

The

Coaster



the magazine of the

**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB**

No. 57 - Christmas 2015

£1.00



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

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" THE COASTER "

***Issue No. 57,
Christmas 2015***



From the Editor's Desk.

Welcome to this latest edition of "The Coaster". I'm pleased to say that we have a wide variety of articles for you this time - several from new contributors, including one or two who have elected to remain anonymous.

A cycle-camping trip across Europe, a motorbike one to Scotland and a storm in France, as well as Home Guard antics and naked bathing are among the delights that are in store for you. So, this Winter, while it's cold, icy and (possibly) snowy outside, take a well earned rest, put your feet up and enjoy a good read.

If, having enjoyed reading our magazine, you then feel like writing anything yourself, please do. As you can see it doesn't have to be on cycling. Anything that might appeal to our members will be considered

You can either email it to me or, if you prefer to write it out long-hand, send it to me at the address above.

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:-

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TO THE SECRETARY AND EDITOR "THE COASTER"

from Alan Symonds

Believe it or not I have just read in depth my copy of the above (Christmas 2014 edition, Ed.), in particular Norman Wrights missive on the rights and wrongs of cycling. Not sure what you want to do with my thoughts on it but here goes:-

1/(Wearing dark clothing). Totally agree. We (ERCC) are changing our club jerseys, and quite a number were disappointed to find that approval for the jersey with a Black background was not granted by the powers that be in favour of the Yellow background, which means the Black version can only be used in club events but not Open Events.

2/(Not having lights in conditions of poor visibility & darkness). I have now adopted a policy of riding with at least a rear light most of the time in blinking mode, and a front light as well in poor visibility. It may be my imagination, but I find that drivers who overtake as close as possible then swing out slightly now do it before overtaking.

Problem with decent lights is the price. However in my thirst for value for money I found a rear light in a shop where every little helps. Twin rear with high/low/flashing alternating, for (I believe) £10.00 with 100 lumens output which is bright. Runs on 3xAAA batteries, so you can carry a spare set easily. Bought a front light with rechargeable battery as well for approx. £15.00. Another good reason for riding at the back (see 3)

3/(Having no mudguards when riding with a group). Possibly my racing background, plus years of riding without them, but there is something about riding a lightweight with no guards, so I usually ride at the back. It's also a good excuse for not doing my turn at the front. However my winter hack does have them. The summer one being a racing frame does not have enough clearance, unless you want the mudguard full of mud, with the possibility of something larger than a piece of grit jamming in there with disastrous results. Have you tried Rickney Lane without them in the winter? I might point out that I have been splattered on many occasions by riders who don't check their rear guards, which do not have sufficient length, yet have complained about me.



4/(Riding down one-way streets against traffic flow). I believe there are some one way roads that you can now ride down the wrong way. I know of one in West Sussex, so beware. In France I know of at least one in Dieppe, so presume this is fairly common but of course the driver is disadvantaged there.

5/(Riders who ignore traffic signals). No excuse. How can we complain unless we are seen to be right. Quite often these will be Commuters/Couriers who are of course above the law.

6/ & 7/(Riders who complain about hills and weather). I thought all riders complained about hills and rain. I do, and the older I get the more I complain, so I complain quite a lot.

8/(Cars parked on cycle lanes). I believe there are some legal excuses for this, but no doubt someone will know if I am wrong. My pet hate is Cooden Drive. Big houses with big drives and still they park on the road. Surprised they can manage the long walk to the house, as most motorists will park on double yellow lines so long as it is right outside the place they visit.

9/(Stray / loose dogs). What can one say? I thought I saw something on the news the other night that said something about it becoming compulsory for dogs to be on leads, but maybe I was daydreaming.

10/(Cycle lanes that go nowhere). Great one. Most of us know where some of them are. Like the ones that stop because they can't obstruct the traffic on a fast stretch of road.

11/(News Reports that state-: "Cyclist collides with ..." suggesting it's always the cyclist at fault). Especially great when it ends "The driver was fined £100.00 and had 3 points on their licence".



PUSH-ME-PULL-YOU-BIKE IS FAR FROM STRAIGHTFORWARD

It may look like a circus prop. But inventor Michael Killian believes he is about to revolutionise bicycle riding. His Sideways Bike offers a strange new twist on the pedal-pushing experience, by requiring the rider to sit side-saddle and progress left to right, while steering the wheels independently with either hand.

Stability, he explains, is a question of mastering front-to-back balance as opposed to left-to-right. The benefits are greater manoeuvrability and a much more exhilarating experience. His prototype has won awards at invention shows in Switzerland and Britain and Mr Killian hopes to have the finished product in the stores by Christmas. Aimed mainly at the youth market, it will retail for around £150.

"It's the first radically different bicycle in 150 years," said Mr Killian, 46, a Dubliner who has travelled across Europe on his invention. "Don't you think it is time for a change? Because the front and rear steering are not linked the motion is strange, graceful and exhilarating, much like the motion of a snowboard, with swooping circles and curves. It's sort of like riding a horse where all body movements come out of your seat and saddle. It will particularly appeal to children. They like the absurdity of it all."



Side saddle: Michael Killian on his invention

Cycling organisations were unmoved by his zeal. Yannick Read, of the Cyclists' Touring Club, said: "Bicycles look basically the same today as they did 100 years ago for good reason. There is no more reason for a bicycle to change than for a chair to change - both are beautifully efficient designs that have found their final form. The inventor himself does not claim the bike to be an improvement, just something different, but I doubt if it will catch on."



Sally Anne Chadwick – A Life Well Lived

Sally loved cycling from the moment she got her first bicycle to the very end. She loved the freedom it gave her; she loved the fresh air and the countryside; the cake and tea stops, but above all she loved the camaraderie that cycling engenders, whether it was riding with one or two people or in a large group she never failed to find someone to talk to and share a laugh with.

