

The



# Coaster



*the magazine of the*

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION  
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

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***East Sussex District Association  
Cyclists' Touring Club***

***President - Ron Ball***

*Secretary & Editor: David Rix, 27 Fullwood Avenue,  
Newhaven, E. Sussex. BN9 9SP  
E-mail: [cycling@eastsussexctc.org.uk](mailto:cycling@eastsussexctc.org.uk)*



***" THE COASTER "***

***Issue No. 43, Christmas 2004***



***From the Editor's Desk.***

*Welcome to this Christmas edition of "The Coaster". Though, with the odd exception the articles in this issue have very little to do with the festive season.*

*We have cycling articles on: China from Richard Thatcher; the Pennine Cycle Way from David Abbott; the Semaine Federale from John Regan and a report on the Historic Churches Bike Ride from Ann Rix. I'm also including an article on our own first family cycle-camping trip to France and, with apologies for it being late, an article also about cycle-camping in France from Rosie Turner.*

*On a festive note, there is a bit about Christmas in war-time, based on actual historical documents, which I hope readers find interesting.*

*So, hopefully, there's plenty here to keep you interested and to while away those quiet after dinner moments over the Christmas season*

*Happy cycling.*

*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

Tel: 0870 873 0060  
e-mail: [cycling@ctc.org.uk](mailto:cycling@ctc.org.uk)  
website: [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)

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

### EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

(website: <http://eastsussexctc.5er.com>)

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

E-mail: [cycling@esda.worldonline.co.uk](mailto:cycling@esda.worldonline.co.uk)

### Sections

Eastbourne & Hailsham: Marion Ball:

5 Horam Park Close, Horam, TN21 0HW

Hastings & Rother: Peter Jenner:

8 Hazelwood Gardens, St. Leonards on Sea, TN37 7HL

Mid-week Section: Esther Carpenter:

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

Seaford & Newhaven: Ann Rix:

3 Sutton Drove, Seaford, BN25 3EU

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## SLOW BIKE TO CHINA

by Richard Thatcher

### **‘The journey is the reward’ - Taoist saying.**

Between 5<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> June 1999 I took part in a sponsored cycle ride from The Great Wall of China to Tiananmen Square in Beijing in aid of Mencap. In 1997 I undertook a 500 km ride along the River Nile. Consequently I was less worried about my ability to complete the China ride, as I understood that much of the Journey would be across hilly terrain in fairly comfortable temperatures. (I was soon to learn not to take publicity brochures literally)

After an uneventful overnight flight to Beijing we transferred by coach to our hotel on the outskirts, arriving in time for lunch. This was the last time most of us were to use transport other than a bike for the next five days. The food was generally excellent and indeed suited my sensitive constitution well. Several of us had however decided to become vegetarians whilst in China to avoid eating unspecified animals. This worked well on the whole, though it resulted in us having a separate room on occasions as the Chinese felt that we would be offended by the mere presence of meat.

After the meal we were introduced to our guides, mostly Chinese, and to our bikes, to which we fitted our own saddles etc. The bikes themselves were American TREK, 21 gear mountain bikes made in China and they were brand new. Before trying them out we were warned that the brakes were a bit fierce, but that didn't stop one lad from somersaulting over the handlebars, happily landing without serious injury.

I awoke at 5 a.m. the following day. An hour later my roommate Steve & I had joined some locals doing Tai Chi exercises under some pine trees near the hotel. At 10 a.m. we finally got going, making our way up some steep sections to The Great Wall some 18 km distant. This section of the wall (Mutianyu), beautifully restored, was reached by a severe climb on foot up the hillside on which it stood.



Somehow though it seemed to lack the magic I had expected. We were delighted to find a toboggan on stainless steel runners which returned us to the car park in about two minutes, thus saving our legs for the afternoon session.

Lunch was taken in a local restaurant after which we cycled through beautiful rural countryside for a further 55 km, incorporating another two steep climbs. The silence in the almost total absence of traffic was amazing. We rode along listening to birdsong and observing brightly coloured butterflies. Great interest was shown in our cavalcade as we made our way through scattered villages, particularly by children who shouted at us. However they were really very shy and indeed fled if approached. Finally, we arrived at the Ming Huang Dynasty Holiday Resort, seemingly miles from anywhere in lovely mountain

scenery. Any ideas that we might have an easier ride the next day were soon dispelled at the evening briefing when we were promised more of the same but harder & further. So after a couple of good cheap local beers we retired early.

An early start at 7.30 a.m. brought us to a Ming tomb after only 4 km. There was little to see except broken down walls and stairs. Despite this we formed a good impression of how it might have looked, with its glazed terracotta tiles still in excellent condition after hundreds of years.

We next made our way up two mountain climbs through scenery reminiscent of Shangri La. At one point we could see the Great Wall at a distance, but far below us. I had by this time teamed up with a guy called Ian Taylor, as our approach to the ride and particularly to the long climbs had been very similar. We took a picnic lunch under the shade of some trees. Above a Kite soared on high thermals looking for prey. The afternoon session was the most boring of the entire journey. It took us through a military zone and at one point we were forced to stop to allow a MIG 19 to cross the road. We arrived in very humid conditions at the Badalling Hot Spring Hotel in late afternoon. Whoever designed this hotel had totally ignored the wonderful traditions of Chinese architecture in favour of pseudo-Greek statuary and California style buildings. The beds were grim, the food average and, to cap it all, overnight a violent thunderstorm raged outside. Total mileage for the day 84 km.

Another early start brought us to the Great Wall after 25 km, but we had been warned not to stop at Badalling on any account. We realised why, as the road was swarming with street vendors through whom we were obliged to ride. On the left hand side of the road was the largest Kentucky Fried Chicken concession I have ever seen. Regrettably this is the way China is going in its efforts to earn foreign currency through tourism. The sad thing is that it appears that this is what the tourists do want. Where in the world can you go without encountering McDonalds these days?

Another 5 km further brought us to the most beautiful section of the Wall we visited. The scenery was spectacular and we were able to walk on the wall to a high point, which looked down upon one of the few original gateways in and out of Old China. We were also able to visit an active Taoist/Confucian temple in which a few worshipers paid homage to a pair of ferocious deities.

The afternoon was spent cycling through another military zone. A strong head wind really sapped our strength and the temperature had also built up to above 40 degrees. The day's ride ended in the industrial outskirts of Beijing. Our room actually overlooked a steel rolling mill. The word was passed around that there was a McDonalds just up the road and I have to admit that I gave in to the extent of having an ice cream. I subsequently discovered that Chinese ice creams are so much better!

Total Mileage for the day 110k

The following morning we headed out through the worst pollution imaginable, past a petrochemical works that leaked noxious vapour from every joint. A further 6 km climb, past a Taoist temple complex, brought us out above the smog. I was reasonably pleased with the progress Ian and I managed to make each day, as we were usually in the first 20/30 riders to complete each section. During the afternoon we travelled through undulating rural scenery until we reached the Juma River gorge in a region called Shidu. On either side of

the valley steep rock walls rose for hundreds of feet as we made our way towards the head of the gorge some 14 km. distant. The road crossed the river several times and on one side was just a rough track composed of mud and rock. To reach our destination without mountain bikes would have been impossible. We stopped several times to admire the splendid scenery and to try local ice cream which tasted of real fruit rather than the synthetic concoctions to which we are accustomed. Eventually we arrived at the village of Bijia which is lovely now, but will be completely spoiled when the plans already in evidence are completed.



