

The Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 45 - Christmas 2005

£1



working for cycling

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

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" THE COASTER "

Issue No. 45, Christmas



From the Editor's Desk.

Welcome to the 2005 Christmas edition of "The Coaster". There is the odd seasonal item this time, but mainly they are general articles.

There are contributions from: John Regan on the Semaine Federale 2005, Ann Rix on a family hostelling trip to the Malverns, Roy James with a ghost story and some more of his excellent drawings.

There is also another cycling ghost story, a cycling variation on the twelve days of Christmas and a (not too serious) test to tell how good a cyclist you are, as well as a few other bits and pieces.

So, I hope there's plenty here to keep you interested while you're stuck by the fire this winter on the days when it's too severe to go out on your bike.

Take it easy in the ice and snow and 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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67th SEMAINE FEDERALE – THE PYRENEES

By John Regan

Les Springett and I were fortunate to stay in a luxurious top-floor flat in the centre of Oloron Sainte-Marie. Every window and the large balcony had an uninterrupted view of the Pyrenees and the owner, Pascal, told us to treat it as if it were our own home. John Seviour and his son Andy, Nigel and Theresa Abbott and Christine Thomas and Ian all stayed with Yves and Bernadette and their three-year old daughter, Martha, in their magnificent new home which had a beautiful swimming pool in the garden. Both of our patrons made us feel very welcome and were most generous towards us. Everybody spent the Saturday settling in and looking around Oloron Sainte-Marie.



We all set off together on the Sunday into the country of the Musketeers with the first stop for all routes, except the longest one, at Arette. On the 13th August 1967 Arette was completely destroyed by an earthquake. This illustrates the violent, volcanic, yet beautiful countryside in this part of France. John, Andy and I then climbed the Col d'Ichere (695m), then the Cols Houratate (452m), Bouezou (1009m) and Labays (1351). The Col de Labays gave a wonderful view of the Forest of Issaux. Then the Col de

Soudet, (1540) was the highest for this day bringing us to La Pierre-St.-Martin. During the winter this is a popular ski station and it is also famous for the exploration of caves. Next we tackled the Col de Suscousse (1216). After the Col de Sustary (473m) only Andy went on to climb the further 322m to La Madeleine and back. At the end of the day everybody met up at the Restauration for the evening meal.

On Monday 1st August we traced the route of Gaston Phoebus. He is credited with creating the State of the Pyrenees because he constructed or restored many chateaux and fortresses. With no Cols more than 300m high, it was to be an 'easy' day. This was perhaps just as well because the heavens opened up and we sheltered at an enclosed bus stop and even explored a historic church at Ledeuix. The rain stopped soon after and we proceeded to Mourenx for our first stop. Passing near to Lacommande and the Hospital and Church of St. Blaise we were certainly in the territory of the St. Jacques de Compostelle pilgrimage route. Once again we enjoyed a meal together at the Restauration. On our way home in the evening we enjoyed the music and dancing which had been organised in the centre of town and in the Federal Village each evening.

On Tuesday morning both of our parties met up at a set of traffic lights in the centre

of town by sheer coincidence. Not bad when one thinks that there were more than twelve thousand cyclists going in all directions. Andy and I set off at a good pace as this was necessary if we were going to achieve the ‘big one’ today – the Col d’Aubisque, which was first used in the Tour de France in 1910. We travelled through a series of picturesque villages at the foot of the Pyrenees. The village of Nay with its museum of berets and then Ferrieres, another example, where the iron mines had been exploited from the 15th century right up until 1961. Cows and sheep roamed the mountainside freely or crossed the roads nonchalantly with their bells ringing, completely oblivious to the frontier between the two



Monument on the Col d’Aubisque

departments – High Pyrenees and Atlantic Pyrenees. So on up the Col Soulor (1474m) and then a further 235m to the top of the Col d’Aubisque. LANCE, LANCE, LANCE was written all over the road in lots of places in large white letters. In the same way the battle for the proposed re-introduction of L’ours (the bear) into the Pyrenees was passionately written all over the road both by those who wished it to happen and by those who were in favour of shooting all the bears. The farming communities are generally opposed to the re-introduction as they fear for the

lives of their stock.

From the summit we enjoyed a long fast descent for miles to reach Laruns. Unknown to me, Andy’s hot rims had blown up his tyre and so damaged his wheel which he had to stop and rebuild. Not knowing whether he was in front of me or behind I pressed on down the valley of the Ossau. A short stop at Eaux-Bonnes and then on and over the Col de Marie Blanche (1035m). It was a joy to have a good fast finish to the day as there was a very gradual descent most of the way home from there.

Pascal’s parents lived in Oloron Sainte-Marie and we had expressed a wish to meet them. Pascal organised some delicious aperitifs and some local wine and we enjoyed meeting them this evening. His father was born in Oloron and he spoke quite a lot of English. His mother was from Monaco and she spoke Spanish and German as well as French of course.

On the Wednesday morning Les and I rode down to Agnos to pick up the rest of our party for the day’s ride. As most of the 24km. to the first stop at Navarrenx was gently sloping downwards we made good time in this region which is called Bearn. We were following the Gave (mountain stream) d’Oloron which is fertile, alluvial, farming country. Navarrenx is the venue for the World salmon fishing competition every year. The ramparts of the town were edified by the Kings of Navarre and are a model of military architecture. Cannons and other military weapons and ammunition have been produced here since the 16th Century until quite recently. A young lady from the Tourist Office gave us a most interesting tour of the town. We then pressed on to Sauveterre-de-Bearn which is the meeting point of the three different regions – the Bearn, the Navarre and the Sould. We had lunch here and afterwards admired the extensive view right down the valley. Then we all enjoyed a fast ride back to Oloron Sainte-Marie. So, John and Les just had to shower

and change and prepare for the evening meal and entertainment. The others had to make the short twenty minutes ride to Agnos and one after the other Nigel, then Andy and then John said “I know the best way back” and then each of them headed off in a different direction. It does not prove anything but John was first to arrive, Andy was second and Nigel was third.

Thursday was picnic day and all we had to do was to cycle either 54 km with total climbs of 534 m. or 75 km with 974 m. to Monein. Most of us chose the latter. In the Middle Ages, in the time of Gaston Phoebus, Monein was one of the principal towns in this area. It is situated at the centre of a triangle formed by Pau, Oloron and Orthez. It's success was due to the large forests, the vineyards and the farms – both fruit and animals. Such commerce continued until the end of the 19th century when the general exodus of



farm workers to towns began and then the two World Wars of the 20th Century caused a further decline. However, the discovery of a deposit of natural gas and the benefits from the E.E.C. have seen a return to prosperity in this beautiful countryside. Each cyclist was given a number for the picnic and as we approached Monein we were directed according to our numbers to a specific farm where we enjoyed an aperitif of local wines (Juracon) with goats' cheese, biscuits and foie gras.

Friday's rides were over the route of the woodpigeons. These birds are known as the beautiful blue birds on account of their plumage. During Autumn they fly over the Pyrenees on their way to a warmer climate for the winter. Unfortunately the shooting of these birds is still counted as a sport in France. This region is said to be undulating and we chose Route 4 which covered 124.5 km & so we did undulate - all day long – we climbed a total of 1445m. Those who undertook route 5 covered 185km & climbed a total of 2682m.