I know that many of you have known Sally for a number of years, some for far longer than I was privileged to know her. But, she touched the lives of everyone she came in contact with, even those who knew her for only a short time.

I would like to thank everyone for the love and support that they gave to Sally during her illness. She appreciated all the gestures however small, whether it was a pat on the back and a “good to see you out on your bike” or the time that Adrian and Geoff spent rebuilding her bike (twice) and putting an electric motor on so that she could still get out with you. She appreciated it all and her big frustration was not being able to do all the things she had previously done and having to get help from other people.

The last ride she managed to go on was Mike Phillips President’s ride. We only cycled from our house to Arlington Tea Gardens and back, but it was clear to see the joy that it gave her just to be out on her bike and sharing time with her friends.

I would also like to express my heartfelt thanks for the support that I have been given since Sally passed away which has been greatly appreciated. Due to work commitments I have not been out on many rides over the years and, I must admit, I have a poor memory for names but do remember faces, so must apologise if I look blankly at you when you are talking; it’s just the cogs whirring trying to put a name to the face, so you might have to prompt me occasionally.

I would like to thank Mike Phillips for organising the memorial ride and all the riders who came along. I know some people could not make it due to other commitments, but were there in spirit. It’s comforting to know that people thought enough of Sally to come along.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who came to Sally’s funeral and would also like to say how lovely it was to see the bikes leaning up against the trees and gravestones as we walked in to the church at Hellingly for Sally’s funeral; I know Sally would have loved it and it certainly meant a lot to myself and her family. I know if Sally had planned it that is exactly what she would have wanted.

Thank you all and I hope to be able to join you occasionally on your rides.

Phil Chadwick



BLACK SEA TO THE NORTH SEA BY BIKE, 2015.

(Istanbul to Cuxhaven)

by Rob Foster

I had planned to do this long trip, but needed some company; fortunately fellow CTC Midweeker Steve Ratford agreed to join me. So in mid-June Turkish Air flew us and our trusty touring bikes, plus a lot of loaded panniers, to Istanbul. After a day sightseeing in this fascinating city, we were off. The plan was to cycle from the Black Sea, back across Europe to the North Sea on the German coast, over 8 weeks or so.



Steve all loaded up for the trip

To avoid city traffic we took a ferry up the Bosphorus to Sariyer, passing under the famous bridges. Then onto what we would call B roads North West across Turkey. All was fine until we met some road works, where the narrow shoulder had cones along it; foolishly I clipped a rear pannier against one and was thrown off the bike hard. Luckily nothing broken, but several good grazes and bruises! That night we stayed at a small hotel in a small town for about £12 each. (We were carrying camping kit, but these Eastern Europe hotels are such good value we used them a lot).

Navigation – we had a paper map of each country, not very detailed but ok most of the time. Steve had sat nav which is great for the detailed bits. And a compass! Three days later, we enter Bulgaria, after some scenic hills and a monsoon, which we avoided in a bus shelter. Before descending to the river Danube, we have to cross a big range of hills, but this goes pretty well as the road was quiet and well graded, though Steve was always ahead. Veliko Tarnovo was a nice overnight stop, in a guest house with a balcony overlooking the pretty river and old town, with good grub nearby.

On day 10 we reach the mighty Danube, but Steve is unwell with gut rot, but after a morning's rest bravely continues via the ferry into Romania. Shame - he missed an excellent breakfast! An easy day to Alexandria, wet evening, nowhere to eat, but only one of us was hungry.



Romania is a country of contrasts, possibly the most interesting of the trip. It has an old rural feel to it, helpful locals (one shop keeper gave us bread etc. and refused payment), feral dogs, many horses and carts, and mad drivers. The main problem was the rough minor road surfaces which needed a mountain bike, not our tourers. So we were forced onto the bigger roads, which have heavy truck traffic, not pleasant. The plan was to go via Transylvania, which is circled by big mountains, to Brasov. My planned minor

road was unusable, said the locals, so we switched to a 'B' road, via a lane that petered out into a muddy field! We pressed on, and had a ghastly time pushing uphill as the bike wheels clogged with mud – mudguards off, and into the next river to clean up us and the bikes. But Brasov was a fascinating rest day; we also went to Bran by bus to visit Dracula's Castle. On via Sighisoara, then at last we had some excellent cycling, following a river into the hills in fine weather for two days, before descending the other side into Hungary.



Hungary is nice and flat, but a bit boring. There are cycle lanes (a policeman ticked us off for not using them), but most main roads ban cycles – this is a problem if you want to go a big distance, like us. So we muddled through to Budapest, where we rejoined the Danube. Another rest day here, with an excellent guided walking tour of the fine city. The heat was terrific in Hungary, up to 37 C, thank God it was flat cycling.



We now followed the Danube for a few days, on the Cycle Trail, crossing into Slovakia. Another good walking tour of Bratislava, then into super-efficient Austria for one night before entering the Czech Republic. 4 countries in 4 days!

Czech has rolling hills, but good cycling in nice scenery – very empty, with ripe grain crops and woods. The Czechs all smoke like chimneys, but we enjoyed some good local food and beer at a brewery in Trebic. At

Melnik we camped for 2 nights to fettle the bikes and do some washing, which dried fast in the heat. Now we have joined the river Elbe, which we will follow all the way to the sea. Up here it has made a gorge through the hills, the 'Bohemia Gateway', which is lovely.



