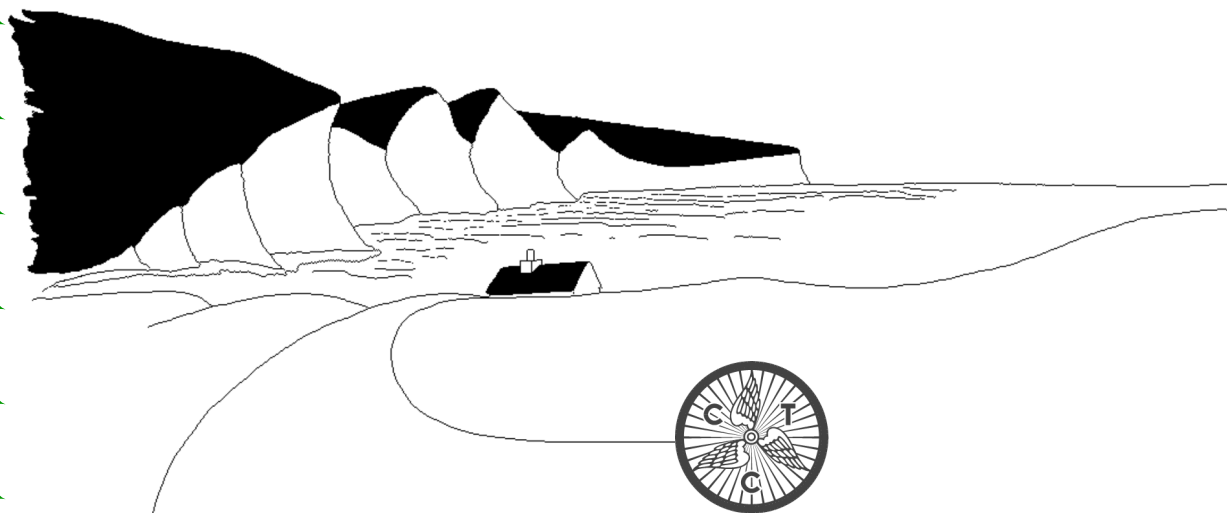


The



Coaster



the magazine of the

**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB**

No. 53 - Christmas 2011

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

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" THE COASTER"



**Issue No. 53,
Christmas 2011**

From the Editor's Desk.

Welcome to the Christmas 2011 edition of "The Coaster". I apologise for the fact that it has been a while since there has been an edition of the magazine (Summer 2010), but I'm afraid that there has been a noticeable shortage of articles. Even now this edition is a bit shorter than usual, and I would welcome a few more contributors for future editions. Anything that might be of interest to fellow members is welcome - it doesn't just have to be cycle tours!

Some good contributions this time, with touring reports from Richard Thatcher and Roy James in France, Frank Dewberry's belated report on his 2001 End to End and my own write-up on our cycle-camping trip to the New Forest .

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

David.

THE CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

Patron: Her Majesty The Queen

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

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

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

NEW FOREST CYCLE-CAMPING TRIP 2011

by David Rix

Having made the decision not to attend the Semaine Federale this year, we still felt we would like to have a cycle-camping trip, so I suggested cycle-camping down to the New Forest Cycle Week and back. Both my wife, Susan, and daughter, Emma, were up for this, so I booked the New Forest Week and started planning our route. When I mentioned our plans to the other Seaford & Newhaven Section members, both Paul Palmer and Derek Pritty expressed an interest in joining us for the trip down. Since Paul had done the trip many times



before we agreed to use his route along the back of the Downs for the trip down, stopping at Graffham and a site that Joyce Wickens had found at Corhampton. Susan, Emma and I would make our way along the coastal cycle paths to Shoreham, before heading inland to Storrington where we would meet up with the other two for the rest of the first day.

Wed. 27th July arrived and we set off at 9.00 a.m. in fine weather, heading along the coast from Newhaven on National Cycle Network route 2, picking up the Undercliff Path from Saltdean to Brighton (which now officially allows cycling) and then the seafront cycle path through to Shoreham Harbour - luckily not as busy as we had anticipated. Here we stopped for a well earned drink and bacon sandwich at Carats Café, before following route 2 across the lock gates and through the side streets, then diverting to the old Toll Bridge to join the Downs Link to Bramber – a much better ride since they did it up. We put up with the slightly busy traffic on the A283 from Bramber to Washington, where we had our lunch in the sun in the local rec. We then took the quieter roads round the back into Storrington and found our way to Truffles for a cup of tea. It was here that we had arranged to meet Paul and Derek, who arrived together at about 3.00 p.m., and after tea we continued on together past Uppark and then through the lanes to Graffham. There were road closed signs at Burton Mill Pond, where the old bridge was being replaced, but we continued past and luckily found they had put in a walkway for pedestrians and we were able to get through with no trouble.

