



The Spindle NOVEMBER 2025 cycleclubsudbury.com

It seems a long time since the last Spindle and the cycling calendar has quieted down somewhat but there is still the AGM and prize-giving to come this year on Thursday 27th November (info in 'Robin's Bits' below).

A big welcome to new members Ben Campbell, Victoria Haye and a returning Byron Grimes!

This is a very full Spindle thanks to Gavin's Silk Road Opus – scroll down to enjoy! Thanks again to all contributors!

Sharon



ROBIN'S BITS

COMMITTEE MEETINGS; 8th JANUARY (before Subs Night), at the Stevenson Centre

UPCOMING EVENTS

AGM AND AWARDS EVENING; 7.00pm, Thursday 27 November, Stevenson Centre, off Broom Street, Great Cornard. Your chance to have a say in how the club works, and to celebrate the winners of our club awards. There will be a buffet and tea and coffee available. If you have any matters you'd like added to the agenda of the AGM, please forward them to Rob Davies at rob.ev.jack@gmail.com before 20 November.

POST-CHRISTMAS GUESS THE DISTANCE RIDE; 11am, Saturday 27 December from the Cock Horse car park, Lavenham. A short ride of about 1hr 20m, ridden as a group without distance measuring devices, GPS, phones, etc. The rider estimating the distance nearest that actually ridden will receive a (very small) prize. Meeting after the ride for a drink and possibly chips in the Cock Horse.



CCS SUBS NIGHT; 7.30pm, Thursday 8 January, Stevenson Centre off Broom Street, Gt Cornard.

A chance to pay your 2026 subs, chat, drink tea, and collect a handbook. If you're not able to attend, there'll be an email in the new year about paying on-line or by post.

CCS RELIABILITY RIDE, Sunday 25 January, from the Stevenson Centre.

The first event of the year – two course lengths (28 or 46 miles) with two finish target times for each distance. Choose your own distance and target time. Can be a challenge, depending on the weather!

CC Sudbury - Audax 2025 Final Results

By David Fenn

Date	Event	Riders
18 th September	DIY 200k	Tony Grimes
19 th September	ACME Tourdax 1 102k	Raymond Cheung
20 th September	ACME Tourdax 2 105k	Raymond Cheung
27 th September	Asparagus & Strawberries 414k	Raymond Cheung
27 th September	Suffolk Byways 114k	Steve Barnes
10 th October	Stevenage 200k	Tony Grimes
12 th October	Silly Suffolk 105k	Robin Weaver, Brian Mann
18 th October	DIY 200k	Raymond Cheung
22 nd October	DIY 100k	Tony Grimes
26 th October	The Dartmoor Devil @ 8 114k	Andrew Hoppit

Name	Points	Total Distance km	50 km	100 km	150 km	200 km	300 km	400 km	600 km	1000+ km	Climbing Metres
Raymond Cheung-1007	45.5	4,627	1	8	-	10	1	2	1	-	11,280
Tony Grimes - 7106	28	2,877	-	7	2	9	-	-	-	-	4,854
Andrew Hoppit - 4235	23	2,367	-	7	-	5	2	-	-	-	17,609
Les Dunham - 28601	14.5	1,411	-	8	1	1	1	-	-	-	8,771
Ian Lovelock - 5675	8	838	-	4	-	2	-	-	-	-	2,754
Rory Coxhill - 31660	8	813	-	1	-	2	1	-	-	-	3,850
Byron Grimes - 12703	8	812	-	2	-	3	-	-	-	-	1,304
Steve Barnes - 8739	7	749	-	7	-	-	-	-	-	-	5,150
Robin Weaver - 7481	7	727	-	5	-	1	-	-	-	-	2,922
Brian Mann - 4689	6	629	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,472
Gareth Smith - 15014	5.5	595	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	1,862
Nick Webber - 43004	2.5	276	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	1,762
Mark Gentry - 2884	1	104	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	672
Mick Bates - 3824	1	104	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	672
Kirsty Fenner	1	104	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	672
Nick Reed	1	104	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	672
Robin Sidgewick	1	104	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	672



Final SpoCo Results 2025.

By David Fenn

20th September, King's Lynn CC 10, B10/37r,
David Fenn, 29:08, 27th, 94 points.

