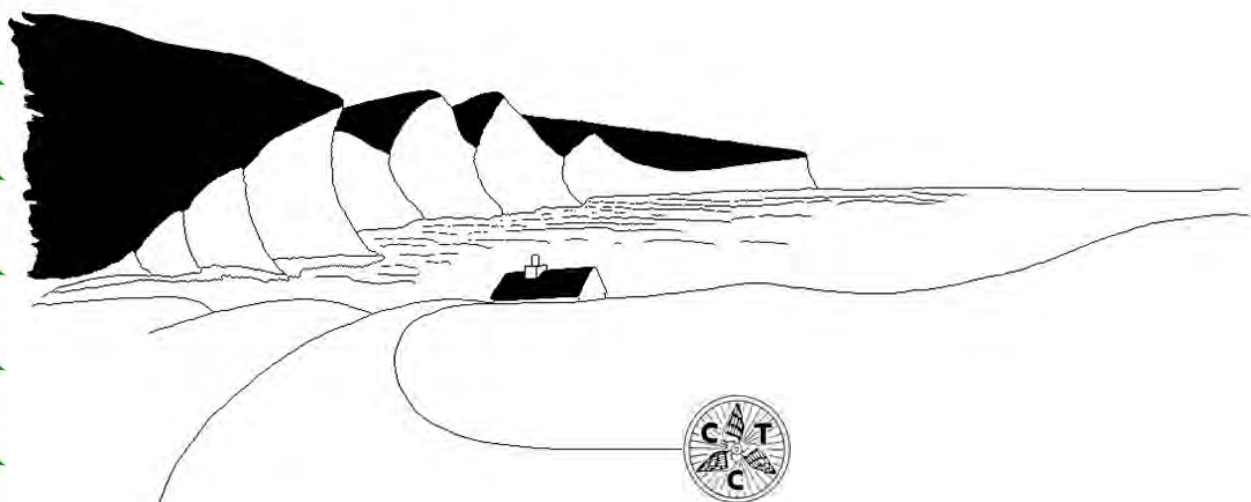


The

Coaster



the magazine of the

**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB**

No. 58 – Christmas 2016

£1.00



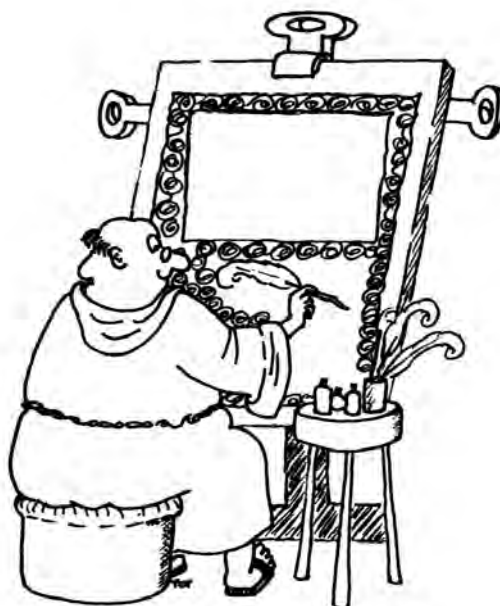
**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB**

President: Mrs Patricia Graham

*Secretary & Editor: David Rix, 27 Fullwood Avenue,
Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 9SP
Email: ctceastsussex@gmail.com*



"THE COASTER"



**Issue No. 58
Christmas 2016**

From the Editor's Desk.

Welcome to the Christmas 2016 edition of "The Coaster".

I'm afraid that this edition of the magazine is a bit shorter than usual, and I would welcome a few more contributors. Anything that might be of interest to fellow members is welcome - it doesn't just have to be cycle tours!

Some interesting contributions this time, with touring reports from Rob Foster and a reprinted article of mine from 27 years ago. Also an expanded version of John Regan's "Octagenarian" letter in the CTC magazine, a tribute to the late Frank Dewberry and a few other bits and pieces.

So, enjoy your cycling this Winter, when you can. When you can't, why not stay indoors with your copy of the Coaster or find a nice country pub with a roaring fire and enjoy a pleasant read over a quiet pint.

David.

THE CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

The Cyclists' Touring Club (originally known as the Bicycle Touring Club, the present title being adopted in 1883) was founded at Harrogate in Yorkshire on August 5th 1878 by Stanley Cotterell. It is Britain's national cyclists' association, devoted to the encouragement of cycling for recreation and as a means of transport, and to the protection of cyclists' interests.

The C.T.C. was the first Touring Club to be formed in the world. Membership details may be obtained from:-

C.T.C. National Headquarters,
Parklands, Railton Rd,
Guildford, Surrey GU2 9JX

Tel: 01483 238337
e-mail: cycling@ctc.org.uk
website: www.ctc.org.uk

or from the local East Sussex Group Secretary or one of the Section Secretaries whose addresses are listed below.

EAST SUSSEX CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

website: <http://www.eastsussexctc.org.uk>

Secretary: David Rix, 27 Fullwood Avenue, Newhaven, East Sussex, BN9 9SP
E-mail: ctceastsussex@gmail.com

Sections

Mid-week Section: Esther Carpenter:

10 Maplehurst Road, Baldslow, St. Leonards on Sea, East Sussex, TN37 7NA

Seaford & Newhaven: Ann Rix:

3 Sutton Drove, Seaford, East Sussex, BN25 3EU

" *THE COASTER*" is published by the East Sussex Cyclists' Touring Club. The opinions and comments expressed herein are the opinions and comments of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the East Sussex Cyclists' Touring Club or its Sections. Contributions on any matters relating, even vaguely, to cycling (or on any subject of interest to cyclists) are always welcome and should be sent to the Editor at the address given at the front.



