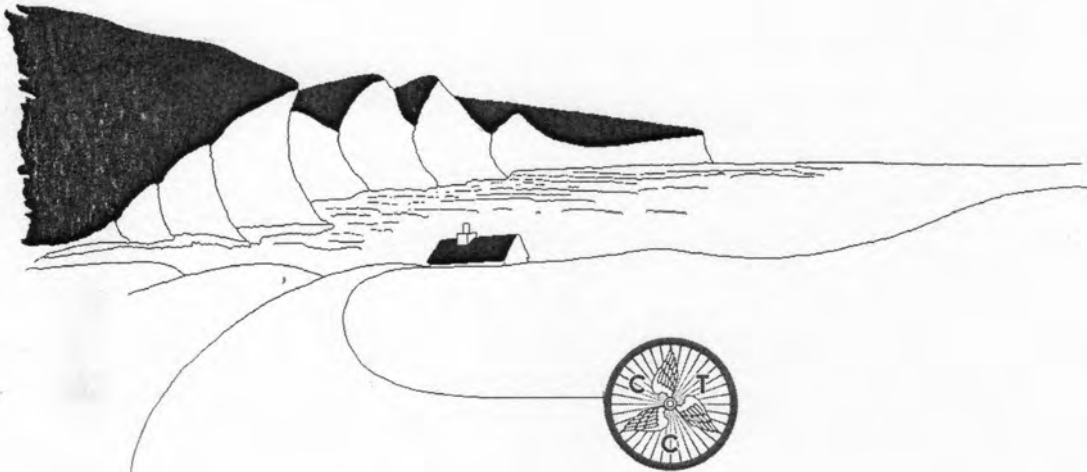
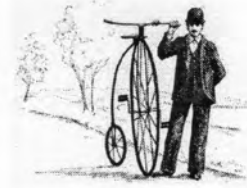


The

Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 41 - Summer 2003

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

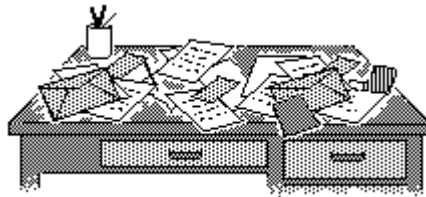
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"The Coaster"

Issue No. 41., Summer 2003



From the Editor's Desk.

Another summer issue, including a report on the successful Dicker Rally. Also, some reminiscences from Peter Crowsley about his early cycling days, as well as other bits and pieces.

Anyone interested in rights of way should make sure to read Becky Reynolds letter about the East Sussex Access Forum. We may, slowly, be getting a network of linked national cycle network routes, but we mustn't lose track of the byways and bridleways, many of which form important links for cyclists – it's important to make sure that they are kept open and usable. If you have concerns about any byways or bridleways or countryside access of any kind then let Becky now.

Deadline for the Christmas issue is mid-November. All articles gratefully received.

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:-

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Cotterell House, 69 Meadrow,
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website: www.ctc.org.uk

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

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

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The First Dicker Rally

Report by David Rix



The weather Friday lunch-time seemed to belie the forecast, it was warm and sunny with almost completely clear skies. There was a good wind blowing, but for once it seemed the forecast might be wrong. The weather was still clear at 3.00 o'clock as we started to pack the car, though there were a few puffy clouds on the horizon. By 4.00 however things were looking distinctly different, the sky had become cloudy and the clouds to the west

were looking darker and more threatening. We finally set off, hoping for the best, but as we drove out to Upper Dicker the rain started and was well set in by the time we arrived at the Hall and field.

Mick & Jean Timperley were already on site in their caravan and Geoff & Jenny Boxall, together with Ann Rix, had arrived just ahead of us. They already had the hall open and we all retired inside to wait for a lull in the weather to put our tents up. First priority though, after a cup of tea, was to get the pitches marked out ready for the expected campers. Geoff had a length of rope, knotted at appropriate intervals, which had been used to mark out for the Ringmer Rally, so it was a simple job to lay it out and bang it pegs at each knot to indicate the corners of pitches.

No sooner had we got the pitches marked than the first families arrived, and shortly people were struggling with tents all up the field. The wind was more of a problem than the rain, especially with the larger tents. I think all were grateful for the cups of tea in the hall. By the time we retired for the night just over half of the 18 pitches were occupied. We were surprised how many had made the effort in such poor conditions.