So another day ended and we sat watching the sun go down behind the adjacent mountains. Tomorrow would be our last day on the road to Tiananmen Square. Our leaders, Theo and John of Classic Tours informed us at the final briefing that we had all exceeded their expectations and as a special treat had devised a route which would involve us in an extra 46 km of largely mountainous terrain. Obviously we were a real bunch of masochists as about 70% of us accepted the challenge. Today we had travelled a further 110k.

The following morning we headed back down the gorge. Unfortunately my front tyre went completely flat following a stop for a group photo to be taken. But help was at hand as the mechanics, who followed us though the entire ride, were a matter of only yards away and soon I was off frantically trying to catch up with the back markers. It seemed that others were in less of a hurry as I was soon safely back in the bunch. After leaving the gorge we climbed up a seemingly endless series of hairpins to a high point from which it was hoped we would get a wonderful view. Sadly a heat haze obscured all but the last few bends up which we had struggled, though for once I was really glad just to have completed the climb. One of the features of each stage was that a Chinese character called Da Li would ring a small cowbell so that we would know that the break was coming up. I cannot describe how welcome this sound was on occasions.

What goes up must come down! A very fast descent took us down to a small village, where wheat was being harvested in a manner not seen in England since the invention of the tractor. The crop was spread out across the road for passing traffic, including us, to thresh. We learned later that some villagers had never seen Europeans before. This was almost unbelievable since we were only about one and half-hours by car from Beijing. Another climb and decent brought us down to the main road into the capital.

After a picnic lunch we set off towards Beijing. Initially I was unable to change gear, but a short stop revealed that a cable had become wedged in the rear mech.. With some difficulty I managed to free the restriction and once again set off to catch the rest of the riders. We were urged to keep together as we would be going through areas of dense population. Easier said than done with 100 riders but somehow we managed to maintain our peloton. We entered the city by way of the historic Marco Polo Bridge, which the Chinese valiantly

defended against the Invading Japanese during World War II. We neared the city centre through dense traffic. In a city of 9 million bicycles adequate provision is made in the form of good safe cycle lanes. Despite this one of the girls in our party was knocked off her bike, unfortunately sustaining a broken arm. Cycling through an underpass I was amazed to see a dozen or more tables set out at the roadside around which men were frantically playing Ma Jong. Amid this chaos a single girl stood on a bench playing a bamboo flute.

Eventually we reached Tianenmen Square, but were able to see very little as most of it was boarded up and closed to traffic. The official explanation was that it was being prepared for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Communist rule in China in October. The date of our arrival however was only one week after the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crushing of the democratic movement in the square so we had our own ideas. The Qianmem Hotel where we were staying was only just around the corner. On arrival we were presented with our finishing medals and a cup of the local bubbly. So it was goodbye to the bikes. A final 110k was covered that day making a grand total of 486 km. During the evening we had a celebratory meal during which we decided to be vegetarians no longer and asked for some Peking Duck - it was fabulous. The evening concluded with a cabaret put together by fellow cyclists. My roommate Steve Thirkettle had made up a brilliant poem about an ice cream lady, whose entire stock we had bought out one hot dusty afternoon.

That, officially, was the end of the trip but we had a day spare before the flight home, so the tour organisers had arranged optional excursions at our own expense. During the morning some of us visited the Forbidden City, with its subtle colours of terracotta and dark red. It was just as I remembered it from the film 'The Last Emperor'. After lunch we were taken to The Summer palace just outside the city, where one of the Emperors who tried to modernise China in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century had been incarcerated by his own government. Set beside a great lake and made up of a series of pavilions with walkways in between, it was one of the loveliest places I have ever seen. On the way back we visited an establishment where fresh water pearls are extracted from oysters cultivated in the lake. I bought my wife a delicate necklace of pearls set on silver thread.



To round off the day we paid a visit to the Chinese Opera, which was noisy, gaudy, and at times very amusing. To be a successful performer takes many years, as in addition to acquiring the necessary vocal skills the actors have to be accomplished acrobats. The performance lasted only 90 minutes but I was told that four and a half hours is more usual. The authorities banned Chinese opera for many years because the stories relate to Imperial times.

The plane home was half-empty which made for a relaxed end to a fantastic experience.



## Semaine Federale 2004 - Cernay in Alsace

by John Regan

Les Springett and I were given a warm send off on this year's Semaine Federale adventure, because we were able to join all our friends for elevenses at the Old Loom Mill on our way to France via the Eurotunnel. After a trouble-free sunny journey and a delicious meal in St. Quinton we camped for the night. After another sunny day we camped the next night near Than, at Willer-sur-Thur. This is near Cerney so that we could book in early on the Saturday. By sheer coincidence Rose and Mick Hills chose this same site

to camp for their stay, but they only arrived after we had left. We only discovered this when we met them later on in the week. They invited us back for tea and cakes and it was only then that we discovered that they had put their tent right beside where our tent had been. It's a small world. In Cernay our accommodation for the week was superb. To begin with it was right in the centre of Cernay, just one hundred metres from the Town Square and about two hundred metres in the opposite direction from our own temporary federal village. We had a large secure room on the ground floor for our bikes and then a lift to the second floor where we enjoyed a large room with two beds and en suite facilities. There were also two large bathrooms with power showers at the end of the corridor as well as a conservatory and a small garden alongside La Thur river, which kept it fresh and cool.

John Seviour and his son Andrew came via Eurotunnel on the Friday evening and spent the night travelling to Cernay. They coped with the map reading as well as building Andy a second bike en route. They were also delighted with the accommodation and soon settled in. From this ideal centre we were able to fit in a full day's cycling and then shower and change for a sumptuous evening meal at the Federal Village. We were served by a team of attractive young ladies who all wore a smart outfit. On each table there was a carafe of cool water and bottles of both red and white wine. Each of these were replenished when necessary throughout the whole meal. We were then ready for the evening entertainment which included a variety of singing and dancing, organised both within the Town Square and at our own Federal Village so that we had plenty of choice. Tired as we might have been from cycling all day we all enjoyed a dance or two to some lively music.

The people in Cernay realised in 1948 that 'les cigognes' (the stork in English) was in danger of becoming extinct and so they adopted this fine looking bird. Twice daily these carnivorous birds are fed in the park and they have built their large flat nests all over town. These nests can be seen on every church steeple, tower and tall building. At the end of each summer they return to Africa where they spend the winter and so avoid the cold and snow. Sadly, less than ten percent manage to return each year. Amongst the reasons for these losses are the facts that after such a long migration they are vulnerable to predators and some suffer electrocution on the many high tension wires which they encounter on both outward and return journeys. The people of Cernay are so famous for their care of the storks that they are known as the Storkas by people in the other Alsace regions. The Storkas had spent four years preparing for this great influx of cyclists. They made us very welcome and most shop- windows displayed a cycle of one type or another in their window display. The town centre was floodlit and the warm evening atmosphere was ideal for dining out, listening to the musical entertainment or just strolling around town. Everywhere was so friendly.

