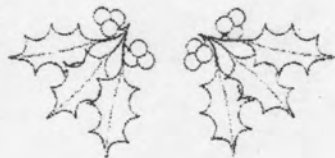


The



Coaster



the magazine of the

**EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLIST TOURING CLUB**

No. 18

25p

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East Sussex District Association - Cyclists Touring Club

by Dennis Jackson

"The Coaster"

Christmas 1989 - Issue No.18

PRESIDENT MRS. ANN RIX

Secretary

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Editorial

Well, here we are again with another Christmas 'Coaster', it doesn't seem that long since the last one. A good number of articles this time and another of Roy James' excellent drawings. I apologise for having to split Jack Dunn's article, but feel that it would be unfair to take up too much of this issue with one article, it will also give you something to look forward to in the next summer edition.

All the best to everyone for Christmas and the New Year,

David Rix.

AN OCCASIONAL SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF THE EAST SUSSEX D.A.
and members reminiscences of the first 50 years.
by Dennis Jakeman.

The Bicycle Touring Club, soon to become the Cyclists' Touring Club, was founded in 1878; not until 1894 was the first District Association formed by members residing in the Northumberland and Durham Districts.

R.T. Lang, its first Secretary said, "when the day comes that a 20th century historian includes cycling in the National History, the formation of the Northumberland and Durham District Association will be regarded as one of the most important episodes in the history of the Cyclists' Touring Club." (1)

Prior to this, one defect in the organisation of the Club was the increasing failure to cater for the social aspects of the sport; it not infrequently happened that members living next door to each other lived in blissful ignorance of the fact unless through some chance remark or wrongly delivered post!

The genial intercourse that existed among members of the Club in the early eighties of the last century gradually disappeared as the membership increased; the wearing of the club badge considered not only a duty but an honour passed out of fashion and the Club consisted almost entirely of individuals who generally failed to see they had any interest in common and whose interchange of ideas on cycling and cycle touring was limited to immediate friends and acquaintances.

The gradual increasing desire in 1896 to form further district associations was met by the formation of a committee by the General Council of the Club to consider the whole question and also whether financial support should be forthcoming. A committee of 13 was appointed, four were in favour, three openly opposed the idea and the remainder were neutral, and even they were reported as being biased against! (2) Hardly very encouraging.

However at the half-yearly general meeting held in July of that year the formation of D.A.'s was formally adopted and thus, although initially only faintly blessed by the Council, was the formation of the D.A.'s throughout the country initiated by the members.

It was not until September 1926 that the Council gave its consent to the formation of the Sussex D.A., an occasion well remembered by Bill Collins. "I remember Phil Aris (to become the first Secretary) contacting head office about a D.A. for Sussex and being told he needed the support of 15 members; so he got a list of all members living in Sussex and a meeting was held at St. Anne's Tea Rooms in Worthing (February 1925). I remember five people went from Eastbourne."

Twenty-three members attended this meeting and agreed unanimously to the proposal for a Sussex D.A. and that the area should be "A straight line from the sea coast through PEVENSEY and HAILSHAM to MARESFIELD and EAST GRINSTEAD, thence along the County Boundary to LIPHOOK thence a straight line through PETERSFIELD and FAREHAM to the coast." (3)

At that meeting Phil Aris was elected Honorary Secretary (protem) and it was agreed that Lieutenant Colonel C.H.S. Baskerville would be asked to become President "if and when the formation is sanctioned by the Council." (4)

At the inaugural meeting of the D.A. held at the Gildredge Hotel, Eastbourne on November 6, 1926 attended by 27 members these appointments were confirmed, together with that of the Rev. Frederick Hastings as Chairman and Arthur Wren (a name that figured prominently in the D.A. over many years) as Treasurer, and "after much discussion, scarlet and black chosen as the D.A. colours." (5)

"I remember," said Bill Collins, "that shortly afterwards Bert Pinnington asked me if I would take on the Treasurer's job as Arthur Wren wanted to step down. I said 'yes' and asked to see the books. I was told that there were none and that there was only 1/6 (7½p) in the kitty, this from the sale of a Club tie! Anyway, I think that we were one of the first D.A.'s to be financially self-supporting and I remember getting a letter of thanks from G.H. Stancer (General Secretary of the Club) for our 'generous attitude.'" (Bill was elected Treasurer in 1928).