The next morning our faith was justified, when the day dawned dry & bright & the forecast for the rest of the weekend looked good. A decision had been made early in the planning to keep things informal, with this in mind a blackboard had been provided for rides to be put up on. No route sheets this time, just an announcement on the board with an elevenses place and a destination. With several families present a family ride to Cuckmere Haven was put up, whilst for the faster ones Ann Rix put up a ride to Seaford for elevenses at her house and then on over the Downs. Before we went out some of us had the job of erecting the D.A.'s new gazebo, bought with some of the profit from the Ringmer Rally. Mick Timperley, my son Martin, & I took a while to sort out all the various poles & get them together in the right order, but eventually we succeeded and pulled the canvas up over the top and secured it to the legs, to end up with a very smart looking gazebo pegged down on the



grass adjacent to the hall. With the wind still blowing, though not as strongly as the previous night, we decided not to put the sides on.

Geoff & Jenny, who were coming in each day from home, arrived at about 9.30 and Geoff was persuaded to lead the family ride. I had decided to take a back seat for once and bring up the rear. We set off, just after 9.45, with 3 other families in tow, taking the road past Michelham Priory, but soon we found ourselves stopping behind Alicia McConnell and her family. One of her youngsters had decided it was too much and was transferring to the Burley trailer. So her husband James borrowed Susan's lock and chained the bike to the fence at the side of the road to be collected later. Geoff, who had stopped the rest at the next junction, came back looking for us to check that all was OK. Everything sorted, we set off again and wound our way through the lanes past Abbotts Wood and down to Wilmington crossroads for coffee at the Wishing Well Tea Rooms. A surprise here when Katherine Webster turned up with a group of cycling friends who were staying with her and enjoying some of our local countryside. It turned out that they were heading the same way and we saw them on and off between there and Cuckmere Haven.



We couldn't take our visitors to Wilmington without a stop to look at the Long Man, who stood out really well in the morning sunshine. Then it was on over Chapel Hill and down the Cuckmere Valley through Litlington to Exceat, where we crossed the A259 to follow the concrete road down through the Seven Sisters Park to Cuckmere Haven. The track to the beach was dry and we were able to ride all the way to the river mouth,

where we found the tide fairly high, so there were no attempts this time, as there had been at the Ringmer Rally, to ford the river mouth. A strong wind off the sea meant that we sat and ate our lunch in the lea of the shingle bank, rather than sit on the beach looking out to sea. Though this was not so bad as there was plenty to see, with the cliffs, the dead river and the wildlife. The children enjoyed themselves throwing stones into the river and, inevitably, one or two got their feet wet.



As we packed up and left Katherine and her friends, having had lunch at Exceat, arrived to have a look at the sea. We left them to it and headed back through the park, a brief stop by the visitor centre and then we wound our way back through the lanes and over the white bridge to Alfriston for a cup of tea. Finally we headed back by the most direct route to the camp site at the Dicker, and found ourselves negotiating the awful cycle paths round the Berwick roundabout, which force you to give way to everybody else and to wait for ages because of the continuous traffic – in future we'll stick on the road!



Meanwhile, Ann's companions had enjoyed their ride down to Exceat, followed by a short walk up the track to Seaford before continuing to Ann's for coffee and biscuits. After which she took them north past Blatchington Golf course onto the Downs and the track that runs all the way to the top at Bo Peep Bostal. Many had not been that way before and expressed surprise at the wide areas of unspoilt downland and the magnificent views. It proved an easy climb with the wind behind them. Ann begged off the remainder of the ride and, together with Mick Timperley, headed back towards camp. However, she was slightly led astray by Mick, who tempted her into the Berwick Inn for a drink and lunch, and so was slightly delayed in her intention of getting back early to help.



Ann needn't have worried, for we all arrived back to find Esther Carpenter and her helpers in full swing, preparing for the evening barbecue. It all looked very organised, with tables neatly laid out with food under the gazebo, whilst Brian Leaney and Jean Timperley were getting the barbecues ready. Plenty of time for a cup of tea and to change before the meat went on. Soon the smell of cooking food attracted campers from around the field and it wasn't long before everyone was

sitting around by the gazebo enjoying burgers, spicy sausages or vegetarian items. The proceedings were enlivened by the arrival of a ferret, which was spotted nipping along the edge of the field and then darting in and out under the sides of various tents. Eventually the, obviously tame, ferret was caught, put in a big box and after some enquiries was returned to his home at a farm across the road. Meanwhile, everyone sat and chatted in the pleasant evening sun, until it was time to start turning in after a very enjoyable first day.