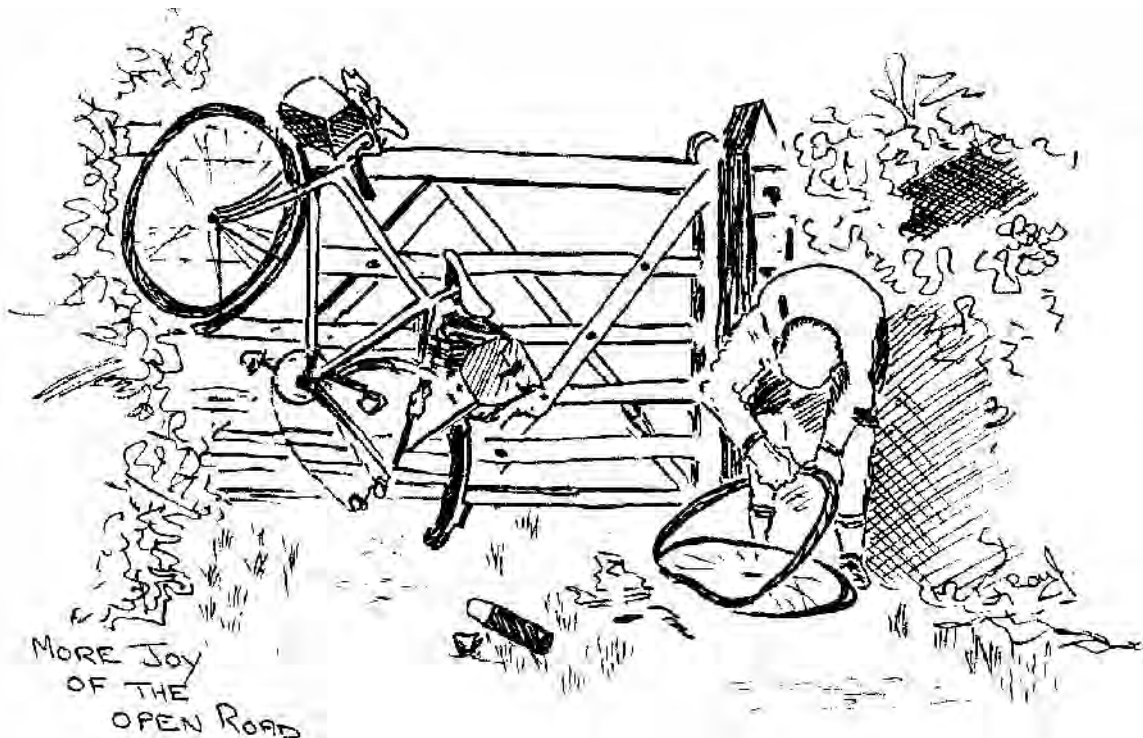
Day 36 we enter Germany, though there is no border post. The Elbe bike trail is now better signposted, mainly smooth (except for stretches of blasted cobbles!) and traffic free, but we seem forever to be into a headwind – one day this was so strong it blew small branches off the trees. But mostly flat. You don't actually see the river much, because of the big dykes, but get glimpses, and there are ferry crossings from bank to bank. We were camping in not cheap Germany, all busy in the holiday season, and your German camper likes to drink beer and make a lot of noise!

The best bits were in the south – ‘Swiss’ Saxony has terrific rock scenery, then you get restored Dresden, then we visited Meissen to see how the porcelain is made. Further north it got a bit all the same, though pleasant enough and easy cycling (if the headwind eased). Some rain showers but nothing too bad. By now we started thinking of the rail & ferry journeys back to the UK, so called into a *bahnhof* to buy tickets, and an internet place for Stena (free wifi is easy in eastern Europe, but rare in Germany). So steadily we progressed – Hamburg had interesting old docks but the infamous Reeperbahn was very tame at 1 pm! A final crossing of the now huge Elbe, and we were into Cuxhaven, the end of our epic journey, where you meet the North Sea.