CC SUDBURY SpoCo LEAGUE TABLE 2025			
POSITION	RIDER	EVENTS	POINTS TOTAL
1	Caroline Wyke	14	1242
2	David Fenn	7	632
3	Ian Short	5	593
4	Nick Webber	2	221
5	Rory Coxhill	2	167
6	Charlie Heeks	1	114
7	Alex Purcel	1	113
8	Matt Shotbolt	1	107
9	Doz Bree	1	104
10	John Golder	1	101
11	Dan Upton	1	100
12	Angela Leslie	1	97
13	Murray Baker	1	96

C.C.S. Riders - Open T.T. Results - September 2025

6th Sep	Norwich ABC - Bungay	B10/43	N.Webber	10	24.15	17th
6th Sep	Norwich ABC - Bungay	B10/43	D.Fenn	10	28.06	33rd
6th Sep	Norwich ABC - Bungay	B10/43	C.Wyke	10	33.15	36th 2nd Lady Rd Bk
6th Sep	ECCA - Six Mile Bottom	E2/10	S.Triplow	10	24.25	33rd 2nd Lady TT Bk
13th Sep	DAP CC - Bungay	B10/43	I.Short	10	21.12	5th
13th Sep	DAP CC - Bungay	B10/43	D.Fenn	10	27.33	26th
20th Sep	Kings Lynn CC - Cambourne	F2/25D	D.Fenn	10	29.08	27th
27th Sep	Welsh Championship 50 - Abergavenny	R50/1B	I.Short	50	0.1.57.57	20th

C.C.S. Riders - Open T.T. Results - October 2025

12th Oct	Chelmer CC - GP Des Gentlemen - 2-Up TT		J.Golder	15	37.35	9th
12th Oct	Chelmer CC - GP Des Gentlemen - 2-Up TT		I.Short	15		
12th Oct	Chelmer CC - GP Des Gentlemen - 2-Up TT		S.Triplow	15	40.09	13th
12th Oct	Chelmer CC - GP Des Gentlemen - 2-Up TT		A.Shuttleworth	15		

SEASONS OPEN TIME TRIALS ROUND-UP 2025

CCS Fastest Times for Rider's at all Standard Distances Ridden in Open Time Trials - 2025

Name	10 mile	15mile	25mile	30mile	50mile	100mile	12 Hours	No. of events
<u>R.Coxhill</u>				01.38.25				1
D.Fenn	27.33		01.20.49					7
<u>J.Golder</u>	23.47	36.46	01.01.29					10
<u>S.Hitchcock</u>			01.08.19					1
<u>I.Short</u>	20.16	31.54	53.19		01.57.57			17
<u>M.Shotbolt</u>	20.57							2
S.Triplow	24.25							5
N.Webber	24.15	38.48						2
C.Wyke	30.38	01.00.32	01.32 02					15

As the TT Open Season comes to a close, it has seen even less events entered by CCS riders with sadly only our usual Open TT stalwarts continuing to fly the flag year after year!

As for the Round – Up, it's hard for me to get enthused each year to with so little to write about. But write I must and reward those who have made the considerable effort each season!

Top of the tree again we have our fastest rider in Ian Short. And what a rider he is. He can claim this year of a unique set of results...2 x 1st placings, followed by a 2nd placing, a 3rd placing, a 4th placing, a 5th placing and a 6th placing over the season from the 17 events he entered. His times in the 10's were very consistent with a very quick 25 time to add the icing to his very deserved cake. He even managed to squeeze in a late season 50 mile event in Wales to ensure he had a good chance of securing the BAR title again.



He finished his year off by entering with John Golder, the 15 mile grandly named GP des Gentlemen's 2-Up on a course near Chelmsford. (Pic left)

The bad news is that he will be moving away and relocating to the West Country shortly. I'm sure he will continue to burn up the TT courses down there and wish him all the best.

Next in order of events entered (15) is our evergreen lady Caroline. She picked up numerous cash prizes for being in the top 3 of fastest ladies on a road bike. Her fastest 10 was a 30.38 which I'm sure is her fastest for 5-6 years. Plus a very pleasing for her, a good time for a 25 this year! She had an unscheduled time off her bike which reduced her events ridden but came back putting in some quick times.

Next is John Golder who is a fairly recent CCS acquisition and rode in 11 events. Over half of them were 10's and recorded some very consistent and close times. His fastest was a 23.47

together with a best of 01.01.29 for a 25. Two 15 mile events saw him record a 36.46 for a solo event and a 37.45 for a 2-Up event with Ian. (Must have been a very hilly event in the 2-Up John?)

David Fenn also had time off his bike during the season with an unfortunate falling off his bike. But returning to the saddle afterwards David still rode some good times and got up to speed quickly with an excellent 10 time of 27.33 towards the end of the season. You can't keep a determined rider down!

