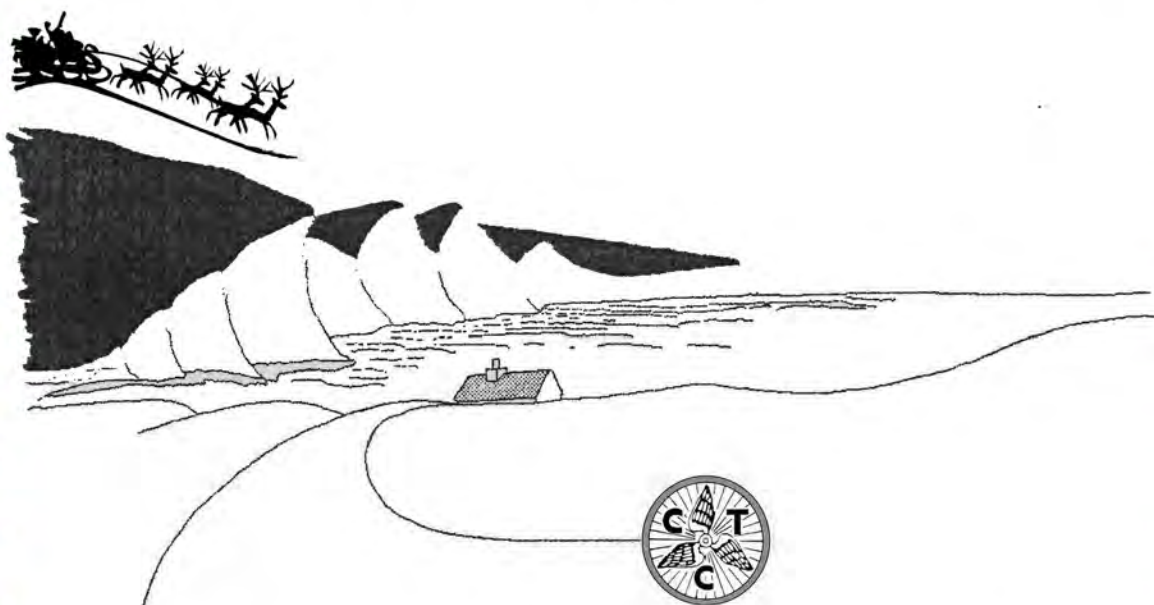


The



Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 35 - Christmas 1999

75p



East Sussex District Association - Cyclists' Touring Club

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"THE COASTER"

Issue No. 35, Christmas 1999



From the Editor's Desk.

I hope this issue finds you as at leaves me, looking forward to Christmas and then another new year of cycling.

Quite a good issue this time. The second of Roy James' articles on the churches of Romney marsh, together with a few of his excellent drawings. Memories of the 50's from Jack Dunn, who just scraped into this issue by the skin of his teeth; and a bit from our friend Wendy, warden of Alfriston Youth Hostel, on a cycling holiday in France. There are several other items to round the issue out nicely - it's good to get some articles from different people occasionally. If anyone else out there feels like putting pen to paper please do, articles of any nature that might appeal to our readers are welcome.

I hope you all have a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

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,
Cotterell House, 69 Meadrow,
Godalming, Surrey, GU7 3HS

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

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MY LOST WEEKEND

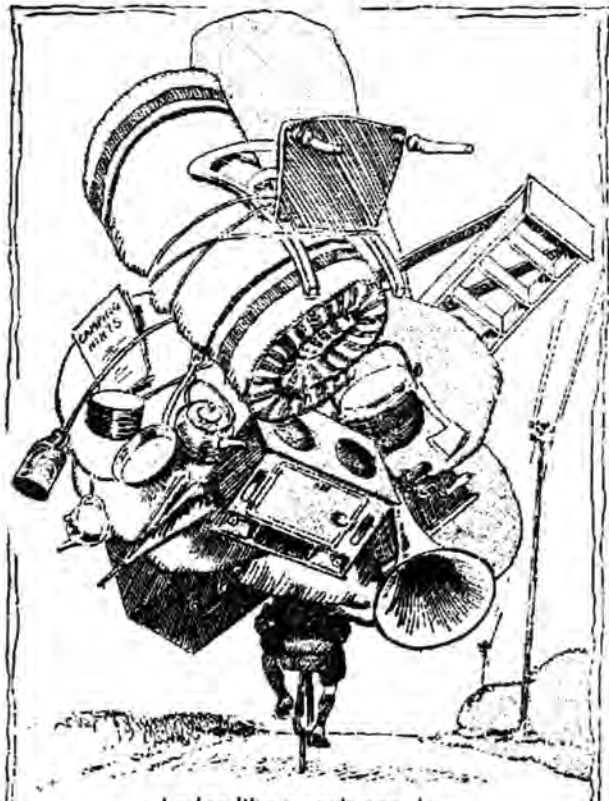
By Jack Dunn

This is going back a bit – to the early 1950's. For many years I had longed to get out of London and live and work in the country, so when the chance came in 1947 I grabbed it. But I had to move into Berkshire, far from the familiar Essex and Hertfordshire roads where the Eagle Road Club and its associated CTC section had provided my sport and companionship for 12 years or so. I continued to join them when I could, but with a wife, two young sons, house, garden and so on, opportunities were rare now.

One such chance came when the Eagles arranged a hard-riders' Easter weekend to somewhere on the Welsh border. We had a car by then, a "family saloon" of 1937 vintage (it was quite usual to keep a car on the road for 15 to 20 years in those days). The plan was for me to drive to somewhere like Stratford-upon-Avon, with the family and my bike aboard. There I would leave them for the club's weekend venue (somewhere near Knighton, I think – or was it Kington?) and Vera would drive on with the boys to Tean in North Staffordshire to stay with her mother for a week. And my conscience would be clear!

But before we got to Stratford, the engine began to make unhealthy noises and they told us at a garage that we had a big end "going". What could be done about it at nearly midday on a Good Friday was unclear, but we were advised to that, by driving very gently, we might just make it to our destination and there seemed no option but to try. Obviously I couldn't leave this heap of trouble to Vera, so I said goodbye to any chance of being in Wales that night and drove on – very gently! But the noise got louder and I recall a man in Birmingham with his hand to his ear on our approach and a look of horror on his face at what he heard.

Well, we seemed to be getting along all the same, but in Lichfield, 25 miles short of Tean, there was a bang and we ground to a sudden halt. There was soon a pool of oil in the gutter and, under the bonnet, the last of the oil was dribbling through a ghastly hole in the crankcase. Strange to say, there were some lucky features in our situation. We weren't out in the wilds, miles from anywhere, and a passing AA man took pity on us and went off to find somewhere in the City where he could call on help for us and there was very soon a rescue truck on the scene to tow us away. We also found there was a bus due soon to take Vera and the boys, with as much luggage as they could carry, to Tean – another bit of luck. There was a great deal of stuff lying around loose in the car instead of properly packed – that taught me a lesson – and when I followed on the bike in due course it was laden like a pack camel.