A VISIT TO MADONNA DEL GHISALLO – THE CYCLIST’S CHURCH, ITALY.

This June I was working near Milan in Italy, and made a pleasant detour to visit the famous small church above Lake Como, the ‘Madonna del Ghisallo’. Situated 2,000’ up, on the Giro route, it claims to be the home of the patron saint of cycling in Italy. You may or not believe that, but it is a fascinating place to visit, along with the Museum of Cycling next door.

To quote the website (www.museodelghisallo.it) :

“The climb of the Ghisallo (from the north) is traditionally travelled by the Giro di Lombardia and has also been repeatedly included in the route of the Tour of Italy . For this reason, the Madonna del Ghisallo is particularly venerated by cyclists, and on the initiative of the then parish priest Fr Viganò Ermelindo (1906-1985), in 1949 the Pope Pius XII proclaimed her patron saint of cyclists universal.

Next to the sanctuary there is the Museum of cycling; in the square in front there is the monument to the cyclist.

For many decades there is between the champions of cycling (mostly Italians, but not only) the custom of donating their memorabilia to Santuario del Ghisallo: these include for example the bikes used by Bartali , Coppi and Merckx in their victories at the Tour de France , special bike used by Moser for the hour record , and several sweaters pink , yellow and rainbow .

In the nineties these relics were now so numerous that not finding place in the little church: it was, therefore, conceived the project of a museum of cycling, to be erected next to the sanctuary. Presiding over the committee for the construction of the museum was named Fiorenzo Magni . The museum was inaugurated on 14 October 2006 , on the occasion of the Tour of Lombardy , with a ceremony attended by several samples of the present and the past.



original pink shirts, from the 30s to today.

The museum is spread over three floors and also includes a multimedia collection of material on cycling. The most important relics still continue to be exposed in the church sanctuary.

Inside the museum contains the largest collection of pink jerseys in the world thanks to the project Giro for Ghisallo, which allowed to retrieve and expose the main hall more than 50

In the forecourt of the sanctuary is the statue of two great cyclists Coppi and Bartali; in 2011 there was also place the bust of Binda .“