Sunday dawned fine again and the family ride headed off South and then through the lanes to Middle Farm, where we sat in the courtyard in the sun and enjoyed our coffee. When we eventually rounded everyone up from looking around the farm and shop, we headed on following the old road past Firle, negotiating the busy A27 twice, to reach Glynde. A kind driver stopped to let us all across, otherwise we



could have been waiting some time. Up Glynde hill and over the top to drop down to the Alpaca Farm. But, where were the Alpacas? Their usual fields were empty. However, Jenny had told us that there was also a camel near the farmhouse, so we carried on round towards Glyndebourne and the drive to the farmhouse. “I hope it’s still there”, she said. Luckily it still was, together with a Lama and, on the

opposite side of the driveway, 4 baby Alpacas. A good deal of time was spent chatting whilst the children admired the babies. When we eventually continued, returning back to the junction and taking the other turning towards Ringmer, we found where some of the Alpacas had moved to, they were in the fields beside the lane leading to Ringmer. They had also been shorn, which probably accounted for their having been moved.



Being fine and sunny it was decided to have lunch on the green at Ringmer, where the children could enjoy the playground. A bit of a push back then, through the lanes via Ripe and Chalvington. A refreshment stop would have been welcome, but unfortunately there was nothing. Some stopped and got their bottles refilled at the Lamb at Ripe, whilst Ann and grandson, Martin, were despatched to scout ahead and see if the ice-cream van was at Arlington Reservoir. Unfortunately it wasn’t so, needless to say, we were all ready for a cup of tea when we arrived back at the site.

Time for a wash/shower and a change before the evening slide show, where we were treated to a varied selection of slides from different people, including pony trekking on the South Downs Way with Rosie Turner, a trip to France with Ann Rix and a selection of Ron Street’s photographic competition entries. Everybody agreed that it had been a very pleasant way to pass the evening.

Monday was still fine, though not as sunny and, following comments from some of the families, it was decided to postpone the proposed games on the field and put on a morning ride to the Cuckoo Trail and the Old Loom Mill for coffee. My turn to lead this

time as Geoff & Jenny had not brought their bikes – though Geoff, not one to miss a ride, borrowed a bike that Bill Earl had brought along to sell and came with us anyway. We only had one of the families with us this time, as the others had decided to drive to the Loom Mill for coffee so that their younger children could ride their own bikes on the Cuckoo Trail. We set off through the lanes past Arlington Stadium to cross the A22 by the cycle path and into Hailsham. I then led them on our route through the side streets and alleys to Ersham Road, then through the estate opposite and onto the Cuckoo Trail to reach the Old Loom Mill.

When we finally dragged people away, we headed South down the Trail to the Polegate bypass, where we turned right on the new path to Copt Hall Farm. This took us down under the side of the roundabout, past the farm and briefly North alongside the A22. The path then turns off through a gate to follow Ogg's Lane, an old, unmade, track through the woods to Robin Post Lane. This section is officially part of National Cycle Network Route 2 (the South Coast Cycle Route), but I would not recommend doing it after it has been wet – it would not be usable all year round! Fortunately for us the weather had been in our favour and we enjoyed the ride up through the woods and sight of all the masses of bluebells. Reaching Robin Post Lane we turned left and shortly rejoined the metalled road, after which it was a pleasant ride back through the lanes past Abbott's Wood and Michelham Priory to Upper Dicker



and the camp site.



We all enjoyed a relaxed picnic lunch, and a few of the children played football, etc., on the field and had a go at Geoff's bicycle slalom - exchanging bikes with each other at times. Finally, we regretfully decided it was time to get started on the task of packing up. Slowly tents came down and people departed, with plenty of thanks for a great weekend. The two toilets from the toilet tents were emptied down the relevant holes and cleaned out, the hall and toilets were tidied up, the gazebo dismantled, the pitch markers removed, and soon there was little to show that we had been there other than paler green patches where the tents had stood. We all agreed that it had been a very relaxed and enjoyable weekend – it has even been suggested that we run

it again if there is no South of England Rally next year..