However these are but early days and it was not until after the Sussex D.A. had celebrated its 21st anniversary on 6th November 1947 that the East Sussex D.A. was finally formed on 17th April 1948 following proposals put to the A.G.M. of that year that resulted in the division of the Sussex D.A. into East and West Sussex, because of the "difficulties in catering for the membership within the large area of the Sussex D.A." (6)

Up to this point there were 5 sections operating within the Sussex D.A. : Eastbourne, Eastern, Horsham, Lewes and Western. We note that a "Mr H. Moore", better known to us as Yub, was a section representative for Lewes on the committee. After various proposals and amendments the following boundaries were agreed upon and minuted:

"East: The County Borough of Brighton and thence northward along the main Southern Railway line to the County Boundary at Tinsley Green. All towns and villages named on that line included.

West: Littlehampton, along A284 to Arundel and thence to the junction with A29 at Whiteways to the County Boundary via the boundary of the Portsmouth D.A.

North: Between the East-West boundaries along the County Boundary." (7)

We have a lot of history to recall of those first 22 years and the subsequent years of the East Sussex D.A.. What reminiscences can you add to the story told in the "archives" to help build up our History of the East Sussex D.A. Why not drop me a line, or better still have a chat with me and my tape recorder.

References.

- (1) & (2) Lightwood. Romance of CTC. 1928.
- (3) & (4) Meeting at Worthing 21.2.25
- (5) D.A. Inaugural Meeting, Eastbourne 6.11.26
- (6) & (7) 21st A.G.M. of the Sussex D.A., Newhaven 1.2.48

(Anyone with any memories for Dennis should write to him at "Jordans", 2 Maurice Road, Seaford. Or telephone (0323) 895552. Ed.)



Ou est le W.C.?

An English Lady is buying a house in Switzerland. On return home she realises that she didn't see the toilet in her new house. She therefore writes to the Estate Agent asking the whereabouts of the W.C. The Estate Agent has very little knowledge of the English language and so asks the Parish Priest to translate the letter for him. The only equivalent of W.C. that he can think of is Wayside Chapel. The following reply is therefore received by the English lady.

My Dear Madam,

I take great pleasure in informing you that the W.C. is situated nine miles from the house in the centre of a beautiful grove of pine trees surrounded by lovely grounds.

It is capable of holding 229 people, and it is open on Sundays and Thursdays only. As there are a great number of people expected during the summer months, I suggest that you come early, although there is usually standing room. This is an unfortunate situation, especially if you are in the habit of going regularly. It may interest you to know that my daughter was married in the W.C. and it was there that she met her

husband. I can remember the rush that there was for seats. There were 10 people to every seat usually occupied by one. It was wonderful to see the expressions on their faces.

You will be glad to hear that a good number of people bring their lunch and make a day of it, while those who can afford to go by car arrive just in time. I would especially recommend your ladyship to go on Thursdays when there is an organ accompaniment. The acoustics are excellent, even the most delicate sounds can be heard everywhere.

The newest addition is a bell donated by a wealthy resident of the district. It rings every time a person enters. A bazaar is to be held to provide plush seats for all, since the people feel it is long needed. My wife is rather delicate and she cannot attend regularly. It is almost a year since she went last, and naturally it pains her very much not to be able to go more often. I shall be delighted to reserve the best seat for you, where you shall be seen by all. For the children, there is a special day and time so that they do not disturb the elders. Hoping to be of some service to you.



Round the World in 60 Days!

by Jack Dunn.

Reprinted with permission from the August 1989 issue of "The Way of an Eagle" (magazine of the Eagle Road Club).

No great achievement these days - you can do it in sixty hours by scheduled flights and that is about the time we spent in the air. But in between there was a bit of cycling (1400 miles in New Zealand and a few hundreds in California and New England), probably a hundred miles on foot and quite a bit of help from train, bus, car and ship.

This is meant to be a helpful article for any reader who may be contemplating a similar trip, rather than just a travel story, so let me start by explaining why we undertook this long and expensive journey and how we arrived at the eventual plan for it.