Yves and Bernadette, our hosts in Agnos, had generously invited Les and me to join them for a barbecue this Friday evening instead of everybody eating at the Restauration. It was a beautiful hot evening and we watched Andy, Yves and Martha enjoying themselves in the swimming pool as we enjoyed our aperitifs. Yves tended the barbecue. We were joined by Yves' brother and his two young teen-age sons and we all sat down in the large dining room to a really sumptuous meal. Yves cooked the sausages and a few other items on the barbecue but Bernadette cooked the rest in her modern kitchen. It was a most enjoyable evening. It was all that one imagines a French family meal to be; lots of happy conversation to complement course after course of local traditional food accompanied by local red and white wines and then liqueurs to finish off. It was then shortly before midnight and Les and I did not argue about which was the shortest way back to Oloron Sainte-Marie – we just followed the white marks along the middle of the dark narrow lane as best we could. We arrived safely and slept well.

By Saturday we were really getting into our stride and we had a most enjoyable day. The 115 km route took us to the outskirts of Pau and the total climbed was 985m. We travelled through fields of corn as we climbed steadily up the river valleys. The scenery then changed to vineyards and forest. We were now in the country of the famous Jurançon

wines and we were soon to enjoy a little liquid refreshment. Nearing Laroin, Les and I stopped to admire the panoramic view from the top of one of the hills at Saint-Faust. To our right there was a long drive with a notice stating that it was open every day including Sundays. Out of sheer curiosity we strolled down this drive not knowing whether it would be a hostel or hotel or whatever. Well, it turned out to be the house belonging to a twelve hectare vineyard. The proprietor invited us into his large cool conservatory and invited us to taste this year's wine. We enjoyed it and the conversation flowed. He warmed to us and invited us to taste his two-year old wine which he kept in a cool steel vat. We enjoyed it very much. He then invited us to taste his three-years old wine – we sschertainly enjoyed this . . . Afterwards we rolled on down the hill and before we knew where we were we had stopped again to taste biscuits and cheese being offered by the roadside and of course a little wine to wash it down. Later on we met two of my Sorian R.C. friends from Surrey, Gillian and Alan Else, and we stopped for a chat. Jurancon village was one of the few luncheon stops where we could spend our special meal tickets. We enjoyed a salad and then a fruit salad followed by a complimentary apple whilst listening to the local band play some good jazz. We then pressed on to complete our route. We just managed to get to the farewell dinner in time. It was, as usual, a very noisy affair with lots of liquid refreshment and entertainment. We slept well that night.

Sunday morning and we all had to get away early as for most of us it was to be on our way home. With the four bikes on top and the luggage inside we thanked Pascal for his hospitality and then we set off for the long trek to Boulogne. We broke our journey at Orleans using the same Etap Hotel as we had stayed at on our way south. John and Andy set off to cycle to Bordeaux. However they decided not to use their mini tent on this return journey and decided on the comfort of a hotel. Then they flew home. Christine and Ian continued their holiday by travelling to Andorra. So ended another enjoyable Semaine Federale.



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED...

- | | |
|---|---|
| Why wrong numbers are never busy? | Why Tarzan doesn't have a beard? |
| Why it's called lipstick if you can still move your lips? | |
| Why it is that night falls but day breaks? | How you can have self-help "groups"? |
| How do you get off a non-stop flight? | How many weeks are there in a light year? |
| If space is a vacuum, who changes the bags? | |
| Why the time of day with the slowest traffic is called the rush hour? | |

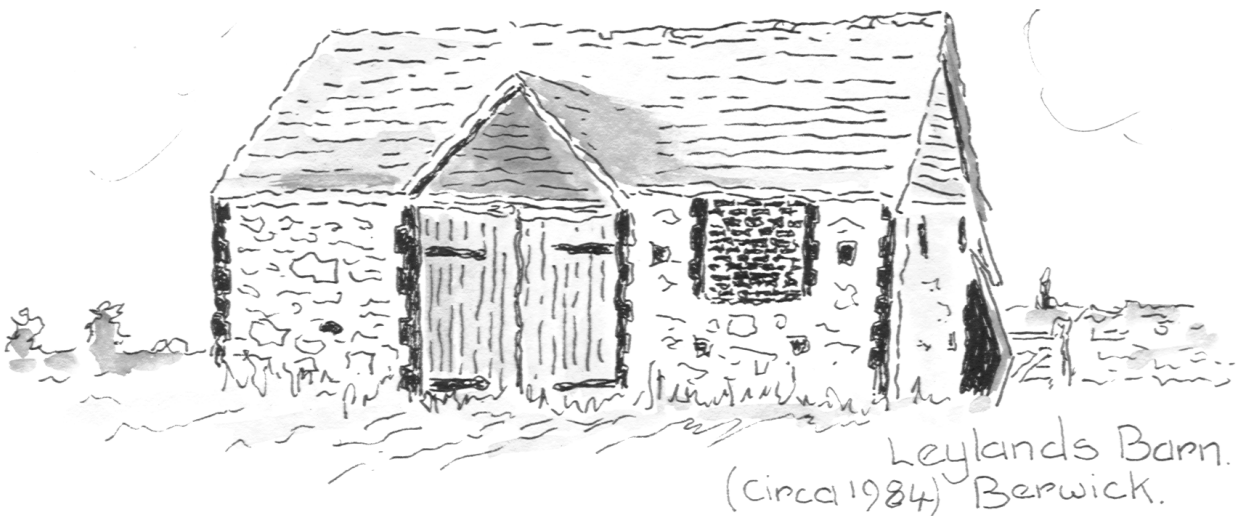
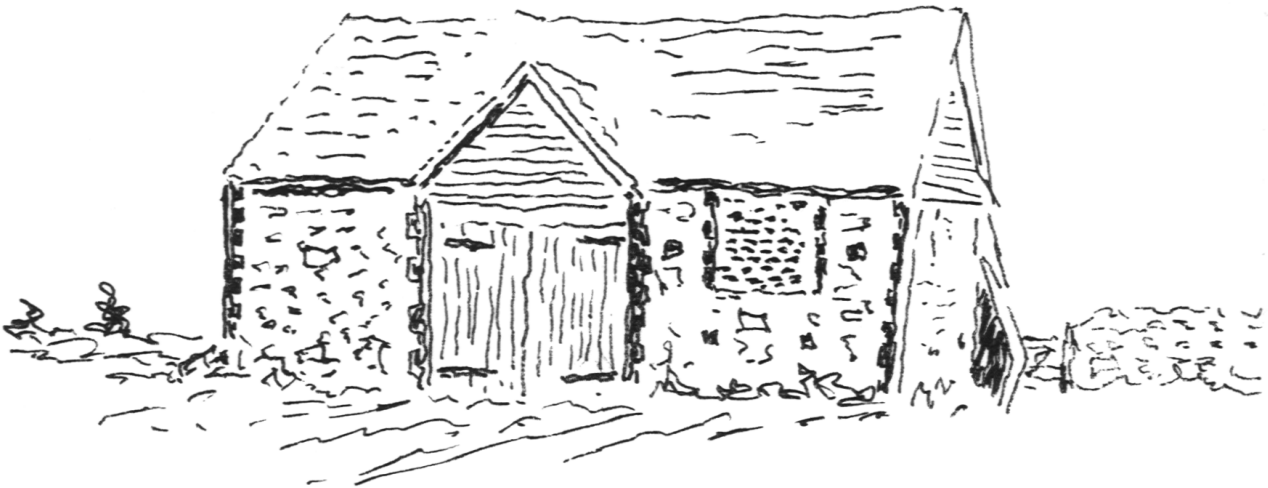
REMEMBERING LEYLANDS BARN

by Roy James

For many years Leylands Barn stood alone and unloved in a field beside the road from Drusillas roundabout to Berwick.

Leafing through an old diary (circa 1980) the other evening I came across a cutting from The Sussex County Magazine announcing the sale of the barn. I remember being encouraged by that notice and realising it would not long be left in peace, cycling out to try and record it before it was lost forever.