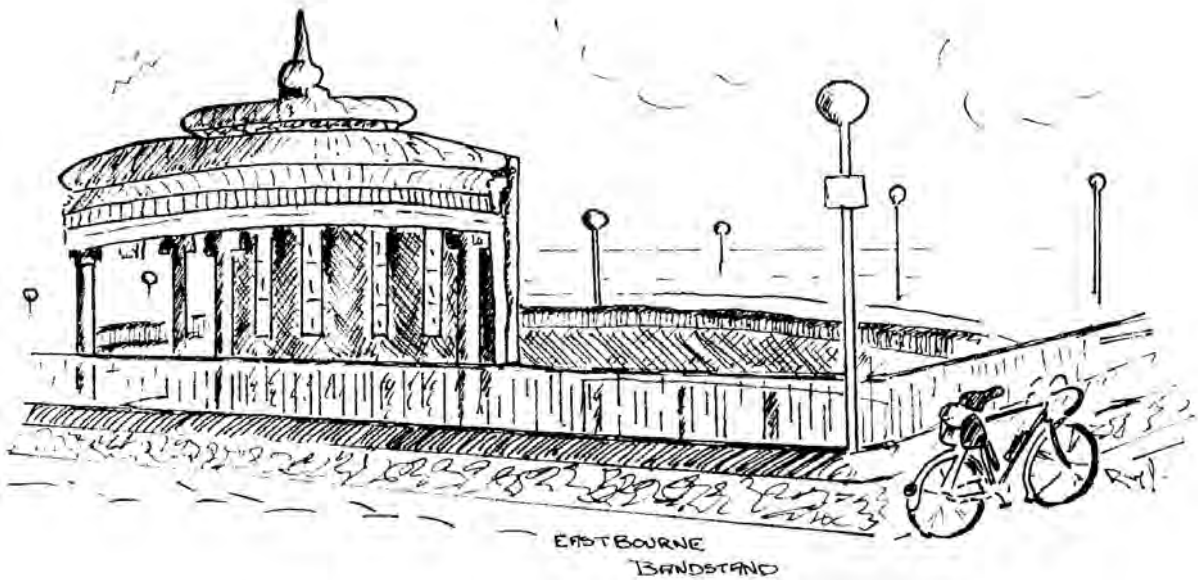
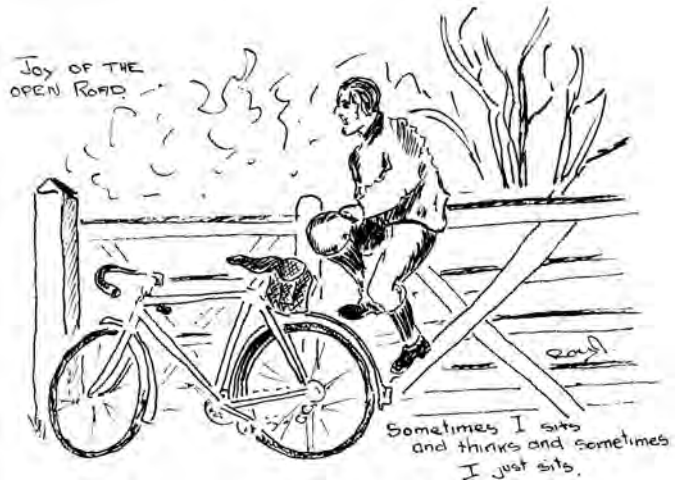
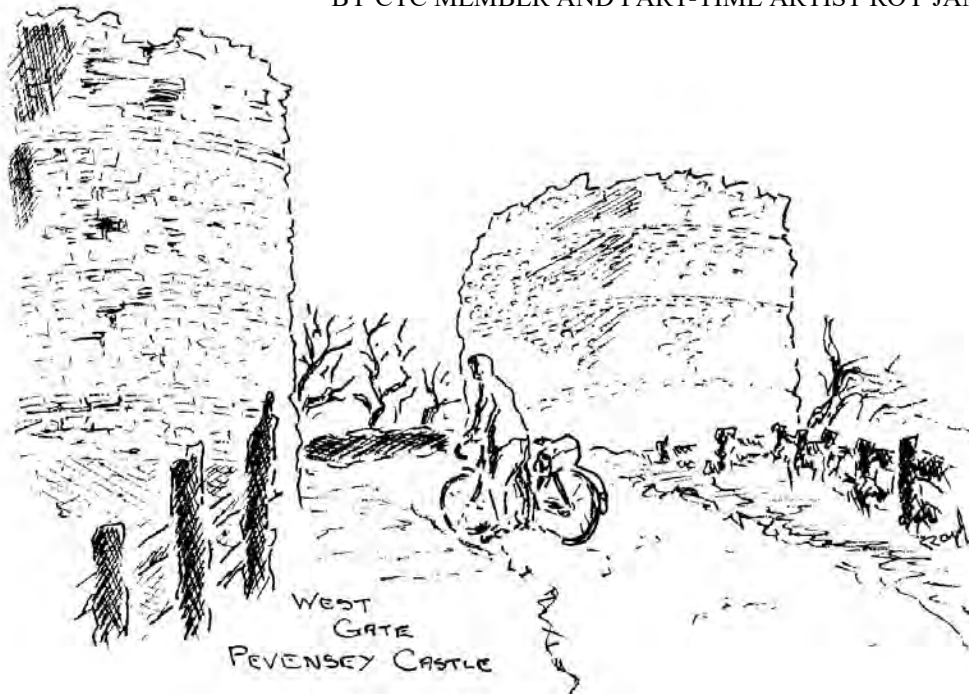


After a celebratory dinner, it was up at 6 to get our budget trains, all six of them, to the Hook of Holland (8th country), and a comfortable overnight ferry to Harwich, where Steve was met by some of his family. I took the train home.

Total distance was about 3,600 km over 47 days (3 rest days). The bikes did well – no punctures or broken spokes (thanks Geoff!) but mudguards suffered in the mud.



EVERYDAY SUSSEX - SOME OF THE MANY PICTURES PRODUCED OVER THE YEARS
BY CTC MEMBER AND PART-TIME ARTIST ROY JAMES



WELL AT LEAST IT WAS ON TWO WHEELS.

By Ted Edwards

Seeing David's request for stories to place in the Christmas edition of "The Coaster" it prompted me to sit down and think about some of the extraordinary events that have happened in my life... so far that is! Regrettably many of which were not cycle related, hence the title of my story.

Back in 1980, being a motorcyclist more than a cyclist, I decided to trade my existing motorcycle, which had low bars and high footrests, in for a less racing type that was more comfortable and which had a more upright riding position. Rationale being that I could actually ride at a more sedate speed and actually appreciate some of the scenery I was riding through. Ok, basically I was getting old and didn't want to lose my life, or to a lesser extent my driving licence, were another couple of reasons for the change.



So after getting permission from my wife (come on fella's you know we all need it), I bought a Honda Pan European 1100cc and, after declining my request to join me, set off for the Highlands of Scotland on my own.

To make the journey up to there from where I lived in Croydon at the time I decided to stop and camp in Keswick for the night. On reaching the camp site I left my motorcycle some distance away from my tent, which as you will soon learn was a good move, and settled down for the evening and night.

So picture the scene in your mind; tent set up, kettle on and meal prepared on a warm sunny evening up in The Lakes, life could not get better could it! Now before I go on you need to know that I am someone that worked in the gas industry for many years, fitting gas meters and running gas supplies to properties, so I had no fear of the smell, taste, or even noise of gas. I offer that as some sort of excuse for what you are about to read - although I am sure all of you campers out there will still think I am some sort of idiot. Take comfort from knowing I agree with you.

Well, having had a good night's sleep I awoke in the morning happy and needing a cup of tea. So kettle filled I fired up the burner and looked forward to having my first cuppa of the day. And then it happened. Believe me you are about to cringe. The gas canister run out, so I had to fit a new one. Now you all know how easy it is to fit a replacement and so do I but ... The but being that I didn't do it, instead I removed the old one and just kept trying to clip the new one in. I expect you are already ahead of me at this point. After much struggling and hissing from the new gas canister I lit my lighter!

I told you you would cringe, and there was a big bang and I found myself running out of my tent with my clothes, tent and leg on fire and my face feeling very raw. Linford Christie was one of our top sprinters at the time, and I tell you he would have been trailing me if we had been competing to get out of that tent.

