

At least 3 Southdown Velo members rode the [Hampshire Hilly Hundred](#) this past Sunday (18th May).

Me and Dave Potheary rode the full 100mile Max event whilst Alistair Peel did the 87 mile Midi route (basically cutting off the stretch from Hambleton to the *Bat & Ball* and thence up Old Winchester Hill).

I personally had a blast. I hadn't felt quite as good on the bike for a very long time. I stormed around catching and dropping people up hill and down dale.

I particularly enjoyed the event because they started you off as you wanted, in effect one after the other instead of in groups. For me this meant I really could do my own thing, whereas in a group it can often either go like a steaming peloton or too slow but not quite slow enough to shed them.

I was whizzing along from the start but in time I and others coalesced into a little bunch of 5, 3 friends already together and a guy from the Addiscombe, riding from Micheldever, via Overton and Kingsclere to the first feed. I was trying not to expend more than the minimum energy early on and began my eating and drinking regime almost from the off. My plan was to arrive at the feeds with naught but dregs in my bottles. The first feed was at roughly 25 miles covered. I went to the loo, filled my bottles - one water, one sports drink - grabbed a banana and set off. I passed my soon to be ertswhile buddies and plenty of others going up Watership Down, all the while trying to avoid having *that* song become lodged in my head, got snapped by a very beardy [Phil O'Connor](#) and powered over the top and along the wonderful lane wending its way towards the Test Valley.

<http://picasaweb.google.com/RennerHolland/Cycling/photo#5202110149522261234>

<http://picasaweb.google.com/RennerHolland/Cycling/photo#5202110153817228546>

I was on my own from then on, steaming through the beautiful countryside. At one point my phone beeped to say I'd missed a call so I rang back to get an update on our poorly cat as I motored along. Unfortunately there was no-one to pass at that minute as it would have been quite amusing.

I caught Dave with about 45 miles covered as we approached the western side of Winchester. We rode along together chatting about the endurance mountain biking event he's doing in Wales this Whitsun Holiday Weekend. Alas as soon as the next rise hit I'd dropped him without even attempting to. I just rode up the slope steadily I thought. Ahem. Not to worry, I was on a mission and, hoping he didn't mind, powered on.

Feed zone at 65 miles or so complete at Horsley south of Winchester. It had been a bit chilly early on so I'd set off wearing a gilet and with knee warmers on. I'm glad I did because the air took a long while to warm up. It certainly had by the time I reached Horsley so the gilet came off and went in a rear pocket but I didn't have any room left for the knees so they had to stay on.

On the flat next to Otterbourne I caught, passed and dropped some [Rapha](#) wearing ponces at 25 miles an hour. I was relentless. Down to Twyford and I got stuck at the traffic lights for what might have only been one minute but felt like an age. Some guy I'd passed on the hill next to the motorway caught me and ran the lights. I waited. Gah! The Rapha ponces and some others caught me back up. I steadily towed this group up the drag to the light jumper and caught him just before we turned right for a set of steep, narrow twisty lanes through the back of Marwell towards Bishop's Waltham. Again, without really trying, I dropped the lot of them. Yes I was riding hard but not so hard that I was going into the red at all. All day I was aware that it was imperative to keep some energy reserves in the tank. After the Milbury's experience I was under no illusions that I was some sort of superstar, it's just that I was surprising myself to be honest and enjoying it.

There were a lot fewer people to pass from this stage and the ones that did remain ahead were obviously quicker than the majority of those behind. I did continue to catch other of riders though. Most often it was when they eased up having reached the top of a slope. Fools. I sprinted past plenty as they took a breather.

The climb towards the *Bat & Ball* was interesting as I've ridden up there quite a few times and then I've been fresh. As you know it's not a big-ringer but you can do it at a reasonable lick. Not after 85 or thereabouts miles! I was on the 21 I think. Down Old Winchester Hill along the Millbury's TT course but in the other direction and then it was the final climb. That tight lane up from Exton where they have the big yellow "ignore your Sat-Nav" signs. That was a toughie. The distance and the effort told. And the camera shows it:

<http://picasaweb.google.com/RennerHolland/Cycling/photo#5202110158112195858>

I knew this was the final climb and afterwards it would be virtually all downhill to New Arlesford so I was prepared to use up whatever reserves were left to reach the top without loitering. The final run in was good. Two guys I'd passed a top Old Winchester had got back to me and we rode together with a common purpose without needing to speak. We swept up another fellow and the four of us crossed the A272 and headed for the finish. On the final couple of rises past the Golf Club the fellow we'd swept up gave it some gas. I followed and the other two let go. We dropped down the hill, under the railway bridge that usually has the classic Pullman carriages parked on them and turned into the school for the finish line.

100 excellent miles covered.

My computer said I'd taken 5:38. Last year I was 6:22. Quite an improvement. Still an hour and a quarter slower than time trialling on the S4/100 back in 1996 but then the terrain wasn't remotely the same!

The official result gave me a slower time obviously because it included pit-stops.

[The scores on the doors:](#)

100 Miles

Mark Holland 05:44:28

David Potheary 06:33:20

87 Miles

Alistair Peel 06:36:30

I was 38th fastest out of 313 finishers. Had I been 5 minutes faster, eg not gone to the loo!, I would have been 21st. Yes, yes, I know it's not a race but even so.

I'm still stoked about having had such a great ride. I think it's down to a number of things. Through racing and riding with the Velo I'm keener and faster than I've been for a long while, having 'bait' on the road and the feeds. The dehydration one gets going out for more than a solo obviously has a tremendous effect on performance.

I'm looking forward to the Highclere Event on the 7th of June now.

Mark