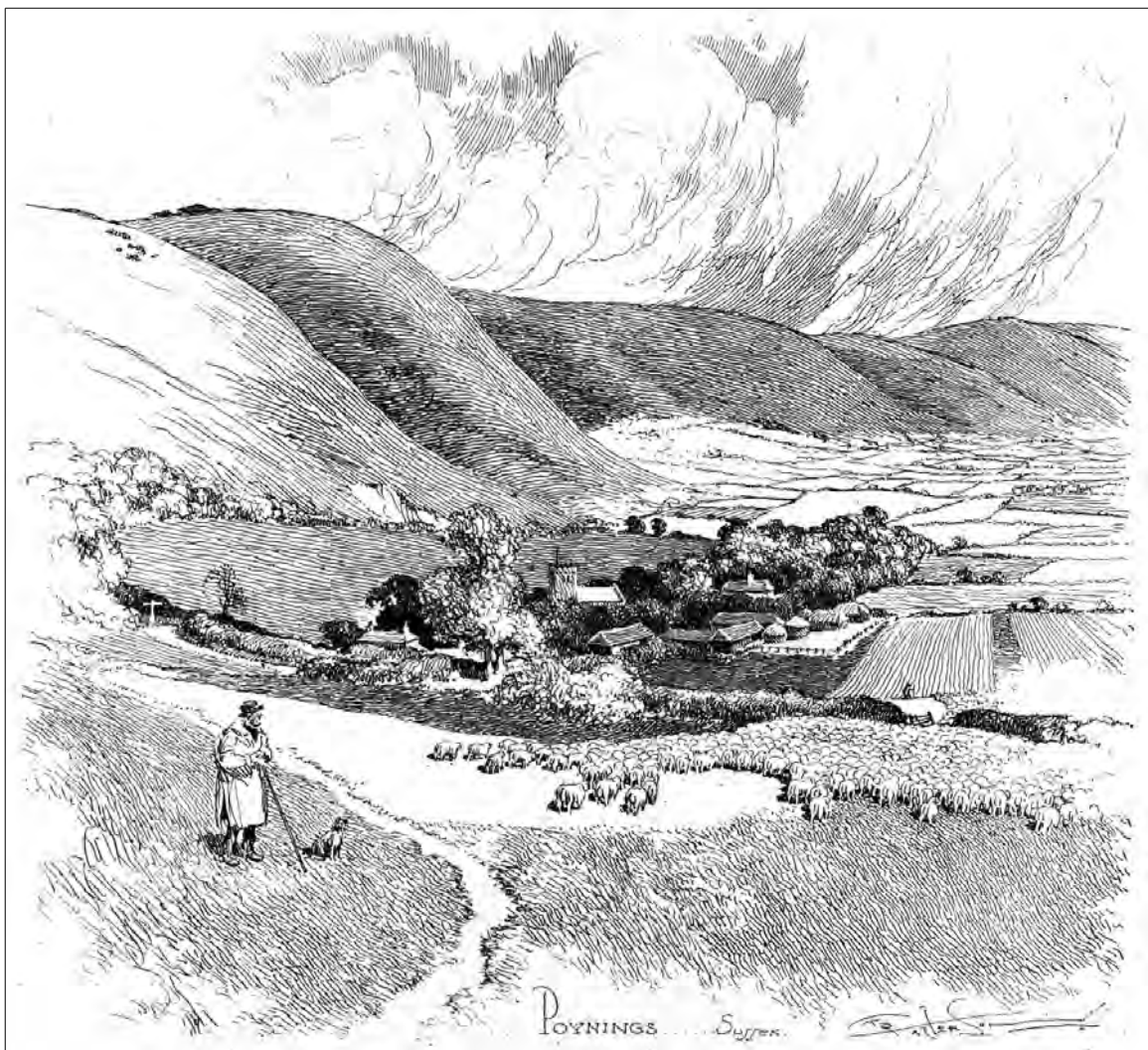


It really is a must-see if you are interested in the Italian cycling greats, and their bicycles. Many locals cycle up the huge hill from Lake Como, and spend time looking at the exhibits. To see Fausto Coppi's Tour de France bike and the pink jerseys of so many past stars was a treat for me. The museum has a section that shows how modern derailleur systems developed, from a simple 2-speed set up, and loads more.

Rumour has it that there was a bus service, but it's not frequent, and I had to walk back down the hill to

Bellagio. At least the view was nice.....

Rob Foster 28/10/16



A Tour to the Loire 1989

by David Rix

(This article first appeared in the Christmas 1989 edition of the Coaster)

It was Susan who suggested our first independent French camping tour. We had been to France on three previous occasions with the D.A., twice to Normandy and once to Brittany, but this was the first time we had considered going it alone. Could we afford it? Was our French up to it? Crossing the Channel we decided did not cost us much more than driving to the other end of the country, also camp sites were (on the whole) cheaper and with better facilities, the roads were quieter and our French we decided, would, with the help of a pocket dictionary, get us by (it's actually quite surprising how much comes back to you when you actually have to use the language).



The Chateau of Chambord on the Loire

So we were going, but where? Susan said she did not mind, just that we should take our bikes and camping gear on the ferry, get off in Dieppe and go from there. I had always wanted to see the Chateaux of the Loire, so it was agreed that we would head South towards Orleans and take it from there. We made no firm plans, leaving it all to weather and chance. We booked our ferry passage at the beginning of the year, I wrote to the French Tourist Information Office in London for information on the areas we would be touring in and details of campsites as well, and that, apart from buying the Michelin guide "Chateaux of the Loire"; was most of our preparation.

We had decided to catch the night boat, so as not to waste half a day on the crossing. Unfortunately, Sealink had altered their sailing times since the last time we went and the boat now left at 10:30pm., arriving in Dieppe at 3:30am French time! Still, we could get a good mileage in before breakfast and rest up later in the day. So it was that we found ourselves riding out of a very dark and quiet Dieppe in the early hours of Friday morning. We saw very few cars and even less people, having the D1, one of the main routes out of Dieppe, virtually to ourselves.

We had decided to catch the night boat, so as not to waste half a day on the crossing. Unfortunately, Sealink had altered their sailing times since the last time we went and the boat now left at 10:30pm., arriving in Dieppe at 3:30am French time! Still, we could get a good mileage in before breakfast and rest up later in the day. So it was that we found ourselves riding out of a very dark and quiet Dieppe in the early hours of Friday morning. We saw very few cars and even less people, having the D1, one of the main routes out of Dieppe, virtually to ourselves.



The Foret d'eawy at sunrise – Avenue de Limousin

Our route took us in a Southerly direction down the D1 for about 12 miles to Meulers, where we turned off and climbed towards Les Grandes Ventes and into the Foret d'Eawy just as the sun began to rise. As we rode through the forest the sun was just starting to break through the trees, catching the early morning mist, the birds were singing and everything was beautiful and peaceful, and we - well, we were getting hungry, it was just after 7:00am. and we had just 1 cake each since leaving the ferry at 4:00! We pushed on and in about half an hour reached St. Saens on the edge of the forest, where a cafe was just opening for coffee and the boulangerie furnished us with bread for lunch-time and two croissants each for breakfast.

By 9:00am. it was getting hot and we were well on our way to Lyons-la-Foret, where we had coffee sitting outside a cafe with a view of the ancient market hall. This day was typical of



A much needed lunch stop in the shade

our first week; hot sun and clear blue skies, but a wind that, though not always very strong, seemed forever to be against us. After shopping for our evening meal we managed another 8 miles before lunch and a short sleep beneath some trees by the church at the little village of Doudeauville-en-Vexin.

By mid-afternoon we were travelling down the picturesque Epte valley and then climbing up to get our first view of the Seine Valley as we descended into the town of La Roche Guyon. It was here that we hoped to camp, but on enquiring at the Mairie (town hall) were informed that there was no camping, not even on the local Stade (stadium) and the nearest site was at Vernon 6-10 miles away. Being tired, and not fancying the climb back up the ridge, we decided to follow the slightly longer route along the valley, also hoping that we might find somewhere sooner. Four miles on, approaching Bennecourt, I spotted what looked like caravans in the trees across the river and there was a bridge. It was a caravan park on the island half way across and on enquiring we were told by the lady Patron that she could find us “un petit place”. And so finally we pitched our tent beside a deserted caravan and tucked into our evening meal, 14 hours and 84 miles after leaving the ferry. As you can imagine we slept well that night.

