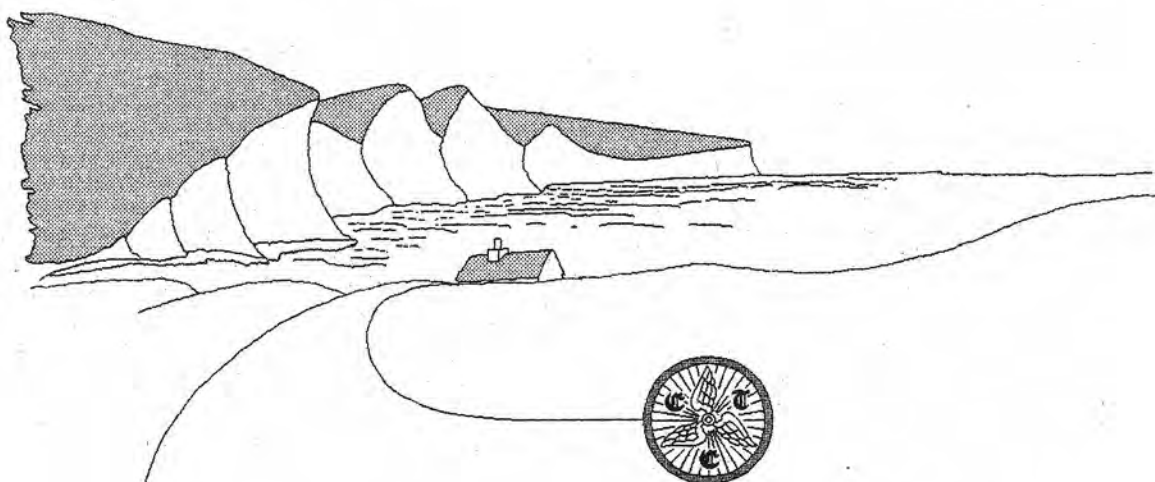


The



Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 23 Christmas 1992

25p

East Sussex District Association
Cyclists' Touring Club

PRESIDENT MR DENNIS JAKEMAN

Secretary

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"The Coaster"

Christmas 1992

Issue No.23

From the Editor's Desk

Plenty of good articles in this edition, several on cycling in France including John Muirhead's on the Chateaux of the Loire, illustrated with some of his own excellent line drawings. Another poem from Harold, as well as touring and general articles.

I hope you enjoy it - it will give you something to read while you relax after all the meals and other events of this social season. And if you have a spare moment you can always dash something of for the next edition.

Deadline for the Summer '93 edition is June 6th.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our readers.

David Rix.

The Season of the Year.

It's the time of year when the mid-winter early morning mists and frosts and shorter daylight hours place some restrictions on our riding habits, and occasionally tempt us in some armchair cycling. But for the true cyclist, it's a time of the year when a brisk run round the lanes comes into its own and we feel justified in lingering just a little longer over that pub lunch.

It's also a sociable season when, for the club cyclist, the spirit of club life is something special, a season which according to our custom is also a time of festivity, goodwill and the often impossible good intentions of the coming year.

All old-fashioned delights, perhaps, but as the festive season draws near let me thank you all for the support and the contributions you have made towards the success of the DA activities over the past year and in particular thank all DA and Section officers who continue to give freely of their time for our enjoyment.

Finally let me wish you all -

A MERRY CHRISTMAS, A PEACEFUL NEW YEAR and SAFE CYCLING.

Dennis Jakeman - DA President.

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

C.T.C. National Headquarters,
Cotterell House, 69 Meadrow,
Godalming, Surrey, GU7 3HS

or from the local D.A. Secretary or one of the Section Secretaries whose addresses are listed below.

D.A. Secretary: David Rix, 27 Fullwood Avenue, Newhaven, BN9 9SP.

Camping & Hostelling: Iris Stevens,
3 Lansdowne Crescent, Hailsham BN27 1LE.

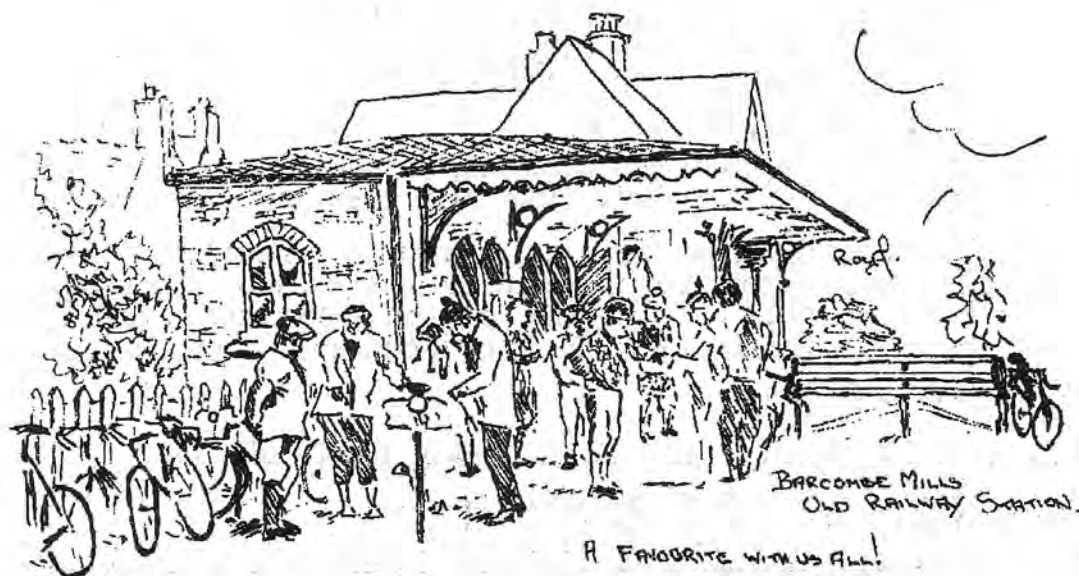
Eastbourne & Hailsham: Jane Lade:
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THE COASTER is published by the East Sussex District Association of the CTC. The opinions and comments expressed herein are the opinions and comments of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the East Sussex D.A. or its Sections.

Contributions on any matters relating, even vaguely, to cycling are always welcome and should be sent to the editor.



DIEPPE AND LE FESTIVAL DU CERF-VOLANT.

By Roy James.

As I disembarked the ferry in Dieppe and cycled along that so familiar promenade, nothing seemed to have changed. It was mid-afternoon, early in September and the kiosks were still doing a steady trade in buckets and beach balls, sun hats and spades and all the knick-knacks so necessary to a seaside holiday. The elegant little creperie, with tables and chairs protected from a chilly westerly wind by a glass screen, was serving coffee and crepes to a sprinkling of customers and a general air of another fading summer season prevailed.

But the following morning it presented a very different scene. After spending the night in Dieppe's much improved Youth Hostel, I had returned to the sea front before starting my ride along the coast to Veules-les-Roses and what a surprise greeted me. Although still early, a small army of men were busy erecting marquees, mowing grass and setting up banks of seats beside the wide lawns that separate the main road from the sea. Flags of countries from around the world hung from tall flag poles and large posters informed me that the 7th Festival du Cerf-Volant was to begin the following day. A festival of kite flying was new to me. Quite by chance I had stumbled upon what promised to be a new experience and I made a mental note to return later.

The ride to Veules-les-Roses and back was hardly taxing, but three separate swims at three bathing spots together with a sleep on the beach and two stops for coffee and pastries left me no time to visit the sea front again that evening. Time was pressing and after all, to visit France and not go for a decent meal borders on insanity. So it was back to the hostel for a shower and then to the Newhaven Restaurant, just a stone's throw from the foot passenger terminal for the ferry.

A slight divergence here to offer a hint on dining at the Newhaven. Arrive in good time for your meal. For, once the CLOSED sign is on the door, the tables are cleared away and the chairs stacked up in about two minutes flat. The waitress then stands at her station wishing you to hell out of it. I gulped down my Creme Caramel, vowing not to make the same mistake again, and rode slowly up the hill that leads to the hostel.

