

The

CHRISTMAS



Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 40 - Christmas 2002

£1



working for cycling

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

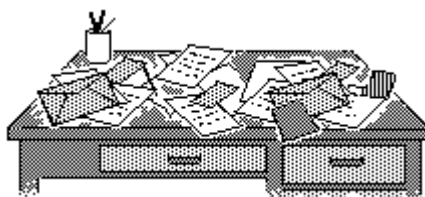
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"THE COASTER"

Issue No. 40, Christmas 2002



From the Editor's Desk.

Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to all our readers. As I write we are just looking forward to the first of our Seasonal socials. The D.A. Christmas Lunch. Let's hope that as well as good eating we can also get in some good cycling during the Winter months.

Thoughts of warmer times in our articles. With a report on the New Forest week and a tour in Andalusia. I've also included a Christmas trivia quiz to keep you occupied while your Christmas dinner goes down, as well as some general bits and pieces and the usual selection of drawings.

I hope you enjoy it and, if so, why think about putting pen to paper and contributing to a future issue. Anything of general interest considered.

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

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

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New Forest Cycle Week July - August 2002 by Ann Rix

Down to the Forest again, oh how we love it, as soon as we cross the cattle grid after going through Beaulieu we know we are nearly there. Paul, Carol and Kevin, Peter and Ron, Derek, Jack and Mathew, John, Bob and Bill all went on Friday and most had a lot of traffic holdups. Geoff, Jenny and I went Saturday with no trouble, as did David, Susan, Martin and Emma. It took us two and a half hours, including the stop at Rownham Services for the usual and coffee and biscuits Jenny had brought. Arrived about 10 a.m. just as a large group was moving off.



Up with the tents, after finding a suitable spot, with no dips - when it rains these quickly fill and flood a tent. David and co. were ready and away first having had a head start, we followed taking the road most of the way via East Boldre. All groups going to Lymington, this meant stacks of cycles everywhere, so we headed for the park further on for our lunch to watch the yachts and the ferry in and out. Saw the others on our way back - going in the other direction to have a late lunch, they had already been to the Market. We thought cups of tea at the Acorn Cafe was what was needed next, then refreshed we left our steeds there to explore the Market for bargains. Down to the Quay where we found the lads, Peter, Ron, Bob and Bill, so all rode back together along the Solent Way and East Boldre to the campsite at Roundhill. John and Sally came to say hello, they'd come for the weekend, cricket with Emma (now she has her cricket set) and co. after supper, then bed.



Sunday 28th Mark arrived. then he and his father John went fishing, Bill and Bob went swimming, I think they had the best of it as David took us for a long day of mostly roughstuff. Off at 9.45 a.m., Mick and Rose Hills joined us to 11's at Holmsley Station as they had to leave early, so road first then the old railway track, after 11's another stretch to Burley, a very short stretch of road then track to Castle Hill and beyond to go through the subway, oh dear, this was full of ponies. With loud shouts David and Geoff drove them through, they didn't want to budge at all well it

was a hot day and they were in the shade, we did get through and then back went the ponies to stop anymore passersby. A quiet spot just beyond was ideal for lunch after which it was up and down steep short hills, to Peter's delight on his mountain bike. Another short stretch of road then track and at long last to Annie's for much needed teas. Cream ones for eight with tea and cake for four, shared about a bit of course with the creamless ones having it on

their cakes, just to help out. Much refreshed and after four cups of tea each, it was on road to and through Lyndhurst, with the track back through the forest to Roundhill by 6 p.m. A good wash was needed after the dusty tracks. John and Mark had caught forty Mackerel and ten Bream, some he left at his friends but the rest he brought back so Derek and co. and Bill and Bob also had a fish supper. Ron caught his leg on a built-up garden frame at Holmsley so had to be doctored, this caused several to turn out their first aid kits and found them wanting but with some from one and another it got fixed. My front brake cable broke just after Lyndhurst so had to be careful on the tracks, Geoff kindly fixed it before supper. All in all we'd had quite a day.

Monday 29th The third sunny calm day and the temperature rising, calm nights too, unbelievable. David and co. with Paul and Kevin went to the Moors Valley, whilst Geoff, Jenny, me, Peter, Ron, Bob and Bill went to Exbury gardens for 11's where George and Ada and their group joined us later. We escorted a family to Lepe after the group had gone then we went on to Calshot for our lunch by Southampton Water, Bill and Bob had a swim, Ron saw over the Castle then some had a look at the CycleTrack. Back to Beaulieu for tea, Peter and Bob had found potatoes by the wayside on our way out to Calshot, then had picked more up on the way back, Bill as well this time, so all three had too much ballast for the hill up to the farm shop. John, Mark, Derek, Jack and Mathew went to Lyndhurst and found that was enough. We did 30 miles but on roads wasn't too tiring, all had had too much Sunday. Cricket in the evening, then we finally found Alicia McConnell and the families out on another field, having hunted for them on Sunday, I was treated to tea and biscuit. We'd had three HOT DAYS and NIGHTS - with the temperature rising, threat of thunderstorms for Wednesday. Lost another of the pannier fixings - had to use a bungi.

Tuesday 30th Still fine at 5.30 a.m. up at 7 a.m., after several things going wrong I was five minutes late, it didn't matter though because we had a long wait for one of the Tandem families. Out across the old airfield to take the tracks to Dilton Farm they had a puncture in the back wheel. Geoff and Susan waited, then he sent her for us all to go on to Lymington, they then went straight up after fixing it and got to the cafe before we did. We'd parked at the quay as usual, just before George and Ada's group rolled in. Left the tandem family there while Alicia's family of six plus Tim and Phil came on with us to Milford for lunch by the sea, Martin and Emma went swimming. The families decided to turn back to join up with the rest, while we went on to Braxton's Herb Gardens at Lymore for tea. Back via Sway to Brockenhurst, some by way of the shops and some via the church road. Paul and Carol had left at 9 a.m. to take Kevin home then come back later with Christopher. We found them and Joyce and Marie there on our return, Don Excell had also arrived in the afternoon. Ron turned up after supper to ask if the surgery was open - so I changed the dressing, it was healing up nicely.

