

Five go wild on Dartmoor

Despite the atrocious weather of the past few months, organisers Matt and Kent were confident that an Indian Summer would bless the attendees on the Bremex MCC September Dartmoor weekend. Those that made the trip were not disappointed with the wall-to-wall sunshine.

The intrepid six (I know it says 'five' above, but it just sounded better) were Penny & Steve, Tony & Amanda, Matt and Kent (literally straight off the plane from a trip to the Alps where he successfully summated Mont Blanc!). All managed to time their arrival in Postbridge for a quick get together in the nearby pub before retiring for a somewhat chilly night under canvas. Canvas? Yes canvas. Matt tipped up with a large tepee, capable of sleeping everyone comfortably but for some reason the offer of accommodation was declined.



Matt's six-man tepee

We were all impressed with Steve's brand new bike, which I believe was a 'significant' Birthday present. It was so posh it even had a gold chain! It certainly put the rest of us to shame.

The campsite at Runnage Farm was 'different'. Totally relaxed atmosphere, right next to a river and camp fires in front of most of the tents. If only we'd known beforehand. We'd have taken the wherewithal to cook our own supper on Saturday.



Five go wild on Dartmoor - ready for the off

It was a relatively late and relaxed start on Saturday morning for the five cyclists and one dog walker (Tony). The calm before the storm perhaps? The original route planned by Matt was fairly quickly dismissed as being too easy and mostly on small local roads. Kent took charge of planning a new route which, as it turned out, was to test the stamina of all who attempted it. We all soon learned the difference between the two types of bridleway shown on Harvey's maps. For future reference, try to avoid the bridleways that do not have a black dotted line next to them – they seem to be random routes across the moors with no visible signs on the ground which result in a lot of pushing and carrying of cycles!

After two hours of hard work and only as many miles under our belts, the prospect of completing the planned route were not looking good. Hills, tufts that came up to your thighs, mud and streams were the flavour of the morning's cycling.

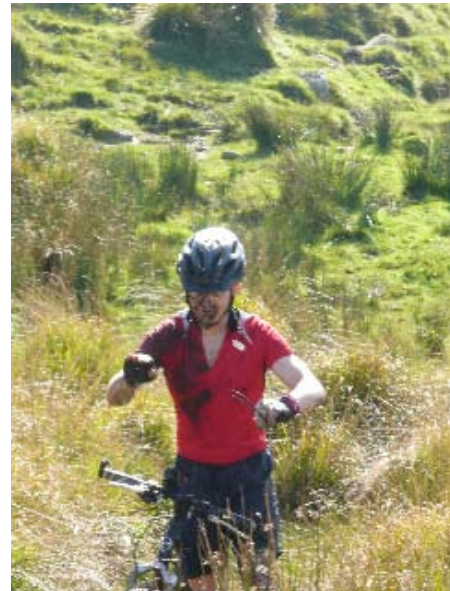
However, Matt's impressive over-the-handlebars dive into a very muddy puddle was quite amusing. After a few more hills, mud and tears (well not

quite) we soon hit our first major downhill of the day, and what a downhill it was.



Amanda...

beer sat in the pub's garden almost heralded the end of the day. It would have been so very easy to sit in the sun all afternoon and have a few pints! It was just like summer.



Matt - over the handlebars and into the mud!



...and Kent in the first of many rivers

At least three miles of white-knuckle, bone-shaking before reaching our lunch point in Peter Tavy. A light snack (well for most of us – Kent had the biggest piece pie you have ever seen) and a quick



Amanda and Penny pushing towards the end of day 1 – it was tough!

The afternoon's route was nowhere near as physically demanding as the morning. Quite a few roads meant we covered a good distance before yet another dose of Dartmoor's best mud. Matt demonstrated the pitfalls of SPD pedals with a

spectacular topple right in front of a local's 4x4. He just couldn't get his feet out quick enough. A final loop of a disused railway (half of which was into a quite strong headwind that Penny really didn't enjoy) ensued which took us to Princetown for a well earned cup of tea. With seven miles still to go on road, and Penny and Amanda feeling as though they had had enough cycling for one day, it was up to the boys to race back to the campsite to fetch a vehicle. All in all, a very good day in the saddle - 30 miles covered and a large chunk of Dartmoor territory covered.

An evening in the pub where, yet again, Kent managed to consume a massive chunk of dead cow – making up for not eating all week on his Alpine adventure. Then, back to the campsite for a slightly warmer night.



Tony – looking after Amanda's bike on the stepping stones

Sunday dawned a bit misty, but this soon cleared. Kent again selected a route for the day. Tony swapped places with Amanda on the dog walking and joined the cyclists for the day. He did look a bit big for Amanda's bike – particularly wearing his winter walking boots. A much shorter route with only a brief spell of bike carrying but with river crossings a plenty, which Kent soon realised were too deep for him to cycle through. However, these presented a good opportunity to rinse some of the mud from gears and chains. Another very welcomed mid-morning tea and biscuit break gave

us the energy needed to get back to the campsite in time to pack away and make tracks for home.



Penny's bike having a cool-off in the river!

Desperate for cream tea, Matt Penny and Steve agreed to stop en-route. Eyes bigger than bellies! Two scones, jam and clotted cream didn't sound like too much of a challenge to hungry cyclists. How wrong can one be! It was only the tall, hollow-legged Steve who managed to consume his entire cream tea. Next time we'll definitely go for the half sized option.



A 'full' cream tea – only Steve managed to eat all of his. Yes, that is cream – loads of it!