With its usual perversity, the stiff wind of the previous day had fallen away completely when I went back to the festival site the following morning. Those fluttering flags of yesterday hung limply from their poles and although the sun shone brightly I sensed an air of dejection among the few enthusiasts that arrived early. Attempts to get their creations into the air seemed hopeless and no amount of running or pulling had any effect. The marquees began to fill with visitors from around the world, jackets and hats covered with badges from similar events they had attended. Optimistically they began to assemble kites of varying colours, shapes and sizes. Half an hour before the opening ceremony, as if knowing what was expected of it, the breeze began to pick up and by noon the air was full of dancing, straining kites. So many types, from the nervous wax paper snakes with long, long tails that wriggled in mid air without any visible means of support, to the giant puffer fish from Thailand and the galleon in full sail from Germany.

I watched until it was time to board the ferry for home, amazed at human ingenuity. Then as I turned to leave, a Red Admiral butterfly momentarily came into view. Tossed by the ever strengthening wind, it was quickly lost in the melee of coloured canvas. But the sight of that tiny creature was enough to remind me that nature is still supreme in art and beauty.



MORE BIKES, BETTER TOWNS.

(Our Rights Officer, Jonathan Dalton, thought that this article by transport consultant, Don Matthew from the magazine "Transport Retort" might be of interest to members.)

People think the Dutch cycle a lot because the country is flat. Wrong, 90% of Britain's cities are flat - but are they "cycle friendly"? The Dutch cycle because they want to, plan to and spend money to achieve their aims.

Now they want to cycle even more, by 2010 an extra 30% of distance covered. This is a target of the new Bicycle Master Plan, an integral part of the Dutch attempts to curb traffic and reduce vehicle pollution. At the same time the Government is aiming for 40% fewer road injuries and 50% less traffic fatalities.

The Master Plan is the result of an inter-Ministerial working group to promote cycling, in a style of which British riders can currently only dream. Other unfamiliar aspects include research programmes into cycle theft, government promotion campaigns in the media, and a requirement that by 1995 cycling will be an integral part of the Company Transport Plans produced by all firms of over 50 employees.

Although 35% of Dutch rail travellers already arrive at stations by bicycle, the aim is to increase cycle parking provision, cycle hire and on-train carriage still more. On the ground the problem areas on networks will be eliminated; and facilities such as bicycle-only bridges will give a perceived and actual benefit over motor traffic.

What is particularly encouraging for a British reader is to peruse a Government document that not only knows the difference between "accessibility" and "mobility" but believes that restriction of the latter is "essential to realize the Government's objectives".

As evidence that all this works, the document cites the example of the new town of Houten, deliberately planned around the non-motorised modes. There car traffic is 25% less than the national average, road accidents are a third, and all food shopping is done locally rather than by car trips to the nearest big city (Utrecht).

Earlier this year the Cyclists' Touring Club published "Bikes Not Fumes", suggesting that over 40% of trips in Britain could be by cycle, because distances were so short. Friends of the Earth's "Less Traffic, Better Towns" study identified more cycling as a key component of reducing urban traffic. The policy jigsaw of reducing urban traffic is fast falling into place.

English versions of the "Bicycle Master Plan" are available, free, from: Ton Welleman, Project Leader, Bicycle Master Plan, Engineering Export Division, PO Box 20906, 2500 DX The Hague, Netherlands.

Bikes Not Fumes is available from the C.T.C. Head Office for £8.00



Eavesdroppings.

An elderly man overheard in hospital:

"I'm not afraid to die . . . dying isn't so bad . . . the trouble is that you're so bloody stiff the next day.!"

Overheard in a bus queue:

"My mother lost hers at a garden fete in front of the vicar.!"

A bizarre conversation overheard on the train:

"What do you want to nick a bollard for?" to which the reply came:

"It'd be a good gimmick to have the only bedroom in North Finchley with an illuminated 'Keep Left' sign in it."

SERENDIPITY CYCLING

by Maggie Jakeman

Forward planning for a 10 day trip to France in late July, early August was limited to booking beds for the first two nights; other than that we had decided to just take things as they came.

We crossed to Dieppe on the early boat one Tuesday morning and we were soon on to the lanes and pedalling south-west to Auzoville in the Saane Valley. We were trying the French equivalent of Bed and Breakfast, chambre d'hotels, for the first time and had booked into a house on the edge of a very small village. Madame, an elderly widow, welcomed us warmly and said she would ring the local restaurant to book a table for us. We were in earshot of the phone call, which seemed to be going on for some time and somehow getting increasingly earnest. It transpired that the local restaurant was inexplicably closed and that she had been twisting the arm of the proprietor of a cafe 4ks. down the road to do something for us.

Bathed and changed we rode off to the cafe which, we were told, was due to have its weekly closing day the next day; all we could have was an omelette (a bit rubbery), a glass of wine and, the saving grace, a very good chunk of Roquefort cheese. There was no bread, no salad, not even the ubiquitous pomme frites! Breakfast fortunately was an improvement and included a boiled egg, two varieties of bread and a long chat with Madame about her family and about farming then and now.

Day two was to take us south to the Seine with an en route visit to an old monastery, St. Wandrille, before arriving at our second digs in Jumieges, in a quiet orchard on the banks of the river. Despite having booked, the landlord was nowhere in sight and a granddaughter I tracked down told me he was in the habit of just disappearing. The weather had got hotter and hotter all day and even at 6 o'clock was about 90 degrees, the thought of cycling to a restaurant 4 miles away was too much for us, so we settled for whatever bits we had left in our panniers plus a cup of tea from our host who eventually turned up.

A Dutch couple travelling to Jersey to take their teenage daughter to a language school were interesting companions at the breakfast table next morning and we found we were quite late in getting away. 5 miles down the road and we were drinking coffee by the side of the river waiting for the small ferry to take us to the other side. We then joined a tourist route which passed by many traditional Normandy style farm houses and orchards and then on into the Forest of Brotonne, before doubling back again on to the river and then on to the high plateau farmland to the north of Evreux.

One of the reasons we enjoy being in France is the food and we were beginning to wonder whether staying in out of the way farmhouses was a good idea, especially since we hadn't yet managed a decent meal! We then decide that we would first check to see if the landlady would provide an evening meal, and if not, to have a restaurant meal at midday. Happily, our next stop at Emanville, which we reached at the end of a very long and very hot day, was the start of a decided change in our gastronomic fortunes.

What a delight to turn into the lane beside a beautiful country house and to be greeted by Madame telling us to sit down and join her in a bottle of cold cider and then to be taken to our comfortable room with en suite bathroom and later to join her and her husband at dinner, which concluded with the opening of a bottle of locally produced calvados. We slept well that night and decided then and there to stay for three more. Before leaving here we ate another meal with the landlady and her family; at table that time were their son and daughter-in-law and one year old twins and three other assorted grandchildren - definitely "en famille"!

We spent the time exploring the area, often having to stop on the side of the road to allow the huge harvesting combines to pass. Harvest was in full swing and the farmers were working well into the night to gather in the grain. As well as the high

plateaux there was also pretty river scenery and several picturesque towns, Evreux, with its cathedral and excellent local museum being the largest.

As Sunday lunch is so much a part of French life we had our landlady recommend and book a restaurant for us in a nearby town, Conches, so most of the day was devoted to cycling there, eating for several hours and then cycling back. After lunch we visited the local church, famed for its stained glass, and also the ruins of a castle keep.

It was time to move on, so with photographs and kisses from the landlady we set off for Houllbec Cocherel, not far from Vernon. Again we cycled alternately between high farm plateaux and river valleys to our farmhouse, which formed part of a former monastic farming complex high on the top of a hill. As before we had only booked for one night but one look was enough to tell us that we wanted to stay longer; this chambre d'hôte was even better than the one before. The entire downstairs of the two storey converted barn was for guests alone and as well as three rooms with en-suite bathrooms there was a large dining/living area with a "kitchen corner" for guests' use. Breakfast, true to the brochure, was "copious".