Wednesday 31st. Rain at 6 a.m., trees dripping on the tent, stopped about 6.45 a.m. then rained again after 7 a.m., fine for breakfast then rest of the day it damped about. Most of the others had decided to go on the crabbing run to Keyhaven, which John had been persuaded to lead, and though getting a little wet they had a good time. Geoff, Jenny & I decided that we would forego



that pleasure and take a trip over to Southampton. We rode to Hythe via Beaulieu, had elevenses at St. John's Church Hall, new in 1998, very nice, only had coffee but very good, they were getting ready for lunches. Rode along to get our Ferry tickets, £1.90 each (seniors) others £3.20, rode the planks of the pier beside the train, very carefully as some were very poorly, then waited for the Ferry to Southampton. Had our lunch by the old walls then followed them as best we could with our steeds - in and out and up and down - very interesting, seeing old buildings as well on our way. Caught the 2.40 p.m. back to Hythe, on



to Beaulieu for tea at the Garden Centre where we had cakes as well this time - not having had them in the morn. Back to the campsite through a short shower, fine evening for an early meal then it was out to the old airfield for the Junior Time Trial. Martin and Emma did very well as did Hannah and Rosie, the first time for the three girls but the last time for Martin as its for 8 - 12 years. Emma won 1st on handicap and 1st on time. Some of the others went on George and Ada's run to The Reptiliary and Owl Sanctuary, the latter getting very wet. Bob left in the evening.

Thursday 1st Most of the cyclists went on the Isle of Wight run. Thirteen of us, our usual lot, followed David through the Forest by track to Lyndhurst for coffee and shopping. A diversion en route, caused by forestry operations, found us following a route we had not done for years. Coffee over it was on to the Reptiliary for lunch where we saw a lot this time, the conditions just right for them, one slow worm at last - but not in the container it was supposed to be. Along tracks and some roads, David took us on an extended route to Annie's for tea, stopping on the way at the Deer Sanctuary where there was a discussion as to how many there were - when several young ones came bounding up - and the others moved about, fifty-five altogether? Back to Lyndhurst, via the watersplash of course, where Martin thought somersaulting should be added, fortunately coming off lightly - not to be recommended.



More shopping then back via the track we'd had to use on the way out - we think this may prove a better return route as the section is nearly all down hill. After an early supper Jenny took us on her traditional walk, some paths were a bit wet but very enjoyable seeing the sunset over the Forest. Back to hear how the others had got on, the trip to the Isle of Wight was good and Ron taken two friends to lunch at Fordingbridge.

Friday 2nd Fourteen this time followed David on tracks to the New Forest Wildlife Sanctuary for elevenses, then it was on roads to Eling Tidemill where we were lucky to find the tide right so were able to see it working. The children all had fun filling in quiz sheets about the mill and were rewarded with pin badges. We had lunch at our usual spot by Southampton Water watching the container ships being filled. South this time, with a bit more rough stuff, David managing to find a (slightly rough) track along the edge of the Forest, avoiding the busy main road, to put us on the road back to Beaulieu for tea. Some

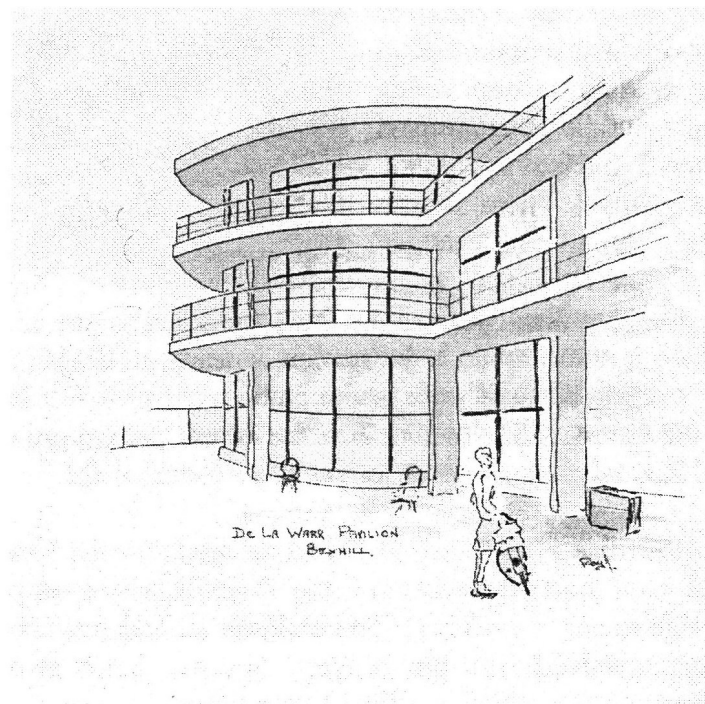
also wanted the opportunity to do some shopping for their meal that night. Tea at the Garden Centre then on to the Farm shop for some, before all returned to the campsite to get ready for the traditional Barbeque which goes on quite late, John's finale is the jumping sweetcorn.

Ray Wickens and daughter Val had arrived during the day, I had a job trying to keep track as to who was there - who was expected - who had gone - and who had arrived during the week.



