

The

Coaster



the magazine of the

**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB**

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

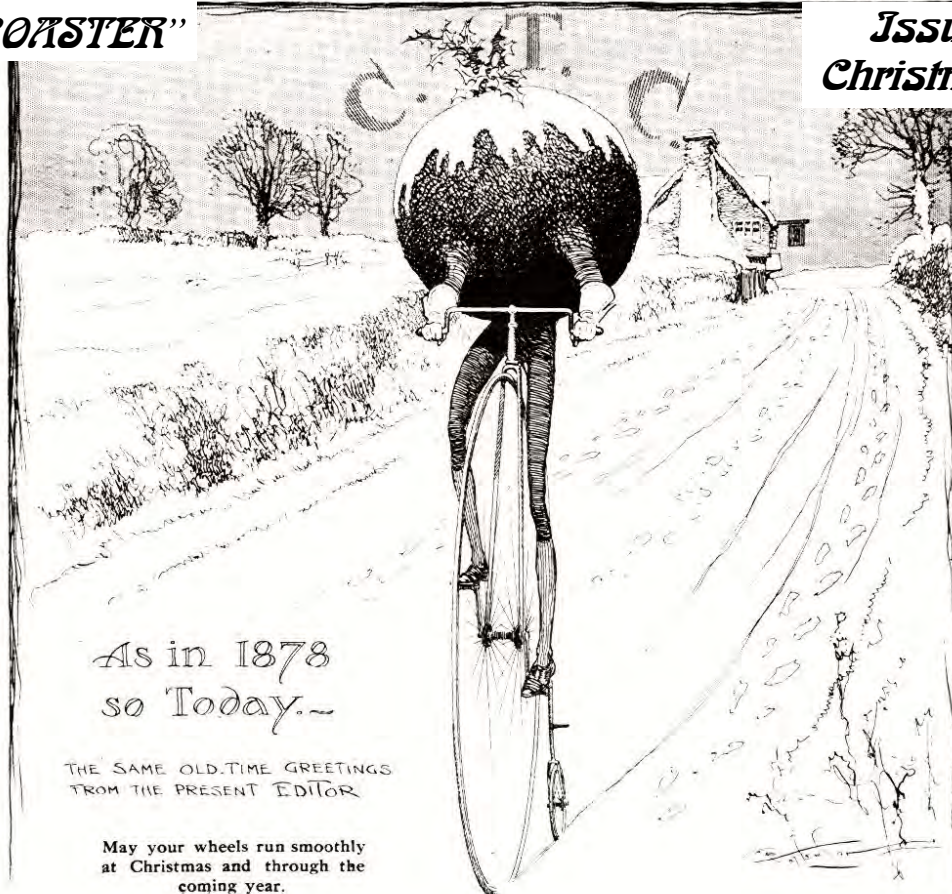
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"THE COASTER"

**Issue No. 54
Christmas 2012**



As in 1878
so Today.~

THE SAME OLD-TIME GREETINGS
FROM THE PRESENT EDITOR

May your wheels run smoothly
at Christmas and through the
coming year.

From the Editor's Desk.

Welcome to the Christmas 2012 edition of "The Coaster".

Some contributions from several new writers this time, with touring reports from Andy Cackett & Chris Colyer, plus an end to end article from John Regan. There's also a tour of the Lake District from the 1970s, plus an interesting article from Dave Healy about his running days.

So, enjoy your cycling this Winter, when you can. When you can't why not stay indoors with your copy of the Coaster and a warm drink.

David.

East Sussex D.A. Website: <http://www.eastsussexctc.org.uk>

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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LANDS END TO JOHN O'GROATS (IN MY 75TH YEAR)

12TH MAY TO 29TH MAY 2012 - by John Regan

Since my retirement fifteen years ago I have cycled on most Wednesdays with the Cyclists' Touring Club, East Sussex Group, around the lanes locally and on the Continent but mainly in France. Nearly four years ago my cycling activities nearly ended abruptly when I was knocked off my bicycle by a deer and I was taken by ambulance to the Eastbourne District General Hospital suffering from a broken hip. On the following morning Mr. Sam. Rajaratnam performed a brilliant hip replacement operation. A year later I was able to resume cycling very gently at first. During the year 2010 two of my cycling friends, Ray Wells and Peter Oakshott decided that they wished to achieve a life-time ambition of cycling from Lands End to John o'Groats. C.T.C. Cycling Holidays organise such trips and so I decided to join them.

In order to prepare for this adventure we trained on a hilly circuit which covered Polegate, Jevington, East Dean, Burling Gap and Beachy Head on many mornings for about six weeks. We were determined to enjoy the sixteen days riding covering 1066 miles (average of 66.6 miles per day) staying at hotels mainly but including four nights in Youth Hostels. Chris Ellison, who has organised more than 50 similar tours all over the World, was the Tour Leader and he drove the support van which carried most of our luggage each day. The other leader, Mark Waters, newly retired from the C.T.C. as their Tours Secretary, rode in support. This made up a group of 18 riders. A positive will to succeed is necessary when undertaking such an adventure. Early on Saturday morning 12th May, Peter, Ray and I took our bikes onto the train to Victoria Station and on arrival we cycled to Paddington to catch the train to Penzance. On arrival at Penzance, Chris Ellison took our bulky luggage onto his van and we set off to cycle to Lands End for our first group photograph. The group consisted of such interesting people that I list them below:



Peter, John & Ray

| | | | |
|---------------------|---------|--|---------------------------------|
| Chris Ellison | 56 yrs. | Tour Leader | Marine Engineer |
| Mark Waters | 63 yrs. | Assistant Leader | CTC Tours Secretary |
| Richard Armstrong | 53 yrs. | Fireman from Colne | |
| David Nash | 66 yrs. | Materials Engineer | Works in USA 6 months each year |
| Richard Mee | 63 yrs. | Doctor from Chesterfield | |
| Margaret Carruthers | 59 yrs. | Nurse from Scotland | |
| Robert Elsley | 63 yrs. | Ministry of Defence | |
| Clare Francis | 54 yrs. | Administers Family Company of Surveyors & Developers | |
| Graham Adcock | 46 yrs. | Civil Engineer | - Lives in Peebles |
| Miriam Adcock | 44 yrs. | Rural Planning Manager for Scottish Borders- | “ “ “ |
| Steve Donson | 56 yrs. | Chicken Farm owner | |
| David Smith | 63 yrs. | Chartered Accountant in Financial Management | |
| Roger Maddison | 70 yrs. | Chartered Accountant: M.D. of Jersey Brewery | |
| Andy Cowan | 48 yrs. | Manager of Beef-Eater in Oxford | |
| Chris Swinburn | 58 yrs. | Consultant Physician at Taunton Hospital | |
| Emma Swinburn | 53 yrs. | Nurse | |
| Peter Oakshott | 70 yrs. | Director in London Re-insurance company | |
| Ray Wells | 67 yrs. | Electrical Engineer | |
| And me, John Regan | 74 yrs. | Law Librarian, Senior Barristers' Clerk | |

The average age of the riders was therefore 60 years and our first night at Penzance Youth Hostel was a rue beginning to our adventure. Can you imagine eight men in a room which is about the size of an ordinary double bedroom fitted out with four bunk beds to sleep eight adults. Each person trying to find space for their over-night luggage and quietly trying to put pillows into their pillow-cases, mattress covers onto mattresses and duvets into duvet covers. Well, we succeeded. The evening meal was of a good quality and most of us went for a short walk afterwards.

SUNDAY 13TH MAY – Penzance to Lostwithiel

After a shower and breakfast Chris supplied each rider with a SatNav and words of encouragement and we set off at about 8.30a.m. The sun was shining as we passed St. Michael's Mount and on up the beautiful but hilly Cornish coast using narrow lanes. We paused for a while in a beautiful Cornish village where we sat



and chatted to a man who planned to walk to John o'Groats. He was born in London but had lived in Australia for thirty years and had acquired a strong Australian accent. After 28 miles we all enjoyed coffee and cakes at the National Trust's Tresselick Gardens before we crossed the River Fal on the King Harry Ferry. We continued along the coast to our next refreshment stop, Charlestown and then on in glorious May sunshine coping with two steep climbs to Lostwithiel and to our first comfortable hotel, the Restormel Lodge Hotel.

MONDAY 14TH MAY – Lostwithiel in Cornwall to Exeter in Devon

8.30 am and it was raining but we had no alternative for the first few miles but to climb on the main road up onto Bodmin Moor to our first stop for elevenses. Chris had recommended the Post Office at Minions, the highest village in Cornwall, for our refreshments but they were closed! However, they opened up for us especially and they made us very welcome. We had lunch in Tavistock and it was still raining hard. We then had a long climb up onto Dartmoor. As we crossed eerie Dartmoor National Park the rain gradually stopped and the roads dried quite quickly as a result of the strong wind. We enjoyed afternoon tea and cakes, as usual, at Moretonhampstead before arriving for a comfortable stay at Jurys Inn Hotel in the centre of Exeter.