Our hostess was a young mother and talented painter in her late twenties. Her husband farmed the land with his father and she ran the chambre d'hôtes, a fairly recent venture which had been reported in the local press.

Our main reason for choosing this stopping place was to visit Monet's house and garden at Giverny, about 20 miles away. Dennis had visited here some 10 years ago before its restoration and was horrified to see the queues of people waiting to get in. He decided to live with happy memories whilst I braved the milling crowds to see the two gardens Monet had created, partially for the pleasure of gardening and partially to have subjects to paint. The first garden was a more traditional flower garden ablaze with colour, whilst the second, now reached by an underpass under the road was the famous Japanese water garden which had inspired his famous "nymphaeas" series of paintings.

The Seine was never far away and a trip to a restaurant overlooking 4 locks plus a tour of a partially restored renaissance chateau in Gaillon were next on our itinerary. The chateau had once been famous throughout France and was currently undergoing extensive restoration. Whilst the workmen were on their summer holiday visitors were allowed to have a free, but limited, tour of the buildings and the work in progress, an experience in some ways more interesting than just seeing the final, finished splendour.

At about this point we suddenly realised how close we were to Paris by train and when the Frenchman who was a weekly boarder at the house kindly offered us a lift to the station to catch the early morning train, then the decision was made.

The Musée d'Orsay in the converted railway station on the river and only opened in 1986 was our main objective. It was quite breathtaking to walk into this huge space so wonderfully designed and presented. It is a museum of arts - painting, sculpture, architecture, furniture design, photography and decorative arts since 1848, but the biggest attraction for us was the huge number of impressionist paintings by Renoir, Monet, Manet, Degas and many others - in many instances a room for each artist, quite a feast.

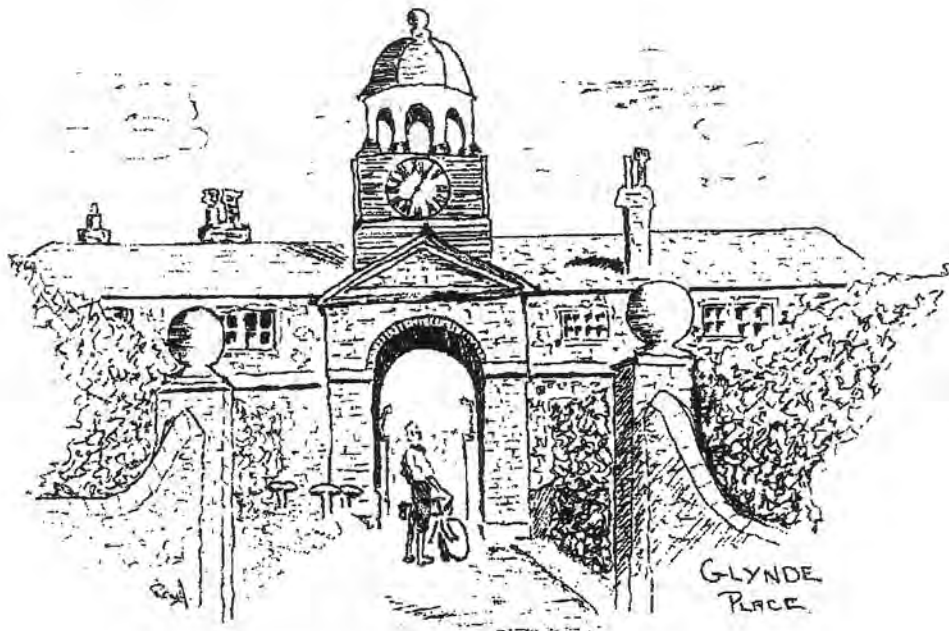
Two bonuses from this visit were the view of Paris from the rooftop terrace and lunch in the magnificent opulence of the restored dining room of the hotel, which had once served the railway station in all its 19th century glory. The other objective of our day in Paris was to look at the new glass pyramid at the Louvre and to walk around the centre of the city, which I hadn't seen since 1976 and Dennis since 1947.

Having stayed at the farmhouse longer than intended we no longer had time to cycle back to Dieppe. We had often thought about using the local train services and this seemed the ideal occasion to do so. Bicycles are carried free but only allowed on

certain trains, usually early morning or late afternoon, but once this restriction is accepted there seems to be no difficulty and we found the various guards extremely helpful. On the train to Rouen there were three other cyclists, two German and one Englishman, and we spent the journey discussing our various tours. We had to change trains in Rouen and the guard on the next train gave up his seat so that our bikes could fit in the guard's van.

As we settled into our seat the weather began to break after 10 days of relentless sun. The downpour had finished by the time we got to Dieppe and only after we had spent a morning in the market did it begin again, just as we had boarded the ferry for our journey home.

Facts: The guidebook for chambre d'hotes is called "French Country Welcome" and is available in bookshops. If you know the area you are planning to visit small free booklets can be obtained from the local tourist office. We paid between £15 and £22 for 2, for bed and breakfast. Some houses also offer an evening meal on request, this costs about £5 per head. Guests are usually allowed to bring food back and can use either the landlady's kitchen, or in some cases there is a guests' kitchen provided. An added bonus is the opportunity to have French conversation. The guidebook on Normandy which we used was plucked from Dennis' collection of "Little Guides", first published in 1906, our edition was the fourth, revised in 1928 and still relevant today.



Everyday Sussex No. 13
by Roy James

JOTTINGS FROM THE NOTEBOOK OF K.R.T. (Ken Rogers Tryke).

It was when we were in Lincolnshire on the Triennial that I first heard him mention the 40+ 100 mile, no mention of it to me first, just asking people were they riding and saying that he might be. How is he going to manage without me I ask you? Anyway we had a nice day trundling round Lincolnshire and he seemed to eat well, weighing more when he finished than at the start.

The next ride anyway was supposed to be the D.A. 50 mile. I took him out for that and a very nice ride too, I was able to give the small ring some exercise. And didn't know how many hills went up in Sussex but, apart from when he tried to steer me into a ditch, everything went well. I didn't let him get me into the ditch but he will have to be careful in future. He gets cocky at times and has to be reminded who is boss.

So, it looks like this 40+ 100 mile is on. I have been given a good clean and he has told me it is in Essex, wherever that is, and how are we going to get there I wonder? Everything is beginning to fall into place, we are going by car and staying overnight but I cannot understand why he is putting the roof rack on. I am not travelling on top of the car and that is a fact. It seems that Dennis Jakeman is coming with us and his bike goes on top, there certainly is not room for it inside with me.

Well we have arrived at the start, how civilized, at 9.15am. It appears we go off in groups, the same as at Lincoln. He has ridden this before, apparently, but that was without me, so I will have to look after him as usual. What a lot of interesting looking bikes about. There is an original Claud Butler complete with rod changer on the chain rings. I think I am to be the only tryke again, when we spot a good looking two wheel drive Longstaff. It is in a fancy shade of purple but has got pink knickers on. (KRT is referring to the axles and forks.)

However, the time to go is here and we join a group from Worthing Excelsior who promptly set off at a cracking pace. I had a word with the computer who told me we were doing a steady 17s. The countryside is rolling and the road surface good so we should be OK. At least he doesn't have to keep stopping me to look at the route sheet. A quick stop for coffee and away again, the weather is now getting hot but we are rolling along nicely; until about 35 miles when this large group of faster riders catch us. The Worthing lads join the back and, in spite of my protest, he does the same. He thinks he's still 18! Computer told me we were now doing 23s, this was definitely too fast for me so, in spite of his efforts, I slowed down to a more reasonable pace feeling completely shattered with him saying he could go on. We staggered into the lunch stop at Finchingfield, having done 53 miles in under 4 hours. I had a rest whilst he went into the pub for lunch. When he came out I noticed that someone had changed his legs in the pub, he had left the good pair in there and come out with a very inferior pair as replacements.