Marjorie and I have always regarded cycle-touring as our preferred holiday activity; retirement brought us the freedom to undertake longer and more ambitious journeys than were previously possible. Over the last few years we met several people who had been to New Zealand and who urged us to follow their example and the more we heard about it the more we liked the idea. New Zealand is about the size of Britain but with only three million inhabitants; we don't like crowds, so that was one big attraction. And it would put to rest the continual itch to travel further! The prospect of a journey right around the globe had its own allure too, and it would enable us to see friends in San Francisco Bay and New Jersey who had repeatedly asked us to visit them.

So the decision to go to New Zealand was made; but when and how would we travel? It didn't necessarily have to be with bikes. In recent years we have developed a taste for walking too, especially on the long distance footpaths. New Zealand has a wealth of such 'tracks' in spectacular country and, for a while, we were considering the four week package offered by Ramblers' Holidays. But a month seemed too short to justify such a long journey and perhaps too long to commit ourselves to the company, congenial or otherwise, of the same people day after day.

Next alternative: hire a car or camper-van and walk when and where we chose to. But the thought of being without bikes in such country for a couple of months was hard to stomach.

So what about the conducted cycling tours offered by two or three firms in New

Zealand? Well, perhaps if we were younger; but at seventy plus, we could foresee difficulties in fitting in physically and socially with a touring group almost certainly much younger. We had doubts about hired bicycles too.

So we had practically decided on taking our own bikes but we thought we would first get an opinion from John Cook, the only remaining paid-up Eagle Road Club member in New Zealand, I believe. He wrote to us with somewhat muted encouragement (but with a warm welcome to his home); there would be difficulties: long distances between stopping places, ferocious head-winds, speeding cattle trucks on main roads, unsurfaced minor roads. We began to have doubts. Then we met John Hinton, an 85-year-old cyclist who had toured in New Zealand the previous year and intended to go again! Our minds were made up - we would take our own bikes (which, in our hearts, was probably what we meant to do from the start) and chance the hazards.

One more decision to be made: it can be very wet in New Zealand and if we were to tackle these long-distance walks we must have suitable boots and weather-proofing. We regretfully decided that these would be too much to add to our luggage, both in regard to weight limits on aircraft and to its effect on handling the bikes. We usually wear fairly robust shoes for touring so that we can take a day's walk, in good weather and not too demanding terrain, and these must suffice for this trip. We would take a light rucksack which would serve also for taking cabin luggage into the plane. But we must abandon the idea of backpacking the long-distance paths.

Next came the matter of timing. New Zealand is appreciably nearer the Equator than Britain, its extremities being of a similar latitude to central France and central Spain, and it is correspondingly warmer. We are not keen on hot weather, nor on competing for road space and overnight accommodation with peak holiday traffic. In New Zealand this comes in a few weeks before and after Christmas. So we had a choice of a late spring start or an early autumn finish. We would probably have opted for the spring were it not for our intended American visits. We settled for six weeks in March and April in New Zealand (late summer and early autumn), calling at San Francisco at the end of April (their late spring) and New England for the first week in May (early spring) on the way home.

Another thing to be considered was the crossing from South to North Island. New Zealand has a brief revival of its holiday season at Easter and there is a lot of pressure on the ferry service and approach roads at that time. We resolved not to be in the area then; we would probably spend four weeks in South Island and cross after Easter for the remaining fortnight. We chose to start in South Island because of the late season and the supposition that South Island would cool off first. Also we thought we were going to like the South Island better and wanted to make sure of seeing as much of it as possible for a start. So we would fly out to Christchurch and depart from Auckland.

New Zealand has daylight saving in summer but regrettably puts the clock back unduly early, the first weekend in March. This was a pity for it meant that evenings would be dark before seven o'clock by the end of our tour. We resolved to make earlier starts each day than we have usually managed (we always make this resolution!)

One more detail in the plan: the flight out to Christchurch can be done in about thirty hours, longer than we were prepared to spend sitting in a plane almost without a break. It seems that most airlines offer bargain stop-overs in Hong Kong or Singapore and we settled for a three night break in Singapore, where we thought we might get our first experience of cycling in Asia; Hong Kong didn't seem to us very suitable for that.