Here is the original pen sketch together with (below it) a more recent tarterd up copy. Some of you may care to see what has taken its place. You will find the replacement inevitably called 'Old Leylands Barn'.



THE WAY WE WERE

The origin of some well known sayings?

Four or Five hundred years ago most people got married in June because they took their annual bath in May and still smelt pretty good in June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the BO! Baths equalled a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the sons and men, then the women, followed by the children and finally the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, “don’t throw the baby out with the bath water.”



Houses had thatched roofs. Thick straw, piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the pets ... dogs, cats, and other small animals, mice, rats, bugs, lived in the roof. When it rained it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, “It’s raining cats and dogs.” There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house.

This posed a real problem in the bedroom, where bugs and other droppings could really mess up your nice clean bed. So, they found that if they made beds with big posts and hung a sheet over the top, it addressed the problem. Hence those beautiful big four-poster beds with canopies.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy had something other than dirt, hence the saying “dirt poor”. The wealthy had slate floors which could get slippery in the Winter when wet. So they spread thresh (cut stalks of corn) on the floor to help keep their footing. As the Winter wore on they kept adding more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed at the entry way, hence a “thresh hold”.

Those with money had plates made of pewter. Food with a high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto the food. This happened most often with tomatoes, so they stopped eating tomatoes ... for 400 years. Most people didn’t have pewter plates, but had trenchers – a piece of wood with the middle scooped out like a bowl. Trenchers were never washed and a lot of times worms got into the wood. After eating off wormy trenchers they would get “trench mouth”. Was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle, and guests got the top, or the “upper crust”.

They cooked in the kitchen in a big kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot. They mostly ate vegetables and didn’t get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start again the next day. Sometimes the stew had food in it that had been in there for a month. Hence the rhyme: Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas prridge in the pot nine days old. Sometimes they could obtain pork and would feel really special when that happened. When company came over, they would bring out some bacon and hang it to show it off. It was a sign of wealth and that a man “could really bring home the bacon”. They would cut off a little to

share with guests and would all sit around and “chew the fat”.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whiskey. The combination would sometimes knock them out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on



the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather round and eat and drink and wait to see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a “wake”.

England is old and small and by the 19th C they were starting to run out of space in graveyards to bury people. So they would dig up coffins and take the bones to a store and re-use the grave. In re-opening these coffins, one out of twenty-five were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. So they thought they would tie a string on their wrist and lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night to listen for the bell. Hence on the “graveyard shift” they would know that someone was “saved by the bell” or he was a “dead ringer”.

SOME CHRISTMAS FACTS

The first Christmas was celebrated on December 25, AD 336 in Rome.

Artificial Christmas trees have outsold real ones since 1991.

In Armenia, the traditional Christmas Eve meal consists of fried fish, lettuce and spinach.

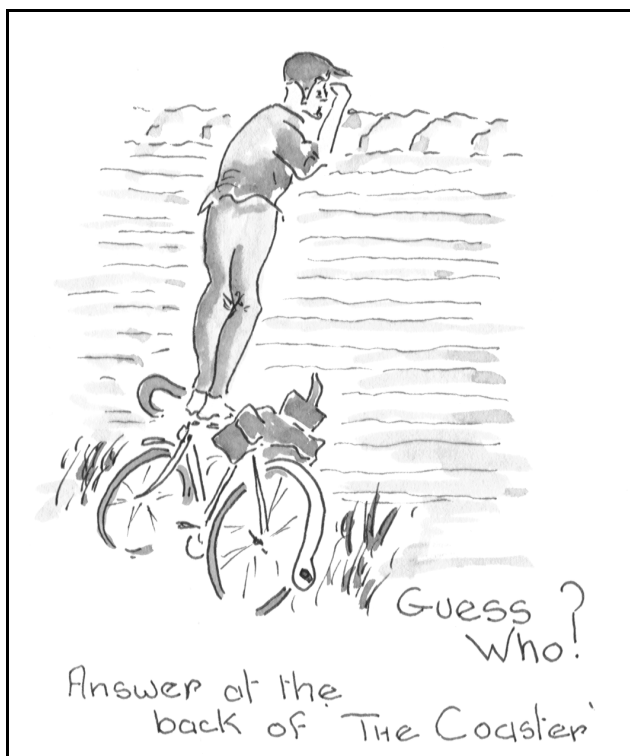
Christmas has different meanings around the world; Christmas Eve in Japan is a good day to eat fried chicken and strawberry shortcake.

Alabama was the first state to recognize Christmas as an official holiday, and the tradition began in 1836.

The Canadian province of Nova Scotia leads the world in exporting lobster, wild blueberries, and Christmas trees.

Roast turkey did not appear consistently on royal Christmas Day menus until 1851 when it replaced roast swan. The medieval dish of Boar's head remained popular with Royals for much longer.

Electric Christmas lights were first used in 1854.



ALMOST A GHOST STORY

by Roy James

I had not visited Lowfield Heath for 40 years. There had been no reason to do so. But last summer I made what I suspect was a final tryst with my wartime self.



The Windmill,
Lowfield Heath. 1940.

Lowfield Heath had been a hamlet of small cottages from the 16th to the 19th century and was a thriving village well into the 1950s. On the main London-Brighton Road, it contained everything needed in a tight knit community. A village shop, church, a blacksmiths, post office, school and the Aero Café, so named after the fledgling airport opened in the 1930s. Here, cycling clubs would pause briefly on their way from London for a visit to the coast.

In 1940 I was evacuated to this small village on the Sussex/Surrey borders and taken in by a childless couple. Uncle Arthur and Auntie Vi were my surrogate parents and for four years lavished all their love and affection upon me. I delivered telegrams for the P.O., had a morning and evening paper round and apart from school, played my life away in the woods and fields nearby.

As the war drew to a close the time came to return to Eastbourne. But even as I left I sensed that part of me remained in what was to become my 'lost domain' of childhood. I made visits to my wartime parents on increasingly rare occasions and finally stopped when Uncle Arthur (dying I am sure of a broken heart) followed Auntie Vi to the grave.

So there I was 40 years later, lifting my bike off the train at Gatwick and trying to find my way out of the airport. I quickly discovered that nothing of the village remained other than the church, hemmed in by office blocks, warehouses and a hideously ugly hotel. Cycling around these dispiriting acres I searched for something, anything, I might recognise, but without success. Then just as I was beginning to wish I had not made the journey, by lucky chance I saw the entrance to Rowley Lane and Farm snaking under the main road. Now at last I was on familiar ground, for I used to deliver papers to Rowley Farm. Scrambling off the road I started on the lane's stony track. On a slight rise the farmhouse appeared in the distance. The sun that had shone all afternoon dipped behind a dark rain cloud. The scent of cow parsley in the hedgerow became almost overpowering and it was then that I saw the boy.

He must have been calling at the farmhouse, perhaps even delivering newspapers for I noticed he had a bag over his shoulder. As he drew near to me there was a crack of thunder. Rain fell heavily in a sudden shower and he lowered his head against the downpour. I sheltered my face briefly from the rain as he passed, then turned to follow but there was no sign of him.

The whole incident puzzled me. The heady wayside scent, the sudden downpour. The surprise of seeing the boy and his apparent disappearance started me wondering. Was it my other self still cycling those lanes of yesteryear? It please me to think so.

THE TWELVE CYCLING DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

(An anonymous submission. Ed)

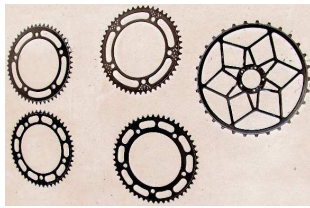
On the first day of Christmas, my true love sent to me a cartridge for a BB. (Bottom bracket!) Handy thing to have during the winter! You never do know when that bottom bracket might seize up, what with all that water and grit about. Anyway, you try and think of something that rhymes with a partridge in a pear tree!