GLEANINGS FROM THE OBITUARY
OF THE VENERABLE CHARLES ROACH

Few if any of us have heard of the Venerable Charles Roach who died this year at the grand old age of 94 years. A seventh generation in his family to become a clergyman in the Church of England, he was something of an eccentric and a constant thorn in the side of the Establishment. More important to us however, he was a remarkable cyclist.

Born in 1908, he celebrated the completion of his training for Holy Orders by cycling from Dieppe to Constantinople. This was the first of many bicycle journeys that were to take him eventually through 40 countries.

From 1935-40 he was at the Boston Parish Church, Lincolnshire and while there cycled from Stockholm to a town 325 miles inside the Arctic Circle. The following year he covered 1000 miles in eastern and central Europe. Encountering wolves in Macedonia he later explained that he always carried a dagger, having been told that this was the best weapon for dealing with such animals, as they attacked too quickly for a revolver to be drawn.

He once rode 2000 miles through central Africa equipped with a London air-raid siren to ward off wild animals. He later reported he had only seen one lion which he rapidly passed at 13 m.p.h.

Soon after the outbreak of war in 1939 Roach went to Iraq to minister to English-speaking people at Baghdad and Basra. During a period of leave he visited South Africa and when deteriorating wartime conditions made it impossible to return by air or sea he purchased a bicycle and cycled to Cairo, arriving back in Basra rather later than expected.

With so much cycling it is surprising that he had time to marry and minister the word, but he did both. When £6000 was needed to repair the roof of his church, he and his wife took in washing to raise funds and parishioners brought bundles of dirty clothes to church with them.

Yes, perhaps something of an eccentric, but a truly Christian man and what a cyclist.

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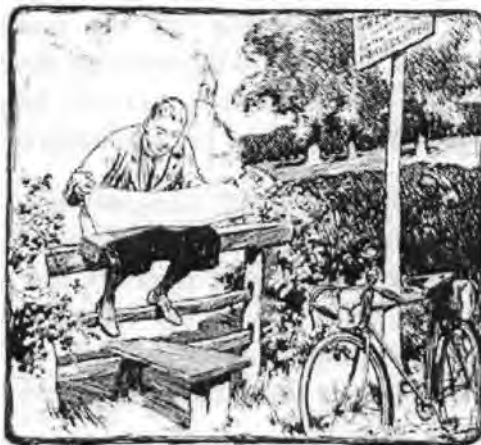
PUJAS, RACING PIGS AND CUTTISFORD'S DOOR-PART 1

by Peter Crowsley

My diary for July 1948 reveals my first ever cycle tour. Overseas of course, well the Isle of Wight. You must remember that, due to tectonic plate movements, the Isle of Wight was then much further from England than it is now. In fact those fearless sea-dogs who commanded the ships that made that perilous crossing were known to take a crate of limes on board before departure in order to administer to those passengers struck down by scurvy in mid-Solent.

Nevertheless I made the passage to and from unscathed and toured the island with a lad from up the road, stopping at Carisbrook Youth Hostel. He on a Lenton clubman and me on my 3 month old Raleigh Super-sport.

You may think that I would then be fired with enthusiasm for cycle-touring, but except for cycling to and from the British Grand Prix at Silverstone in '49 and having my bike on Cornish holiday I did little. Of course the '53 season was spent in Pembury hospital having unsuccessfully tried to negotiate the final bend on Preston Park track.



For my next lot of cycle-touring I am indebted to Her Majesty the Queen who, concerned about the safety of her empire, invited me to join a club so exclusive that you had to have a medical even before joining. In other circles it was given less complimentary names and was known as National Service. My first posting for 'square bashing' was to RAF Bridgenorth, where the camp commander, an ex-Bath Road man, mistook me for an intelligent racing cyclist and granted me the rare privilege of having my bike and civy clothing on camp during basic training. His faith in me was vindicated when I almost won the RAF national 25. When I say almost, I would have won except for the 113 other riders who rode a trifle faster. An event only eclipsed by the Western Command 50, when I was given a time of 2 hrs. 50 mins. Given, as, by the time I arrived at the finish, the time-keeper had gone home. Nevertheless that posting gave me a lasting love of the South Shropshire countryside, which seems an unjustly neglected touring area.



