

Spokes competition 2015, Entry 1

The 9.40 Chain Gang

2. Who is it suitable for? [it doesn't need to suit everyone] *circle all that apply...*

Experienced fast/road cyclists

3. Where is the route located? *circle all that apply ...*

Ed south / Ed east / Midlothian / East Lothian

4. Brief description of route

a. Start point... Royal Commonwealth Pool

b. End point circular

c. Brief description... Up to Dalkeith, Whitecraig, Prestonpans, Longniddry, Drem, Gullane, Aberlady, Musselburgh & back

6. Why is this a favourite route of yours? [This question is very important in the judging. You can just write one or two sentences or up to **300 words maximum**].

I like all kinds of cycling: cycling is fun, cycling fast is fun **and** exciting. I've done the 9.40 chain gang most weeks over the past 14 years, so if any ride is my "favourite", this must be it.

Not the same route for every Saturday for 14 years I hear you groan? Sounds like "Groundhog Day", the film where Bill Murray is forced to repeat the same day, every day. But (in case you haven't seen the film) in doing that, he just about finds out the meaning of life, and gets off with Andie MacDowell.

Well, I can't claim either of those epiphanies, but I can tell you no two rides are exactly the same; it's been a welcome constant amongst changes.

Groups go off from the Commie Pool on Saturday at 9.30, 40, 45 & 50, fastest ones first. Ideally I'm in a group of 10-12, and we ride two abreast. There is more to chain-ganging than meets the eye. You have to concentrate, positions constantly change; the 2 abreast becomes 2 parallel lines, with the one on the leeward side going slightly faster before the front rider pulls over to the other line, and correspondingly the rear rider in the slower line pulls over to the faster one. Like any successful relationship, commitment, compatibility and communication are key. On a good day, I'll average over 30kph for the 80kms to and from home (via a welcome refuel and debrief at a café in Marchmont).

I find it endlessly fascinating, co-operating with a different group each week. I've seen numbers grow from a couple of dozen to a dozen dozen. I've learnt to be proud and confident on a bike. I've seen how enthusiasm can help, but so does wisdom and experience. And most of all, how an experience shared infinitely increases the pleasure.

307 words