On the second day of Christmas my true love sent to me two thermal gloves, (no more frozen finger-tips on those long, cold winter training spins), and a cartridge for a BB.

On the third day of Christmas my true love sent to me three French pens. I knew they were French because they had “Le Tour” down the side. They'll do for filling in the old training diary. Oh yeah, two more thermal gloves and a cartridge for a BB.

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love sent to me 40,000 words. Actually it was The Ras, Ireland's Unique Bike Race, by Tom Daly and no, I haven't counted all the words but there's a lot and it's a great read to boot. I got three more French pens, (this time they had Ag2r on the side), two thermal gloves and a cartridge for a BB.



On the fifth day of Christmas my true love sent to me five new ch-a-i-n-rings. (A 53, 52, 51, 45, 42 and a 39 if you must know), 40,000 words, three French pens (Brioche Le Boulanger), two thermal gloves and a cartridge for a BB.

On the sixth day of Christmas my true love sent to me six geese-a-laying. Don't really know why she sent them but hey, maybe she couldn't think of anything to do with cycling that rhymed either! Suppose the eggs will come in handy for those pre-race meals anyway. Five more chainrings, 40,000 words, three more French pens (Jean De-Letour), two thermal gloves and cartridge for a BB arrived. The spare room is filling up fairly rapidly now and I'm not really sure about having those geese in the house!

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me seven pills for slimming. I knew I was finding it hard to get up the hills, but I just thought it was early days yet. Oh well, I'll try one tomorrow before my poached geese eggs. I got another six geese-a-laying, five chainrings, 40,000 words, three French pens (Credit Agricole), two thermal gloves (I now have a pair for every day of the week) and a cartridge for a BB.

On the eighth day of Christmas my true love sent to me eight bottles for drinking, seven pills for slimming, six geese-a-laying, five ch-a-in-rings, 40,000 words, three French pens (VC La Pomme), two thermal gloves and a cartridge for a BB.

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love sent to me nine pumps for pumping. I now have more pumps than I have wheels. The eight bottles for drinking, seven pills for slimming, six geese-a-laying, five more chainrings, 40,000 words, three French pens (Credit Lyonnaise), two thermal gloves and another cartridge for a BB are taking up a good bit of room in the house. I had to move the geese into the back garden after they ate through two copies of the Ras book. Still, the eggs taste nice and they're a lot bigger than your average, ordinary, everyday, run-of-the-mill, ho-hum chicken's egg.



On the tenth day of Christmas my true love sent to me ten bikers biking. Now, I know it's good to have mates at your beck and call to go training with but where the hell are they all going to live and one of them is already giving out that he hasn't got a pump!



On the eleventh day of Christmas my true love sent to me eleven ladies dancing. See, the trouble with not adhering strictly to the cycling orientated theme is that it just takes

one thing to go wrong for the whole lot to fall apart. The eleven ladies dancing have already begun fighting over the seven pills for slimming and the ten bikers biking haven't biked since they arrived. They say it's too cold out and they prefer to watch the ladies dance. Since the ladies arrived I can't find any of my thermal gloves. The geese are beginning to crack me up with all that cackling. It's looking like goose for Christmas dinner this year!

On the twelfth day of Christmas my true love sent to me twelve pulsometers bleeping, eleven ladies dancing, ten bikers biking, nine pumps for pumping, eight bottles for drinking, seven pills for slimming, (which were gobbled up by the first seven of the dancing ladies to reach the front door this morning!), six more geese-a-laying. I'm getting a bit sick of eggs now and wouldn't mind a pancake breakfast out of McDonalds. Five more chainrings! I mean come on! even Desperate Dan wouldn't break that many chainrings! 40,000 words, (I had to use the last three issues to protect my good wooden floor from those foul geese. Maybe that should be those geese fowl. I don't know anymore,



I can't concentrate with all those pulsometers going off. I think one of them is bleeping from inside a goose! Nearly forgot three more French pens (Bonjour), two thermal gloves (I still haven't found the rest of them) and a cartridge for a BB. Today I'm gonna ride through the sand down the beach for an hour. Those damn bottom bracket cartridges are filling up my cupboards!!!

APT ANAGRAMS

DORMITORY
re-arranged becomes:
DIRTY ROOM

PRESBYTERIAN
re-arranged becomes:
BEST IN PRAYER

DESPERATION
re-arranged becomes:
A ROPE ENDS IT

GEORGE BUSH
re-arranged becomes:
HE BUGS GORE

THE MORSE CODE
re-arranged becomes:
HERE COME DOTS

SLOT MACHINES
re-arranged becomes:
CASH LOST IN ME

ANIMOSITY
re-arranged becomes:
IS NO AMITY

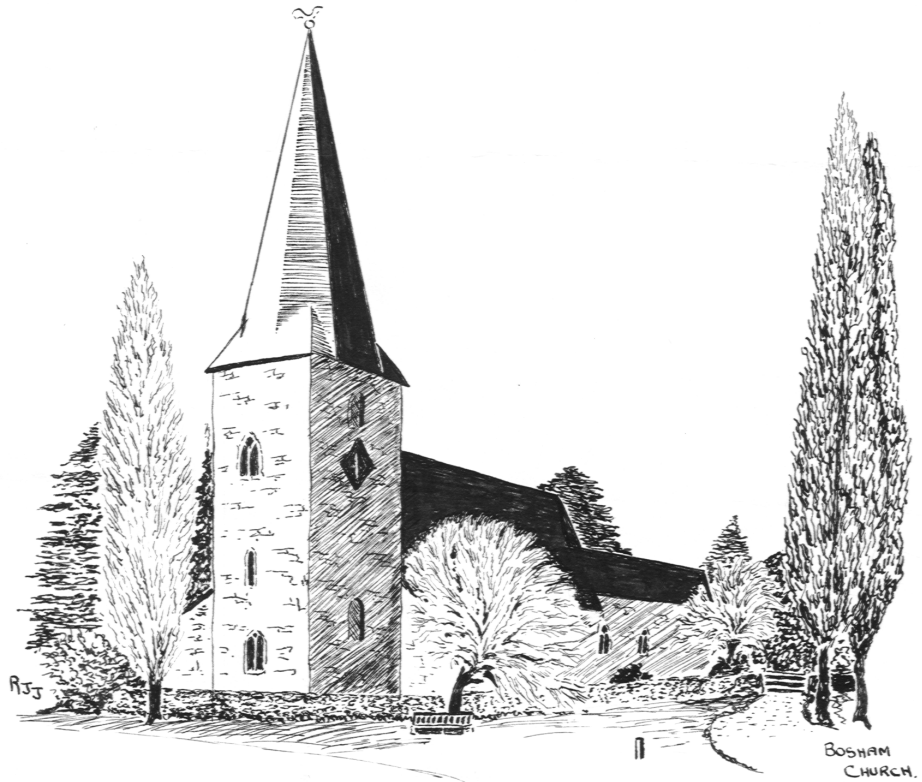
MOTHER IN LAW
re-arranged becomes:
WOMAN HITLER

