



The Spindle JANUARY 2026 cycleclubsudbury.com

Well, that's another year chalked up and we're now at the start of a new year of cycling. Hurrah!

As described by Robin below, the first 'event' will be the Reliability Ride on Sunday 25th January so it's straight back into the cycling year!

Obviously, there are no results to report but we welcome new member Mark Arnold to the club – happy riding Mark!

As ever, if you would like anything included in The Spindle do let me or Robin know! Next edition due in March

Sharon



ROBIN'S BITS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY SPINDLE BITS

COMMITTEE MEETINGS; 7PM, 4 FEBRUARY, 4 MARCH at the Stevenson Centre

AGM/AWARDS EVENING

A reasonable attendance of about 35; that still leaves 60 others, though!. No major changes at the AGM; Jim Bird has now joined the committee.

A vast number of trophies were handed out, The majority to Ian Short, with Caroline Wyke not far behind. Thanks to Rob and Evelyn for organising the evening and buffet.

GUESS THE DISTANCE RIDE, 27 DECEMBER

Organised by Matt Skeats and family, the route took in local roads selected to be rideable in winter weather. We stayed dry, and not as chilly as 2024. The event was won by Steve Barnes, who was 0.1 miles out in his guess. Others ranged wildly, from 12-21 miles.

SUBS NIGHT, 8 JANUARY

Given the poor weather forecast, it was surprising anyone turned up! If you've not yet rejoined for 2026, see below.

Membership subs for 2026 are the same as last year;

Youth (up to 16) £5

Junior (16 - Dec. after 18) £8

Senior (18-65) £20

Senior (65-80) £15

Over 80 and Life members £0

Family £26

Second claim £12

Associate £4

Temporary; 6 wks £5

In addition, First and Second claim members can pay up-front for a season of Thursday evening time trial rides; £65 for the season of 20 time trials.

Ways to pay

- Payment by bank transfer is the preferred payment method. Bank details; Barclays Bank, Account name Cycle Club Sudbury, Sort code 20 83 50, Account number 30308188; ***please use your surname as a payment reference.***
- Payment also possible by post, with a cheque (to Cycle Club Sudbury) posted to Robin Weaver, 14, Chapel Street, Bildeston, IP7 7EP.

UPCOMING EVENTS

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!

Starting and finishing at The Stevenson Centre, Great Cornard Post code CO10 0WD.

Selection of distances and target times.

46 miles in 3hrs 30 mins, sign on at 0845, first group starts 0900

46 miles in 2hrs 45 mins, sign on at 0900, first group starts 0915

27 miles in 2hrs 30 mins, sign on at 0915, first group starts 0930

27 miles in 1hr 45 mins, sign on at 0930, first group starts 0940

Route maps and GPX files can be downloaded from the CC Sudbury website

www.cycleclubsudbury.com

Event organiser; Andrew Hoppit

Mobile; 07528 498036

Email - andrew.hoppit@gmail.com

Entry fee £6.00 includes refreshments

(To help us save time please bring correct entry fee if possible - there will also be a card machine for cashless payments).

Sign on the line on the day

This is a British Cycling registered event and for insurance purposes requires all riders to wear a hard shell helmet conforming to CE standard EN1078. No helmet, No ride.

Andrew Hoppit 07528 498036

CCS COLCHESTER TRACK EVENING; January date, to be confirmed; look out for an email.

An opportunity for winter cycling in a traffic-free environment, on a super smooth but grippy surface.

CCS MAD MARCH HILLY OPEN TT, SUNDAY 29 MARCH

This may seem a long way off, but if you're planning on riding, entries close on 10 March.

Nearer the time, there'll be an appeal for helpers with catering, marshalling etc, so even if you're not riding, keep the date free! All over by lunchtime.

AGM / Prize Giving 2025

PHOTOS! * UNFORTUNATELY THE SECOND PHONE CAMERA USED DID NOT WORK PROPERLY AND SO NOT ALL MOMENTS ARE REPRESENTED











Bits & Bobs...

Bob Bush, who recently moved to Southport, contacted me (Robin) this week to ask me to pass on his best wishes to all CCS members. He's settling in well, with family not too far away.