At Graffham we were put in a small glade behind the wash block and soon had our tents up and our evening meal on. It was a pleasant warm evening, the wind had dropped, and we were able to sit, chat and discuss our route until we turned in.



The next morning we were up and about fairly early and with tents packed were back on the road not long after 9.00 a.m. It was a pleasant ride, on quiet, narrow, lanes along the back of the downs, with little wind and the sun shining down on us. We reached Cocking, where we found that the village store on the junction did take-away coffee – and also some very nice cakes – so we took advantage of this and had an early elevenses sitting in the sun on the grass bank across the road.

Refreshed we were back into the lanes via Bepton, Elstead and South Harting to Buriton, where we had lunch in the shade beside the village pond. A short diversion to the village shop in East Meon, before Paul led us on the climb up the Downs to the top of Chidden Down, where the Sustainability Centre had a very nice café for our afternoon tea – they also did camping, which Paul took advantage of the following week on his journey home.

From here it was good run down of about 2 miles into Corhampton, then a short, gradual, uphill drag along the B road to Corhampton Lane Farm. Here we found the farmer's wife to enquire about camping, and were told it would be £10 for the lot of us - £2 each for the night! Paul then asked about having breakfast in the morning, since this had been mentioned on their website, and when told that this would be £5 we all decided to take advantage of it. £7 for the night for camping and a farmhouse breakfast was a bargain! Camping was on a raised grass area behind the barns and we did have a grain dryer going most of the night, but luckily they couldn't have had them all going because it wasn't enough to disturb us.



After a really good breakfast the following morning we set off again, turning into the lanes and then following minor and B-roads via Upham and Fisher's Pond to a garden centre at Otterbourne for coffee. Then we skirted Eastleigh and Romsey on minor roads to run down towards Totton and pick up the cycleway across Totton Bridge into the town. Here we picked up food for lunch, which we ate at a playground a little further on as we followed the cycleway towards Ashurst. Then we continued on the, rather rough, cycle path beside the A35 all the way to Lyndhurst, where we picked up supplies. Since it was still a bit early we carried on via the A35 and then forked off on the minor road to Burley and the New Forest Tea House for afternoon tea. We then had only about 3 miles left to do to Avon Tyrrell, where the Cycle Week was being held – though a mile of this was uphill!

When we arrived and checked in we were pleased to find that an area called "The Glade" had been allocated for cycle-campers as well as Avon Clump where we had been in 2010. We thought this a much better area and soon had our pitches selected and our tents up. We were also much closer to the wash block. Some of the other East Sussex members had already arrived and most of the rest arrived some time the following day (all car-assisted).



Across the top of the forest to Fritham

We had had good weather all the way down and this continued for several days. Saturday morning we just saw my mother, Ann, and Geoff & Jenny Boxall arrive before we set off for our usual ride to Lymington for the market. Over the next few days we enjoyed our usual rides around the local lanes and through, and over, the forest, with one or two new

routes thrown in for good measure. On Wednesday we went to Ringwood for the market and then had a ride round Ringwood Forest and back via Avon Heath Country Park, where unfortunately, just before tea, my mother, Ann, sustained some nasty injuries (cuts, bruises and scratches, when her brakes failed and she was thrown onto the side of the road. After first aid attention from Emma (and I had repaired her brakes) she was able to continue, slowly and, after a reviving cup of tea at the Avon Heath visitor centre, managed to limp back to camp. Though her injuries took a few weeks to fully heal, I'm pleased to say they didn't slow her down too much, and she is now fully recovered.

Wednesday was the only wet night, though it was very heavy and many, including us, found that water had got into our tents in the night. Since it wasn't very nice on Thursday morning most of the others decided to go to Sammy Miller's for lunch – some by bike and some by car. We stayed at camp and dried our stuff and the bottom of our tent out. We had planned to have a day off the bikes and walk to Burley, but the walk was abandoned because the tracks would be too muddy and we just pottered around the site.



Of our little group of cycle-campers only we stayed till the very end of the week. Paul had set off home first thing on Wednesday, following our outward route, and had managed to reach the Sustainability Centre before it rained. He wasn't so lucky on Thursday, when he got the rain we had had over night. Derek had planned to leave on Thursday, but opted for a cooked lunch with the others at Sammy Miller's, and eventually left on Friday morning, though riding with us towards Christchurch before getting the train from Hinton Admiral. So, on Friday evening, only Susan, Emma and I were left to enjoy the end of week barbecue with the motorised contingent.