Next morning I returned from the wash house to find Susan struggling to light the stove. “It won’t light at all.” she said. She was right, unfortunately, the tube that ran across the top of the Coleman stove had obviously coked up and stopped the petrol from reaching the burner. Not having our globetrotter with us, and not being able to afford to eat out too often or wanting to pay out for another stove that we would probably only need for this tour, we were left with the fact that we would have to manage with cold drinks and meals for the rest of the tour. Luckily for us this is not too difficult in France with its large number of Charcuteries (delicatessens) and also the weather was such that we didn’t really miss the hot meals. Not wanting to rush we only did 8 miles before coffee at Mantes-la-Jolie the next morning and only another 4 before lunch. We made up for this in the afternoon as we pushed on to St. Leger-en-Yvelines and then joined an excellent surfaced cycle path through the Foret de Rambouillet to Rambouillet itself and our next campsite. Here we received a pleasant surprise - the patron started to fill in his form and then finding that we were English and camping with just our bikes, came outside to look at them and then told us that we could camp for free. He seemed surprised that we had come from England by bike with all our gear.



Quiet campsite at Bouzonville-aux-Bois

We continued south, stopping Sunday night at a virtually deserted site in the little village of Bouzonville-aux-Bois. At first we thought we had come unstuck, the sign on the gate said “Ferme” closed, and the nearest site was another 10 miles. The place looked closed as well, but then the Patron arrived and explained that he always had Sunday lunch with the family and closed up while he was away. Soon we were tucking into the food, and drink, that we had bought earlier, together with a bottle of frozen water supplied by the Patron - it was very hot that day.

So far we had been travelling through mainly open country, with fields of maize and sunflowers as far as the eye could see. But now that was all changing as we approached the Loire Valley and entered the Foret d'Orleans. The Orleans Forest is not greatly mentioned in the tourist guides, a great shame I feel as we found it beautiful and a great place for cyclists - peaceful and serene, with very little traffic and many Routes Forestiere (unmade, but very well surfaced tracks). We had lunch beside an old lock on the Orleans Canal, before continuing on to Jargeau and our first view of the Loire, a wide sprawling river at this point, set in flat open country.



The Chateau of Sully-sur-Loire

We spent three nights at Jargeau, using one day to tour the local countryside with a visit to the Chateau at Sully-sur-Loire and also the Basilica at St. Benoit and the beautiful church of Germigny-des-Pres, one of the oldest in France. The Chateau we found very interesting; not as commercialized as the big ones and the guided tour was in French (we were given a printed translation) but well worth the money. The Basilica at St. Benoit (St. Benedict) is a massive building and one of the finest Romanesque buildings in France. Its main claim to fame is that it houses the

remains of St. Benedict, which are housed in a shrine below the altar that is open freely to visitors. The church at Germigny-des-Pres, founded in 800 A.D., has been carefully restored and has a rare example of Carolingian art. The east apse - the only original portion - has a mosaic fixed to its roof. The subject is the Ark of the Covenant, including two archangels and the hand of God. The mosaic was rediscovered in 1840 and can now be seen in all its original glory.

On the other day we visited Orleans, and spent the morning seeing the cathedral and walking around the city with its old houses and statue St Joan of Arc, before moving slightly south to visit the Parc Floral de la Source, a beautiful floral garden laid out around the source of the Loiret, a tributary of the Loire.

After two days with only saddle bags, we were loaded up again the next day as we moved on south-westerly across the Sologne, an immense and flat region with heaths, forests and solitary pools towards Chambord.

After the hiccups of the first two days we were settling into an easy routine. When we moved on we were usually away by 9.30am. after a breakfast of fruit juice and fresh croissants. There being no shortage of bars and cafes we had no problem over morning coffee. Lunch was usually French bread and whatever we fancied in the local shops, and occasionally one of their delicious cakes. Our afternoon drink was usually the remains of the lemonade we had bought for lunch, and then we would start looking for shops to buy our evening meal with, occasionally, a bottle of wine to wash it down. It's a hard life!



We reached our next site at Bracieux, 5 miles south of Chambord, by early afternoon and, having pitched our tent, decided that, since the Chateau was that close and did not close till 700pm. we would have time to go there before dinner rather than waste the afternoon. Chambord is built on the grand scale, a palace rather than a chateau, built for show not defence, with its multitude of turrets and its impressive double spiral staircase.

Staying a second night at Bracieux we visited the ancient town of Blois (twinned with Lewes) and enjoyed a walk around the old part of town with its old buildings and narrow alleyways. We also took advantage of some more Routes Forestieres through the Foret de Boulogne. In Blois we met a young English couple, on their first camping holiday in France, who were attempting to buy a camping carnet. We were able to offer some help by showing them ours,



The Chateau of Azay le Rideau

but I did not hold out much hope for their being able to get one - they had been told that they would be able to buy one at sites in France, but had had no luck and even the Tourist information Office didn't know where they could get one.

Over the next few days we travelled on via Chenonceux, where the Chateau is built across the River Cher, to Montbazon, from where we visited the beautiful Chateau of Azay-le-Rideau and the ancient city of Tours, before turning our wheels northwards towards the other Loir (without an e).

After the Loire, the Loir was a refreshing change, a picturesque little river running between trees and lush pastures and passing through pleasant little towns and villages, marred in places only by its proximity to the busy N10. We wisely, kept to the tiny riverside roads.

