

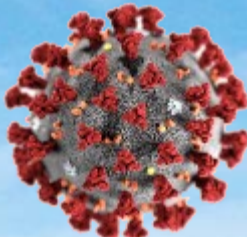


Quarter Wheeler

2020 Issue 1

Autumn

The magazine of the Hounslow & District Wheelers



2020 Year of Covid 19

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Farewell Trevor: The Legend that was T.G

Editor: Patsy Howe

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Please contact me if you have any comments or would like to suggest news or an article for the magazine.

For more information about Hounslow & District Wheelers, visit our web site: <http://www.hdwcycling.co.uk> or find us on Facebook.

Editor's note (possibly a one off!)

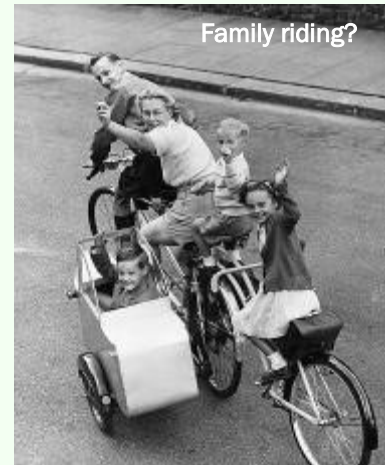
Apologies for the long delay in producing the Club Magazine, but in my defence, it has been a strange year; I hope it provides a little light relief. A second lockdown has begun, and café stops are, once again, no longer allowed. We are fortunate, however, that our sport is officially deemed beneficial. During the first lockdown it was lovely to see many more people out on their bikes, including families, enjoying the calm and quiet of the relatively pollution free roads. Unfortunately, the quiet roads were short lived, but it was nice while it lasted. Competitive cycling and group rides were banned though and our racing calendar for 2020 has been severely affected with the Autumn '25' Time Trial the only club event to take place this year.

Winter approaches and, at home it is the time of year when a silent but determined battle takes place, I suspect ours is not the only house where this happens. I'm talking, of course, about the struggle for control of the central heating. Not a word is spoken but the on off button definitely takes a battering until the weather turns so cold that even the most warm blooded agree that heating is a necessity.

Many thanks to those who have made contributions; as always there are some great articles and I am always very impressed and grateful to those who take the time and trouble to recount their experiences and, or thoughts. We have a new (hopefully to become) regular item this edition, begun by Chris Lovibond. It is entitled 'Now and Then' and involves submitting two pictures / photos of the same place on your cycle ride taken (or drawn) years apart for comparison. Have a go! It might provide different perspectives and points of interest when out on our bikes.

Best wishes to all, especially those who have experienced or are going through tough times due to the pandemic.

Patsy Howe (editor)



HDW Club Clothing

*Half price sale to clear
existing stock prior to reorder*



Item 1:

Short Sleeved Top with full zip & 3 pocket

Size	Number	Clearance
Small (2)	Nil	
Medium (3)	3	£16
Large (4)	2	£16
X-Large (5)	Nil	
2X-Large (6)	1	£16



Item 4:

Gilet

Size	Number available	Clearance price
X-Small	1	£18
Small	5	£18
Medium	2	£18
Large	2	£18
X-Large	3	£18
2X-Large	Nil	



Item 2:

Long Sleeve Jersey with full zip & 3 pockets

Size	Number Available	Clearance Price
Small	1	£18.50
Medium	1	£18.50
Large	1	£18.50
X-Large	Nil	
2X-Large	1	£18.50



Item 5:

Bibshorts: These will not be re-ordered - when stock is gone, it is gone

Size	Number	Clearance
X-Small	1	£18
Small	5	£18
Medium	2	£18
Large	2	£18
X-Large	2	£18
2X-Large	2	£18



Item 3:

Lightweight 'Windtex' shell Jacket 3 rear pockets

Size	Number	Clearance
Small	3	£21
Medium	4	£21
Large	1	£21
X-Large	1	£21
2X-Large	Nil	

Item 6:

Windtex thermal Winter Jacket full zip 3 rear pockets: These will not be re-ordered - when stock is gone, it is gone

Size	Number available	Clearance price
Large only	3	£22

Club Kit Contact:
Jeff Marshall: jeffm41@gmail.com

Final Club Result of 2019

Autumn '25' 15th September

Position	Name	Club	Result
1st	James Cadman	H&DW	00:57:46
2nd	Mark Silver & Jill Bartlett	H&DW	01:03:53
3rd	Bruce McMichael	H&DW	01:12:00
4th	David Howe	H&DW	01:15:15
5th	Luke Carter	H&DW	01:19:48
Other rides			
	Ragnar Laan	Twickenham CC	01:00:30
	Jamie Richardson-Paige	Chippenham & Dist	01:01:53
	Dan Thisdell	PTT	01:09:18



James Cadman



Mark Silver & Jill Bartlett



Bruce McMichael



Dave Howe



Luke Carter

Photos: Patsy Howe

Club Result 2020

Autumn '25' 13th September

Pos	Name	Club	Result
1st	Tim Budd	H&DW	00:59:45
2nd	Nic Stagg	H&DW	01:00:11
3rd	Jill Bartlett	H&DW	01:19:19
4th	Jo Wells	H&DW	01:27:06

Other rides

	Ragnar Laan	Twick'm CC	01:00:00
	Dave French	Weyb'ge Whs	01:00:50
	Nic Charles	Chiswick CC	01:07:01
	Brian Jones	Horsham CC	01:12:42
	Pippa O'Brien	RT Poda	01:31:25



Photos: Patsy Howe



Photo: Chris Lovibond

Sadly the Autumn '25' was the only club event held by Hounslow and District Wheelers in 2020 due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Racing this year has been a shadow of its former self

OBITUARY – THE LEGEND THAT WAS TG.

Trevor Gilbert – 1938 – 2020

Trevor died alone of a heart attack at his flat, in Churchfield House, a retirement home in Cobham Surrey on 26h Aug. He was 81. Several friends spoke to him during his last days and he seemed to be his usual very verbose self!

Trevor had no living close family relatives after his mother, who lived to be 100, died in 2017.

He was an only child, born in December 1938 in Long Sutton, a small market town in the Lincolnshire Fens, about five miles from The Wash and the North Sea. His parents, Jim and Joyce were members of the Wisbech Wheelers C.C.

He also joined the Wisbech Whs. In 1952 when aged 14 and rode a 25 mile tt the same year, recording a 1 11 26.

Aged 19, he moved south to live near High Wycombe, then the furniture making capital of the UK, where he enrolled at The High Wycombe college of Tech. and Art, to study wooden furniture design and cabinet making from 1957 to 1961. He joined his second club the High Wycombe C.C. in 1957. He toured and raced with them, often doing prodigious mileages in a week, as we did in those days. He got a job as a draughtsman / designer in Central London with the GLC in County Hall, on the south bank of the Thames where he produced drawings for bespoke school furniture.

Trevor endured more than his fair share of tragedy and sadness in his life. He met his first wife Tina in 1961 and they got married in 1963. They both worked in London, commuting daily from Amersham-on-the-Hill, by train. They both cycled and toured with his second club, the High Wycombe C.C. This was a halcyon time for Trevor but it ended in tragedy, when Tina, pregnant at the time, was killed in an accident with a bus in London. Trevor was devastated but somehow soldiered on alone.

Prior to this, for Tina's health, they had moved from Amersham, to Live on the 'Maggie May' a big houseboat on the Thames, first with a mooring at Taggs Island, Richmond, then at Dumsey Meadow, Chertsey around 1968.



In those far off days it was normal for a cyclist to belong to a club near his home, and since 'TG' had known Dave Stalker of old, he then joined the Feltham R.C. his third club. Never a man to shirk club duties, he organised both their Open '25' & their Annual Dinner in 1971.

With improving morale and searching for a challenge in his cycle racing and to improve his time trialling, Trevor joined our club, the Hounslow, his fourth and final club in 1972 at the height of our fame for racing achievements. He trained and raced with us, improving all of his time trialling PB's. We had a big influence on his life and he on ours. Through us, he met and married his second wife Marilyn, a Welsh girl who was a friend of Julie Ayton, sister of our clubmate Steve Ayton. They hosted some great parties on the 'Maggie May' in the 1970's

They eventually sold the 'Maggie May' and moved into a small terraced house in Medlake Road Egham. His life seemed settled and he was happy again. Early In 1983 Marilyn presented him with a son, Owen who was 'the apple of his eye'. Then tragedy and sadness struck again. Owen died suddenly, aged only three months. The diagnosis was Cot Death Syndrome. The funeral was the saddest I have ever known. Owens tiny coffin caused emotions hard to control. Once again the bottom had fallen out of Trevor's world. He was very, very low; bereft.

Some time later Trevor lost his job with the GLC and took early retirement. Sadly in the difficult months and years that followed, Trevor and Marilyn parted and sold Medlake Rd. in 1993. Trevor kept his sanity by burying himself in cycling related activities, organising, timekeeping, record keeping, anything to occupy his mind, I guess.

In 1993 he moved to a flat in a house in Dudley Rd. Walton on Thames for 13 years before becoming a lodger in our clubmate Dennis Egans house in Hithermore Rd. Stanwellmoor. When Dennis moved away in 2006 Trevor lodged with us for a month before finding a flat near the Scilly Isles for a brief period. Finally, In 2007, settling in flat no 74, Churchfield House, a retirement home in Cobham. He always had an interest in classical music attending concerts at Kneller Hall and other London venues. He was also a supporter of the Yehudi Menuhin school of music.

He always lived in small places and he had a lot of 'stuff' and so had to be very meticulous, organised and tidy in his ways. He recorded every event he ever rode, with all the details. He said he took after his Dad, who was a navy man and liked everything 'spic & span'. He knew, for example, that he had ridden 801 time trials and everything about them. He did ride on various velodromes and a few road races, rode tandem, tt's and team time trials. He rode his last event in 1994..... As Michael Caine said "not many people know that"



TG was legendary for his verbosity. But he was not a good listener! At our rumbustious club dinners in the 70's and 80's he was ribbed unmercifully for this. On one occasion he was presented with a full size 'hind leg of a donkey'. On another occasion those seated each side of him were wearing ear defenders! Another time we all unfurled newspapers as he rose to give a speech! He took it very well though, basking in the attention.



Using his impeccably kept records, Trevor wrote a three-piece article for our magazine in recent years, entitled 'Born to Ride' (refer to magazines 2015 iss.1 / 2016 iss.1 / 2017 iss. 1)

To acknowledge his enormous contribution to our club In 2019 we published an article entitled 'Thanks a bundle TG. (or one guy did all this?)', refer to our magazine 2019 iss.1. Trevor made a difference. We will not see the like of this character again.

You may not believe it to look at him recently, but in the seventies that tubby little old guy was a lean, muscular cycling machine and often a third counter in our many 'team' wins in open time trials.