Saturday morning saw us packed up fairly early and away not long after 9.00 a.m., saying farewell to the others who were busily taking down tents and packing cars since they had to be off site by 10.00 because another group were coming in.

I had planned our route back to follow, as far as possible, NCN route 2 along the coast – though avoiding some of the more convoluted bits, which simply added extra mileage to no advantage. We had hoped to follow the old railway line to Brockenhurst but, due to the previous heavy rain, felt this was not a good idea with full camping gear. Instead we followed roads via Burley and Holmsley to Brockenhurst and then through to Beaulieu, where we stopped for coffee at the garden centre. Then it was on to Hythe, where we picked up food for lunch before catching the ferry to Southampton. Route 2 crosses via the ferry and we were able to follow it onwards, over the Itchen Bridge and then South-East via Netley, on side roads and cycle paths, stopping beside one stretch through a park area to eat our lunch with views out over Southampton Water.



Our route then took us through Royal Victoria Country Park and here I took a chance, as the route was only shown as proposed on the Sustrans site, and I wasn't sure whether we could use the footpath out of the end of the park. Luckily, though narrow, there was no problem and we got through easily – though the others did wonder where on earth we were going!

We then had an interesting crossing on the tiny ferry across the Hamble at Warsash, where there was only just enough room for us and our loaded bikes and the elderly captain looked like your stereotypical old seadog. Once across we followed lanes and minor roads through to Titchfield where we found a nice little tea shop in the back of the local jewellers shop – very reasonable prices as well. It was then a case of following route 2 on minor roads through the suburbs of Fareham, as well as under and alongside main roads on cycle paths, until we finally crossed the A27 and joined the minor road to the foot of Portsdown Hill, to find Ellerslie House Hotel and its campsite, where we had booked our pitch for the night. Though less than ¼ mile from the M27 the traffic noise was not particularly noticeable, we had a nice pitch and the facilities were good. Probably not a site we would use regularly, but a good stop for a trip such as ours.



You wouldn't realise how close the traffic was

Sunday morning and we headed back to re-join the A27, and continued on cycle paths, and a few short stretches of road through Portchester – some sections of path were well separated from the main road and, if you didn't know, you wouldn't realise how close the traffic was if you didn't know.

The cycle path continued alongside the A27 and then at Hilsea we followed an advisory route, which actually disappeared in the middle of an industrial estate – luckily being Sunday there was hardly any traffic and, by following the

map, we were easily able to find our way through. It was then back onto cycle paths alongside Farrington Marshes, and then through suburbs and under the A27 into the centre of Havant where we stopped for coffee and bacon baguettes at a local café in the pedestrian precinct. We then followed route 2, sometimes on on-road and sometimes off-road cycle paths all the way into Chichester. Here we purchased sandwiches and ate them in view of the Cathedral. We also ended up in Field & Trek, where we couldn't resist purchasing a new three-man tent – reduced from £249 to £100! So we ended up going with two tents and coming back with three, though we had been intending to replace ours anyway.

Leaving the centre of Chichester, we made our way to the ring road along the B2144, which luckily crosses at traffic lights, and headed in the direction of Tangmere. We skirted the edge of the old airfield on an old road and then headed to Barnham, where we stocked up with food at the Co-op before popping into the Cosy Cottage Tea Rooms beside the windmill for tea and cake. Suitably refreshed we pushed on, crossing the A259 Bognor road near Climping, to follow route 2 over the footbridge into Littlehampton. Here we followed

some local cycle paths through the centre, then wound our way North through a housing estate to the A259, where 100 yards of footpath took us to our campsite for the night.



This site, Daisyfields, was a real find. A large flat site, surrounded on three sides by housing and with excellent facilities. Despite being the start of August it wasn't particularly busy and it wasn't too expensive either. We thought it might be suitable for our Section to use to explore the area West of Littlehampton.

Having bought a new tent we felt we had to take the opportunity to try it out, and also avoid the embarrassment of putting up a new tent for the first time with all our camping friends watching! It went up with no problems and we were really pleased with the size and the extra room in the porch. After dinner we took a short walk up the road to the next junction to sort out where the cycle paths were, since it had not been clear on the Sustrans mapping.

Monday was our last day, and it was with some sadness that we packed up our tents for the last time. Our route now took us on B-roads and minor roads through East Preston to the A259 at Roundstone, where we joined the cycle path along the South side for half a mile before turning South and following the cycle route on minor roads through Ferring to the sea front and along to the Sea Lane Café – very busy, but very good. At Worthing we joined the cycle path along the prom and followed this all the way to Shoreham Beach.

