

Ballymena Road Club review of the season.

Ballymena Road Club – Scott Roof Tiles – cyclists once again had a varied and eventful year in 2010 both in the racing season and in the leisure and touring events.

Junior rider Matthew Brennan finished the season as Ulster junior road race champion and also Ulster junior 25 miles time trial champion and there were numerous individual successes across all categories including Aaron Swan's victory in the All Ireland under 13 youth's criterium championship.

Reliability trial attracts huge support.

The first Ballymena Road Club – Scott Roof Tiles – event of the 2010 season was their annual reliability trial on 24th January.

A total of 137 cyclists from all over NI and also from Donegal, traveled to Rex Bonar House for the start. This popular event attracts more participants than all the other road club “open events” put together.

One rider missing from the reliability trial was BRC's Philip Bremner, although he was present at the start to help send everyone on their way. Philip was a victim of black ice on the previous day's club run when he came off and broke his collar bone and was taken by ambulance to Antrim area hospital.

Another pre-season event which was a great success was the women's training day at Ballymena.

Ryan Connor, who had been recently installed as chairman of the Cycling Ulster road commission and Ballymena Road Club member Louise Fullerton, who is one of the founder members of the Ulster women's association, were the organisers of the day's activities.

Twenty five ladies assembled at Fitness First in Pennybridge, they had come from as far away as Armagh, Coalisland, Dromara, Phoenix and Ards as well as the local Ballymena Road Club girls who included Judy Mahon, Brigid Quinn, Hazel Hughes, Maria Shannon, Joanne Kee and Louise Fullerton.

McCullough gets off the Mark at Newry.

There was early season success for BRC's Mark McCullough, from Portglenone, who finished in second position in the John Haldane road race at Newry on 7th March. The event took place on the perfectly flat dual carriageway between Newry and Warrenpoint where Mark took part in the “A” race for first, second and third category riders.

Mark has quickly acquired a reputation as a fast finisher but he was unable to get the better of Ballymoney's Jason Henry on this occasion and it was Henry who was declared the winner by the width of a tyre.

PJ Logan cup

Ballymena's Colin Scullion followed up his fifth place in the Annaclone Grand Prix on the opening day of the season by going one position better at Coalisland on Sunday 14th March.

Colin took part in the fourth category race which saw a maximum field of 60 riders take part over the Bush 100 motor cycle circuit.

Bremner finishes fourth in "comeback" race.

Roger Aiken overcame a seven minutes handicap to win the Cicli Sport GP, "A" race for first, second, and third category riders, at Coagh.

However the good news for Ballymena Road Club – Scott Roof Tiles – was the return of Philip Bremner who was riding his first race of the season after having broken his collar bone following a crash during a club training ride on 23rd January.

Philip finished in a very creditable fourth position and he will be hoping for a continued improvement in his fitness levels before he tackles the P&O tour of the north at Easter.

Sun Shines on Wallace Caldwell memorial road race, as Ahoghill's Ryan Connor takes second place.

Ballymena Road Club's first open race promotion of the season was their annual Wallace Caldwell memorial road race at Galgorm on Saturday 10th April. The event was favoured with near perfect weather conditions and this no doubt contributed, not only to a maximum turnout of sixty riders, but also to a near record number of over 50 finishers for the 79 miles race.

Ryan Connor and Stephen Gallagher, who had been in the leading group all day, attacked and drew clear on the final climb up Tully and at the top were 25 seconds ahead, and when Gallagher crossed the finish line at Galgorm they had 38 seconds in hand over third placed Simon Williams. The winner's time for the 79 miles was 3 hours 6 minutes 4 seconds; this was quicker than most other years despite a 3 miles detour at Portglenone.

Best of the BRC riders was Conor McAllister in eleventh place at 9 minutes 16 seconds. Leo McAllister came in 17th at 9.23 with Matthew Brennan and Colin Scullion also in this main field at 9.23.

McAllister wins selection for Ireland under 23 team.

Ballymena Road Club cyclist Conor McAllister was rewarded for his excellent fourth place ride in Easter's P&O Tour of the North by gaining

selection for Ireland's under 23 team which took part in two Nations Cup events, the Cote de Picarde (14th April) in France and ZLM Tour (17th April) in Holland.

Road club's tourists have extended stay in Majorca.