SNOOZE ALARMS
re-arranged becomes:
ALAS, NO MORE Z'S

A DECIMAL POINT
re-arranged becomes:
I'M A DOT IN PLACE

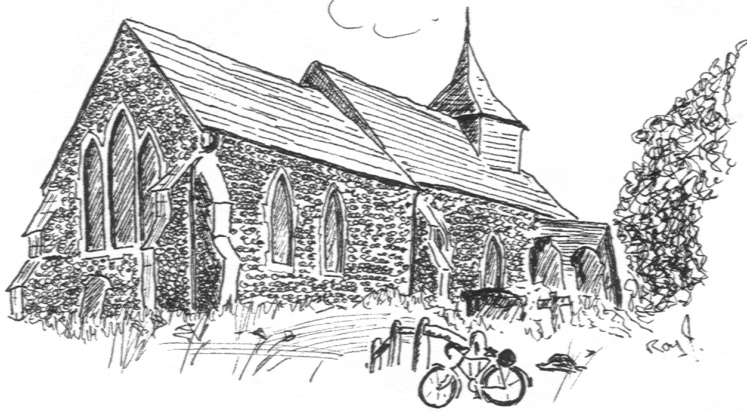
THE EARTHQUAKES
re-arranged becomes:
THAT QUEER SHAKE

ELEVEN PLUS TWO
re-arranged becomes:
TWELVE PLUS ONE



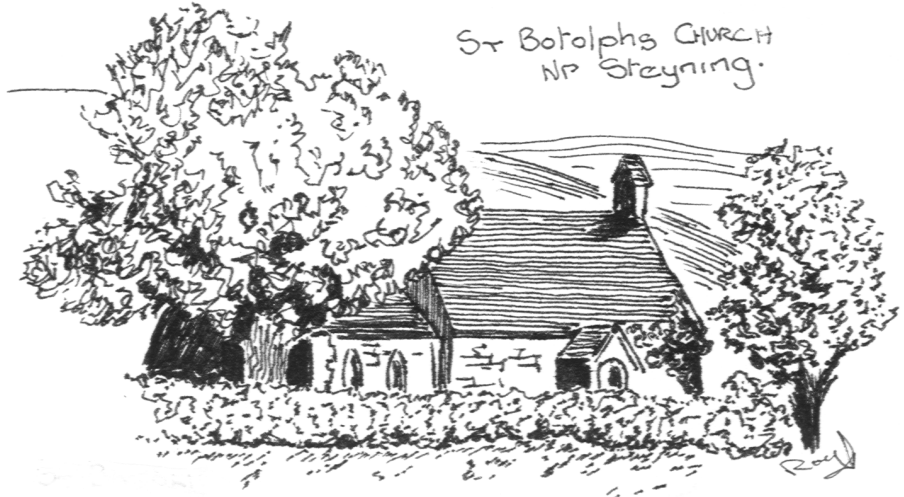
BOSHAM CHURCH.

ST PETER'S CHURCH
FOLKINGTON.



SOME SUSSEX CHURCHES
by
Roy James

ST BOTOLPHS CHURCH
NP STEYNING.



HOSTELLING IN THE MALVERNS, OCTOBER 27 – 30th 2005

by Ann Rix



Having had difficulty booking at some Youth Hostels, because of closings or refurbishing, we finally settled on Malvern Hills for the half-term break. Another reason was that this hostel was also one of those on the closure list – in fact it was already on the market. David and I agreed that we would like to stay there once more as he and I had stayed there, with the rest of the family, in 1967 on our 517 mile tour in 15 days riding all the way. My husband rode our Claude Butler Tandem with our daughter Lesley 9 on the back, I rode the Jack Taylor with help from David

10½, while John nearly 12 rode his single, except for one day when he was badly bitten so changed places with David.

Wednesday, collected by the family about 9.30 am, car tyres pumped up and finally left at 9.50 am. Queues of traffic at Beddingham was not a good start, but not too bad after that as we joined the A23 for 11's at Wyvale Garden Centre at Hand Cross. Be warned this one has a more expensive Tea Room, not like the one at Lower Dicker - we thought we don't want too many like this for the next few days. On up to the M25, lots of lorries, then the M40 through the Chilterns, skirting Oxford on the A40, joining the A44 heading for the Cotswolds.

We had taken a packed lunch with us to be on the safe side, agreeing we could always have it for our evening meal if need be. As it happened about a mile along the A44 at Yarnton Susan said 'Garden Centre', so on to the roundabout and down a small lane and there it was. To our surprise they had a super restaurant, a good variety of meals to suit most folks, not long to wait either so we were all soon tucking in. We all agreed that if it fitted in with our return journey this would be the place for Sunday lunch.

On we went greatly refreshed, passing the gates to Blenheim Palace at Woodstock, through Chipping Norton and Moreton in Marsh to Broadway seeing the lovely drystone walls that edge the fields of the Cotswolds area. Through the Vale of Evesham to Pershore with Bredon Hill on our left, it was raining now so definitely not 'Summertime on Bredon' as the song says. We were now thinking teatime, but where? David as usual had been looking up other D.A.s' tearoom lists, though did not get a reply from one in the area we wanted. We ended up at Upton Upon Severn, The Cosy Café, CTC recommended (and by us as well), a quick look at the Severn nearby then it was on again.

We reached the Malverns about 5pm, found a Somerfield to stock up for our four days stay, it was fine by now fortunately so on up to the Hostel to get booked in and sorted out. Cycles into the bike store, I got delayed there as a young woman was trying to tighten her front wheel not realizing the locknuts were loose – CTC to the rescue once more – she reckoned she'd had a master class. The family meanwhile wondered what had happened to me and went searching, at least I missed having to help carry bags up to our room. We were glad our meals had worked out the way they had as the self-catering kitchen was busy and we only had to make our drinks and have our picnic. Card games to

round off the evening then bed by about 10pm after a long day.

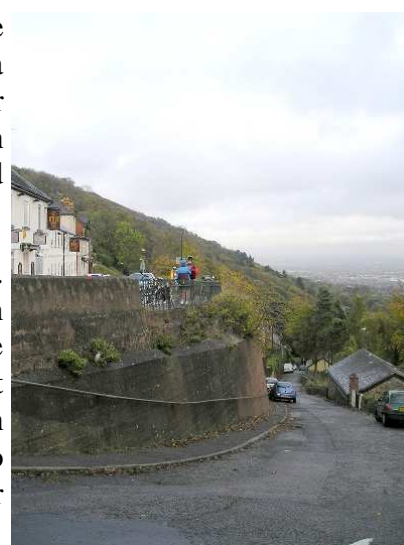
Thursday, as the forecast promised, a lovely day, very warm though did blow a bit chilly after 11's for a while, which we had at a Garden Centre on our way to Newent. The girl at the checkout tried to charge Susan £24 for our five 11's, she soon had to sort it out to £13 odd, a foreign student I surmise. It was a very nice spot with a veranda to sit and watch the shoals of fish below, but definitely not worth £24. On to Newent for a wander



round the Shambles, a Victorian Village hidden behind the houses in the middle of town, with over eighty shops and shop windows to either wander in and out of, up and down stairs and steps, or peer in shop windows, a fascinating look at days gone by. This made it a late lunch by the lake behind the church at 2 pm, watching the ducks swim to and fro.

Leaving there at 2.40 pm we headed for Ledbury and our afternoonses, this was much better – one of a group of youths by the Market Hall came across and asked me what we were doing there, I said looking for a café – he offered to show us – up the hill through the town we went to a Cybernet caff – not quite what we had in mind but we thanked him and off he sped. Two doors up was a Bakery with enticing cakes in the window so in we went, good drinks and cakes for - wait for it - £7.50 for all five, very different from the morning. A good rolling ride back - until we hit the hills - the worst was the mile long climb back up to the Malverns by 5.20 pm. We all got very hot and needed a shower before cooking our super meal. Table Tennis for Martin and Emma in the games room (basement), then cards before heading for bed by 10 pm after another good day.