TUESDAY 15TH MAY – Exeter to Sidcot near Cheddar in Somerset

Chris Ellison (in the van) told us that today would be "an easyish day of only 62 miles". He warned us that there were not many, or any, places for elevenses on our route today through the Mendip Hills. The weather was cloudy but dry and cold as we then proceeded over the Blackdown Hills and across the Glastonbury Levels. We over-took Margaret as she cycled steadily on. However the SatNavs ceased to work and we went off course. Ray had taken the precaution of carrying torn-out pages from an A.A. Atlas and he guided us back onto the route. We caught up with Margaret again as we had completed two sides of a triangle and she led us to Broadway where we were very ready for lunch. Chris supplied new and some spare batteries for the SatNavs so we should now be prepared. We enjoyed afternoon tea and cakes at a Garden Centre with a lovely café which was situated where our route crossed the A.38. We followed a Rail Trail before arriving at the Premier Inn, Sidcot, for our over-night stay. 'Bikes in the bedrooms' was the order of the day so we cleaned the mud off them first. It was a hard day – so much for "an easyish day of only 62 miles"

WEDNESDAY 16th MAY – Cheddar to Hereford

In light sunshine we made our way along Somerset's lanes to The Kings Arms in Pill for elevenses before crossing the River Avon and then on and under the M4 to cross the River Severn. There was naturally quite a strong wind blowing as we crossed the Severn Bridge into Wales where we stopped for lunch in Chepstow in Gwent quite near to its Castle in the centre. Offas Dyke runs from here right up to Prestatyn on the north Wales coast bordering the Irish Sea and we cycled parallel to it and the River Wye as we climbed up into the Forest of Dean. At Symonds Yat village we crossed over the River Wye from Gloucestershire to Herefordshire. We enjoyed tea in Ross-on-Wye before a

steep limb to reach Hereford and the Premier Travel Inn. Once again, bicycles into the Hotel. The Hotel did not cater for evening meals. However, we dined in the Beefeater which was next door.

THURSDAY 17th MAY – Hereford to Shifnal in Shropshire

As I had completed five months trade training at R.A.F. Hereford, Credenhill, just 56 years ago I felt that I was riding in familiar territory. In those days I often rode the 140 miles to Westminster on a Friday evening for a week-end at home and then back again on the Sunday evening. So, at 8.30 in the morning as usual we set off northwards and reached the Castle Buttery Café in Leominster for our elevenses and a little sight-seeing. We then went onwards up to Ludlow with its ruined late 11th Century castle and then to Much Wenlock for lunch. In the year 1850 Much Wenlock was the birth-place of the Wenlock Olympian Games which led to the National Olympian Games in 1866 and subsequently the Modern Olympic Games. This is all thanks to Dr. William Penny Brookes. Just five miles south-east from here I completed my two months 'square-bashing' at R.A.F. Bridgenorth when I was 18 years old. We soon crossed Telford's famous cast iron bridge over the River Severn at Ironbridge village, where we stopped to enjoy an ice-cream and take photographs as if we were normal tourists. We climbed out of Ironbridge in bottom gear and then through Corve Dale and soon reached our destination – The Park House Hotel at Shifnal in Shropshire. We were so pleased that we had had a dry day because we were told to put our bikes in a spare fully carpeted and furnished dining room. We took great care not to cause any damage.

FRIDAY 18th MAY – Shifnal to Youlgreave Youth Hostel in Derbyshire

After our usual 8.30 start we arrived at a Bakery/Café in the old High Street at Stone in Staffordshire some 25 miles later and the freshly baked buns, cakes and scones were simply delicious. So much so that I had two! We had lunch at The Admiral's House Public House which was more fuel in preparation for our ride up some big hills to reach the beautiful Peak District National Park. This was the first National Park to be established in Britain. I felt cold most of the day but especially as



we crossed this beautiful National Park. Our route took us over two fords and as I happened to be at the front I rode straight over the first ford without incident. David Nash, who wore shorts every day, was not so lucky when his light wheels and tyres slipped and he landed in the ford. He told his friends in the U.S.A about this, using his i-Pad. Some of them asked him which model Ford it was – they do

not use the word 'ford' in the same sense and he had to explain to them. The others in our group used a small footbridge which I had not seen. On walking over the next ford I realised just how sharp and slippery the rocks were. The Monsal Trail through the Manifold Valley which we then followed was beautiful but spoilt by a very broken up tarmac surface. However, there was a café where we enjoyed tea and cakes before we finished our ride to Youlgreave Youth Hostel. Ray dined out with his daughter, Irene and his grand-daughter Jessica. After their dinner they returned to our 'dormitory' to see just how frugal it was. However, only four of us were in this 'dorm' with four bunk beds – i.e a spare bunk each to place our baggage on. The one big advantage about Youth Hostels is that they have such large drying rooms and I was able to wash everything with the knowledge that it would all be bone dry in the morning. The views from the Hostel were magnificent. During our evening stroll we were able to use a cash machine to top up our 'snacks' fund and we met some hard-riders who were down from Glasgow for an extended week-end.

SATURDAY 19th MAY – Youlgreave to Huddersfield in Yorkshire

Another day through the beautiful Peak District with its patch-work of stone walled fields to elevenses at Yorkshire Bridge Inn which is close to the shores of Ladybower Reservoir in the lovely Derbyshire Hope Valley. We then cycled parallel to the Derwent and Howden Reservoirs in the Upper Derwent Valley. Up then to Langsett for lunch after which we skirted around Huddersfield to

climb up to the Old Golf House Hotel in Outlane.

SUNDAY 20TH MAY – Huddersfield to Hawes in the Yorkshire Dales National Park

As I had felt cool, even cold, most of the previous day I mistakenly donned all my warm clothes for this day's ride. I say mistakenly because I did not realise that to get out of Huddersfield one simply climbs up and up onto the Moor and I was certainly over-dressed. However, there followed a very steep descent into Sowerby Bridge and then onto Hebden Bridge. Then we cycled up again into the Pennines and into Haworth made famous by the Bronte family - Charlotte, Emily, Anne and their brother Branwell - for their classic literature. Haworth was bedecked in Union Jacks and bunting as they were celebrating the year 1942 that very week-end. The village was full of antique cars, war-time military uniforms including some Germans together with jeeps and other war equipment. Bands were playing 1940s music and most of the spectators were dressed in the fashion of that era. We did not look out of



place in our coloured lycra. The 'Sally-Ann' was busy dishing out tea and cakes and so we were in our element. After a little sight-seeing we pressed on up onto Keighley Moor and on to Skipton and then onto the Yorkshire Moors where we stopped at The George Inn, Hubberholme for lunch. We then followed the River Wharfe through the Dales to climb up over the long steep climb over Fleet Moss. The beautiful scenery was much appreciated as we descended into Hawes Youth Hostel for the night. The generous helping of the home-made 'Lasagna' was the best that I have ever tasted. The views from the Youth Hostel were stunning. The large drying room presented another opportunity to do a large laundry s as to be fresh or the next day.

MONDAY 21ST MAY – Hawes to Carlisle in Cumbria

After our 8.50 start we over-shot the café in Kirby Stephen for our first break as we then cycled up the beautiful Eden Valley. We proceeded through to Appleby-in-Westmoreland where we enjoyed our elevenses having done 28 miles. Then onto Culgaith where we enjoyed an excellent lunch at a café which was next to a Garden Centre. A CCTV camera was directed along the railway line just beside this café and the picture was projected onto a large screen. This was of particular interest to Ray who is a 'trains buff'. We enjoyed tea and cakes in Wetheral before cycling on a cycle path parallel to the main road and into Carlisle to the Premier Inn. Once more we ate at the Beefeater net to the Hotel. Chris, the Consultant Physician who lives in Taunton, was able to meet his parents who stayed the night at this hotel as they have now retired to the Lake District.

TUESDAY 22ND MAY – Carlisle to Abington in South Lanarkshire, Scotland

After our 8.30 start we were soon crossing into Scotland at Gretna Green with its 'first house in Scotland' and its Blacksmiths which are both famous for performing marriage services to eloping couples. Couples who could not obtain their parents' consent or on occasions when the boy could be as young as 14 years or the girl only 12 years. However, the age of consent is now similar to the rest of the British Isles. This was a cold but sunny day and Lockerbie was our first stop for refreshments and we took the opportunity of visiting the local Cemetery to pay our respects to the 270 people who lost their lives as a consequence of the Libyan terrorist bomb aboard Pan Am Flight 103 exploding over Lockerbie on Wednesday 21st December 1988. These victims came from various countries, including America and Scotland. We were pleased to lunch in the warmth of The Old Brig Inn at Beattock in Dumfries and Galloway. We enjoyed 'Bruce the Spider' as he tried and tried again as he went up and down on his thin strand of web but the game was over when the landlady trod on him! On this route there are remains of a Roman road, a Roman Fortlet and a Roman Camp.

WEDNESDAY 23RD MAY – Abington to Stirling

We soon reached our first stop at Carnwath where we once more enjoyed the fresh baking in the Apple

Pie Bakery and Café before setting off northwards across the Scottish Lowlands. The route took us right up through middle between Glasgow and Edinburgh and managed to avoid towns and villages with only one or two exceptions. We went under the M8 Motorway. During the afternoon unfortunately Ric crossed over a ford and his lightweight tyres both punctured on the sharp rocks. We stopped in case some help was needed and then we went on up to Stirling with its castle visible for miles up on top of the hill. Stirling, once the capital city of Scotland, is said to be the gateway to the Highlands. Our hotel 'The Golden Lion Hotel' in King Street, is right in the middle of the town and has been there since 1786 though it has been renovated and added to over the years.

THURSDAY 24th MAY – Stirling – a rest day.