He's currently without e-mail (being fixed), but his other contact details are;

Flat 4
Park Crescent Court
Park Crescent
Southport
PR 9 9LF

01704 526852

07778 805145

I'm (Robin) sure he'd love to hear from anyone at the Club!



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07933877712

Congratulations to Steve Barnes for having the closest guess of 16.4 miles on the 'Guess the Distance' ride - actual distance 16.3 miles. Other guesses ranged from 12 to 21 miles. He now has the privilege of organising next year's event!

An excellent route organised by a family group of Martin, Matt, Seb and Ollie. Thanks team. Relatively flat roads with no muddy bits, and no-one got lost!

The Cock Horse was nice and warm after a chilly ride, with chips/cheesy chips available.



West Suffolk Wheelers
Suffolk Punch 2026
The Reliability Ride
Sunday 15th February

4 Routes Available 14,38,62 & 80miles
Everyone welcome to join in & test your winter fitness

Registration 8:20 at HQ. IP32 7BH
First riders leave club at 9am.
Entry fee each route £5.00 on the day
Refreshments available at additional cost



East Anglian Air Ambulance

All proceeds go to East Anglian Air Ambulance



And here we have something a little special...part 2

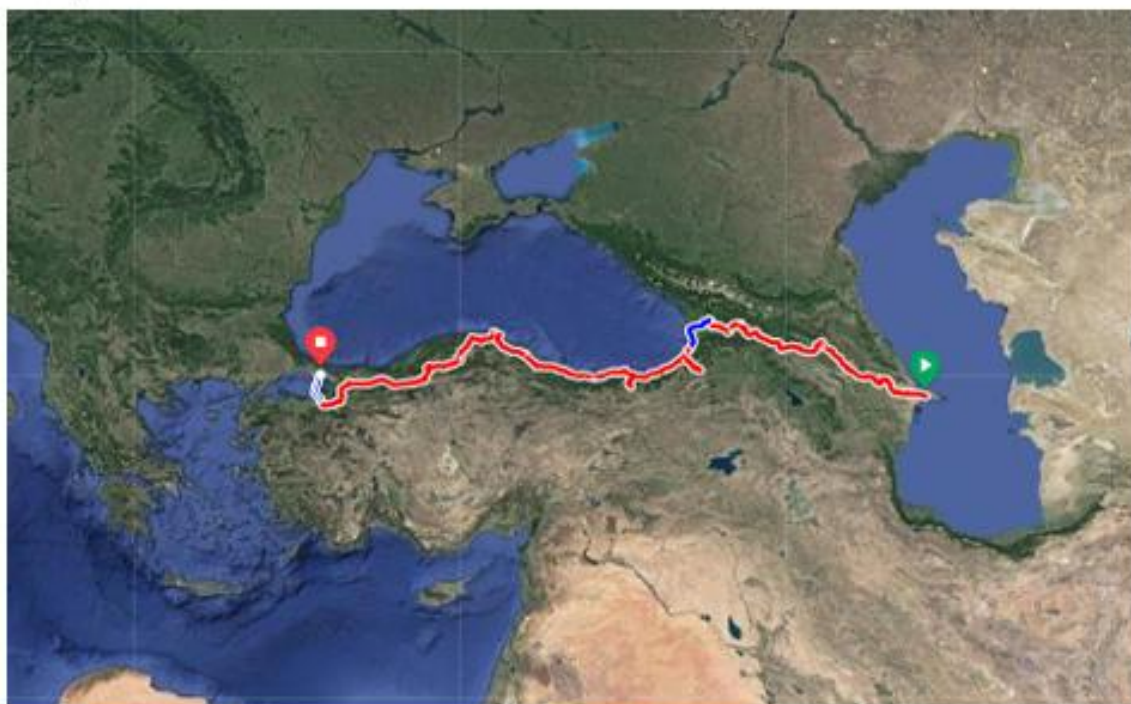
by Gavin McGillivray (part 2 of 3)

Cycling another Thread of the Silk Road 2023

In an endeavour to cycle home from India (in stages) via some of the many routes that make up the Silk Road, in 2022 - I [biked across the steppe](#) from Almaty in Kazakhstan to Bukhara in Uzbekistan. As I planned the onward ride for 2023 - there were two options: north-west across the Karakum Desert, or south-west through Turkmenistan and Iran.