Two days after leaving the Loire we reached Chartres, or rather a campsite outside at St. Georges-sur-Eure, 8 miles to the west. We had intended to stay two nights, allowing a day to visit the city, however the state of the site - disgusting and un-cleaned facilities - and the presence of some rather unsavoury characters put us off. We decided to move on in the morning, spend the day in Chartres, and then find another site somewhere north of the city.

Chartres is another city well worth a visit, the Cathedral of Notre Dame with its 3000 square yards of stained glass is magnificent and the walk around the old part of the city was very enjoyable.

The camp site we eventually settled on, at Maintenon, was a far cry from the last, a modern site with brand new facilities and early morning bread deliveries - essential when you like fresh croissants!

The following day saw our first real rain of the tour. We had had some little showers around Chenonceux and Azay, but nothing to cape up for. This was different, it poured heavily during the afternoon as we headed for our next stop at Evreux - another let down, the site being beside what seemed to be the busiest road out of the city. Then we



Nice modern campsite at Maintenon



The Chateau of Robert le Diable

were headed back towards the Seine and Jumieges, to reach which we had to go via Elbeuf and then cut across two loops of the Seine. Though the second was relatively easy the first entailed a long hard 2 mile climb out of the river valley followed by an exhilarating descent back down to the next loop. A breather was taken at the top first however, with a look round the Chateau of Robert le Diable (Robert the Devil), a ruined Norman fortress, now housing a reconstruction of a Viking longship and a wax museum. The castle is still very imposing and the views across the Seine Valley are magnificent - for this alone it would be

good value for money.

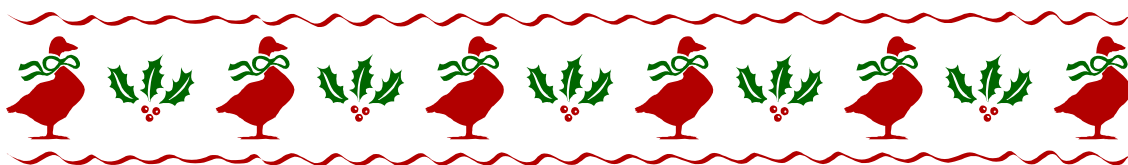
A near change of route was almost brought about when we came upon road closed signs as we headed up the Seine Valley. To follow the diversion would add miles to our route, so sticking to the usual cyclists thinking, that a bike can get through where a car can't, we pushed on. A mile up the road we found the reason for the signs, the right hand side of the road was collapsing into the river! Work was going on to mend it, thus blocking most of the road but we passed through with no trouble and were soon speeding towards the ferry crossing at Duclair.

We were nearing the end of our holiday now and, leaving Jumieges, we headed North towards the coast and the campsite at Offranville, where we had stayed on a previous tour with the D.A. Having most of the afternoon still available we headed for the Mammoth supermarket outside Dieppe for some last minute shopping, and then in the evening went for an excellent last night meal at a local hotel.

Sunday morning, our last in France, dawned grey and wet. After two weeks with only an hour or two of rain it just had to pour on our last day. We had no choice but to pack up a wet tent and then we rode down into Dieppe for coffee. We then had time to shop for some last minute presents and have lunch before boarding the ferry. By coffee time the rain had stopped but the skies were still grey. When we came out on the deck of the ferry the skies had miraculously cleared and the sun was shining. We were going home.



We had had 16.5 days in France, travelled 756 miles, seen some great sights and beautiful countryside, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Where to next year I wonder?



Octogenarian Cyclists



The East Sussex C.T.C. Wednesday Rides is probably the largest group in the U.K., with over 70 members out on Wednesdays when the weather's good, and its octogenarians probably have the highest average age of any other group in the U.K. The following members ride regularly on a Wednesday as well as managing their own house and garden.



Ron Street aged 89 years (90 in January 2017) often leads the Medium Pace cycle runs on a Wednesday. He is our Hon. Section Treasurer and is a member of several walking clubs in Battle. He walks his partner's dog on a regular basis. Only comparatively recently Ron decided to retire from cycle camping activities.

Joyce Wickens is 88 and also walks regularly with her Rambling Club, but cycles each Wednesday. She leads a New Year's Day 8/9 miles walk for the club cyclists. Joyce and Les received a tremendous welcome from the Press in Paris just a few years ago when they cycled from London to Paris.



Les Springett is 84 and has never stopped cycling since his time trialling days with the Eastbourne Rovers where he won team and tandem awards. Les has also given up cycle camping quite recently. Les is making a good recovery after a recent triple heart-bypass operation so we all look forward to seeing Les 'down the road' very soon.



George Lillicrap is 84 and he really enjoys his cycle rides. He finds and takes home many discarded objects which he manages to re-cycle in due course.

Ann Rix aged 85 and her son, David and his wife Susan and grand-children are an essential part of this Section's success. They are responsible for the production and distribution of the bi-monthly runs list and the bi-annual magazine, The Coaster. They all ride their bikes regularly.

Marie Shepherd is 84 and rides regularly on a Wednesday and always with a smile on her face.



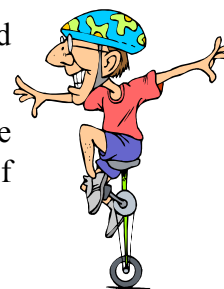
Geoff Boxall aged 83 builds, repairs and maintains club members' bikes in his fully equipped garden shed. He and his wife, Jenny, are often hosts to the whole club for their coffee breaks. Geoff will always help anybody out for transport or transmission needs.

