

# FITTING TRIBUTE



The old Stannington Cycle Race is returning to the streets thanks to the determination of a local enthusiast.

**A**t the age of 10 James Thompson received his first bicycle – a mountain bike from Langsett Cycles. This marked the beginning of racing in the British premier calendar (elite road racing), riding for a national level team and resurrecting the Stannington Road Race.

With the help of Rutland Cycling Club, which celebrated its centenary in 2008, the road race has been revitalised, though it is somewhat different to the event that originally took place between 1951 and 1967.

A gruelling course of up to 90 miles, the old race took riders through areas such as Malin Bridge, Rivelin, Ringinglow, Bamford, Glossop, Burbage and Hathersage. Today, heavy restrictions have forced James to change the course dramatically. It is now 75-miles, consisting of 14 five-mile laps around Stannington, which James

estimates will take riders about three-and-a-half hours to complete.

“I’ve raced for four or five years and now ride for the Hope Factory Racing team but I wanted to put something back into racing locally,” he explains. “I knew about the old Stannington Road Race and I thought as it was on my doorstep I should do something about it.”



James Thompson



Image courtesy of Andy Jones

Attracting a strong field of elite level racers it’s a fitting tribute to the original and James hopes it will continue for many more years, even expanding to replicate the old race more closely and possibly incorporating a tour of Strines.

It starts at 9.30am on 10 June at the home of Our Cow Molly, Cliffe House Farm, which alongside main sponsors Langsett Cycles is sponsoring the race with Bradfield Brewery and Nourish Me Now. With goodies from each on offer – including a barbecue at the farm – it’s a great spectators’ sport and this is enhanced further by the Our Cow Molly ‘King of the Mountains’ competition. This prize goes to the winner of individual sprints within the race, known as ‘primes’, which are thrilling to watch.

James admits that road cycling sometimes gets a bad press because of road closures causing traffic issues but insists a few minutes’ delay on the roads is worth the talent it produces as a result. “What people don’t see is the link between this and the success that we will hopefully have at the Olympics. Without races like this you’d never get to that level.”

His dedication to promoting the sport in Yorkshire motivates him to undertake great challenges such as the Stannington Cycle Race. “I train six days a week and probably cover about 250-300 miles a week. It’s the physical part of the sport which I like, the training, the keeping fit, the competitive element. It’s also great living in Stannington and though I’ve travelled a lot to places like Australia, New Zealand, America, Asia and Europe, for me Loxley Valley is the best place to ride.”