Trade training posted me just outside Blackpool where, resisting the bright lights of the Tower Ballroom and activities unsuitable to mention in "The Coaster", I found myself within easy reach (well 50+ miles was that in those days) of the Lake District and made the most of the Summer, struggling over the Wrynose and Hard Kott passes and other inclinations the area had to offer. And pre car invasion days too.

My permanent posting was just South of

Lincoln, not the most exciting area as far as cycle-touring is concerned. By that time – by dint of ruthless drive and ambition – I had risen to the exalted rank of Junior Technician (that's sort of one above private) and was in charge of fusing up practice bombs that the squadrons of Canberras used to release on the bombing ranges in the North Sea – well most of them, for there was a story about a direct hit on a garage near to the Lincolnshire coast.

Anyone who has toured the Fenlands on a cold, overcast November day when, however far one seemed to ride, Crowland Abbey was always on the horizon, will understand that touring takes on many aspects, as well as frozen feet, and why house prices are somewhat lower in Lincolnshire.



However, the weekend thirty-six hour pass and moderate fitness, despite RAF food, found me developing an extensive touring knowledge of middle England, and at the country's expense. Memory recalls, Sherwood Forest, many rides in the Peak District, floundering around Hathersage Edge in the dark trying to find the Youth Hostel. Leicestershire and its many gated roads and hardly any flat bits – in those days pre-eminent as hunting country and home of Melton Mowbray pork pies.



Having some leave, I thought I would sample the delights of touring in Western Scotland and have a photo of my trusty Macleans leaning on a post marking the summit of the pass of Glencoe. Unfortunately my tour coincided with a surfeit of horizontal wind and rain and forced withdrawal to more benign climes.

My Lincoln time was enlivened by joining the Lincoln Clarion CC, a friendly bunch run by Peg and Jeth Bruton, and I enjoyed their local knowledge and club runs. One memorable ride was a night ride from Lincoln to Kettering – no mean distance. We must have left Lincoln about 8 p.m. and by the early hours were out in the back of beyond in that state of mind where someone got the giggles and in no time we were all in hysterics – some rolling around in the road – over nothing in particular. Order restored we reached Kettering – home of steel and leather in those days – found a cafe open, then fell asleep in the recreation ground. Then all we had to do was to ride back to Lincoln.

Must thank Her Majesty sometime for indirectly increasing my knowledge of England - well some of it - when traffic was so light. But, of course, we didn't know that at the time.

To be continued ...

I am told the reason for the title will become apparent in part 2 – ed.

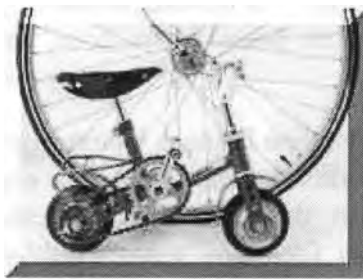
A VEHICLE, TO WIT, A BICYCLE

"My front lamp constable? Why man, the moon.
My rear lamp?
Shining there ten yards behind me.
Warm parlour lamplight of the 'Dish and Spoon'.
But for all my fancy talk, they would have fined me
Had I not set a rather sly half crown
Winking under the rays of my front lamp.
Good will towards men disturbed the official frown,
My rear light beckoned through the evening's damp.

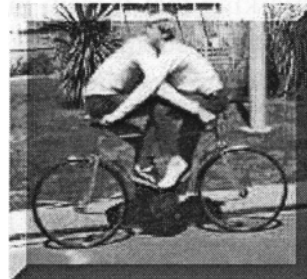
Robert Graves.