Our final rider of our current stalwart quintet is Sue Triplow whose rides were mainly 10's (best was 24.25) excepting for an early Oct 2-Up which she rode with a regular CCS Evening Series rider Anne Shuttleworth (Cambridge CC) in the aforementioned GP des Gentlemen's event at Chelmsford, to very good effect. Sue also gained 2 cash prizes for coming 2nd in the fastest Ladies TT bikes category

Nick Webber had a quiet season compared to last season but still managed a 4th placing with a 38.48 for a 15 mile event on the Mundford course. His 10 time on the Bungay course was a creditable 24.15.

Nice to see Matt Shotbolt dipping his pedals in Open TT's again. He rode 2 10's, the best was a tremendous effort on the E2/10 where he recorded a 20.57 time. (2nd fastest 10 time for CCS riders the year!) Great comeback Matt, look forward to more of the same next season.

We only have Rory Coxhill and Steve Hitchcock left of our gallant Open Riders. Rory entered the famous Leo30 (only CCS rider to do a 30!) and returned a commendable effort of 01.38.25 for his efforts..keep going Rory, the pain is always temporary! Steve is an occasional Open Rider and I was pleased to see him return this year. He rode the fearsome F2/25 near Cambourne and not only posted a decent time but captured cash prize for 3rd fastest Men's Road Bike.

A big Chapeau to all of you!

Rog

Semer Hill Climb

Prizes:

** One rider, one prize, except for team.

Men:

1st £35	<i>Oskar Everett</i>	Junior - 1st £15	<i>George Collins</i>
2nd £25	<i>Sean Purser</i>		
3rd £15 **	<i>James Sherwood</i>		

Women

Team of three - £15 each

CC Sudbury

1st £35	<i>Claire Hall</i>	<i>Martin Mortimer</i>
2nd £25	<i>Geethana Yogarajah</i>	<i>Daniel Upton</i>
3rd £15	<i>Angela Lesslie</i>	<i>Murray Baker</i>

Many thanks to all riders, helpers and sponsors for another first class race, with many excellent performances, not least that of Oskar Everett, who secured another win, pushed hard and close by Seán Purser in second place.



Full result:

<i>No</i>	<i>First Name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>Club</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Age Group</i>	<i>Time</i>
1	Oskar	Everett	Lee Valley Youth CC	Open	Junior	0:46.4
2	Seán	Purser	St Ives CC	Open	Senior	0:46.9
3	George	Collins	Schils - Doltcini RT	Open	Junior	0:49.5
4	James	Sherwood	Rule 28 Outliers	Open	Senior	0:52.7
5	Daniel	Hall	Colchester Rovers CC	Open	Espoir	0:53.0
6	Paul	Hamblett	AS Test Team	Open	Veteran	0:53.1
7	Stephen	Clark	Orwell Velo	Open	Senior	0:53.5
8	Paul	Moss	Stowmarket & District CC	Open	Veteran	0:54.1
9	Ashley	Briggs	CC Breckland	Open	Senior	0:59.8
10	Martin	Mortimer	CC Sudbury	Open	Senior	1:00.0
11	Joseph	Shaw	Ipswich BC	Open	Senior	1:01.9
12	Paul	East	Reading CC	Open	Veteran	1:04.6
13	Daniel	Upton	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:04.9
14	Claire	Hall	Parenesis - TotalVelo Cycling	Female	Veteran	1:07.6
15	Murray	Baker	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:08.4
16	Geethana	Yogarajah	West Suffolk Wheelers	Female	Senior	1:15.3
17	Angela	Lesslie	CC Sudbury	Female	Veteran	1:15.8
18	Archibald	Douglas	Colchester Rovers CC	Open	Youth	1:16.7
19	Zac	Rogers	Team PB Performance	Open	Senior	1:17.3
20	Keith	Sparkes	Wolsey RC	Open	Veteran	1:21.5
21	Rory	Coxhill	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:23.4
22	David	Sawyer	Wolsey RC	Open	Veteran	1:24.4
23	Haydn	Smith	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:26.5
24	James	Bird	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:28.6
25	Adam	Speers	CC Sudbury	Open	Veteran	1:37.3
26	Wilfred	Hare	Tri Sudbury	Open	Youth	1:47.8
DNS	Shane	Jarvis	Colchester Rovers CC	Open	Senior	
DNS	Matt	Haigh	Colchester Rovers CC	Open	Veteran	
DNS	Ben	Smith	Verulam CC	Open	Veteran	



In other news...



Iceni Velo Proudly presents Eastern Regional cyclocross championships 2025.

