

Cranleigh Cycling Club Guide to Time Trialling



Time Trialling has a long and illustrious history in Great Britain and is a sport that essentially started as the result of an argument, a crash and the sensibilities of Victorian England. The crash in question happened in 1894 on the A1, just outside Huntingdon between a group of racing cyclists and a lady driving a horse drawn carriage. The argument was between the police and racing cyclists and the sensibilities were those of the governing body for cycling at the time, the National Cyclists Union. The NCU resolved the argument, seemingly in an act of self harm, by banning all road racing. What replaced the void left by road racing was an event in which riders started one at a time and rode a particular course un-paced, thus avoiding groups of riders racing on the road. The idea was to avoid any unwanted attention from the police, who were not fans of racing on the highway and thus the early events were somewhat clandestine, secretive in nature and unashamedly amateur. Time Trialling, as a sport, was effectively born in 1895, the brainchild of a certain F.T. Bidlake and his club, North Road CC. Its clandestine nature lasted well into the twentieth century and its effects can still be seen in the early starts and in the formally secret codes, which the sport still uses to define courses.

Time trialling is a peculiarly British pastime whose success is really due to the simplicity of the format, fastest rider wins, its accessibility, with many courses all over the country and its low cost of entry. Another feature of these events, which only adds to its Britishness, is the homespun nature of the post race refreshments, which usually involve cups of tea, coffee, squash and home made cakes, often served in a local village hall.

It the simplest of competitive formats: a race against the clock, with riders starting a minute apart. It's known as the 'race of truth' because there's nowhere to hide, no one to draft behind, just you, your bike and the thumping of your heart.

Oh and a clock ticking! Although the fastest rider wins, there are often a number of prizes available, for fastest man, woman, youth and prizes for those on ordinary road bikes. Even if you don't win, getting a personal best on a course can be prize enough and the competitive nature of a TT can really bring out the best in you.

Time trial distances tend to be nice even numbers and always in miles 10 is the most common and popular but 25, 50, 100 mile, 12 hour and even 24 hour events also exist. Although the majority of events today are for individual riders, there are also events, which are for teams of two, three or four riders who ride together, known as Team Time Trials - shortened to 2up/3up/4up TTTs.

Cranleigh Cycling Club currently run two individual 10 mile time trials a year, a "Come and Try" event in the Spring, usually in April on course G10/44 and an Inter Club event, with our friends at Dorking Cycling Club and Horsham Cycling, in September on course G10/46.

A 'Come and Try It' event is a means of enabling newcomers to try time trials without some of the usual restrictions (e.g. riders do not have to be members of an affiliated club, they can ride in any type of clothing (helmet is required), on any type of roadworthy bike).

Riding a Time Trial should really be not much more difficult than a hard indoor cycling class and, the cost of entry is similar.

Aim to arrive 1 hour before your start time, to collect your number and cycle to the start. Pin your number low down on your jersey (not high up your back). Sort out your bike and kit and then warm-up thoroughly. You will need to allow a short amount of time to cycle to the start.

Ideally you should arrive 3-5 minutes before your start time. Make sure you select a low gear and at 30 seconds, the starter will – if you wish- hold you up. Take a few deep breaths, clip in and orientate your pedals.

Whichever course you ride, the course will be signposted and marshalled, however you are still responsible for your own safety on the roads so please look where you are going and be aware of other traffic on the road.

There are no “race tactics” to speak of just a need to pace yourself appropriately. Don't overdo it in the first few miles. You need to get into the ride, find a rhythm for your breathing and pedalling that's hard but sustainable. Other riders may come past you, but don't worry about it!

When you can see the finish, give it everything. Keep riding straight past the finish, don't hang around the timekeeper or try to talk to them.

If you are a first timer or, just want a reminder, here are a few useful links:

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/knowledge/article/izn20150401-road-riding-a-10-mile-time-trial-0>

<https://roadcyclinguk.com/how-to/chris-boardmans-ten-mile-time-trial-tips.html#00HwFBqL4CXPPaZK.97>

<http://www.theraceoftruth.org.uk/>

Course maps

G10/44 <https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/course-details/g10-44>

G10/46 <https://www.cyclingtimetrials.org.uk/course-details/g10-46>

References:

Hutchinson M (2007) Re:Cyclists 200 Years on Two Wheels

Cycling Time Trials website

Cycling Time Trials is the NATIONAL Governing Body for time trials in England, Scotland and Wales. Cranleigh Cycling Club is a CTT affiliated club.