On Saturday 31<sup>st</sup> July we rode the Sunday route but in reverse order. We covered 65 miles in temperatures which exceeded 40 degrees centigrade at times. Then on the Sunday we did

the same course but this time in the correct direction and in about 35 degrees centigrade which was more comfortable. We were accompanied by a fair percentage of the 15,000 cyclists in the area. I quite unexpectedly met two of my former cycling club friends at lunch on this ride. They are Gill and Alan Else who were members of the Sorian R.C. in the 1960s. They joined us for the rest of the ride and we all met up for the evening meal. The next day we were all feeling fit so we opted for the longest ride. We did 95 miles in 35 degrees C. The following day we rode about 75 miles in similar temperatures, but as we were so near to the border with Germany we crossed into a small town called Breisach-am-Rhein. A good hearty German lunch mit ein bier or two was served to us by Suzanne who took a shine to Andy.

On Wednesday Les, John S. and Andy cycled up Le Grand Ballon which is 1,343 metres in height. I joined a coach to the foothills and walked to the top with a large party of French people. Both the coach and the party seemed to disappear as I examined the radar station at the top intently. However, I managed to hitch a lift right back to Cernay on a dormobile driven by a French couple who had one of their daughters, Agnes, with them. Strolling down to dinner that evening Les and I discussed whether or not I should ring in to say that I had arrived back safely. We decided that it was not necessary. Nearing the end of our dinner there was an announcement on the tannoy asking for John Regan. I stood up and everybody in the huge hall began clapping and cheering and they just carried on clapping and cheering. I wondered what I had won or what great feat I had performed. I went over to where the walks leader and two policemen were standing and the cheering got louder.

They were just relieved to find that I had arrived back safely. Suddenly I was famous and everybody knew me! I should have reported my return.

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> was picnic day and this was to take place in Parc de Wesserling which was a mere 25 miles away. We opted to take in a climb up to Geishouse en route as it is a mere 750 metres high. We then stopped to take some photographs in St. Amarin and suddenly realised that the dormobile owners, their daughter Agnes and her sister were out on their bikes today. Naturally we took their



photograph. After the picnic we toured the grounds of the chateau and then Les and I enjoyed lemon tea on the terrace of the chateau. The wealth of this particular chateau was founded on the development of cloth and in one of the large buildings there was a most interesting exhibition demonstrating the history of the cloth materials which had been produced on this site through the ages. This came right up to date with mention of the cloths which were now used by Tour de France riders and athletes generally. On Friday we steadily climbed to the top of Ballon D'Alsace which is 1178 metres high. As we arrived for the lunch stop there it began to rain. We managed to enter the auberge just in time to prevent us getting wet and cold – yes cold – because now the wind was blowing really cold air. After lunch I wondered how I was going to descend in my shorts and light cycling top without catching pneumonia. I was given a black sack and a pair of scissors and I cut holes for my head and arms to go through and this saved my life on the way down. On our ride back to base we accepted Rose and Mick's invitation to tea and cream buns which we

thoroughly enjoyed. Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> saw myself and Les joined by Alan and Gill as we set off for Seppois-le-Bas and Bouxwiller. At Pfetterhouse Les and I decided to turn south and enter Switzerland. We cycled straight past the border as there was nobody on duty there. We then returned to France and set off on our route again. At least we took the road with the correct number but realised after a few miles that we were going in the wrong direction and that we were back in Switzerland again. On the second occasion we had to talk our way out of Switzerland. On Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> thousands of cyclists assembled at the local sports pavilion where we all lined up into our national teams. Most cyclists were dressed in traditional national clothes and most were carrying national flags and posters. After speeches and much clapping we all set off in order to tour right round Cernay. Thousands of local residents turned out to clap and cheer us all the way around town. It was a wonderful send-off. We then went to the Federal Village for the closing dinner. We sat down at about 2 o'clock and course after course and bottle after bottle just kept coming; we were there until about 6pm, I believe. The entertainment was superb and we were all sorry that it was all over. It was the most enjoyable Semaine Federale which we have been to and we are all looking forward to the next one.



Andy Seviour      John Regan                      Rose Hills      John Seviour      Les Springett



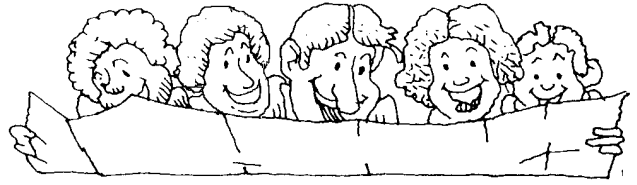
**Did You Know?**

The philosopher Rene Descartes speculated that monkeys could in fact speak, but that they chose not to in order to avoid having to work!

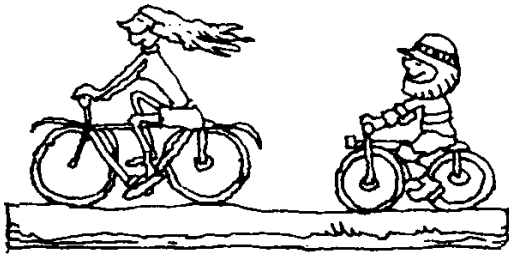
## FREEWHEELING TO FRANCE

by Rosie Turner

It was a bright, beautiful day and we sped along the cycle track through the picturesque French countryside. It was plain sailing and the whole family; Alice (14) riding solo, Amy (12) riding solo and Vicky (8) stoking the tandem, were happily spinning their pedals. We stopped by the riverside to have a picnic of baguettes and Camembert and to dip our toes in the cool clear water.



We had camping gear aboard the bikes and had arrived in France a few days earlier. We had weathered a severe thunderstorm and then we had “un problème” finding a second camp site. As the children were very tired we had decided to find a place to “rough camp”.

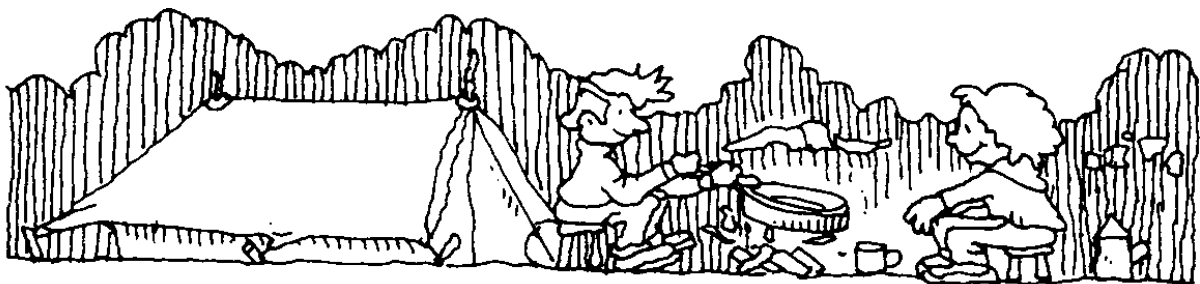


Alan and the two younger girls pitched the tents whilst Alice and I headed off to buy provisions. As we arrived at the boulangerie, we noticed that I had a flat rear tyre and Alice had a flat front tyre. However, we decided to bury our heads in the sand and ignore the punctures until we had finished the shopping. We had to get our priorities right!

