

This year's Mildenhall Rally was yet another roaring success for the club, surpassing previous years in terms of fun and results achieved! A record number of riders took part in races ranging from the grass track, roller racing, cyclo-cross and duathlon. The club's first promotion of the roller racing (which returned to Mildenhall after being absent for several years) turned into a fantastic evening and was well received by the crowd which packed the hall to full capacity. (Click on 'Read More' to see full article, or follow the 'Gallery' link in the navigation bar above to see a selection of pictures).

Sam Connolley took his first of several wins over the weekend with victory in the U16 Boys grass track omnium on the Saturday, topping his 2nd place in 2008. It did not come easily though as Sam looked certain to win until his chain came off in the penultimate event. In order to draw for or win the title, he needed to win the event and the current leader (Alex Avery, Spalding CC) to finish no higher than third. This was in fact the final result and with the lads drawn on points, Sam was allocated first place based on his performance in the final race, with Avery finishing second.

Also racing on Saturday was Lucy Harper who took part in her first ever race which was the U12 Girls grass track omnium. She started with a fantastic opening time trial, beating all the girls as well as all the boys except for two. In the second event Lucy came down hard in a crash on the final bend but showed courage by getting back to her feet and continuing with the day's racing. Some particularly good rides in the sprint events saw Lucy finish second out of seven girls in the omnium; a fantastic debut to bike racing!

Sunday opened with the children's duathlon in which Lucy Harper again rode and despite fatigue from the previous day, took second placed girl (13th overall) in the 11-13 years age group.

Sam Connolley took to the grass track again that afternoon with the seniors alongside Neil Chapman. Due to record numbers of entrants, riders were split into A, B and C categories, and the Maldon boys were put in the B group. Sam had a bittersweet day, winning the Devil-take-the-hindmost and scoring third in the keirin with dominating rides, but had his chain come off in the 3km scratch as he looked likely to win that also. Neil also rode strongly which took him to 4th place in both the devil and the 3km scratch. The two lads then teamed up with Ken Baker (Colchester CC) to ride the qualifying round of the team sprint where they rode fast enough to guarantee a place in the minor final on Monday where they would ride of for 3rd or 4th.

Sunday evening saw the Maldon's promotion of the roller racing which drew a very large crowd, with many having to stand as seating filled up rapidly. The strongest attendance of riders was from the Maldon and from the Chelmer CC. Maldon's George Wood put in some fantastic rides to win U16 500m TT and 750m scratch, and although he did not win the handicap, all three riders in the final were within less than a second of each other in a thrilling race. In the senior event, Mark Beattie, Jim Gould and Sue Wood all took part and rode well; Jim Gould in particular who had asked to pull out but stepped back in to make up numbers due to other retirees. Despite not wanting to ride, he won his heat in the handicap and accidentally securing himself another ride in the final where he rode strongly to second place. At the end of the evening, Mark Beattie was brought up on stage and presented with thank-you gifts for him and his dad, Ivor, as it is thanks to their engineering skills that the rollers are back again. Paul Gregory was also thanked by the Mildenhall CC for organising the event on the night which thrilled the crowd and left the riders itching for another go next year.

Monday morning brought the cyclo-cross to Mildenhall. Lucy Harper rode again and turned in one of her best rides of the weekend as she claimed 1st girl and 9th overall in the U12s race. A total of 9 Maldon riders took part in the senior madison cyclo-cross: Sam Connolley & Neil Chapman (12th), Gary Wood & Sue Wood (15th), Chris Ridley & Kevin Bunton (36th), Nick Manley & David Dodsworth (38th), and Vince Monk (20th) who paired with Philip Peacock (St Ives CC). Sam & Neil rode particularly well but a bad crash on the final lap as a rider cut up Sam cost them a top 10 place and injuries from the crash would be felt by Sam all day.

The final round of grass track racing saw Sam and Neil joined by Chris York and Chris Ridley. Sam was a strong presence yet again, winning the Men's Devil but other strong rides were stopped by more mechanical problems. Chris Ridley performed consistently well in the endurance events, regularly placing in the top 10, and Chris York put in a fantastic ride to win his heat of the handicap and bag a place in the final where he rode with Sam who finished 3rd. Neil & Sam teamed up with Ken Baker (Colchester CC) again and despite a great ride were unable to beat their rivals for a medal and took a strong 4th place.

The event everyone had been waiting for, the team pursuit, did not disappoint. Having finished 3rd in their first attempt last year the Maldon boys had to try and match or better that feat but with a new line-up. Chris York & Neil Chapman rode again and were joined by Sam and Gary Wood who was the lead-out man and doing his first ever ride on the grass. They rode a terrific qualifying time to secure a place in the minor final (interestingly, the result of the top 4 teams in qualifying was identical to last year!). An even better ride in the final saw the boys nearly catch their rivals, Preston Park and secured their place on the podium in 3rd spot. The podium was in fact nearly identical to 2008 but in the final Cottingham Coureurs took revenge on last year's winners Team Welwyn to beat them to 1st. But this gave the lads another chance to spy on rivals and to learn what they have to do next year to climb a few steps higher on the podium.

## Mildenhall 2009 Report

Written by Rob Tyas

---

On the whole the weekend was a fantastic success. Thanks must go to Andy Ballentyne (Easterly CC) and Neil Withington (Andersons Racing) for loaning bikes in order for us to field a whole team in the team pursuit in face of mechanical problems. A great weekend was had by all - roll on 2010!