

# Thanet Road Club

Christopher Hovenden explores the east Kent lanes with this well-established, fast growing club

To say Thanet RC has risen Phoenix-like from the ashes may be stretching the truth, but the club based on the east Kent coast has undoubtedly experienced a dramatic transformation in recent years.

"When I joined the club in 1992 it was predominantly 40-year-old time triallists, and even in 2008 we had no youth section. Now we have nine [British Cycling] level-two coaches and over 70 members under 16," says head coach and Go-Ride coordinator Colin Robinson.

The club's fortunes began to change when Robinson's eldest son was inspired by the Great Britain cycling team's

success at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Due to a lack of local youth road racing opportunities, Robinson decided to contact British Cycling and ultimately set up Thanet RC as a Go-Ride club later that year.

## Room for all

Seven years on and proof of the club's rapid growth is illustrated by a large group of riders gathered at a bus stop in St Nicholas-at-Wade on a cold winter's morning.

"The Sunday run is the backbone of the club. We used to have only one group, but now we regularly get up to 60 riders across three groups," says Brett Dennis, Thanet's president and club run leader.

"It's really cradle to grave now; the club caters for toddlers to pensioners."

To accommodate the range of abilities, three groups ride slightly different routes (40 miles to 55 miles) at speeds between 15mph and 19mph, all converging at the Adelaide Farm Cafe for a bite to eat.

The fast group goes as far afield as Dover and while rolling along the flat lanes between Plucks Gutter and Preston, Rob Milnes explains why there are two versions of yellow and red club kit on show: "We're all very much one club, but in 2013 we set up a race team. We wanted to give the junior and senior riders support to go as far as they can in racing."

Lawrence Martin, whose son is a member of the race team, supports this sentiment: "The club isn't elitist at all... I ride! But it also provides avenues to excel."

With a hairpin bend, and set behind the iconic white cliffs of Dover, the ascent of Langdon Hill is the ride's toughest and most picturesque challenge. However, it is a lot easier

## Club facts

From: Thanet (Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs), but also attracts members from Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay.

Members: 238

Formed: 1947

Meets: Saturday Go-Ride sessions at the Betteshanger Country Park; Sunday at 9am, three group rides from the St Nicholas-at-Wade bus stop; members that are retired or work shifts ride midweek; monthly club nights at St Nicholas-at-Wade cricket club and a summer 10-mile time trial series.

when two of the race team's rising stars, Oliver Robinson and Daniel Martin, are sat on the front, blocking the wind.

## Great camaraderie

After cresting the not insignificant climb, and as we enjoy the rolling roads towards the welcome refuelling stop, Robinson and Martin explain the benefits of being part of the race team: "There's loads of encouragement and camaraderie at races — we really push each other on."

In addition to having



## History

Thanet RC was formed in 1947 by a group of 12 young members from the local CTC division who wanted something a bit more race-oriented. Time trialling was a popular discipline for the club from the outset and, throughout its near 70-year history, the club's predominantly yellow and red kits — save for when a communication error meant that the jersey modelled on the professional PDM cycling team from the 1980s had a green rather than yellow flash — have been ridden over all distances, from hill-climbs to 12-hour races.

Thanet RC's fortunes were boosted by the conversion of the

former Betteshanger Colliery into a closed road circuit in 2007, and by its becoming a Go-Ride club in 2008. The youth section grew rapidly and led to the creation of a youth development squad in 2012 and a race team a year later; a surprise consequence was the number of parents who have followed their children in joining the club.

Now, in addition to time trialling, many members regularly take part in mtb, cyclo-cross, road racing and racing on the track at the Olympic Velodrome.

## Achievements

■ The club is the current South

East Go-Ride club champion.

■ Keith Ratcliff won the 1974 Grand Prix of Essex, a prestigious international race at the time, by beating Jan Raas (1979 world road race champion) in the final sprint.

■ Callum Gough was third in the National Hill-climb Championships in 1981.

■ Oliver Robinson in 2015 won the South East youth TT championships, was second in the South East youth road and third in the South East youth track championships.

■ Sebastian Dickson came second in the 2015 National University 10-mile TT Championship and



simultaneously broke the club 10-mile TT record. ■ Daniel Martin won both the Junior Kent CA BAR and Kent 10-mile TT junior championship in 2015. He was also the South East representative on the National Youth Forum.



Ride with

# Thanet Road Club

## Ride highlights

**45 MILES**

### Favourite cafe

The Adelaide Farm Cafe is located on the A258 just down the road from the closed road race circuit at Betteshanger Country Park. It has been a favourite for local riders on and off for many years and it is clear to see why. There is plenty of seating and space outside to store bikes, the food is good (including fantastic fry-ups) and the staff are friendly. With copious parking and good road links you could be encouraged to pay a visit without your bike.

Adelaide Farm Cafe, Sandwich Road, Deal, Kent, CT14 0AT. 01304 620158

### 1 Plucks Gutter to Preston

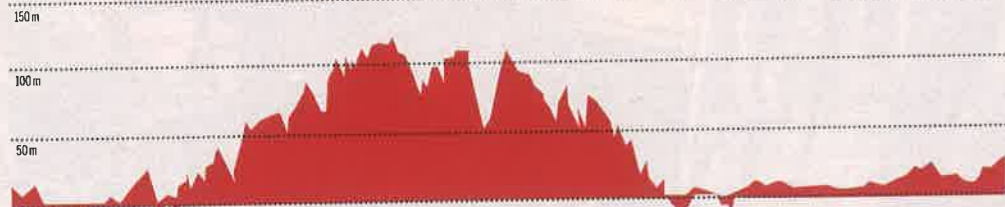
The quiet winding country roads running from Plucks Gutter to Preston are what the Kent countryside is all about. It is a joy to roll along the flat roads surrounded by farmers' fields.

### 2 Griffin Hill to Mill Top

The tree-covered hill's steady gradient can be ridden seated but will have you breathing heavily by the time you reach the top.

### 3 White cliffs of Dover

Langdon Hill rewards you with a beautiful view across to St Margaret's. Just hope there is a kind south-westerly breeze coming off the English Channel rather than a block headwind.



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These days Thanet RC is a club for all the family

## Meet the club



Colin Inett: "I've some great friends. I don't know what I'd do without the club."



Lance Childs: "I like racing on the track and the road. Everyone here is friendly."



Jim Dickson: "There's a great support network, which really helped my son Seb get into cycling."



Madeleine Bazin: "The social side is great. There's a really nice family feeling."



Cafe chat is always lively and inclusive



Don't touch the chain! Clean hands on display

regular racers in its ranks, the club hosts a variety of races and social events.

"This season we hosted 58 events, which involved 300 club volunteers, and I marshalled nearly all the events at Betteshanger Country Park [a closed road circuit]," says 'super marshal' and women's representative Teresa Childs. "We also have lots of events and trips

— the monthly social at the cricket club, the summer barbecue, plus trips to Herne Hill and Paris-Roubaix."

By the time the fast group reaches the cafe it's bustling with Thanet members both young and old. "Us old boys like to pass on a few tips to the youngsters," says the affable Andrew McCall, who along with Dave Mastin and Colin Inett have clocked up more

than 70 years of Thanet membership. Their advice is not limited to training either, with Mastin recalling the unofficial club motto of 'don't touch the chain!', referring to always keeping your hands clean. The growing number of members means there is a constant queue of riders waiting to take notes.

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