The day before Rose Hills had texted Susan to say that, if we let them know what time we were due at Shoreham Beach, she and Mick would be at the beach hut with the Kettle on. Susan had told them we would be there between 12 and 1 and had texted at Worthing Pier to say we were on our way. When we arrived Rose not only had the tea on, but had also prepared sausages and beans, which was followed up by some of her delicious cake. A big thank you to both of them.



Lunch at Mick & Rose's Beach Hut at Shoreham

When we eventually tore ourselves away we continued over the old Shoreham footbridge, through the back streets and then back over the lock gates we had crossed nearly two weeks earlier. Then it was just a case of retracing our outward route, following the seafront path all the way to Brighton. Then it was back onto the Undercliff, with only a stop for tea and piece of cake at the tea bar at Ovingdean, before tackling the hill at Saltdean, and following route 2 through the back of Peacehaven, eventually reaching home about 4.30 p.m.

An excellent trip with good weather both going and coming back. The only real rain had been that one night in the New Forest. All of our campsites had turned out well and we had no major problems – we look forward to repeating this another year.



SOME DIFFERENT VIEWS ON THE COMPUTER AGE



"There are better ways to log off."



Casual Friday for the
Telecommuter

Stupid computer
keeps saying
"you got mail"



LIFE BEFORE THE COMPUTER

- * Memory was something you lost with age
- * An application was for employment
- * A program was a TV show
- * A cursor used profanity
- * A keyboard was a piano
- * A web was a spider's home
- * A virus was the flu
- * A CD was a bank account
- * A hard drive was along trip on the road
- * A mouse pad was where a mouse lived
- * And if you had a 3½ inch floppy
- ... You just hoped nobody found out!





Have a nice day!



A drawing from Geoff Boxall recalling a camping trip to Romney Marsh

BATTLEFIELDS CYCLE TOUR 2010

By Richard Thatcher

Since reading books about World War I as a child, I have had a desire to visit these theatres of extreme violence. More recently, reading the Regeneration Trilogy by Pat Barker, Birdsong by Sebastian Fouldes and the works of Siegfried Sassoon have offered more realistic perspectives of the conflict. The Cyclist's Touring Club offers member led holidays to worldwide destinations, so when I saw a tour to WWI and WWII sites I thought the opportunity too good to miss.

Very early on a Sunday in August I drove to a farm on the outskirts of Dover where I rendezvoused with the tour leaders and the 20 or so other cyclists. (A very mixed bunch of varying ages and including three husband and wife partnerships on tandems.) Our luggage was put in a people carrier after which we rode to the ferry at Dover.



At Calais we picked up a road which ran at the side of a canal almost all of the way to St. Omer, our destination for the day. Unfortunately, it being Sunday, there appeared to be no cafes open for coffee. In addition it was unseasonably cold with a strong headwind and a coffee, maybe with a bit of calvados, would have gone down very well. The surface of this particular road was very poor and bumpy. I had injured a finger requiring a trip to A&E only two days before departure and was thus unable to wear a glove on my right hand. This led to some discomfort. St. Omer was reached late in the afternoon.



The Following day dawned cold and very wet. We made our way through undulating countryside to La Coupole. This was an assembly and launch site for V1 and V2 rockets. The Interior, a massive dome, is now a museum devoted to various aspects of WWII, including rocketry, forced labour, the resistance and the holocaust. The latter was particularly poignant with sketches done by the inmates and artefacts from the camps. After lunch at the on-site cafe we rode to Le Blockhause, an impressive V2 rocket sight which the RAF put out of action using the tallboy bomb, designed to penetrate thick concrete.

Early the following morning I had time to look at the magnificent Norman cathedral which was almost next door to the hotel. On entering I followed a distant murmur of voices until I came upon an ancient priest saying mass.

Drizzle alas continued as we made our way to Cassel, which is surprisingly on the summit of the only serious climb that we were required to conquer on the tour. The old castle ramparts are dominated by an equestrian statue of Marshal Foch, the commander of French forces in WWI who had his headquarters nearby. After coffee we undertook a terrifying descent over wet cobble stones to regain the plain below.

The rain stopped in time for lunch which was taken at Popperinge, just across the border into Belgium. This town was behind the lines and was where troops were rested after a spell at the front. Besides being the original 'home' of TOC H, the cells behind the town hall had been used as a prison for deserters. We were shown the room where the unfortunate soldiers spent their last hours as well as the post to which they were tied for execution by firing squad. I found this the most harrowing part of the whole trip. On the way to Ypres (now called Leper) we visited a cemetery which contains the grave of Captain Chavasse who won two VCs, the second being awarded posthumously. Our new hotel, where we were to spend the next four nights, was excellent and only a stone's throw from the town centre and the Menin Gate.