Laden like a pack camel

I remember little of the Saturday and Sunday, except that I rode into Lichfield on Saturday morning to discuss with the garage what might be done with the car. Only a replacement engine would answer, it seemed, and this would involve a search around the car breakers and might well take a long time. I rode back to Tean in sombre mood, again well laden with the last few bits of luggage from the car. So at least I had 50 miles of cycling that day.

But Monday demanded real action; I was due back at work next day; I was 150 miles from home and it was a beautiful morning; at least I would get a ride today. I started out through Stafford and over Cannock Chase and had to go through the fringe of the Black Country at Hednesford, a mining village near Cannock. There were a lot of people about. One of them was a small boy, on what we used to call a fairy cycle, careering out of control down a steep side street on my right. He shot straight across the road and under my front wheel; it probably saved his life – he would have hit a house otherwise. There were no serious injuries, but my bike was a funny shape and obviously was not going to get me home that day. The boy's father was a witness to the collision; once assured of his son's survival he scolded him vigorously, apologised to me and offered safe custody of my mangled bike until such time as I could collect it.

So I had to find some other way of getting home. The first stop was a short bus ride to Cannock, then a longer one to Walsall and another to Birmingham. I can't recall why I chose to continue by road; perhaps I wasn't sure I had enough cash on me for the rail fare to Reading. So it was the bus again to Stratford, another to Chipping Norton and my sixth bus brought me to Oxford in gathering Dusk. It had been a pleasant enough ride through the smiling Cotswold countryside and I had surprisingly little wait between buses. The next stage to Reading finished in darkness and I had my doubts whether I would get any further so late in the evening, but my luck held and there was still a bus which took me to Bracknell, about 100 yards walk from my home.

I feel sure that a cross-country bus ride of this length would not be possible these days. I probably had my doubts when I started it. But I was home, albeit with no car, no bike and no Welsh border cycling with my old club mates. Not my idea of a successful cycling weekend!



MY FIRST BRUSH WITH THE LAW

By Bill Whiting

I have always tried to 'toe the line' when it comes to the law. When I was small, policemen were tall (none of this current acceptance of the under 5 foot 10's) and their very appearance commanded the utmost respect. (Some hope now I hear you say!) It was a warm, sunny, afternoon during the summer holidays (it was always warm and sunny in those far off days of 1943 and 1945). I had a bike, but could not ride it - it was too large for me, so I rode those of friends, when they thought I was a safe bet! I met two of my school friends, David and Brian, about half way between our respective homes. Using my charm, I persuaded David to let me ride his bike up and down the road, which he generously did. I had just completed two runs along the road, when at the junction at the top of the rise appeared, yes, Mr Plod, standing, one hand on saddle, the other on the handlebars of his huge black bike. I remember his cape in the 'official' location, over the bars. We had had it drummed into us that lending a bike was against the law (what rubbish!). PC Plod stood there looking at us. Quick as a flash, David had his bike back, while Brian and I scapa'ed round the corner to our respective homes. Later, I learned that David had ridden home, past Plod, with not so much as a wink. Such are childhood memories.

The next occasion was very different. I was in the sixth form at school. Easter holidays were with us, and of course, the warm sunny weather we all remember with affection. I was about half way round an exploratory rider through Woldingham and Tandridge and was heading back through Oxted, to Westerham, Tatsfield, and then the old Roman Road to West Wickham. It was just along the A25 above Old Oxted. I was pounding along, down hill, a following wind and chased by a 410 bus, which was eager to reach Bromley. Now it could be argued that I was riding furiously; I was certainly fast. Then at the height of my joy at travelling so speedily, a PC stepped into the gutter and ordered me to stop. I think he was surprised that my brakes were so effective, as he only had to retrace a few steps to reach me. The bus sailed by.

"Hullo, sonny! Have you seen the sergeant?"

"NO," I replied, "should I have?"

"I just wondered. I was due to report to him half an hour ago and I can't find him."

Now, I realised he was more scared than I. I suspect he had been having a quick blow' down at the local just down the road and had found the Black Eagle Brewery's output was rather rewarding on a warm afternoon. I pedalled off down the last few yards of hill leaving him to face the music, my views on the 'fuzz' having been considerably mellowed in the process.





Byway Riding

ONLY IN THE LANES IS THE UNSULLIED LOVELINESS OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE TO BE FOUND IN ALL ITS PRISTINE BEAUTY.

A LETTER FROM AFRICA

This is the first of several letters, sent by our old friend Rob Russell, currently in Africa, to Ken Smith and also Geoff Knights. We will have the second letter in the next issue.

Rob Russell
DAPP
Private Bag 342
Chichiri

Monday, 19 April, 1999

Dear Ken and John,

For a start I live in a house with four Malawians and one Zimbabwean, the Principal of the school. We are all connected with the Vocational School that I teach at. They share the cooking chores and eat traditionally, which is not very nutritious. After some searching and questioning I have been able to get all the food that I wish to satisfy my vegetarian whimsies. Olive oil, ginger, noodles, Soya beans, mung beans that I make into bean sprouts and plenty of fresh vegetables, as well as all the spices that one could wish for. I have got to know a couple of Asian traders who have put me onto a supply of basmati rice. Mangoes have just finished their season, but avocados are in season. They are much larger than the fruits available in supermarkets in England. At the side of the dirt road on the way to town they are about four pence each avocado, in town they are about five times the price owing to transport costs. Passion fruit, paw paw (papaya), banana, oranges, pineapples, custard apple, which are all grown locally.

I get up at 05.45 every day for a cold shower as we have no hot water. It does not matter, the water never seems cold, just refreshing. School starts at 07-30. Anyhow I'll write later about school and all that is happening at a later date.

I got some splendid letters from my son, Raphe, about Thailand. It has prompted me to try to write a topic at a time when possible. Maybe this may give the feeling of what it is like here. Give me feedback. It is so long since I have written letters and much practice is needed in composition as well as in computer skills. I do prefer using a word processor as it is easy to change, add, spell check, file, make the page, as well as having a thesaurus, if necessary.

Recently was my first visit to town, that is Limbe, which is the trading part of a sort of twin town of Blantyre and Limbe, it is also nearer to me. After some "Tiger Oats", with a bit of jam to sweeten it, the day rucksack was loaded with a hat to keep the sun off of the face and particularly the neck. The sun was already up as I set off under the shade of an avenue of fir trees that shade the dirt road that I live in. School kids skipped past saying, "give me your money, Sir". The smaller kids had little satchels on their backs, their legs were shining with an application of Vaseline. Their bare feet were silent as they passed, the dull, pinkish white soles of their feet contrasting with their black skin and spindly legs.