Once more we joined the Worthing lads, but these replacement legs were of no great help to me and this time we lost them after 5 miles as we were climbing some hills. He then started joining different groups, all of whom knew the way, so at least we could keep trundling along. He told me that the tea shop would be along soon and I could have a rest, but it was along time coming with the weather now in the 80's and with a strong wind blowing against us. At last we came to the tea shop and I had a look inside. What a lot of dead bodies, all trying to pretend they were enjoying themselves.

Well he staggered out and asked me to take him to the finish 20 miles away. Just as we were leaving, I saw the Longstaff arriving and realised, if I hurried along, I would be the fastest tryke. Well, out of two! And so we made the finish and clocked in at 7 hours 49 minutes. I was quite pleased with myself and felt glad I had brought him along.

If anything more of interest comes along I will pass my notebook over to David.

K.R.T.

* * * * *

MEDWIN LAURIE CLUTTERBUCK

Laurie, whose death in September was fully reported in the obituary columns of "Cycletouring", was a life member of the C.T.C. and a contemporary of Bill and Dot Collins and Yub and Phyl Moore, in the early days of the old Sussex D. A., which was founded in 1926. (The division into East and West Sussex was not until 1947.) Laurie held office as D. A. Secretary in 1930 and was a D. A. Vice-President and Chairman of the old Central Section in the thirties.

His connections with the East Sussex D. A. are well remembered by Bill Collins, when he gave a talk on the League of American Wheelmen at Stone Cross Hall and subsequently his occasional visits to D. A. slide shows at Hellingly Village Hall, a popular venue for D. A. events in the past.

Laurie was known for his interest in "international touring" and in particular the International Bicycle Touring Society of America and the part he played in planning the 600 mile tour of the U.K. which he jointly led in 1968 with Dr. Graves of the USA the President of the Society, when he left his dental practice to plan and ride the entire route, arrange food and lodgings for the 44 participants from the USA and Europe and check the road conditions! The five page article "Windsor to Westmorland" by James Grambart of New Jersey USA in the Oct/Nov 1968 issue of "Cycletouring" describing this tour makes good reading. (A copy may be borrowed from the D.A. Library. Ed.)

He was also well known for his interest in the bicycle as such, keeping himself well informed and up to date with developments and holding positive views on the design and equipment for the touring bicycle and the tandem. This is reflected in his surviving stable of six solos, all hand built, four of which were made in Macon, France.

It seems appropriate therefore that we republish his article "The Evolution of a Touring Bicycle", which appeared in the first issue of the "South Saxon", the official organ of the old Sussex D. A., in March 1936.

Dennis Jakeman 30/9/92

The Evolution of a Touring Bicycle.

by M. H. L. Clutterbuck.

When the Editor asked for an article it occurred to me that it might be of interest to trace the evolution of a touring bicycle.

During my first tours I rode the typical Club type of machine with narrow saddle, 26 x 1¹/₄" wheels and double cogged hub. Thus equipped I went to John O'Groats and Cape Wrath. The memory of the discomfort is with me yet. On the level stretches of the Great North Road I longed for a hill to give me the excuse for getting off such an uncomfortable perch. On another trip, this time to Ireland, I tried another narrow saddle but with coil springs underneath; it was no better. It was the following year during an Alpine tour that I realised that the true solution of the problem was to have a saddle providing an adequate area to carry one's weight without undue pressure. The model which met this requirement was a B10 and since then I have always used one with the exception of brief intervals.

After the first few tours I began trying variable gears, both hub and derailleur, with the object of reducing fatigue and eliminating undesired walking.

After touring on sprints and tubulars for two years, I tried balloon tyres with the object of rendering rough roads more easily negotiable. The first ones were 26 x 2" Dunlops, very comfortable and lively but making the machine appear rather bulky and a trifle on the heavy side. My next experiment was with a machine incorporating

24 x 2" opensided tyres, the diameter of the wheels was reduced in order to save weight without sacrificing comfort and has the added advantage of allowing a longer head tube and also providing more room for luggage under the saddle. This machine had a wheel-base of 40" which in practice proved too short. A slightly longer base provides smoother running.

With the experience thus aquired, I have just had built a machine incorporating those features which I have found desirable and in which the weight has been kept as low as possible by utilizing modern light components.

The machine was built by Mr. F. W. Evans. The frame is of 531 steel with 21 ins. seat tube and 42 ins. wheelbase. The special cranked tapered chainstays, necessary for wheel clearance, were supplied by the Cyclo Gear Co. The tyres are 24 x 1 ¹/₈ ins. open-sided Constrictors mounted on Conloy rims built on Sturmey Archer brake hubs. The gear is a Super Cyclo with duralumin double chainwheel, the chainwheel derailleur being a Simplex. The chainwheels are 46 and 36 teeth and the freewheel has 13, 18 and 28 teeth giving a range of gears from 29 to 85. The lighting equipment is a Bluemels dynamo set. The mudguard stays are of hiduminium as also the seat pillar, handlebars and stem. The brake levers are of duralumin made by Tabucchi. The machine is finished in chromium plating, aluminium and green enamels. I almost forgot to say that the pedals are Conloy and the cranks Williams dureel.

So far I have not given this machine any extended test but from preliminary trials it gives promise of fully realising my expectation of a light comfortable and responsive machine fit to go almost anywhere.



INCIDENT ON THE WALL.

by Roy James.

With a grateful sigh June sat on her bed in their family room at the Once Brewed Youth Hostel. It had been a long day and while Roy and the two grandchildren, Omar and Ali, were down in the hostel kitchen preparing some sort of meal, it gave her a chance to review the ups and downs of their day on Hadrian's Wall.

The walk along the wall from Steel Rigg had been quite demanding but the two children had managed very well. Ali, the younger grandson, was convinced he had climbed Robin Hood's tree, for part of the Kevin Kostner film had been shot on the wall, and both boys had enjoyed scrambling in its lower branches. Of course, the day had not been without incident. There had been that woman with her troublesome young boy at the picnic site. He had kept kicking his football at Omar and Ali as they sat quietly having their elevenses before starting the walk towards the Roman Army Museum at Greenhead. He had been a real pain, but had been quickly left behind and it would have been a quiet walk with not another soul to be seen had they not encountered a large party of Japanese tourists approaching from the opposite direction. A cheerful group, they had been most polite and formal, smiling a greeting and asking all manner of questions. The grandchildren had stood quietly while June and Roy did their best to answer queries before continuing the walk.

Rain marred the last stage of the walk and everyone was rather muddy when they reached the Roman Army Museum. An excellent museum, that had given them a fascinating insight into the ways of a conquering army, although June was not at all sure she cared for the way that Roman soldiers treated British women.

Yes, it had been a good day, but so tiring. How long would it take those three to cook a simple meal? Perhaps there was just time for a few minutes lie down on the bed.

She sank back on the pillow, but hardly had her head touched when the door opened and in walked that woman with her wretched child.

"Is this the family room?", she enquired.

"Er, yes", replied June, glancing around the room and noticing for the first time a pile of old army camp beds in the corner.

"Surely she is not going to stay in here", said June to herself.

But the woman began to assemble two of the beds while her child started to kick his football about the confined space of the room.

"I'm not sure he should do that", said June.

"Oh don't make such a fuss," said the woman, "that's the worst of you people from the South. You're so soft."

June was just about to give a heated reply when the door opened again.

"Thank goodness, here's Roy now," she thought.

But it was a beaming Japanese face that looked around the door and an oriental voice enquired,

"This is family room. Yes?", and without waiting for an answer a stream of Japanese came pouring into the room and quickly began to undo bed rolls on the floor.

"Oh, this is impossible", thought June, sitting up on the bed, "where is Roy? Where are the boys?" Why don't they come?"

The door burst open again. With a crash a burly Roman soldier burst into the crowded room. Tall and broad, splattered with mud, he strode forward, kicking the cowering Japanese underfoot, ignoring the other woman and her child and made straight for June.