At Old Buckenham Country Park on Sunday the 23rd of November 2025

Whether you fancy having a go or just want to come along and watch this great discipline, all the relevant information can be found here. Racing for all ages

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/.../Eastern-Region...>

Racing starts @ 09.30, bring cowbells.



Photo Fit

Sunday 'Club Ride' 10th August 2025

As many regulars on the 'Sunday club ride' can attest, there are many 'good', some 'very good', and other 'much-preferred' destinations, so having ridden to 'Dedham' to then bask in the fantastic setting that is 'The Munnings Museum garden cafe and whilst being accompanied by fellow regulars in this idyllic setting, we arrived to then admire the vista. Just as I, along with others, started to notice that around the upper area of the garden were strategically placed posters, posters that resembled people that were I imagined possibly being sought by the authorities, who can say, however, one poster in particular struck me as being very familiar, yet, I just couldn't place who this rogue may well be.



Putting it out to the audience, can I ask, that if any club member having seen this is able to contact the relevant authorities with a full description of this individual, whoever he is, I feel certain that there is bound to be some sort of a reward for him being apprehended, as quite frankly, and as always, he looks far too fast just sitting there !.....

Be careful out there, stay safe lovely people.

Adrian Rush



A Message from Ian Short

To the CCS club members.

"We are westward bound"

I just wanted to thank the Cycle Club Sudbury for two of the most enjoyable seasons in my cycling career. I started hovering around the Thursday evening series in 2022 & 2023 when I was still riding for TeamSalesEngine (TSE). TSE folded in 2023 when we lost our sponsor and the natural choice for me was to join the Sudbury Club. In truth I should and wish now that I had joined much sooner. I didn't always fit in when I was younger and typically retreated to a place where I just did my own thing...So long as I was riding and racing, I was happy. That mentality still carries on today.

However, from the moment I started riding the occasional Thursday '10' in 2022, I felt welcomed and part of something good. It reminds me of how I felt when I joined the Hainault Roads Club as an unruly teenager in the late 80's. The Hainault brought out the best in me and even now when I see a Hainault jersey at an event, I am transported back to discovering cycling in the late 80's and getting out of Ilford. Weekend club runs as a fourteen-year-old saved me from what I am sure would have been a very different path.

Anyway, Annie and I are taking a big step in life and moving in together and we've chosen mid Devon as our place to go. We have been travelling to that part of the UK over the last few years to look at areas and more importantly prices. We started off looking in the Blackdown Hills around Ilminster and Honiton etc but whilst this area is lovely, it's just too expensive. There is also the small matter of hills, hills and more hills. We've lived in London, Essex and Suffolk all our lives and prefer a more rolling landscape.

Once our house search crept a bit further west, we got acquainted with the roads west of Tiverton and things got a whole lot more palatable.... Instead of standing outside estate agents windows shouting "owwww much?" in our best TOWIE accents, we were saying "Hmm, not bad". We took our bikes at Easter this year for a three dayer in and around Tiverton and that's when we discovered the Taw Valley. The valley straddles North Devon and Torridge Districts, extending into Mid Devon to the south. Sure, you can still find some big ups, but the landscape is gentler and nicely positioned between Exmoor to the North and Dartmoor to the South. Croyde, Westward Ho and Bude beaches are less than twenty miles away – An hour on my best bike!!

The real gem of the area is the historic railway line running between Exeter and Barnstaple – known better as the Tarka Line. "Did you ever read Tarka the Otter?" The railway meanders its way through the Taw valley beside the river. It's just lovely.

So, with great excitement and some sadness, we are leaving the beautiful Essex Suffolk borders in October. I cannot bring myself to leave the CCS just yet and plan to race the 2026 season in Orange. Annie is also keen to remain a Cambridge member for a while longer, like me she has been welcomed into something very special.

I've got my eye on a couple more club records which might just be possible on the right day but it's likely in 2027 that we'll both ride for a Devon club but always remain second claim members at the CCS.

We're already planning a weekend back on the parish at the end of March 2026 for the MMH. I'd love to go one better than 2025 and win it, but I am at the mercy of younger and frankly insanely fast competition like Will and Tim. If they don't ride, I might just have a chance...

Thank you CCS for making me feel so welcome. I've loved every minute X

Ian Short.



And here we have something a little special...