The camp owners ran across with a water hose which turned out to be a little too short to reach my tent, so I watched that burn to the ground after stopping my leg burning. A neighbouring camper told me to complain about the water hose being too short, but I said that I wouldn't as if I had not been such an idiot it would never have happened. Needing treatment to my leg the camp site owner took me to Keswick hospital where they treated and bandaged it.

After returning to the camp site I gathered up my many charred belongings, binned the tent, strapped everything onto my new motorcycle and eventually set off to return back home.

The story continues ...

So feeling miffed because it seemed my adventure was over I headed off back home. But in doing so I had to ride back past the hospital and I suddenly had another thought and stopped and went in to speak to those that had treated me. They had informed me that I need to receive treatment on my face and leg daily, so I asked whether I would be able to go into the hospital at Fort William to receive it. Once they had confirmed that I could I decided to continue my adventure and to continue my journey up to the Highlands.

By the time I arrived in the Highlands it was getting dark and the shops were closed, so I rode around to a B&B I had used the year before, when I went on a walking trip up there, to see whether I could stay there again. But just like the experiences of Joseph and Mary, this time there was no room at the Inn or in my case B&B and the owner could only advise me to knock on the door of another B&B further along the road to see if they had any vacancies.

By this time of course it had got even darker, both physically and metaphorically, as it turned out that they too had no vacancies. Unlike the previous B&B owner though, concerned for my well being, she telephoned her friend who agreed to let me stay with her.

Now picture the scene, it's now very dark and a strange man, a biker as well, with all of the connotations that can go with that, arrives at your door step reeking of smoke, with a red raw face and, rather than turn him away, you invite him in to your home. You then not only provide him with a delicious meal, but allow him to bathe in your bathroom. To me that says something about a special person and our Grace is definitely that. I say our Grace, because she is now a big part of my wider family, and my wife and I try to go up and see her at least every other year, but also talk to her monthly on the telephone.

Grace is now into her 80's, but like us she is a keen cyclist and has only recently stopped skiing, but still walks up the hills in Fort William briskly. I will spare you the details, but if I was to tell you about the tragedies she has suffered since I have known her, I guarantee you would at least have moist eyes.

They say everything happens for a reason, I am sure that's correct as, if I hadn't burnt my tent, I would never have met Grace and my life would have been so much poorer for that.

On ending my story I wonder how many of you have had similar experiences to me and if you have please let us all know your story by sending it to David for an edition of the Coaster.

I know some cyclists don't like motorcyclists and vice versa, but the two things both groups have in common is that we are vulnerable road users and both love riding on two wheels.



THE HOME GUARD'S WEIRD & WACKY HOMEMADE DEFENCE MECHANISMS

(Sent in by an anonymous contributor. Ed.)

The Home Guard intended to defend Britain against a German Invasion with lots of improvisation. The common opinion of the Home Guard is summed up by Dad's Army, that is that they wouldn't have been much use in the event of an actual German invasion. This assessment is a little unfair, and misses one key element: that these men were prepared to fight an army much better equipped than them with rudimentary weapons. Even gentlemen in their nineties were willing to join!

With the armaments industry trying to rapidly refit and rearm the regular army after they left most of their weaponry at Dunkirk, the Home Guard did not receive much, if any, new issue kit as there was not enough available. Many of the first parades undertaken by the Home Guard featured a myriad of different weapons, from knives on brooms to pitchforks, sports and hunting rifles to 12 bore shotguns.

Despite the lack of arms, there was a willingness to get to grips with the enemy – one Home Guardsman took a German pilot prisoner with a 12 bore shotgun, as reported in the Derby Daily Telegraph, Friday 26 July 1940. There were also several incidents of the Home Guard firing on RAF aircrew who had bailed out of their aircraft, believing them to be enemy agents!

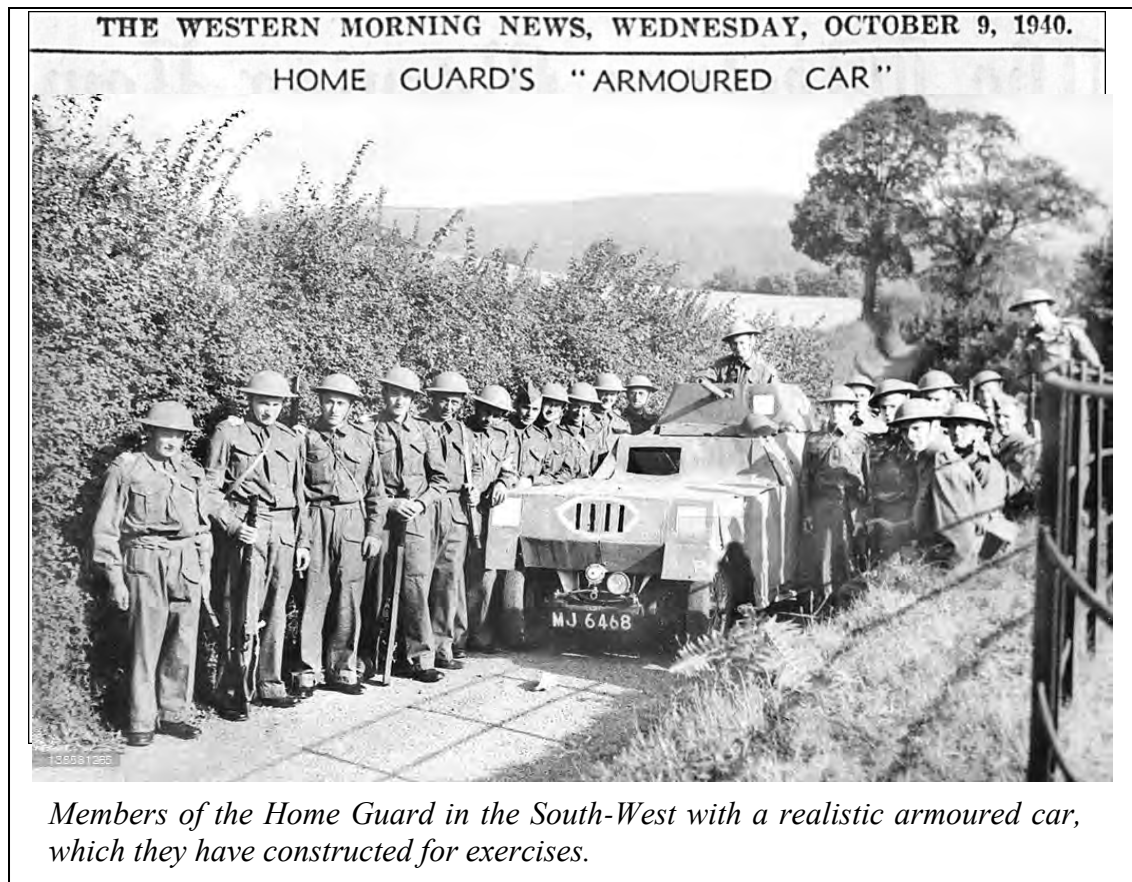
There are reports of some units raiding their local museums, and of one former Royal Navy rating setting up a 'Cutlass Platoon'. So bad were the shortages that the Home Office manufactured 250,000 'Pikes' for use by the Home Guard, which was resented at the time for good reason.

