

Trianing weekend in Wales

Aimed specifically at those people entered to race in the Alps in July, Simon Bowler organised a training weekend at a small town called Bala, one of the few places in Wales of which the name can be pronounced by non-Welsh-speakers. It's situated in the beautiful Snowdonia National Park, on the banks of the lovely, (and as we were to find out later, freezing cold) Lake Bala. We stayed at an outdoor adventure centre just outside town.



Stream and fields next to the house, with possibly even some patches of blue sky (obviously everyone hadn't come out for the ride yet)

As soon as everyone had arrived and had had time for a cup of tea and Chris' excellent fig rolls (he fixes bikes and bakes!), we set off for a short ride. And it started raining, something that seems to happen in Wales whenever two or more cyclists get together for a ride. The route was just over 30 miles, but included the highest paved road in Wales (Bwlch Y Groes in Welsh, the Pass of the Cross, but christened Nausea Hill by me). The data from my computer shows just over a 1000m ascent for the ride.



Still smiling at the top (from left to right): Jim, Chris, Simon, Scott, Jon, Lisa, Elaine and Louise.

The descent was just as interesting, even more so thanks to the “attack sheep” that inhabit the hills and like sprinting across the road in front of cyclists. This was followed by a loop around another lake (Efyrynwy) and then what Simon called a short climb through the forest on the way home. This short climb led to some prize language and possibly a curse or two being placed on Simon.

Friday evening we walked down to Bala for pizza.

Saturday morning’s program (the official version) started with an hour’s swim in the lake. We drove down and found that the mirror surface from the previous day had been replaced by waves. The peace was disturbed by screams and curses as we entered the water (the lake is called Llyn Tegid in Welsh, which they claim means lake of serenity, but I’m sure means something to do with brass monkeys), and quite a few of us decided that the pain was more than we could bear, so went back to the cars and stood there shivering. The hardy few that managed to swim out to the buoy and back deserved to be applauded. After this it was back to the house for breakfast in preparation for riding the Bala middle distance triathlon route. What had been a light drizzle in the morning very soon became a heavy shower, helped along by what felt like galeforce wind. Everyone was hanging on for dear life and working hard to avoid ending up in a hedge/ditch/other place unsuited for bicycles. Simon, Jim and Chris were the first back to Bala, with the rest of the field arriving at various intervals. My computer shows just over 50 wet, windy miles.

Thanks to the fact that Simon is doing a sports massage course and took along his massage table, a few of us were treated to some therapy in the afternoon. Although not usually a spectator sport, those not being “treated” sat around

taking pleasure from hearing the patient groan in pain. Jon was kind enough to fetch dinner from the local fish & chip shop and we all lay about in various states of fatigue.



Tea & toast/fig rolls/biscuits/sandwiches, and a very large teapot

Sunday morning Louise and Scott were the only ones brave (i.e. crazy) enough to go for another swim, after which Simon had planned another cycle. There were definite sounds of mutiny at the mention of a long climb and a distance of about 36 miles, but we headed out nevertheless. The weather hadn't been bad at all, until we were all kitted up and ready to leave, when it started raining again. This very almost led to play being stopped before it had even started, but in the end we decided to just ride to the top of the hill behind the house. It was a stiff, cold climb with more sheep thrown in for fun on the fast descent. The distance was only about 10 miles, but by this time we'd had enough of the rain. We all packed up and headed for home, just as the clouds cleared and the sun came out.

Thanks to Simon for a great weekend and I believe we would all be happy to do it again, if the opportunity arises.

Chad

Some info on Bala - <http://www.gwynedd.com/locations.php?l=16>
RYG Outdoor Centre - <http://www.rygoutdoor.co.uk/>