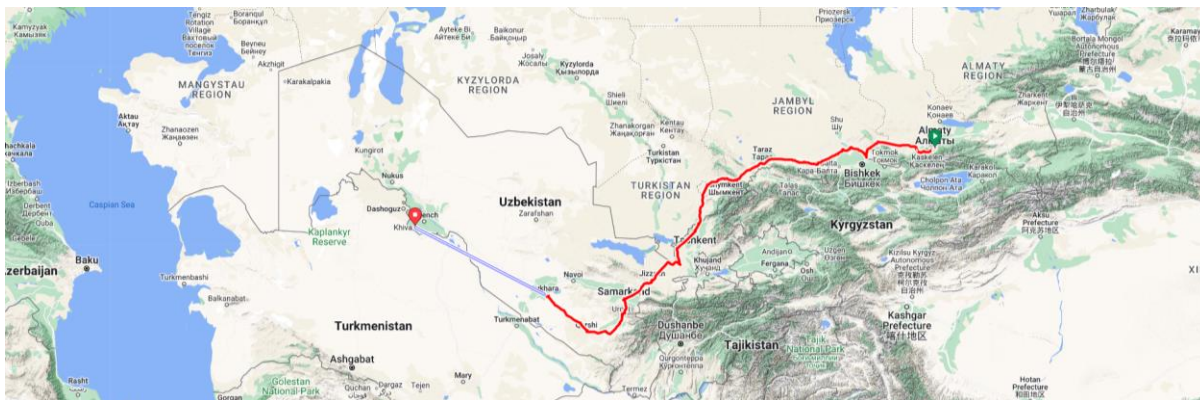
by Gavin McGillivray (part one of three)

Cycling a Stretch of the Silk Road 2022

In 2019, mid-way through four years in India with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), my wife Katie & I decided that at the end of the posting we would return to England to be near family & friends. The idea struck that I could end my largely overseas career by cycling home. It's hard to cycle out of India (Pakistan too dangerous, Nepal & Tibet too complicated). So I planned to fly up to Almaty in Kazakhstan, then roughly follow the medieval merchant routes together now known as the Silk Road. A passage for goods, slaves, faiths, disease, know-how and treasure. Successive leaders – from Alexander through Genghis Khan and Timur to Tsarist then Bolshevik Russia - conquered and re-conquered the lands through which the routes passed. Rulers would leave their mark through constructing mosques, madrassas, mausoleums, cathedrals, forts and palaces. I planned a route that would take in some of these remarkable buildings, taking 5-6 months to get home.

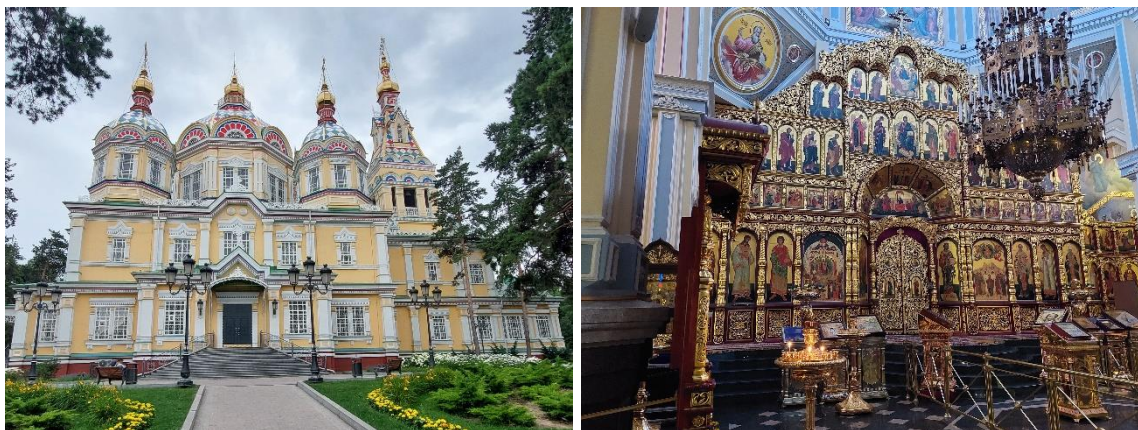
The time came to leave India in mid-2021. Covid had closed down frontiers and my ride. I resolved instead to do a shorter trial run of a stretch of the Silk Road in 2022. I prepared by cycling long miles through the British winter and spring – and doing an online course in Russian.

In June 2022, I flew from London to Almaty in mid-June with my 2019 Lichen Green Temple Adventure Disc bike.



My route

Tsarist Russia had built Almaty's Ascension (Alexander Zelensky) Cathedral – still one of the world's largest wooden buildings – in the early 1900s. After the Russian Revolution - the Bolsheviks closed it. And nearly all other churches, monasteries, mosques and synagogues – along with religious practices like wearing the burka. The Cathedral was restored and reopened in 1997.