UNUSUAL BIKES 1

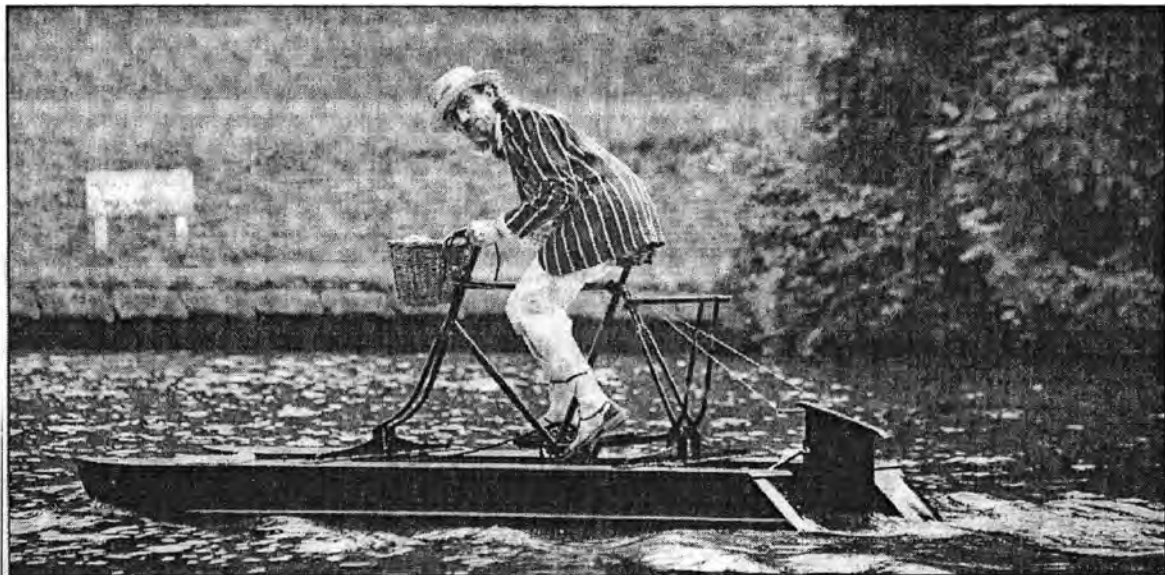
If you have any other instances of weird or unusual bikes, or bikes in unusual places, why not send them in to us.



A Japanese 4 inch wheel bike
made mainly for circus performance.



A two way bike
Don't ask!



Recycled! John Calvert on his restored 1920 watercycle, found under his boathouse at Goring on Thames

GOLLY AGAIN

By Roy James

Everything goes in circles so they say, and once again I find myself having to write in defence of an old friend I first defended over ten years ago. So far in this year of 2003 no fewer than five club members have commented on my wearing a golly badge and that by doing so I could be fostering racism. Nonsense of course. But time moves on and the pernicious progress of political correctness continues apace. Even James Robertson, the preserve manufacturers, have succumbed and they now produce ghastly badges featuring Roald Dahl characters.

I fear Mr. Golly has had his day.

Perhaps our editor will allow a reprint of my article of eleven years ago.

A quick search through the archives, Roy, and your wish is my command.

The History of Mr. Golly (with apologies to H.G. Wells)

Two members of the club have recently commented upon my wearing a golly badge, one even remarking that therein may lie the seeds of prejudice. As nothing could be further from the truth I submit below a short history of a one-time friend of millions, now alas consigned to the dustbin of so-called liberalism.



Golly first saw the light of day when Frances Upton discovered a grotesque doll that her grandmother had kept in a cupboard for many years. This gave her the idea for a story that was popular in Victorian nurseries for many years. Published in 1885 "Two Dutch Dolls and a Gollywog" was an instant success and several gollywog stories followed. Manufacturers were quick to latch on to such a popular figure and the character we know today was launched on the toy market where it became increasingly popular. Just before the First World War a son of James Robertson, the preserve manufacturer, while on a visit to North America, noticed children playing with these popular dolls and decided they would make an appealing trademark. So Golly came out of the nursery and into the world of commerce.

Although still popular, he suffered a severe setback along with Noddy and Big Ears when, despite the dropping of the termination in his name, misguided educationalists decided he was 'bad' and must be banished from the toy box. He lives on though in the form of Mr. Robertson's little badges and long may he continue to do so.

Why do I wear it? Well, I am always inclined to support lost causes and anyway someone took my old one off my school blazer when I was evacuated to Charlwood fifty years ago and I never did get it back.

Roy James.

Victorian Women and the Freedom of the Bicycle

David Rix



Amongst the bicycle's most important, and perhaps most enduring, legacies is its effect upon women's issues; indeed the mark the bicycle left upon gender relations at the end of the 19th century cannot be overestimated.

One must remember that the Victorian era was one of rigidly defined gender roles, with distinctly separate spheres of activity for men and women. The distinctions between the sexes were certainly as rigidly defined as ever in the years leading up to the 1880's. But then came the bicycle.