"I have come at the urgent request of the Senate to collect the woman from Eastbourne, to serve the Emperor in Rome. Come.", he said making a grab for her as, with a muffled cry, she pulled the duvet cover over her head.

"Come on, come on Gran," called a somehow less commanding voice. As she looked out from under the cover there was Omar standing beside the bed, shaking her and saying,

"Come on Gran. Supper is ready but I'm afraid it's baked beans again."



I've taken the opportunity to reprint this picture by Roy which first appeared in issue 9 of "The Coaster".



SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

THE RAIN CAME DOWN IN BUCKETS, IT'S SUNDAY ONCE AGAIN.
HERE AM I WITHOUT A CAPE, I REALLY AM INSANE.
THEN I CAUGHT A SIGHT, OUT OF THE CORNER OF MY EYE.
A GORGEOUS PAIR OF LEGS, JUST COME HURLING BY.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

THIS BUCKED ME UP, NO END, AS I BLASTED IN PURSUIT.
I COUNTED ALL HER GEARS, OF WHICH SHE HAD A PLENTY.
I THOUGHT TO CATCH HER UP, AND HAVE A LITTLE CHAT,
WELL! I'M RATHER HANDSOME, AND WEAR A PRETTY HAT.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

WE RODE FOR MILES THAT SUNDAY MORN,
THROUGH EXETER AND RYE,
SHE... STILL AHEAD, NO MATTER HOW I TRY.
THEN! UP AHEAD, THERE LOOMED A HILL, I KNEW I'D GET HER THERE.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

GEARING DOWN, TO MEET THE HILL, IN GREAT ANTICIPATION.
SHE DROPPED A COG, LIKE A DOG, SHE LEFT ME FAR BEHIND.
WITH CLENCHED TEETH, BIKE BENEATH, I SET OFF AT A CANTER.
BUT A GAS THIS FAIR BLOND LASS, HAD THE MEASURING OF ME.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

WE TOPPED THE HILL, SHE'S ON THE PILL! (ANTAPHRODISIAC) IT HIT ME
IN A FLASH.
UNDAUNTED STILL, I RODE DOWN HILL, IN DEEP ADMIRATION.
FEAR STRUCK MY HEART, A CROSS ROADS AT THE BOTTOM.
WOULD I SEE THE WAY SHE WENT? STOKE NEWINGTON OR TRENT.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

I HIT THE JUNCTION, AT TOP SPEED, MY BRAKING WAS APLENTY.
I STOP IN TIME, TO SEE HER BEHIND, ON THE ROAD TO CREWE.
TURNING LEFT, LIKE GEORGE BEST, MY PEDALS KEPT A CHURNING.
AH! A LEVEL CROSSING WAS IN SIGHT, A TRAIN LIGHTS A BURNING.

SHE WAS ON AN HERCULES, I WAS ON A DAWES.

SHE DID LOOK LOVELY, IN HER PALE BLUE SHORTS, AS SHE WAITED
AT THE CROSSING. SHE GAVE THAT SMILE... I'D SEEN BEFORE.
SHE WASN'T FOOLING ME, FOR I'D ALREADY MADE ME PLANS,
NEXT SUNDAY MORN, AT THE CRACK OF DAWN, I'D BEAT HER TO THE SHED.
THEN...

I'LL BE ON THE HERCULES, AND SHE'LL BE ON THE DAWES...

Harold '92

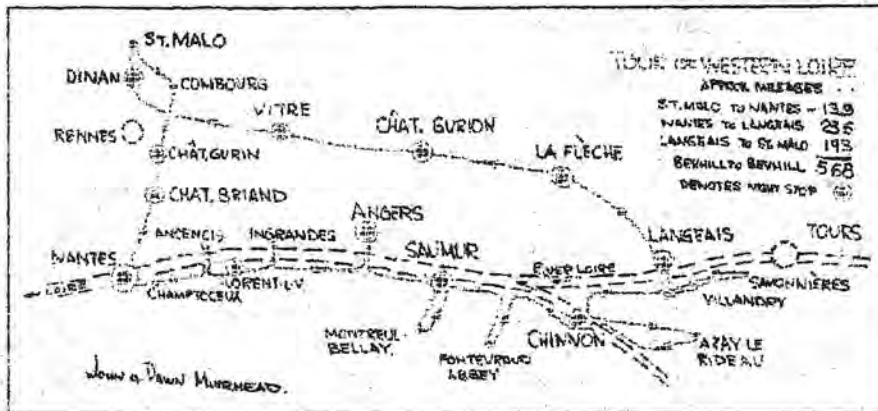


CHATEAUX GAZING - THE LOIRE VALLEY 1992.

Written & illustrated by John Muirhead.

June 25th. Dawn and I started our holiday in France. The plan was to wander along the western end of the Loire Valley "chateaux gazing" with plenty of time to stop and stare. Thus the tour proper would start at Nantes and move along the southern bank of this great river perhaps as far as Tours and then return in stages to St. Malo for the ferry home. The London office of French railways had told me that we could not take the bikes from St. Malo to Nantes as accompanied luggage so we added three days to cycle down. The accompanying diagram indicates the route we followed, the sketches were done "as and when" and the diary notes indicate the impressions that I must have thought worthy of recording each night.

For anyone making a similar journey I suggest they take a copy of the green Michelin Tourist Guide - "Chateaux of the Loire", it's not very heavy and it does contain a great deal of interesting historical information. I do the preliminary planning on Michelin Cart Routiere information 1:200,000 maps and sheet 233 is essential. The final chosen route is then marked carefully in pencil on the larger scale IGN 1:100,000, for this tour we used sheets 16,17,24,25 & 26. As the planning proceeds the local library provides lots of books including the interesting P & O European Ferries "French Entree" in this case No. 8 by Patricia Fenn is very useful. As the plan unfolds notes are made culled from all sorts of sources - Travel agents, French Government Tourist Office, etc. - in a loose leaf note book 5" x 3", places of special interest, hotels, Tourist offices, etc., are noted in the daily sequence of the route. The overall plan is marked out on a fold out strip showing distances between night stops. We find our "little black book" invaluable on the the road, it also serves as a diary and provides a note book for phone nos., insurance policy no., description of bikes (required if stolen), passport details, traveller's cheque nos., etc. All this planning is tedious but it does to some extent add to the pleasure of anticipation. On the road we both have transparent map pockets on our bar bags, Dawn has the larger scale IGN map and I have the smaller scale Michelin. We both have "Cat Eyes" in addition to my Sachs-Huret cyclometer.



June 25th Bexhill - St. Malo.

Mid-afternoon train Bexhill - Portsmouth; change Brighton. Vandalism somewhere delayed train and extra change in Lewes resulted, just caught connection in Brighton. Coped with night crossing in reclining seats.

June 26th St. Malo - Chateaugiron.

Pushed bikes off ferry and took our time to re-organise at customs kiosk and were mistaken for first passengers back to Portsmouth! Picnic lunch by lake at Combourg. "Route Barre" for new railway construction near Guipel required detour and added a few miles. Hot. Cuppa at Betton. Complex navigation east of Rennes. 4.30 arrived Chateaugiron. Hotel Le Cheval Blanc good. Pleasant little town, Chateau mostly ruins but in commanding position, great views all round, nice old buildings and streets. French smells.

June 27th Chateaugiron - Chateaubriant.

Shopped for lunch, left 10.30 for easier day. Still very warm. Long straight ups and

downs hard in the heat. Le Theil de Bretagne, made detour for lunch beside dolmen la Roche aux Fees, once burial mound now abode of fairies (legend). Roads still undulating and straight. Rode a while with fellow Brit. riding Cherbourg to Redon, he had collapsed his rear wheel and had to buy a new rim. Glad to arrive Chateaubriant, bigger, busier, noisier than expected, market day. Located Hotel du Pont Saint-Jean, bikes in garage. Much of chateau in ruins, part municipal offices. Lots of space, trees, quiet inside after streets below. In market lots of bargains that we couldn't carry. Late traffic and revellers made night a bit noisy. Not a bad place.