The walk to the bus stop took an hour. It passed along the uneven, rutted track, which occasionally has a battered pick up pass along. Goats were tethered up by one leg to graze the grass, their un-tethered kids stayed close to their mothers. Men were pushing bicycles with large loads of firewood to sell just a few sticks at a time. The woods are being denuded faster than they can be regenerated. Women are walking faster than those men who are walking. The work is largely done by them, they mostly carry a load on their heads, pumpkin leaves for sale, or maize being taken to be ground into maize flour. 85% of available land is used to grow maize, the people eat little else except sugar cane, of which

there is evidence all along the tracks, roads and pavements in the towns. It is torn at with the incisor teeth, in order to remove the outer casing, when the white inside shows it is then bitten off, chewed, to be spat out once the sweet juice has been extracted.

On arrival at Nguludi, where the minibuses go from, there were a number of market stalls constructed from bits and pieces of stick to give an approximate flat surface to display produce. A number of stalls had a galvanised sheet, with a hammered basin to hold cooking oil - chips were then fried. This was all done in the open with dust and dirt, flies, no water, and a dirty knife for peeling the potatoes. A fire made of sticks was in a brazier underneath. Next to this was a meat stall, where little attempt was made to keep the flies away. Pieces of sack, or cardboard, on the ground, with the stall-holders sitting patiently on the ground behind. Here bananas, peanuts, buns, avocados. Cigarettes are sold individually, the favourite brand is called Life. All around everything is green and the presence of maize is everywhere. Grass roofed huts in villages in the valleys and lower hillsides. Hills are covered in grass, trees and maize, giving a picturesque scene in a variety of green shades. The soil is red. Mango, eucalyptus, avocado and large flame trees giving shade to the whole scene, with a tuft of banana leaf and the lofty odd shaped paw-paw tree occasionally sticking up near to any grass huts.

After a wait of an hour the bus came, at least I heard it rattling and banging along as it approached. It was then that I realised that I ought to have made other arrangements to travel, except that there are no alternatives! There are no bus timetables, all the buses are privately owned and are in competition with each other. As the assembled crowd of people surged forward I thought that there are more people than seats. People were on the bus and had to get off, as the bus turns and returns to town. As the bus passed me I grabbed a window frame and climbed in through the open window and removed my rucksack. There was seating for 14. A warning had been given to me by an old African who was also waiting for the bus. Men being bigger and stronger, they got on first. Women and children had to wait until the end. That is the way of things over here. I was bigger and stronger so I was first on. My mouth dropped open as everyone managed to cram on somehow or other. The sides must have been bulging! The exterior was a good indicator of what was inside. I counted those who got out at Limbe it was 29! The windscreen had cracks all over it, all the fittings were missing, the seats were in tatters, with the metal frames of those showing and these were shiny from bums rubbing on them over a period of time. Money was handed down to the fare collector as the bus crashed along the road. One could hear the springs bottoming. The steering was gone, as the driver could not keep a straight line. The road was full of pot-holes from traffic and heavy rains. The bus wound its way around obstacles like holes, puddles, places where the road had washed away into gullies. Passing by were men on large, black, sit up and beg bikes with roller lever brakes, with massive carriers.

The rear tyres were nearly flat with the weight of huge loads of wood chopped into neat lengths for sale as firewood. The former forests are being felled at an alarming rate, they will soon be semi-desert. The bus leaned dangerously without ever tipping over. One was thrown from side to side against fellow passengers. Thick black exhaust fumes pouring in through the windows, with the smell of leaking fuel. Whilst going through a particularly deep rut the driver managed to stall the engine. The bus was in a bad state, but when I saw the engine that was even worse. There was no radiator cap. The driver was pumping fuel from the rubber pipe by gravity after pulling the connection off of the inlet. I jumped out in case anything went wrong. Somewhere near to his right I had noticed something that kept sparking as we went along, a short of some sort. At a roadblock, which was a 40 gallon drum with a plain pole balanced on top, everyone had to get off for a search. I stayed on. No one complained. The policeman asked me what was in my rucksack. He was told that it

contained a bottle of water. "Thank you sir". An hour of frequent stops in first, second and occasionally third gear, twenty miles an hour was the top speed for the twelve mile journey, finally we got to the outskirts of Limbe. Blantyre is a further 5 miles, which means a change of bus and more of the same.

The former colonial houses stood where they were built 40 to 50 years ago. Surrounded by large trees which give shade all day, clumps of bamboo and ornamental trees that had been tended by the family gardener, but since then have grown wild. The vegetable gardens were full of grass and weeds. The corrugated roofs and verandas, enclosed by mosquito netting were sometimes torn. The houses had not seen a coat of paint for many years. Green mould around gutters, mud stained lower walls, and rust spreading. Hard to imagine them in all their former glory in colonial times. A flash back of my early days in Africa saw the bougainvillea, in a variety of colours setting off the white walls of the house, the bright orange of morning glory spread across the roof, poinsettias in their Christmas red 10 feet tall, dotted about the gardens, clumps of wide banana leaves, but most of all the summoning of the servant with a bell, to bring more cold beers, which were brought on a tray, with him in a white uniform and wearing a fez! Across the road was the Limbe Club where evenings of drinking used to take place, with planters, civil servants and businessmen, with sports at weekend. I don't know what goes on now, as I have not yet been inside.

Limbe was somewhere I had not been to before, but I have been to twenty or more similar places like it over the in places such as Lusaka, Bulawayo, Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Ndola. The sort of place was known as the second class trading area. It was where the Asian traders operated. The style of architecture was the same in all these places. A square canopy from the flat fronted shop, nearly always painted white, to keep it cool, extends about ten feet into the pavement and is supported on pillars about ten inches in diameter. A flat wall sits on top of the pillars. No weight is really supported; it is all largely ornamental, as the roof is made of corrugated sheeting, which is deafening when heavy rain falls. I needed to go into a toilet before setting off around town. 'Amuna' told me this was the gents. Wow, it was pitch black inside, with the inside ceiling hanging down and the smell was appalling. The worst toilet that I have ever been in, anywhere!

It was not possible to walk in a straight line for two reasons, firstly the pavements were jammed with home made stalls selling all sorts of cheap produce, mostly plastic. There were also bookstalls selling religious booklets and Chichewa booklets, the local language, there were a few well-worn books. The sun had faded the covers and turned the edges yellow. The Asian shops, almost exclusively Pakistani Moslems, were in their shops, but these pavement sellers blocked views of the windows, which were further blocked with thick burglar bars up to an inch thick. The shops were full of products mostly imported. The funding for these came partly from foreign exchange dealings that the traders indulge in. Their rate is essentially the same as that of the banks. Holding quantities of dollars allows the holders to use them as a hedge against devaluation of the Kwacha, which was once worth nearly a pound, now there are just over 70 to the pound. The traders sit in their shop fronts eyeing suspiciously any Africans who enter. Yet, to me they are obsequious.

The African marketers were friendly and chased away beggars from me. I expect to be a target. I was able to say the odd word like *mumachita zingati?* (how much is it?). *Tatsitsani* (Come down). It was just like old times. One felt completely relaxed and stress free. I smiled readily and got mouthfuls of shining teeth in response. Nice to be able to bargain. "I'm not a tourist, just look at me in dirty old clothes with mud stains, come on give me a proper African price". Down, would come the prices with a good-natured grin.