The advent of the bicycle at this time stimulated great controversy about women's proper role in society. Questions of "how they should ride", when they should ride, who they should ride with" were considered by commentators, and "wheeling's" many critics were certain that bicycle riding threatened women's health, morals, and reputation.

The Ordinary or 'Penny-Farthing' bicycle, with its giant front wheel and small back wheel, was a Victorian invention. But it was not designed for the faint-hearted; it required considerable skill to ride and could be hazardous - not many women were attracted to riding the Ordinary.

When the 'safety' bicycle, with chain drive and air-filled tyres, was introduced in the 1880's more people took to the roads. It soon became the height of fashion to ride a bicycle, as recorded in two contemporary accounts.



"The Spring of '96 saw us in Torquay . . . everybody was learning to ride things called bicycles. In Torquay there was a circular cinder track where, at stated hours, men and women rode solemnly round. Tailors supplied special costumes for this sport."

Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)



*With lifted feet, hands still,
I am poised, and down the hill
Dart, with heedful mind;
The air goes by in a wind.*

*Swifter and yet more swift,
Till the heart with a mighty lift
Makes the lungs laugh, the throat cry:-
'O bird, see; see, bird, I fly.'*

Henry Charles Beeching (1859-1919)
'Going Down Hill on a Bicycle'

One great thing about cycling was that it appealed equally to men and women. However, there was opposition to the use of cycles by women; Physicians Thomas Lothrop and William Potter posited that the bicycle inevitably promoted immodesty in women, and could potentially harm their reproductive systems. Other critics argued that women bicyclists favored shorter skirts, thus "inviting" insults and advances. Shorter skirts had started to appear because women bicyclists often found themselves being spilt on to the road when their long skirts became tangled up into gears and spokes.

In 1850 the attention of an American woman, Mrs. Amelia Bloomer, had been called to the short dresses worn with loose trousers gathered at the ankle (originated by Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Miller) which a few ladies about that time had begun to don. She was pleased with it, adopted it in place of the long, heavy skirt and many layers of undergarments that ladies were accustomed to wear, and advocated its adoption by others in the *Lily*, the local temperance paper which she edited.



This manner of dress soon excited great interest both in America and around the world, and by the 1890's an adapted version was being adopted by lady cyclists, who saw it as a more practical and safer cycling costume. This garment, which became nicknamed 'bloomers', scandalized many respectable Victorians, and poor Mrs. Bloomer was even accused of trying to undermine the very foundation of the family. She and her 'bloomer girls' suffered much ridicule and were the butt of many rude jokes and songs, like this popular music hall number:

I'll be a Bloomer

*Listen, females all
No matter what your trade is,
Old Nick is in the girls,
The Devil's in the ladies!
Married men may weep.
And tremble in the ditches,
Since women are resolved
To wear the shirts and breeches!*

*Ladies do declare
A change should have been sooner,
The women one and all,
Are going to join the Bloomers.
Prince Albert and the Queen
Has such a jolly row, sirs;
She threw of her stays and put
On waistcoat, coat and trousers.*

The Rational Dress Society formed in 1881 in London approved of Mrs. Bloomer's ideas on practical fashions. The society was formed by Viscountess Harberton (pictured right) and Mrs. E.M. King. They drew attention to restrictive corsetry and the immobility caused by fashions of the day. So that women could participate in the craze for healthy cycling Lady Harberton suggested a dual garment which initially was a divided skirt worn under a long coat. The idea appealed to many as sensible and practical. Those favouring the style drew attention to its value. Accident reports of cyclists who had been encumbered by the fashion for wearing standard skirt styles often appeared in the press. Rational dress as a fashion was finally adopted in 1895 by a handful of privileged women. It was not universally worn and virtually no cycling costume is found in museums. A rare example of fashionable cycling dress from the Victorian era is held at the Platt Hall Gallery of English Costume in Manchester.



Only limited numbers ever wore the full rational dress Lady Harberton wore. Female cyclists still risked ridicule and many preferred to wear breeches beneath a skirt and plenty more simply wore just the skirt. Lady Harberton herself was refused admittance for refreshments at the coffee room at the Hautboy Hotel. A lawsuit and heated debate followed which gave a more public airing to the idea of women wearing appropriate clothes for safe movement in activities.