The following day was spent riding around the Ypres salient. It was strange having coffee in the centre of Passendale, an area which was the scene of such total devastation in WW1. We visited Tynecot, which is the largest of the Commonwealth cemeteries. The rear wall of the cemetery is a memorial to the missing. Here I was able to find the name of one of my wife's uncles, Rifleman Harold Jones, who died on 20th September 1917 aged 21. Afterwards we visited the Passendale museum which showed the full horror of what the soldiers endured in graphic detail.



In the evening we attended the last post ceremony at the Menin Gate in Ypres. This event is held daily as it has been since 1918. Two of our number laid a wreath in remembrance of those who gave their lives while serving with the London Cyclists' Battalions.

The following day we rode to Diksmuide. On the outward route we visited the Essex dressing station where John McCrea wrote his famous poem 'In Flanders Field'. On the way back we visited a memorial to the cyclists' battalion in a lovely little wayside chapel. Here too was a bollard marking the furthest extent of the German advance into Belgium.



We then continued on to the German cemeteries at Langemark and Vladslo. After the First War ended, the allies were understandably less generous in allocating land for German burials. As a result the dead were often buried in mass graves with no headstones, only large tablets on which the names of those interred were inscribed. At the far end of the cemeteries statues had been erected. Those at Vladslo depict grieving parents and were made by the artist Kathy Kollwitz whose son is buried close by.

The weather had improved during the afternoon and a pleasant sunny ride was topped off by a stop at a community centre for refreshments which a kindly caretaker opened specially for us.



Friday started with a visit to Sanctuary Wood, Hill 62 and Hill 60, all strategic points during the third battle of Ypres. We were supplied with torches in order to access tunnels between trenches. The Belgians are clearly not as keen on health and safety issues as we are in the UK because there was no way that these trenches would have been open to the public had they been in England, rusty metal was everywhere, besides heaps of discarded ammunition in piles against the museum wall.

After lunch we cycled around part of the Messines Salient including a visit to the recently constructed Irish Peace Park, which commemorates the dead of both Northern and Southern Ireland. Such an undertaking we imagined would not have been possible prior to the Friday Agreement.

On Saturday we cycled by a different route back to St. Omer, passing through the village of Dozinghem, where some houses still have stencils on the walls indicating the number of soldiers who could be billeted there. Before reaching our destination we visited the site of the Wormhout Massacre where in 1940 a number of British soldiers were murdered by the Waffen SS.

On Sunday the weather threatened to deteriorate so we set off at a brisk pace for Calais. The rain started however before we reached our destination. This time we were fortunate to find a cafe open due to the French equivalent of a car boot sale that was being held nearby. At Calais we had plenty of time to find some lunch and also to admire the famous statue of “The Burgers of Calais” by Rodin, which stands outside the town hall.



So ended a very memorable tour. A journey filled both with strong emotions and a sense of gratitude to those who had given their lives for their country. In all we covered 285 miles, no great distance of course, but the object of the trip was to visit places with such evocative names rather than merely to cover huge distances.



ODD CUTTINGS

On a hotel television set, Belgrade, Serbia:

If set breaks, inform manager. Do not interfere with yourself.

Notice in hotel room, Las Palmas, Canary Islands:

If you telephone for room service you will get the answer you deserve.

CYCLE CAMPING BY TAXI

by Roy James.

I finally decided not to go camping in France this year. I have been going on shorter rides and taking longer to do them for some time. Perhaps carrying camping gear would be too much. Then there is the weather. Surely if one is going to worry about the weather it is better to stay at home. So, having booked an emplacement in the early summer at my usual camp site, I had second thoughts and phoned again to cancel.

Camping des Deux Rivieres at Martigny, a few kilometres from Dieppe has been an important part of my summer for many years and although others may travel farther, none could enjoy more the quiet pleasures of the French sea and countryside. The thought of not going was difficult to come to terms with.

In the meantime, Laith, my son-in-law had developed an enthusiasm for cycling and with my daughter Debra had been making forays 'en velo' to Eastbourne and Pevensey beaches for swimming and coffee on the way home. It nevertheless came as a complete surprise when he suggested that he and I go cycle camping to the Martigny site for five days.

"We can take my London taxi," he said, "That will create a bit of a stir. Everything can go inside, we won't have to slog along for miles with camping gear and I may pick up a few fares on the way".

Everything was arranged and when he came to collect me I knew that a new, softer style of camping was about to begin. How different it all was. Under the front seat was a small hamper containing enough food for a fortnight. Two tents were stashed away together with a blow up mattress for Laith that covered the entire base of his tent and there, peeping from the folds of a sleeping bag was an ELECTRIC KETTLE! For sure,



this was not going to be any Ray Mears affair. With two bikes crammed in the back we were on our way.