On our 'rest day' we walked the length and breadth of Stirling and of course we enjoyed a tour of the historic castle. We then caught a bus to the Wallace Memorial and climbed right to the top which meant 365 steps with each level containing the history of the struggles which had taken place, mainly against the English. My elder son Peter works in Edinburgh and he motored over to join us for our evening meal at our hotel – The Golden Lion Hotel. During the course of the evening Graham and Miriam insisted that I receive some treatment for my right ankle which was swollen. So while Graham produced a towel and some ice and a stool to rest my leg on, Miriam kept the towel wrapped around my ankle whilst Nurse Margaret administered some cream. Doctor Ric and the Medical Consultant, Chris, discussed the problem. I received the full benefit of the whole medical team which coincidentally was riding this 'End-to-End' with us. Dr. Ric thought that I had received an insect bite and then Chris, the medical Consultant, who was unaware of the ice pack, observed that the ankle was cold. I quickly let him know that the patient was still alive! The 'medical team' advocated 'rest' so I slept well that night and was ready in the morning to tackle the second half of this adventure. My son Peter set off for his home in Peebles having enjoyed the evening with us and meeting everybody in the group.

FRIDAY 25th MAY – Stirling to Pitlochry in Perthshire

Soon after our early start in the misty almost rainy weather we reached Dunblaine, famous for all the wrong reasons, until recently. The champion tennis player, Andy Murray, was born and grew up in Dunblaine and so this town is now World famous for a better reason since he won the Grand Slam during 2012. He is the first Briton to win this since Fred. Perry 70 years ago. Soon we were climbing the Orchil Hills on our way to Crieff for elevenses. We were treated to a spicy, hot elevenses in a small café run and owned by a pleasant man from Turkey! We enjoyed the stunning scenery and the woodlands in these Scottish Highlands where cycling, walking and other outdoor activities are enjoyed in the heart of Scotland. Highland Games are held regularly here. We enjoyed lunch at Aberfeldy on the River Tay and then proceeded on to Pitlochry which is near to the River Tummel and to the Rosemount Hotel at the end of our ride today. As usual we all cleaned and oiled our bikes before enjoying a shower and a hearty dinner. We often shared a bottle or two of wine or drank a beer and usually enjoyed a short walk before we were ready for a good night's sleep.



SATURDAY 26th MAY – Pitlochry to Boat of Garten in Tayside

We cycled up Glen Garry through the Grampian mountains with the Forest of Atholl on our right. We took refreshments in Dalwinney which is famous for its single malt whisky. It is now a quiet town since Dr. Beeching's cuts in the rail services and now that the main road by-passes the town. The village is one of the coldest villages in Britain with an average October temperature of only 6.5 deg.C and yet in October 1976 it reached the highest in Scotland with 26.2 deg.C. We stopped in Newtonmore for lunch and then we passed through Aviemore which is famous for its Sports and Ski Centre in the Cairngorms. We arrived in Boat of Garten which is known as "the Osprey village" as this very rare bird nests here in this highland part of the Cairngorms National Park. The Boat Hotel

was our most luxurios hotel with patio doors leading onto our own private patio overlooking grassland down to the River Spey's banks and the Station which is still manned by volunteers who run a regular steam train from here to Aviemore for tourists. Ray was in his element.

SUNDAY 27TH MAY – Boat of Garten to Tain in Highland

A cycle track took us alongside the A9 with a slight diversion to pass through Culloden Battlefield where in 1746 the last pitched battle on British soil took place; the Jacobites were finally defeated by the Loyalists. We cycled on to Inverness and took refreshments at the Tesco Café and bought a picnic lunch in the Supermarket. We crossed the River Ness on its way from Loch Ness as it continues to sea by way of the Ness Canal to South Kessock. We travelled through Inverness and crossed the Moray Firth using the impressive Kessock Bridge to North Kessock and the Black Isle. Black Isle is renowned for its temperate climate throughout the year. In a lovely spot in the woods the 'Eastbourne Maffia' as we became known (Ray, Peter and myself) were joined by Mark Waters to enjoy our picnic lunch. After lunch we crossed the Cromarty Firth and enjoyed afternoon tea at Eventon. It wasn't long before we arrived at the Morangie House Hotel in Tain for a comfortable short stay.



MONDAY 28TH MAY – Tain to Tongue in Sutherland

After an 8.45 start we cycled through high, hilly, desolate, wild countryside to reach Lairg for our first refreshment stop. We pressed on and arrived at the famous Crask Inn which opened promptly at 11.00am which was a few minutes after we reached it and the warmth of the Inn was worth waiting for and much appreciated. The Altnaharra Hotel at 48 miles was a good place for lunch after which we cycled on through remote but beautiful countryside. The road became even more remote and dead straight and very narrow with frequent passing bays for vehicles to pass each other. Every inch of the route was stunning and then we arrived in Tongue. Another Youth Hostel in a most glorious setting alongside the Kyle of Tongue and Tongue Bay.

TUESDAY 29TH MAY – Tongue to John o'Groats

The steep climb from virtual sea level was an introduction to the first twenty miles of our last days ride. It was very hilly, in fact the most difficult hills which we encountered in Scotland. We cycled along the northern coast of Scotland in a westerly direction against a very strong east wind. We were pleased to reach the Strathy Inn near Melvich for our elevenses and then The Bistro Café in Thurso for lunch.

The long straight stretches against the strong wind seemed to go on for ever but finally we reached our destination – John o'Groats. Soon after our arrival we all assembled at the famous sign-post for our team photograph and then returned to The Seaview Hotel for a celebratory drink followed by Dinner at 7.30. Our Consultant Physician, Chris, in an entertaining speech summarised our efforts as follows:-



- A 1000 mile trip involving about 100 hours cycling.
- The work rate involved will vary between 0 Watts free-wheeling down-hill to about
- 175-200 Watts going up a very steep hill.

- He assumed an average of 100-125 Watts for the purposes of the following estimates:
- Your wheels turned about 750,000 times for a 700x23 size
- Your heart will have pumped about 15 litres of blood per minute – compared with about 5 litres when inactive, and up to a maximum of 25 litres per minute up a steep hill.
- In all, it will have pumped about 17,000 gallons during the ride.
- Your heart will have beaten about 700,000 times whilst cycling.
- You will have breathed about 180,000 litres of air whilst riding, usually about 51 per minute when sat up to 501 per minute up a steep hill.
- This will deliver enough oxygen to those working muscles, in all about 12,000 litres of oxygen burnt up and a similar quantity of waste gas carbon dioxide produced into the atmosphere – so our carbon footprint may not be great!
- I made a short speech after Chris to present both Chris Ellison and Mark Waters with a magnum of the best Scottish malt whisky.



The Winalot Diet

Yesterday I was at my local Sainsbury's store buying a large bag of Winalot dog food for my loyal pet. I was at the check out queue when a woman behind me asked if I had a dog.

What did she think I had an elephant? So, since I'm retired and have little to do, on impulse I told her that no, I didn't have a dog but I was starting the "Winalot Diet" again. I added that I probably shouldn't do, because last time I ended up in hospital, but I'd lost 2 stone before I woke up in intensive care with tubes coming out of most of my orifices and IVs in both arms. I told her it was essentially a perfect diet and that the way that it works is to load your pockets with Winalot nuggets and simply eat one or two every time you feel hungry. The food is nutritionally complete so it works well and I was going to try it again. (I have to mention here that practically every one in the queue was enthralled with my story).

Horrified, she asked me if I ended up in intensive care because the dog food poisoned me. I told her no, I stepped off the kerb to sniff an Irish Setter's arse and a car accidentally hit me! I thought the guy behind her was going to have a heart attack he was laughing so hard.

By the way I am now banned from Sainsbury's.

Better watch what you ask retired people as they have all the time in the world to think of daft things to say.

Anonymous.

Winter Riding.

(A poem by Frank J. Urry from the CTC Gazette 1931)

I toil in the town, I moil in the town,
And bricks and mortar rise
To close the sight of the white wrapped down
And shut the arch of the skies;
The traffic roars in the tangled street,
Slips and shudders in grease;
I long for the highway's safe retreat,
A vista of country peace.

So! Ho! for the road when the work is done,
Where snow lies smooth and white,
I'll wander west with the crimson sun
To find the vale of night.

I toil for a week, I moil for a week
Here, in the press of town,
And then for a few short hours I seek
Space on the windy down;
And the wide horizons welcome me
With shine or mist or snow,
And there's more in all their mystery
Than towns shall ever know.



So! Ho! for the road when the week-end comes,
Whate'er the weather bring,
If the light snow flies or the blizzard hums,
It sings the song of spring.

I toil for a day, I rest for a night,
And in the evening glow
Of ruby fire, with a pipe alight
I dream the ways I go;
I see my road in the ruddy fire
Chiselled along the range,
And there at the end my one desire,
An inn, with food and change.

So! Ho! for the road, the changeful road,
Winter, summer and spring,
It lifts like magic the weekly load
That care is burdening.



Cycling in Denmark – August/September 2011

By Andy Cackett

The original concept of this holiday was a cycle tour pure and simple. Arriving, cycling fully loaded, and camping etc until time for return. However, research showed some very alarming costs of getting across the North Sea and I am still not confident about flying with a touring bike and full kit. Also, with the benefit of a good map, distances between places of interest were far greater than initially thought so the plan changed to a car-based tour with cycling from selected camp sites. A Dover/Calais crossing is not the usual or easiest way to get to Denmark but, having decided upon the car as the main mode of transport, it enabled me to visit places previously visited in my youth in both Holland and Germany.

