

Cyclists have sights set on 2011 racing season.

Although 2011 has only just begun Ballymena Road Club – Northstone - cyclists are already preparing for the new season.

Registration has commenced and will continue each Monday night in January and many, who intend to compete this year, have already signed on and have commenced their pre season training.

Having said that, training was severely curtailed again last weekend because of the dangerous icy road conditions. The only safe way to train at present is on an indoor “turbo trainer” or in the gym.

Each year a series of pre season “reliability trials” takes place in the weeks leading up to the start of the open race programme of events.

The first Ballymena Road Club event of the 2011 season will be their annual reliability trial on 30th January.

Last year 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.

The club is hoping that the current spell of sub zero weather conditions will be well and truly behind them by the end of the month as the RT is a valuable source of funding the annual expenses incurred in running the club house premises.

The new BRC race secretary Hugh McCullough is already thinking of the racing season and he has drawn up the programme of club time trials and road races which are scheduled to commence on 13<sup>th</sup> April with the Australian pursuit event on the Sheddings course at Broughshane.

Week two of the club race season, on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> April, will see a 10 miles time trial on the A26 Woodgreen to Dunsilly course. The fastest rider on the night will be awarded the Stan Finlay memorial rose bowl. The Stan Finlay 10 event usually takes place each year on Boxing Day but had to be postponed in 2010, again because of the ice.

Cycling Ulster has also issued their draft calendar of open race promotions for the forthcoming season. Ballymena Road Club will again play a full part in the hosting of races with three open events to their credit.

Their first of the season will be the Wallace Caldwell road race at Galgorm on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

Ahoghill’s Ryan Connor was runner up in 2010 when 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.

In the closing stages of the 2010 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 the pair had 38 seconds in hand over third placed Simon Williams.

The, Blair International Transport, Red Hand Trophy road race is scheduled for Broughshane for Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

Glen Kinning (East Antrim) won the Red Hand Trophy in 2010. The previous year he and Ryan Connor had made history when they tied for first place. Connor finished fourth in 2010 after either being in the leading group or ahead alone, for the entire race.

2010 result (1) Glen Kinning (East Antrim) 2 hours 28 minutes 32 seconds  
(2) Gary Cranston (East Antrim) (3) Paul Vaughan (Sport Active) (4) Ryan Connor (IRC)

Normally the road club's third open race promotion is the Tommy Smyth cup "Town and country" event at Bellaghy, which was won last year by BRC's David Dougan. However the race sponsor, John Smyth, has expressed a desire to see this event take place in his local Moneymore area and at the time of writing it looks unlikely that this will be a Ballymena RC promotion this year.

Some of the Ballymena Road Club racing committee members also play a pivotal role in the organisation of the Easter P&O Irish Sea Tour of the North stage race which is scheduled to take place between Good Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April until Easter Monday 25<sup>th</sup> April.

The town will again host the event with either the Saturday or the Monday stage taking place in the borough.

#### Calendar

Cycling Ulster will hold the 2010 season's Prize Night this Saturday 15th January 2010 at Massereene Golf Club Antrim

The presentation of medals will be to the Ulster and Northern Ireland Champions, also on the night the Slane League winners along with the voucher winners in the Ciclisport.com Wee Foot Trophy will receive their prizes. Ballymena's Matthew Brennan won the Wee Foot trophy in 2010. The Martin Birney and Sport Active trophies for time trials will also be presented. The evening will start at 8pm and be finished by 11.30pm. Tickets cost £20 for adults and £10 for youths and are available by contacting the CU website.

Registration continues this Monday.

Ballymena Road Club cyclists will continue to “sign on” for the 2011 season this coming Monday 17<sup>th</sup> January. A wide variety of membership options are available:

Cycling Ireland is continuing with their “beginners” membership fee for 2011. This will cost £25 and includes insurance for cycling (excludes racing). The BRC fee and NICF fee is also included in this £25.

The “cycling membership” (non racing) fee is £43. This “cycling membership” category includes third party liability cover for those assisting or officiating at a club event.

Other category fees are: Club racing membership £71. Restricted open racing licence £97. Full racing licences - adult £128. The junior membership fee is £51, while under 16 youth membership costs £36 with under 14 youth £10.

All first time Cycling Ireland applicants must produce a copy of either: birth certificate, passport or driving licence for ID purposes. (Please bring a photo copy of the appropriate document with you when coming in to the club to sign on; this will be posted to Dublin along with your application form) Those seeking an International licence for overseas competition need to supply a photograph with their application and also an additional fee of £18.

BRC treasurer Richard Wilson asks club members to pay by cheque which should be made out to Ballymena Road Club.