His time trialling PB's, all done in the 70's were ; 10miles 22-07, 25miles 57.36, 50miles1.56.17, 100miles 4.18.27, 12hrs 246.7miles. Not bad at all, eh?.....RIP TG

Jeff Marshall
18th September 2020

Footnote to Trevor's obituary.

If Trevor Gilbert had lived in the ancient world people would have assumed that he had done some terrible thing which had offended the Gods. There seems to be no reason why such an inoffensive person, whose heart was always in the right place, should have suffered so much bad luck.

However, in one way The Hounslow and cycling generally benefited since, as Jeff says, Trevor threw himself into his cycling work in a way that a family man with a full time job could not possibly have done. It is hard to imagine him ever being replaced.

I'd just like to add that Trevor's advice, encouragement and on occasions, physical help was a great benefit to my own modest racing career. Thank you Trevor.

Chris Lovibond

Your Rubber: Tubeless or Tubed?

Jeff Marshall



My trials and tribulations. A salutary lesson in puncturology. Are you ready to throw away your inner tubes?

In June this year I took delivery of a top end Ribble Endurance SL Disc road bike. It has Mavic Ksyrium Elite carbon disc wheels with rims ready for tubeless tyres. To cope with the crappy potholed roads of Surrey, I had ordered 28mm Mavic Yksion UST (Universal Standard Tubeless) tubeless tyres....Even with mudguards fitted the Disc brakes allow clearance for 28's. However, the bike was delivered fitted with 25mm Continental Grand Prix 4000s tubeless ready rubber but with inner tubes fitted? Also, loose in the box were a pair of the 28mm Yksion UST tyres I had ordered? But no charge? When I phoned the Ribble workshop to ask why this was, the guy replied "Oh that is how Mavic supplies us the wheels, so we just put the tyres you ordered in with the bike when we finished building it."

So, I started riding the bike with the 25mm Conti tyres and inner tubes.

Until one Tuesday I suffered a puncture.... Luckily, I was only a few miles from home and it was a fine day.

Ho-hum I thought, I will have to put a spare tube in. To my surprise, forty five minutes later I was still struggling to unseat the tyre bead to get the tyre off. Tyre levers just would not go between the rim and the tyre bead. I am sure that the inner tube inside did not help. I tried everything, but for the first time in 63 years of cycling and thousands of punctures, I had to admit defeat! I could not squeeze the tyre hard enough. "my kingdom for a pair of pliers", I thought. Thank god for mobile phones! So I called Linda, who could not believe it, but, after exclaiming "Wot, you can't mend a puncture?" came out in her car to rescue me.

At home with plenty of tools at my disposal, I had to resort to a pair of pliers to squeeze the tyre hard enough to disengage the tubeless bead from its undercut seat in the rim. At this point I decided to go the 'whole hog' and fit the 28mm tyres and the tubeless kit (the special Mavic rim fitting valve and the Muc-Off 'no puncture hassle' sealant)

This is the drill :

- 1) Make up a bottle of soapy water and dribble it over the inside of the rim.
- 2) Mount the tyre and inflate. I used a floor pump. The tyre should seat and seal with a 'pop' and a 'ping'.
- 3) Next let the air out, remove the valve core and inject 40 -50 ml of sealant, spin the wheel to evenly disperse sealant, replace valve core, then inflate again. Bingo!



This is my experience of tubeless

I have had no punctures since, but after a few weeks I deflated a tyre to simulate a puncture and tried removing the tyre. It came off relatively easily, squeezing by hand, no doubt due to the bead being lubricated by the sealant, and the absence of an inner tube. It is claimed that the sealant liquid inside the tyre will seal any normal puncture. To prove this I tried it on a tubeless ready tyre with a small hole in it. And it worked. Also it is claimed that the tubeless rim should retain a flat tyre so you can ride on it. I tried this for about a mile and it seemed OK.

The moral of this story is : Do not use UST tubeless tyres / rims dry and with inner tube fitted unless you carry a pair of pliers with you!

Patching the Unpatchable

Chris Lovibond

FIX IT!

Repairing inner tubes is not a very twenty first century practice – most people (so I hear) never mend a tube.

Even for those who still have rubber solution there are some tubes which seem past repair and a common reason for this is a patch that has failed, either badly applied in the first place or perished. Attempting to get round this may seem to be excessive meanness, but there are at least two situations where such a repair may be necessary: it's Saturday evening and you need the tube for a Sunday ride, or you have a hard to replace item such as a 28" tube with a Woods valve or a 26 x 1.25" with a Presta valve.

It's never a good idea to put one patch over another, so how to remove the remains of the existing patch? They are usually very hard to pull off.

The answer is a Dremel.

This is a small battery powered hand tool used (in this case) with a rotary grinding bit. Surprisingly it's quite easy to grind off the old patch, which is usually rubber, and leave the butyl of the inner tube nicely roughened ready to accept a new patch. If any rubber inner tubes still exist, I doubt whether this technique would work with that type



I have to admit that the cost of the Dremel is equal to a large purchase of inner tubes, but the tool does have many other uses beyond this example of repairing the irreparable.



The stop watch shows the time taken to remove the old patch.

Self-explanatory?



Chris (Lovibond) sent me this photo with the words 'Self-explanatory, I'd say' attached to it. I was baffled as I had not come across the word 'cotted' before. So I googled cotter and found the following definitions: -

1. A peasant farmer in the Scottish Highlands
2. A medieval English villein
3. A fastener consisting of a wedge or pin inserted through a slot to hold two pieces together.

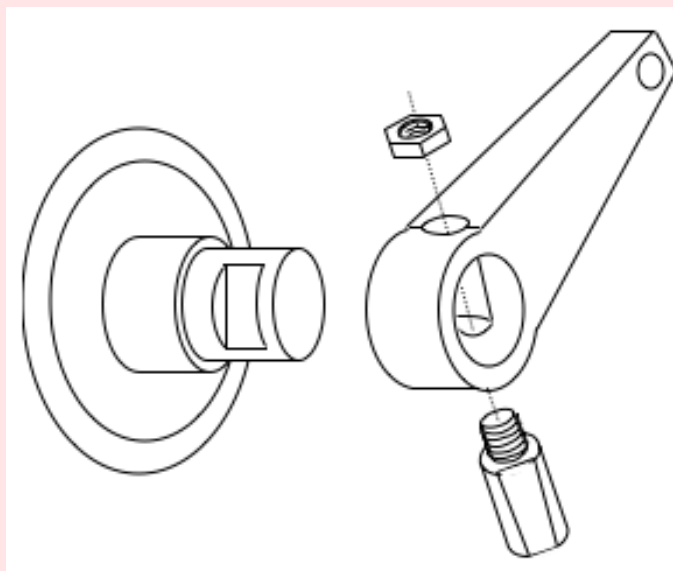
On further investigation I found the following explanation in answer to my question 'What is a crank cotter on a bike?'
Answer: Crank cotter with nut and washer - Many older bicycles use wedge-shaped fasteners called 'cotters' to hold the cranks onto the bottom bracket axle. These cotters have a nut to hold them in place after they have been driven or pressed in.

Reference: sheldonbrown.com/cotters.html

Ah OK! In Chris' words 'Self-explanatory, I'd say'!

For the benefit of me and others who haven't come across the term cottering before, Chris has provided a fuller explanation.

For those of us who grew up with cotter pins it seems almost impossible that the term is no longer familiar to bike riders. Although cotterless cranks had existed from early times (e.g. Rudge) steel cotted cranks were still the norm in the fifties. They were favoured by many of our heroes, at least for the first half of that decade: most of the professional peloton, Reg Harris on the track and for RRA records in 1958 Dave Keeler used Chater-Lea for his End to End followed three weeks later by Reg Randall using the less prestigious but ubiquitous Williams C34. It was only really from about 1960 cotterless cranks (almost always ali) came to be seen as the hallmark of a properly equipped bike. So for us semi geriatrics, not knowing the term cotter-pin is much like never having heard of inner tubes (although that may come) or handlebars.



Cotter Pin crank.
Circular pin with
wedge-shaped cutout
slides through crank
arm and against flat
area of BB axle
(rotated for clarity).

Ref: bikebooboos.com

Many people today think that cotters are an abomination, always troublesome and difficult to deal with. I disagree with this view which I believe is simply caused by lack of skill - in fact in recent years I have had to deal with quite a few cotterless problems. There are at least three difficulties with cotterless systems:

1. If a cotterless crank does come loose (and they do) and the rider doesn't notice, the crank will quickly become irreparably damaged. With a cotted crank it's usually only the easily replaceable cotter-pin which will suffer.
2. With the square taper system there is a temptation (especially after problems with looseness) to overtighten the retaining bolt, which may cause a dangerous fracture of the crank.
3. Cotterless cranks need a special tool for removal - there are numerous possibilities, so there's a fair chance you won't have the right one when you need it. All cotted cranks have the same toolkit - a vice, a file and a hammer.

And so, as Chris pointed out "That photo has produced its own little article".

The Cyclo

Bike!

When setting out to restore an old bike the most frequent starting point is a frame, but in this case I began with a 'Cyclo Standard' derailleur and then looked for the rest of a bike which would suit the mech: the result can be seen in these photos.



One of my very first riding companions in 1956 (we were both eleven) had a bike with this type of gear mech, clearly ancient then and handed down from some relative, but although the bike was worn and the rider weak and unskilled I was impressed by the quality of this machine which to my youthful eye appeared to be easy and smooth running.

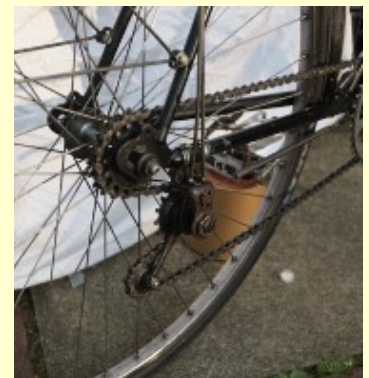
So a good half century later and coming into possession of this type of gear, I decided to build a copy of my young friend's bike. Lorna provided me with the basis in the shape of an unknown but probably pre-war bike.

As it was



Although this was not of the very highest quality it was fine for my purpose - it came with a Resilion front brake, 26" Constrictor wired on rims (of the heaviest type) and a fixed wheel set up.

This vintage bitsa would, I hoped, be pleasant to ride and so get some actual use. Just as this was the type of machine that I can remember elderly CTC riders using when I was young, now it might be useful to me as an old person myself, but to be satisfactory for this purpose it would be necessary to achieve a reasonably low bottom gear. Old derailleurs are nothing like as flexible as the more modern (but pre-index) gears we know so well - a three speed cannot easily be made into a four or five, and mine was a three with the only block available being 16,18 and 20 teeth, not low enough to climb in tourist mode with a full saddlebag. The solution can be seen in the photographs: TA Cyclotouriste rings (46/32) mated to a steel stronglight crank. Perhaps surprisingly this arrangement works quite well even though the rings are 3/32" and the chain (of necessity) is 1/8th. I have cheated slightly by using a modern front changer since it was all I had, but even this doesn't seem to mind the wider chain. These sprockets give reasonably spaced gears from 41.6" to 74.7" which are fine for my current use; Alpine touring might require something different!



