



No one knows great rides like CTC groups. **Mike Wigley**, secretary of Peak Audax and Manchester & District CTC, describes a favourite

A Cheshire Safari



Main photo by Shaun Gregory. Inset: Mike Wigley

Look out for elephants and camels: this ride takes you through the middle of a zoo where you can get glimpses of both. It also passes through the wide open spaces of Tatton Park, with its herds of deer and sheep. 'A Cheshire Safari' is the season-opening event from Peak Audax, organisers of cycle events into the Peak District and onto the Cheshire plain as part of Manchester & District CTC activities.

Although the 100-mile route can be described as flat and is certainly suitable for fixed gear machines, it does undulate through pleasant dairy farming countryside and through woodland – Delamere Forest is usually glorious even this late in autumn. Even if you visit both Preston-on-the-hill and Dunham-on-the-hill (different hills!) neither is that high. It's a low-lying route (below 90m) as befits a November ride, with less than 600m of climbing.

You pass through Knutsford, otherwise known as 'Canute's Ford' (the King is reputed to have come this way) or perhaps 'Cranford' as the base for local writer Elizabeth Gaskell's novel. These days it's the venue

for the Ordinary World Championships, contested on authentic penny farthings. The next race is due in 2010 so you should order your machine now.

You will also get a glimpse of Frodsham and Helsby, overlooked by a landmark sandstone hill. The roads are fairly quiet because the parallel M56 keeps most of the traffic away.

Eureka cafe is the first stop at Two Mills on the Wirral. This legendary place has been looking after cyclists for nearly 80 years and knows what we want: big mugs of tea and plenty of toast. Cycling mementoes adorn the walls, with pride of place being a Tour de France yellow jersey, presented by Chris Boardman from just up the road.

A second stop is made in the picturesque village of Great Budworth, but we're more interested in the Ice Cream Farm cafe which usually has a good selection of cakes (and ice cream, of course).

Later you pass both Styal Open Prison and Appleton Young Offender Institution. So if you see any cyclists with arrows on their jerseys, give them a wide berth.

The Cheshire Safari makes a good introduction to audax riding. Gradients are modest and you are never far

(Main) As it's Cheshire, the ride is fairly flat

(Inset) Well wrapped up for a November start



from civilisation or a railway station should things go pear-shaped.

Who we are

If it's a longer ride you want, you could try the companion 210km event, the Eureka 200. And if you enjoy your day out, Peak Audax has a whole series of challenging rides of 100km and 200km events. The flat events head out onto the Cheshire Plain and into North Staffordshire and Wales, while if we want hills, then the Peak District is handily placed. For those truly bitten by the long-distance cycling bug, we also run a full Super Randonneur series, with rides at 200km, 300km, 400km and 600km.

Manchester CTC, of which Peak Audax is a part, was founded more than 100 years ago but with a merger with Mid-Lancs DA in 1995, most

of our membership actually lives outside Manchester itself. With cyclists from Bury to Macclesfield, and across from Wigan to Oldham, our new name of Manchester & District CTC perhaps better reflects our membership base.

The area is richly provided with cycling groups, with CTC groups in West Manchester, South Manchester, Bury, Bolton and Oldham & Tameside, as well as plenty of clubs who welcome CTC members, such as Macclesfield Wheelers and Seamons CC. Our quarterly publication, Northern Wheel, gives many useful contacts and runs lists so there ought to be something of interest to most cyclists.

Route directions

- START/FINISH Cheadle Village Hall (SJ 856 888)
- L at T from hall to A560 where R at T and SO Gatley Road A560
- SO signed Gatley A560 (over A34)
- L at Horse & Farrier onto Church Rd
- L at T Styal Road B5166 thru' Styal
- R thru carpark, over foot bridge to Kings Road
- R at T (A538), then L to Morley Green
- R Burleyhurst Lane (after Golf Club)
- 2nd L Mobberley Davenport La
- L at T then R at T to Ashley
- L Slade La
- L at T to B5085 where L
- R at T signed Chester A537
- R onto King St in Knutsford
- R Tatton Park and follow signs to Rostherne Exit where SO Rostherne Lane
- L New Rd in Rostherne
- R & over A556 at Tls at Bucklow Hill
- L at B5159
- R on Mowpen Brow
- R at T A50 signed Warrington
- L Swineyard La
- L at B5356 Grappenhall Lane
- R&L over A49 in Stretton onto B5356
- L (at R hand bend) Pillmoss Lane
- R at T Summer La to Preston Brook
- L at T and R signed Chester
- L onto A56 through Frodsham, Helsby, Dunham & Mickle Trafford
- R Dee Rd
- R Picton Lane
- L at T on A5117 to Backford Cross
- R to Capenhurst
- L at T then R at T on A540 to Eureka café
- R out of cafe on A540
- SO over A5117 signed Chester
- L Coalpit Lane
- L Demage Lane, then L at T
- SO over A41 Rake Lane
- R Chorlton Lane
- R at T, over canal bridge then R on bridleway through Chester Zoo
- L Oakfield Drive
- L at T Caughall Road
- R to Picton Gorse Acres Lane
- R to Picton Gorse and over M56
- L at T to Mickle Trafford
- L at T on A56 & follow Cheshire Cycleway to Great Budworth
- L Ice Cream Farm cafe
- Right out of cafe
- L at T Pickmere Westage Lane
- R at T Budworth Rd
- R at T signed Northwich
- L signed Knutsford Linnards Lane
- L and R at A556 to Plumley
- SO to Freegreen Lane
- R at T Freegreen Lane
- L at T signed Knutsford A50
- R Stocks Lane
- L Chelford La
- L to Marhall Snelson La
- SO to Warford Sandlebridge La
- L at T to Mobberley
- R at T B5085
- L to Wilmslow B5086
- L on Bedells Lane
- R and L over A538
- R at T Hawthorn Lane
- L at T and L Church Lane
- SO to Lacey Green then
- R at T to traffic lights on B5358
- Follow all signs for Cheadle
- R at T A560 and L back to village hall
- L Lyme Grove to Village Hall

FACT FILE

A Cheshire Safari

- DISTANCE:** 162km/100 miles
- TIME:** typically 8 hours (min 5½, max 11)
- TERRAIN:** low lying (below 90m) and with no big climbs. No off-road riding
- WHEN:** 2nd Sunday in November (entry fee £4 to CTC members includes start & finish refreshments)
- MAPS:** OS Landrangers 109, 117 and 118
- START/FINISH:** Cheadle Village Hall (SJ 856 888), 4km west of Stockport
- BIKE SHOPS:** None on Sunday but Eureka cafe sells some cycling equipment and spares
- CAFES/PUBS:** Eureka cafe 80km, Great Budworth 124km plus cafes, shops and pubs in Knutsford (20km) and Frodsham (55km) and elsewhere along the route
- MORE INFORMATION:** contact Mike Wigley at mike@PeakAudax.co.uk or phone 01457 870421
- WEBSITES:** www.PeakAudax.co.uk, www.cyclingManchester.org.uk