

THE VINCENT RUN 2018

The 11th October this year dawned bright and sunny as only an October day can in old Albion. This was the day of the Vincent Run 'Recce Run' when we inspect the cycleways of Stevenage for any impediments to the progress of our event on the following Sunday. Normally two or three of us do the recce run, but this time we had six riders. Some were in fact not able to make the Sunday run and so it became a kind of midweek event.

This year we made a change to our normal route to try to avoid a couple of miles of busy road off the cycle track to get to the pub which did specialise in rather random service performance.

By actually reversing most of the route and using a new pub right on the cycle track towards the end of the run we were able to kill two proverbial birds in one go. I had planned the route and ridden, cycled and walked it to try to make sure the instructions were as right as possible. Maybe rather rashly I had decided to make another radical change to the instruction format to try to simplify it to encourage more riders to follow the route rather than the person at the front. It is normal to give a route listing the various turns etc and some kind of map to assist if you get lost or have a problem. There is a very good map of the Stevenage cycle tracks on the internet, but printing it at A4 size makes it almost unreadable so I decided to use a kind of Underground map format, i.e. not to scale but with junctions and important points marked. To maximise the scale, I decided to make it a strip format starting at the bottom of the page and moving up as you ride (a bit like Satnav).

The outcome of all this was the new (conventional) route sheet was easy to do, but the new strip make took absolutely forever, involving lots of updates to make it clearer, which of course had the opposite effect. In the end I did my best and hoped!

On the day of the Recce Run, I noted a dearth of route rollers so any hope that the participants would be proof-reading my efforts were rather in vain, however, thanks to David Ross who took it home and checked it through.

In stark contrast, despite the Friday and Saturday being sunny, the Sunday morning of the main run dawned wet, in fact not just wet but the kind of 'don't get out of bed', pouring rain. I was kind of expecting to be doing the run on my own, but four other brave souls turned up at Fairlands Park.

Because of the new route and the small number of riders, I decided to give up on my fancy new route map, and just lead everyone round. This was much easier with four following as I could see them all reasonably well and I could slow the 'pack' down for any tricky bits. I put on full Hi-Vis wet gear, flashing red rear light and even flashing LED armbands, hopefully they could see me! The Cyclemaster also sported a 12v LED spotlight fitted into the cycle headlight which runs from the lighting coil with three modes including flashing to warn (illegally) other users of my (our) approach.

In fact the rain did leave-off when we were riding and subsided to a gentle drizzle at worst, the serious rain only returning when we were in the pub.

Everyone got round OK and it was generally agreed that the slightly shortened route was better and that the new pub although lacking in Rustic charm was efficient and had lots of room. A short run back to the start and everyone seemed quite happy.

So the runners on the day were:

Self (Cyclemaster/Phillips) and Gary Clark (Garelli) from the NHNC, Peter Lawson and Mary doing back-up. Also Ken Howard (Velosolex) and Tony Gabis (Honda PC50) and Alan Gray (Dax).

Special commendations to Gary for coming even though he was going to a steam fair in the afternoon. To Ken for doing the Recce run and the event and to Tony and Alan for coming all the way from Leighton Buzzard/Tring.

Runners on the Recce Run were:

Self (Cyclemaster), Sandy and David Ross (Velosolex), Ken Howard on Raleigh Wisp and Roger Hodgson (Velosolex).

Chris Sawyer
23 October 2018