The Cyclo works well and its long tension arm copes easily with the big difference between the chainrings. It's interesting to note (thanks, Disraeli Gears website) the 'Le Chemineau' mech of 1912, designed by Paul de Vivie and Joanny Panel, is remarkably similar in appearance to the Cyclo, although its transverse movement is by pull chain against a spring, whereas the Cyclo has a helical slot and peg. Although I've failed to discover exactly when the Cyclo went out of production I know these gears were still in common use in the nineteen sixties - a creditably long run, especially considering origins go back more or less to the beginning of commercially successful derailleurs.

The rest of the bike presented little difficulty - luckily I had a rear Resilion brake available, also the handlebars and stem which are of suitable age. The bars (North Road, flat) are reversed to suit my riding style - this seems an obvious beneficial change since it allows the rider to climb out of the saddle, but judging from old photographs it was never done back in the day. Perhaps climbing *en dansant* was seen as a dangerously foreign activity.

This bike has proved successful in use - it's been to Belgium and covered some of the Liege-Bastogne-Liege course and it's been on V-CC, CTC and Hounslow & District Club runs. If life permits, I still hope to use it for some proper touring involving luggage and Youth Hostels; there's nothing like optimism about the future!



Cote de Wanne, Belgium

Chris said: "It's perhaps worth mentioning that this Belgian photo doesn't represent a long and exhausting ride - my other half was just round the corner with the car! However I did ride a few miles and one memory from that day was seeing a red squirrel - the only one I have ever seen."

A final note - I must offer thanks to Steve Griffiths for his most useful help and advice on the Cyclo mech.

Chris Lovibond.

A Hard Day in January update

Chris Lovibond writes: 'The Hard Day In January ride (first reported in the Quarter Wheeler, 2013 Issue 1) has had some new developments this year. There are two current threads on the ifgss forum

<https://www.ifgss.com/events/5080/?offset=200#comment15060382>

<https://www.ifgss.com/conversations/140570/?offset=600#comment15057095>

You will note that it has become 'international' with a Danish tribute ride. Although it is no longer a HDW event, we were deeply involved at the beginning and I am still supporting it. Since the total number of forum views of all the threads is now around 90,000 I feel it ought to be good for us - even though no effect is noticeable. '

MEET A MEMBER



This edition, Ian Seccombe, 60, is the subject of our regular 'Meet a Member' item.

To start with, Ian describes his earliest cycling memories.



Where it all began

Well, I cannot remember a time when I did not have a bike of some sort. I can just remember my first bike, a maroon, heavy weight tricycle, I would have been very young when I had this, even so I still remember it having stirrup brakes and a little leather pouch behind the saddle, with just three items in it, a flat fit-all spanner, a metal tyre lever and a puncture outfit in a small tin box, none of them did I ever use myself but I suppose I did watch my father using them, early lessons! I was taken out summer and winter, day and night on that bike. I certainly remember riding it in snow.

At about the age of about 6 or 7, I remember my father bringing home a small two wheeled bike for me. Then after a number of practice false starts, with my foot starting on an old wooden beer crate and some falling on the lawn I remember the balance just clicked in, from then on, I never looked back. I had my own transport! Soon I was cycling to school, Cubs, piano lessons and to the swimming club on it... and messing around with friends, we all had bikes. I think it was on this bike I took my Cycling Proficiency Test.

I had one larger flat bar bike after this, with Sturmey Archer hub gears, it had a canvas saddle bag and it was on this one, I started to ride further afield, extending my radius of discovery and developing a sense for adventure. It was different times, quieter roads and my parents seemed quite happy for me to go off for hours at a time on my bike exploring, with the only proviso, I was given an old fruit pastel tin containing half a dozen thrupenny bits and told to call them once in a while to let them know where I was and confirm all was OK. Later the contents of the tin changed to two pence pieces (they came in with the new currency and the phone boxes adjusted to take them) Often, they voiced surprise in how far I had travelled. My father was a keen cyclist, so we often went on small routes together. My parents also had a tandem, so it was a family pastime.

At the age of about 11 or 12, I was bought my first real road bike with drop bars and 5 gears! I remember that very clearly, it was a Carlton Corsa, the frame was Lilac, forks half chromed, Weinmann brakes, Huret gears and white handle bar tape. The sprung bottle holder was on the front of the handle bars. Excitement wasn't the word, I was ecstatic. This was true independence, I cycled wide and far on it both on my own and with friends. It was the daily transport for school and for the eventual Saturday job.

Some years later, this was up dated to a slightly larger all Chrome Carlton Cobra with 10 gears. When I started doing triathlons, I had a red Holdsworth bike, I think the group-set was Suntour and the gears Simplex but unfortunately that bike was written off, when I was taken out by a car driver jumping the lights.

He recalls his history with Hounslow & District Wheelers

I was aware of H&DW from my father funnily enough, not that he was a member himself however, his younger cousin was. This would have been late 50s I would think and he told me once that, in those days, the Sunday meeting point was the Bell PH and a Sunday club run was often to Littlehampton and back; they certainly seemed to do more mileage in those days. My father had another cycle crazy friend, he did things like the National 400 and night rides to the York Rally. They talked of time trials on the Bath Road and shopped at Ken Ryall's, he passed on to me his old copies of Cycling magazine and once took me to see the World Cyclocross championships at Crystal Palace, this was in 1973 so I was 12 at the time.

Even though I was aware of cycling clubs and cycled a lot, I never joined a cycle club or cycled competitively. When young my main competitive sport was swimming and then when I gave up competing at around 15, I moved to a number of other sports, including for a while the then new sport of Triathlon, then training on bike began. It was also at this time I got interested in cycle touring mainly in France around Nimes, the Camargue and in the Massif Central with my old French penfriends Dominique and Jean Francoise who I spent time with each year. I also enjoyed quite a bit of mountain biking.

Later I was skiing, climbing, mountaineering and kayaking a lot; my friends and I used road cycling as a way of training for these activities. We started getting involved with Audax rides and the year always started with the Watership Down Audax ride in January, by the Sunday after Easter we were fit for the Dorset Coast 200km and then the up and coming climbing season in the Alps.

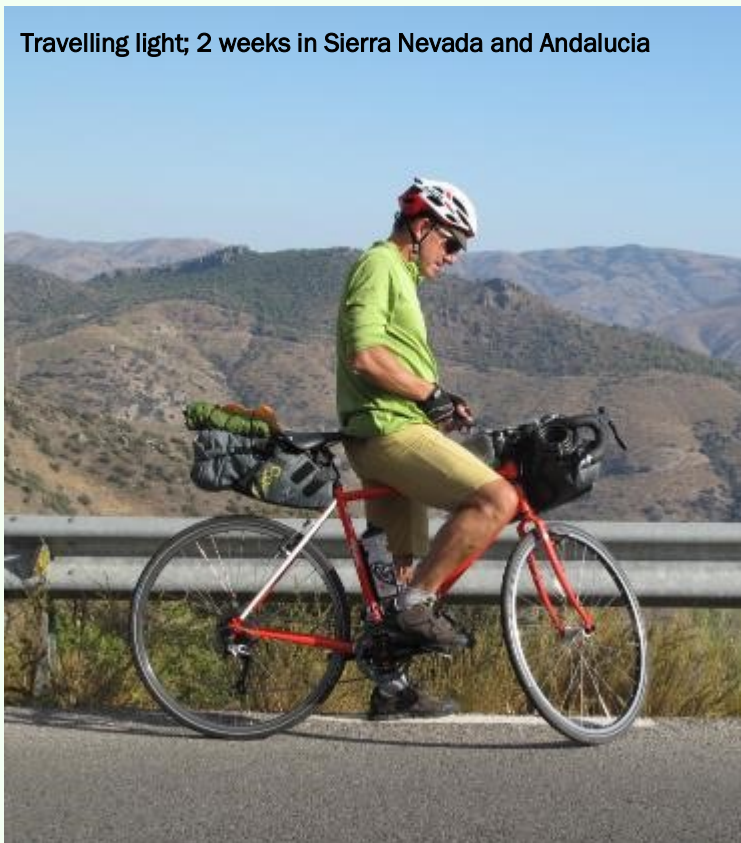
Well, it was Jill Bartlett who invited me along on some club runs in the middle - late 90s. I did a few Sunday rides then but never actually joined the club, my work was very busy and I was spending longer and longer periods of time out of the country, working away in mainland Europe, the USA, Australia and South East Asia.

Full membership wasn't until about 2008. I needed a new bathroom and kitchen; time for Mr John Marshall to enter my life! Before the bathroom and kitchen were complete, I was to become a fully paid up member of the club and in those days regularly present on Sunday club runs. Enjoying the comradery of the group ride, I had an informal apprenticeship in club riding etiquette from the likes of Norman Howson, Jeff Marshall, and Graham Davis. I admit, I spent a lot of time on Jeff's back wheel studying and learning from a master, the art of smooth spinning, perfect cadence and tapping out a steady speed.

I asked him about the type of riding he does and what he enjoys doing the most

Whilst entering a few time trials, my heart was still more into cycle touring and long-distance cycling, so I was never a regular on the 10 course or other events. I used to do a lot of mountain biking with friends living in the mountains, mostly relishing the dry summer conditions in the Swiss, French and Italian Alps. I did a number of mountain hut to mountain hut tours on mountain bikes, which were fantastic with exhilarating cycling. There is definitely a close and rewarding relationship between skiing in the Winter, ski touring in the Spring and mountain biking in the Alps in summer.

Travelling light; 2 weeks in Sierra Nevada and Andalucia



I returned to triathlon again for a while when I was in my forties competing at Olympic distance and Half Ironman but nothing had changed, I was still a much better swimmer than I was a cyclist and by then my knees when running were telling me something too!.

I still enjoy a group ride not to mention the coffee stop! Each year with a group of friends I look forward to a centre based cycle week in such places as Mallorca and mainland Spain. Most years, my wife and I do one or two extended cycle tours, whether that be in the UK, mainland Europe or further afield, this Autumn we were touring across north western Cuba. We both enjoy exploring different countries by cycle touring, it's a perfect speed to get to know a country and its people well, I think in foreign climes there is an element of respect if you arrive by bicycle and that normally leads to a warm and friendly interaction with the locals... and one always has a good appetite to enjoy the local food! To date I have cycle toured in eleven countries from New Zealand & Australia, USA & Caribbean to many mainland European countries and their islands; in some of these countries many times over many years.

Right: Ian with wife Anja.
A shared love of cycle touring and exploration



Racing the Golans in the Swiss Engadine

These days I use winter road cycling to train for some cross-country ski races I do each March, call me a masochist but I do enjoy long winter rides, especially when there is a sharp nip up the nose, it is also useful conditioning for ski training and racing in thin lycra suits in freezing minus conditions at altitude.