The state of the roads and pavements was the second reason for not being able to make ones way in a straight line. Feet had to be continuously monitored to avoid stumbling,

or falling. Many manhole covers were missing. Paving slabs were missing, or uneven. Subsidence had taken away areas of road and pavement. Everywhere was in a state of decline. Paint peeling, cracks in buildings, plaster missing on walls thus exposing the brickwork underneath, rubbish littering the gutters and pavements. Grass was growing on flat roofs. Maize stalks, fruit stones, bits of sugarcane, grit. My senses were assaulted. Grit and sand hit one as passing traffic whipped it up. The sun beat down and clothes were sticking. Music of all sorts blared from a hundred radios. A mosque could be heard calling the faithful to prayer at lunchtime, then the majority of shops closed for an hour, some for an hour and a half. Time is passed. Three hours from home to the town and then an hour, or so, at lunchtime is a huge chunk from the day if one is not used to it.

The Asians were most friendly towards me in their shops. One 22 year old, Osman, who was born in Coventry, was very pleased to talk to me for a long time. He had garlic, spices and herbs, nuts, olive oil, fresh ginger and many other things to make my cooking more than the plain fare of the Malawians. He was a Manchester United supporter and had seen them play live. David Beckham had signed a shirt for him. He had a laptop computer with a modem and offered me its use to send an urgent message to Raphe. Being an Asian he had a free Internet connection from a friend. All the usual possessions of car, computer, satellite TV, mobile phone, etc. Anyhow I hope to use him again. He did say anytime. Further investigations unearthed small shops that had things like chickpeas and noodles. Had my first drink of milk since arriving. Only saw five Europeans all day, two were in cars. As I said to Osman, to come back after 15 years and to find everything in a worse state than I had ever seen, was most sad and distressing. Malawi always had such fine roads and to see parts on the outward journey that had formerly been tarred reduced to just plain dirt. This made life so hard for everyone dependent on buses. Corruption is making life very tough for the poor. The people are so patient, even submissive. At least it is a democracy, which means that it is not likely to suffer a famine, that is something reserved for dictatorships.

There are trips that I am lining up. One is to Lilongwe, the capital, to meet the British High Commissioner in order to try to get a substantial donation out of him, like US \$10,000, to purchase equipment, seeds, fertilisers, books, and cash. The other trip is to Zimbabwe to do my research project as soon as possible. (We all do a piece of research whilst being here). There is the need to obtain posters, books, chemicals, as there is almost nothing here to work with, you know the usual shortage of money, also to visit a number of farms to observe modern commercial practices in vegetable, fruit and flower production. Doing the project now will have the greater benefit for all the school, whereas if the visit by me is later the benefits are less. The bus ride there and a week of travelling around doing a number of tasks that I have set myself is a pleasant prospect.

Anyhow, that is enough for now. Just to say before signing off that I love it here, the people make me realise how much we have lost in Europe. To be treated with respect. To be waved at and saluted. To feel an individual, not a series of numbers, bank, social security and every way that one loses individuality. I got three lifts today when I was out without asking. To be greeted by strangers. It is true to say that I have not even frowned since being here. Stress just drains away.

Fraternally, Rob



IN NORMANDY WITH BICYCLES!

By Wendy Nicholls (Warden of Alfriston Youth Hostel)

STOP! STOP! WAAIIT!! I yelled, but on they sailed down the long straight hillout of sight - heads down, wind in their ears deafening them. I stopped by the verge and watched them disappear, the heat from the road and stubbled field quickly confirming my decision not to follow my family. As I felt in the pannier for a drink, I recalled the directions at our last map stop - "1½ miles straight down the hill, then right at the 1st crossroads". We'd had a lot of up-hills that day, so it was rather sad they'd overshot the crossroads so spectacularly!

I opened the juice box and thought about our holiday. Our cycles aren't exotic or hand built - a selection of off-the-peg (or out-of-the-Friday-Ad!) Raleigh, Peugeot and Dawes, and Nancy's Adams Slipstream trailer bike. For fairness, we have a hitch for the latter on each adult's bike! One set of rear panniers and a bar bag carried all the kit for the day, leaving the children unladen. Any parent of healthy teenage boys could have told me this was a mistake, and next time Tom and Robin will be equipped with a bag of bricks each! (Actually the boys, long bemused by my persistent preference for a Sturmev Archer 3 speed had to concede that it made no difference to my ability to keep up!)

The last of the juice rattled rudely up the straw. There was no shade and I couldn't venture from the crossroad. Sooner or later someone - probably Tom would ride up the hill as a messenger, but it was taking a while. How far down had they gone?

I imagined my feet on the cool tiled floor of our holiday home. We had booked cottages directly with "Gites de France". The reservations office sent a selection of property descriptions complete with photos and floor plans and accepted credit cards (although signing a contract written entirely in French was a little unnerving!). This was less expensive, and the houses all proved to be better than we anticipated, with large gardens, bicycle storage and "salles de Ping-Pong"! Traditional Norman beams and furniture throughout made them delightful, although the habit of keeping all the crockery in a beautiful carved cupboard far from the kitchen did irk the table-laying team! We stayed in FUAJ Youth Hostels at each end of the trip, finding both Dieppe and Boulogne to be pleasant, clean and welcoming.

A tractor paused at the junction, disturbing the straw dust by the verge. Our mutual nods turned to curious stares as I spotted surely the oldest haywain outside the Weald & Downland museum and the farmer wondered about my high visibility vest! Our HV vests raised attention in France, where even the traffic policemen and railway workmen don't wear them. One night, an overturned lorry forced the closure of the major road by our cottage. For 4 hours, in darkness, a fire-woman directed traffic - wearing her black uniform and equipped with 2 flashing cones and a torch, which she switched on and waved as vehicles appeared over the hill!

No surprise then, that this farmer was wondering why I was so dressed and waiting at the crossroad. He was shortly to be answered, for as the tractor rounded the bend out of my sight, up the hill pedalled Tom. Eventually regrouped, our convoy set off in the heat for home.

As we cycled, I was thinking about a very different day the previous week...

(more next issue!)

Some possibly helpful information!