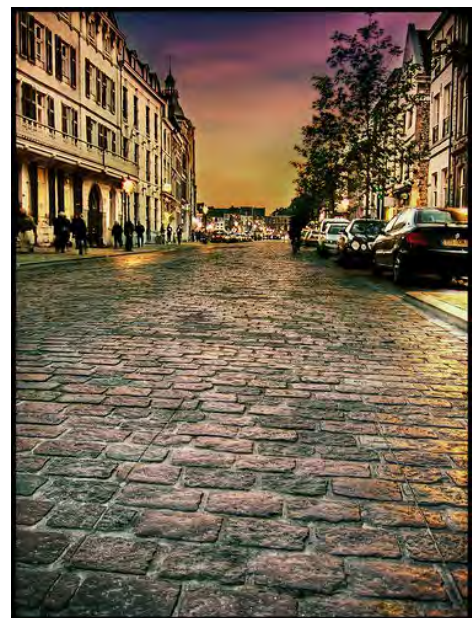


So first, Holland. I had been sailing on the lakes at Vinkeveen south of Amsterdam with the sea scouts back in 1956 and how it had changed since then! It had evolved from a series of very small shacks on strips of reclaimed land to a series of mainly very fine expensive architecturally inspired houses on strips of reclaimed land. Being a building surveyor with strong architectural leanings, such things appeal to me almost as much as the natural beauty of the place and certainly one can often compliment the other to the benefit of both. Unfortunately, my arrival

coincided with a heavier than usual cloudburst so that, rather than find a soggy camp site, I booked into a cheap and cheerful fisherman's hotel. My first evening ride of 25 miles was around the lakes on very quiet roads and some well surfaced cycle paths. There was lots of water around and huge skies with towering and glowering storm clouds which emptied at night, thankfully. A longer day ride followed along quiet cycle roads following the dykes between lakes and canals and included numerous lift or swing bridges and one self-propelled chain ferry specifically for cyclists and walkers.

My first taste of Dutch pave came in Amstelveen where I stopped for coffee. Most uncomfortable with tyres inflated to 80psi. The routes were well signposted with good maps at main junctions but I still managed to get lost in the outskirts of Amsterdam where the names on the map did not tie up with the names on the sign posts. I suppose you have to know the area, but then why bother with sign posts? Vast tower block estates are not the most pleasant places to cycle at the best of times and, typically, it had started to rain again. Thank heaven for Schwalbe Marathon Plus tyres with extra puncture resistance as there was quite a lot of broken glass around.

Things improved weatherwise in Denmark and my first camp stop was outside the mediaeval town of Ribe, allegedly the oldest town in Denmark and typically mediaeval it was too – all pave and tourists. My purposely fitted bike stand came in handy here as there were so many bikes parked that there were no railings or walls

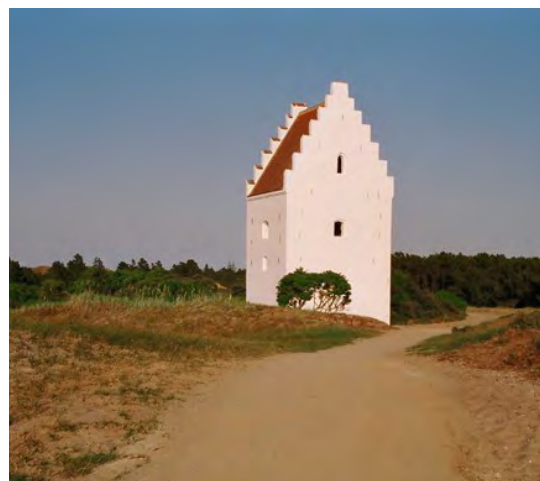


left against which to park, but it's still not quite me I think. A 50 mile circuit, including a visit to the almost obligatory Viking Museum, was on a combination of good cycle paths and very quiet roads and included a section of the North Sea Cycle Path just for fun – actually it was boring and even more windy. I passed some very fine and well maintained old churches, farms and cottages but was always accompanied by a very strong and blustery wind which became a constant companion, unfortunately, rarely from the rear.

I then moved up to the island of Mors in the 'lake district' of central Denmark and enjoyed two consecutive 50 milers in good sunny weather and wind. I found my first real hills to the north of this island and wherever I rode the locals were busy harvesting their corn. I had not appreciated from school geography that Denmark did anything but raise pigs for bacon, but the huge, modern combined harvesters and lorries full of grain bore down on me at almost every turn. After one visit to a local bakery I was prepared to forgive these leviathans, as the range of bread rolls was superb and very morish if you will forgive the pun. Quite surprisingly, I was able to indulge another passion - geology, in a place where the bedrock sandstone is inter-layered with volcanic dust (now rock) that would make the recent Icelandic eruption look somewhat puny. This dust has been traced to old volcanoes in the region of the present day Faroes but which, at the time, were somewhere else altogether with most of the rest of what is now Europe. Plate tectonics are not about balancing a picnic plate on your knee, but that is for another day.

Here again, cycle routes were well signposted and generally well off the (few) main roads. They were quite well used by a combination of heavily laden tourist types and families out for the day on their 'town' bikes. Even the smallest of hills usually had a cluster of gasping and usually elderly cyclists at the top who were all very friendly as compared with the tourists (Swedish?) or the occasional training 'racer' who could barely summon any form of acknowledgement at all, but then in a land where virtually everyone cycles as a means of transport rather than for outright pleasure, they must get used to seeing cyclists.

Then on to the northern tip of Denmark where the light apparently inspires artists if the number of studios and galleries is anything to go by. Not really my cup of tea but with the weather having taken a further turn for the worse one needed somewhere to shelter. With my wife trekking on the highest sand dunes in the world in Namibia, I just had to see the largest sand dune in northern Europe, Rabjerg Mile (Google it for some better photographs than I managed in the rain). Unfortunately it is not very high at all but it is fairly extensive and with low cloud one could easily get lost. Actually, it was quite impressive and made Camber seem quite puny by comparison. Interestingly, all the dunes up the west coast are populated by a mix of quite old farmsteads and all manner of modern second homes. There is also a tourist attraction of a church 'lost' in the dunes. Strangely, hoards of people managed to find it when I was there and I couldn't help thinking how stupid they must have been to build it there in the first place with no village to support the congregation. I think I may have read a story about building on sand but I can't be sure.



With the weather further deteriorating my outline itinerary went by the board and plan 'B' found me on a near deserted camp site overlooking the waters of the Ebeltoft Vig in the National Park of Mols Bjerger, a hilly, forested area sticking out

into the Kattegat. Here I found one of the few gravel roads which, unfortunately, had been washed away to such an extent that I finished up walking after taking a tumble (unhurt, thankfully, as I was a long way from anywhere) in deep soft sand. However, the riding and scenery was lovely, the sun shone and the wind blew. Two fifty-odd milers on consecutive days, one tumble and one broken spoke 20 miles from the campsite and late on a Sunday afternoon but we, that is the bike and I, survived but I do need to carry spare spokes and learn how to change them.

A very expensive toll bridge on the motorway to Odense (cyclists apparently have to walk and, presumably, don't pay) brought me to Odense, the spiritual home of Hans Christian Anderson and of a fine cycle shop where my spoke was replaced and wheel trued (interestingly, the man said in perfect English that he had 'squared' it up) for the price of a good drink! This was my first experience of cycling in a big town and it really was quite hairy. Cycle paths are strictly adhered to but can be two way or one way without apparent indication and sometimes you have to stop at traffic lights or other crossings and sometimes you don't – again without any indication that I could see. Some crossings have blue lines painted for the cyclists to follow and the lights are timed so that you can cross diagonally – a bit scary at first. They are very proud of their cycling heritage and have electronic displays showing the numbers of cyclist passing certain places every day.



It's in the thousands in a town that I guess is about the size of Tunbridge Wells. Cyclists also have their own set of hand signals not dissimilar to group riding and woe betide any pedestrian that walks on a cycle route or on the wrong side of a combined foot/cycle path – and you have to use a cycle path if one is there, but it saves a lot of hooting. The paths in some places can be a long way from the road, cutting off through forests and fields but still generally well

paved with only the occasional disturbance due to root growth. On a bridge into Copenhagen there is even a sign warning of ice on the cycle path and a wind sock for both cyclists and motorists – I never saw a limp wind sock in Denmark!

With bike mended I headed to a so called 'city' camp site outside Copenhagen that turned out to be 15 miles outside the city, but what a ride! Generally well away from the roads and beside a whole series of lagoons full of birds and yachts. The gradual approach to a big city by bike over flat land is quite impressive until you are finally caught up in the hurly burly of it. I did all the touristy things except the Tivoli Gardens (expensive fun fairs do not appeal) and saw some fantastic modern architecture alongside some historic city buildings such as the Town Hall, a familiar sight to those hooked on the Danish thriller series *The Killing*. Cycling in the city was pure anarchy! The cyclist prevails but there is just not enough space on the cycle paths for everybody and I kept away from the rush hour as previously viewed video footage suggested that this was pure chaos – but it works. Old ladies on sit up and beg versus city courier types on repro fixies, all with various loads strapped on in some way. With my own bike I was not in need of a city rental, but this was obviously big business from the number of rental bikes seen and there was a surfeit of cycle shops selling the latest carbon fibre racer to the heavyweight transport bikes that make the butcher's bike of my youth seem to very small indeed.