Ken Smith, 83 was the Membership Secretary to welcome new members into the club in years gone by.

John West (82) and his Wife, Joan, are out regularly with their dog who enjoys the ride sitting comfortably in his basket on the front of Joan's bike.

Charles Lancaster (82) and his Wife, Connie, arrange the successful and enjoyable Carol Service each Christmas.

Ron Ball (82) often sings and dances at Club dinners which reflects the passion which Ron and his wife, Marion, have for the Music Hall Shows of yesteryear.



Bruce Allcorn (82) with his Wife, Rene when she was alive, together with their daughter Katie, often hosted tea parties at their home for club members.

Pat Graham (81) often leads the run for her section on Wednesdays. Pat has only ceased in recent years voluntarily teaching sailing for beginners.



Ray (80) a retired policeman rides regularly with the 'Energetics' group – when he is not participating in races at sea with his swimming club.

These octogenarians combine with younger members and committees to help organise such a successful cycling club. Esther Carpenter, our ageless Midweek Section Secretary finds time to organise all of our club activities as well as organising time trials in Sussex for many other clubs including the 24hrs. T.T. in which Andy Wilkinson broke the National Record on East Sussex roads with 541.17miles in 2011. This equates to an average speed of 22.55 miles per hour for 24 hours!



We are so fortunate to have so many excellent volunteers – long may it continue.

John Regan



A Shocking Exposure

Picture the scene: the morning of Christmas Eve 1943, in darkest Lincolnshire. The weather was foggy, raw, and distinctly un festive. Three airmen doomed to pass their Christmas at a far-flung dispersal, were ministering to their Lancaster bomber. They were exiled from the cheery lights of the sergeants' mess, let alone Mum's home cooking. All of them were feeling somewhat miserable, faced with spam, stale bread, and not much in the way of warmth in their Nissen hut. Realizing that they would not be missed, the three heroes set out on a foraging spree, hoping to commandeer anything that would add to some festive spirit.

Cycling into one quiet village at lunch-time, they happened upon a goose grazing upon the common. With one accord they fell upon the unfortunate bird, hoping to stifle it before it drew attention to its impending appointment with their Christmas menu. Rapidly they stuffed the (by now) apparently inert bird, down inside the ill-fitting battledress of the smallest airman, buttoning it in before the village bobby appeared.

Well pleased with their efforts, they propped their bikes against the wall of a nearby hostelry, and repaired to the public bar, which was deserted save for a buxom young barmaid and a rather large, bullish landlord.

Seeing the airmen served with three pints of bitter and some salt biscuits, the landlord went into the saloon bar, only to be summoned back by a dreadful piercing shriek. He ran into the public bar, only to see a couple of biscuits on the counter, three half-empty pints, no airmen, and the barmaid in a dead faint on the floor.

“Elsie, love, what happened?”

He patted her into consciousness. Terrified, the girl looked up and blurted, “Oh it was awful. . . awful. . .” With a choking sob, she lapsed back into oblivion.

“Blimey, this means brandy!”

Gently, he coaxed some of the burning amber liquid between her pallid lips. Slowly, colour returned to her face, and once more her eyes opened.

“Oh it was awful, I can’t say, it was awful.”

“Ere Elsie, come on, I can’t afford any more brandy.”

“It was terrible, I’ve never seen anything like it!”

“Now, now Elsie, it was those airmen wasn’t it? I thought they were up to no good. Come on girl don’t faint again!”

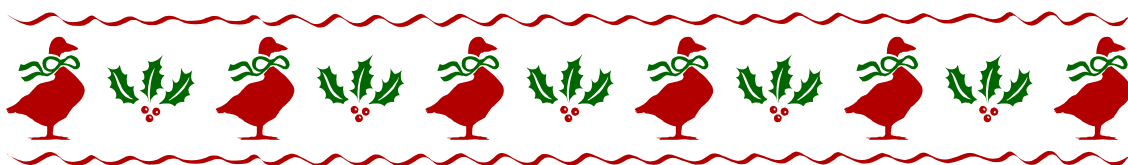
“Yes, yes, it was ‘orrible!”

“You’re a big girl now Elsie, you’ve seen that sort of thing before! One of them exposed himself didn’t he?”

The barmaid sobbed, convulsed with shock at the memory of this dire event. “Yes I have, but nothing like this! I’ve never seen one before that lifted itself up, and took a biscuit off the counter!”



That takes the biscuit! Cartoon by Giles Thomas. (Copyright Giles Thomas, 1995)



MAX

By Wild Weather Woman

Uncle Tony was smaller than my other uncles. He had red hair, and being only 14 years older than my father, was nearest in age to him. For big family celebrations he wore a kilt and a sgian dubh (traditional Scottish, small, single-edged knife) tucked into his knee stocking – all very dashing attributes to me and my sisters, as small children.

Next older to him was Uncle Ben. Six foot five and blonde, apart from his red goatee beard and that monocle he insisted on wearing, he was the spitting image of Dad in hair colour, looks, blue eyes and in particular his mannerisms. They could have been twins, excepting the monocle, and that they were seventeen years apart in age. To see them together was a constant marvel to us children.