June 28th/29th Chateaubriant - Nantes for 2 nights.

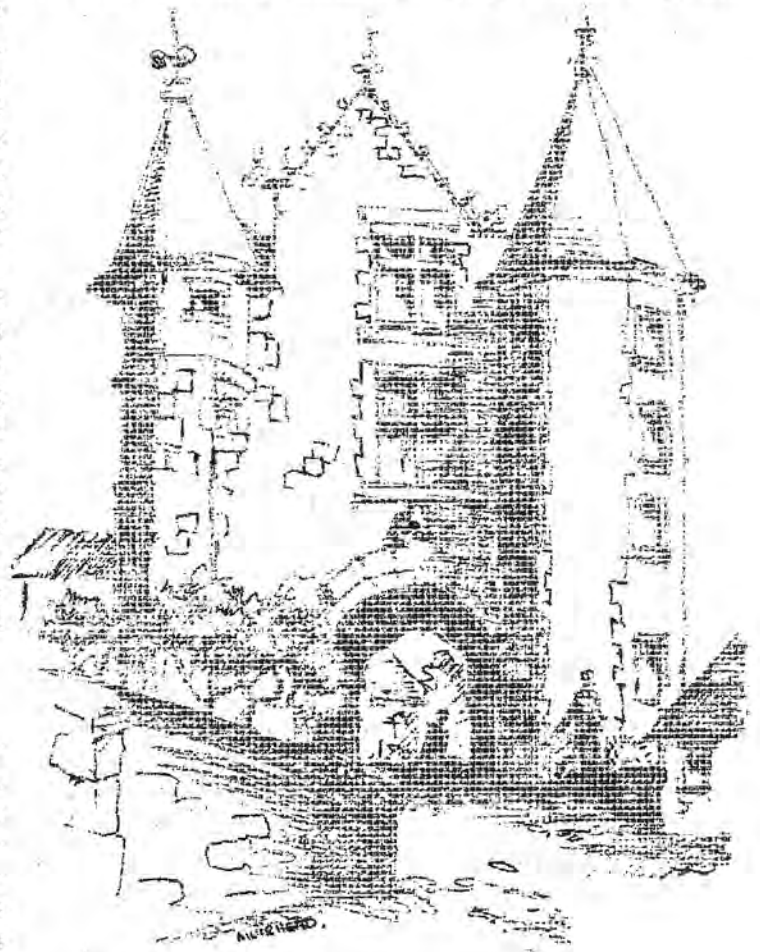
Long straight dragging gradients seemed never ending, flattened out a bit after coffee at Nort-sur-Erdre and picnic beside backwater of Nantes - Brest canal. Favourite spot for families with elaborate meals in many ice boxes, must have thought us eccentric with bread and cheese and plastic water bottles. Sunday, no traffic into Nantes. Hotel des Trois Marchands hid gloomy interior behind smart glass and stainless steel doors. Bikes amongst junk and bottle crates in passageway beside kitchen. Few staff, fewer guests. Passageway proved poor shelter during violent thunderstorm on second night causing us to leave town with plastic bags over soaked saddles. Nantes too big and uncomfortable, best place Jardin des Plantes, welcome serenity in city centre, lawns, specimen trees, water, flowers, winding paths. Altogether enchanting. Chateau large and imposing undergoing face lift restricting access. Cathedral worth visit, excellent shops, old town pedestrianised but shared with cars, dodgy. Two nights and one full day, more than enough.

June 30th Nantes - St. Florent-le-Vieil.

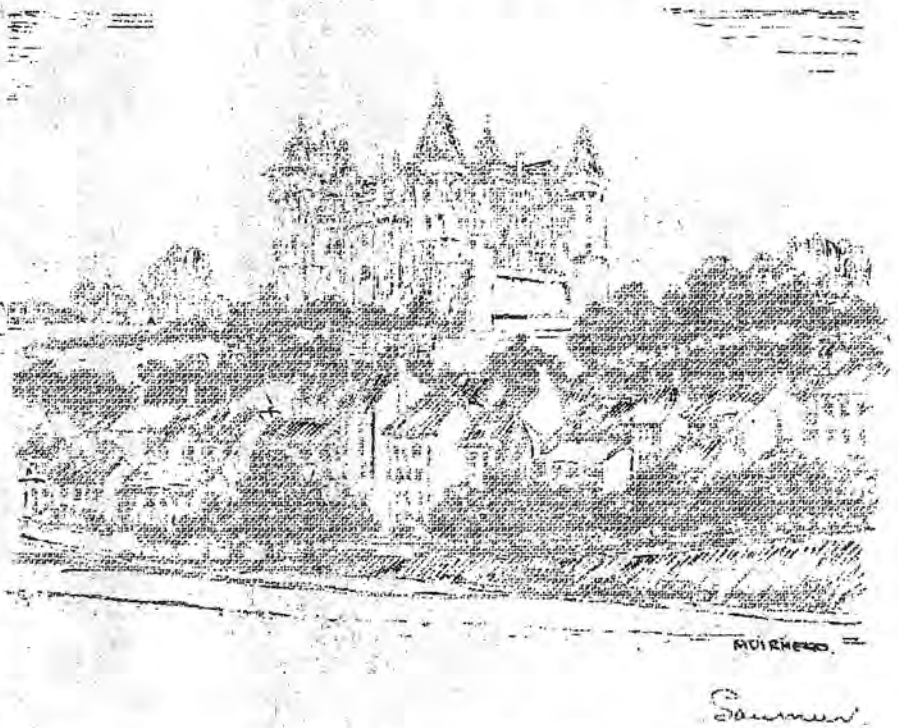
Drizzle after storm, road works, detours, mud, horrendous traffic. Walked two miles to escape city, finally crossed river and turned left on D751 on our way east. Friendly French cyclist on his way west, we helped each other with road and traffic information. Flat dull country soon improved but rain did not, wind billowed capes. Picnic high on hill at Champtoceaux after first steep little climb of the trip. Loire is vast, must be half a mile wide in places, sand and gravel barges fight the current after last night's storm, debris swirls in the eddies hundreds of feet below. Sat on seat under dripping trees, sky cleared a bit and country ahead looked inviting, we pressed on. Crossed river for quick look at Ancenis then back, paused on bridge to absorb immensity of river. St. Florent-le-Vieil described as fishing village. High on hill above river, lovely church, splendid views, old streets, extensive work installing street lighting closed the best streets. Only hotel Hostellerie de la Gabelle right on river by bridge. Welcoming proprietors - she welcomes he cooks, nice lines in Kir food and wine.

July 1st St. Florent - Angers.

Deviated from D751 onto D210 alongside river, crossed bridge for glance at Ingrandes and to see river from its ample middle, back through Montjean-sur-Loire to rejoin D751, Chalonnes-sur-Loire, Rochefort-sur-Loire to Erigne, then over four bridges to Angers. Dubious about 200,000 population of Angers.



Syndicate d'Initiative - (Tourist Information Office. Ed.) closed for extended lunch so no street map. Found room in annexe to hotel in town centre, ground floor so bikes slept with us. Busy place, quieter around old town and chateau, massive fortress, enormous walls strangely forbidding. Moat now full of flowers, deer browsing in grassy areas. Huge tapestry of the Apocalypse 350 feet of it in 76 panels displayed in special exhibition hall. 21 years of incredible labour and now colour has faded, sad. Cathedral majestic soaring above steps leading from river. Cobbled narrow streets, thriving commercial-agricultural centre. Steps, galleries, clearly doing its own French thing.



July 2nd Angers - Saumur.