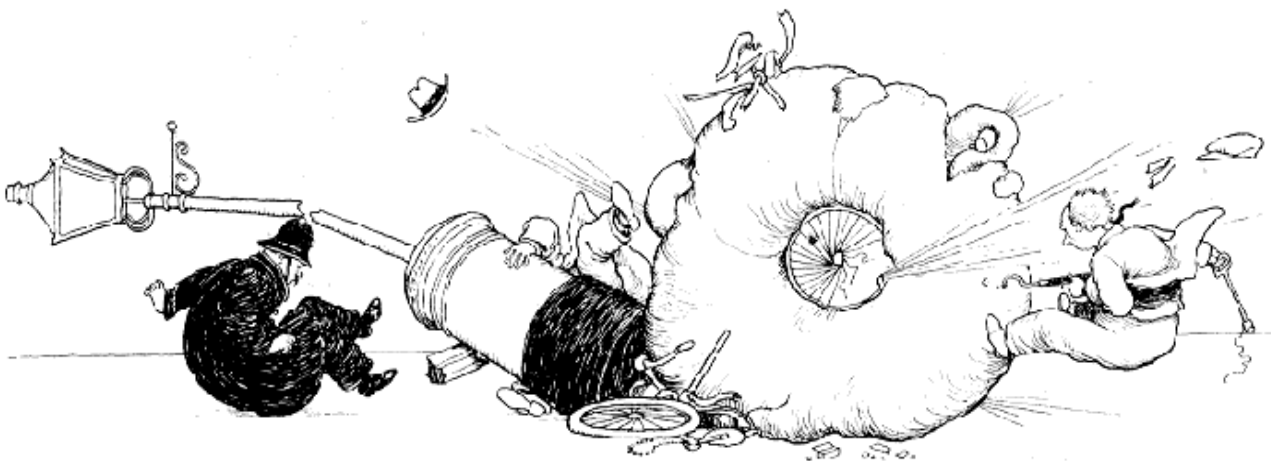
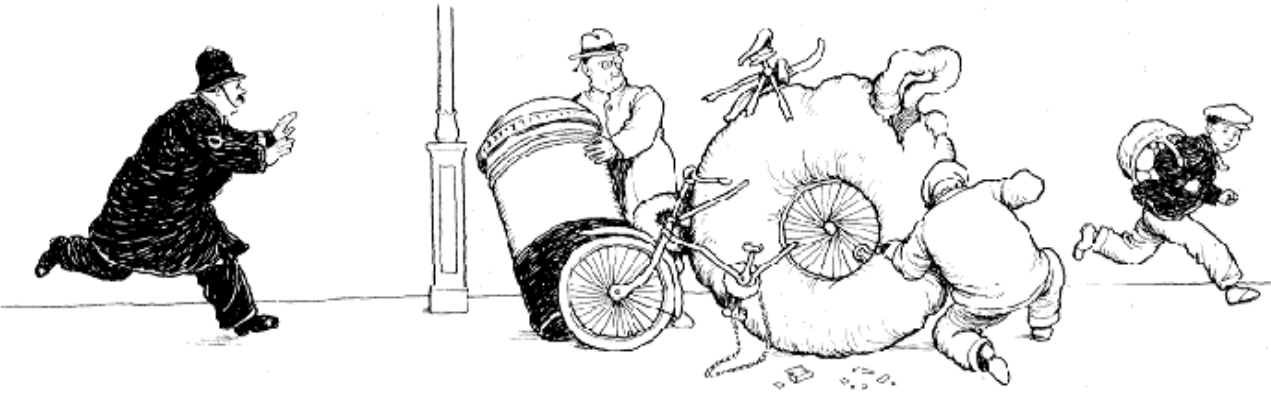
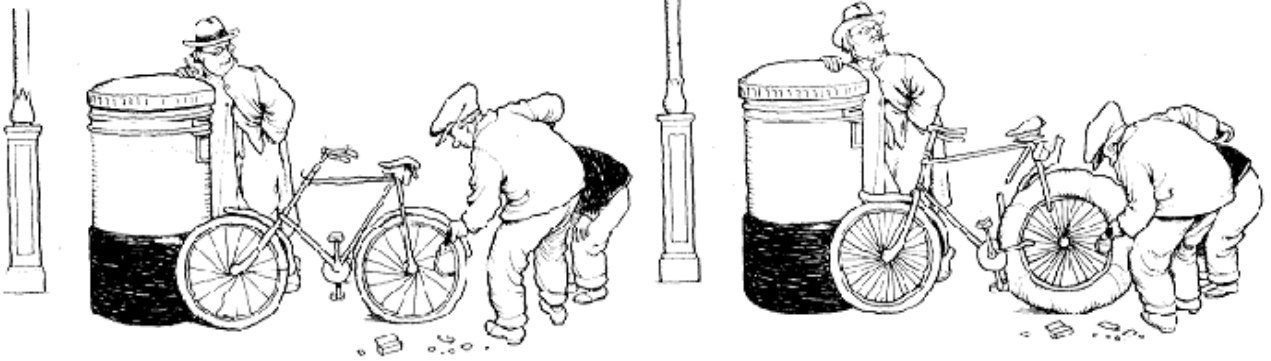
Saturday 3rd Rode to Lymington, via the watersplash near Norleywood, for the Market again. Lunch at the park - in the rain - so had it in the empty bandstand before we rode the Solent Way eastwards for tea at Buckler's Hard and back by roads - rain all the way. Geoff, Jenny and I had to pack up mainly in the wet - with occasional let-ups that allowed us to pack the car - then down it came again. Wet tents were packed to dry out at home - ah, the pleasures of camping. We agreed - down to Brockenhurst for Fish and Chips, which we ate in the car, we eventually left at 7 p.m. and reached Seaford at 9.15 p.m. after a stop for petrol. Hot chocolate for three, then Geoff and Jenny headed home to Ringmer. Sunday was fine for us to get our washing done and dry out - and for the rest who'd stayed to pack up in the dry.

Once more a super week of three C's - camping, cycling and companionship.



EVERYDAY SUSSEX by Roy James

THE PUNCTURE
By Heath Robinson - date unknown

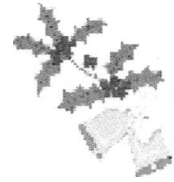


HEATH
ROBINSON



Christmas Trivia Quiz

How many useless, sorry interesting, facts do you know about Christmas
All the answers can be found at the back of this issue



- 1) The first instrument on which the carol *Silent Night* was played was:
A) A harp B) A pipe organ C) A guitar D) A kazoo
- 2) In Guatemala, Christmas Day is celebrated:
A) On January 6 B) On December 25 C) On October 31 D) Never
- 3) Electric Christmas tree lights were first used in:
A) 1492 B) 1895 C) 1944 D) 1976
- 4) Good King Wenceslas was king of which country?
A) Abyssinia B) England C) Bohemia D) Gondor
- 5) Medieval English Christmas pantomimes did *not* include which character?
A) St. Nicholas B) The Bold Slasher C) Father Christmas D) The Turkish Knight
- 6) The name of Scrooge's deceased business partner in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was:
A) Bob Cratchit B) Jerry Cornelius C) Bill Sykes D) Jacob Marley
- 7) In North America, children put stockings out at Christmas time. Their Dutch counterparts use:
A) Old hats B) Beer mugs C) Shoes D) Stockings, just like everybody else!
- 8) The poinsettia, a traditional Christmas flower, originally grew in which country?
A) Canada B) China C) Mexico D) Spain
- 9) Which name does *not* belong to one of Santa's reindeer?
A) Comet B) Prancer C) Blitzen D) Klaxon
- 10) In Syria, Christmas gifts are distributed by:
A) The Three Kings B) Tom o'Bedlam C) One of the Wise Men's camels D) Father Christmas
- 11) One notable medieval English Christmas celebration featured:
A) A giant, 165-pound pie B) Snowball fights between rival courtiers
C) A swimming race across the English Channel D) Huge crackers that sometimes exploded fatally
- 12) In Australia, usual Boxing Day activities include:
A) Building snowmen B) Tobogganing C) Wombat hunting D) Surfing
- 13) In Sweden, a common Christmas decoration is the Julbuk, a small figurine of a goat. It is usually made of what material?
A) Candy B) Straw C) Uranium D) Fir wood
- 14) The real St. Nicholas lived:
A) At the North Pole B) On the island of Malta C) In Turkey D) In Holland
- 15) Which of the following was not one of the Three Kings?
A) Caspar B) Balthazar C) Teleost D) Melchior
- 16) In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of:
A) Fried fish, lettuce and spinach B) Square meat pies C) Broiled partridges with gooseberry sauce
D) Turkey and plum pudding
- 17) In Tchaikovsky's ballet *The Nutcracker*, the Nutcracker's main enemy is:
A) A girl called Clara B) The King of the Mice C) Dr. Almond D) Drosselmeyer the magician
- 18) The day after Christmas, December 26, is known as Boxing Day. It is also the holy day of which saint?
A) St. Eustace B) St. Brigit C) St. Nicholas D) St. Stephen