Friday, rain showers early, we set off hoping for the best. Climbed up from the hostel to turn right then further on sharply left up Wyche Road, the old salt road the packhorses used (“Old Wyche Road” looked a lot steeper), to cross over the Malverns and drop down, down and down to Colwall. Took a lovely quiet route to Caddington and on to Bosbury where we stopped for photos of the Church with its tower sitting beside it. On to the fascinating Hop Pocket Craft Centre at Bishops



Old and New Wyche roads

Frome for elevenses in their cafe. We had a look round then it was a short ride to lunch at Bromyard outside the Heritage Centre, just finishing when down came the rain so shot into the Centre and looked at the Hop displays there, Hops from start to finish.

Riding back Emma complained of a rear wheel wobble, David had a look, undid the wheel, then wished he hadn't, did it up again as the axle had broken in half. Setting the chain on a lower cog on the block and asking Emma to use the front changer instead of the back, with walking the steep hills, we managed to get back though later than before so, as it was getting dark, David, Martin and Emma headed back to the hostel while Susan and I did some more shopping. We then slowly made our way back, uphill with the load, to hear they had found Emma's carrier had broken as well. Showers first as we found the hostel had filled up with Northants YHA Group who were busy in the kitchen. Prepared our meal which by then we were ready for then waited for the single sink to be free to wash up, this was the drawback to the hostel. Games in the evening again before bed while discussing what to do next day now that one cycle needed attention.

Saturday, having decided that too much time would be wasted trying to sort out Emma's back wheel even if we could get a replacement, we all went out in the car rather than splitting up with some riding and some by bus. It was a chilly day as we headed off in another direction to a place David had thought would be too far on two wheels, Avoncroft Museum at Bromsgrove. On the same lines as the Weald and Downland



Museum in West Sussex, with old houses, etc., saved from the area. We reached there before opening time but were soon able to get into the café for 11's. Armed with a booklet we started off, but it wasn't long before Martin and Emma were having fun with the collection of old telephone boxes, some of which were connected to each other also to the police box – The Tardis. There were AA and RAC boxes there too. We were lucky they were only charging £1 each over the halloween weekend, it would have been about £20 for us all normally. Still chilly so we sat in the car to have a late lunch.

We explored further on after lunch looking for the Worcester and Birmingham Canal with its umpteen locks. We managed to park near a bridge then walked along the towpath and were lucky to see two boats going through, one up and the other down through the locks, these were very narrow so took some skill to manoeuvre them through, they were also very close together so they'd no sooner done one than it was on to the next, rather than me but Martin and Emma thought they would like to try it.

Afternoonses, after one disappointment, was had at the Bakery in Pershore then it was back to the hostel for the last time. Our evening meal over we chatted with the YHA

Group, especially over the survey we'd been given about the hostel. All agreeing it didn't cover all the points we'd like to make. This took us till 11pm 'New Time' all having changed our watches, David managed to finish the jigsaw he'd been doing, with a little help from me.

Sunday, having sorted clothing the night before, we were soon ready for packing the car after breakfast. It had been raining at times but just managed it and got the bikes loaded before it got heavier. We headed for Tewksbury where, after walking through the streets then by the River Avon in the rain, we finally ended up in the Abbey Refectory for elevenses. Had a chat here with a couple from Gloucester CTC who had come on their tandem. Back to the car and on via Stow on the Wold, to show Martin and Emma the Youth Hostel where we had stayed in the past. On to Yarnton and the Garden Centre where we'd promised ourselves a Sunday Lunch, very good it was too. Following the same route back we were soon homeward bound, stopping off at Washbrooks for tea before the last miles home after a very good five days break.



Locks near Bromsgrove



UNIFACTS – ODD FACTS ABOUT UNICYCLES



Tallest: 31.01m (101ft 9in) high

Ridden by some nutter, namely Steve McPeak, over a distance of 114.6m (376ft) in Las Vegas, Oct. 1980. Proving some scrap of sanity, he had a safety wire attached to a crane. Possibly blowing the sanity idea out of the window, he once rode a 32ft high unicycle from Chicago to Los Angeles.

Smallest: 20cm (8in) low

Again in Las Vegas, a Swede called Peter Rosendahl rode the stunning distance of 3.6m (12ft) on 25 March 1994. Must beg the question why? There must be something in the water in Vegas...

Largest: 66-inch diameter wheel

'Large Marge' was the largest unicycle ever made, and was owned by Dave Moore, Michael Leebolt and Steve Gordon. All 'crazy' Californian guys, Steve had the first ride on 17 October 1986.

Fastest: 23mph

Floyd Beattie was timed over 200m at an International Human Powered Vehicle Association meeting in Indianapolis in 1988.

Fastest over 100m: 12.11 secs (29.72kph)

Set on 1 July 1990 by Peter Rosendahl, a man with an obvious Guinness Book of Records fixation.

Fastest 100 miles: 6hr, 44min, 21.84secs

Takayuki Koike of Kanagawa, Japan on 9 August 1987. He was 18 years old, and rode a unicycle with a wheel diameter of 42 inches. He did not dismount for the entire distance!

Silliest: 74.75km (46.7 miles)

BACKWARDS in a time of 9 hrs, 25 mins on 19 May 1990 in Las Vegas... Peter Rosendahl again.

A COUPLE OF POEMS

Two poems by Tom Mason, reprinted with acknowledgements to the F.C.O.T.

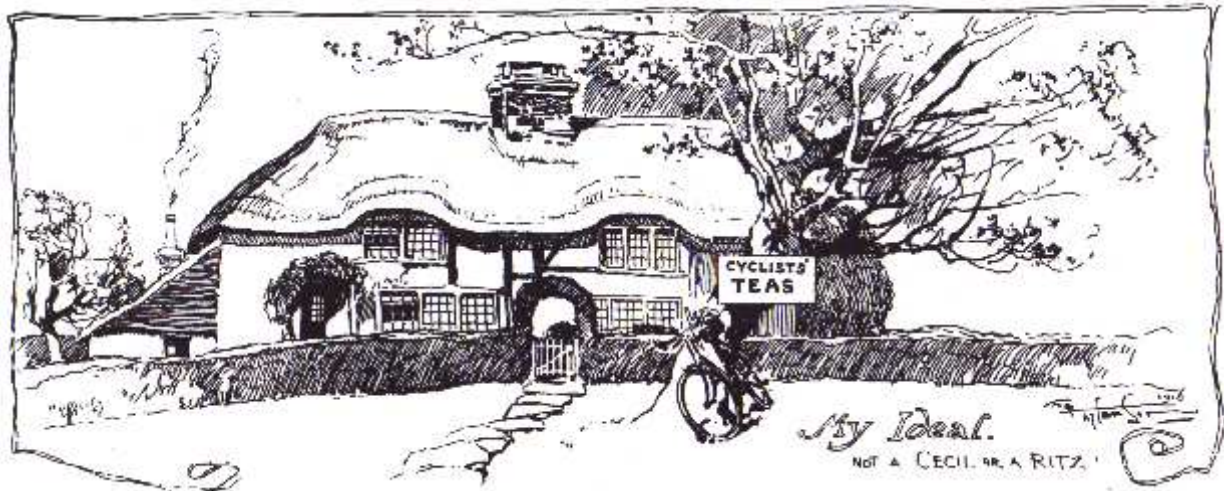
At Year's Beginning

On Winter nights I dream of Summer days,
I dream of warm and blissful sunny hours,
I dream I roam those lovely country ways
Where grassy banks are bright with yellow flowers;
Where butterflies precede me as I go
And flutter on in vague, uncertain flight;
Where hedgerow birds, whose names I never know,
Break into song to add to my delight.