I now also appreciate the medicinal qualities of cycling and find it very beneficial for my knees, after a life-time of doing too many crazy things on skis; messing around jumping, downhill & slalom racing and ski mountaineering tours, skiing with heavy climbing sacs, it all takes its toll and the orthopods recommend the conditioning properties of cycling and I am not one to disagree.

His favourite ride?

This is a difficult one as there are so many places I enjoy riding; if we are referring to a local ride though, I would say I like to ride in the Thames valley and up into the Chilterns. A favourite route would be, out via Drift Road – Fifield Lane – Bray – Cookham – Marlow – Fingest – Turville Heath – Stonor Park – Pishill – Cookley Green – Swyncombe - Ewelme – Benson (Waterfront Café on the Thames at Benson, great toast bacon and poached eggs) – then back via Ipsden – Stoke Row – Sonning Common – Binfield Heath – Play Hatch – Sonning – Twyford – Waltham St Lawrence – Bottle Lane – Warfield – Winkfield. it's a fantastic route and my favourite; quiet country lanes and lovely countryside, with some stamina building hills, from home doorstep to doorstep is 70 miles. If short on time or daylight, I make it shorter by going directly to Stonor Park via Paley Street – White Waltham - the Cabbage Patch route via Knowle Hill to Warren Row and Henley (either via the Flower Pot back road route or straight down Remenham Hill, then out the back of Henley and through the Assendons to Stonor Park and Pishill which reduces it to 59 miles door to door.

And his most enjoyable riding terrain?

Again, it is so hard to single out just one; I love cycling in Switzerland in particular the lakes, passes and mountains of the Bernese Oberland and the upper and lower Engadine. So, I would have to pick one of the many routes that link up circuits including some Swiss passes and the raw beauty of the mountain scenery. Spinning up a Swiss pass with kaffee und kuchen at a hospice on the col, with an amazing descent back to the valley for an après ride beer has got to be number one.

I asked him about his bikes



My main road bike is a Trek bike, nothing flash by today's standards, aluminium frame with carbon forks, Shimano 105 group set throughout, 44cm handle bars, it has been well fitted to me, it is very comfortable and I am happy on it for very long rides. I have covered many miles on it. In summer I run GP 4000s and very much enjoy David Howe's annual circumnavigation of London (outside the M25) ride. I have done it four times now. This bike is very comfortable for the 178 miles door to door route, which we normally complete in about 12 hours in the saddle. In Autumn and Winter, I have got used to and prefer using Schwalbe Marathon plus 25mm, they are tractor tyres but are bomb proof in winter conditions.



My drop bar touring bike is a Pearson's "I May be Some Time" steel frame and fork with Shimano XTR mountain biking group-set throughout, Salsa 46 cm splayed Wood Chipper bars with bar-end Durace shifters. It has very good clearance so I can go from 28mm GP 4000s for lightly loaded fast touring to 40mm Schwalbe Marathon Mondials for off road touring in rough conditions. I did a south to north traverse on the Pic Veleta, 3,395m altitude, in the Sierra Nevada mountains of Andalucía on these (the highest road in Europe) they were very effective in particular on the south ascent route which was rough rocks and gravel. Again, very well fitted for me, comfortable and robust for the long haul, lightly or heavily loaded. In summer these days I normally use light weight Apidura bike packing luggage but on longer non summer tours can also use Ortlieb paniers. It travels well on flights just in the regulation CTC plastic bag, so it's great for foreign one-way routes.

My Expedition bike is a Thorn Sherpa, fit is perfect, very comfortable, flat ergo bars with horns. Steel frame and fork with 26" wheels. It is a robust bike; it tours well on all surfaces but is especially good for rough pot holed and gravelly conditions. Perfect for long distance tow path tours, such as the Burgundy Canal route or Reading to Bristol on the Kennet and Avon. It can carry a lot of weight if required with front and rear paniers. Amongst other places, I used it on a camping tour around Sardinia, it worked perfectly, carrying all the kit and handling very well. It was also used to great effect on a two-week tour in the Picos Europa mountains, not only carrying kit well in paniers but when stripped down with no luggage was great for some mountain bike routes on a couple of non-touring days, handling exceptionally well on the long mountain descents.



I have an old second hand Genesis Flyer, flip flop fixed / single speed. I bought it out the back pages of Cycling Weekly. I like to ride it; it has a lovely feel to it with 69" gearing. I predominantly bought it as a winter bike but then discovered that this model will only take 23mm tyres and no clearance for mud guards!

I have an old Trek lightweight steel framed mountain bike along with an even older Chas Roberts mountain bike which travelled with me a lot in the Swiss Alps. When Chas built it, he said "would you like Shimano or Campagnola group set", I unfortunately said Campag ... it was during the window of about 2 years where Campag flirted with making mountain bike group sets Now it's impossible to get replacement cassettes, big shame it's a beautiful frame and the wheels are Mavic but useless without a new cassette!!!

His favourite bike snack?

It's nice to have an "Eat Natural" fruit and nut chocolate, with cranberries and macadamias muesli bar in the back pocket on a long ride but if the wall beckons nothing beats a "Snickers Bar"!!

And finally his favourite coffee / bacon sandwich stop and why?

Based purely on the quality of the bacon (it's from their own pigs), without doubt the "Café with a View" at Fernygrove Farm Shop at Hawthorn Hill. Coming a very, very close second, again bacon from their own pigs is "The Barn Café" at Turville Heath. Coming very close in third spot would be "The Waterfront Café" at Benson, for their poached eggs on sourdough toast with mashed avocado and mushrooms. Based purely on the top quality of their coffee would be "Velolife" at Warren Row, their Cortado is excellent, they use amazing coffee beans.

When cycling one can always wax lyrical about food!

Here's to many more years in the saddle and miles in the legs!



CONTRIBUTIONS NEEDED

Do you have a favourite bike? Why not write about it for a future issue?
Do you have a question (or solution) for our regular FIX IT item?

Our new regular item is 'Now and Then' which Chris has started off. Find an old picture or drawing of a place you ride and then take a current photo, preferably with your bike included. Include a short description

Tell us about your racing career.
Describe a ride, sportive or race that made an impression (good or bad)!
Send photos, poems or funny stories - we want to hear from you!



Queries or contributions to Patsy Howe (editor) patsyhowe@live.com



The Man who didn't like Changes

(A 'refound' article)

Ride over a mountain on fixed? You'd have to be crazy!

There can be no one who has more than the briefest association with the Hounslow who does not know the date 1961 as the turning point in fixed wheel racing: a certain P.J. Woodburn won the 25 championship on gears so proving the inferiority of fixed for all time, or at least until Obree and Boardman came along.



A quarter of a century earlier, however, there had been a greater event in the story of bike race gearing. Two days after the start of the 1936 Tour de France, Henri Desgrange (right) the founder and first autocrat of the race, having followed the first stages in a car seat specially padded to try to relieve the pain he was suffering after a kidney operation, had to admit he was too ill to continue. One result was that he lost his power of veto over the use of *dérailleur* gears thus ending the heroic age of strength with suppleness. Desgrange believed that his race should depend on a simple struggle of man against man, and that the intrusion of technology could only lessen its interest; a point of view which today seems starkly prophetic, even though the problem does not lie in the gearing department.

Suppose we wanted to recapture, even for a few moments, that fascinating, grainy, black and white world of the pre-war French sports papers; is there any way? Here is a suggestion – create your own Henri Desgrange stage finish.

You will need a fixed wheel bike with a double sided rear hub and a stopwatch. Next, pick a suitable mountain. Select an easily recognisable land mark on the road a few miles from the start of the main climb; this is necessary because by beginning the ride just at the foot of the climb there would be no need to stop and turn the back wheel onto the bigger sprocket, which is an essential element in this 'discipline'. Finally, note the time taken between your landmark and the summit to report to your club mates, suggesting that they should try to improve on your efforts.

I would not make this suggestion without having tried it myself. For my attempt at this new type of 'event' I chose the Ballon d'Alsace where the highest point on the road is 3,800 feet (or, if you insist, 1178 metres, but this doesn't sound as good). My landmark was the *Maison de Retraite* on the south side of the RN66 at Le Thillot (88). The sprockets used were 43 teeth front with 18 (freewheel) and 22 (fixed) rear, and giving gears of 63.5" and 51.8". These were the sizes I happened to have, but Roger Lapebie who rode his first Tour in 1932 reports using very similar gearing in mountain stages. The road up the climb is the D465.

On the bike there was no question where to turn the wheel - the spot was obvious - and the change took me the best part of two minutes. Once on my 43x22 the climb (about five and a half miles) presented little problem, not by reason of my athleticism but because the road is so well engineered with gradients between about 1 in 12 and 1 in 15, all beautifully surfaced.

My time from Le Thillot to the café at the summit was 48 minutes, and I roughly calculated my average speed for the climb itself at about 10 mph. I felt reasonably satisfied with this until I found the monument to Rene Pottier who was first up this climb in the tours of 1905 and '06 with an average speed of 12 mph. This is impressive considering he did not have the benefit of modern knowledge, lightweight kit or a good road surface, furthermore Desgrange had stated he thought the climb to be unrideable, but it is said that Pottier overtook his car during the 1906 ascent.

I chose the Ballon because I'd already decided to go to the area and because it is famous, but any climb would do, even Box Hill. Anyone who thinks this activity has no potential as a new sporting discipline might consider the success of downhill mountain bike racing.

I am indebted to Les Woodland's excellent book on the Tour for some of my information on Desgrange, Pottier and Lapebie. Mention must also be made of the support car, ably driven by Sabi Westoby.

Chris Lovibond
Revised draft 12.1.2008.

ROGGO'S RAMBLINGS

(Or, Having Too Much Time On My Hands)

Sung to the tune of "Daisy, Daisy"

*Is there someone? I need to ride with you.
Will you help me and pedal a bit, please do.
We're socially not together, but now we have better weather.
You would look sweet upon the seat,
As this tandem was built for two.*



Some of these inane ramblings have also been shared with the North Road C.C.'s Gazette as it is a monthly magazine and requires various write-ups otherwise it (often) becomes a picture gallery, mostly of younger riders whom I have never met or likely to meet. So forgive me if some of it does not directly apply to the Hounslow and District Wheelers.

The 'Lock-down', as it appears to be called (thought it only applied to prisons!) has not had much impact on my (our) daily routine, I'm still out riding but not quite so far and Pam is out in the garden getting it in the best shape it has ever been. Riding alone has become a bit tedious and without the company and the tea/coffee stops it is not quite as enjoyable although I still get real satisfaction from cycling. I seem to spend a bit more time on the internet looking through Faceache pages especially 'Legends of the RTTC', some of it is interesting. There was a series of pictures regarding cycling clothing colours and visibility;-

Black.....Invisible

Blue.....55 ft.

Red.....79 ft.

Yellow.....121 ft.

White.....180 ft.

Green.....426 ft.