- 19) In Greek legend, malicious creatures called Kallikantzaroï sometimes play troublesome pranks at Christmas time. To get rid of them, you should:
- A) Placate them with gifts of rice pudding
 B) Bum either salt or an old shoe
 C) Sing hymns in a loud voice
 D) Throw your sandals at them
- 20) When visiting Finland, Santa leaves his sleigh behind and rides on:
- A) Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer
 B) A giant ptarmigan
 C) A goat named Ukko
 D) A flying carpet
- 21) A boar's head is a traditional Christmas dish. According to a popular story, the unlucky boar whose head began the custom in the Middle Ages was killed by:
- A) Choking to death on a book of Greek philosophy.
 B) King Wenceslas, who speared it from horseback
 C) A falling fir tree
 D) Remorse, after goring St. Nicholas
- 22) When distributing gifts in Holland, St. Nicholas is accompanied by:
- A) His wife Lucy
 B) His servant, Black Peter
 C) Thirteen elves
 D) St. Stephen
- 23) At Christmas, it is customary to exchange kisses beneath a sprig of which plant?
- A) Ivy
 B) Yew
 C) Holly
 D) Mistletoe
- 24) Believe it or not, one Indiana town is called:
- A) Christmasville
 B) Wenceslas
 C) Noel
 D) Santa Claus
- 25) Who was the author of *A Christmas Carol*?
- A) Mark Twain
 B) Charles Dickens
 C) Hans Christian Andersen
 D) Thomas M. Sawyer
- 26) Which popular Christmas song was actually written for Thanksgiving?
- A) Away in a Manger
 B) Frosty the Snowman
 C) Jingle Bells
 D) Joy to the World
- 27) A favorite Christmas story is Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in...*
- A) Maryland
 B) Boarding school
 C) Wales
 D) China
- 28) In 1647, the English parliament passed a law that:
- A) Made Christmas illegal
 B) Recognized Christmas as an official holiday
 C) Let prisoners spend Christmas Day at home
 D) Gave Santa immunity to break-and-enter charges
- 29) The world's largest Christmas cracker was made (and pulled) in which country?
- A) Sweden
 B) Australia
 C) England
 D) The United States
- 30) The poem commonly known as *The Night Before Christmas* was originally entitled:
- A) Santa's Secret Visit
 B) A Visit from St. Nicholas
 C) The Night Before Christmas
 D) The Midnight Guest



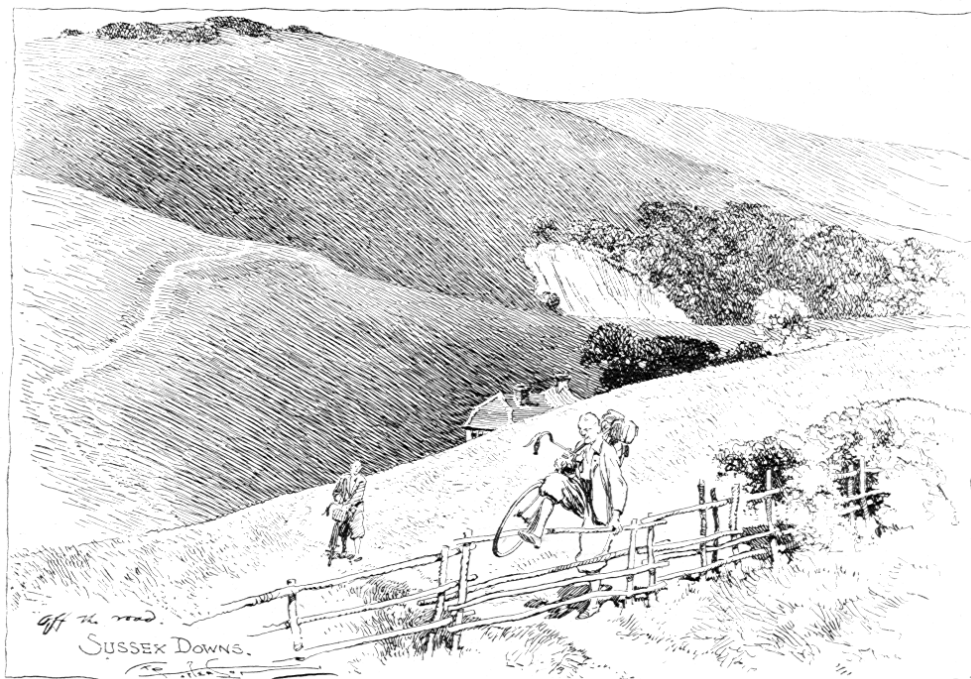
THE SOUTHDOWNS WAY 12-16 SEPTEMBER 2002
By P.G. Tips

While on a camping weekend at Graffham,
Joyce said who will
ride the South Downs Way with me.
I must have had a lot of wine
Because I said OK, I'll see.
We then thought who else would
come along. Joyce asked Marie,
And I asked (H & R Section) Don
They both said they would go,
But when Joyce asked Ray
He didn't want to know (sensible chap).