I choose a third – and in April fly to Baku – the capital of Azerbaijan on the western Caspian shore. From there, I aim to cycle across the Caucasus then along the Black Sea to Istanbul. Roughly the route through which the 6thC Byzantine Emperor Justinian had attempted to draw the Silk Road merchants to Constantinople away from their main thoroughfare through Persia. With the Greater and Lesser Caucasus mountain ranges to the north and south, the camel trains passed through a melange of topographies, religions (Georgia and Armenia were the first countries to declare themselves Christian – in the 4thC), cultures, ethnicities (still over 50 today) and languages (over two dozen today).

After taking Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans inherited the Byzantine hunger for the Caucasus – and over the centuries fought for it with Persia / Iran, Russia and other powers – directly and through support to the countries that comprise the region – today Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.



My route

In Baku, I meet up with a friend from Delhi – Mohit, who is to cycle with me to Tbilisi. At 6ft 4" tall, a successful entrepreneur, investor, impresario and inexhaustible raconteur – Mohit is a striking and stimulating companion. Baku is already barricaded to the hilt for the imminent Formula 1 Grand Prix – and filling up with petrol heads. In 1900, Azerbaijan produced half the world's oil. Today it is less than 1% - but oil & gas still dominate Azerbaijan's economy. To an unhealthy extent. Azerbaijan lies third from the bottom of the Global Economic Diversification Index – above only Angola and Congo.

We make an inauspicious start. Setting off comfortably mid-morning – our intended hotel at the edge of Baku's interminably scrappy outskirts turns out not to exist (Google Maps was to prove reliably unreliable throughout the trip). The next hotel is some 80 km further

on. We pedal on through the afternoon – up the first of many long inclines and against the swelling gusts of a debilitating headwind that would blow against us for three long days. The golden sunset illuminating the bare brown hills is little comfort, and none at all as we begin to be plagued by punctures. We repair the third by torchlight. The fourth finds us still 30km short of the next hotel – and we give up. We chain our bikes to a speed sign and – in the pitch-black evening and unoptimistically - try to flag down a lift.

To our surprise & delight, after only 10 minutes - a small ancient Lada saloon rattles to a halt. The burly driver greets us loudly and unintelligibly - and takes over. He piles our panniers into the little boot and motions us to unlock our bikes (thieves would lift out the sign-post he motions) – which he piles on top, the lid agape. Mohit somehow folds himself into the front seat – knees jammed against his chest. Off we set and gather worrying speed – our saviour making mobile-calls with one hand, gesticulating enthusiastically with the other – bellowing in a tongue beyond our ken over the Lada's howls and clatter.

But he delivers us to a roadside hotel – and makes light of our profuse gratitude.

Onwards and often upwards along the southern flank of the Greater Caucasus mountains, a few times above the snow line. Villages and towns notably Sheki sometimes telling of past glories. Everywhere groups of men sitting around smoking and drinking tea from tulip-shaped glasses. Some beckon us over to share their tea and wish us well in gestures.



Samaxi to Lahit, Azerbaijan

Roadside billboards insist that Nagorno-Karabakh is Azerbaijani. Roadside shrines commemorate those who died fighting for it. (Since the ride, Azerbaijan has fully retaken the Karabakh enclave conquered by Armenia in 1992-94. Like Israel and Gaza – there is no undisputed version of this century-long conflict).

Georgia is immediately different. The blessed absence of oil resources evident in the diversity of enterprises, workshops and farming. Glorious rolling green countryside. Some vast fields left over from Soviet collective farms – but mostly family orchards, vineyards, meadows and vegetable plots. Roadside and village churches turn out to hide rich frescoes.

The hilltop medieval town of Signaghi could be Tuscan.



