



HHYCC racing report 2008-09

I was hoping to give you a simple statistic, of how many of our members raced at least once during the year.

I produced this figure for 2007 and it was 37 riders out of 64 members, but I used the LondonCycleSport website to trawl through the race results. Unfortunately as the site was down through most of the summer months, it wasn't possible to collect the figures for 2008.

However, I'm pretty sure we beat it – partly because, at the first event we ran last year (We ran 7 events in all – an excellent achievement!) we had 19 riders in just one event, at Round 1 of our Mountain Bike Summer Series. Considering that there was a season full of 19 rounds of the Crystal Palace Criterium League on Tuesday evenings, 16 rounds of the London League, 6 National Trophy Series, 5 Southern XC races, 5 Gorrick MTB races, a Southern MTB Championship, a South Eastern Cyclo-Cross Championship, Inter-Areas, and National MTB and Cross Championships, where our members were very evident – our members will have attended well over 50 events last year, and sometimes 10 or more of them at each event.

I could go on and on with the events that our members won, or were placed at, but this could literally take half an hour. Our riders are at the top level nationally in U14, U12 AND U10 categories, and people are noticing! What is even more than that – the standard of racing has really shot up nationally over the last few years, with significantly more people taking part – and our club has gone with the pace, passed it, and come out on top.

We have 2 riders in particular, Dan Tulett and Freddie Argent, who are both U10, but also outstanding riders in the U12 category. I firmly believe Dan might have won the London CX League U12 series, if he hadn't had to win the U10 category outright before he was able to compete with the U12s. Freddie wasn't far behind at any stage.

Josh Parkin joined us at the start of the Cyclo-Cross season, and certainly didn't disappoint! His battles with Harry Franklin in the U14 category were strong but measured and also very mature. Harry, however, was leading the National Trophy Series with 2 wins, after round 3. This is history for us, to have a rider right at the top of the national rankings!

It was unfortunate that some illness and some mechanicals lost him valuable points later on in the series, but nevertheless these two finished 2nd and 3rd overall at the end of the series, with Elliot and Noah Phillips both featuring strongly in the top 10. We were the only club to have 4 riders in the competition, so to have all of them in the top 10 is truly amazing!

I'd love to mention all our racers by name, but really there are too many of them. Our team is big, and it's strong too. I am truly inspired when I watch these racers. The maturity and determination and sheer unbridled effort they put into their racing often makes me forget their actual age.

When I remember that when the club started up in 2001, it was 2 years before we started to get anyone racing on a regular basis, I am staggered to think that between them, our riders might have done over 500 races last year.

I mustn't forget the parents. The success of our riders could only come about with their parents taking them to events. The effort that some parents put in is quite exceptional as well. The Finch family attended every single London League round last year – the Jay family attended all but one, and so did the Tuletts. Not every parent is able to put in that commitment, and indeed not everyone has a car to take them in. As a club we think it very important to give people opportunities to race – or to go on country rides – if the child is keen to do so. It's more than likely that we could have at least one potential champion who doesn't have the resources to get out there and prove him or herself.

Part of the problem is having lifts to offer, and partly some people who would like help are shy to ask for it. I think it's really important to share resources in this way.



Still with the parents – we were given a fantastic response to calls to help out with various things. I mentioned before that we ran 7 events during the year. At the last of these, our round of the London League – there were no less than 15 parents and other adults from our club helping to run it all. None were shrinking in the background to try and stay in the warm – all really pulled their weight, and others came up saying they felt guilty because they hadn't realised they were needed. With volunteers like this we're set up for a long time to come!

That was the racing report – I've nearly finished!

I firmly want to make the point that our Club isn't all about racing. I'm very well aware that some people have been coming to us for years, but just don't want to race. That's fine. We're a cycling club first and foremost – it's just that racing is something that helps to encourage some members to stay in the club. But if you aren't competitive, we're still really keen to keep up your interest. Once you are competent to ride every hill in the place, we want to be able to take trips out in the country. We did one of these last weekend, and we want to do more. I couldn't make it last weekend, but I hear that there were 21 people including parents out at Bedgebury Forest. More and more, please!

If any of you are thinking of going for a ride like that, let the rest of us know. Last Sunday's trip didn't take a great deal of organising, and there are plenty of places like Bedgebury to take them. We have long been aware that while Herne Hill is a lot of fun, it's only the beginning of a vast off-road cycling lifetime. A whole World of mountain biking awaits, and we're just Step 1. The next step is heading off into the North Downs, South Downs, Epping Forest, Swinley Forest, and lots more besides.

We've been looking at arranging a weekend trip out of town, which I'm hoping someone else can fill the rest of us in on.

It's only February, but the 2009 season awaits us. If it's anything like last year, Bring It On!

Bill Wright