the deserted esplanade and onto the attractive coastal cycle track which soon turned inland alongside the pretty little estuary of the River Brue. We then passed through Watchfield, Mark and Tadham Moor without much delay in view of the short daylight hours But we needn't have worried because it was still only 2.30 when we parted company at Westhay.

It was a good 30 mile ride and the weather was kind to us - much milder than the previous day's frosty conditions.

*John Wh.*