Signaghi, Georgia

We reach Tbilisi at dusk in sheeting rain. The downpour, steep cobbled streets, dense traffic and remorseless one-way system make cycling no fun. I stop in a roadside gully coursing with rainwash to try to discern a route on my drenched Garmin – and curse the van that draws up practically on top of me. The driver winds down his window and asks if he can help. The rain eventually clears to reveal galleried houses, some in magnificent disrepair, hanging over precipitous streets and the Kura River. Graffiti is stridently anti-Russian. Black-clad grey-bearded priests tread resolutely between the many churches. In the Sioni Cathedral, first built in 6thC, destroyed and reconstructed several times since, the wondrous polyphony chants of three women flood an atmosphere redolent with the prayers of centuries. Incoming worshippers lose their hurry as they cross themselves and pray before their chosen icon or mural.



Tbilisi, Georgia

I cycle west along undulating country roads – a couple of broken spokes casualties of the cobbles. Georgian shepherd dogs lunge with intent. Too fast to out-run, so I leap off and behind my bike as a shield. Now & again I pass inert Soviet factories and plant. They litter the town of Chiatura, which squats in a steep valley bottom – linked precariously to the manganese mines beyond the crags above by decrepit cable-cars and wire bridges.



Chiatura, Georgia

Two broken spokes become three then four then unrideable. I wobble to a canyon-side hostel in Martvili. The nearest possible bike repair shop I can identify is 150km away – in the Black Sea coast border town of Batumi. I find a van – and am driven at rash speed through a region that used to be known as Colchis – in Greek mythology the home of the Golden Fleece and the destination of Jason & the Argonauts. At the Batumi bike store – I eventually manage to engage the splendidly-disinterested owner (smoking and chatting absorbedly with friends), who agrees to replace the spokes.

The next day - I set off in the rain. Easy riding along the flat coastal road to the border and Turkey. The country gearing up for what are forecast to be knife-edge elections in two weeks. Will Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – Prime Minister from 2003 to 14, and President since – and for the first time facing a united opposition - win another term?

Turkey does infrastructure. The coastal road is high-quality dual carriageway. Even minor roads seem good ones. Tunnels run deep and true. I venture inland and uphill through steep tea gardens. Tea-pickers' calls to each other across the hills mingle with calls to prayer from village mosques. Eight dams already stem the Çoruh River, nine more are to be built. The Artvin hydro-dam is appallingly gouged out of the Pontic Mountains – but the Chorokhi reservoir it creates is a thing of beauty. On the way there, I had foolishly spurned the new tunnel and spent a morning labouring up the many hairpin bends of the Cankurtaran Pass. Coming back in the rain, I ride into the 5km tunnel then down through the chilly dark heart of the mountain soaked and fast – and emerge the other end catatonic with cold.



Chorokhi Reservoir, Turkey

And a couple more broken spokes. I stop at the town of Rize. Election campaign flags bedeck streets lined with independent shops – an astonishing number (here and it turns out, throughout Turkey) selling hand-made sweets; myriad types of halva, baklava, Turkish delight, milk puddings, sugared nuts and cakes. The only bike shop I can find sells mostly kids trikes – but the young man in charge assures me (thank goodness for Google Translate) that yes – his dad is in town and can replace spokes. Come back at 10 o'clock tomorrow.



Sinop, Turkey

I do so – to find son & dad sitting contentedly at a small table, drinking tea, smoking and eating bread, cheese and dubious sausage. Tea and eats are pressed upon me and – after rather stilted Google-enabled pleasantries – I enquire innocently whether it had been difficult to fix the wheel. Oh – the wheel – they respond heartily. We'll look at that after we've all finished breakfast – have some more sausage. Two hours later – after watching and wincing as they set about my precious bike with rusty screw-drivers and other not-fit-for-purpose tools – the wheel did in fact seem to be fixed.