Finally there was Uncle Max. The eldest of the brothers, he was 23 years old when our father was born. The same height as Uncle Ben, he was much broader and needed neither monocle nor dagger. His giant frame cast an enormous shadow as he filled the doorway on his many visits to us. His eyes, unlike any one else in the family were black, as was his robust head of hair, and most curious to us was the permanent 6 o'clock shadow of prolific black stubble. There was no way round the fact that he was swarthy, accentuated by his blonde brothers, and we delighted that our secret childhood nickname was obviously and entirely appropriate. He was Black Max. His powerful bass voice boomed in a deep rumble of massive decibels whenever he spoke and when he held us, his little nieces, in his gaze there was a collective tremor of trepidation, which he savoured with a wicked twinkle. His favourite and most predictable joke was his question of why we thought little girls wore skirts, and before any of us could pluck up courage to answer, he'd boom "so you can wipe your hands on them"... followed by a seismic roar of laughter.

Unlike the others in so many ways, he had not joined the Armed Forces as they had, but had joined the Police force, and proudly worn the white police helmet that was so special to the Brighton Police summer kit in those far-off days before the Second World War. And as far as law enforcement went, I'm sure nobody would have argued with him. But he had a very gentle side to him, which meant firstly that he never squashed any of our kittens when he stroked them, this being a misplaced fear our run-away imaginations had cultivated in our early years. Secondly people expected he'd wield his mighty frame in the front row of a local Rugby scrum for a hobby. But no, Black Max's hobby was that of amateur radio ham, forever tinkering with finely-tuned and usually home-made equipment. He had a colleague in the Police force who was also interested in radio communication, and together in the quieter moments of law enforcement in rural Sussex, between the two World Wars, they amused themselves communicating with each other on the crackling radio airwaves.

On one occasion when he had been enforcing law in Ringmer, whiling away a dull shift and playing on their faltering radio apparatus, he decided to use that lovely mile-long undulation of "The Broyle", between Ringmer and Halland to note cars which passed by and to relay this exciting and as yet innocent, information to his colleague who was positioned further up the road using his home-made radio. So they waited. Cars were few and far between in those days and the wait must have seemed an age. Then came the excitement of spotting the car that would test their equipment. The unfortunate car sped past and the information was *immediately* relayed further down the road. No more fumbling with Police Issue Stop Watches.

The culprit was apprehended. And a “eureka” moment in the history of law enforcement and speeding motorists. Thus some time later, the old method of stop watches was to become a thing of the past.....

On the one hand I’m aware that quite a few motorists have probably cursed the man who invented The Speed Trap, but I’m also very proud of Uncle Max. Black Max, and his small but historic contribution to improving The Speed Trap, on that quietly-family-famous piece of Sussex, the B2192, called The Broyle. It’s a peculiar piece of history for both The Broyle, and for our family, which I often reflect upon when I cycle or drive along that stretch of road.



Francis Hilton Dewberry - 1929 -2016

Francis was born in West Bridgford, Nottingham on May 16th 1929; the second of three boys. He developed a life-long love of Music, playing his Father’s vinyl records from a very early age. He had piano lessons for only a few years; his music teacher retiring and not being replaced. He played on throughout his life until only a month before he died, delighting everyone at St. Wilfrid’s Hospice and his second Wife, Brenda.

Francis’ other life-long love was cycling, being given his Father’s bike at the age of ten. He started touring holidays after retiring which included New Zealand just before his elder brother died in Australia. The highlight of his cycling , however, was his “End to End”- Lands End to John o’Groats at the age of 70. He went alone (none of the modern back-up facilities for him!) and he reportedly only got lost once! In the 1990s he joined the Eastbourne and Hailsham Section of East Sussex CTC, riding with them regularly on Sundays, and served as their Secretary for several years. Sadly, a loss of balance forced him to give up at the age of eighty when he also gave up driving.

Francis did National Service before going to University at St. Mary’s College in East London reading Latin, Ancient Greek and French. By then his parents had moved to Romford. In the Army he became ‘ Frank’, being told that Francis was a girl’s name! He was known as Frank for the rest of his life by a lot of people. His family, however, still called him Francis.

At University he met Wendy, whom he married in 1956. Wendy was a very talented person, teaching French until Robert was born in 1960 – followed by Helen in 1963. Sadly, Wendy died of cancer in 2008 after 52 years of happy marriage.

Francis’ career was in Insurance, starting as an Insurance Inspector in Liverpool, a job which he loved and which probably instigated his love of exploring old buildings and alley-ways. He then joined Eagle Star Insurance at No. 1 Threadneedle Street in the City of London. He stayed with Eagle Star until his retirement having moved around several of the branches. He finished up as Private Secretary to the Managing Director, Sir Denis Mountain.

Francis’ other hobby was his garden which had an irresistible pull – well past meal-times! In October 2010 he met Brenda whom he married in 2011. After five very happy years he died on their fifth Wedding Anniversary August 24th this year. A happy release from the pain of cancer. Francis was a very modest man and was loved and respected by everyone.



Christmas in Wartime

The following are a couple of interesting stories about Christmas during World War Two, which I found in a book of war memories. Ed.

Deck the Shelters with Paper Garlands

A family remembers trying to decorate and prepare for Christmas during the blitz. Their sheer determination to have a traditional Christmas come what may was the stuff the British home front was made of a stoic determination not to take any notice of the bombs!