So that was the plan. How did it work out? Pretty well, on the whole. Over a nine week journey it would be a miracle if everything turned out precisely as planned. We had a list of places we would like to see and of people we hoped to visit and we managed most of them - and we had some wonderful experiences and encounters which were quite unplanned.

For a start, our intended cycling tour of Singapore, a circuit of the entire state (an island about the size of the Isle of Man but flat) never materialized. Each day started

with downpours of rain and the prospect of riding in capes in the tropical heat was too daunting; the bikes had been delivered to our hotel room, still immobilized for carriage by air and they remained in that condition until it was time to go. Meanwhile, there was much to be seen in the city. Singapore is a meeting place of many races: Chinese predominantly, Indian, Japanese, Arab, Thai and many others, Europeans included. We had a bus tour of the city and a cruise by junk round the bay and small islands, but we spent a lot of time just walking the old Chinese quarters, dodging the heavy showers when necessary. The streets of Singapore teem with bicycles, or cycles rather for many are three-wheelers, the rickshaws, massive contraptions with a passenger seat for one or two under a protective hood, or sometimes a goods container. They are usually propelled by a diminutive Chinese with matchstick legs, oblivious of the weather.

It didn't rain all the time; sometimes there was just a slight drizzle and there were even periods of brilliant sunshine when we were made aware of how hot it could get! The time went very quickly and our brief stay in Singapore was a happy one. I would not want to spend a long time there - it is too hot for my tastes - but would certainly recommend it as a place to break the journey to the Antipodes.

Arrived in Christchurch, our general plan for the South Island was to make for Timaru to see John Cook and family for a start, spend a few weeks touring the southern half of the island (no details of route planned yet) then probably take the train up the east coast to Picton for the crossing to North Island.

The main road to Timaru is possibly the one road in South Island that could fairly be called dull. Dead flat most of the way and in long straight stretches across the Canterbury Plain; pleasant enough farming country, with lots of sheep, of course, but these are features that could pall after the first 50 miles. Fortunately there is an alternative, quite a bit longer, round the back of the plain, gently switchbacking over the toes of the foothills of the Southern Alps. A glorious road which occupied us for our first two days in New Zealand and where we began to learn a thing or two about the country. First, a reminder of the scarcity of refreshment places; we had been forewarned! Around lunch-time on the first day we started looking to places like Aylesbury and Charing Cross, each shown on the map as an important looking meeting place of several roads, to provide a drink and a sandwich. Both these places proved to be just that - not a building in sight of any sort. And while we were scratching our heads at the second place, wondering what to do next, along came two cars from different directions. Both drivers stopped and got out to offer help and advice, an example of friendliness and kindness that we came to realize was the normal thing in the New Zealand people. The following day we were hailed by a motoring party in a picnic lay-by with an invitation to join them at tea. We spent an hour with them and learned a lot about their country from them and, I believe, left them with a clearer view of life in Britain.

We arrived in Timaru about midday on Sunday and spent the afternoon cycling with John and Judy. They are fortunate in living in an area well-provided with a network of country roads, nearly all tarmacadamed. So many minor roads in New Zealand are 'unsealed', as they are described, just loose gravel or broken rock and for people not too addicted to prolonged rough stuff, this is a great disincentive to exploration of remoter corners of the country. On the other hand, the main roads are well surfaced, well graded and, with few exceptions, only lightly burdened with traffic.

Next morning, armed with a wealth of advice and information from the Cooks, we set out to get among the 'high stuff', the Southern Alps which extend down the length of South Island and divide it into two vastly different regions.

The day after this, we had a bit of trouble with the weather. We were heading west into an upland area called the Mackenzie country (after a noted bandit of earlier times), a wild open moorland where the main industry is the collection water for hydro-electric power. West winds and rainfall were forecast, so when the wind got up and the rain started and we heard that a bus going our way was due we decided to try it. There are few railways in South Island but there is a good network of bus services; the buses have a luggage compartment and the driver will accept bicycles at

his discretion according to space available. The knowledge that we had such assistance at our disposal in case of need had helped to decide us to bring our bikes to New Zealand. When the bus came we were aghast at the amount of luggage already aboard. No matter; the driver cheerfully climbed up the mountain of suitcases and boxes of fruit and hauled our bikes up on top of it. As it turned out, the rain came to nothing and the wind went round to the south and we wondered why we were sitting in a bus for some 50 miles, wistfully gazing out at the sunlit country.