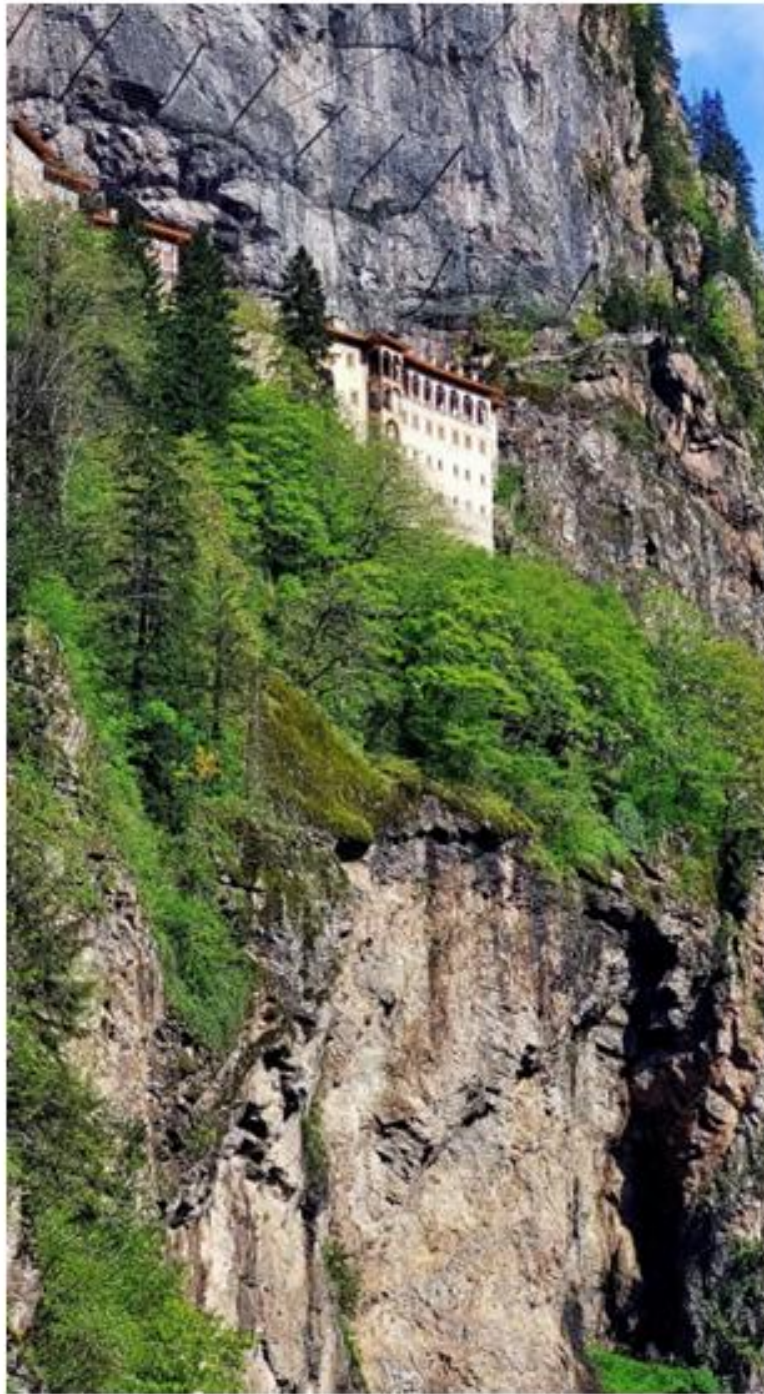
On along the coast - the tea gardens increasingly replaced by jerry-built medium-rise office & apartment blocks, and traffic thickening - to the historically important trading city of Trabzon. An opposition rally

in Meydan Park is doused by a downpour. The international press is agog with alarm over likely electoral unrest – but the Turkey I see appears to be going unconcernedly about its daily business. Few hotels or eateries serve beer – but maybe that's always the case in this moderately Muslim country.

The Greeks had sailed along the Black Sea coast since before 700 BC seeking trade. Some settled and built their places of worship. Trabzon's Sophia Hagia Mosque was built in the 13thC as a church and converted into a mosque after the 15thC Ottoman conquest. The Ottomans plastered over the Christian frescoes, but these were rediscovered and restored (with the help of Edinburgh University) in the 1950s and 60s.