Retraced tracks over many river channels to Erigne then D132, D175 (again). From Gennes spotted first cave dwellings, house fronts 'stuck' on cliff face so caves behind provide accommodation. Cunault abbey church, impressive height of columns, 11th century. Huge bell tower. Worth visit. Mushroom museum at St. Hilaire

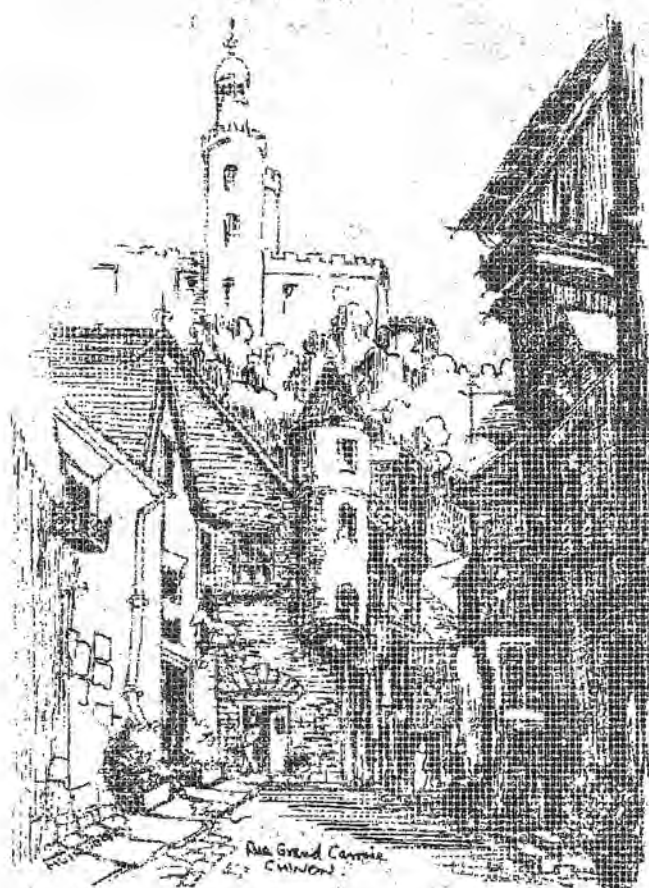
in linked cave system, originally quarries extracting limestone Tuffa used on many chateaux, some in Westminster Abbey. Region produces in these caves 75% of France's mushroom crop - 500 tons/day in Saumur alone! Saumur by early afternoon, Hotel de Bretagne, bikes in shed guarded by Boot lookalike and his noisy friend. Nice shops in nice street. Gibbs dentifrice castle type chateau looking exactly like a chateau should, glistening white in sun, lots of pointed towers. Built as fortress but elegant in detail, pleasant gardens, nice ice-cream. New buildings in town in excellent taste. Traffic well behaved.

July 3rd Saumur - Montreuil-Bellay (day trip).

Lovely day, huge cuddly sunflowers, acres and acres of them, easy terrain, photos of me amongst sunflowers. Montreuil-Bellay nice little town, overlooks river Thouet. Shade trees and seats in town square opposite chateau gates. Bikes locked within portals. True period furniture, fine staircase, high painted ceilings and frescoes. Kitchen with seven charcoal fires suggests no gastronomic frugality nor Duchess's bedroom serious deprivation in exile. Four canons (of the cloth) occupants each of a tower in canons lodge deserting spiritual endeavour for lure of Bacchus. Retrieved bikes with special ceremony, chateau closed for lunch. Hairy, wheel-locked descent down to riverside park for picnic. Stunning views of church and chateau now high above.

July 4th Saumur - Chinon.

Goodbye Boot, goodbye your friend, may you continue to guard les velos. Left in light rain, then steady, then heavy, too wet for map reading so made a few miles on main road, D947, snorkelling along in wheel spray. Located right turning, few miles of narrow lanes then found Fontevraud Abbey, locked bikes in entrance archway. To sound of rain cascading off acres of roofs explored St Mary's cloisters watched over by the preceding abbesses. Always an Abbess in charge of mixed community. Vast and careful restoration in abbey church, huge stones in huge excavations. Unique and ornate kitchen with large capacity and many flues to accommodate fickle winds. Herb garden water logged like us. Paradox, modern conference centre alongside 16th century kitchen. Doubtless delegates bring sandwiches if wind too fickle. Pressed on in pouring rain, one descent Dawn ahead obscured by rain and spray, frightening, worst yet. Crossed



river to Chinon in lessening rain. Hotel de Trielle, deserted bar, no customers but Madam attentive. First night bikes amongst tables in cavernous function room. 1190 hotel was part of Palace of Archbishop of Tours, no doubt his lackeys wore stone steps into death trap hollows. Ecclesiastical background did not inhibit family celebrations next day. Chinon pleasing to the eye, twisty streets, top heavy leaning houses, timber, stone and cobbles below fortress chateau standing guard above. Excellent guided tour. Note! winter project, learn more Anglo-French history. Great exhibition of contemporary painters in Hotel de Ville, honours to be bestowed, wonder who won large medallion.

July 5th Chinon - Azay-le-Rideau.

Rain again, buckets, too bad for intricate navigation, 19km dead straight undulating dual carriageway. Ferocious traffic, not all "D" roads are quiet! Chateau ranked with Chenonceaux for sheer beauty. Up to expectations, built on old fort - beauty on site of bloody past. Lovely interior, very good value. Met American mixed party, arrived Paris by air, 15-20 bikes in boxes, to travel route previously surveyed and hotels booked, repair shops alerted, highly organised tour, nice folk with wet bums - no "fenders". Stopped raining, returned via Villaines-les-Rochers, basket workers day off. Quiet trip back, Neuil, Crissay-sur-Manse, Panzoult, Cravant-les-Coteaux. Chinon, minor bike checks, last walk around, last look at paintings for personal conducted tour. Bikes now outside in yard but no "Boot" lookalike to guard them.

July 5th Chinon - Langeais (via Chateau Usse)

.Start grey, cold, drizzly - soon cleared. Usse a bit special. Perfect setting, perfect design, origin of Sleeping Beauty, unique "peep-in" tableaux with figures, lavish furnishings, luxury everywhere. Memorable visit. More rain, lunch in restaurant. D16 riverside to Langeais. Two hotels are closed, quiet room in Hostellerie La Duchesse Anne. Full tour of chateau, fortress cum luxury residence furnished 15th century. Charles VIII and child bride Anne of Brittany tableau, sad, power hungry lawyers, Bishops, sycophants, business as usual. "Watch path" exciting views. Good guided tour. Worth while. Contrast, cobbled back streets with HGV's roaring through on N152.

Guide book recommended creperie dead loss, don't believe all you read in guide books, things can change for better or worse with new management, so we ate well and elegantly at the table of La Duchesse Anne.

July 7th Langeais - Villandry (day trip).

(After 'big town syndrome' decided to return to Langeais from Villandry and skip Tours for this trip.) Sunshine, easy wander along river bank to Villandry. Keenly anticipated famous gardens, up to best expectations, just like photos in the brochure enhanced by heavy scent of box hedges. Chateau place to linger, Spanish picture gallery and furniture. Along river to Savonnières, picnic by river after disputatious matron moved us along to another seat. More caves, commercial set up. Dripping water, stalagmites/tites, water slowly dripping deposits of lime on intricate copper patterns producing cameo-like duplicates. Dinosaurs (models), wine tasting. Worth while. Back to Langeais, patch of real pave.

July 8th Langeais - La Fleche.

First leg homeward, nice day easy riding, rural villages, no traffic, warm, but head wind stiffening. La Fleche busy, clean, civilized, off tourist route. Loir (no 'e' now) wide, attractive gardens. Chateau is town hall. Hotel des Quatres Vents, 18 francs to garage two bikes amongst junk. Nothing else of note!

July 9th La Fleche - Chateau-Gontier.

Nice morning, breezy, main road to Bazouges-sur-le-Loir then twisting country roads. Colour warmer, roofs tiled, pink and yellow walls, abundant flowers, more cattle - fat & contented, demonic 3 inch beetle crossing road. Lunch Morannes beside river Sarthe,

market day, cruising boats. Climbing now, long drags, head wind. Mire 2 beers and 2 diabolos to Dawn's taste, Bierne, Chatelain, Chateau-Gontier. SDI heavily concealed so no street map. Brief patrol pushing bikes found Hoteliere du Garc. Bikes locked in yard, saddles covered. It rained during the night!