I managed a second geological excursion to the chalk cliffs of Mons Klint on the eastern ex-



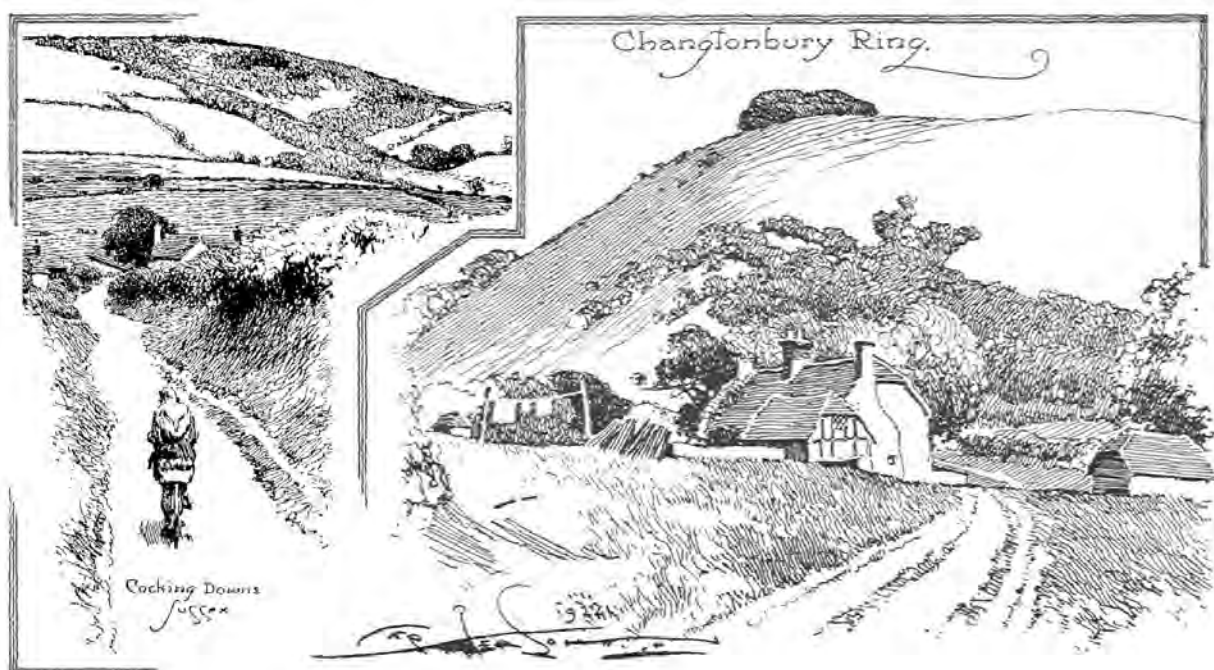
tremity below Copenhagen where amazing fossils have been found unlike our own chalk which has very limited fossil distribution. After an overnight stay in a posh hotel I had a beautiful crossing from Denmark to north Germany on mirror smooth water with distant views of the largest wind farm in the world, partly on land and part in the sea, but why Denmark needs so many wind farms puzzles me as they have enough wind naturally without creating more!

My final destination (apart from home) was to be Hamlin on the River Weser. I had played water polo there many years ago and not really seen the delights of the town (I wonder why?) but I have now 'done' that. My day in Hamlin was the best of the holiday. 23 degrees and wall to wall sunshine with no wind, so I did what hundreds of others do in such conditions and rode the Weser Cycle Path some 25 miles up the river and back. Brilliant!

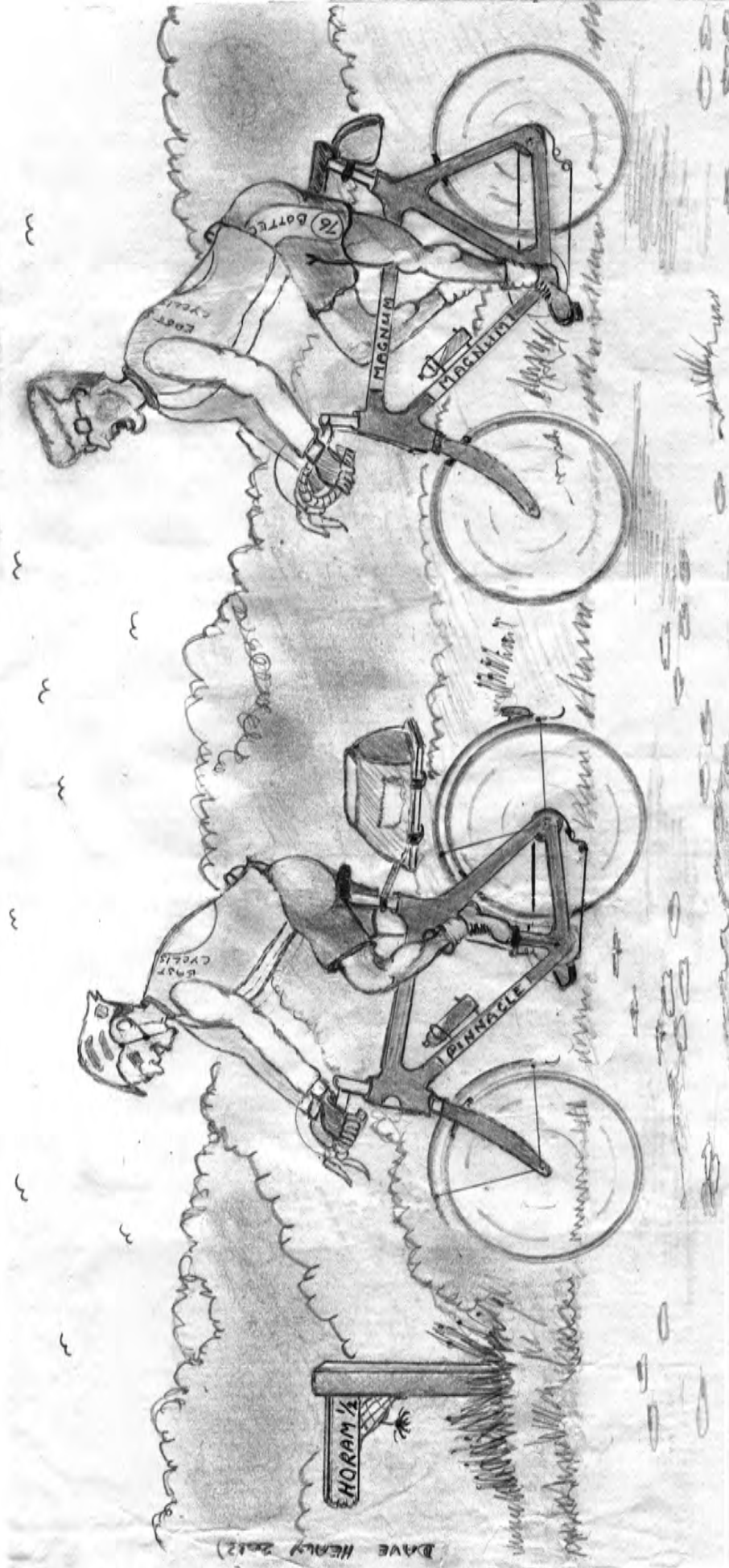
As promised by one day's good weather, all hell then broke loose with further torrential rain and I cut short the French part of my trip – I had intended a ride in the Ardennes with a meal to follow, but fortune was on my side as I caught an early ferry and so avoided the storms and strike of Tuesday 6th September.

In all three countries everyday cycling is catered for to an extent impossible to imagine in the UK and this benefits the touring cyclist with meaningful and respected quiet cycle roads and cycle paths. Signposting is generally very good and maps are available from campsites and tourist offices or from the likes of Stanfords. Denmark is not totally flat but the incessant wind more than compensates for lack of hills.

Andy Cackett. Mid-week Tourist



STOP SHOUTING JOHN, I KNOW MY WAY FROM POLEGATE TO HOLMES HILL, OK.



Explanation: I led a small group of riders from Polegate to Holmes Hill for eleven days, however I forgot to turn left at Horsebridge, and finished up at Horam, we rode to Holmes Hill, a total of 23 miles, it was a 'senior moment' OK, we all have them, and I do lead rides, so what do you expect! Cheers
D. HEALY

LAKELAND VENTURE 1979

by Fred Mehew

(A report of a tour undertaken by Fred Mehew, Bruce Allcorn & Tony Vaughan)



It was early in the year when we decided that the Lake District was to be the venue for our 1979 tour, and soon afterwards we had obtained our route from the Cyclists' Touring Club and booked our accommodation, which was to be at Youth Hostels, with the exception of one night at a farmhouse. Suddenly, or so it seemed, the departure date was but a few days ahead, and after hurried preparations the three of us were sitting in the car soon after dawn on June 9th, with the bikes aloft, on our way to our base at Kendal. We were looking forward to an adventurous holiday and we were not disappointed.

The route on the first day took us through the narrow, steep-sided Long Sleddale (a "No Through Road" this), and then over the rock strewn Gatesgath Pass, which involved carrying the bikes, to Haweswater Reservoir, a natural lake which was dammed to form a huge expanse of water to supply the needs of Manchester. A lane along the side of the Reservoir led us via the rolling country around Bampton and Askew to Pooley Bridge and thence to the path on the western shore of Ullswater, which contrary to our expectations was rocky and unridable. It was quite a relief to mount our bikes and climb up to Glenridding Youth Hostel.

The next morning we made our way up the Kirkstone Pass and then down the very steep hill to Ambleside. This hill is known locally as "the struggle" and not without good reason. Ambleside with all its tourist attractions, did not appeal to us, and we soon found the lanes again, which led us to Loughrigg Terrace; an easy piece of roughstuff. The views from the Terrace were superb with Grasmere Lake beneath at the foot of a steep slope, the village of Grasmere beyond the lake, and in the distance a fine semi-circle of hills. The village of Grasmere didn't claim our attention for long and we were soon meandering along the lovely tree lined road on the western side of Thirlmere, another reservoir serving the taps of Manchester, which was once two lakes but flooded in the 19th century to form one large expanse of water. We found the old coach road leading to High Row without much trouble, but unfortunately a heavy rain storm soon after the start spoilt what would otherwise have been a really splendid roughstuff crossing. The rock strewn track quickly became awash, and it was somewhat hazardous riding along it "caped up" trying to avoid the rocks or coming to a halt in a deep puddle, or both. Ironically the rain ceased as we reached the road and we were able to dispense with our capes and wend our way in the dry to Mungrisdale and finally to Hutton Roof for our overnight stay at a farm house, where we were treated right royally.