Loaded with bread, paté and pain chocolat, we stopped in the village square and surveyed the damage. I mended the punctures and replaced the inner tubes. It wasn't until I tried to pump up the tyres that I realised we were trouble. They wouldn't inflate, despite repeated pumping. By this time we felt deflated ourselves, so we decided to cut our losses and push the bikes back to camp.

Eventually, three miles further up the road, we arrived back to a chorus of “hooray!” We ate our supper ravenously whilst Alan (our hero) managed to mend the faulty bicycle pump and inflate the tyres ready for the next day's cycling. We celebrated the victory with a bottle of wine.

We spent four days exploring the countryside around Dieppe, visiting churches, cafes, cycle camping and generally soaking up the French ambience. We spent the final day pitched by the camp site “Vitamin” swimming pool, relaxing and recovering, ready for the final day's cycle ride home from Newhaven to Bexhill-on-Sea. It was certainly an exciting family holiday.



## CHRISTMAS IN WARTIME

(Recently in my work as a school librarian I have been finding information for students on Christmas during the 1<sup>st</sup> World War. Particularly fascinating is the information available from the Imperial War Museum. The following are some extracts from that information.)

What of '*Peace on earth and goodwill to all men*' during wartime? The truce of 1914 is a famous example of animosity being put aside on Christmas Day. But when they are demonised in propaganda and your family and comrades are being killed, how easy is it to feel goodwill towards your enemies?



### 1914 Christmas Truce

On Christmas Day, 1914, during the First World War temporary truces occurred all along the frontline. These were usually instigated by the German troops through messages or by the singing of carols. The truces involved the exchange of food and souvenirs, but also allowed the grim task of the retrieval and burial of dead bodies out between the lines. The truces were seen as 'unwarlike' by those in command and were discouraged in later years.

**John Wedderburn-Maxwell**, a British Officer who served with 45th, 1st and 36th Batteries, Royal Field Artillery on the Western Front 1914 - 1918, recalls his 'fraternisation' with German soldiers on Boxing Day 1914. They discussed conditions in the trenches and the futility of the war. Wedderburn-Maxwell mentions the famous football match in No Man's Land between German and British troops, although he recalls that the ground was far too uneven for such a game in his part of the front. At midnight on Boxing Day they returned to the 'job of war', signalled with a round of artillery fire from the British.

*(Ref: 9146)*

“There was a party, oh a couple of hundred yards away, of our troops and the Germans all fraternising. And so I said: *"Right, I'm going to go outside and have a look at this"*. And I told the infantry to keep an eye on me, in case anyone tried any rough housing so they'd know what was happening. And I went up and I met a small party who said, *"Come along into our trenches and have a look at us"* and I said, *"No, I'm quite near enough as it is!"*. And we laughed and we chaffed each other and I gave them some English tobacco and they gave me some German - I forget what it was - and we walked about for about half an hour in No Man's Land. And then we shook hands, wished each other luck, and one fellow said: *"Will you send this off to my girlfriend in Manchester?"*. And so I took his letter, and I franked it and sent it off to his girlfriend in Manchester when I got back.”

### Lieutenant W B P Spencer

Wilbert Spencer served in the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment (7th Division). He fought on the Western Front from December 1914 until just before his death in action, at the age of 17, in the Battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915. He participated in the Christmas Truce of

1914 and wrote an account of his experiences in a letter to his mother.

**(Ref: 87/56/1 - Department of Documents)**

“28 December 1914.

My Dear Mother,

Well here we are again after a very cold xmas in the trenches we went in on xmas eve and saw 9 or 10 lights along the German lines. These I said were xmas trees and I happened to be right. There was no firing on either side during the night which was one of severe frost. On xmas day we heard the words “Happy Xmas” being called out whereupon we wrote up on a board - “*Glückliches Weihnachten*” and stuck it up. There was no firing so by degrees each side began gradually showing more of themselves and then two of them came half way over and called out for an officer. I went and found out that they were willing to have an armistice for 4 hours and carry our dead men back half way for us to bury. A few days previous we had had an attack with many losses. This I arranged and then - well you could never imagine such a thing. Both sides came out met in the middle shook hands wished each other the complements of the season and had a chat. This was a strange sight between two hostile sides. Then they carried over the dead, I won't describe the sights which I saw and which I shall never forget. We buried the dead as they were. Then back to the trenches with the feeling of hatred growing stronger after what we had seen. It was strange after just shaking hands and chatting with them. Well it was a very weird xmas day. ”

### **Judith Konrad**

A Hungarian Jewish civilian who lived in Budapest during 1930s. She was interned at Lichtenworth labour camp in Austria (1944-1945). Here she describes Christmas 1944, which she says was her worst time during the war.

**(Ref: 9499)**

“The Oberscharführer decided that because we're Jewish we don't have Christmas holidays anyway and the best way to celebrate for him was to do a roll call. So he herded everybody into one room and he wanted to keep his records straight in some way or another and he sort of called people, everyone with a name beginning A, B or C in alphabetical order more or less. Now Hungarian names are pronounced so that the surname is said first and the Christian names after, my name was Weiss Judith and not Judith Weiss, the German way is of course the way it is in English. He of course wanted us to say our names in the German way, which is not very difficult, but when people are confused, frightened and very hungry and sick. Every time someone made a mistake and said their name as you would say it in Hungarian he started all over again. We were standing there the whole of Christmas without food, he was sitting there, he had his dinner, he had his drinks right in front of us and we had to stand to attention, people fainted, people were sick and there was no end to this. Every time somebody said something wrong, not the way he wanted it we had to go back to A. My name starts with a W, I was standing there two whole days and a night. I seem to remember I think that was just about the worst time.”

### **Alice Christobel Remington**

A British civilian driver and canteen worker with Angela Forbes' canteens. She served as a

Red Cross Voluntary Aid Detachment ambulance driver in France (1915-1918). Here she recalls a poignant Christmas moment during the First World War.

*(Ref: 511)*

“One particular Christmas which was a really beautiful starlit night it was Christmas Eve and a very big convoy came in, but they weren't badly wounded. They were all very cheerful at the idea of getting into a bed and having Christmas in bed. We started singing, I think it was *Hark the Herald Angels* or something. Anyhow, they all sang and it was such a very quiet, still night and you could hear them going up and winding up and down this hill, these boys singing their hearts out, Christmas carols. It was really a lovely thing, moon shining, and the stars shining and these boys all singing carols as they went up to the hospital. They were so thankful, they knew they'd get a bath and clean. It was wonderful; I'll always remember that night.”