I ride with three other guys regularly and two of them wear black, it is noticeable how under the shadow of trees they become almost invisible from a few hundred yards behind. I had thought that my red top was so much better but it seems that is not good enough. I was watching the Paris-Nice race and in the rain the riders were donning rain jackets, most of them black and thought how they did not show up very well – no other motorists to worry about I suppose but apart from perhaps retaining warmth (while white reflects heat) why do they have to be black. Mind you I didn't think the green showed up much better in the picture, but then I'm old with dodgy eyes.

Also from the internet: New Corona Advice

Avoid crowded spaces..... Ride a bike

Keep a safe distance from people Ride a bike

Do not use public transport..... Ride a bike

Expose yourself to sunlight..... Ride a bike

Avoid recirculated air..... Ride a bike

Boost immunity with fresh air..... Ride a bike

No exercise class?..... Ride a bike

Self-isolating..... Ride a bike

Keep a positive attitude..... Ride a bike

With not only dodgy eyes, but worse hearing I often have television sub-titles on screen – oh what a laugh with some words making absolutely no sense at all sometimes with hilarious results even when they are ‘corrected’. However, it is a pretty poor state of affairs when pre-recorded subtitles have spelling mistakes or other errors. One of the major compensation claim firms have an advert on where the claimant tripped over a “curb” – what a howler!

STOP PRESS! I have actually got myself a mobile phone! Bought it two months ago from my riding colleague for £20 although I haven’t used it yet as my lifestyle doesn’t require me to ring anyone on it. I carry it for emergencies but I’ve managed for 55 years without so we shall see.

No Strava, no Garmin, no power meters, very little modern equipment I realise people might call me a “Luddite” (Noun derogatory; a person opposed to industrialization or new technology). I’m not really, it just doesn’t play a big part of my life) or “dinosaur”. The former, I feel, is a bit of an insult to the memory of Lobby Lud; yes, you remember Lobby, he was a fictional character created in 1927 by Westminster Gazette (later News Chronicle and Daily Mail) and people had to try and recognize him from a disguised figure in the newspaper, approach him with a copy of that paper and utter the prize winning slogan, “You are Lobby Lud and I claim my £5” (or whatever). The competition was started because people on holiday were less likely to buy a newspaper. The character (or similar) appeared in an episode of Poirot on television where Hercule was repeatedly mistaken for him. My ex-North Road club mate and great friend of my granddad, Reg Risley, was often given the role of Lobby Lud down on the seafront. “Dinosaur” – yes I have been around for a few decades and I remember riding against Bronto the saurus and Tri-bars-ceratops with Velo-ciraptors regularly winning the team prizes Other pre-historic beasts include Trevorgilbosaurus, Pedaldactyl and the tandem pairing of Woolly Mammoth Gear and Sabre 60-tooth Tiger, plus the old favourite Saddlesorearse. Tyrannosaurus Rex or T-Rex or T as I used to call him was actually one of the first to experiment with feeding and nutrition in races. He didn’t mean to, but had this bad habit of eating all the people he caught. Proteins, carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals all on the move and no fiddling with sticky gels!



Footnote; Any resemblance or similarity between, what would be, prehistoric fossils and members of the Hounslow and District Wheelers is purely coincidental.

Returning to “Legends of the RTTC”, some great photographs from years ago. I’ve seen Martyn, Jeff, Ken Clapton, Bob Porter, Kevin (albeit I think when he was in the Camberley), Ethel Brambleby with, very often, an appropriate comment by Norman Howson. Frequently there has been a picture of Paul Bennett, 25-mile Competition record holder in 1965 with

53-31. I believe he nearly caught George Wingfield (North Road C.C.) who was setting a personal best and club record of 56-18. As elite riders didn’t seem to speak to us mere mortals it wasn’t until we were both regularly riding veteran races that I got to know him (and eventually beat him – 30 years too late!). Paul was doing a Land’s End to John ‘O Groats ride with Nikki Hunt on a tandem and as I was living in Dingwall at the time offered them a bed for the night 100 miles south of their destination. During the afternoon of their impending arrival a phone call from Paul saying that they had ruined their back wheel on a cattle grid and could we help them with directions to the nearest cycle shop. It was easier to go and meet them and guide them through the outskirts of Inverness than try to explain the route. Just south of Daviot we met and led the way to the shop. It was a glorious sunny day and Paul went inside the shop, appearing a few minutes later with a rim and many spokes. He then sat outside in the sunshine and proceeded to build the rear wheel from scratch using the brake blocks to ‘true’ the wheel and despite the cycle shop offering to let him use their equipment he finished it outside –incredible. We took some of their luggage in the car and set off home, Nikki and Paul arriving later for their stay. The wheel was still going strong 20 years later when Nikki upgraded it to an 11-speed and is currently being used by Brian Foran.



~
**MANY RIDERS WILL NOT HAVE
KNOWN THAT JULIUS CAESAR
WAS A CYCLIST.**

**JUST AFTER HE LANDED IN
BRITAIN FROM ROME, HE
UTTERED THE IMMORTAL
WORDS**

**“VENI, VIDI, VICI, VELO,
PUNCTI”**

**(“I CAME, I SAW,
I CONQUERED,
I CYCLED,
I PUNCTURED”)**

Other photos shown from my early days were Mick Divine (58-11) in the ECCA Junior 25 on E3 (4/5/64) to my 1-04-59 – my fourth time trial and Bill Curtis-Cody (58-45) in the Comrades Junior 25 also on E3 (6/6/65) to my 1-06-59 – told you I was no good!

Exercise routines still continuing but with no company it makes you look around for other things, such as, a lorry passing me with a sign on the back, “Eat Healthy British Chicken” – er, at what point of being dead is healthy?

Here’s hoping that you are all keeping well with ghastly virus making its presence felt everywhere. We can only hope that people are sensible and follow the guidelines and we shall get out of it in the near future. If anyone is interested in 24-hour events then buy a copy of John Taylor’s ‘The 24-Hour Story’, available from John @ 7, Hillcrest Rise, Burntwood, Staffs. WS7 4SH. Fascinating reading including how North Roder G.P. Mills could have died after taking cocaine on an End to End record attempt with just a few miles to the finish. He was 20-years old at the time.

2020 is the 100th anniversary of my granddad’s one and only attempt at 24 hours and his exploits (!) are mentioned in the book with the following extract: “The last man in the race was C.A. Sewell with 291.75 miles. Sewell in his day was a good racing man, but not at 24 hours and we think the following extract from the account of the race published in the club gazette will not be without interest: “Sewell, of course, finished; he always does. Probably the family motto is something to the effect that Sewell’s may die, but they never ‘chuck’. As a matter of fact, Sewell did ‘die’ at about 11 hours but for the remainder of the time the corpse gave a series of spasmodic kicks which propelled the bicycle along at about 8 mph. We admire Sewell’s determination to finish, but as somebody said: “He rides a very fine ‘30’ but he can’t seem to manage 12 of them on the same day”! We believe he rode something like 120 races in his career and finished in all but one of them.

He actually had a personal best for 30 miles of 1-19-40 in 1919 and it took me three attempts to beat it! (Told you I was no good)!

Keep smiling and keep riding, best wishes to all.

Roger

Club Strava Group

I know that Strava is a very popular social media platform for all athletes but especially for cyclists so we have put some effort in to ensuring it works better for our club.



If anyone has not signed up for Strava or not yet joined the Hounslow and District Wheelers club then I would encourage you to do so.

Strava is free to join and this service will be suitable for many but there is also a subscription if you want some of the added benefits. My recommendation would be to join for free and see how you like the platform first.

I am pleased to let you know that we now have a secure and up to date Strava group for our members. The group is now restricted to ensure it is secure for our members to join and share club information including club runs and routes

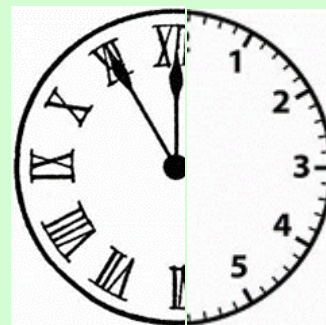
We have worked with Strava to verify the club as genuine and you will now see the orange certified tick from Strava on the group logo

Anyone wishing to join the club should search for ‘Hounslow’ in Strava and you will find the Club Group, you can then request to ‘join the group’ and one of our group admins will admit you to the secure group.

I am happy to answer any questions via email if anyone would like to know more.

Ian Kirk: ianjkirk@gmail.com

Times Change and We Change with Them



So goes the saying, but I wonder if I'm the only one who thinks the language of cycling is changing unnecessarily and too fast? The new expressions which irritate me can be put under three headings.

Americanisms

'Cleat' for shoe plate and 'clincher' for wired on are just two examples among many. These are relatively harmless but are at least mildly annoying – how would you feel about an English car mechanic who insisted on referring to the 'hood' of your car when he meant the bonnet?

Basic Misunderstandings

Most notable here is the term 'fixed gear' now widely used instead of fixed wheel. It is clear to me that our old term arose from the need to make a contrast with freewheels – originally fixed wheel bikes were called 'safeties' (to distinguish them from ordinaries), then when the free wheel was invented, it became necessary to distinguish between fixed and free. 'Fixed gear' misses this point, is confusing and tends to encourage the use of the term for machines with a single freewheel.

Mistranslation of French

Hounslow members are, I'm sure, very familiar with the expression 'to be on a wheel', but recently some commentators have often seen fit to change this to 'in a wheel'. This seems puzzling – surely 'on' describes the situation far better than 'in' which sounds as though, at the very least, it would cause broken spokes: I'd like to offer a possible explanation for this dubious turn of phrase.

School pupils struggling with the early stages of Latin have always been miffed by the way *in* can, in that language, mean both in or on according to context. In French the primary meaning of *dans* is certainly 'in', but it can also be used in some contexts to mean 'on': for example "he attacked *dans le Galibier*" clearly is better translated by 'on' rather than 'in'. Similarly '*dans la roue*', a common expression in French cycling journalism, is better rendered by 'on the wheel' rather than 'in the wheel', which strikes me as a mistranslation.

We must accept that language is always fluid and objecting to every change may justly bring an accusation of pedantry, but when change obscures meaning I think it's time to complain.

Do other members have pet hates relating to modern cycling expressions – we'd like to hear from you!

Chris.