Ascension Cathedral, Almaty

After two days in Almaty, the staff of my small hotel gathered to see me off. I wheeled the bike – replete with 19kg of panniers and 5 litres of water – to the top of the precipitous ramp to the street below. The

bike plummeted down, yanking me over on top of it and into an ungainly heap on the pavement. My shin gashed and dignity wounded, I waved ruefully at the troubled-looking staff – and set off.

West along the highways across the steppes. To the South Kyrgyzstan and the Tian Shan mountains – called the Mountains of Heaven as they appear to hang in the sky. The roadside crickets loudening with the heat of the day – reaching 40°C by mid-morning.

Thenceforward I would set off at 5am. Coolth and golden dawns a heartening start to days. Soon women would start sweeping the dust in front of their houses. Later they would cast water on the same ground in an effort to keep their homes cooler.

Far horizons, straight mostly flat roads, head-down, pedal pedal pedal.



Almaty - Uzynagash Road

Scrunch – I'd scythed into a car drawn up on the roadside. Water bottle and other bike paraphernalia flew off – but bike and car thankfully undamaged. The couple inside the car bewildered.

No other touring cyclists at all. In fact few cyclists, except a handful of (generally older) men pottering around on bikes in villages and towns. But no-one took any interest in this lycra-clad pensioner. Such a contrast to India – where a crowd of curious people would quickly gather.

Roads in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan tended to fall into just three categories; rutted dirt tracks, crumbling deeply-fissured pot-holed tarmac roads - and modern highways. I generally opted for the latter – trying to keep within the narrow side lane.



Temple 2019 Adventure Disc



Shymkent - Tashkent Road

I'd reckoned to cycle about 50 miles a day and find accommodation en route. I took no camping gear. Poor reckoning. Places to stay proved few & far between. In the first week – on three days I needed to cycle 100 miles or so to the nearest hotel or B&B. Overall – I averaged about 70 miles a day.

Which brought me quicker than expected to the Uzbek border. A small pack of mostly women rushed eagerly towards me. “*Change money? Best rates!*” I opted for a kindly-looking woman and retrieved my wallet. In one fluent blur of movement, the woman plucked the Kazak Tenge notes from the wallet, counted them, plunged them deep in her bag, announced her rate, thrust several wads of Uzbek Sum into my hand, and walked off. I had little idea how much Tenge I had had, and none as to the rate or amount of Sum received in exchange. I was speechless in admiration at her professionalism.

In Tashkent I enjoyed a happy evening with long-time friend Roli Asthana, now impressively UN Resident Representative for Uzbekistan.

Before the Bolshevik closed them, Tashkent had over 30 Russian Orthodox Churches. Only two have re-opened. By contrast, many mosques, madrassas & mausoleums have been lavishly restored. New ones built too. The 2,400-capacity Minor Mosque that opened in 2014 had been constructed in just 12 months at President Karimov’s command.