## NOTES FROM EARLY YEARS OF THE TOUR DE FRANCE

Sitting over a long lunch, Henri Desgrange, French newspaperman and former racing cyclist, conceived the idea of a nationwide cycle race as a means of increasing the circulation of L'Auto magazine.

It cost 10ff to enter the first Tour and the winning prize was 3000ff.

Maurice Garin, "The Little Chimney Sweep" won the first Tour in 1903 and would have won the second in 1904 but was disqualified along with several others for covering part of a stage on a train.

Some of the the stages were absurdly long. For example Paris to Lyons 467 kms, or Marseilles to Toulouse 423 kms.

18 hour stages were not uncommon and riders had sometimes to race through the night in order to finish the stage in daylight.

Rene Pottier, winner of the 1907 Tour, did not live to defend his title. He committed suicide the following January.

In 1909, Francois Fabier of Luxembourg won the Tour in appalling weather, winning 6 stages, including a 255 km breakaway in a snowstorm.

1910, and the first time riders tackled four snowbound and bear inhabited mountain passes in one stage, the Peyresourde, Aspin, Tourmalet and Aubisque. Won by Octave Lapize, he was killed flying as a fighter pilot in the First World War.

Riding alone through the night, some riders were attacked in the hills, pulled off their bikes and left beaten and groaning on the verge by rival supporters. Nails were left scattered on the road on many stages.

Leading the field in 1913, Eugene Christophe suffered a snapped frame on the descent of the Col de Tourmalet. Banned all outside assistance, Christophe shouldered his cycle and carried it 14 kms to a blacksmith's forge, where he repaired the frame. Only to be disqualified for receiving help from the young boy who operated the bellows.

With acknowledgements to "Le Tour" by Jeremy Whittle



## THE PENINE CYCLE WAY (North)

by David Abbott

Having enjoyed the Coast to Coast (C2C) route with Holiday Lakeland, Richard Thatcher and I decided to try this other route in the same area. Where the C2C route starts from Whitehaven, goes through the Lake District and over the Pennines to finish down an old railway track through Consett to Sunderland, the PCW route starts from Appleby and follows close to the Scottish border to finish at Berwick-on-Tweed. They are both Sustrans routes.

The start at Appleby was from a hotel about a mile from the town centre, which was something of a disappointment because we liked the town and had wanted to have a look round it. After breakfast we set off in a northerly direction, up the western edge of the Pennines, through Dufton and other villages to Melmerby where we had coffee in a pub. The road was undulating with no big hills and many of the houses and walls were made of a dark red sandstone. It had been suggested that we should have coffee in the bakers at Melmerby, but we were thirsty and impatient, and it turned out that coffee would have been dearer there.

At Melmerby we crossed the A686, the main road from Penrith to Alston. In order to avoid the long climb up to Hartside on that main road, with all its traffic, we followed a loop of lanes which took us up to rejoin it



close to the summit. At Hartside summit is the highest café in England (1904 feet), where we had our lunch. Normally, refreshments in remote places cost more but we found the prices at the Hartside café to be no more than usual.

After lunch we could have freewheeled nearly all of the five miles to Alston, but the cycle route took us along two miles of bumpy lanes before rejoining the main road. We arrived at the hotel where we were to stay on the night before it was ready for us, but after half an hour or so we were able to park the bikes in a disused bar room, wash and change and go for a walk round the town. Apparently Alston had been a film location and the town centre had been tidied up by the film makers. Unfortunately, the town is spoilt by the heavy traffic through it.

Next morning we continued northwards on the A686, leaving it after just over a mile to take a quiet lane along a valley, just as the main road started to climb. This was too good to be true we thought, a quiet almost level lane along a pretty valley. It was! After a mile the lane turned through ninety degrees and went steeply straight up the valley wall for a quarter of a mile. We continued along the valley, sometimes high, sometimes low, and then took a side lane to join an old railway track, now a cycle path. This took us up to Haltwhistle, where we had coffee and a cake in the open air. A husband and wife on mudguardless mountain bikes were part of our group and some sheep were grazing the banks at the sides of the track. The sheep had left deposits on the track and the husband had cycled through them, spraying material on to the garments of his wife who was following. She was not best pleased!

Along the river for five miles and then steadily up hill for another three took us to the information centre at Once Brewed and the pub at Twice Brewed, where we had lunch. Just to the north we could see the ridge along which ran Hadrian's Wall. After lunch we crossed the Wall and went down the other side over rather bleak country to reach a gate into Wark Forest, where the organisers' back-up wagon provided tea and cakes.



In the forest itself there was only a track with a surface of loose cubic blocks about an inch across. This made riding on narrow road tyres a bit tricky. I was so busy trying to stay upright, that I did not realise that Richard was not close behind me. After about two and a half miles the track surface became fine grit and I stopped. There was no sign of anybody following although I could see about a quarter of a mile back along the track. There had been several others of the group doing the route back at the gate when we were there, many of them on mountain bikes, and they had stopped to rest. Finally those others turned up and I was told that Richard had had a puncture. Eventually he turned up on a hybrid bike from the back-up wagon, his bike being carried by the wagon. A few more miles of lanes and a steep descent brought us to Bellingham, where we were to spend the night.

We were delayed the following morning fixing several punctures on Richard's bike and were the last to leave. Through farming country we went to Elsdon, where a cycling enthusiast ran a café facing the large village green. There we had coffee and cake sitting in the sunshine.



Then we made a mistake. It had been suggested that we should get lunch in the pub at Alwinton, which was only about ten fairly easy miles from Elsdon, and between Alwinton and Alnham there was an off-road section including a steep rocky climb. We decided that we should seek lunch after the off-road section. Unfortunately, there was no pub in Alnham or any of the several villages following. However, in Glanton, some eight miles beyond Alnham, there was an ironmonger's shop with a snack bar. There we had a late lunch.

Later we encountered the back-up wagon with tea and cakes along the lane leading to Wooler, where we were to spend the night. We were told, correctly, that the following lanes



