

Interviews & comment

CYCLE SHORTS

THIS MONTH BCQ ORGANISER JEFF EAVES, MICHAEL BONNEY'S OFF-ROAD WHEELCHAIR, JON SNOW ON LOCAL ELECTIONS, A CLOSE-PASS INITIATIVE, AND THE AGM



Jeff at St David's Pass, near the Llanuwchllyn (Bala Lake) checkpoint

Local Hero

JEFF EAVES

Jeff is the volunteer organiser of the British Cycle Quest, a cycle touring 'treasure hunt' across the whole of Britain

THE BRITISH CYCLE Quest is the latest version of a scheme that began in 1982 to encourage cycle tourists to visit new places,' Jeff Eaves explains. 'Participants can earn certificates and medals by visiting checkpoints and answering simple questions.'

It sounds and is straightforward – until you consider the scale. There are 402 checkpoints, as far afield as Cornwall and the Shetland Isles. So far, 14 Cycling UK members have completed the quest, each spending years exploring. You don't need to commit to that; you could just answer the

questions that relate to your home county.

'The checkpoints were chosen by local cyclists to introduce visitors to their county,' Jeff says. 'There are certificates for those completing 10, 50, 100, 200, and 300 checkpoints, and a few national ones, such as all of Wales. Medals are available for completing 100, 200, and 300 checkpoints, and there's a free trophy if you visit all 402.'

Jeff is the validator for the British Cycling Quest (BCQ). 'My task is to check that the answers submitted are correct – or nearly so. You'd be surprised at how many miscount the number of steps or record the

wrong date that's written on a plaque. I need to know that participants have actually visited the checkpoints so that certificates can be awarded. I also sort things out when checkpoints change. I'm dealing with one that has been demolished and another that has a plague of rodents, which prevents access. As well as this, I answer Cycling UK member enquiries about the BCQ.'

Jeff began chasing checkpoints himself back in 1982, and so far he's visited 322. This was how he ended up as organiser. 'In 2008, my latest set of answers didn't come back. It transpired that the former validator had moved home and subsequently died. I asked National Office if they would like me to take over, and a fortnight or so after that Mark Waters arrived from Guildford with a car boot full of papers and computer discs.'

SIXTY YEARS A MEMBER

As a full-time carer, Jeff's checkpoint-hunting is on hold, but he still finds time to ride his bike. 'I have never driven, so I use my bike for everything – shopping, racing to catch trains, touring holidays, and taking my dogs on the back for walks further afield.'

Jeff has been a member of Cycling UK for 60 years. 'In 1957, a car shunted me as I was on my way to college, so I joined and have been a member ever since. I'm also a member of the Moulton Bike Club.'

If you're interested in having a go at the British Cycle Quest, it couldn't be simpler. 'Just download the question book from the website or contact National Office to obtain a paper copy,' says Jeff. 'Then choose any ten checkpoints, head off on your bike, and try to answer the questions. If it takes your fancy, purchase some answer cards (it's our only form of income), fill them in, and send them to me with an SSAE. The whole of England, Scotland and Wales is there to be visited.'

Read more and download the question book at cyclinguk.org/british-cycle-quest