The Home Guard also manufactured homemade grenades (milk tins filled with nuts and bolts and milk bottles filled with petrol), improvised means of throwing them (one Railway Home Guard platoon built a Petrol Bomb catapult out of spare braces, railway sleepers and a signal lever) and



training of some Home Guard platoons in London on roller-skates to act as rapid responders & messengers. Other Platoons practiced 'rooftop scrambles' in order to get above the enemy.

Eventually, the shortages began to be overcome via American 'lend Lease' equipment, as the Home Guard took delivery of P17 and P14 Enfield Rifles (manufactured in the United



States under license) and old WW1 Short Magazine Lee Enfield rifles. Some units also got Thompson submachine guns, or 'Tommy' guns, and Browning Automatic Rifles. The odd Bren also crept through.

Below are some (2015) women's family memories of the Home Guard

By Ann: My father could not enlist because he was on secret work for the government, making periscope sights for submarines. So he joined the Home Guard and became a Captain. He had one assignment to show the locals how to wear their Gas Masks. He took me along with him some times to show the children how to wear theirs and to give them confidence. Some of the very young ones were frightened of them.

by Carolyn: My grandfather was in the Home Guard in a specialist section. He had a series of bolt-holes in the forest where guns and ammunition were stashed, so that he could lead a guerrilla army if the Germans had invaded. When he died we found that his cellar was full of Molotov cocktails, cases of ammo and sundry other pieces of military equipment!

By y Kathrine: My husband joined the Home Guard after leaving school at 17 as a sort of gap year before joining the Army at 18. As he had been in the school Army Cadet corp he became a corporal and was the only young member. Nearly all of the others were older men (too old for

regular service) who commuted to London daily and gave all their free time to being Home Guards. They were defending the woodland area of Seal Chart near Sevenoaks in Kent.

by Elizabeth: My father - John Dougan - was an engine driver with L.N.E.R. during the war, and was later made Superintendent in charge of Seafield Depot. He joined the Railway Home Guard and they spent some time on manoeuvres in the King's Park in Edinburgh. They then decided they would like to have an armoured engine, which they managed to build and eventually wanted to try it out. They started it up in Leith Central and intended to run it to the Waverly Station then return, but found they could not stop it, so it ran through the main line in the Waverley to stop at the Haymarket where Dad's Uncle Ross was the Superintendent. They eventually returned it and stripped it down. He kept his rifle in the cupboard under the stairs and Mum used to have a fit when he took it out to clean it! I don't know if he ever got to fire it.



SOME THOUGHTS ON GARDENING



The best way to garden is to put on a wide brimmed straw hat and some old clothes. Then with a hoe in one hand and a cold drink in the other, tell somebody else where to dig.

Knowledge is knowing a tomato is a fruit; Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

When weeding, the best sure you are removing a valuable plant is to pull it out before it comes out of the ground.



Why are husbands like lawn mowers?

They are difficult to get started, emit foul smells and don't work half the time. A weed is a plant that has mastered every survival skill except for learning how to grow in rows.

If a man is alone in the garden and speaks, and there is no woman to hear him, is he still wrong?



ONE FINE DAY IN NORMANDY

By Wild Weather Woman

The alarm rang at 5.30 and I was already wide awake - Everything was planned. I'd studied the weather forecast; clothes, food and water were laid out, and the bike was in the sitting room ready for a quiet exit from the sleeping house. So in the cold pre-dawn and with the promise of blue skies, I opened the front door and I guided the bike down the steps into the lane and set off. Today a long-held dream would come true and I would ride the "S bends". Since I first saw this chicane of lovely flowing bends, down and down the steep wooded valley then up the other side, I'd dreamed of the descent. The apex of each corner met exactly right, in my mind the lines well rehearsed, the shifting of weight, the bike's response, the temptation to touch the brakes, then the thrill of daring not to - I'd visualised it all... a fabulous adrenaline ride.

I'd cycled the 10 miles to get there and, too early for any traffic, had a good chance of having the road to myself. Leaving the country lanes I turned onto the main road and headed west towards the realisation of my dream. Away in the distance, I noticed storm clouds gathering. But storms, in this region of Normandy, are often very localised, and this one was not spreading out over the plain, it remained concentrated over a small area, so I guessed I'd miss it. On the approach to the S-bends the road is straight and undulating, an easy and quite fast ride, but now a head wind quickened and became a persistent stiff wind causing me to change down a gear, then a minute or two later another gear. I flicked the chain to the inner ring. I hadn't expected to do that, but this head wind was hard work. A few spats of rain and the storm was now dead a-head and I thought I'd be in for a soaking.