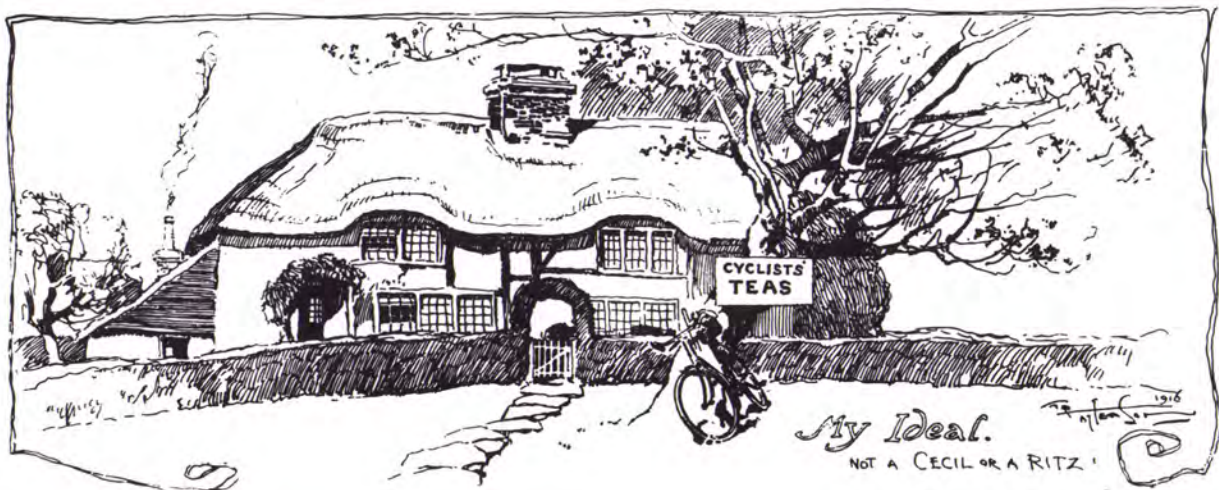
Lane near Wooler

included several fords, but in each case there was a footbridge, which we used. It was a switchback ride to Wooler.

The final day, from Wooler to Berwick-on-Tweed was a short one, or rather it should have been. We had coffee from the back-up wagon on the green at Norham and later crossed over the River Tweed into Scotland via the Union or Chain Bridge, a small suspension bridge, which you could feel move as a vehicle went by. When we were only three or

four miles from Berwick we were misled by a curious Sustrans sign with a loop of rope but no number. We turned left off the correct route and followed lanes almost into Eyemouth. The sign directed us to the left at one junction, but the signpost said that Berwick was to the right and about eight miles away. Turning right, after a mile or so we met the A1. As we were due to catch the bus back to Appleby from Berwick station in just over an hour, we had no choice but to use the A1. Luckily there was a strong following north wind, which enabled us to maintain sixteen to twenty m.p.h. all the way and we found the station straightaway. That morning we had done about the same mileage as we had done on each of the preceding three days.

After a light lunch from the station buffet we got into the bus and returned via the Scottish borders to Appleby and the car. We had done about 170 miles of mostly quiet lanes through farmland and some moorland, and the only rain had been in the evening at Bellingham. Although the temperature in the South of England had been very high (80<sup>o</sup>+F), it was just comfortably warm throughout. Altogether a very pleasant holiday, with comfortable hotels and splendid, if too generous, food.



## Sussex Historic Churches Trust - Sponsored Bike Ride/Walk - September 11th 2004.

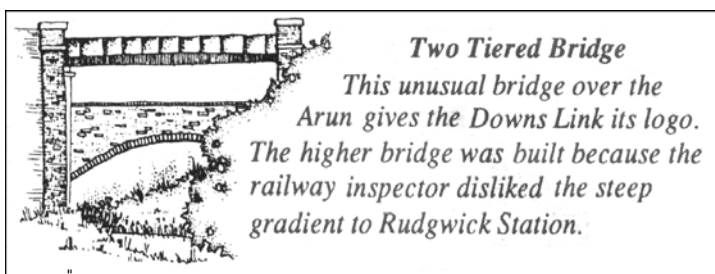
A tale of your Area Organiser who went Rideabout to another County.

by Ann Rix

Our Section of the Cyclists' Touring Club usually have our last camping weekend in early September - weather permitting. Three years ago we had camped near Shipley and visited West Sussex churches; my son David suggested we did the same again as Martin (13) and Emma (10) had enjoyed it. He (being very good with routes) offered to work out one to take in as many as possible with high star points, the idea behind these is to get more people visiting the outlying churches.



The forecast was not good but, being fine Friday afternoon, I rode over to Newhaven to join the car load of David, Susan, Martin and Emma and my bicycle joined the other three on top - Emma's goes on the back. My camping gear, etc., had already been picked up by Susan on Thursday. An hours drive and we arrived at the farm to find Paul, who had ridden from Hailsham, already set up. Our four soon went up (Martin and Emma each have their own now) and the evening meal was cooked and washed up before dark, though we were besieged by biting insects. Derek from Plumpton camped nearby and joined us Saturday morning to ride to Southwater & the Church of the Holy Innocents to meet Ron, from Battle, who had stayed with his daughter. Now eight, we had to wait while the Vicar was found - he was also late for their 9 a.m. service. We had five with forms to be checked each time so ¼ hour later we set forth on road, then the Downs Link (disused railway) to Christ's Hospital Chapel. By road to Itchingfield, St Nicholas at 9.41 a.m. Then Emma wanted to take in Rudgewick, this entailed a long stretch of the Downs Link, but did mean we crossed the double bridge over the River Arun just before the A281, which two hadn't done before.



On road to the small chapel of St John's at Tisman's Common, near the Surrey border, next was Holy Trinity and also in Rudgewick, the Chapel at 11 a.m. By now the troops were feeling faint - no drinks - no eats- 'how far now?' we asked our leader. Three miles to Slinfold was the answer, so on the Link again and hope, 11.30 at St Peter's and no luck but we knew the village shop would save us. Coffee, tea and hot chocolate plus cakes were soon demolished and we all felt better - well it is our fuel. Along the road to the URC who would have done drinks but we approached her from the wrong direction, we had a lovely chat - while taking turn to use the loo - she remembered our visit of three years ago and said how much she enjoyed being a recorder and meeting folk.

12.30 p.m. and we reached St.John's, Broadbridge Heath, just after a shower, no sign of life but explored and found a table of drinks and biscuits, I stuck two stickers to the post outside for others to see. No one at Warnham either, then crossing under the railway - down three flights of steps and up three the other side the next hazard was crossing the Horsham bypass which had cut across a smaller road we used to use. There was a halfway refuge to

the pathway the other side; this led us through estates to St. Mark's. They had a Flower Festival and signed our forms but had no info' about the ride. Next was All Saints at Roffey where we met the Vicar; he had been at St.Mary's, Eastbourne four years ago. We just fitted in Holy Trinity - no one there - before late lunch in Horsham Park, standing our eight cycles round the plinth of John Skelton's Sun God sundial and using the seats around it.

Once more refreshed, at 2.45 p.m. we reached the URC and then St.John the Evangelist RC where she made us mugs of tea. The Unitarian at 3.10 p.m., Friends Meeting House 3.15 p.m., then St.Mary's at 3.26 p.m. where the guests were assembled and expecting the bride any minute. Last in Horsham was St.Leonard. Down through Dragon's Green and up and up to St.John's Coolhurst and a nice welcome there, he said we would boost their numbers. On to Mannings Heath to find the small Church of the Good Shepherd, part of Nuthurst parish - it was tucked between houses that had been built long after. Next it was on to St.Andrew's at Nuthurst, both had been very welcoming, then two disappointments - no one at West Grinstead at 5.20 or Shipley at 5.41 or paperwork either so blackmarks to a lot of the churches. Back to the campsite at 6 p.m. to try and cook the evening meal with the wind rising once more and feeling very cold, then the rain drove us into our tents for an early night after a very weary though enjoyable day. We visited 24 churches and rode 45 miles.