The train ride to Winchester had its snags,
So we got there rather late.
We will tell you about all that
At a later date.
The ride to the next stop went to plan
We stayed at Cocking in a very nice pub.
We shared our evening meal
With a vicar's cycling club.
When we got to Steyning
We couldn't find anywhere to stay.
So we ended up at Hove,
From the South Downs Way.
This made us rather late,
So we decided to end at Lewes
And finish at a later date.

We went back to Falmer on Saturday 21.9.02
Joyce, Les, Young Jim, Don & me.
Marie couldn't make it
Her sister was coming to tea.
Half way along the ride, that
Kind generous Johnny Oxfam & son,
Laid on cakes and pots of tea,
He said he felt sorry for me.
A bit further on
Ron met us from the other way,
That really made our day.
We stopped at Alfriston,
Les Treated us to tea.
We all made it to Eastbourne
Including me.

I fell off so I feel a bit sore,
I don't think I'll be going back for more.
Thanks to Joyce and all who came,
It makes Wednesday rides seem rather tame.
It's the toughest bike ride
We have ever done,
It was hard. But oh what fun.
Whatever next, End to End,
Or Coast to Coast,
I wonder what
would hurt the most?



THE LEWES AVALANCHE - 1836
A bit of local history.



South Street, Lewes

The worst snow disaster in UK history occurred in blizzard conditions at Lewes on December 27th 1836. England was covered in snow which was particularly severe over the South Downs. Christmas week in 1836 had brought a heavier snowfall than even the oldest Lewes inhabitants could remember. The snow started on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day the blizzard started. All through the weekend it fell and great snow drifts started to be whipped up, eventually reaching a height of over 20 feet. By Boxing Day, the County town was cut off except by the river.

In nearby Brighton 2 people died from the cold. But the situation was about to get worse. At the foot of a cliff in South Street, Lewes a large overhang of snow was starting to threaten the houses in Boulder Row below. When cracks started appearing in the snow the residents were asked to evacuate.

The *Sussex Weekry Advertiser* gave an account:

It was observed on Monday that the violence of the gale on the previous night had deposited a continuous ridge of snow, from 10- 15 feet in thickness, along the brow of that abrupt and almost perpendicular height which is based by South Street and the Eastbourne road, where tons upon tons seemed to hang in a delicately turned wreath as lightsome as a feather, but which, in fact, bowed down by its own weight, threatened destruction to everything beneath. Considerable fears were entertained on Monday for the safety of that line of houses immediately under the hill known as Boulder Row, and these apprehensions were not diminished when, on the eve of that day, a considerable fall occurred at Mr. Wille's timber yard which destroyed a sawing shed and forced it from its position upwards of forty feet.

The owner of the yard warned those of his labourers who lived in Boulder Row to go at once to rescue their belongings, but they refused. By the next morning the overhanging snow had developed great fissures, and the cottagers were again warned and offered accommodation elsewhere, but still they refused.

Onlookers were becoming desperate; just after ten, two young men rushed into a couple of cottages and tried to drag out the women, still without success; hardly were the men clear again before, at about 10.15 a.m., the great wall of snow slid down, crushing and burying seven houses. A gentleman watched in horror:

.... a scene of the most awful grandeur. The mass appeared to strike the houses first at the base, heaving them upwards; then breaking over them like a gigantic wave to dash them bodily into the road; and when the mist of snow

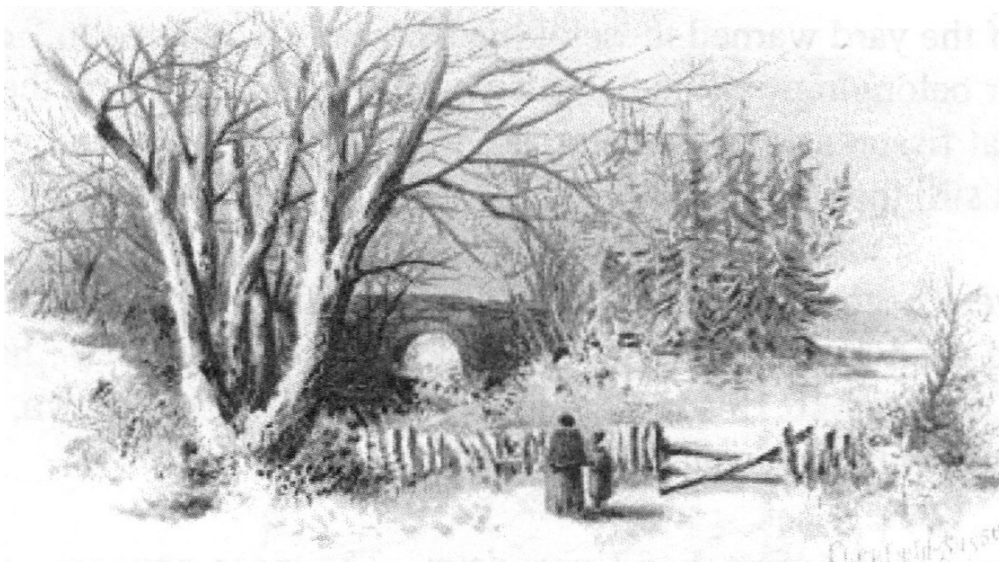
which then enveloped the spot, cleared off, not a vestige of habitation was to be seen - there was nothing but an enormous mound of pure white...

United in horror, everyone struggled; with spades and hands, labourers and gentlemen together - it was a mighty effort. The next day there was another avalanche which hampered their rescue attempts. 15 people were trapped in their houses, 8 died from suffocation or were crushed under the weight of their homes. The survivors included a baby, shielded by her mother's body. The baby was only bruised, but her mother Mary, wife of John Taylor, had not been so lucky and left ten other children motherless. The 8 people who died, that Christmas Eve, ranged from an old man of eighty-five to a little girl of eleven.