This wind was now getting very difficult indeed, and strangely was warm. Oddly warm. Trees were swaying and leaves swirling about and my progress was forced to a walking pace. A small branch of twigs clattered on my helmet and tumbled to the floor. Suddenly a roaring wind tore at the trees, ripping twigs and small branches, tossing them into the air. Hurling them to the ground. It crossed my mind to take shelter perhaps in the lee of a barn wall and I looked round at the only option, but strangely I couldn't get there. My path was blocked with debris from the trees, and I was braced against this now immensely powerful wind. If I changed direction I thought the wind would knock me over. With this one thought, the direction of the wind changed, then changed again, so I was buffeted from several directions at once, and every part of me was concentrating on staying upright. Three calm and clear thoughts came to mind: 1) If I try to get off the bike, the wind will blow me over during the manoeuvre, and I've already had too many broken bones in my life, so I have to keep going. 2) This wind is hot, very hot and a few degrees more will make my skin burn and peel. 3) It's only a freak squall...

Now, I was on the descent – my wonderful adrenaline chicane ride. The ride of my dreams was unrecognisable. Not only branches came crashing down, but now several whole trees were uprooted and crashed across the road. Debris filled the air as the screaming wind hurled flying splinters of wood. By some crazy miracle I kept my balance. The Ridley still upright, I picked my way through this mayhem, surrounded by the deafening roar of this inferno, with a burning hot wind that was about to peel my skin. Now I could see the bridge at the bottom of the valley, where I had hoped there would be shelter amongst the thickest part of the wooded valley, but now realised it was funnelling the storm into this narrow gap at the bridge.

Surely this was the worst place to be. I felt very alone as I struggled up the other side of the valley, and remember comparing the heat of the wind as being similar to when you open the oven door and step away from the heat – only I couldn't do that. I picked a way through the fallen branches on the extreme right of the road, close by the verge, but noticed a deep ditch dropping away from the road, and in an odd detached way I estimated that this wind would soon blow me into the ditch and I would not be found for days... and I was very, very tired... Finally, slowly, and very carefully I managed to get off the bike, without being blown over and without breaking bones... Relief... But the rending scream of an up-rooted tree reminded me it wasn't time for congratulations. So very tired. Then, in slow motion this tree fell on the power lines – or were they phone lines – I really didn't care... I didn't even move as some of its top branches swept my arm on route to the ground.

On foot now, struggling in this maelstrom, cursing my awkward uncomfortable cycle shoes, I struggled up the hill. Kept going. My route here was easier; the deafening wind was subsiding, the heat easing off..... Then I saw the headlights of a car – another human out and about in this madness.

The car drew close and the wind eased. The un-remitting heat gone. It astonished me that a car had managed to pick a route through the carnage. It was Karl, looking for me. We compared notes on the devastation. Apparently garden furniture had been smashed up and carried away, a huge ash tree had come down narrowly missing destroying our dog kennels with the dogs still inside. There was no power to the village, nor phones lines and garden sheds had been smashed up and roof tiles blown off. The Pompiers had already started the clear-up. Karl told me people were beginning to venture out, assessing the damage and discussing the carnage of *the tornado*.

With nothing to do here on the road overlooking the S bends, Karl went home to offer help in the village and, somewhat shaken, I rode home reflecting on how quickly plans can go awry.



NAKED BATHING ON BRITAIN'S BEACHES

By Skinnydipper

Nude bathing is nothing new and was probably quite common throughout history. Though, with the coming of the Victorian era, a strong sense of decency descended on the British people, and anything that might shock or cause offence was generally frowned upon. Therefore bathing machines came into use on British seafronts, but this did not put a stop to people, mainly then men, bathing naked. The bathing machines would be wheeled down into the water, the bathers would divest themselves of their clothes and then enter the water unclad without showing themselves to anyone watching from the shore.



In Victorian times bathing machines on beaches were everywhere. The machines with their rusty old wheels, dim little windows and rickety doors stood drawn up in rows, just above the high water line. After that came the neat rows of white painted beach huts and after them – except where commerce still insisted on their use – the undress anywhere and don't mind you neighbour habit that is still common today.

Nevertheless, commerce is not ousted without a struggle, and the battle between the bathers and the Borough Corporation of Eastbourne, somewhere round about 1930, is an example. No hut, no bathe, was the rule at Eastbourne, but there came a time when bathers organised a revolt. Whilst hut occupants protracted their bathing, there appeared along the seafront a multitude of “mackintosh bathers”, eager for whatever fun was in store. And fun they had. Police arrived by the car load, and took hundreds of names and addresses. The news reached London and the national press, and laughter took sides against the town. Eastbourne saw itself in danger of being blown off the map of eligible resorts in a gale of derision – and the victory went to the bathers.

Back in the days of the Victorian bathing machine, ladies slowly started to adopt the wearing of full length “flannel cases” as they were sometimes called, which tied at the ankles, and thus protected their modesty. However, it was still the common thing for men to bathe naked. One young woman wrote to a friend as follows:-

“... in the full glare of day and sunshine. Here is complete absence of costume as in the Garden of Eden before the fall of man, and hundreds of men and ladies look on while the bathers plunge in the foaming waters or emerge from them. I really think the police should interfere.”



The absence of costume presumably refers only to the male bathers. Since the “gentlemen”, whose lack of costume were such a stain on the gentility of Brighton, persisted for so long and so obstinately in their nakedness, the mixed bathing with

which the era of the seaside was ushered in did not long survive. Some resorts adopted ingenious safeguards. At one bells were rung at different times for men and women to bathe – with a penalty for those of the men who were in the vicinity when the women were bathing. What the men might see of the ladies, enveloped as they were in gowns fastened with string about the ankles, we cannot know. The sport of the ladies, with their “unblushing obtrusiveness” upon the privacy of the male bathers, was more profitable, nor do we read of any fines connected with their misdemeanours. To look on and to disapprove at one and the same time seems to have been their calmly assumed prerogative.