July 10th Chateau-Gontier - Vitre (for 2 nights).

Rain, capes. Survived 2 miles of main road on patchy cycle track buffeted by endless homicidal bulk truck drivers before escaping. Country roads nice and rolling, rain cleared on rising head wind. High expectations of Vitre well rewarded. Hotel du Duguesclin welcoming, clean, cheerful, helpful, on edge of old town. Bikes in vast basement, access via street below or steps in cupboard under stairs. Old town streets superbly preserved, timber, stone, cobbles. Quick look now, exploration tomorrow.

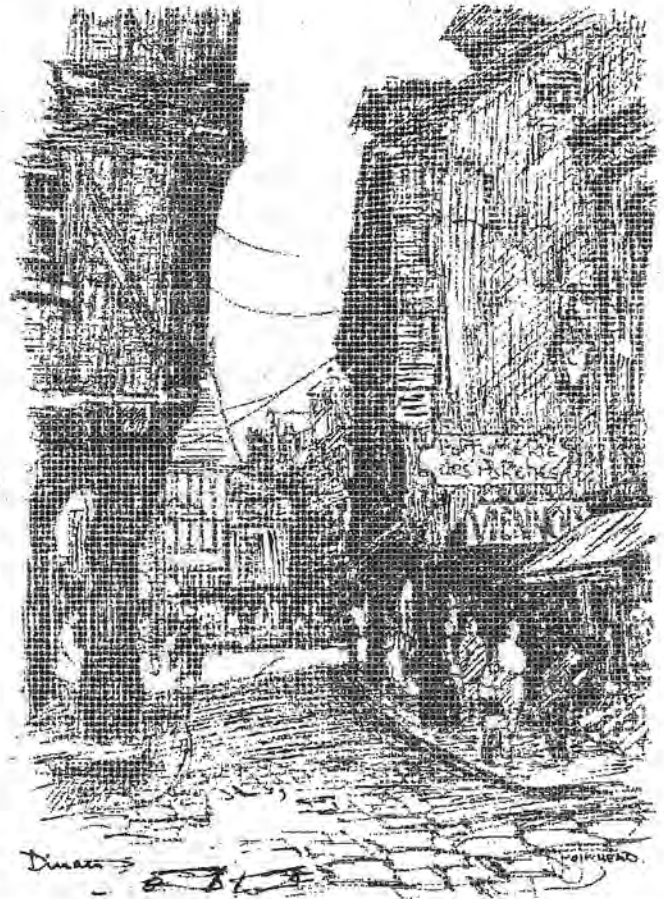
July 11th Vitre on foot.

Madam Guerinel phoned ahead to Dinan assuring bed for last night. Roamed the streets, camera, sketch pad. 15th century fortress chateau, cosy, miniature Angers, part civic offices, part open. One

large memorable painting, alone, well lit, well remembered. Walked the walls and ramparts inside and out. Well worth a full day. Long day tomorrow.

July 12th Vitre - Dinan.

Left nice people, patron optimistic about weather. English type countryside. Lots of



cyclists "Les Anciens" going hard. Head wind persists. Ripped off for coffee and rained off first attempt at picnic, took refuge in adjacent cafe, good coffee this time. About now belt on cyclometer broke, now more careful with 'Cat Eyes'. Arrived Dinan, Hotel de la Ocean, proprietor recognised us from last year. Confusion, room booked on phone key lost. Walked our favourite town, bad choice meal, drooled over Gauthier's shop window in anticipation of treat tomorrow.

July 13th Dinan - St. Malo.

Monday, Gauthier's, "Aladdin's Cave" of cycle shops closed all day! Wandered around, lunch beside river, left 2.30. Chose route with latter part east of Rance for a change. Navigation error led to nice little fishing port before we found bridge at Port St. Hubert. Looked at St. Suliac thence with some confusion of blocked off roads, dual carriageways and motorways to St. Servan-sur-Mer. Fortified by crepes in readiness for ferry. Fast crossing. Bexhill 10.00am July 14th. Here endeth tour 1992.

Reflections: Drivers homicidal to each other but not to cyclists. No litter or graffiti, good signposting, villages not only declare their name on approach but also on leaving. Great convenience of village square with church in centre and steps around, church spire can be seen for miles, aids navigation. In 18 days only encountered one somewhat unfriendly, unhelpful person. We seemed to be only ones locking bikes.

That's a surprise.

They don't leave much to the imagination in the City. An eminent firm of stockbrokers has issued a prospectus to potential share holders in a fleet of helium and hot-air powered airships. One section explains: 'Casualties in aviation are generally caused by involuntary vertical movement towards the ground.'

& From the National Economic Development Committee's report on the food and drink industries: 'Total food demands tend to be constrained by the size of the human stomach.'

THE DOVER COASTGUARD or THREE DAYS BY BICYCLE IN THE RAIN.
by Tony Palmer.

It isn't everyone who has been fortunate enough to visit the Meteorological Office at Bracknell, recognised as the world centre of excellence in the field of meteorology. There you will see banks of computers, fax machines and telexes receiving and analysing details of the atmosphere & the oceans throughout the world, throughout the day, every day without exception. A huge, costly organisation to forecast wind and rain.

Organise a cycling tour and I discover that, no matter where it is, both wind and rain can be forecast with the greatest accuracy over any time span you care to mention. Our trip to Dover was no exception. The rain began five minutes before setting off and continued for three days. Not bad timing even if I say so myself. There had been none before and there was none after.

Regardless of this we were spot on time at Dover as we rested our bicycles against the white walls of H.M. Coastguard. Elevenses time without elevenses, as we presented ourselves to the smart young lady at reception. Perhaps this was more by good luck than judgement but, whichever way it was, we were there. Alas, without our kind-hearted Frank and Peter.

Neither Frank nor Peter joined us in the circular conference room, a room superior I am sure to the seating arrangements of the U.N. Security Council. Superior because it is surrounded by picture windows to give the most magnificent views across the Dover Strait to France and from the eastern English Channel to the southern North Sea; a panoramic view which we would most certainly have enjoyed had the rain not been lashing across those famous white cliff tops to the sea beyond. Hardly the tranquil scene described by Matthew Arnold in his poem "Dover Beach". But this did not in any way detract from the interest, or the care and attention given to our visit by the officer-in-charge, in describing the work of the coastguard, in particular at Dover. Unless of course you had forgotten to close your saddle bag or cover your saddle.

For those who venture in this Strait, or take their holiday by ferry, it is reassuring to know that your movements are monitored by a responsible sleepless eye, from above; that you are scanned and recorded by the latest technology, warned of dangers, that there is organisation to pluck you out of the briny at a moments notice. Even for the undeserving and there are many of these. Passing through the Dover Strait one calm summer weekend, in dense fog, but with a blue sky and sun above, I came across an elderly man in a small wooden boat happily fishing with rod and line in the middle of the deep draft channel. No radar reflector, no sense, no understanding, certainly no receiver to hear a few home truths from irate shipmasters, or the calming assurances given by the female coastguards for those in peril on the sea. Another ten feet and only the arm that binds the mighty deep would have helped this intrepid mariner.

Intrepid mariners they may be but when disaster strikes it strikes suddenly and thereafter the sea is relentless and merciless to the unprepared. At those times we are grateful indeed for the likes of the coastguards whom we met in July, and for the organisation of ships and aircraft which lie in readiness behind them. Later that day we were grateful ourselves for the skills of the emergency services and for good samaritans along the road. (When Frank came off on a steep hill in the wet. Ed.)

We left that road far behind, subdued in spirit, to the homeward route. My weather forecast remained valid and accurate and needed no amendment. The distance was accurate, timing and teas less so, but with nothing more serious than gear mashing, a puncture and a few cases of mud measles, a new experience was added to our cycling repertoire.