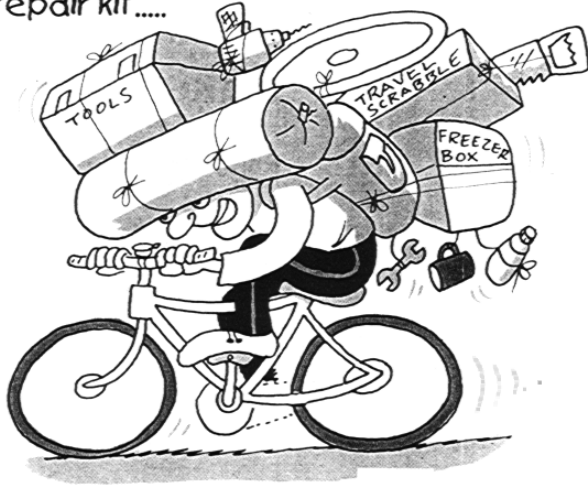
The Snowdrop Inn near to the Cuilfail Tunnel now stands on the site of Britain's worst ever avalanche disaster, which is also commemorated by a plaque at South Mailing.



Old Pictures of Cuckfield in Winter

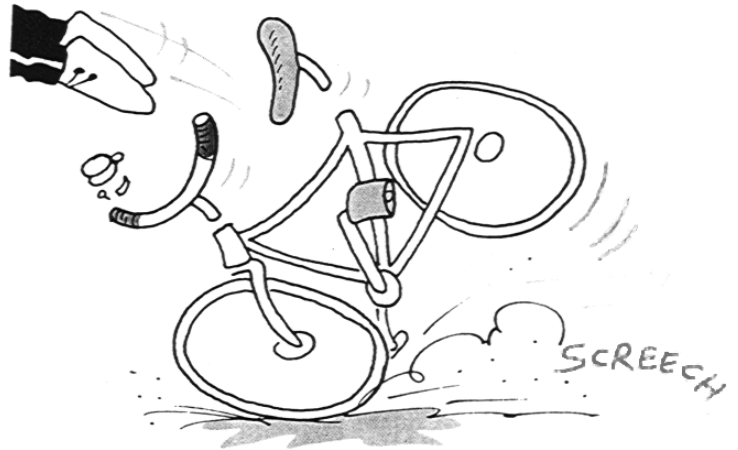


Carry the right equipment for you and your bike - including clothing, food and a repair kit



**"THE
ILLUSTRATED GUIDE
TO
SAFER CYCLING"**

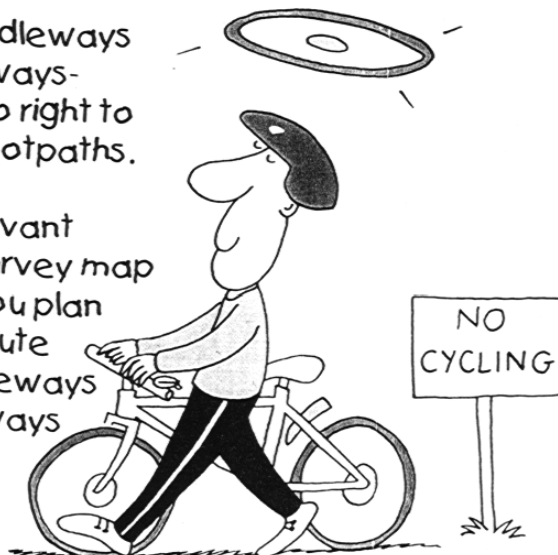
**While on holiday, Rene
found some good advice
for cyclists.....**



Brake smoothly and progressively to avoid surface damage

Keep to bridleways and byways - you have no right to cycle on footpaths.

The relevant Ordnance Survey map will help you plan your route using bridleways and byways



Never forget that the countryside
is the farmers workplace -
please respect it



Give fair warning when
approaching others.



Avoid
bunching up
and
disturbing
others when
riding in
a group



Give way to horses
and slow right down for walkers

A BRIEF TIME IN ANDALUSIA

By Roy James

In their guide to cycling in Spain, the C.T.C. writes “Malaga is an easy airport to cycle from”. Well, you could have fooled me. The exit road from the terminal joins a constant stream of high speed traffic that at first I found intimidating, but a wide, had shoulder offered safety of a kind and so I started my tour of a small area of Andalusia.

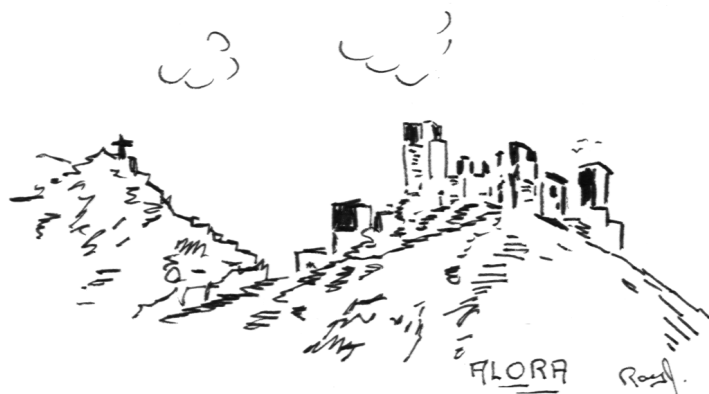
This tour was intended to be something of s swan song, as I no longer seem to get in the miles that I once did. Indeed, as I joined the speeding traffic I began to wonder if I had been wise in making a solo journey at all. The nightmare of break neck traffic was short lived however and within twenty minutes I had left the main highway and had turned onto a quiet road in the direction of the villages of Campanillas and Cartoma, neither of which had any great appeal. But I was in Spain. The road was good, the sun was shining and I had eight hours of daylight to reach my first destination, Alora, a small, hill top town some thirty kilometres away.

Speed has never been for me the essence of cycling and much of its pleasure I have found in stopping at random to enjoy the sights and sounds and smells of somewhere new. In this respect the road to Alora offered much. Mildly hilly, this was a countryside of orange and lemon groves. In the warm afternoon sun the scent of blossoms was always in the air. Later, olive trees replaced the citrus. These gnarled and twisted trees hold a deep fascination for me and to sit in their shade, as I did that afternoon, tied me to something indefinable, both ancient and everlasting.

Pizzara, like other villages I encountered was not dusty and tumbledown (why should it be?) as in old movies, but spick and span. Regional flag flying from the ayuntamiento, well kept, white-washed houses, a wide plaza looking out over the countryside and a bar that was open and keen to offer me a room. It was an offer I had to refuse. Alora was only 10 kms. away and likely to offer a wider choice of accommodation. I ordered an omelette and, perhaps unwisely, a glass of wine and after a short rest I was on my way.