There is, for instance, the story of a Frenchman’s experience at Brighton in the middle of the 19thC. Having gone for a swim, he returned to find his bathing machine was now fifteen paces up the shore. And between him and his machine, a mother and her two daughters, each holding a prayer book (it was Sunday), sat upon three camp stools. What was he to do? He wasn’t wearing a stitch of clothing, nor, though he looked wildly about, could he discover even a fragment of drifting seaweed to cover his nakedness. In his dilemma, he dropped on all fours, and began to crawl cautiously forward, raising himself by degrees “as much as decently permitted” in the hope that the ladies would take the hint and remove themselves. But they sat on in serene unconcern. He crawled back into the sea and resumed his swimming. But, as he justly remarked, “one cannot swim forever, while one can sit with fatigue for hours” – the forces were evenly matched. At last he did the only thing possible.

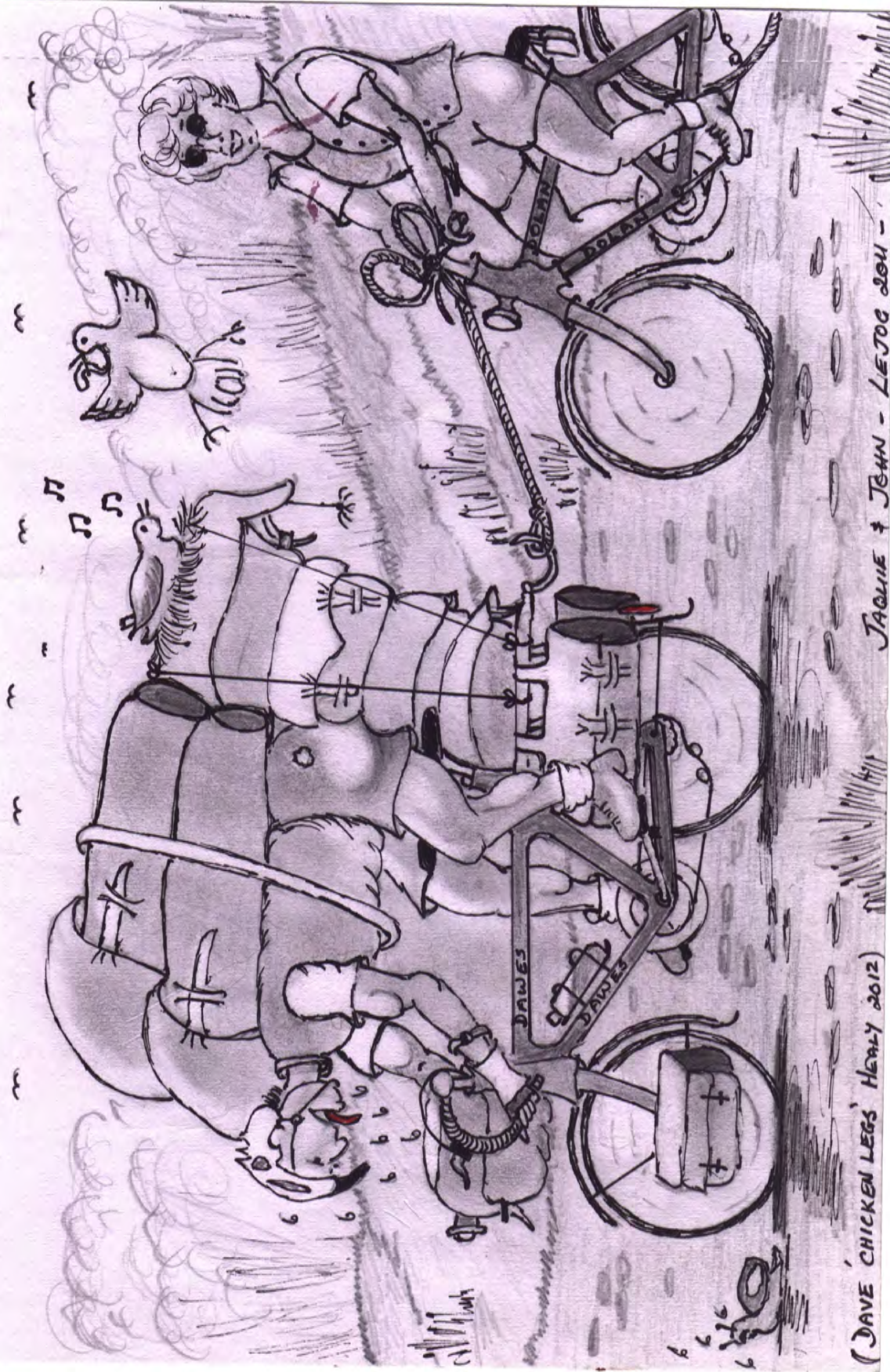
“I rose slowly, like Venus from the waves. Striving to a bearing both modest and unconcerned, reminiscent of the lost traditions of innocence of a younger world, I stepped briskly past the three ladies, who made no pretence of looking away.”

The poor gentleman found out later that the three ladies were “quite puritanical” and had adopted this extra-ordinary method of punishing him for bathing on the Sabbath day!



This Roy James drawing is particularly apt for the last article.

LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE JOHN, BEFORE WE LEFT FOR JOHN O'GROATS, YOUR LEGS WERE AS SKINNY AS DAVE HEALY'S, NOW LOOK AT 'EM, THEY ARE AS FAT AS BRUV, SO STOP MOANING, AND PEDAL, OK!



JACQUIE & JOHN - LEJOG 2011 -

(DAVE 'CHICKEN LEGS' HEALY 2012)

Thanks to Dave Healy for his version of Jaquie Julen & her brother John's End to End trip