

Ickniel Road Club

Stevenage Start of Summer Special 115KM Audax
Ride



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On Sunday 26 March the first day of British Summer Time, five Ickniel Riders (Matt Price, Peter Macintyre, Matt Prince, Su-Anne Bullock and Tracey Williams) gathered at Fairlands Valley Park in Stevenage to partake in the Stevenage Start of Summertime Specials 115km Audax.

The route took us east from Stevenage, through many picturesque towns and villages, with three 'check points' to be navigated to in order for each rider's 'brevet' to be stamped (similar to orienteering), before returning to Stevenage.

The rough plan agreed before setting out was to aim to average 16mph, stop only as long as necessary at the first 2 check points then take a more leisurely stop at checkpoint 3 (where there was some fantastic food), and aim to complete the ride in around 4 1/2 hours.

All was going well through to the first stop at around 24 miles - AvSp 15.5mph (into a fairly stiff headwind) - quick photo, back on the bikes and away we went.

After around 2hrs cycling, in the village of Clavering, Su-Anne developed a puncture in her apparently un-punctureable tubeless front tyre. This resulted in much head scratching amongst the group, as none of us had ever tried fixing a puncture in a tubeless tyre... Thankfully, we had some mobile connectivity, so Google came to the rescue suggesting that you could just insert a regular inner tube. Happy days thought all! So, a tube was produced, but the valve stem wasn't long enough for Su-Anne's deep section wheels! After MUCH head scratching and 'gentle' persuasion, managed to get enough valve stem through the fairing to hopefully attach a

pump... But no pumps within the group would connect and allow the tyre to be pumped up!



At around this time, a kindly gentleman arrived at the house we had been working outside, and offered us the use of a pump which had quite possibly last been used to inflate the tyres on a penny farthing (assuming of course that a penny farthing has pneumatic tyres...) But I digress from the story... the

pump still wouldn't inflate the tyre. Kindly gentleman to the rescue - he offered Su-Anne and bike a lift to the second Check Point in the Village of Thaxted (about 15mins drive away) on the strict proviso that he was back in time for his lunch at 1300. Si-Anne was later collected by her own personal Broom Wagon (husband) and no doubt will be chomping at the bit to make up for the shortened ride as a soon as possible!

So, Team IRC were down to 4 riders, and hoping to make up some of the hour or so that had been lost working out the tyre issues... Back on the bikes, we set off slightly downhearted at having lost a rider, but determined to enjoy the remainder of the ride.

No more than 2miles down the road Matt Prince heard a strange sound coming from his back wheel - a spoke had snapped! Clearly, this was to be a very eventful ride... following an inspection it was clear that Matt had stopped in time to avoid any further damage, so the offending spoke was 'removed', a quick test ride carried out and with no ill effects reported, we were on our way again.

Some 9miles or so later, we arrived in Thaxted, made sure Su-Anne had arrived safely (she had), and following the requisite card stamping, we headed off to the 3rd stop.

At the third stop, there was a fine selection of sandwiches, a vegetarian Chilli-Non-Carne, and a chicken curry, along with somewhere to sit down and relax for a few moments before making the assault on the final 10miles or so.

At around 99km (62miles), there was a question to answered relating to an environmental station along the route- this was found with relative ease, and then it was full throttle to the end!

As few had left the third stop, we had caught up with another group of cyclists, and they would pass us before we passed them, and they then passed many times over the final stage of the race. Tracey was of the firm opinion that the stronger two riders in the group just couldn't handle being overtaken by ladies!

Finally, at around 1630, we made it back to the finish, received our final stamp, and reflected on a long, eventful, but extremely enjoyable days cycling around the lanes of Hertfordshire and Essex.