These dreams I have when nights are dark and long,
I dream these dreams when Winter nights are cold,
My dreams are of the sun, the birds, their song,
And grassy banks enriched by living gold,
Of butterflies and skies of vivid blue,
And soon they'll be no longer dreams - but true!

Lines Written in Praise of a Favourite Café.

A refuge on a rainy day, a welcome that prolongs the stay,
A garden (should the day be fine) where outdoor folk may drink or dine.
Where cyclists talk of past events, or record climbs, or fast descents;
Where future weekend jaunts are planned, with tea and toast in great demand.
A place to know, a friendly place, for tourists and for those that race;
Where age gap is a term unknown, 'tis just that we have older grown,
And cyclists all both fast and slow, are welcome here. 'Tis good to know.





BLAZING THE TRAIL TO PARIS

by Geoff Boxall



The inaugural London to Paris trailblaze ride was a joint East Sussex County Council (E.S.C.C.) and Seine Maritime venture to sound out the possibility of a cyclo-tourist route. Jenny and I were invited because we had expressed interest the previous year when we rode the Avenue Verte event sponsored by the E.S.C.C.

Jenny decided that the daily distances were more than she wanted and generously gave up a booked 5-day trip to France so that I could go. Joyce and Les had also been booked on our trip and I managed to get them to transfer and come with me. The bikes were collected by E.S.C.C. van on Thursday afternoon as well as our panniers.

On Friday we met at Ringmer and Jenny ferried us to Lewes Station to catch the 8.45 to London. We expected to see some of the other participants. None showed up so we travelled up on our own. We expected to see others on the platform at Victoria, but we were still on our own. After a fruitless tour, hunting for our bikes and panniers, we returned to a payphone and dialled Tobias Bauer's mobile to learn that "they" were at Croydon and would be with us in ten minutes. Once reunited with our bikes and kit we followed our leader to Big Ben where the top brass were taking photos and getting ready for the official off.

Once under way we soon felt the streets and found ourselves riding through all sorts of twittens, alleys and paths, hardly seeing any cars until arriving at Carshalton at 2.00 p.m. We ate our picnic and drank tea by the pond, then continued through parks – over Farthing Down to Gatwick. En-route Eddy Collicot took a header on some loose gravel banging his chest on his brake lever. Our route took us via the Worth Way to our hotel at Felbridge, Eddy and Tobias having diverted to get Eddy's ribs checked out – nothing broken fortunately. Joyce's pannier frame snapped just above the mudguard eye, but by splinting it to a mudguard stay it survived the rest of the trip.

Our Saturday route took us along the Forest Way to Eridge, then route 21 to Heathfield. The path at Redgate Mill was lethal, especially with low loaders. The section from Newick Lane to Heathfield was uphill, very loose surface (horse damage) and a very long walk! Lunch was taken at Wessons Café at Horam where Ann Rix and Jenny met us. We continued down the Cuckoo Trail, turning West just short of the A27 following route 2 on the track through Ogg's Wood. What had been slurry two months earlier had been turned into a tip for hard core, but at least it was now rideable! Many of the participants were from the Transport and Environment departments of various councils - mainly East Sussex - and were able to see at first hand the difficulties of crossing the A27 at Wilmington.

Further difficulties were highlighted at the Golden Galleon at Exceat, where discretion dictated that we took a path into Seaford rather than risk the main road. We dined at the Flying Fish at Denton. John, ex-Mayor of Seaford, had joined us, having had his old bike "serviced" – new chain and cassette fitted. Unknown to him his chainrings were shot and Tobias ended up changing cranks and rings and bracket outside the pub. Just what you need when you've got an 8 p.m. deadline to catch a boat. We did make it, though quite how I still do not know.

We disembarked at 1 a.m. French time. Within 100 metres of the hotel, up a long steady climb, John's chain snapped depositing him heavily on the tarmac. Another job for Tobias in the morning! The hotel was similar to a Youth Hostel, used a lot by sports clubs. We were

joined by Claud and Daniel, two Parisian cyclotourists who were our French leaders. Also there was Roger Beuraine, my Dieppe friend, who had come to ride with us for the morning.

Elevenes was taken on the start of the Avenue Verte. I was asked to be interviewed by a charming lady reporter. "I'm not the oldest," I replied, "Les is a year older than me and Joyce a tiny bit older than him." The reporter loved it! Joyce had her photo taken from all angles and her every word translated into French by Phil, all of which appeared in the local paper that week.



A picnic was provided for us at Neufchatel, where we found any shade we could. The afternoon was uncomfortably hot and we dived into the first bar we could find in Forges-Les-Eaux for iced tea. The lanes to Gournay-en-Bray were cooler. We had to split up, no one hotel being able to cope with our 18 riders. By arrangement we all met at the Pizza house at 8 p.m. There was a real French ambience about the group; the wine flowed and the tongues loosened and the banter went on until 10 p.m.

The next morning, it being Monday, it was decided that we should find a Shoppi and buy a picnic. Claud took us all round Gournay for some considerable time until we found one. It was a good job that we did! Our 60 mile day went up and down through the countryside with not a watering hole to be seen all day. When we eventually arrived, our Formula 1 "hotel", 28 miles from Paris, was all that was available. It was on a dodgy trading estate. A scout had found the only eating establishment, a couple of miles away. It turned out to be a couscous house, but they were delighted to see us – you want it, they supplied, to hell with the menu! We three had omelette and chips, with wine of course.

On Tuesday Claud led us into Paris, mainly on roads, but eventually on a canal path. Even Claud lost himself at times. We had also been joined by a French councillor on a rough old bike, who kept rushing ahead and taking photos. In Paris more hype – photos, hand shaking and a set-up ride into the square because they hadn't got a movie of our arrival the first time. The bikes and unneeded bags were then loaded onto a van to be taken to Dieppe and we were shepherded onto the Metro to our Hotel.

I luxuriated in a long bath and afterwards we all met Daniel who shepherded us to a splendid bar just round the corner from where he lived. A fabulous evening – steak and chips washed down with lots of the red stuff. Presentations to Joyce, as the star of the ride and the only lady to complete the whole event, and Martin, a late forty-something from Surrey who was trying to lose his beer gut before he was 50 – he was awarded his memento for his supreme effort in getting to Paris. Martin was a lovely man who had to work for every one of his 250 journey without ever complaining. We all ended up in Daniel's flat with more refreshments. What an evening.

Next morning it was onto the 59 bus for a sightseeing ride and a trip to the top of the Eiffel Tower, then it was via metro to the station and back to Dieppe with an hour to spare for the boat home. Just time to renew stocks of red to fill up the spaces in the panniers! Home on a flat calm sea to be collected by Jenny at Newhaven.

All credit to the ESCC and Seine Maritime for getting such a large mixed-ability group to Paris - without serious incident. The CTC input was no more than "pit-stop puncture repairs" and teaching all the others group riding discipline. By Paris everyone was pointing out potholes and shouting "oil up", etc. A very worthwhile exercise.



Are You a Real Cyclist?

(I was given this a while ago, it looks like it came from a cycling magazine. Ed.)



Real cycling is not about gear ratios, wearing lycra the colour of rainforest toads, or riding to the country pub in the sun, then getting a taxi back because it's dark and raining. No. Real cycling is fixing your second puncture on a windy night. It's buying a three-metre curtain pole, then realising you have to bike it home like a medieval joust. It's crunching your way to work through thick snow, arriving half an hour late icy-toed and white-fingered -- to find everyone else has taken the day off because their cars wouldn't start! Real cycling is frustrating, inconvenient, exhausting -- and huge fun. See which of these things you've done to find your Real Cyclist rating out of 100.