We arrived at the Martigny camp site to find the 'Reserve' notice displayed on our emplacement and the tents and blow-up Mattress were (quite) quickly in place. Nothing seemed to get in the way of our pleasure. The sun shone every day without being too hot. There was no wind (the bane of every cyclist) to ruffle the calm of the nearby lake and we had our end of the site to ourselves. Every day was taken up with cycle rides along the Avenue Verte or to the wonderful Foret d'Arques, here we followed endless tracks through the beech woods until, tired of so much tranquillity, we would return to our tents for cups of tea and possibly a sleep in the quiet of the afternoon. Twice a day it was necessary to go into the village for fresh bread, for what would a holiday in France be without the ubiquitous baguette. The electric kettle worked a treat and each evening we drank more tea and watched the sun glow crimson as it drooped behind the Chateau d'Arques, black in silhouette against the sky.

One afternoon Laith drove the taxi to nearby Pourville-sur-Mer. Sitting on the terrace of the Cafe du Place we ate croquet-monsieur while bathers stumbled painfully over the pebbly beach into the not too inviting sea.

“Pity we forgot our swimming things,” I said in a half hearted way. Laith nodded his head in the same way.

Macdonald’s, epicentre for the jeunesse francais served us with double burger and cheese on our last evening. A few hours later we were on the boat for England. If it was my last ‘French leave’ it had been one of the best.



ODD CUTTINGS

Dr. A. Dewlap & Miss H. Griskin

Dr. Aurelius Dewlap, Bishop of Kew, has pointed out that the headline in last Monday’s *News Echo*, “Bishop Rapes Headmistress,” does not accord with his recollections of what took place at his recent discussion with Miss Hermione Griskin, headmistress of Burntfire Comprehensive School, on the subject of religious instruction in schools. He has been in touch with Miss Griskin, who is positive that no event of this nature occurred. Dr. Dewlap also contests our statement that he has a brothel in Chelsea.

The Headline, as most readers will have realised, should have read, “Bishop Raps Headmistress,” and the word brothel should, of course, have been brother. We apologise for these unfortunate errors, which were due to the introduction of new typesetting processes designed to raise the level of accuracy.



ONE MAN'S E2E - MAY/JUNE 2001

By Frank Dewberry

The first problem I had to deal with was getting three and a half weeks special leave from my job as Head Gardener in Eastbourne. June was a very difficult month for such an application and I was pleasantly surprised when permission was granted without very much trouble. Detailed planning could now be started and in this task I found the CTC End-2-End Route Sheets and Accommodation List most helpful. My idea was to be self-supporting on the trip as well as self-propelled and I intended to cover about 55 miles each day with one rest day each week. In the event this plan of campaign proved to be quite practicable, but it gave little spare time for visiting places of interest or stopping for camera shots along the way.

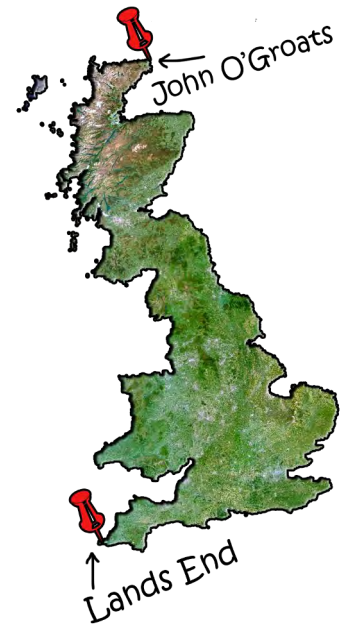
As expected, Cornwall and Devon proved to be hard riding with several 30% gradients around Crackington Haven, Boscastle and Tintagel and I found my planned 10mph reduced to 2½ mph at times. On the small lanes I found myself completely at a loss at some junctions through not having a compass with me — this was an item I had decided would not be required on the trip. (Mistake number 1!) My next error was quite inadvertent. Having encountered rain on my run down from Penzance station to Lands End, I left my cape hanging up to dry overnight in the very convenient bike shed and then forgot all about it the following morning - something I much regretted and had time to ponder over during the next few days! I also discovered as the days passed that touring capes are not a standard stock item in the modern bike shop. I had reached Market Drayton in Shropshire before I achieved success in my search.

The Accommodation List included quite a variety of B & B places and I was hoping to stay at two or three farms en route. In the event I stayed at only one - Greenway Farm, Wiveliscombe where I was able to enjoy one of the best sojourns of the whole trip, it was a sizable mixed farm but their dairy herd had been slaughtered because of BSE and had been replaced by 500 goats which produce milk for specialist cheese-making. My evening was spent firstly enjoying an excellent meal down in the village and then, in front of a huge log fire, discussing some of the seemingly endless problems which beset the farmer in these difficult days.