Thank you all for your support and to Susan Drader for looking after St.Peter's.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FUNNY HOW THINGS ARE WORDED!**

- Spotted in a toilet in a London Office: "Toilet out of order. Please use floor below."
- In a Laundramat: "Automatic washing machines. Please remove all your clothes when the light goes out."
- In an office: "Will the person who took the step ladder yesterday please return it or further steps will be taken."
- In an office: "After tea break staff should empty the teapot and stand upside down on the draining board."
- Outside a second hand shop: "We exchange anything - bicycles, washing machines, etc. Why not bring your wife along and get a wonderful bargain?"
- Notice in health food shop window: "Closed due to illness."
- Notice in farmer's field: "The farmer allows walkers to cross the field for free, but the bull charges."
- Message on a leaflet: "If you cannot read, this leaflet will tell you how to get lessons."
- On a repair shop door: " We repair anything." Then underneath: "Please knock hard on door - the bell doesn't work."

## FOUR GO CAMPING IN FRANCE

by David Rix

It was Susan's suggestion that instead of buying two, two person tents we buy one tent for us, and two single tents for the children, Martin (13) and Emma (10). The idea being that if we intended to cycle camp in the future the load would be spread out and the children would be able to carry their own tents. It was only a short jump then to the idea of trying them out with a trip over the water. Living at Newhaven is very handy in this regard, since we can simply go with just the bikes and leave the car at home. So it was onto the Internet and we were very quickly booked up for a five-day trip to France. Martin and Emma were quite excited and had their stuff packed and ready several days before.



Sat. Aug. 14<sup>th</sup> came and we were down at the port by 6.30 and very quickly we were on board, our bikes secured and we were up on deck watching as the Seacat manoeuvred out of the harbour. There was a bit of a swell, making some feel a bit queasy, and the crossing was slightly delayed due to operational difficulties. We had a snack of croissant or Danish and coffee (fizzy drinks for the kids) on board to make up for missing breakfast, due to the early start.

11.30 found us off the ferry and heading into Dieppe. Across the swing bridge and then round the streets to the station looking for the Avenue Verte (A.V.), a cycle route along the old railway line from Dieppe to Forges Les Eaux. We found a short stretch of cycle path along the Rue de Stalingrad, which ran out after ¼ of a mile when reached the railway, but no indication of where we went then. Having missed the shops we took a short detour back along the D154 to a "8 à huit" mini-mart to pick up meat, cheese, baguettes and fruit, etc., for lunch. We then continued, following the D154 through Arques-le-Battaille towards the little village of St. Aubin le Cauf, where (just short of the village) we finally found a large sign directing us to the Avenue Verte. It is intended to take it right into Dieppe, but this section obviously isn't completed yet. We joined the route and very shortly stopped for lunch at the Parc Guy Weber, a recently opened local wildlife education park, which had lots of interesting artworks on display around it.



The Avenue Verte was quite a revelation compared to the cycle

routes over here. A good 3 - 4 metres wide, smooth and well signed, it was more like a country road than a cycle path. There was plenty of room for everyone, though we saw far fewer people than on the Cuckoo Trail at home. Every half kilometre there were markers at the side of the track and at every crossing there were clear signs with distances to the nearest towns and villages, the only thing missing was any kind of seats or picnic areas to stop at - a strange omission we felt.

We continued, on a very slight downward gradient, through very pretty countryside, heading towards Neufchatel-en-Bray. We stopped to look at the outside of the Chateau of Mesnieres, where Geoff & Jenny Boxall had stayed on a Council cycle ride earlier in the year - the Chateau had been badly damaged by fire shortly before their trip, but looked none the worse for it now. On the outskirts of Neufchatel we saw a sign "Camping St. Claire" and were pleased to find that the site was less than 50 metres from the cycle route. We checked in for two nights, ordering baguettes and croissants for the morning at the same time, pitched our tents and then headed along the A.V. into Neufchatel to do our shopping. A visit to a boulangerie, boucherie and small convenience store saw us well provisioned for dinner and we were soon back at camp enjoying our first cooked meal in France. Then in the evening we took a short walk down to the restored station and back along the A.V. , before turning in for the night.

After our breakfast of croissant and baguette, collected from the camp shop at 8 a.m., we sorted our bags out for a day ride and set off along the A.V. for Forges Les Eaux. 2 km. short of town we reached the end of the made up path and continued on road into the town. We had coffee and chocolate at a bar opposite the market place, with cakes bought at a local patisserie, noticing while we were sitting there the signpost opposite giving the mileage to Heathfield! - we had forgotten the two towns were twinned. We had a wander round the town, buying our lunch and investigating a small local park and the local church, before dropping down for 2 km to the large park opposite the town's casino to sit by the lake and eat our lunch. Most days our lunch was the typical French fair of baguette with meat or cheese, sometimes a French pastry as well, and fruit.

We followed the track out of the park through the trees to join a road through the Forest. At the next junction I gave them the option of staying on road or following a track through the Bois (wood) de L'Epinay. Emma persuaded us to do the track. It started off well, a reasonably graded "route forestière", but slowly became just a narrow tracks through the trees. Luckily it was fairly dry and, with just a few detours round fallen trees, we slowly made our way through the wood for about a kilometre, eventually coming out past a farmhouse onto a narrow farm lane which finally returned us to our original road route. We continued through several pretty French villages hoping



for a bar or shop to buy drinks, but to no avail. Luckily we did have some small packets of biscuits with us and these, with drink from our bottles, kept us going. We stopped at the little village of Massy to see the two war graves in the churchyard and to look at the old washhouse by the stream behind the church, very evocative of French rural life.

We'd been going up and down through the lanes and were finally rewarded with a nice long run down to Quiévre-court and then across the river back to Neufchatel. We had to get our supplies at the convenience store again as none of the Supermarkets were open. So it was beef-burgers for dinner, before a short walk and then some chips from the campsite bar before turning in. We were woken (all except Emma, who slept right through it) by a violent thunderstorm at about 2.30 in the morning, which lasted for about ½ an hour. When we woke in the morning it was dry, though we had to wipe the tents down well. Croissant and baguettes from the site shop again, then we were packing up our tents ready to move on. As it was now after 10.00 a.m. we decided to have coffee in Neufchatel and so, after getting some money out at a Credit Agricole, we finally set off just after 11.00 a.m.

Our route took us up a long straight road out of Neufchatel, before turning onto a winding road up through trees, finally reaching the top after about 2 km. We then rolled across the top, up slightly again over the A28 autoroute, did a short section along the D928 (old A28), then onto a lane than that took us down gradually through pretty villages to the town of Foucarmont. This didn't look too promising at first, very quiet, but we were surprised to find a Patisserie/Boulangerie open at lunch-time (unusual in France), where we purchased food and drinks, which we ate in the town square. We then rejoined the D928 here and followed it to Blangy-sur-Bresle. We had camped here before so new the campsite was out of town. We looked but no shops seemed to be open, so continued on to where we new there was a Super U on the way to the campsite. Shock! - the Super U had been demolished, there was only rubble. We decided to carry on to the campsite where we checked in and put our tents up. Susan enquired and got a map from the manager showing the way to the local Intermarche, which was on the other side of Blangy. We had soon bought sausage and salad for lunch, croissants for breakfast, plus meat for our lunch the next day.