“Alora is at the top of a very steep hill”, the C.T.C. again and this time they are spot on. Cycling into the town was out of the question and I had to use the one alternative offered to all cyclists. Arriving in the town centre I cast around for a room and followed a sign for the Hostal Duran. In a very short space of time I had booked in, the bike was safely stored and I was raising the blind on my room as it started to rain.

A much restored Moorish castle dominates the town and as I cycled away the next



morning I looked back to see it in the bright sunlight. Once again I felt that oft recurring sadness on my tours that I would be unlikely to see Alora again. This was a day of much pleasure and hard cycling, for now the hills began in earnest and some entailed much walking. A steady ascent and then whizzing down hill again was the general pattern. A solitary road, that at times was quite unnerving, for

often, apart from perhaps a few goats, nothing could be seen. A camper van passed and then a little further on it was parked by the roadside and a Dutch couple invited me to share a simple picnic. I think they were not a little surprised to see a lone cyclist. Shortly after leaving them I was dropping down steeply to the town of Antequera standing on the edge of a fertile plain stretching away to the mountains of Sierra Morena.

I had read that here were tombs dating from 2000 B.C. These I was unable to find and although I was lucky enough to discover the remains of the Arab alcazar and the only remaining gateway to the Roman colony of Anticaria, for some reason the town offered less than I had expected. How often such is the case. However, it was easy to find simple accommodation in the hostel/bar Madrona and across the road a tapas bar that completed a long and enjoyable day.

A minor road out of Antequera ran straight and flat for 15 kms. And early the following day found me riding towards the village of Bobadilla. Already sprinklers were at work on the vast fields on either side of the road and all too soon I had passed the village and was turning onto the main route to Campillos. Perhaps I would find just another small tourist town with nothing much to say for itself, but it was an immense pleasure to be well away from tourist Spain.

I remained longer than intended under the shade of palms in the garden plaza of Campillos watching the tides of Spanish life. The town had a good hostel in the centre and I considered staying overnight until I noticed on the map a minor road leading to the village of Teba. On impulse I decided to take a chance on finding a room there.

Teba is a little gem. A ruined castle, a main street with tiny plaza and a bar with rooms above. Here I stayed the night ready for the ride to Ronda the following day.

The road to Ronda was probably once a bit of a slog. No doubt it would have had its ups and downs, but the art of modern road building has turned it into a smooth undemanding route that gave me 30 kms. of pleasant cycling, bringing me to the town of Ronda by late afternoon. Perhaps, as Dr. Johnson said of the Giants Causeway, Ronda is “Better to see than to go and see”. Nevertheless, standing as it does on the very edge of an imposing gorge, the town can boast some amazing views. From any of three historical bridges one can see the celebrated “hanging houses” which seem to be suspended over the bare rock walls of the gorge. At sunset I stood on the so called New Bridge (built 1750-1800) to watch the sun’s rays throwing light and shade across the limitless vista.

Then there is the bull ring. Not to everyone’s taste I am sure. But it is the oldest in Spain and that surely counts for something. For myself, as I scuffed my shoes in the gritty sand of the empty arena, I felt a second hand thrill as my thoughts turned to Ernest Hemingway, who was a frequent visitor to the Ronda bull ring in the thirties, of Tyrone Power in “Blood and Sand” and of Pedro Romero, probably Spain’s greatest bull fighter.



As I left Ronda the next day I paused at the ruins of the Roman aqueduct that once supplied water to the ancient town, then looked at the forbidding hills ahead and confess to a

sinking feeling. The prospect of two climbs, each of about a thousand metres, was, I admit, rather more than I am accustomed to. It was all new however and with two days to cover about sixty kilometres I knew time was on my side.

As it happened the climbs were no great problem. To be sure, that doesn't mean I just rode up them, but by taking my time, walking a bit, cycling a bit, I reached the first summit in good nick. On the way the air was filled with the scent of wild thyme and lavender. The sound of bells from the clusters of goats at the wayside often broke the silence. Just once a tourist coach roared past. How thankful I was to be free of such travel.

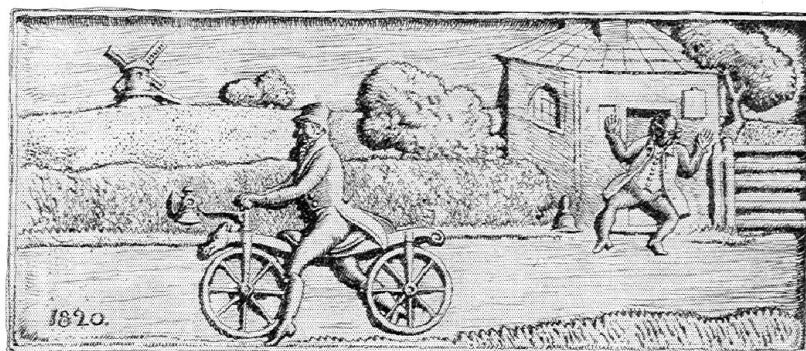


Down, down to the village of El Burgo. Set in a green valley with a stream running through, it was an ideal place to stay, for again there was a room available in the bar. But what is it that drives us on? Is it to see what is over the hill? Is it a sight that will remain with us forever or just one of many? And what have we missed by moving on and not staying? Did gypsy women come down from the hills that evening and dance wild flamenco to the sound of their men's guitars? Alas, I would never know, for after a short rest I moved on for the second climb.

By early evening I swooped down again to yet another village. Yonquera was hardly a lively affair, but there was no problem finding the Hostal Ascencio and it turned out to be the most comfortable of my rooms. As the only guest I was made much of, given the best room and from my bedroom window could have plucked lemons from the tree outside.

I left Yonquera late the following morning and slowly drifted down through the pine scented forest of the Ronda National Park, making frequent stops on the way for I knew that my short tour was coming to an end. And so it was. As I neared the town of Coin, urbanisation took over and things took a turn for the worse. I was unable to find accommodation and although it was getting late I had to cycle on to Alhaurin de la Torre, a good, modern town near the airport. There I quickly found a room and though the town was pleasant enough there was an air of finality about this last evening.

Next morning I soon covered the short distance to the airport and arrived in good time for my homeward flight.



The super-veteran: a design for a box lid, drawn and carved by Frank Patterson.