Gites de France booking offices-

Seine Maritime 0033 235 60 73 34

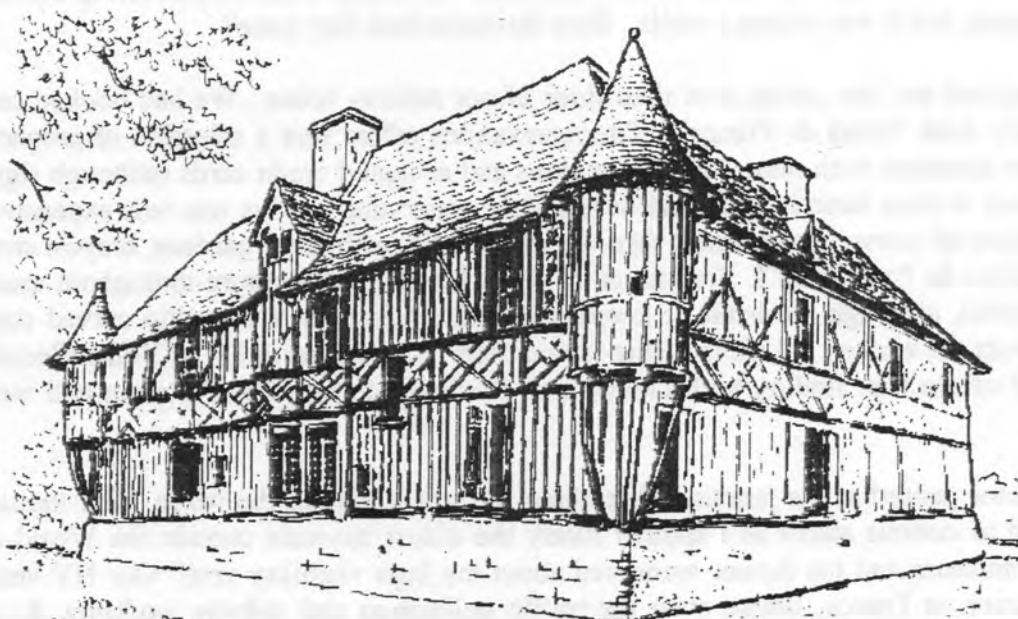
Fax 0033 235 61 69 20

Eure 0033 232 39 53 38

Fax 0033 232 33 78 13

Gites de France will send or fax you about 3 cottages meeting your requirements. Details are in French, but the floor plan helps. Use a 1:100,000 IGN map to check the location - I rejected a cottage under a motorway flyover! Some of the staff speak English, and they accept Visa, which they call "Carte Bleu".

Ferries - Our initial plan to "cycle across" the channel changed when the ferry price quoted was only £5 less than the fare for car, trailer, bikes and family! The convenience of taking the car won, but there is evidently a huge green transport issue needing addressing here - given a suitable discount we would certainly have left the car at home. Does anyone know how to get family and bikes over in August for less than £200? The Camping and Caravanning Club could only discount a ticket that included a car!!



A typical Normandy manor house.



BEHIND THE SCENES WITH TIME TEAM

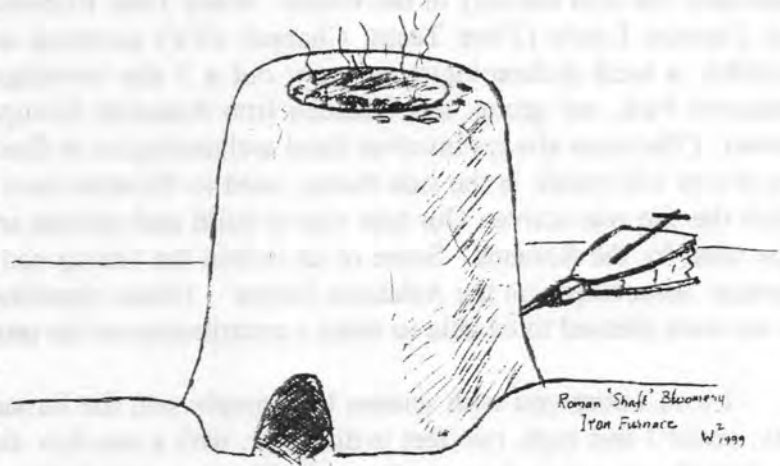
by Boanerges

To see oneself on TV can be a horrifying experience, but this happened to me in February. Among my several mad interests (including cycling) is industrial archaeology, and especially the iron industry in the Weald. When Tony Robinson, Phil Harding, Mick Aston and Carenza Lewis (Time Team, Channel 4TV) accepted an invitation from Dr Gerald Bodribb, a local archaeologist, to carry out a 3 day investigation into Roman remains at Beauport Park, my group, the Wealden Iron Research Group, was asked to help with the cameo. (The team always involves local archaeologists in their digs.) The cameo, the viewers of you will recall, is the side theme, used to illustrate how things were done at the time when the site was active. Our task was to build and operate an iron-smelting furnace of the type used by the Romans. Some of us within the Group had set up such an experimental furnace 'somewhere on the Ashdown Forest' - (these experiments are still under way), and so we were pleased to be able to make a contribution to the programme.

I won't bore you with science but, simply put, the furnace is very simple. A shaft of clay, about 3 feet high, two feet in diameter, with a one-foot diameter vertical space, is fired up, initially on wood, then on charcoal. Blowing with bellows into the fire starts when the charcoal is added and helps to raise the internal temperature to just over 1200° centigrade. That's hot! Indeed, bright red-hot. Iron ore which has previously been roasted to oxidise it, is then added in small batches, the bellows working hard to maintain the temperature, as more charcoal is added. The charcoal has a double effect - as fuel and as a source of carbon to reduce the ore to metal. Impurities in the ore are run out of a hole at the base of the furnace in the later stages of production. The iron master gauges when things are ready, by eye and instinct. A 'bloom' of spongy iron is then pulled out of the furnace, using tongs, usually through the base of the furnace. It is spongy because of the liquid slag still entrained in it. It is put in a forge of red-hot charcoal (called a finery, as it re-fines the iron), and taken out to be beaten by wooden mallets to push out the slag. This is exciting, with hot slag at 1100°C squirting around. It's just like butter patting to form the oblong shape, only hotter and more spectacular. The bloom is re-heated and beaten many times to produce a billet of shiny, pure metal. This billet can then be used, as raw material, in the manufacture of many different things. The Romans produced nails, hinges, armour, axles for chariot wheels, and many products that could be produced by hammering. The casting of cooking pots, etc. came later. So much for the technology, but what of the programme and its production?

Prior to the three day excavation there is much research and preparation by the production team. Beauport Park, as members of the Mid-Week Group will know, is a Roman site, with the largest Roman iron slagheap in Europe. Robinson and Co. were meant to uncover more of the Roman bathhouse and anything else Roman they and 'geophys' could locate. In fact during the whole exercise last June, they found nothing. That meant the cameo rose in importance. One of the programme advisers was Gerry McDonnell, an archaeo-metallurgist from the University of Bradford. He called in the services of Jake Keen, who heads up the Rural Crafts Resources Unit of the Dorset Education Committee in Cranbourne. Both had been on earlier series of Time Team. My Group provided five 'helpers' - we were all part of the Ashdown Forest experimental team. By chance this is the only other cycling connection you'll get! Two of us ride regularly, and another two help their son as marshals and timekeepers on the road events he organizes.