A party of Ballymena Road Club and Michelin cyclists found themselves stranded in Majorca following the Europe wide grounding of air travel. The party traveled out on Sunday 11th April with "Sport Active" and was due to fly home the following weekend but they finished up staying an extra week because of the volcanic ash cloud.

Philip pursues victory at Broughshane.

There was a very encouraging turnout of 23 riders for the 11 miles Australian Pursuit race at Broughshane on 14th April.

This was the first event of this season's extensive calendar of BRC club race events.

A group of 20 to contest the final sprint at the 30mph sign on the approach to Broughshane where Philip Bremner proved best from Mark McCullough with Matthew Brennan third.

Youth time trial, Sheddings to Broughshane 5 miles

1 Craig Crawford 11.08 (2) Aaron Swan 11.39 (3) Marc Moody 13.10

4 Emma Gordon 15.15 Also Maeve Savage 12.49

Ballymena Road Club held their second big classic event of the season, the "Blair International Transport" Red Hand Trophy road race at Broughshane on Saturday 8th May.

RESULTS (1) Glen Kinning (East Antrim) 2.28.32 (2) Gary Cranston (East Antrim) (3) Paul Vaughan (Sport Active) (4) Ryan Connor (IRC) (15) Chris Beattie (Ballymena) (16) Matthew Brennan (Ballymena)

Ballymena's Simon Taggart also finished and he won the third BRC prize.

Philip wins tour of the Mourne

BRC rider Philip Bremner put his early season injury well and truly behind him when he recorded his best ever win when he was first home in the tour of the Mourne road race at Newry.

Philip opted to miss his "home" race, the Red Hand Trophy, the previous day to concentrate on the Co. Down event and his decision paid off as he was included in a 12 rider break which went clear early on in the race. BRC

junior rider Matthew Brennan was in the break too and he was to take an excellent 9th place.

Ryan wins to extend league advantage.

Ahoghill's Ryan Connor (Irish Road Club) scored his fourth successive win in the Tommy Givan Memorial road race at Hillsborough on 15th May.

Ryan led home a four rider breakaway group at the end of the 66 miles, Maryland Wheelers promotion, and in doing so extended his overall lead in the Slane Cycles Ulster Classic League.

BRC held their popular H&M Wilson cup road race over three laps of the Caddy course on 12th May. This year's race was the first round of the four race inter club league series between BRC, Carn Wheelers, Bann Valley and Bann Wheelers with participants from these visiting clubs swelling the entry to 57 riders. BRC's David Dougan proved best and won the 25 rider bunch sprint by a clear margin from Bann Wheelers visitors Robert Kennedy and C McIntyre.

David Dougan followed up his win in the H&M Wilson cup event with a victory in the annual Tommy Smyth cup road race at Bellaghy on Monday 24th May.

The event was very well supported this year with 41 riders taking part in the eight laps, 24 miles, senior and junior race.

The youth race was held over one lap of the circuit with victory going to Adam Kerr from East Tyrone's Harry McCombe and Adam McCullough.

(4) Marc Moody (5) Stefan Wills. Results Tommy Smyth Memorial 2010
(1) David Dougan (Ballymena Scott Roof Tiles) (2) Glen Kinning (East Antrim) (3) David Neill (Madigan)

Craig is schools champion.

Dunclug college student Craig Crawford successfully defended his Ballymena schools' champion's title at the mini stage race event at Broughshane on 26th May.

Craig, from Ballykeel, won a closely fought contest by just seven seconds from Steven Carruthers of Cambridge House with another Cambridge House student, Aaron Swan third overall.

Cambridge house retained the Brian Russell inter school's team trophy.

Touring

The Ballymena Road Club touring section cyclists successfully completed their annual "Nine Glens challenge" on Sunday 25th July. Entry fees amounting to £200 went to the Chernobyl children's appeal charity. The tour of 70 miles included 25 miles of climbing. Well done to all the participants and many thanks to Marian McQuillan and her daughter Brenda for their excellent catering and back up support and also to the Silver cliffs holiday park in Ballycastle who kindly provided free use of their showers and changing facilities.

McNeilly wins at Clough

One of Ballymena Road Club's newest club members, Stephen McNeilly from Cushendall, took the honours in the 28 miles road race at Clough on 27th July.

The event was held over eight laps of the Mid Antrim 150 motor cycle racing circuit, as part of the village's week long celebrations, and it attracted 21 starters with another five in the youth race.