Around the Bristol area the roads were very busy and it was a relief to be able to turn onto the Bristol to Bath Cycleway, which is well-surfaced and has a preserved railway running alongside serving Bitton, Oldland and North Common stations. I had a little bit of trouble locating the Severn Bridge afterwards, but I think that may have been my own fault!

Booking accommodation from the CTC list as I went along generally worked well, but local events such as weddings and country fairs



sometimes took up all the available rooms, causing me to change my plans here and there. It seems to be a fact of life that B&B signs sprout on all sides when you do not need a place to stay and then melt away completely when you are hunting desperately for a bed somewhere.

Considering that I was following an official route during the month of June it was surprising that I met so few other end-to-enders. However, one such was a fellow guest at Ross-on-Wye who explained that his plans were very flexible, combining the best of the B&B and Hostels routes. The only definite aspect was that if he did not manage to get home again after two months his wife would set out to look for him. (I only hope she was not too forgetful otherwise he may still be languishing on the road somewhere).

During the early part of my second week I managed to find time to look around Ludlow and also to stop at Much Wenlock and admire the Guildhall with its incredibly richly-carved Council Chamber. Here my pleasure was jarred a little when I was apprehended in the act of using the camera. I was suspected as being of the same ilk as someone who also, a few weeks earlier, had used a camera and had returned to burgle the premises two days later. I was glad to get away without having the camera confiscated!



A slight detour to visit Ironbridge was well justified, because it proved to be a highly atmospheric place, especially immediately around the famous bridge designed and built by Telford in 1779. Mid-afternoon I arrived in Knutsford and was able to have a look at the remarkable collection of Penny Farthings and other early designs of bicycle in the Courtyard Coffee Shop. If you arrive at the premises riding such a machine you get your tea free! Another facility in this area which is free of charge for cyclists is the Toll Bridge over the Manchester Ship Canal near Warburton, which I crossed a little later on my way to Leigh in Greater Manchester where I stayed the night.

The next day I set off happily northwards again but was soon in trouble, delayed by a confusing network of one-way town streets as I was making for Lostock Junction. With some expert local help I eventually found my way through and reached Blackburn just in



time for lunch. The town centre was very busy with a lively atmosphere, but my attempt to book my overnight stop at Slaidburn was unsuccessful, so I reached that village in the late afternoon wondering exactly where I was going to spend the night. As it happened I need not have worried at all - the village inn bearing the name 'Hark to Bounty' had a room available. That name apparently has nothing to do with Captain Bligh or his ship, but refers to one of our four-footed friends who was so named and used to frequent the inn with his

master over one hundred years ago. The inn is certainly very old and built entirely of stone, as are the majority of houses in the village. Little has changed in recent years.

I had been hoping to stop next at Appleby-in-Westmorland, but found that I could not do so because of the annual ‘Appleby Fair’, so I stopped a few miles short at Orton - not a very good decision. Breakfast the next morning was quite late and I was not on the road again until 10 o’clock and facing quite a long ride to Langholm just over the Scottish Border. I stayed for two nights at the Reivers Rest Inn and spent my rest day walking on the hills around the town. Mine host recommended the particular routes which were based upon his considerable experience in helping to regenerate the energies of the somewhat jaded end-to-enders who turn up on his doorstep. At least I survived the treatment!

The next stop, Peebles, is another attractive town with baronial style towers on various buildings in the High Street. That evening I borrowed the ‘Spokes’ detailed street map of Edinburgh and was able to set off the next morning knowing exactly which roads I had to follow to get to Princes Street and Edinburgh Castle. The city was very busy but it was only when I decided to follow the A90 out to the Forth Road Bridge that conditions became really unpleasant.



Peebles High Street

After the A90 experience it was doubly pleasant to reach the peaceful civilized atmosphere of my overnight stop at Cleish, near Kinross. The route next day passed between Perth and Crieff and I was able to stop and look at the charming thirteenth century church of Fowls Wester. Inside there is a Celtic standing stone which used to adorn the village green but some thirty years ago was moved inside the church to preserve it in good condition.