Our turn of duty was on the last day, the Sunday. Jake had found a source of iron ore only a few yards from where he was to build the furnace. This he roasted on the Saturday while building the furnace with dollops of damp clay from a bank also just a few feet from the working site. By the time we arrived at 10.30 on the Sunday mornings the furnace was built and was being warmed up by a charcoal fire, ready for use. Up came Ella Gallinski, the Associate Producer, as bubbly as any film hand you can picture. As this was an outdoor shoot, there were no make-up girls to fuss over us. Which was just as well, as we were going to get pretty mucky before long. Our instructions from bubbly Ella were: act naturally, don't look at the camera, forget it's there, and clear off when asked!



Our work now started in earnest. As there is no viewer interest in the furnace heating up - just a little smoke - we were put to our several tasks. Dennis found himself preparing a wet mixture of clay and sand with which he later plugged the many cracks that appeared in the furnace wall. Tim and I broke up the roasted ore into smaller pieces and discarded any sandstone lumps that were interspersed with it. Dot and Tony sorted and sifted the charcoal. Jake had bought the charcoal from the Charkers near Battle, just up the road. Sad to say it had been imported from South Africa (the Romans never got that far!). As the Group's bellows expert, I was then given responsibility for keeping tabs on the internal temperatures within the furnace. The Romans used the colour of the red fire as their guide. I was glad I had a couple of 20th century thermocouples and a meter. When the internal wall temperature approached 1000°C we knew we were in business. Ore was added and well, you know the rest on that front.

Meanwhile, the dig was going so badly that Phil the Hair and Mick the mucky sweater spent most of the day with us. Every now and again the camera team, one with the over the shoulder camcorder, the other with the woolly mike on a stick, dropped by. Jake brought them up-to-date. If a shot was timely, Phil the Hair and Jake, with Ella outlining the script, would rehearse once, then into the shots rarely more than 8-10 seconds long. The script did not exist on paper, it was verbatim. Phil Harding made appropriate 'oohs' and 'ahs' plus the odd, pre-briefed question and that was it. Both he and Mike Aston (he with the Brummy accent and rainbow pullovers of uncertain efficacy and age) appeared bored by the whole proceedings. No doubt if the excavation work on the golf course had come up trumps they would have been happier bunnies. It must be hard to keep up an appearance of enthusiasm when you have thirteen weekends away from home, working in all weathers (ours was one of the few dry days).

The several digs, led by Carezza, had taken place on the golf course, about a quarter of a mile from our furnace. Isn't it amazing what some people will put up with for the sake of knowledge? Our furnace was in the middle of the back garden-of a Tudor farmhouse.

The Team had taken over the house, its owners living and picnicking in their own garden, which we were busy turning into an industrial sites, fumes, sparks, the lot. Downstairs had been turned into the 'incident room' with maps, charts, a couple of computers and bright lights. The kitchen was a constant source of cold drinks (on the Time Team account), served by the unit's catering arm.

Towards the end of the day 'Baldrick' himself appeared at the furnace to discuss the day's success with Phil and Jake. He is short. I nearly missed him, and he was standing right in front of me!

The work finished promptly at 6.30 p.m. Our billet had just been forged. Phil had held it up to the light with his famous Bristolian, "Cor, look at that!" Elia had confided that the cameo of the furnace was the most exciting part, not only of the day, but of the series. Meanwhile, a scaffolding tower had been built on the 'lawn', for the final group shots of the Team discussing their findings and conclusions. We each signed a copyright agreement to allow the production unit to show our little gang on the 'box'. And that was that. The Team cleared the house in record time, the owner said he wanted the furnace and would put a wooden shed over it. We bade farewell to Jake Keen, from whom we had gained much practical advice on operating a 'bloomery' furnace. All we had to do now was to put our new knowledge into practice at our own furnace, then await the February transmission of the programme.





THE LITTLE CHURCHES OF ROMNEY MARSH (2)

by Roy James

Spring had arrived early when we reached Ham Street on a sunny morning in February. The wayside trees were breaking into blossom and the air was almost warm. The square, red-bricked tower of Warehorne church could be seen over the trees little more than a mile away and Bill and I were quickly on our bikes and cycling toward it. Being North of the military canal Warehorne barely qualifies as a marshland church, but that tower decided us and we knew we must visit.

St. Matthews church stands across the narrow road from a perfect village green and with village pub for company it looks to the South across the canal to the marshland and sea beyond. An earlier tower had been struck by lightning in 1772, but five years later the present brick one had replaced it. Of course it should have appeared incongruous against the older stone of the church, but the passage of time plays strange tricks and church and tower now unite.

We entered through the Flemish style porch built in the 18th century and influenced, as we discovered later, by the influx of Huguenot refugees to the area in the 1600's. A spacious building with an oak pulpit, which was built by the rector in 1905, in the corner of the nave. There cannot be many churches where the incumbent made his own pulpit. Unusually, and interestingly for those of us who like to wander around graveyards, there is a detailed plan of all the graves. We found this in a dusty corner of the North aisle and after making a close study went outside to look for the oldest gravestone. This turned out to be the grave of Elizabeth Head who died in 1702. Even had we not been searching for this grave we would have been drawn to it, for the path was littered with Snowdrops that traced a path of nodding white flowers down to the church gate. We found a warm spot on the South side of the church and there had our elevenses. From here, far, far to the West we could just see Fairlight church in silhouette against the sky.

Then it was South for us. Over the canal on the narrowest of lanes and straight into a flock of sheep moving towards us. There was nothing for it but to turn tail and be driven along by them until able to take refuge on a farm cart beside the road. After the flock had shuffled past we continued on our journey and in a short time arrived at Ivychurch. The church of St. George is impressive for such a lonely spot. Monastic in appearance it is at present being restored to the tune of some £50,000 and when completed will rank with the finest of all the marshland churches. Beside the interior of the South porch is a small door that leads to a priest's room used at one time by visiting priests. Now we could just see the stone steps, in a bad state of disrepair, and decided that they had probably not been used since the room had stored food, arms and ammunition during the 1939-45 war. Against the South-west wall of the nave was stone seating that was used by the elderly or infirm in the days when the bulk of the congregation would stand. Hence the phrase, "Weakest go the wall".

We stepped out into the sunlight and to my dismay the sheep that had been cropping the grass in the churchyard were now gathered around our bikes and one, bolder than the rest, was trying to remove my remaining sandwiches from my cycle pannier. They quickly moved however. The food had been saved and we were soon riding toward the church of

St. Mary in the Marsh.

Like many other marshland churches, St. Mary's stands on a slight mound to protect it from flooding. To the original Norman tower has been added a spire, which may or may not have improved it. I think not, but just outside the churchyard wall is a splendid wooden seat that catches the afternoon sun and allowed us a comfortable seat while we drank our tea. Of that I heartily approve.

To the casual visitor perhaps, St. Mary's church has little to offer. Black text and prayer boards adorn the walls of the nave. Floor brasses of Matilda Jamys from 1499 and her son William Gregory 1502 have been mounted on the wall. We found the impression on the floor where they had rested for nearly 500 years. But are these the originals or merely copies? As I studied them on the wall I began to have doubts. Who can blame the church authorities for removing the genuine brasses if such is the case. A high price is paid for keeping their buildings open, for many irreplaceable and valuable objects have been stolen in recent years.

