

GOODBYE TO THE 2021 SEASON

WELCOME 2022
Cyclists Love Cake



By Norman McNair

The SHAPE International Cycling Club brought the curtain down on 2021 with a trip to Gent in November 21 and kicked off the new 2022 road biking season by joining curtain-raising events around Belgium in February this year.

Here we explain some of the things club members have been doing in recent months;

So what makes a bunch of cyclists from SHAPE set out early one cold Saturday morning in November to ride 90km to Gent to watch yet more cyclists ride round a velodrome and then ride 90km home the next day?

That was the question on my mind as I joined my fellow cyclists from the SHAPE International Cycling Club (SICC) as we left SHAPE heading to Gent. We were on our way to the 6 Day Festival of Indoor Cycling at the Velodrome in Gent, which has become somewhat of a tradition for club members to attend.

While 90km may sound daunting the route had been well planned by Ride Captain Ronald Bultsna with only a few hills to climb and a promised coffee and cake stop at the half way point. The group of 8 cyclists were also joined by another 6 club members who decided on motorised transport. Both groups met up in Gent and headed out to dinner on Saturday evening before going to the Velodrome. Watching professional cyclists ride bikes with no brakes and only 1 gear at speeds of more than 70km/per



hour was an amazing spectacle.

The Gent Velodrome is affectionately known as the Kuipke and is unique in the world of European velodromes, as it's much shorter at 166 metres long compared to the standard velodrome which is normally 250m. This makes it a close and intimate venue with incredibly steep banking on the corners.

Frankly, the racing can be confusing, especially when riders are looking to gain laps on each other as well as taking points on sprint laps. Some of the races include the Deryn race where riders follow a pedalled

motorbike around the track reaching amazing speeds. The Elimination race, the Scratch race, Madison, one lap time trial also form part of the event. At the end of the 6 days the points are added up and winners declared.

After a fantastic evening of watching the professionals in the velodrome and following a hearty breakfast it was time for the SHAPE cyclists to head home. Despite the damp conditions spirits were high as the group set off from Gent. Having enjoyed the apple cake and traditional Flemish Mattentart so much the day before, the same café was selected in Geraardsbergen for

the half way pit stop. Refueled, the group arrived back at SHAPE having enjoyed a fantastic weekend.

One of the benefits of joining SICC is you automatically become a member of the Belgium Cycling Federation. This gives us access to the many cycling events that are held throughout Belgium all year round. These include mountain bike, gravel and road bike events. Such events are very informal and accessible for cyclists of all abilities and are a great way to see the country in which we live. The 2022 road biking season kicked off officially on 26 Feb 22 with a series of events where SHAPE members were out in force. This included the Kuurne-Brussel-Kuurne event near Kortrijk and the more local affair in Dour (about 20 mins from SHAPE). The cost of participating is often less than 10Euros for club members and a range of distances from 20 – 150km is usually available, with snack and refreshments stops provided. Cycling in Belgium really is for everyone.

Returning to the question I posed at the beginning; the camaraderie of group riding, pushing yourself to achieve things you didn't think possible, seeing the beautiful Belgium countryside, feeling the wind on your face as you race downhill, the adrenaline rush from climbing hills or just having fun. Any and all of the above is what makes us do it.

A final question; want to know more about the SHAPE International Cycling Club? SICC is available for all Shapians to join. The club aims to cater for all abilities. From April – October there are weekly organised rides around the local area. At weekends club members post rides they're planning themselves on our FB page or join rides organised by other Cycling Clubs in Belgium. Winter spinning sessions are offered at the SHAPE Gym by Club president

Pino Rampini during lunchtimes and evenings up to 4 times per week. Road biking and mountain biking are both popular with club members. Annual membership costs 90Euros and for this you get a fantastic professional quality SHAPE Cycling Club shirt or shorts, Cycling Insurance and membership of the Belgium Cycling Federation, and all the support and encouragement you need from a club with more than 100 active members.

**Drop the SHAPE Cycling Club a line at:
shapecycling@gmail.com**

**or visit the website
www.shapecycling.com
and come and join the fun**

**YOU WON'T BE
DISAPPOINTED!**