Illustration from the CTC Gazette - November 1928

- 16) In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of:
 A) Fried fish, lettuce and spinach - The meal was eaten after the Christmas Eve service, in commemoration of the supper eaten by Mary on the evening before Christ's birth.
 B) The King of the Mice - The King of the Mice, usually represented with seven heads, leads his troops against the nutcracker's toy soldiers, but loses the battle when Clara, the heroine, stuns him with a hurled shoe.
 18) The day after Christmas, Dec. 26th, is known as Boxing Day. It is also the holy day of which saint?
 D) St. Stephen - This St. Stephen for whom the day is named is the one in the Bible (Acts 6-8) who was the first Christian to be martyred for his faith.
 19) In Greek legend, malicious creatures called Kallikantzaroï sometimes play troublesome pranks at Christmas time. To get rid of them, you should:
 B) Burn either salt or an old shoe - Apparently the smell drives off the Kallikantzaroï. Other effective methods include hanging a pig's jawbone by the door and a large fire so they can't sneak down the chimney.
 20) When visiting Finland, Santa leaves his sleigh behind and rides on:
 C) A goat named Ukko - Folklore says Ukko is made of straw, but is strong enough to carry Santa anyway.
 21) A boar's head is a traditional Christmas dish. According to a popular story, the unlucky boar whose head began the custom in the Middle Ages was killed by:
 A) Choking to death on a book of Greek philosophy - Apparently a student saved himself from a charging boar by ramming a book of Aristotle's writings down its throat. He cut off the boar's head & brought it back.
 22) When distributing gifts in Holland, St. Nicholas is accompanied by:
 B) His servant, Black Peter - Black Peter is responsible for actually dropping the presents down chimneys, but he also punishes bad children by putting them in a bag and carrying them away to Spain.
 23) At Christmas, it is customary to exchange kisses beneath a sprig of which plant?
 D) Mistletoe - Mistletoe was associated with peace and friendship in ancient Scandinavia, which may account for the practice of kissing beneath it.
 24) Believe it or not, one Indiana town is called:
 D) Santa Claus - There is also a Santa Claus, Idaho.
 25) Who was the author of *A Christmas Carol*?
 B) Charles Dickens - After *A Christmas Carol* Dickens wrote several other Christmas stories, one each year, but none was as successful as the original.
 26) Which popular Christmas song was actually written for Thanksgiving?
 C) *Jingle Bells* - Composed in 1857 by James Pierpont, it was originally called *One Horse Open Sleigh*.
 27) A favorite Christmas story is Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in...*
 C) *Wales* - This story is based partly on Thomas' memories of his own childhood. Originally a radio script, *A Child's Christmas in Wales* is now sold as a book and has been made into a television special.
 28) In 1647, the English parliament passed a law that:
 A) Made Christmas illegal - Christmas festivities were banned by Puritan leader Oliver Cromwell, who considered feasting and revelry on what was supposed to be a holy day to be immoral. The ban was lifted only when the Puritans lost power in 1660.
 29) The world's largest Christmas cracker was made (and pulled) in which country?
 B) Australia - The cracker, 150 feet long and 10 feet in diameter, was made by Ray Price in 1991.
 30) The poem commonly known as *The Night Before Christmas* was originally entitled:
 B) *A Visit From Saint Nicholas* - This poem was written by Clement Moore for his children and some guests, one of whom anonymously sent the poem to a New York newspaper for publication.

Christmas Trivia Quiz - Answers

- 1) The first instrument on which the carol *Silent Night* was played was:
 - C) A guitar - The carol was first sung as part of a church service in Oberndorf, Austria. The unusual choice of guitar rather than the traditional church organ has given rise to a number of stories (the organ bellows were damaged by mice, etc.), but it was simply a matter of preference on the part of the author, Joseph Mohr.
- 2) In Guatemala, Christmas Day is celebrated:
 - B) On December 25 - Guatemalan adults, however, do not exchange gifts until New Year's Day. Children get theirs (from the Christ Child) on Christmas morning.
 - 3) Electric Christmas tree lights were first used in:
 - B) 1895 - The idea for using electric Christmas lights came from an American, Ralph E. Morris. The new lights proved safer than the traditional candles.
 - 4) Good King Wenceslas was king of which country?
 - C) Bohemia - The historical Wenceslas was actually a Duke of Bohemia, not a king. He lived in the 10th C.
 - 5) Medieval English Christmas pantomimes did *not* include which character?
 - A) St. Nicholas - In Medieval England, Nicholas was just another saint- he had not yet metamorphosed into Santa Claus and had nothing to do with Christmas.
 - 6) The name of Scrooge's deceased business partner in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* was:
 - D) Jacob Marley - who's spirit was the *first* of four to appear to Scrooge on Christmas Eve.
 - 7) In North America, children put stockings out at Christmas time. Their Dutch counterparts use:
 - C) Shoes - Traditionally, the shoes used are wooden ones called *sabots*.
 - 8) The poinsettia, a traditional Christmas flower, originally grew in which country?
 - C) Mexico - In Mexico, the poinsettia is known as the 'Flower of the Holy Night'. It was *first* brought to America by Joel Poinsett in 1829.
 - 9) Which name does *not* belong to one of Santa's reindeer?
 - D) Klaxon - A klaxon is actually an electric horn.
 - 10) In Syria, Christmas gifts are distributed by:
 - C) One of the Wise Men's camels - It is said to have been the smallest one in the Wise Men's caravan.
 - 11) One notable medieval English Christmas celebration featured:
 - A) A giant, 165-pound pie - The giant pie was nine feet in diameter. Its ingredients included 2 bushels of flour, 20 pounds of butter, 4 geese, 2 rabbits, 4 wild ducks, 2 woodcocks, 6 snipes, 4 partridges, 2 neats tongues, 2 curlews, 6 pigeons and 7 blackbirds.
 - 12) In Australia, usual Boxing Day activities include:
 - D) Surfing - In Australia, as everywhere in the southern hemisphere, Christmas is in the middle of summer.
 - 13) In Sweden, a common Christmas decoration is the Julbuk, a small figurine of a goat. It is usually made of what material?
 - B) Straw - A variety of straw decorations are a usual feature of Scandinavian Christmas festivities.
 - 14) The real St. Nicholas lived:
 - C) In Turkey - St. Nicholas was bishop of the Turkish town of Myra in the early 4th century. It was the Dutch who *first* made him into a Christmas gift-giver, and Dutch settlers brought him to America where his name eventually became the familiar Santa Claus.
 - 15) Which of the following was not one of the Three Kings?
 - C) Teleost - A teleost is actually a bony fish.