The country behind Skiddaw was less rugged than hitherto and Hesketh Newmarket and Caldbeck, both in John Peel country, proved to be interesting villages. The pleasant wooded Dash Beck Valley took us into Bassenthwaite village and from here we found our way via Bassenthwaite Lake and Derwentwater to Grange. At this point, thanks to a cafe with a verandah and two friendly cyclists, who let us leave our cycles in the garage of a cottage they were renting, we escaped the worst of a storm, but we still had to climb the Honiston Pass (mostly on foot) in the rain, to the Youth Hostel at the top.

After the steep descent to Buttermere we followed the lane over Newland House and thence via the Whinlatter Pass to the isolated and beautiful Loweswater. After a brief halt we went to Ennerdale Water, where we found a delightful spot for our picnic lunch, and then along the forest track to the remote Black Sail Hut Youth Hostel, where we turned to cross the Black Sail Pass to Wasdale Head.

Mountaineering with a bike is perhaps the best way of describing this unforgettable roughstuff episode; the walkers we met looked astonished to find cyclists on the Pass. What a superb valley Wasdale proved to be and its beauty is enhanced by Wastwater with its screes falling to the lakeside; the Youth Hostel overlooks the lake. This was certainly a day to remember. No wonder the Roughstuff Fellowship have chosen Wasdale for their Anniversary Meet in 1980.

The following day saw us ascending the Wrynose Pass before we entered the Langdale Valley with the Pikies towering above. A bridleway led us through Tilberthwaite and then a road took us to Coniston, where we soon left the shops and holidaymakers behind for the solitude of the lane along the side of the lake, where Donald Campbell died trying to break the water-speed record. The very extensive Grizedale Forest was next on our route before we reached Hawkshead and the Hostel for the night.

Finally we went via Cartmel, an interesting old village with a fine Priory Church and surprisingly, a racecourse, to Grangeover Sands - reputed to be the Torquay of the north - and then over Cartmel Fell back to Kendal.

Thanks to the Cyclists' Touring Club we had a super route, along very quiet minor roads and, with sheep, cattle and wildlife as our only companions for most of each day, we found it hard to accept the people, cars, coaches and gift shops in the tourist centres. A host of memories come flooding back, but perhaps my most vivid are the two roughstuff passes, the wild beauty of Wasdale and some of the hair-raising multiple hairpin descents. I had read somewhere beforehand that the route would be arduous and so it proved to be; our daily mileage rarely exceeded 40, but nevertheless our days were very full, perhaps because we seemed to ride slower instead of faster as the week progressed - anyway it would have been a sin to have hurried in such magnificent country.

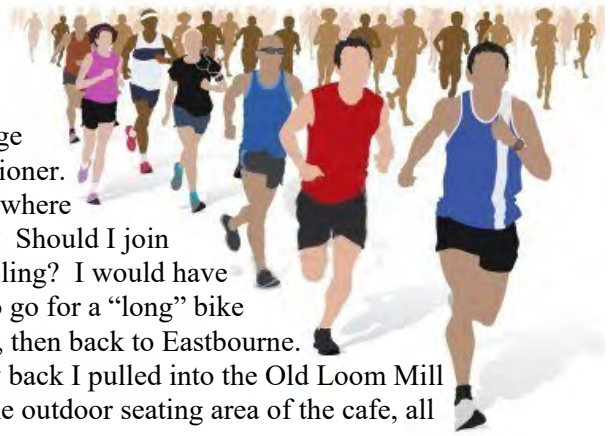


Tourist



London to Brighton Road Running Race
53½ miles - 26th September 1982

by Dave Healy



On Thursday 9th February 2006, I ceased to be a wage slave, and at the grand old age of 65, became a pensioner. I retired from Smith & Ouzman, a security printers, where I was employed as a lorry driver. What would I do? Should I join a rambling club and go for walks, or how about cycling? I would have to decide a.s.a.p. Not long after retiring I decided to go for a “long” bike ride, up the Cuckoo Trail to Heathfield, turn around, then back to Eastbourne. I thought I could do it, so let’s find out. On my way back I pulled into the Old Loom Mill for a cup of tea and, as I pushed my bike round to the outdoor seating area of the cafe, all I could see was bikes, bikes and more bikes.

“Hello,” said this very pleasant lady, “I am Jenny.”

“Hello,” said this man, “ I am Geoff, we are Geoff and Jenny Boxall, and this is the Seaford and Newhaven Section of the CTC.”

I was introduced to Ann Rix, Andy Hall, Cliff Avery and a dozen or more other riders, and we chatted away for quite a while. When I eventually left the cafe, I was laden down with a rides list, a “cafe stop list” of East Sussex, plus information about the CTC. I knew then that my mind was made up, I would become a cyclist. So, when I am leading a Medium Group ride up at least half a dozen hills, you know who to blame - the Boxalls, as without them I might have joined the ramblers.

However, before my conversion to two wheels, my great passion was long distance running, and when I was away overnight with Smith & Ouzman I would change into my running kit in my B & B and go for a 10 mile run in Yorkshire, Lancashire or South Wales, depending on where I parked up that night.

I was in the army for six years (1958-1964) and the army taught me to drive heavy lorries, as ever since I was a small sprog in Portsmouth in the 40s and 50s, lorry driving was all I ever wanted to do, they were my passion. I was demobbed in 1964 and got married to Doreen, but there wasn’t a great call for lorry drivers in Eastbourne, so we moved to Southampton, where I drove for Prestcold Refrigeration. I had given up smoking and took up jogging to keep fit, and soon joined the local athletic club, Southampton & Eastleigh A. C. (SEAC). This club could boast amongst its runners, Roger Black, Kris Ackabusi and Todd Bennett, 3 of 4 of the Gold Medal winners from the 4 x 100 relay team of Great Britain.

I ran a few marathons, and I do not want to appear big-headed, but I was a good distance runner, and soon made a name for myself in Hampshire in the veterans’ section, (veterans are male 40+ or women 35+), and I won a few prizes. SEAC won the Southern Counties team prize in Harlow in 1981 and I am still waiting for my medal, as it was never sent to us.

However, my sights were on the big one, the world famous 54 mile London to Brighton Road Race, so I sent off for an entry form. A letter arrived a week later saying, “No, no, no you plonker, you cannot just enter for the L2B, you have to qualify, this isn’t for fun runners.”, or words to that effect. As I was 41 at the time I had to run two marathons over a space of one year, in a time of 3 hours 10 minutes or less. The older you were the longer time you were allowed, but the cut-off time, whatever age you were, was 3 hours 45 mins.



The year was 1982, so in May I ran the first ever Southampton Marathon. There were 250+ runners in the race and I finished 6th in 2 hours and 39 mins., and a week later I ran the Winchester Marathon, finishing in 3rd place in 2 hours and 41 mins. - I had my qualifying

times. I sent off my form and cheque and to my absolute delight I was accepted, although I must confess I was a little nervous, this was a double marathon, what had I done?

Two other runners from SEAC were also running, David Cartwright, a lecturer at Southampton University and Malcolm Knight, who was an office worker with Hampshire County Council. We three plus a dozen “hard core” runners from SEAC & Romsey AC pounded out 20 mile training runs around the lanes of Hampshire, and we three also ran a 40 mile race from London to Southend (4 hours 55 mins.), plus a 30 mile race in Coulsden, Surrey (3 hours 35 mins.), and before we knew it the great day had arrived. Anne Knight, Malcolm’s wife, drove us to London, leaving Southampton at 4.00 a.m. and arriving in London at 6.10 p.m. We had to change in County Hall, the HQ of the Greater London Council (GLC), and rumour had it that the leader of the GLC, a certain Mr. Ken Livingstone, was in the hall, but if he was I didn’t see him - what a shame!

At 6.50 p.m. Westminster Bridge was closed to traffic, much to the annoyance of motorists and taxi drivers, and 128 runners from all parts of the world stood under Big Ben. Most runners were from the UK, but a lot were from the USA and South Africa, as well as Europe and South America. On the first “bong” at 7.00 a.m. from Big Ben we were off, and we ran down the A23. We ran thru! Brixton, Streatham, and soon clocked up 10 miles at Croydon, at 20 miles we ran into Redhill, straight on to Gatwick at 30 miles. I had run the marathon distance (26 miles, 385 yards) in 3 hours 10 mins., so I was quite pleased, and felt quite good.

I was running with five other runners at this point, not through choice because I liked to concentrate on my running, but as only one could speak English (an American) it wasn’t too bad. The others were French, German, Russian and an unknown European. Give or take a pound and an inch or two, we were all about the same build and height - nine stone wet through. The weather was dry and mild, but there was the curse of all runners and cyclists, a very strong head wind. This wind was



horrendous, and we soon came to a very steep hill. We had to lean into the wind and slowly push our way uphill. When we got to the top the wind hit us full on, and the sight of six nine stone runners running on the spot must have been quite hilarious to any onlookers. But we didn’t see the funny side of it, we bent almost double and forced our way forward. After a few miles the Frenchman and I had dropped the other four and, not long after, Frenchy pulled ahead and dropped me.

This suited me and I ran quite easy, concentrating all the time, and soon a smile came to my ugly mug.