The church of St. Clement, Old Romney was not far and, as I did not have time to visit last autumn, we decided that we must include it this time. St Clement is a popular Saint in Kent. No fewer than four churches are dedicated to him in the county. For the record, he was martyred by being thrown into the sea with an anchor fastened to his neck. I last visited the interior of the church some 35 years ago and at that time it was in a bad state of disrepair. There was even talk of it being made redundant. Now however, in the early Spring sunshine, it looked magnificent as we approached along the grassy lane.

The interior has been beautifully restored with painted box pews and double pulpit. At the rear the 18th century minstrel's gallery and stairs were in a way saved by none other than Dr. Syn, for when a film was being made of the legendary doctor, the interior of St. Clement's was needed for some scenes and the company paid handsomely for the use of the church.

My second visit to the Romney Marsh churches ended in Old Romney, but I must mention three ruined and abandoned churches that I passed on my travels, for ruined as they are they are still a reminder of those ancient dwellers of the marsh. I give map references for any who wish to visit for themselves.

Midley. 15th C. deserted by 16th C. G.R. 031 232

Eastbridge. 12th C. deserted by 15th C. G.R. 075 322

Hope, All Saints 12th C. oratory. G.R. 049 258



NEW FOREST 1999

by Ann Rix

On Saturday 24th July, Jenny and Geoff Boxall came down to Seaford to collect me and my camping gear and 15 minutes later, at 8.30 a.m., we were off. We stopped at Rownham for coffee (Jenny's) and a comfort stop, arriving at Roundhill at 11 a.m. Had a leisurely putting up of tents and lunch - John Holmes providing two cups of tea each - then, though Geoff and John didn't really want to move, Jenny and I thought we ought to have a ride. We four then left the quiet, shady lightweight campsite to ride down to Lymington to have tea at the Acorn Café, then sit and watch the boat world go by at the Marina. Back to have our meal via the track past Dilton Gardens, then John and I joined David and co. plus Derek, Jack and Mathew for football, boomerang and Frisbee throwing etc. till too dark to see them. Derek and co. had arrived on Friday and had gone for a ride. David, Susan, Martin and Emma had been down at 10 a.m. Saturday, so they went for a ride in the Forest, with the young ones on their own cycles.



Sunday had a splitting up and then meeting again, the first to go was John who went fishing at 5.15 a.m. At 9.30 a.m. with breakfast, etc. over for the rest of us we were just thinking of moving off when Geoff had to tighten his bottom bracket, as he was riding fixed this was serious, he had help and comment from some of the group. The five Rix's opted for 11's in Brockenhurst as Susan was not feeling well, while the other five, with our friend Jean from Sheffield, headed for Lyndhurst and the bike shop. Jack then also felt poorly so he Derek and Mathew went back into the Forest. Geoff, Jenny and Jean joined us at the Reptillary at lunchtime. We were lucky here, it was too hot and sunny at first so we only saw one frog and a distant view of the adders, then it came over cloudy and out they all came. Adders, a grass snake, common lizards plus babies, the sand lizards with their distinctive patterns, also lots of frogs.

Annie's of course for tea on the way back with her scrumptious cakes, with three going the whole hog, literally, with cream teas. This means - for those of you who have never experienced it - that you get two scones with as much cream and jam as you can manage, plus the choice of the previously

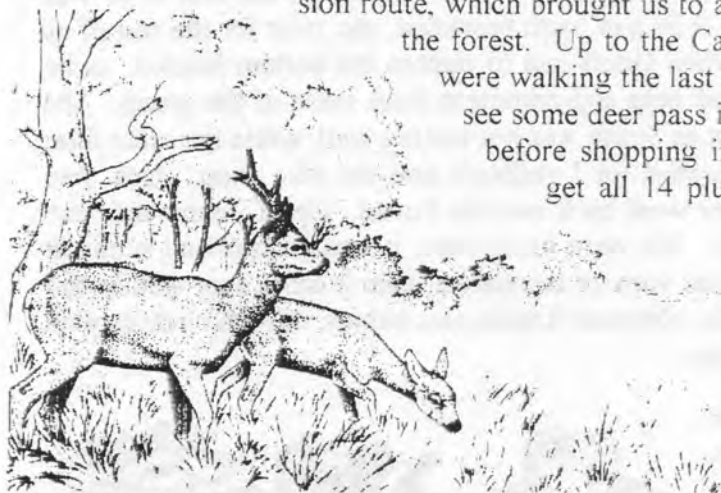


mentioned cakes. Three of the poor souls who had only sampled the cakes were forced to help out by having cream on them. Can you wonder that we didn't feel like moving for a while after that. Then it was back through Lyndhurst and the Forest to the campsite to find David and Susan had lost half a fruitcake to the ponies and so had to throw the rest away. Fortunately John had got back earlier in time to scare them off or they would have lost more. Evening meal over it was across to the open space again for football first then, when all eleven arrived we finished with a good game of cricket to our own rules - well John's ac-

tually - ten balls an over unless bowled or caught out - Jenny did best with seven runs. We'd done 21 miles that day, so well done to Martin on his own cycle now, with Emma on the Trailer bike.

Monday morning was cold with a strong wind which had been blowing all night setting tents flapping. John set off back home to collect son Mark, who was joining us for a few days. Paul and Christian from Portsmouth joined us on their tandem, as did Jean, so 13 set off for 11's at Exbury Gardens. A brief stop at Lepe to sit by the sea while Jack and Mathew took the chance to look in the shop. Along to Calshot for lunch by Southampton Water watching the boats go by, some of us trying to keep out of the wind. Tea at Beaulieu Garden Centre and then we stocked up at the Farm Shop on our way back to the campsite, where we found that Joyce and Marie had arrived during the afternoon. John returned with Mark bringing our D.A. numbers up to 14. All of which had games and cricket in the evening and a good time was had by all.

Tuesday it was Jean's turn to feel poorly so she decided to have an easy day. Paul and Christian had things to do, so it was just our 14 who set off with David in the lead as usual with Emma on the trailer bike. Martin was on his single again so this meant 4 boys now and 8 adults to keep an eye on them on the roads. Especially crossing the junctions around Lyndhurst - no problem in the Forest of course. Out through Brockenhurst to ride along the disused railway track to Holmsley for 11's, on along the track to come out on the road to Burley. Up through there and beyond to find the track we wanted was closed owing to Forestry operations. A stretch of road and into another track, following the red posted diversion route, which brought us to a good quiet shady spot for lunch in



the forest. Up to the Canadian Memorial and as five of us were walking the last steep part we were lucky enough to see some deer pass in front of us. Annie's again for tea, before shopping in Lyndhurst, and then managed to get all 14 plus steeds in the Forest gate, before following the tracks back.

Joyce then had a shock as the horses had been at her tent, broken eggs, eaten bread and her tea bags. This meant moving time for her and Marie to spaces near us where they felt safer. After all this, and a meal, time was getting on, so Jenny led us for a walk, 5 children and 5 of the adults, on a circular route round through the forest.