Wayside catering facilities can be rather few and far between in Scotland and this is particularly true of the winter sports area in the Cairngorms. Several places in the area were advertising tea, coffee, refreshments, etc., but, since it was the middle of summer, they were all firmly shut up and deserted. Having mingled with tourist crowds in Braemar I deviated a few miles off route to stay overnight in Ballater. At breakfast I was asked where I was heading for. My reply, “Inverness”, was met with the unnerving response, “You’ll no’ get thro’ the bridge is doon.” Having set the scene for a full-scale emergency my informant launched a succession of urgent phone calls on the subject of the collapsed bridge, the last of which fortunately established that the bridge had been repaired and reopened to traffic. I did not fancy a major detour on what was already a longish ride to Culloden and beyond.



On several occasions I found it quite difficult to get back on the route when setting off after breakfast and this was the case at Inverness, where I had to seek directions to Kessock



Bridge before I could get properly on my way. I was relying on individual map pages taken from the spiral-bound edition of the Ordnance Survey 3-miles-to-the -inch Road Atlas and these are necessarily short on urban detail. However by this stage of my travels route complications were a thing of the past - the A836 would be my route for most of the remaining distance to John o'Groats. Most of that road was described officially as 'narrow road with passing places'. There was very little traffic, most of which seemed to be German motorcyclists who fortunately were not attempting to utilize the power of their massive machines.

North of Lirg the route through Sutherland was gently undulating and from Aitnaharra onwards it follows the course of the River Naver right to its estuary which is marked by an impressive golden sandbank jutting far out to sea. The CTC appointment at Bettyhill overlooks this coastline stretching away westwards into the mist. Inside the building a notice made it plain that I had arrived almost sixty years too late. Had I arrived that much sooner I would very likely have had King Haakon of Norway as my fellow guest, because it appears he was a frequent visitor during his wartime exile.

The last stage along the coast of Caithness is undulating and unremarkable although the sea is in view much of the time. There are no trees or mountains and incidentally nothing to obstruct your view as you suddenly realise that you are looking at Dounreay Nuclear Power Station (known as 'The Dome' locally). It was decommissioned in 1996 but you can still get quite a decent cup of tea there and the heavy water does impart a certain distinctive flavour. A few miles further along the coast is the fishing port of Thurso



which is very grey but has an appearance all its own. There I met a group of four end-to-enders - all workmates. They had had to split their trip into three separate stints because they all worked for the same small firm in the midlands and it was impossible for them all to be off 'on holiday' at the same time for three weeks on end.

I understood that my destination point at John o'Groats was situated right by the main crossroads and I was quite surprised when, just meandering - comfortably along, I saw the signboard of the guesthouse right in front of me. I didn't realise that I had in fact arrived as I had hardly seen any other building of any sort in the vicinity. It was at least dry when I got there after rain most of the day, but a few minutes later the heavens opened yet again giving my faithful steed a thorough wash down in the yard - because the strict rule of the house was that bikes were placed in secure storage at 9.00 p.m. each day and not one minute earlier!

I estimate that I had covered 1,050 miles in my eighteen days riding. Having, luckily, suffered no punctures or mechanical problems, it was only on my arrival the next day at Wick station that I found myself in a problem situation. No Scotrail train could take my bike that day, the next or the one after. Only three bikes were allowed on each train. The only ray of hope was that the Post Office might be able to help. With boxes provided by

Safeways I succeeded in packaging the bike well enough for transport southwards by Parcel Force. This arrangement saw the bike delivered home one week later in good condition apart from a seriously damaged rear wheel.

This damage was soon put right and did not detract too much from my sense of satisfaction in having completed the ride more or less as planned without any major problems. What's next? Who knows?



ADVICE FROM THE PAST

Roy James.

Unable any longer to keep up on club runs, I find myself cycling 'tout seul' more and more. However, the act of cycling can be an attitude of mind anyway and I draw comfort from the experiences of past cyclists faced with the same problem.

Browsing through Sussex D.A. News Letter for Christmas 1979 (incidentally the inspiration for our editor's excellent Coaster magazine) I discovered a piece of advice taken in turn from 'The Rambler' magazine of 1897 that I have taken to heart.

Golden Hints For Cyclists.

You will derive benefit from cycling so long as you keep within your natural capabilities, but never put in a straining spirit even though there be a man behind. If you cannot ride a hill without opening your mouth get off and walk. Never continue level road riding when you feel it a strain, this causes irregularity of the heart action and may be otherwise injurious. Two pennyworth of claret mixed with a bottle of lemonade is a good thirst quencher.

A plan which will be found excellent to prevent thirst while riding is to keep a short piece of quill (part of an old quill pen) in the mouth like a cigarette. This draws in fresh air but compels the lips to be closed, so no dust gets into the mouth to make it dry. Cyclists out of practice will find they can accomplish a journey with much greater ease and comfort if they rest a little after the first two miles.

I don't know about the claret and lemonade or the quill pen but the rest of it seems to make good sense, Roy.