Ahead of me was a surprise, as I saw the shapely figure of a woman runner. Her name was Anne Franklin, a Welsh international from Merthyr, who was eventually to win the women’s race (there were only seven women starters), and she finished 4 minutes behind me. I passed Anne and then at 38 miles, as I went through Bolney, I had a look behind me. I saw Anne, but she was about a ¼ mile or more behind me, so I settled into a rhythm and enjoyed the moment.

Although it was a Sunday the traffic on the A23 was very heavy, and the speed was motorway speed, all I could hear was - woosh - woosh - as the cars went by me. At about 41 miles there was a minor miracle, a lull in the traffic, it was only a minute or two, but it was heaven. I could hear a blackbird singing its head off, and I was running in a dreamlike state, my legs, my feet, and my brain were as one, complete co-ordination, I was on a trance, floating across the tarmac. I have heard, or read, that drug addicts experience something similar, but I did not need heroine or cannabis, I was on a “runner’s high” - but with no comedowns. I carried on floating for a few more yards - then suddenly I heard footsteps behind me. No, it was impossible, Anne Franklin was the only runner I saw when I had looked behind me - she could not have caught me - could she? I spun my head around and realised whose footsteps I had been hearing - mine! I had been



so much in a trance I was listening to my own feet hitting the ground.

I swear this is true, and the absurd aspect of this hit me, and I burst out in uncontrollable laughter. Not just because of the absurdity, but also the relief that no-one had caught me. I was still laughing like a demented schoolboy and the traffic was back to normal by now - woosh - woosh - every second or so. The motorists were shouting remarks, fortunately I didn't hear them, and horns were blaring at me, but I shrugged it off and kept running.

At 49 miles or thereabouts I saw a sign saying "Welcome to Brighton", and a race official shouted, "Well done Healy," (He had a list of numbers and runners) "keep going, almost there, only another 5 miles to go." - only 5 miles, it seemed like an eternity. When I ran into Brighton town itself, this became the worst moment of the race. There were no police or officials to help us and I had to dodge around cars and buses. A car just brushed up against me, it wasn't a problem but it could have been. Eventually I arrived at the seafront and turned left at the Aquarium, running over the finish line in 36th place, in a time of 6 hours 57 mins. 51 secs. Normally to finish in 36th place would be a disappointment but, as I said before, the best runners in the world were in this race, so I was absolutely delighted with my time and position. Anne Franklin finished 4 minutes behind me to huge applause, and we had a brief hug and congratulated each other.



"Jump in lads," said a voice, and I looked to my right and saw an official with a minibus. Anne, myself and two other finishers climbed into the bus - "jump in", we could hardly lift our feet, let alone "jump in"! The driver took us about ¼ of a mile to a school, where our tracksuits and bags had been taken. I crawled under the shower with the other two males (strangely Anne Franklin didn't join us) and the hot, no very hot, water eased our aches and pains. After the shower I went to the changing room to dry off and slip on my tracksuit. "Hello, what time did you do?" asked this small male runner. I told him my time and asked him his.

"6 hours, 9 mins." he said, I finished in 9th place. I looked at him, and I knew him by sight. "Are you from Hampshire?" I asked, "Your face is familiar."

"No, I'm from Gloucester, my name is Dave Dowdle." and we shook hands.

Dave Dowdle, of course, now I recognised him, this man was a legend in long distance running. This man was the Bradley Wiggins of running and I was sitting next to him. For the next hour I sat in the dressing room listening to top runners from across the world talking about their training regimes, the races they had won, etc. Although these men held world titles, and were champions in their own countries, they were, to a man, modest and ordinary, but I sat open mouthed listening to their every word.

I had to wait for over an hour for my club mates, David and Malcolm to finish, but we soon made our way back to Southampton and home. I made up the spare bed - I had to sleep alone for the next few nights, because if Doreen touched my toes by accident I would hit the ceiling.



I was now working for Meachers, a haulage firm, as a long distance lorry driver. Before the race I had asked the transport manager, Terry Crocker, who like myself was an ardent Saints (Southampton F.C.) supporter, if I could be kept local for a few days, and he had agreed (it cost me a pint). I had two days off and the next day, Monday, I felt OK, a few aches and stiffness but, all in all, not too bad. However, as an experienced marathoner, I knew that tomorrow would be hell, and it was, pain all over my body, but worst of all drained of all my energy.

The next day I started work at 5 a.m. and took my lorry and trailer down to the container port to load on an empty 40 foot container and do my local run - Twickenham. I was

to report to a regular customer of ours in Twickenham who exported to the USA. He was an “antique” dealer, but his “antiques” were old telephone boxes, road signs, pillar boxes, etc. If it was British, and if it came from London, preferably, then Americans would pay large sums of money for it. For example, a road sign such as Fleet Street, The Strand or, best of all, Buckingham Palace Road, would be a large price - how many were fakes I wonder. During the 1980s, as you may remember, the trade unions were all powerful, so we were told not to load or unload the containers, that was down to the customer. I backed my container onto the loading bay and went to the canteen for a hearty breakfast. After brecky I climbed into my cab, removed my boots and climbed into my bunk, straight into the land of nod.

After what seemed like minutes, but was in fact 4+ hours, a knock on the cab door woke me up. A young girl from the office had my customs notes in her hand and, after checking the customs seal on the door, I signed her copy and drove out of the factory down onto the M3. After calling into Fleet Services for a cuppa and a chat, I drove to Southampton.

The following week it was back to normal, pick up/drop off in Liverpool, Manchester, Ipswich and Felixstowe but, except for slight stiffness in the legs, I was OK. I was a very happy bunny, I had done and was doing two things I loved, running and driving heavy lorries - bliss.

Cheers, Dave Healy

Race Facts:-

The first three runners were all from South Africa, they were:

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| B. Fordyce | 5 - 18.36 | G. Fraser | 5 - 43.13 |
| D. Anderson | 5 - 44.43 | | |

From Brighton - 4th Sam Lambourne 5 - 51.13

First woman - Anne Franklyn 7 - 01.51

Of the 128 runners who started only 96 finished, mainly due to the strong headwind.

Even the winner, B. Fordyce, said that on two occasions he was “running on the spot”, so it wasn’t only the “also rans” such as myself who had suffered, it also affected the “supermen”.



CTC Tour - High Atlas Mountains & Jebel Sarhro Traverse, Morocco, 2012 - Leader: Pete Jarvis

Diary of Chris Colyer

Saturday 24th March – Marrakech (450m)

My son and I arrived at Marrakech Airport at approximately 11.00am and met Geoff (another CTC rider) and we shared a taxi to our hotel. Quite an experience with three large cycle boxes hanging from the boot of the old Mercedes saloon, just about fixed in position with a couple of crocodile straps. Arrived at the hotel in Marrakech and met the rest of the party. The rest of the day was spent assembling our two bikes followed by a tour around the Medina in Marrakech, which comprised a large market square and endless arcades selling just about everything you could think of. The market square transformed at night to a vast open air restaurant of countless stalls, selling a variety of drinks and food + numerous street performers, snake charmers etc.



A Typical Moroccan mountain village

Sunday 25th March – Marrakech to Teferiate

Cycled out of Marrakech along the N9 road for about 20K gradually rising until we reached the start of the Atlas Mountains and then into fairly steady climbing to our lunch stop. After this some fairly serious climbing till we reached our Hotel. First and only Hotel that actually sold alcohol so we treated ourselves to a couple of cans of Heineken.

Monday 26th March – Teferiate to Telouet (1880m) via Taddert (1375m)

Strenuous day today still continuing along the N9. Fairly long and steep climb out of Hotel up to Ait Barka at **1410m** then a long section descending into a gorge which we then followed to Taddert where we stopped for refreshments. Refreshment stop followed by a spectacular, long and fairly steep hairpinned climb to the top of Tizi-n-Tichka at **2260m** stopping for lunch just before we reached the summit. This ascent, apart from being strenuous was a tad scary as there were extremely long and unprotected vertical drops on one side. I can only assume that the Moroccans put their trust in Allah rather than Armco. The route then continued generally descending until we turned off the N9 onto an unclassified rough and undulating road through a fertile valley to Telouet and our hotel. We visited the Kasbah in the late afternoon. The Kasbah is supposed to be one of the most important in Morocco and is a World Heritage site.

Tuesday 27th March – Telouet (1880m) to Ait-Benhaddou (1000m)

Comparatively easy day today mainly downhill which incorporated one long and steep hairpin descent. The route followed a very rough, uneven and potholed road to start with but gradually progressed into a fairly good surfaced road. The road followed a spectacular lush green valley with several Berber villages along the way and we saw our first site of camels since leaving Marrakech.



The Ksar at Ait-Benhaddou

We arrived at Ait-Benhaddou about lunchtime and found that our Hotel actually had a swimming pool. We visited the Ksar (fortified village) in the afternoon. This Ksar is built on a pink sandstone hill and comprises a series of battlement towers, blind arches and decorations etc to form 6 fortified Kasbahs. Apparently the film *Gladiators* (with Russell Crowe) was filmed here. Also managed to find a Cyber Cafe so I was able to make my first contact with home.

Wednesday 28th March – Land cruiser transfer from Ait-Benhaddou to Tinerhir (1430m) and then back on bikes and cycling to Tamtouche (17ta50m)

Land cruiser transfer firstly along unclassified road to start with and then along the N9 to Ouarzazate

(large film studios here) and then along the N10 through Boumalne Dades and onto Tinerhir. Set off cycling after lunch through centre of Tinerhir where a stage of the Tour of Morocco was finishing that afternoon (and we thought that the crowds were turning out for us!!). After passing through the finishing barrier of the Tour we then turned off the N9 and joined the R703. Quite a steep ascent out of Tinerhir (10% for at least 2K) and then the road rose fairly gently through the very spectacular and steep sided Todra Gorge and passing through several villages. It had been raining very heavily the night before and consequently the roads were extremely muddy with numerous large and deep puddles. Arrived at our hotel in Tamtatouche at late afternoon with rather ominous rain clouds building up. We took a stroll into the village but it soon started raining heavily and had to return to hotel. Very heavy and continuous rain overnight.