A Search for Lost Time

Chris Lovibond

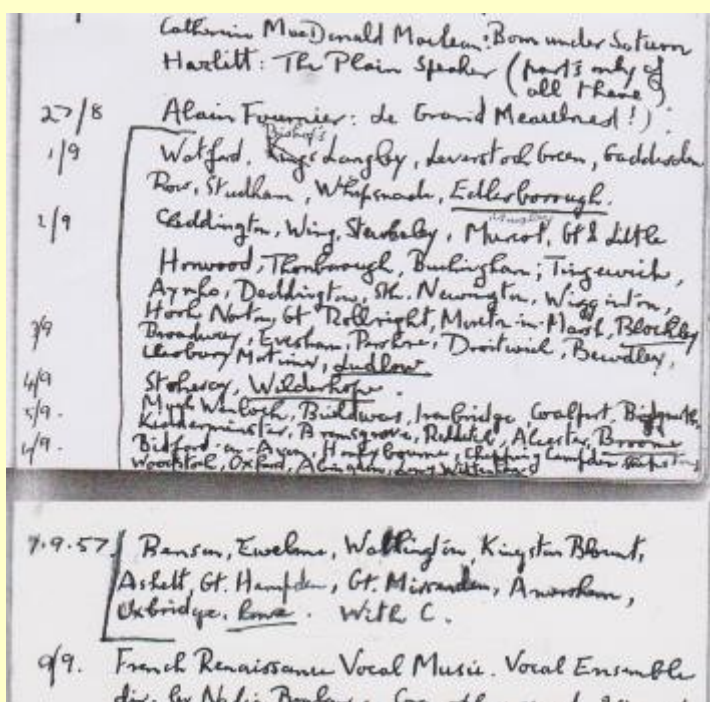
In late August 1957 I had just passed my twelfth birthday, acquired a new bike and was keen to go youth hostelling with my Dad, who was a cyclist, but not of a type we are familiar with today. He was not primarily an enthusiast for cycling itself – he just used a bike as a means of getting to places which interested him, but as these places were often far away this would sometimes involve some fairly strenuous riding. He was no clubman and was pretty much the opposite of a modern mamil; I'm pretty certain that even at that time some of his riding kit was still pre-war. His interest in bikes was limited and his appetite for bike related gadgets was zero.



I remember his bike with the clarity that a child's eye has for early experiences. It was originally a 'Silver' Sunbeam and in this context Silver meant inferior to the so called 'Golden' models. Purchased in 1940 it was some way from its original spec, but the changes were generally not improvements, just replacements; no one today would think it suitable for riding any further than the nearest corner shop. One alteration which he saw as an intentional improvement was to increase the gear (single free) from 66" to 74" (46 x16, 26" wheels). Dad was no twiddler – his style was to plod along, often with pipe in mouth, but in spite of appearing to do almost everything wrong he was capable of covering fairly big distances each day. His knowledge of the countryside, architecture and the Youth Hostel system in addition to competence at map reading (Bart's half inch) made him an excellent companion for a novice cycle tourist. I rode many miles on his wheel, although at the time I was unaware of the expression or that I was letting him do most of the work.

Dad kept a diary, still in my possession, which included brief outlines of cycling expeditions, so that summer's route can be retraced (*below right*).

Places underlined are overnight stops – Edlesborough and Blockley were relatives' homes, not hostels – money was not plentiful. It can be seen that our route was mostly cross country with a minimum of main road riding, but a certain amount of climbing. My new bike was not really suitable for this job (on reflection, it was only suitable for being sold by an unscrupulous cycle dealer). Aside from being too big for me, its 56.5" bottom gear was far too high for tackling the Cotswolds and the Welsh Marches, especially with a heavy saddlebag which made honking next to impossible. Dad's eccentric choice of gearing was helpful here – he needed to dismount before I did. My memory of the actual riding is a little hazy now, but two things that stand out are that then, even as little as forty miles from London, regional accents were noticeable, and that some towns smelt of their trades – Kidderminster stank of wool being cured for the carpets which were made there. These are features which have virtually disappeared from English touring.



My strongest impression of the whole trip was our stop at Wilderhope Youth Hostel.

This is a Tudor manor house which had opened shortly before the second war after some restoration to bring it to the limited standard required by hostellers of that era. I don't think it had changed much by 1957 – there was no electricity and lighting was by Tilley lamps which was pretty exciting for a twelve year old. Everything else was equally primitive, but the stone built structure itself, which owed much to the architecture of mediaeval castles, gave the whole experience the feeling of a time warp. In the common room I scored my first chess victory against an adult, and so (wrongly) began to think of myself as a promising contender in that field.

Let us now skip fifty-seven years to 2014. My undistinguished racing career had clearly come to an end but my interest in riding remained; touring seemed a natural way to continue, but I needed a suitable bike. Having had a loan of the ex Marcel Planes (Winner Cycling's Century Competition, 1911) BSA Light Roadster of 1913 which proved to be an excellent mount, I set out to build a copy (at this point you will doubtless be thinking: 'and this bloke had the nerve to call his Dad eccentric!'). This project proved more difficult than I expected since I could not find a suitable frame – it then occurred to me that I still had my Dad's Sunbeam frame which would serve a similar purpose, although it proved to be inferior to the much older BSA. I only had the frame and forks, but it could be re-equipped with components I had lying about which were roughly contemporary with the original bike, but of rather superior quality. Brief spec: wheels 26x1.25" with ali rims, chainset Williams B100 with 7" steel cranks, gearing 48 x 20 with Sturmey AW giving gears 62.4" direct, top 83.2" and bottom 46.8".



Where to go? Given the bike and the diary, Wilderhope was an unmissable choice. The original trip had taken seven days, but the complexities of adult life only allowed me four and I was confident I could cope with this, so I booked Stow on the Wold and Wilderhope hostels with my sister in Oxford for the third night.

How did the ride go for this old man on an ancient bike?

Day one, Willesden to Stow (April 8th)



Although I started before 10 am with less than eighty miles to cover before dark, the day was much more of a rush than was desirable. This was mainly caused by a persistent all day headwind - almost the only point where there was shelter was the long climb from West Wycombe towards Stokenchurch which I crawled up using my just adequate bottom gear. Lunch at the top of the climb (Chris's Café) was a relief, but I felt obliged to ride the remaining 50 miles non stop to beat the onset of dusk. The day felt like a solo training run – but in slow motion.

The hostel at Stow was excellent: an elegant eighteenth century building which proved to be comfortable, well run and provided good company, although I did come to wonder whether the YHA should rename itself 'The Pensioners' Hostel Association'. Note the epilogue below for a sad note on this accommodation.

Day two, Stow to Wilderhope.

This began as a pleasant spring morning but with a similar wind to the previous day, although this did ease by the afternoon. After about twenty miles I broke a spoke which put the front wheel worryingly out of true; break another now overstressed spoke and the wheel could collapse bringing the whole venture to an untimely end. Miraculously, I found Echelon Cycles in Pershore who were most helpful and repaired the damage while I had lunch, but the time lost here combined with the nagging wind caused me to feel guilty about taking 10 minutes off to look at Worcester cathedral.

After this city I ran off the edge of my good map, which caused me some difficulty and led to a stretch of unpleasant main road work; I particularly do not recommend the Bridgnorth by-pass. Luckily by this point I was nearly into the lanes which took me to Wilderhope Manor where I arrived just in time for dinner having covered another 77 miles.



This hostel was the main objective of the trip and it proved good value and much was as I had remembered. As many of you know, my main hobby is living in the past so naturally I would have preferred to find that no modernisation had been done, but I accept it was too much to hope that electricity had still not penetrated that corner of Shropshire. However much of the fabric of the building remains undisturbed and I think the photographs give a better description than I can provide in words.

Day three, Wilderhope to Oxford.

At last I could feel I was touring. I had an easy ride into Ludlow, an attractive and still fairly prosperous place where I was able to look around without the pressure of the previous days. From there I had an idyllic ride to Tenbury Wells and another 20 hilly miles to Worcester where I reluctantly decided to take the train to Oxford. I did not wish to abuse my sister's hospitality by arriving late and too tired to hold a conversation. As it happened, because of decorating work in her house, I found myself booked into a guest room at Worcester College (no discernable connection with the city). This was an experience in itself, particularly having breakfast in the beautifully decorated eighteenth century dining hall which was similar in concept to the dining room at Wilderhope, but the older one looked rustic compared with the elegance of the college.



Day four, Home.

The final leg back to London on familiar roads was uneventful, but I was certainly pleased to put my key into the front door. I was happy to have achieved an old style YHA tour which had started by getting astride my bike outside my home, rather than driving (or flying) and hiring. As to equipment, I don't believe I would have been significantly better off with modern kit.

One other point I certainly did establish was that four days was too short a time for this trip, which would have been more enjoyable at the leisurely 1957 pace.

Epilogue

Stow on the Wold Hostel was under threat when I visited it and has now closed. It was busy and well run, but I guess the value of the property was just too tempting for the YHA; I would certainly be interested to know on what terms that organisation originally acquired the building. It would now be impossible to do this journey without using non-YHA accommodation.

Below can be seen the idealistic cast iron plaque that was on the front wall of the hostel, and next to it the witness mark where it has been removed: clearly it would not have been appropriate for the building's new occupier 'The Stag at Stow', which charges £95 for a single night's bed and breakfast.



Chris Lovibond, January 2020.

Lands End to John O'Groats

Ian Kirk

My own Lands End to John O' Groats story started back at the end of 2015 when I was persuaded to sign up for the mammoth journey by some friends and work colleagues. I trained hard for 10 months for the event in September 2016, entering a number of sportives with friends, but mostly many solo miles. Unfortunately, the LEJOG attempt in 2016 ended in A&E in Inverness with a broken Collar Bone, 7 and a half days in and I hadn't finished, I knew I had to do it again.

In the summer of 2018, I was at a wedding in Inverness and seeing the beautiful Scottish scenery and possibly the copious amounts of alcohol, I signed up again for LEJOG 2019. Scotland really is a beautiful country.

For 2019 I wanted to train differently, I wanted to join a cycle club and after googling local cycling clubs I found Hounslow and District Wheelers on the British Cycling website. My first ride with the club was the first club run of 2019 and after feeling nervous about joining a club before, I knew this was for me and wanted to join properly.

I'm not sure how many club runs I did in 2019, but it really was great to meet new people and ride new routes, it helped enormously with the training.

By September 2019 I had ridden more miles than any year before and I knew I was ready for the challenge

The logistics of LEJOG are almost as difficult as the training. I chose again to ride with Threshold, who organise this event every year for about 800 riders; they call it RAB (Ride Across Britain). The first part of the challenge is getting to Lands End ready for the start which was on Saturday 7th September. My journey started with a drive from home with my wife to a friend's house in Devon which was base for Thursday night and then a drive down to Lands End on the Friday. It's amazing how long it takes to get through Cornwall.

A typical campsite setup and pitstop on the road



Having done the ride before I knew what to expect on arrival in Lands End. A very short ride to the signpost for a photo and then getting my bag, kit and bike into the camp site ready and waiting in LE. The organisation in camp was fantastic and after saying goodbye to my wife I set up my sleeping bag and tent before meeting up with some friends I had met in 2016 (also doing the ride again) and then a hearty meal before heading back to my tent for an early start.

The route chosen by Route Director Andy Cook isn't the shortest route possible; the signpost at Lands End says 874 Miles and our route was going to take us 980 miles but does use quieter roads and takes in some of the most breathtaking scenery across 3 countries. The organisation through the ride was fantastic, pretty much everything needed was provided from catering in camp and pitstops on route, mechanical assistance when needed, laundry and washing facilities in camp and staff that were always smiling and willing to help when asked. This was in addition to the crew setting up and taking down all the tents and shipping all our luggage from site to site.