The youth race was held over one lap of the same course with Adam McCullough winning in 11 minutes 14 seconds, some 33 seconds ahead of second placed Marc Moody (3) Josh Barr at 41 seconds (4) Emma Gordon at 2 minutes (5) Stefan Wills at 2.39.

Stephen McNeilly then followed up his success at Clough by winning the "B" race at the Madigan grand prix at Eden, near Carrickfergus, on Saturday 7th August. McNeilly and Steven Harkens (Madigan) went ahead 11 miles into the first lap and opened up a gap of one minute. At one point this was reduced to 40 seconds, but they moved further ahead on the second king of the hills.

Stephen won the "two up" sprint from Harkens with the third rider, Jason Taggart (Ballymoney) finishing 1 minute 20 seconds behind.

One of the highlights of the season was Matthew Brennan's victory in the Ulster junior road race championship at Dundrod on 22nd August, when the title races were held over the famous Ulster grand prix circuit.

Conor McAllister just missed out on a medal in the senior event where he finished fourth.

Road Club race secretary Tommy Wilson took fifth in the Veterans' title race while Stephen McNeilly and Simon Taggart were second and third in the fourth category (non championship) race.

Louise Fullerton's challenge in the ladies title race was halted by a puncture.

Youths at Dromara

Craig Crawford from Ballykeel finished second in both the under 14, 4 miles time trial and road race championships on Saturday 21st August at Dromara. He recorded 10 minutes 58 seconds in the time trial which was won by Mark Downey of Banbridge in 10 minutes 18 seconds.

Adam Kerr was seventh with 11.53 and Aaron Swan ninth with 11.57.

The under 14 road race also went to Downey who won by 57 seconds from Crawford with a time of 57 minutes. Swan was sixth and Kerr eighth.

Get well soon

The same weekend saw Maria Shannon knocked off her bike at the roundabout on the Ballymoney road, at the junction of Parkway.

Maria is still recovering from several fractures sustained in the collision and hasn't been able to cycle since the incident. Everyone at BRC and the Michelin clubs continue to wish Maria a successful and complete return to full fitness.

Aaron Swan wins Irish championship for under 13 youths.

Another highlight of the season came in the Irish National youth cycling championships took place at Coalisland on 28th August.

There were three events with a time trial and criterium held on Saturday followed by a road race on Sunday.

Once again Cambridge House student Aaron Swan, from Clough, the 2009 under 12 Irish youth champion, proved his worth on the big stage and won the criterium championship for under 13 riders this time around.

Aaron also finished second in the road race and was fifth in the time trial. Craig Crawford and Adam Kerr were in action in the under 14 title races. Craig was second in the time trial, fourth in the criterium and sixth in the road race.

Adam Kerr had a 22nd place in both the time trial and criterium events and was 19th in the road race. Well done to all the boys for a great weekend's results.

BRC cyclists held their final club road race of the season at Glarryford on Wednesday 25th August. There was a field of 25 riders for the senior and junior race, for the Will Henry cup. A group of 13 contested the final sprint finish of the season and Mark McCullough again proved best in the gallop and won the race for a second successive season. His winning time was 49 minutes 30 seconds. This was the final round of the club's road racing league and Matthew Brennan, who was runner up to Tommy Wilson, in the 2009 series made no mistake this season and won with a total of 49 points. The final round winner Mark McCullough was second overall with 39 points while Sam Davidson had an excellent first season with the Road Club and finished third overall with 27 (4) Alan Blair 26 (5) Stephen McNeilly 24 (6) David Dougan 23. Altogether thirty riders registered at least one point in the series.

The club's fun tour series commenced on 4th September with 57 participants, and it was to prove a great success over the next twelve weeks. The snow and frost called a premature end to this year's efforts as the thirteenth and final week had to be cancelled. Nevertheless the series was concluded and the town hall reception was held on 7th December when, on a freezing cold night, over 40 of the cyclists from the fun tour series were the guests of the Mayor Mr. Maurice Mills at the town hall.

There had been a record number of medalists in this year's series with thirty three earning bronze, nineteen silver and twenty nine gold. Five cyclists achieved full attendance. The charity fund also reached a record total with £683 being collected over the series and this, when combined from the £200 raised during the nine glens challenge, meant that a cheque for £883 was presented to the Chernobyl Children's appeal NI.