Thursday 29th March – Tamtatouche (1750m) to Agoudal (2440m)

Another fairly strenuous day entirely along the R703. We left the hotel and cycled through the village. The road was generally fairly flat to start with just a few minor climbs and descents along the way. We reached the town/village of Ait-Hani to find that due to the very heavy rain the night before a river had formed and had flooded across the road. Luckily the locals had placed a couple of very long telegraph poles across the river by the side of the road and we were able to wobble across these carrying our bikes. Safely across we then continued with the road steadily rising and passing through several villages. The road then gradually got steeper and steeper until we reached the hairpinned ascent of the Tizi-Tirherhouzine where we continued climbing to **2700m**. This was then followed by a long and fairly gradual descent crossing several small rivers to the Berber village Agoudal. We stayed the night in an Auberge which had very basic accommodation and facilities but nevertheless was friendly and they served very good food in its attached dining area (the usual cous-cous with loads of meat, vegetables and Moroccan bread).



The Auberge at Agoudal

Friday 30th March – Agoudal (2440m) to Msemrir (2080m)

The planned route was to ride along the R704 out of Agoudal to Msemrir but we heard that due to the previous heavy rainfalls the road was impassable which necessitated a change to the itinerary. The whole party (8 of us + driver) got into the Land Cruiser with our luggage strategically placed all around us and with our bikes strapped to the roof (all highly illegal but we took a calculated risk that we would not come across any police that deep into the mountains) and drove back to the top of the Tizi-Tirherhouzine where we then alighted and continued on our bikes and retraced our previous day's ride back to Tamtatouche. From there we joined the route to Msemrir which comprised a "piste" track. This turned out to be fairly evenly graded compacted mud for the first 10k or so but quickly deteriorated after this into an increasingly rocky and uneven track which incorporated some very steep climbs and descents which made it almost impossible for me to cycle along let alone stay upright (I was riding a steel framed light-weight bike without any suspension and with radial spoked wheels with 25mm tyres). So after about a further 10K of this with the track getting even rockier I had to abandon my bike and get into the Land Cruiser along with 4 others in our group. Only those with full suspension bikes with fat tyres were able to continue cycling. A bit disappointing but my bike and myself just would not have survived it.



Cafe stop before our ascent of Tizi-Tirherhouzine

Saturday 31st March – Msemrir (2080m) to Boumalne Dades (1500m)

Amazing day through the fantastic miniature Grand Canyon of Dades Gorge along the R704. The whole tour would have been worth it for this day alone. We started out and soon got into a steep hairpinned ascent closely followed by a steep hairpinned descent into the lush and fertile valley of the Dades Gorge. From here the ride followed the undulating and spectacular valley road through several villages until we reached a point where the gorge narrowed significantly, which had caused the river to entirely flood the road. This necessitated dismounting and wading through knee deep water carrying our bikes until we had passed the flooded section. The road then continued climbing, fairly steeply in some sections, to Souteska and the spectacular cafe and terrace with amazing views of the gorge and equally spectacular view of the hairpinned descent we were about to undertake. After stopping for refreshments we tackled the hairpinned descent to the bottom of the gorge and continued the undulating road through some of the most spectacular rock formations forming the sides of the gorge eventually reaching the wealthy market town of Boumalne Dades.



Sunday 1st April – Boumalne Dades (1500m) to Nkob (1850m) crossing the Jebel Sarhro

Very difficult day mainly on unclassified roads and piste. We left the hotel and cycled out of Boumalne Dades along the N10 but after a short distance turned off this road onto an unclassified but made up road heading towards the Jebel Sarhro Mountains. The road was fairly flat to begin with but soon developed into relatively long climbs which gradually increased in severity before finally descending and levelling out. We then turned off this road onto a fairly level compacted sandy piste which contained occasional pockets of soft sand where the wheels got stuck which caused several falls off the bike. The piste gradually got more uneven and rocky and started climbing and increasing in severity. This became a very tricky and strenuous climb until we eventually reached the summit of the Tizi-n-Tazazert at **2200m**. Quite astonishingly and miles from any other form of settlement there was a cafe at the summit where we stopped for usual coffee and/or mint tea. After being suitably refreshed our route continued down a very steep, rocky and dangerous descent with a sheer drop on one side and again I decided discretion being the better part of valour and in order to preserve myself and bike I



Cafe at the summit of Tizi-n-Tazazert

climbed into the Land Cruiser again. The piste remained extremely rough and rocky for the remainder of the route until we finally arrived at our destination hotel in the town of Nkob.

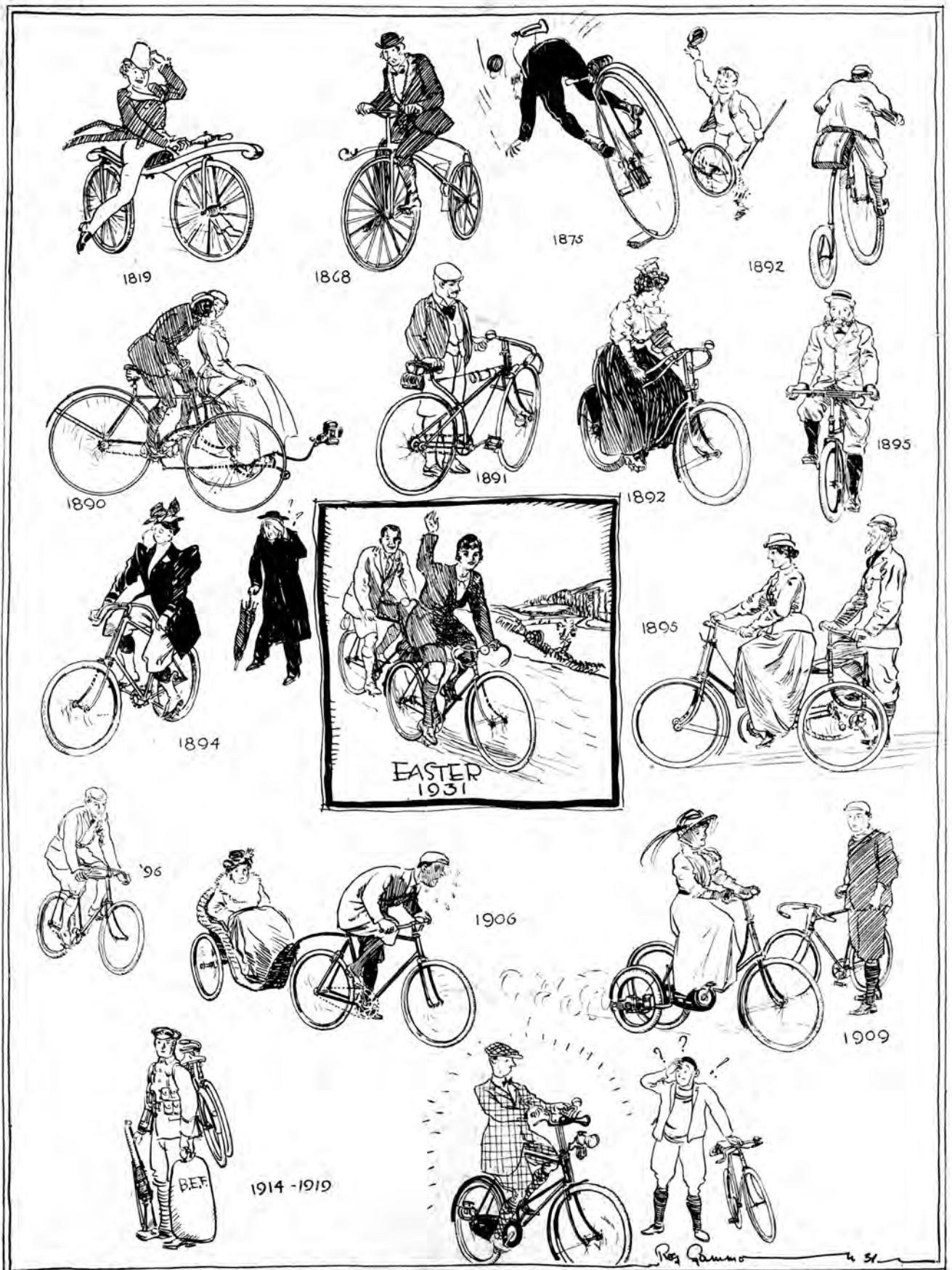
Monday 2nd April – Nkob to Marrakech

Land Cruiser transfer back to Marrakech for finish of tour.

Tuesday 3rd April – Marrakech to Gatwick Back home.

Conclusion

A fantastic and very enjoyable tour with a wide range of experiences from the hustle and bustle of Marrakech to the remoteness of the Jebel Sahrho mountains and the poverty of Telouet. Stunning scenery and in particular Dades Gorge. People generally friendly and the food good and wholesome - but only if you like cous-cous, plenty of meat, vegetables and omelettes. The whole tour was very well organised and led by Pete Jarvis – I would thoroughly recommend it. My only comment is that if I did it again I would do it on a mountain bike with suspension.



Good-bye to all that : a few peeps into cycling's past. Times have changed, but there is just as much romance as ever in the greatest of all games.