Have you ever...

Shifted a huge load. What's the biggest thing you've moved? For real cyclists, having cargo doesn't mean you go by car. And we're not talking plastic carrier bags dangling from handlebars. We're talking hatstands, vacuum cleaners, sofas, coal bunkers, trees. They have all been biked, and today's trailers can transport anything you could fit in a small car.

Score 5 pts for big shopping, 8 for mid-size appliance (computer etc.), 11 for comedy items (snooker table, canoe, double bed etc.).

Biked Across Britain. The ultimate British ride is Land's End to John O'Groats (the tail-wind way). The 900 or so miles take one to three weeks -- plus, if you're doing it for charity, about six months to chase up all your sponsors. Too busy? The Coast to Coast (C2C) route is a quick and convenient way to 'do' Britain side-to-side. The inspiring 120-mile route can be done easily in a long weekend; a sort of End-to-End Lite. Or you could do the Audax Paris-Brest Paris -- 750 miles in 5 days! -- not forgetting all the 200, 300, 400 & 600 qualifying rides of course.

Score 7 pts for the C2C, 16 pts (max) for the End to End, (P-B-P or similar length routes); 2 pts extra if you actually managed to collect all your sponsorship money (if any).

Biked to work frozen. "There's no such thing as bad weather, only inadequate clothing"; true, but arriving at work on a winter morning looking like Sir Ranulph Fiennes is rarely looked on as promotional. But then, no-one ever failed to start their bike because of the cold. And carless snowed-up roads under a clear sharp sky are breathtaking. Literally.

Score one point for every degree C below zero (max 10) of your coldest-ever commute.

Failed a repair. Punctures miles from anywhere are bad enough -- especially back-wheel ones from the invisible gramophone needles infesting cycle tracks. But no points for those.

To score you must have failed to fix (2 pts) something major (buckled wheel, collapsed rack etc. - 2 pts) with hopelessly makeshift tools (e.g. rock, grass to stuff tyre, coat-hanger - 2 pts) and had to push or freewheel back to civilisation (2 pts). Max 8 pts.

Busted the speed limit. Real cyclists know their law. For example, cycle to church on Christmas Day and you contravene the Holy Days Act, 1551 (you must walk). On the other hand, you cannot be charged with speeding on a bike. There is no such offence. (This on the authority of His Honour Patrick Halnan, no less, in a letter to The Times in Nov 1997.) You can be done for cycling "dangerously", "carelessly and inconsiderately" or "furiously"; but if you're safe, careful and considerate, there's nothing to stop you zonking along at 45 in a 30 limit. **Score** 5 pts for busting the speed limit. (Minus 20 pts for Christmas cycling to church. Cycling Plus cannot condone breaking the law.)

Been carless. Few things show as much commitment to two wheels. Bask in the respectful astonishment of friends and relatives as they grapple with the enormity ("but how do you take the kids to school... get the shed back from Homebase... train-and-cycle to Go-

sport?"). Make them feel guilty (fossil fuels, pollution, asthma, road accidents, etc.). **Score** 5 pts if you have been or ever were carless for over a year in adult life, 5 more if over three years, 5 more if carless now.

Dripped all day. English rain, unlike foreign precipitation, can also go upwards, sideways & backwards. It knows where your feet are. It will keep them squelching all day. The exquisite dread of putting on wet shoes after camping in the rain is unforgettable. **Score** 5 pts.

Been thrown off bus / train. Bikes on trains? No problem: simply call the information line on your mobile phone to see what changes they made to the regulations that morning. Bikes on coaches? They're welcome, so long as you enclose your machine in a six-foot concrete case that's so convenient to carry around. **Score** 5 pts for any enforced exit from public transport; 2 more for aggravating circumstances (the carriage was empty anyway, you'd checked up by phone before, etc.) Max 7 pts.

Ridden a recumbent. It doesn't matter whether you're for ("easier, faster, better on your back and private parts") or against ("dangerous in traffic, impossible up hills"), just so long as you speak from experience. **Score** 3 pts, plus 2 if you careered in circles before falling off first time round.

Had a bike nicked. ...plus a bonus point if you a) kept looking round the local streets expecting to see it ridden by the thief or b) scanned the paper for reports of someone painfully injured in an accident while riding your machine. But zero pts if you made on the insurance. **Score** 0 - 6 pts.

Been on a demo. In those pub conversations where you put the transport world to rights, your opinion counts double if you've been on a demo. London's Critical Mass rides, usually 5.45 pm on the last Friday of the month from the South Bank, are generally sociable, well-attended shows of gentle force from thousands of cyclists simply happening to congregate. **Score** 5 pts. Extra 5 pts if you buy the next round.

Back-marked in a race or Audax ride. The Ashes. Argentina. Eddie the Eagle. We're obsessive about failure. You get more attention from being a heroic last than an effortless first, in cycling like everything else. Sadly for the sneerers, Audax rides are organised for sheer enjoyment & personal challenge. They don't publish 'results lists'. Your satisfaction in happily bringing up the rear will be between you and your friends, many of whom you'll have made on the ride. **Score** 5 pts.

Your Ratings

70+	Real Cyclist	If you run into Adam Hart-Davis, Josie Dew, Jeremy Paxman or John Snow in a cafe, you can swap stories as peers.
45-69	Real Good	Indurain might beat you up the Alps, but you'll be first back with your groceries from the supermarket.
21-44	Real Trouble	Look at your bike. Why is it so clean and new-looking?
0-20	Real Bad	Driving your bike to the shop to have a puncture mended is not big or clever, you know.



Answer to Guess Who?: Bill Earl looking for HM The Queen over the wall at Sandringham

BELIEVE IT OR NOT!



This photo is genuine and comes from the Airstream Archive at www.airstream.net/as_photos/photos.html Alfred Letour- near (France) towed this 22' Liner in the late '40's as an Airstream publicity stunt. Unfortunately, I couldn't find any information as to how far he towed it, how he got it started – or how he stopped! Ed.

THE HEADLESS CYCLIST

A winter ghost story

George Dobbs was determined that the bitter weather and shortages of wartime Britain were not going to get him down. It was 1940 and the country was in the grip of one of its worst Winters for years. Snow covered the countryside and, to make matters worse, the war news was gloomy.

George wrapped himself up against the hostile night and set out from his home near Northampton to walk to the Fox and Hounds pub for a few beers to cheer himself up.

With his hands deep in his pockets he struggled up the slippery slope past the cemetery when he noticed the dim lights of a car slowly approaching, its wheels running in and out of icy ruts. Framed against the lights of the car, George saw a cyclist pedalling towards him. He too was having difficulty in steering his machine because of the ice and snow.

At first George thought that the cyclist had no head, but he quickly dismissed the idea as being a trick of the light or the fact that the rider had muffled himself up well against the cold.

The next time George glanced up, the cyclist was still fighting for control of his machine, completely unaware of the approaching car. But before George had a chance to cry out, the car drew level with him and chugged past towards Market Harborough.

George could not believe it. The car must have hit the cyclist, he thought. He ran through the snow as fast as he could to the spot where he had last seen the cyclist – expecting to find the result of a terrible accident.

There was nothing. No cyclist, no cycle and no accident. George searched both side of the road in vain. He fled as fast as his legs could carry him to the Fox and Hounds at nearby Kingthorpe. As he thawed out in the bar, he told his story.

When George finished there was silence – until Lid Green, who was for many years the local gravedigger, leaned across the bar. He said, “That sounds just like the chap I buried 25 years ago. He knocked off his bike in deep snow outside the cemetery gates.”

“His head was torn off in the crash.”