The touring section's chairman Patsy McGurk also embarked on several successful fund raising activities which saw him complete a ride in Egypt last month. The fundraising cycle event took place over six days in the Nile and covered 335 kilometres from Mount Sinai to the valley of Kings by mountain bike.

The fundraising campaign was for "Buy a brick, build a home for life." and aims to build a centre which will be purpose designed and built to meet the needs and demands of adults with learning difficulties.

Gold for Brennan, silver for Fullerton in 25 championships.

Ballymena Road Club – Scott Roof Tiles – cyclist Matthew Brennan, the recently crowned Ulster junior road race champion added the Ulster junior 25 miles time trial title to his growing list of honours when he was fastest in Sunday's championship event at Woodgreen.

Matthew recorded a winning time of 58 minutes 28 seconds which was just 11 seconds slower than his personal best which he set in May this year.

Louise Fullerton clocked 66 minutes 05 seconds to take the silver medal in the ladies championship which was won by Heather Wilson of Maryland wheelers in 59 minutes 30 seconds. Tullygarley's Elle Forrest (Bann Valley) was third with 67.48.

Conor McAllister missed a medal in the senior title race by just 25 seconds, when his time of 54.31 earned him fifth position behind gold medalist John Heverin (Clann Eireann) who had a super fast time of 53 minutes 00 seconds.

Steven Workman, who was riding his first championship, recorded an excellent time of 55 minutes 04 seconds for seventh place. Our third team member was Chris Beattie whose 58.24 took him to 23rd place. This BRC team just missed out on the team championship medals; their total time was 2 hours 47 minutes 59 seconds. The winners were East Antrim whose total was 2 hours 47 minutes 32 seconds.

Matthew takes bronze in 10 championship and secures "Weefoot trophy"

There was a turnout of 60 riders for the Ulster 10 miles time trial championships at Woodgreen on 19th September.

Matthew Brennan was suffering from a bug and had difficulty throughout the race. His main motivation was to secure the season long "Weefoot trophy" and he was successful in that regard. His relatively slow 25 minutes 09 seconds earned him the bronze medal in the junior championship to add to the gold which he earned in the 25 miles title race the previous weekend. Juniors (1) Conor McIlwaine (Errigal) 23:30 (2) Chris Henderson (Roe Valley) 25:04 (3) Matthew Brennan (Ballymena RC) 25:09 Women (1) Elle Forrest (Bann Valley) 26:33 (2) Mary Boyd (Roe Valley)

27:34 (3) Kay Hack (Bann Wheelers) 28:16

Hand cycling (1) Darrell Erwin (Ulster Hand cycling) 37:55

Ballymena riders well placed in Women's leagues.

Louise Fullerton took second place in the final standings of the Ulster Women's Association Time Trial League series, just four points off Rachael Withers in top spot. Maeve Savage took a creditable fourth with Joanne Kee in equal seventh position.

Maeve proved best of the Ballymena girls by finishing eighth in the Road Race League with Joanne ninth, Louise fourteenth and Maria Shannon in twentieth. This has been a superb result for the Ballymena Road Club quartet of Ladies and shows they can mix it with the best in Ulster.

BRC held their annual prize presentation dinner at the Adair Arms Hotel on 19th November where Commonwealth Games cycling team manager Cormac McCann was guest of honour.

The club's main champions for the 2010 club race season were:

Steven Workman, the senior time trials best all rounder and the time trial handicap league and the Australian pursuit league winner. Bobby Currie veterans' time trial BAR on age standard. Louise Fullerton, ladies time trial BAR. Matthew Brennan junior time trials BAR and road race league winner. Adam Kerr youth time trials BAR, youth league winner and youth road racing league winner. Maeve Savage ladies racing league winner. Joe McAuley from Knockeen won the Friendship cup as "clubman of the year"

Get well wishes to Sean.

BRC veteran cyclist Sean Wright fell badly on Tuesday afternoon 21st December and has sustained a broken leg. Sean had been out on his mountain bike and was less than a mile from his Tullygarley home when he skidded on a patch of ice and slid off. He had surgery last Wednesday, 23rd December, and has had a "cage" fitted to support the broken bones. Everyone at BRC wishes Sean a complete recovery, although it will be a slow road back to fitness as the cage must remain in place for three months.

Happy new year to all local cyclists and if you aren't a member of Ballymena Road Club yet then please resolve to join this year. No more ice and snow please and certainly no more fallers in 2011.

R Wilson