The Portsmouth tri-vets event was on a very hot Saturday, 6 July when 12 participants completed a 100 km ride, and a further 4 went on to ride 100 miles.

The route was a figure 8 centred on Havant Spring Centre. The first stage was 100 km from Havant to Havant starting at 9am following a delightful route along the South Coast Cycleway, before riding into Bosham, including a short off-road section across the harbour, made possible by a low tide that enabled those tracking the ride to show they could cycle across water! We continued around Bosham Hoe to Fishbourne from where the route joined the off-road Centurion Way from Chichester to some excellent elevenses at West Dean Post Office. The aim was to follow quiet lanes and cycle tracks in order to avoid the busy traffic around the Goodwood Festival of Speed wgich was clogging major and minor roads for some distance around the Goodwood Estate. This proved to be a successful strategy, thanks to the cycling infrastructure in West Sussex. The ride continued along the valley from Singleton, through East Dean and over Duncton Hill to a very good pub lunch at Badgers in Coultershaw Bridge, with a sub-group enjoying a picnic lunch at Graffham, supplemented by the Village Stores. We then followed the line of the South Downs in lovely sunshine along quiet country lanes until we recrossed the Downs using the off-road Butser cutting cycleway which Portsmouth CTC was instrumental in developing. Our route back to Havant was along more quiet lanes through Chalton, Finchdean and Rowlands Castle, returning to the Spring Centre at 4:45pm. The Spring had agreed to open specially for us, and provided a cheerful welcome and some really tasty, perfectly cooked food. It was a convivial end of the day for the 100 km riders.

By 5:30pm the 100 mile riders were refuelled and ready to start the second loop of 60 km, this time following lanes and cycle paths in Hampshire, flirting with the flanks of Portsdown Hill, but avoiding going into the Downs again. We stopped for snacks at the Co-op in the pretty village of Titchfield before heading back to the coast at Titchfield Haven to follow cycle tracks along the seafront, with some great views of the Isle of Wight which seemed very close in the clear evening light. In Alverstoke we headed back North to Fareham, once again following off-road cycleways, and the Eclipse busway which is reserved for buses and bicycles only; the cycling infrastructure in Gosport deserves much wider publicity as it is a model from which the whole nation can learn. In the spirit of negative splits, after the rather leisurely 100 km loop during the day we were able to up the pace for the evening loop, completing the 100 miles by 8pm.

It was a day of perfect riding weather, excellent food to keep us going, and no mechanical incidents to slow us down. One thing that several riders commented on was the number of miles we were able to ride on completely traffic-free routes, and also the low traffic density in the lanes we used for much of the remainder of the ride (admittedly some would be very challenging in a car, so we knew we were unlikely to see much traffic). Our route showed how riding a bike can open up a much bigger network of roads and tracks than is visible to drivers of motor vehicles, and while main roads on a hot summer Saturday were fraught with too much traffic the cycling routes enabled us to enjoy a tranquil passage through some delightful countryside.

We look forward to the next one in 2022!

With kind regards

John.