Black clouds had started to appear in the West as we went out for our evening walk. We decided to only go a short way, which was lucky, as we could see the thunderstorm approaching as we entered the site and got back to our tents just as the rain arrived. We all crowded into our tent and sat and played cards for about an hour while the storm crashed and banged, passing right over us. As the rain stopped we crept out to find the skies clearing, as the storm disappeared eastwards, leaving us with a fine dry night.

Next morning it was still fine, but we found that rain had got under our groundsheet and into the bottom of the tent. Luckily it wasn't too bad and we had soon dried it out. We then set off for a day ride, heading through Blangy and down the valley, beside the river Bresle, to Incheville. Here we bought baguettes, butter and drink, ready for lunch, in a little Coop shop. Then we found the boulangerie anyway and bought cakes. We had coffee or chocolat in a local bar and that sat under the trees in the town square to eat our cakes.

Leaving Incheville and the valley, we turned and climbed gradually up towards the Forêt Domaniale d'Eu. Up in the trees we came to a junction where a large information board showed horse and cycle routes through this part of the forest, which were marked as route forestiere on our map. At Emma's urging we followed one track, the Route Tournantes, for

about 3 km. Not as good as our own Forestry tracks, but fairly good nonetheless and very peaceful. Back on road we were still following the Route Tournautes - a long straight road along the ridge through the centre of the Massif de La Haute Forêt. We had seen signs pointing to the Site Rein Marie and eventually came across signs and information boards marking sites on either side of the road. Here the French had created a



memorial walk, dedicated to Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. There was already a memorial here to the signing of the Entente Cordiale between our two countries - with two trees, an oak and a beech, seemingly growing from the same bole. Now they had added a further memorial and the walk to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of our own Queen Mother and the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Entente. It was a very peaceful spot and we ate our lunch sitting on some of the seats without being disturbed.

Crossing the D928, by which we had entered Blangy, we descended for several kilometres, through the forest via Mierval and back, passing the campsite, to Blangy. We had hoped to visit the glass museum, but it was closed on Tuesdays. Instead we went into town, visited the church with its modern stained glass windows and then looked around the shops before heading for the Intermarche to purchase our dinner. We played table tennis in the evening - Emma had bought rackets and balls earlier to use on the table they had at the site.

It was a dry night, which meant the tents were almost dry and so it took us very little time to pack up. We settled our bill and were away by 9.30 a.m. We rode through Blangy, along the valley on the main road, and then turned onto the D149 through Rieux and climbed up through the forest again - an easier climb than the day we arrived. We crossed the ridge close to the Site Rein Marie and then descended out of the forest, on a long run down into



Grandcourt. As we descended, we could see a large cross in an isolated enclosure on the hillside below us. This turned out to be the Grandcourt Commonwealth War Cemetery, the second smallest in Normandy, where 58 mainly Australian, New Zealand and Canadian soldiers are buried - mostly airmen. The rows of crosses, grouped mainly by crew, make for a very moving tribute to these brave souls who gave their lives for our freedom. We spent several minutes in this peaceful spot, reading the book of remembrance and some of the individual memorials. It was

interesting that some primarily Commonwealth crews had had British pilots or navigators.

We continued on down the hill into Grandcourt where we had coffee in a bar, before buying cakes, which we ate by the roadside on the way out of the village. It was a long, fairly gradual, climb up to Fresnoy-Folnoy on the D149, bringing us to a plateau that stretched almost to the coast. We turned onto the D26 and rolled along through open country with the wind behind us to St. Quentin-au-Bosc. Entering the village Martin had a puncture. Mending it we continued the 100 metres or so to the junction and found a bus shelter for lunch just as a light shower passed over. On then in the dry, reaching our destination, St. Martin-en-Campagne, at about 2.30 p.m. We were not sure where the campsite was, but followed signs towards the coast, deciding to book in before shopping - a big mistake. We found ourselves descending and eventually found the site, 2 km downhill from the town. It also turned out to be our most expensive site €28 for the night. When we checked in we found out that the nearest shops were back up in the village. So, once we had pitched our tents, we headed back up the hill to purchase dinner. We also took the opportunity to have a look around, visiting the church and a little memorial garden nearby.



The others headed back downhill to camp while, after consulting the map, I went round via the next village, Berneval-le-Grand, to see if we could get out that way. I followed a bus route all the way down through the houses and back to the beach, where signs led me 500 metres to the campsite - a slightly easier route than the road straight up to the shops. After dinner we took a short walk down to the cliffs and the steps down to the shore - Martin and Emma went all the way down and out onto the sand, which went out for over 100 metres, whilst Susan I enjoyed the views. Returning to camp we bought chips from the bar, eating them by the tents, before turning in just as another thunderstorm, which had been rumbling off-shore, arrived. The storm lasted about ½ an hour, then there was only the odd shower during the night and in the morning it was dry again.

Thursday morning, our last day in France, and we were up early getting packed. We bought croissants and baguettes from the bar for breakfast, before packing up our tents, which were fairly dry, and we were away by 9.20 a.m. We climbed slowly up to Berneval, then followed the D113 through Bracquemont and Puits to Dieppe. At Puits we were stopped by Gendarmes as we were leaving the village, to let a coach and car out. Then as we climbed the hill we were passed by a convoy of cars with flags fluttering on the front. We continued on down into Dieppe and the ferry terminal, only to find that the Seacat was cancelled due to bad weather. We had to go round to the passenger terminal where at first they told us they would take us to Calais, but then said that they could transfer us to the Transmanche Ferry in the afternoon.

We had time to spare now, so headed into Dieppe, parked our bikes by the quay and went for



walk round. We had coffee and bought some cakes along the Grand Rue, then followed the town walk round towards the seafront. Here we found the reason for the coach we had seen earlier and the convoy of cars. The end of the front by the Canadian ar Memorial was closed to traffic and hundreds of people were there for the service to commemorate the Dieppe Raid. There seemed to be representatives from all the Commonwealth countries who took part and they played the different national anthems.

We then walked back to the quay and found a restaurant for lunch. Just after we had to shelter from the edge of a storm, before having a look at the boats in the harbour then going to a pharmacy to get some seasickness pills for the

boat trip home. As we left the shop we had to dive back into the porch and shelter again as the heavens opened and the streets became awash with rainwater. Eventually we were able to return to our bikes and ride round to the ferry terminal. We thought we were going to get on in the dry, but had to shelter briefly behind a container lorry as the rain came on again. Then we were on and still fairly dry. The return journey, though longer, was much smoother and it didn't seem too long before we sighted the Seven Sisters and soon after were entering Newhaven harbour.

It was a very successful conclusion to our holiday. We had no major problems and had really enjoyed ourselves. Hopefully we can go for a bit longer next time.



Everyday Sussex by Roy James