The route starts with the short sharp climbs of Cornwall and Devon before the more challenging and steeper Cothelstone in the Quantocks and impressive Cheddar Gorge in the Mendips. After two nights of camping, night 3 was in Bath Uni Halls of residence and a proper bed, a huge treat. We then went across the Severn Bridge and a short ride in Wales before following the River Wye in its valley towards Hereford and onto the next campsite at Ludlow.

Ian in Cheddar Gorge and the route along the Wye Valley



The next part of the ride was less challenging as it took us through the flatter heartland of England between Liverpool and Manchester and up to the Lake District and Carlisle. The biggest challenge was the climb of Shap Fell in the Lake District and the weather which provided some rain and wind to contend with.

The last part of the ride is Scotland, its amazing how big it is and how long it takes to ride through until you do it; four full days of cycling out of nine are in Scotland. The scenery is epic, the climbs are long and steep, and the roads are much quieter and generally in better condition than the rest of the ride. From the Forth Road Bridge, the climbing to ski resorts in the Cairngorms and the scenic majesty of the Highlands, the Scotland leg is both the most difficult and most rewarding cycling I have done.

Forth Rail Bridge and the Scottish Highlands



After 9 days of cycling averaging 110 miles a day, the ride into John O'Groats was possibly the easiest part with 40mph tailwinds assisting on the final hills.

It was with a sense of fulfilment, joy and some relief that this time I had finished! I took time to stop and take photos along the route, I made friends along the way and learnt to appreciate what a great country we live in. The journey took a lot of planning, a lot of training and over the 9 days there were times that were difficult and miserable but in retrospect its one of the best things I've done, its what's called Type 2 fun and I'd recommend it to anyone.



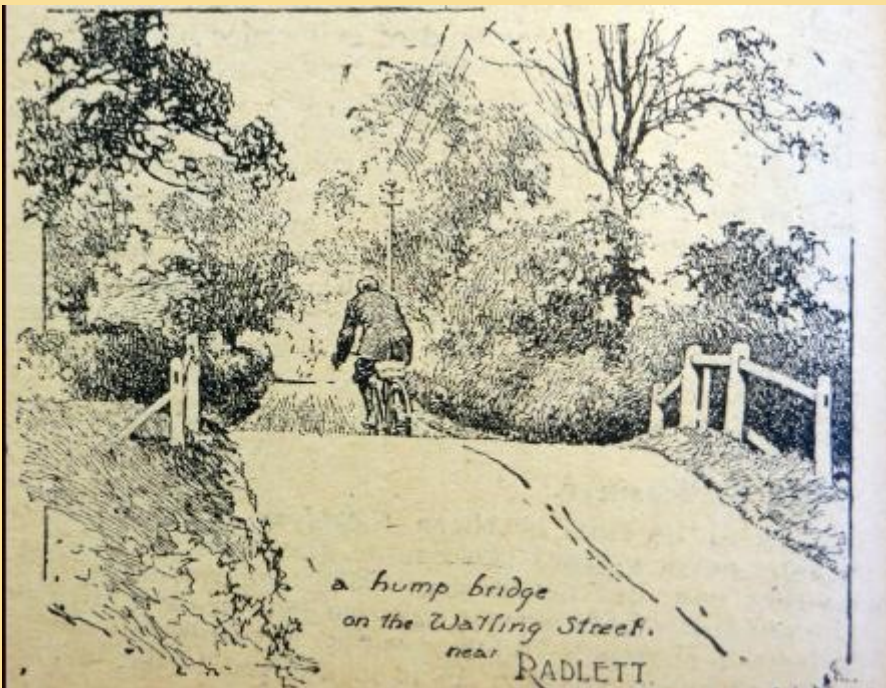
Finally finished and the medal to prove it

Bridge near Radlett

Chris (Lovibond) submitted the images below and has made the suggestion that members might like to contribute similar comparisons for a new 'Then and Now' regular item. Take pictures on current rides (not necessarily connected with Patterson) and remember to include your bike in the photo if possible.

Chris quite often rides up the old A5 through Raglett and so finds this pair of images interesting.

Frank Patterson (1871 – 1952)



Patterson was an English illustrator and is best remembered for his pen and ink drawings of cycling during the early 20th century. This drawing was originally published in *Cycling* in March 1924. Chris commented "I don't think it's the best of his work but I chose it because there is a good contrast between then and now."

Chris makes two points about these images. Firstly, he regrets not parking his bike by the parapet of the bridge in his photograph, Patterson style - he always included a bike in his drawings. Secondly, how can one be sure this was taken in the same place as the old drawing? Simple, the OS map shows this is the only place near Radlett where a stream crosses the main road. It shows the bridge as it is now with the wall on the right hand side under the tree - the rise in the middle distance is not the bridge, which has been completely flattened. Chris added "I'm sure F.P. would be horrified to see what has happened".



Lockdown Life

Those of you who know me well will be aware that my hobby is Living in the Past. Now that we are living in a time when there is virtually no present, I feel my pastime has really come into its own. How do I apply this to cycling? Firstly by old bike maintenance and use, and secondly by searching for the lost Golden Age of cycling in old periodicals.

About a quarter of a century ago it came to my notice that my ability on a bike (never great) was gradually decreasing, and it was at that point I decided not to modernise my kit. I felt that the benefits to be gained were small whereas the potential embarrassment caused by performing badly on a state of the art bike would be significant.

As time has gone by I have had to compensate for ever decreasing speed by using older and still older machines. I am now at the 'Cyclo Standard' dérailleur stage and I still have this BSA Roadster in reserve for the future.



These bikes provide entertainment not just in the riding but also in their maintenance, which is naturally more troublesome than with modern machines - and in fact it has been the space created by the crisis which has enabled me to get the Cyclo machine back into rideable condition (See pages 12&13 for a full description)

The old magazines which form the other leg of my escapism are surprisingly plentiful, but if you have none and want to look at them I recommend joining the Veteran-Cycle Club which has an excellent library, accessible on line. A useful feature of modern life is that the internet can be used to discover what happened to the heroes of the past, sometimes with interesting You Tube clips. I particularly liked this surprisingly good film of the 1936 Tour:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-l1h4n2SVWE>

As you probably know, this was the last year that Desgrange managed to retain his prohibition on variable gears and so this must have been quite a different race from all later versions. Was that a Golden Age? I think it's a candidate worth considering.

Anyway, let's hope this dream time will be over before we're all too old to meet up somewhere on the road.

Chris Lovibond

SHARE YOUR STATS WITH US

CONTACT: patsyhowe@live.com

During 2019 **Chris Vessey** totalled a mileage of 7660

He said "Not a lot I know but for an ageing "git" with spare parts fitted I hope you think its OK?"

Update as at 5th November 2020:

Chris said that he had ridden every day so far this year except 3 days in February; for Storms Clara and Dennis in addition to a washout day.

Total so far this year is 6250 miles. "Not a lot but I'm happy with it!" added Chris



A Covid 19 story.

Jeff Marshall

This would never have happened but for the Corona virus lockdown.

One day in the middle of May I answered a caller at our front door and was surprised to find a guy 45 years old, or so, standing there who I had not seen since 2012/13 when he had installed the wiring in our Garage and loft for our solar panels.



He had obviously noted and remembered all my bikes and the bike workstand at that time. He had to remind me that his name was Murray. He explained that he wished to become a bike rider and would I mind talking to him about cycling and acquainting him with the basics. Like many others during lockdown he had somehow aquired a road bike and wished to stay fit by cycling. The bike, an old bright yellow aluminium Carrera T.d.F with flattened tubes needed some maintenance. His local bike shop was inundated with sorting out old bikes dragged out of retirement by furloughed workers and their kids, and so could not do anything for six weeks.

So I volunteered to have a look at it. Also at one of his 3 son's mountain bikes.

He had absolutely no idea what needed doing where to get the parts and how to do it, so I volunteered to get the parts which was not so easy, as nearly everything was out of stock. Especially 9 speed chains and black handlebar tape. The world and his dog were ordering bits for bikes apparently.

The mountain bike had a bent derailleur hanger and only needed straightening and adjustment. Easy.

The road bike needed a new chain, but the cassette was OK. The brake / gear levers were fitted facing 30deg. Inward and the 'bar tape needed renewing

Brake and gear cables needed renewing.

He needed a pump, a mini saddlebag, inner tubes and tyre levers. Plus a bottle holder and a Bike Eye rear view mirror. As he did not have any cycling shoes or the confidence to use shoes with cleats, and was using trainers to ride in, I got him a pair of Shimano combination pedals so he could upgrade to cleats later.

Lastly I got him a pair of 28mm Continental GP 5000 folding tyres. Very nice- I might get a pair myself. All in all, it cost him a few bob. I enjoyed spending his money on the best kit.

By the end of June he was all kitted up and ready to go and asked if I would mind if he tagged along with me for a ride.?

Several times he tried to organise himself to ride with me at the weekend but family commitments like shopping got in his way as management was calling the shots and he had to fit a new Kitchen.

We eventually succeeded in getting out for a ride on Sun 19th July. We arranged to meet in Lightwater. It was raining at 9.30 so we delayed until 11.30 and rode a 30 mile circuit out towards Maidenhead and back. Despite the lack of cleats or toeclips Murray survived, he was OK and he was pleased, but said his legs were killing him.

Murray is on his own now. Will he keep it up? Only time will tell.

Jeff

'Our friend Peter Whitfield who spoke at our 2010 club dinner, has since, together with his wife Nancy, sold their house at Charlbury in Oxfordshire and taken up residence in Italy. Peter, a lifelong cyclist, born in Woolwich, and whose mother lived in Staines, is author and publisher of many books on very diverse subjects, from a history of English poetry to a study of Sir Francis Drake. If you want to know about Dante's Divine Comedy or Herman Melville's Moby Dick, or Charles Darwin in a nutshell, or even Johnny Helms's lifework of 500 cartoons, Peter is your man! But they include some with the history of cycle racing as their theme. I have read some of them and I think he has managed to capture for posterity the unique atmosphere and tradition of our sport as it developed over the last 70 years. About 12 years ago he was instrumental in producing a DVD entitled 'A Time Trialling Album'. It has more than 200 of our old friend and clubmate Bernard Thompson's brilliant atmospheric black & white photographs of time triallists during the 60's, 70's & 80's. So, the genius that was Bernard, lives on thanks to Peter.

What follows is an e-mail I received from him in April describing his experience of the pandemic lockdown around his new home in Italy.

It seems he is a bit of a rebel as well as an intellectual. '

Jeff

Ps ; 27/07/20 ,They are back! I hear that he and Nancy have sold up and just returned to the UK and are looking for a house around Chipping Norton. (I think he missed the Bodleian Library !)

CONFESSIONS OF AN OUTLAW CYCLIST

Peter Whitfield

I have been living in Genoa for a couple of years, and I have already described my feelings about the way the virus crisis has been handled, so I won't repeat that now. I want to concentrate on the subject of cycling here during the past month. It seems strange to remember that it was only six weeks ago that I was happily enjoying regular 30 or 40 mile rides along the coast or up into the local hills. Then came the fateful day when we heard that new and terrible word, Lockdown.