Minor Mosque, Tashkent

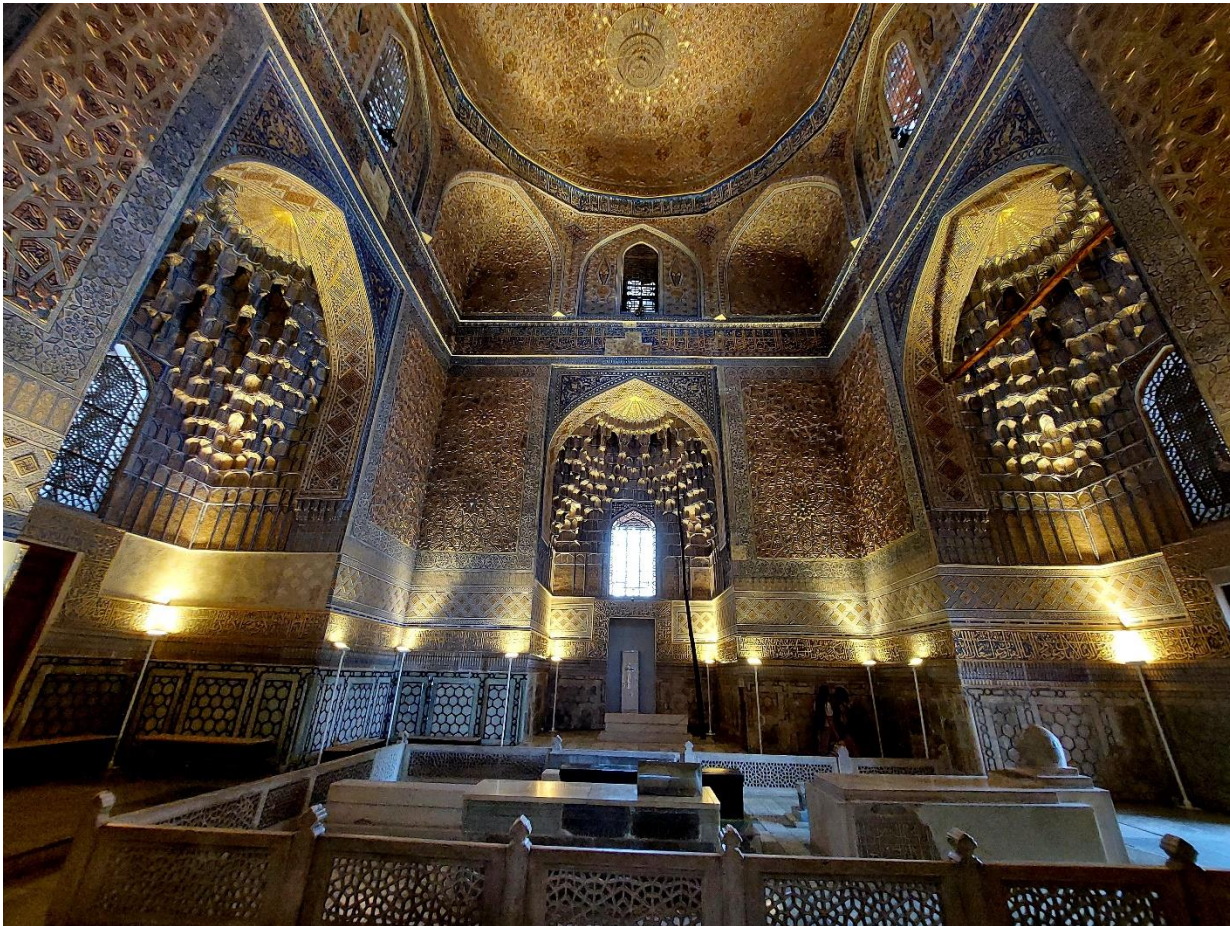
Not far away, the US\$150m Center of Islamic Civilisation megaproject is taking shape, reportedly funded by Alisher Usmanov, an Uzbek oligarch who made his money in precious metals and now lives in Russia.

Cycling seemed safe compared to taking taxis in Tashkent. These rocketed around. In one I closed my eyes as – at full speed - the deaf-mute driver conducted a hand-signing conversation via his mobile screen. With both hands.

In general, I felt safe. In both countries there is a practice of paid hitching. Would-be travellers flag down

cars anywhere, enquire as to the destination - and agree a price to be taken. On roadsides leaving towns, people gather to catch a hitch, including single women. Elsewhere groups of men wait on recognised street corners for the chance to be picked up for day-labour. On pavements and verges, men & women sell fruit & veg – not often in desperate little piles, and sometimes from car boots.

On to Samarkand; the mausoleum of Timur (who by the early 1400s had conquered from present-day Turkey to west India); the Registan Square (flanked by three madrassas – built in the 15th C and 17th C), and the Sheik Zinda Necropolis (where Qutham ibn Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet Muhammad, is believed to be buried) - fabulous beyond words.



Timur's mausoleum



Registan Square, Samarkand



Sheikh Zinda Necropolis

The Islam practiced seems gentle and tolerant. The guide I hired for a day was a Muslim. He unhesitatingly showed me round churches and a synagogue as well as mosques. He and I were welcome in all.



Samarkand - Shahrissabz road

In Shahrissabz, at dawn men congregated in and around the mosque to begin the Eid al-Adha festival to honour Abraham's faith in God. It felt as much an act of community as faith.