We had always had a big tree, a real one. My uncle had a small farm, and we always got one from him; it was his present to us every year. So we had lots of lovely glass decorations, mostly from before the First World War, that had belonged to my grandfather's sister. She had married a German glassblower from Thuringia. Lovely they were, little glass birds, and Father Christmases, a cuckoo clock, and balls of all sizes and colours. We also had a Christmas tree made from goose feathers. Not that you'd know they were feathers, they were processed - another German secret! But a good one.



It was this feather tree that was our saving during the war. It was only three feet tall, and in its own little wooden pot. So we used to decorate it with all non-breakable things, like tinsel stars, pipecleaner animals and suchlike, and paper things and tinsel. Then we could pick it up and take it down into the shelter with us! All the lovely old glass decorations were carefully wrapped and taken down to my uncle's for safety. We still have most of them.

I was one of three sisters and two brothers, and we lived within the sound of Bow bells, though our family came from Wales and north of London, and were country folk. Our Mum was one of twelve! Catholics - big families; very useful in times of war, a nuisance the rest of the time!

We managed to have a Christmas Mass in the cellars of the church in 1942. All candlelit, and completely blacked out, it was like it must have been hundreds of years ago. We got a real sense of continuity there. I remember there were no Communion wafers, so we had stale bread consecrated instead! It felt funny chewing Holy Communion as we'd always been taught not to touch the wafer with your teeth but to let it dissolve. The nuns who made the wafer hosts had given all their flour supply to one of the local lads. He'd been in a seminary, but left to serve his country in the Army before he was made priest. As he was a deacon, he had got special permission to take Holy Communion to the front line troops fighting Rommel in Africa. So the nuns had supplied him with all their flour at short notice, as those poor lads never got a chance to even see a church.

The priest talked about pulling together and helping each other and those who needed our help. War certainly does something to bring communities closer together. Mind, we always were close in the East End. It's all changed now. Not much of the old East End spirit left.

A Farmhouse Christmas in London's Blitz

Flo, the eldest sister of the family in the previous extract, who was married with a young family, lost her home with a direct hit, and spent Christmas with her grandmother. Now eighty-one she positively sparkles with the memory of what was for her, a magical opportunity that would not have occurred had it not been for the war - several years spent getting to know grandparents, who had been rather shadowy figures up until then.

Gran had a big house; five bedrooms, eight steps leading up to the front door, and a huge cellar, which Grandpa had used as a workshop; he was a carpenter by trade. They brought up twelve children in that house. I suppose it didn't seem so big with all that lot, but with just the two of them it was a wonderful temporary home for me and the kids, especially with my husband away.

Anyway, we cleared away Grandpa's stuff in the cellar, and made quite a cosy den down



there. Grandpa knocked up two sets of bunks for the kids in their own corner, and another set for him and Gran. I had a cosy little hole done like they used to have in Wales, where he'd been brought up with a sort of cupboard bed. We had a gas stove down there, but Gran preferred to use the old fired copper which Grandpa adapted for her. She wasn't happy about the gas being used. We spent most of our time down there during the blitz in fact. It got pretty dark though as Grandpa had blocked up the window with sandbags against blast. We

had lots of Tilley lamps, as there never had been electricity or gas lamps down there, and Grandpa needed plenty of light for his work. We were luckier than most I reckon, with our shelter comforts.

Grandpa had, with the help of a couple of neighbours, put up four huge beams going across the cellar and resting on the top of the bare brick and stone walls - to give a bit of extra protection in case of a direct hit he said. My poor little two up, two down didn't stand a chance, but Gran's house was made of much sterner stuff!

We decorated properly for Christmas down there, with jolly paper streamers and honeycomb pendants. The kids made loads of paper garlands which we had put all over the house! It kept them occupied for hours - a pile of newspapers, a box of paints and thick brushes, scissors and some flour paste Gran made them.

We had a wireless down there too, rigged up with a wire through the floor above, and Gran and Grandpa had brought down their favourite comfy chairs. We had plenty of food too as Gran's stores were all down in the cellar in little walk-in cupboards with stone slabs and air holes to the outside for freshness. She was a great one for making all her own stores: dried and salted meat and fish, potted meats, pickled eggs, chutneys full of vitamins, jams, hundreds (it seemed like anyway) of kilner jars of preserved fruit and veg. She even had four 12 lb cheeses that she had got from her niece's farm in Buckinghamshire the previous year. So our Christmas 1940 was better



than most, and she had stores to save for the leaner years to come.

Grandpa had this lovely musical revolving Christmas tree stand; it was German, of course. It was silvery metal, very ornate, with a big key. You put a small feather tree in the hole at the top, and when it was wound up, the tree revolved to the tunes of 'Silent Night' and 'Von Himmel Hoch'.

Magical it was. On Christmas Eve the candles would be lit, and the stand wound up, and you should have seen the looks on the kids' faces.

The kids didn't miss much in the way of presents either, with Gran making sweets and dolls and knitted bonnets and Balaclavas, gloves, stockings and cardigans, and Grandpa making all manner of wooden things. That first year he made a Noah's ark, using all different bits of wood, so the animals didn't need any painting as they looked lovely in all their different texture and shades of natural wood. We still have one or two pieces of his work in the family, but children today don't appreciate that sort of thing as much. They should have been kept as a tribute to Grandpa really.



I thank God for the land I tread,
A pipe to smoke and an easy bed,
The thatch I made that's over my head,
And daily bread.