As has been said, long skirts made riding the Ordinary (with its large front wheel) virtually impossible and were not suitable for the safety bicycle. Tricycles, however, were designed to accommodate full skirts and allowed women to ride without adopting the bloomer outfit, which many women opposed for its politically radical associations. Like nearly every other aspect of life in the nineteenth century, tricycle riding had a specific set of rules and regulations. The rule against women riding alone in fact generated a new profession: the professional lady cyclist as chaperone. Tricycles were commonly used for touring, and the tandem tricycle was popular with couples.

Matters of dress aside, the bicycle was consistently trumpeted by progressive women as a tool for increased freedoms. Indeed, many feminist tracts of the day frequently invoked the bicycle as a metaphor for increased self-control, tracts such as that by Frances' Willard (president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union) entitled "How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle". One author, Maria Ward, in her book "Bicycling for Ladies", bluntly noted that "Riding the wheel, our powers are revealed to us...".

Unfortunately this attitude, empowerment coupled with visions of an increasingly egalitarian future, angered many men greatly. Simply put, the woman on wheels was a threat to the well-ingrained system of practical inferiority that had existed for centuries, and outraged men were quick to point to the bicycle as a threat to the social order. The cycle, it was argued, would disrupt the delicate sphere of the family unit by allowing the woman to travel beyond her previous limits without the surveillance of a knowing husband nearby. The younger woman too was vulnerable to a bicycle-induced lapse in morals, for it allowed her to stray farther a field with members of the opposite sex during courtship. But still, despite the efforts of many 'right minded' men, the use of the bicycle by women thrived.



Simply put, the bicycle allowed for movement into new spaces, literally and figuratively. The woman of the 19th century who had been given little opportunity to cultivate or express her autonomy now had a vessel with which one could not only develop autonomous power, but do so while leaving behind the old reliance upon men for travel.

The levelling effect achieved at the end of the Victorian era by the woman on the bicycle was so great that it can be seen as a major factor in the rise of the suffragette movement and the emancipation of women.



31-May-03

Dear David,

You mentioned in your June-July 2003 newsletter that the invitation to apply for membership of the new East Sussex Local Access Forum had not produced a volunteer. I am writing to let you know that I did apply to East Sussex County Council to join the forum in the "User interest - cycling" category and have been successful. The first meeting is on June 4th 2003 at County Hall in Lewes.

Here is the full membership of the forum:

Timothy Calcutt, Withyham	Land Interests (Farmer & land manager)
Dr Lesley Cook, Kingston	User Interests (Horse riding)
John Freeman, Crowborough	Other Interests (Disabled interests)
Major R R Goulden, Horam	Other Interests (Various rural interests)
Leo Hickish, Bodle Street Green	Land Interests (Land manager)
Tony Kempster, Beckley	User Interests (Off-road motoring)
Malcolm McDonnell, Withyham	User Interests (Walking)
Councillor Anthony Reid, Nutley	ESCC Cabinet Member for T&E
Rebecca Reynolds, Lewes	User Interests (Cycling)
Sarah Robinson, Blackboys	Other Interests (Conservation)
Tony Smith, Ashburnham	Land Interests (Farmer & land manager)
Major Edward Stenhouse, Colemans Hatch	Land Interests (Farmer)
Stephen Turner, Winchelsea	Other Interests (Rural Business & Tourism)

Members of the forum are appointed on the basis that they act in an individual capacity rather than as a representative of a particular organisation.

The purpose of the forum is "giving advice to the County Council and to the Countryside Agency on how to make the countryside more accessible and enjoyable for open air recreation, in ways which will address social, economic and environmental interests."

I hope that your members will feel free to let me know their views and concerns about Rights of Way and other issues relevant to cycling in East Sussex.

Advice from CTC head office in Godalming is that:

"Quite simply, if cyclists do not have their views heard and acted upon, then we will lose out to all other interests in the countryside. It is therefore important that the wishes of cyclists are represented to ensure that we gain facilities rather than losing out by being squeezed by other priorities."

(from CTC information leaflet - Getting involved with your Local Access Forum.)

The East Sussex Local Access Forum is expected to give advice on three main topics:

- a) The development of recreation and access which cater for a wide range of people;
- b) Improvement of the rights of way network;
- c) Implementation, management and review of the statutory right of access to open countryside and common land.

I look forward to hearing any points which you or your members would like to make. Email contact is preferred or a message can be left on our answer phone.

Best wishes,

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