**"Then came the
fateful day when we
heard that new and
terrible word:
Lockdown"**

It took a few days for the reality to sink in, but soon there was no doubt about it: the city and the countryside round about was switched off, shut down, paralysed. Businesses large and small were closed, all the shops except food shops and chemists were closed, the café bars closed, all schools plus colleges and the university closed, libraries, museums and parks closed, and the beaches were closed, although no one was swimming yet. Most severe of all, we were told to stay at home, we could not venture out except for essential shopping and we had to carry identification with us plus an official declaration stating where we were going. Teams of official vigilantes plus the police, patrolled the streets and had the power to impose huge fines for breaking these rules - up to several thousand Euros. We were even told not to venture more than 200 metres from our homes; but to be fair I don't think that this was ever actually enforced. However there certainly were vans patrolling the streets broadcasting warnings for people to go home and stay inside as if a nuclear war were imminent.

But for me the worst thing of all was that cycling was banned, absolutely, all over the city. A simple cyclist; a bloke pedalling quietly around in the sunshine was suddenly declared to be a threat to life and society. I was stunned and dismayed. I know this situation was seen as a national emergency, but it's worth remembering that we in Genoa are outside the danger zone: even now after a whole month, we have still recorded less than one hundred cases of the infection and less than ten deaths, which in a city of over 600,000 people is pretty remarkable. Moreover, if there has been a plus to this crisis it is that traffic in cities like Genoa has been cut to around 20% of normal, maybe even less. The result is that the streets are quiet and the air is cleaner than it has been for almost a hundred years. I should explain that cycling is not big in Genoa, mainly because the city is built across a series of hills which rise up over a thousand feet, and cycling is therefore quite challenging. So this was a great opportunity for people to at least try cycling; to move around and get some exercise and discover the pleasures of the bike. And what do the authorities in their wisdom decide to do? They ban cycling!

**"I had to go out when
the vigilantes were not
around, which means
early in the morning,
very early indeed."**

There was no chance of my accepting this ban, no chance of me sitting at home doing nothing day after day, especially as it seemed that the crisis might last for months, plus spring had arrived with a glorious spell of dry weather. I was not going to obey this insane cycling ban. What could I do? There was only one realistic answer: I had to go out when the vigilantes were not around, which means early in the morning, very early indeed, and I had to avoid the main roads. I am lucky to live at a point which, although not far from the city centre, is at the foot of a road that leads up onto the main ridge of high ground that surrounds Genoa. Along that ridge is a favourite area for walking, running and cycling, both on and off road, in woodland and in open country. This area had to be the target for my pre-dawn training rides.

So, admittedly in some trepidation, about four weeks ago I set off at first light, but well before sunrise. I had no idea where the vigilantes might be patrolling, or when they came on duty, I just had to go out and try it, to spy out the lie of the land. So the adrenaline was flowing a bit I must admit, and I was nervous of my own shadow as I pedalled silently out onto the dark roads, at first still in the zone of street-lights. I was re-assured on that first ride by meeting precisely no one for the first few miles, and I began to breathe a bit more easily. However, I've said that this road climbs up and up, getting well clear of the city. In fact virtually from my doorstep it climbs on and off for no less than five miles to its highest point. It was not a very comfortable feeling to be labouring up this road, mile after mile at less than ten miles an hour, wondering if a white van was going to emerge out of the shadows and nab me. I had left in the dark because it made me feel safer, but I soon realised that I had not left early enough, because the dawn was coming up, the light was seeping through the trees, and when I reached the top of the ridge I was greeted by a magnificent sunrise over the hills to the east, and a view down to Genoa harbour on the west. But I wasn't in much of a mood to appreciate this: I had been out for half an hour and had only covered five miles, but I knew I must simply turn around and skim down as fast as I could to safety. Luck was with me, and in about ten flying minutes I was turning into my street, having seen only a couple of cars and a few dedicated early dog-walkers. I had made it. I had got my ride in, dodged the boys in blue, asserted my freedom, and become an outlaw cyclist. I must admit I felt pretty good.



Since then I have become a lot more experienced and I've grown to love it more and more. I now go out a lot earlier so I can ride further. It's darker of course out beyond the street light zone, but that doesn't matter much because the roads are almost completely empty, as no one lives up there on the hill. Also the sun rises two or three minutes earlier every day, which is very much to my advantage. I am now leaving at 6 am with sunrise coming around 6.45. In another week or so I'll be going out at 5.30 and I'll be able to get in 90 minutes and should still see nobody. At weekends I'll soon be able to ride for two hours in safety and in daylight. Of course I have no guarantee of that safety, but I have been out now a couple of dozen times and I have never seen the vigilantes. But why, realistically, should they go out at the crack of dawn to drive through empty streets? It may be that the threat of heavy fines and the original patrols with their loudspeakers had their effect, and that the authorities were satisfied that people had been sufficiently intimidated. I also have a feeling that some degree of sanity may have prevailed, and that the patrols have been quietly relaxed a little: it would be in the Italian character for this to have happened.

And I have discovered a new dimension to my cycling. I go out into a city that is still asleep, in fact I seem to have the whole world to myself up there, watching the light appearing and growing almost imperceptibly until it fills the sky. I have been reminded, if I ever knew it, that the birds' dawn chorus actually comes before the dawn, when there is not a glimmer of light in the sky, so I wonder what sets the birds off – is it their own biological clock rather than the first light? This experience of riding into the dawn also reminds me of leaving home years ago, before the days of car-ownership, to ride out to time-trial starts maybe twenty miles away or more. Riding at that time of day makes you sharply aware that the cyclist really is a loner, a special sort of being, in many ways an outsider. It can be almost a magical experience, and afterwards it's as though the cyclist is in possession of a secret that can't be taught, it can only be experienced. It's not an experience you could get while driving a car, cut off from nature; the cyclist is out there in the cold morning air, aware of the realm of nature that surrounds him, and also aware that he is part of it, he is not disturbing its silence; this is an experience that refreshes mind and body.

This solitary under-the-radar riding has thrown up quite a few thoughts in my mind. The shock of the cycling ban itself makes me think there are some important differences between cycling culture in Italy and that in England. We have always been told that the Italians are passionate about cycling, and so they are in their way, but it is not our way. We know that they worship the memory of Coppi like a god, and Bartali only slightly less; then over the years they have had Baldini, Gimondi, Moser, Saronni and Bugno for example, all victors in the Giro and the World Championships, plus great trackmen from the days when the track was as glamorous as the road, men like Maspes, world sprint champion no less than seven times. But this was all professional sport, these were the great showmen, the gladiators, the heroes whom ordinary people could look up to as superstars. There must have been amateur bike-racing in Italy, but I have never been able to find out anything about it. Did they have clubs as we did? If so, they certainly never had the early-morning time-trials which have given us so many superb amateur working-class athlete-heroes like Ray Booty, Alf Engers, Ian Cammish and Andy Wilkinson, and nor did cycling ever mean touring for the Italians. So there is a deep divide between everyday cycling and the professional superstars, and cycling is not a truly popular pastime here as it has been in Britain or in Holland for example. I think it must be this divide which lies behind the extraordinary ban on cycling during this current crisis. No country which had a true feeling for cycling could possibly have imposed that ban, and the politicians and bureaucrats who did it obviously have no conception of what cycling means, and how it can enhance personal and social health. I hope that such a ban will never be imposed in Britain.

One further point concerns me. The toll of this virus on the Italian people has been worse than on any other country, with the ratio of deaths to infections running at 11% or 12% as opposed to 4% or 5% elsewhere, and we have to ask why this should be. While living in Italy I have noticed several public health issues which may be relevant. The average age of the population here is the highest in Europe, so that there are more vulnerable people than elsewhere. But beyond that, in Genoa itself I see large numbers of elderly people with obvious poor health, overweight and struggling with mobility problems. They travel everywhere by bus, they will never walk, they wait for a quarter of an hour for a bus rather than walk a kilometre or two, even taking a bus to get downhill. The buses tend to be old and heavily polluting with diesel fumes, so that the air quality is noticeably poor. The level of smoking is very high among all ages: groups of young teenagers standing waiting at bus-stops, all smoking, is a common sight. These teenagers are waiting impatiently for the day when they can get their first motor-scooter and join the adult world; they never cycle and they never walk, the excuse being the hills and the dangerous roads. People I meet, even the educated ones, are incredulous when they learn that I actually cycle around this city. There is evidence of poor social hygiene in most Italian cities, with rubbish and dog-mess all too visible in the streets. I have a feeling, though of course I can't prove it, that all these factors add up to a population in which impaired immune systems are common. I suspect that this may be an underlying factor in Italy's terrible experience of this virus. I feel that Italy may be paying the price for its past neglect of these important issues.

The final matter that I want to mention is that I surprised myself how angry I became at this cycling ban. In itself it may be a small thing, but it seems to show that a supposedly democratic government can impose emergency orders on its people without consultation, and immediately suppress civil liberties and human rights. Why should we all be punished because a small fraction of people are ill? Are not people ill, and indeed dying, every day, and doesn't life still go on? I stand by my central argument that 95% of the population of Italy and of the world has nothing to fear from this virus, so we have to learn to live with it. Why should society be shut down in this way? We must ask questions like these, we must be able to think for ourselves, we don't have to accept the official line. All the politicians' talk about, "This is a war that we must win," is unreal, it's bluster. If any good is to come out of this crisis we need to look seriously at mankind's relationship to nature, at ways to improve urban health and to reduce our dependence on technology and high-intensity medicine. We must take more responsibility for our own health and our own lives. In this crisis the far more serious world environment emergency has been forgotten. Now that the cities have been calmed and the air has been cleaned, can't we keep them that way? We have to do this by capturing the attention of the young, by getting them out of the cars, off the motor-scooters, away from the computers, off the cigarettes and away from consumerism. This is a tall order, but my experience in the last month has convinced me that we must make a start somehow, or social life will become ever more intolerable. These are the thoughts of a simple cyclist who was compelled to become an outlaw. But I can't deny that I have, and I plan to keep on with my dawn riding as long as I have to, and beyond.

Club news & notes



Club rides prior to the first lockdown



Your club committee

President
Jeff Marshall
Chairman
Graham Davis
Secretary
Bill Carnaby
Treasurer
Martyn Roach
Racing Secretary
Bruce McMichael
(trophies)
Dave Sykes
Captain
Jeff Marshall
Membership Secretary
Linda Williams
Magazine Editor
Patsy Howe
Press Officer
Chris Lovibond
Website Manager
Ian Kirk



Club Camp 2019



The venue for the club camp this year was Coate, Devizes and took place between the 15th and 23rd of August. Everyone enjoyed the week. Many thanks to Tony Cosstick who researched and booked the site.



Distribution

This magazine is primarily distributed by electronic means. This saves the club time and money. If you're reading a paper copy that you received in the post and would be willing to switch to reading it on your computer or printing it yourself, please let the editor know.



Next Issue

Please contact the editor with your contributions or suggestions.
It's your magazine!