Trabzon's Sophia Hagia Mosque, Turkey



Sumela Monastery, Turkey

The next day is election day. To be out of the big city and keen to see more frescoes, I ride inland 40km and up 1,200m to the famed 4thC Sumela Monastery. En route I detour hopefully up precipitous tracks to 14thC Kizlar Monastery – mostly ruined, and 15thC Kaymakli Monastery – a ruin. I wind on up, round a corner – and stop in wonder as I catch sight of the Sumela Monastery hanging high off a mountain cliff. Wandering Greek priests Barnabas and Sophronios founded the monastery in 386 AD. With a few interruptions, Greek monks lived secluded lives there for the next 1,500 years, including following the Ottoman conquest, during the First World War, the 1916-18 Russian occupation and the 1919-22 Greco-Turkish war. But this was to end in 1923.

In the early 20thC, some three million Christians – mostly Armenian or Greek – lived in present-day Turkey. Averting a danger to national security, before and during WWI, Turkey conducted campaigns of forcible expulsion of Christians. Hundreds of thousands died or were killed. During the Greco-Turkish war – both sides

committed further massacres. In an attempt to pre-empt further violence,

Greece and Turkey agreed in the 1923 Treat of Lausanne to an extraordinary population exchange – or rather mutual expulsion. Turkey ejected some 1.3 million Greeks. Greece threw out 0.5 million Turks. (Like Karabakh and Gaza – there is no telling of this terrible saga that is commonly agreed).

I get back to Trabzon in the evening. Election results are coming in. Erdogan has done much better than the polls predicted, despite 50% inflation and even in earthquake-struck southern Turkey which he allegedly left to its own devices. The opposition alleges foul play – but half-heartedly. Mass protests do not materialise. As no party reaches 50%, the elections will go to a second round – but public opinion is that the opposition has missed its chance and Erdogan will win the re-run in two weeks' time.

In Trabzon, I'm joined by a school-friend Tom, who will ride with me for 11 days. One of the few saving graces of aging is to have what my mother used to call "old slipper friends". Tom and I first met just over half a century ago. We have seen each other but occasionally since school – but ease straight back into companionship. We ride long days along the largely flat coastal road, the grey Black Sea to our right, unlovely apartment and office blocks to our left. The tea gardens behind gradually give way to hazelnut groves (Turkey produces three-quarters of the world's hazelnuts) and, further west, to fields of wheat stubble and others flooded for rice.

We reach Çatalzeytin, about half-way along the Black Sea coast, and turn inland. A 1,900m climb over 69km through managed forests then rolling grasslands, snow patches to the side of the road, brings us exhausted to Devrekani by mid-evening. The proprietor of the only hotel in town tells us he has no free rooms. We plead. Through Google Translate he instructs us "don't be victims – let me see what I can do". He allows us rooms on condition we vacate before 7am.

Which we do – and have an unchallenging ride into Kastamonu. Here in 1925, Atatürk announced the banning of wearing Fez, like his discouragement of the hijab, an attempt to rid Turkey of what he saw as backward traditions and religious practices. This was not gentle persuasion.

Dozens of those who protested against the garb changes were condemned to death.

Tom flies out from Kastamonu. On the eve of the next round of elections I cycle on to Safranbolu. Grown wealthy in the 18th & 19thC through trade & saffron, Safranbolu's merchants built fine timber-frame houses, many now converted into boutique hotels. During election day, some shops open – but most people stay home. There is a sense of inevitability about Erdogan's winning. I think of the novel *The Autumn of the Patriarch* – Gabriel Garcia Marquez's magnificent tale, in interminable sentences some several pages long, of a dictator who reigns on and on and on



Safranbolu, Turkey

I cycle up a long incline, the roadside peppered with stalls selling garlic, corn-on-the-cob and salt. Stall-holders summon me to share their tea and wish me well on my way. My relief at reaching flatter terrain is tempered by a sudden shower of hazelnut-sized hailstone - stinging my bare thighs and pinging off the road-side barriers. And so on westwards, over rolling farmland and through minor towns to Izmit (Nicaea in times past) and then south to Bursa inland from the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara.

Bursa, for half of the 14th C the Ottoman Empire's first capital, now a major city. The city is packed with historic mosques and a fine bazaar. But after cycling 3,200km and 33,000m of ascents - I have run out of puff and cannot do it justice.

I take the ferry to Istanbul, my 2023 journey's end.



Istanbul, Turkey

Part 3 in March Issue!



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