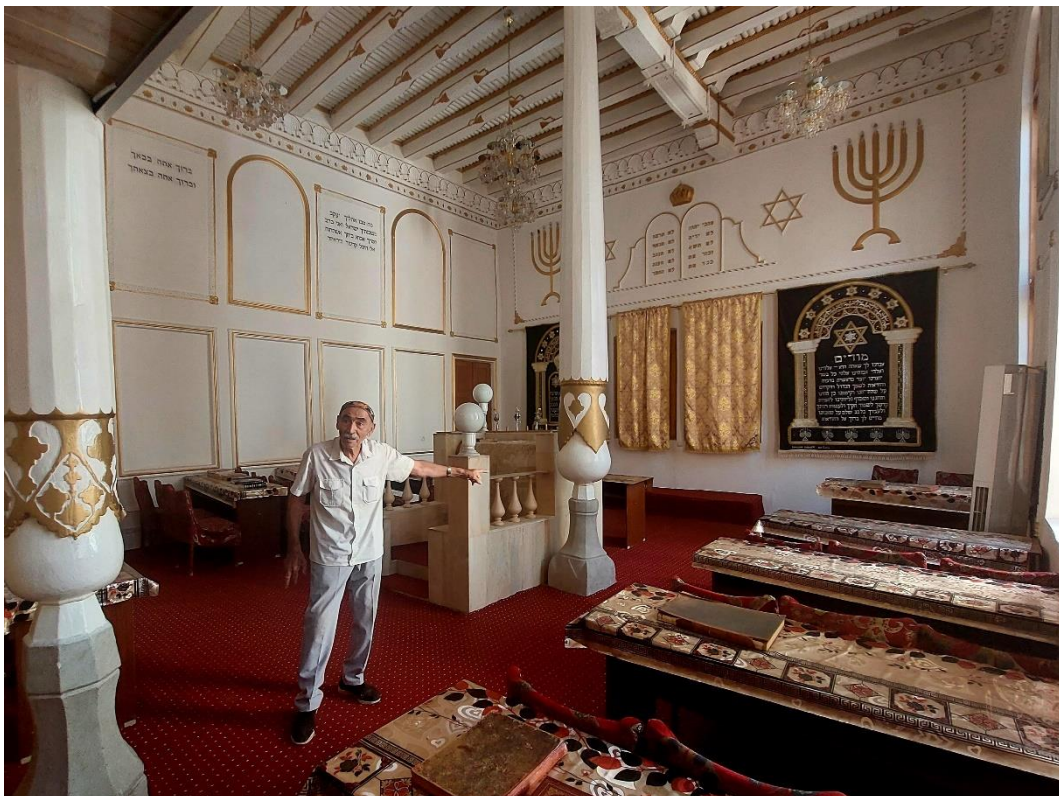
Mosque in Shahrissabz

Then through Qarshi and on to Bukhara.



16thC Nikolayev Bridge, Qarshi

The caretaker of the 17thC synagogue in Bukhara was glad to have a visitor. On learning I was cycling, he asked my age, showed me his trusty bike and told me proudly that he was 85. The synagogue had once served over 30 thousand Jews. Fewer than 200 remained. In a narrative paralleled throughout Central Asia, some Jews fled when the Bolsheviks closed their synagogues and most of the rest emigrated in the 1970s-90s.



Bukhara Synagogue

Bukhara proved the end of my c.1,000-mile ride. I was steamed, scrubbed, stretched and pummelled in the 16thC Bozori Kord hammam – and felt very good for it.



Bozori Kord hammam, Bukhara

Bukhara's narrow streets, domed bazaars and disused madrassas are lined with stalls selling traditional crafts - carpentry, metal-work, stone-masonry, pottery, miniature painting, rugs, weaving and embroidery. The sales-people proud of their wares and not at all pushy.



Craft stall, Bukhara (note the high "portal" – a feature of many buildings – to catch the breeze)

I am ridiculously pleased with the Suzani embroidery I bought. About 1.5m square, the Suzani is made of four panels, each of which would have taken a woman some six weeks to embroider.



Suzani embroidery, Bukhara

I wonder if craft is a neglected area in the field of international development? Backing craft-people to find more lucrative markets and design products that appeal to these, can be a means of capitalising on the asset that all poor people have – their labour, while reinforcing identity and community. We need further thought and innovation on how to do so in non-patronising and cost-effective ways.

I couldn't cycle further west. The Uzbek President had just declared a state of emergency in Karakalpakstan, Uzbekistan's westernmost and poorest state, and closed it for visitors. The demonstrations and crack-down had left 20 dead and 240 injured. Earlier in 2022, 200 people had died in protests in Kazakhstan. Both countries are liberalising markets in a carefully-calibrated way following the reigns (repeatedly extended by "free & fair" elections) of Uzbek President Karimov (1991-2016) and Kazak President Nazarbayev (1990-2019). The liberalisation obviously only goes so far.

I balked at the 280 miles desert ride from Bukhara to Khiva with nowhere to stay en route. Instead, I went by train. In 2019 the Uzbek government had moved the inhabitants out of Khiva's medieval centre to make way for tourist accommodation. The city is full of wonders – but akin to a museum.



Pakhlavan Mahmoud Mausoleum, Khiva



Khiva at dusk

From Khiva I took my bike on trains back to Tashkent – and flew home. Next year I plan to take up the journey for a few months more