Wednesday Jenny was feeling queasy and not up to riding, so she and Geoff went to Christchurch in the car and explored there on foot. My old trouble was bothering me, so David kindly took us and Jean across the old airfield, out to Norleywood, then joined the Solent Way to Lymington for 11's. John and Derek had agreed the night before to Mary Edwards request to lead the crabbing run to Keyhaven, John though would only do it if he took it the way he knew. We arrived there about 1 p.m., after riding the track through the salt marshes, to find the bridge crowded, with the children dangling fishing lines with various bait attached, some with bacon some with beef! etc. Most of the elders sat and had lunch watching all the activity and took it easy, some having a snooze. The idea of crabbing is to catch as many as you can, then before leaving, put them on the sand for them to

race back to the water, poor things. We left John, Derek and their band to make their way back via Lymington while we headed for Milford and the café for tea and then more or less back the way they had come.

Thursday John and Mark went to the New Forest Show. Jenny felt better and so did I so we all set off, but I didn't feel up to the rough track yet so went round by the road and reached the Owl and Otter Sanctuary 10 minutes before they did, for 11's. Jean had gone to the Isle of Wight with the group but Paul and Christian joined us again so we were 14. On to Eling Tidemill to have a look round, unfortunately the tide was wrong for the mill to be working but the young ones all enjoyed filling in the quiz as we went round, if they finished it they were given a badge. The toll keeper told us of a good place for our picnic by Southampton Water, which we must remember, we found enough shade under a small tree for the 12 of us while Paul and Christian had something at the café. The toll, by the way, did not, thankfully, apply to us, only motor vehicles. As Paul and Christian had not yet sampled Annie's tea and they were heading home next day that was the obvious place to go. It was a good decision, as it meant reaching there by a different route. As we went we found excellent cycle ways, well signed, through council estates between Hounslow and Ashurst area, on to Woodlands and Minstead, New Town and then to Acres Down and tea. Three needed six cups each while for the rest three were sufficient. Time for more shopping in Lyndhurst, then five took the busy road back (Joyce and Marie were carrying bottles so felt it safer), John and I preferred the road anyway, as it would be track all the way otherwise. It was busy as it was the last day of the show and they were coming out on that road but we survived, it was much quieter after we turned off at Balmer Lawn. Paul, Christopher and Kevin had arrived at 2.30 p.m. so we were now 17 including 7 young ones.

Unfortunately it was 16 at 8.30 a.m. next morning as Mark was picked up for a holiday on the Isle of Wight. An earlier start than usual for 9 of us as the destination was Moors Valley Country Park and we were riding all the way. Paul, David and Susan took their cars to Burley to meet us at the Forest Teahouse for early 11's, where sitting in the shade in the garden suited us all just fine. The 16 of us then rode on to negotiate the traffic through Ringwood and join the cycle way beside the A31 which led us to the Castleman Tramway, a disused line, which is now a good track for cyclists, walkers and horse riders. Over the busy road to take another stretch of the track, through an estate then over the road again to enter the park. We parked our cycles, carried our lunches and set off for the Play Trail, the 6 children running ahead to explore each of the large wooden animals with the adults trailing along behind. We found a nice shady spot for lunch near the loggosaurus before doing the Tree Top Trail, with other small ones to climb over on the way. Back to the Visitors Centre for cups of tea, or ice-cream for some, while others had a go at the Adventure Playground. We 9 then left, heading for tea at Holmsley, then arriving at Brockenhurst to find the others there with the cars to take anyone's shopping. The traditional barbeque that night was just getting started when we arrived back at 6.30 and went on till very late.

On Saturday we woke to find the outer tents wet inside for the first time this week as mist had come up during the night. Jean came to say goodbye, as she was going for a short walk before leaving. Derek and the boys were packing up ready to go and weren't sure whether to have a ride first or not. John had gone fishing early again, forgetting that he had locked Marie's bike to his the night before - it was panic stations for a while - Geoff found it was too large to use a hacksaw on - Joyce was thinking she would have to work out a route for them both - when John, who had got as far as Sway, suddenly realised what he had done and came back, so all was well. Jenny and I were picturing him out in the boat

fishing, having an awful realisation about the locked bike and not being able to do anything about it. He had been kindly locking his, Marie's and Joyce's bikes together every night. With that over David led us down the track past Dilton Gardens, through the outskirts of Boldre, down Vicars Hill, to Lymington for 11's. 12 of us this time, some at the Acorn cafe, then as it was market day we separated to see if there were any bargains. Across the salt marshes again to Keyhaven with some riding the track along the beach from there to Milford, while Paul, Christopher, Kevin and I went round by road. Lunch for most on the beach and a swim for some, while others had theirs in the shade of the shelter. Off we went again with David leading us a devious way, to Sammy Millers at Bashley for tea. On our way through one estate we were joined by two other riders who came along with us which was nice. Back along the railway track from Holmsley, then into Brockenhurst for shopping and fish and chips for David, Susan and co. It was here that Susan's rear brake cable broke, we were glad it was then and not going down a steep hill. Back to the campsite for the rest of us for our meal. We had a short walk later after the 4 young ones had had a good time riding round on each others bikes - even John and Paul who rode Kevin and Emma's (the two smallest) at John's suggestion - with great difficulty I might add. Though the forecast had been for 31 degrees that day, we found it was more bearable than the day before as we had a sea breeze, so had definitely chosen the right destination.

Another warm day and tents were not very damp so by the time we'd had breakfast they were dry to pack and so was the groundsheet. The youth pack of 4 had enjoyed riding round again - to our amazement they had added 9 miles to our total the previous evening. We three left our campsite at 10.45 a.m. having waited to see if John Holmes managed to pack the amount he had piled on the grass into his car. We had to bypass the horses near the office - one of the usual places where they congregate - then out through Beaulieu and on to find the old A27. We stopped at the Chichester Tesco's, where Geoff had an all day Brunch, Jenny fruit and all had tea. She and I then ate our sandwiches before moving off at 1.30 p.m. We reached Seaford at 2.50 p.m. to unload me and my gear, then have tea before Geoff and Jenny headed home to Crowborough. David & Susan drove home late afternoon after spending the day in the Forest, with both Martin and Emma riding their own bikes.

A super week for friendship, good rides, good scenery and weather.



FELLOW CREATURES

By Tom Mason

'Tis good to be alive these sunny days,
The sky is vivid blue, no cloud is seen;
The wayside verge is bright with springtime flowers
And hedge and trees are clothed in shades of green.
A butterfly goes by in fluttering flight
Then settles in the hedge to disappear,
And Cuckoo Flower in bloom, a welcome sight,
Can mean the Cuckoo too may now be here.

And as I linger in the sunshine's heat
By leaning on a gate beside the way,
Just yards away from me on prancing feet,
A large and active hare begins to play
So buoyantly alive, and free from fear
Of me, a fellow creature, standing near.

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Hare

