

HARDRIDERS

HARD TIMES FOR HARD RIDERS

In February and March, when the weather is cold and the mornings are dark, the collective mind of Britain's time triallists naturally turns to the question of how it might be possible to make things even tougher.

That is why hardriders' events are the traditional start to the time trial season. Normally run on circuits in the lanes rather than on main roads, the races feature technical twists and turns to test your bike handling, and as many climbs (and steep descents!) as the organisers can find.

They're a searching examination of how your winter training has gone.



Or, if winter training remained no more than a good intention, they're a great way to get some fast miles under your belt to get things started, and practise the time trial pacing skills you'll need for events later in the year.

Many of the hardriders' events have acquired the status of classics over the years – races like the North Road Hardriders' 25-miler in Hertfordshire or the East Surrey 30-miler run over the same courses every year, and they attract riders keen to see what shape they're in, and enjoy the unique atmosphere on offer.

If you're new to time trialling, hardriders' races can be a fun way to move into bigger events – despite the tough course, most riders approach the race with a relaxed attitude, and there is usually a wide spread of ability. **There is usually a wide spread of tea and cake available at the race HQ afterwards too...**



STEP UP TO OPEN EVENTS

Unlike come-and-try-it club races where anyone can just roll up and ride, most hardriders' events are "open" events. That they're a bit more formal, but don't let that put you off. They usually have cash prizes, which sometimes have a category for beginners or best improvers. You have to be a member of a club that's affiliated to Cycling Time Trials (most clubs are) or to join the Headquarters' Club that CTT administers for new riders. You need to enter open races about two weeks before the event, using a form that you can download from the CTT website.

For a full list of open events, as well as entry details, it's easiest to order a copy of the CTT handbook, again from the website.



Photographs courtesy of Kimroy Photography

HOW I STARTED



Geoff Clifton

Geoff Clifton is 49, and lives in Surrey, he's a member of Redhill CC.

What was your first race?

It was about four years ago, on the back of a friend's tandem. My second race was just a few minutes later, because I rode again later in the same event on my own. Less than three miles in, national-championship medallist Ben Instone came flying by me. I've been racing ever since, in events up to 12 hours.

What drew you to time trialling?

I took up cycling six years ago, just to stop myself getting fat. I started commuting

by bike, and then I just liked the idea of competing. Time trials are great because I compete against myself, comparing my time from one race to another. There are a few local riders who are about as fast as me, so I look out for their results too.

Have you any advice for a new comer?

Just be brave and give it a go. Don't be worried about how fast everyone else might go.



Getting into time trialling is easy. Telephone Phil Heaton, CTT National Secretary on **01942 603976** or just contact one of your local clubs listed on **www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/beginners** and they'll tell you all you need to know!