One of the sights we wanted to see was, of course, Mount Cook, the summit of the Southern Alps, 12,000 feet plus. Mount Cook Village, considerably lower, has limited (and very expensive) accommodation; so for once we booked a room ahead to make sure of a bed. This was one of the times when we were defeated by the weather. We set out after lunch to do the 30-odd miles of lakeside road from Twizel without any thought of difficulty. It was a glorious afternoon of sunshine and white clouds, but a rapidly rising north-west wind eventually blew us to a standstill. We had to admit that we would never make it, so we turned our backs to the wind and flew back to Twizel to cancel our booking. Next day the wind was in much the same quarter so we headed vaguely southward and after a couple of days arrived in Queenstown.

Queenstown is the great tourist centre of the South Island; coach-loads of American, Japanese and German tourists abound there and street names are signed in Japanese as well as English. There are some ghastly achievements in hotel and restaurant architecture and people who knew Queenstown a few years ago complain that the place has been ruined. But it is a wonderful centre for so many excursions and activities, and that is why we spent five nights there. The main feature of our first day was a trip on the 50 mile long Lake Wakatipu, in a steamship built in 1912, to a sheep station where they demonstrated sheep control by dogs, sheep-shearing and other aspects of New Zealand's major industry.

But the following day was a high-spot of our trip. Milford Sound, a spectacular sea inlet like a Norwegian fjord, only more so, was high on our priority list; but it would be a three day journey by road from Queenstown and through a rather intimidating tunnel, too. There was every possibility of the weather changing in that time, so we seized the opportunity to get there while it was still fine by flying direct - about 50 miles in 20 minutes. But what a 20 minutes! Within minutes of take-off, our little 6 seater single-engined Cessna was among the snow capped peaks of the Southern Alps. Not over them but weaving in amongst them and with not a sight of any possible place for an emergency landing in the event of loss of power. We suppressed such uncomfortable thoughts to enjoy the vista of range upon range of dazzling white peaks.

Arrived at Milford Sound we were soon ushered aboard the launch which was to take us down the Sound to the open Tasman Sea and back. I am not going to attempt a description of the trip, but it was all we had been led to expect from the travel brochures, and more. All too soon we were back at the little airport for the return to Queenstown. The arrangements are all very slick and we should have been back in Queenstown by lunch time - it is a very quick way of spending quite a lot of money - but our plane was found to have a punctured tyre so we had to wait for a relief to fly out.

This gave us time to eat our lunch by the waterside and also get our first experience of one of the hazards of New Zealand - sand flies! These are small black creatures, a bit smaller than a house fly; they swarm like gnats and bite voraciously. They are easily controlled by an insect repellent and we had duly provided ourselves with such but, of course, it was in a saddle bag back in our hotel! We finished our lunch well away from the water. Sand flies do not seem to need sand but they do seem to swarm in the vicinity of water and we met them only in this moister west coast area. Our return journey in the relief plane gave us a view of the Sutherland Falls, a drop of some 2,000 feet, which, had we walked the Milford Track, we would have been admiring from below. This was truly a day to remember.

The rest of our few days at Queenstown we spent mainly walking, apart from a bike ride one evening to nearby Arrowtown, a survival (or revival) of the little town that sprang up in the gold rush days of the 1840s. It has a saloon reminiscent of those

in the old Western cowboy films and old-fashioned shops to match. It also has an extensive car park! Then, our last day we spent on a walk up nearby Ben Lomond - a more demanding one than its namesake and with an even more rewarding view.

The day we left Queenstown we again had a change of plan enforced on us by the weather. We had set out for Te Anau on the borders of the sparsely inhabited Fjordland National Park and because of the scarcity of accommodation on the way had booked a bed about 65 miles ahead. This time the wind got up from the south-west and brought rain with it. There was no chance of fighting this wind under capes, so again we did a u-turn and went another way; it didn't matter - we would miss seeing one place and see others instead.

Our substituted route took us down the valley of the Clutha, New Zealand's biggest river, and this gave us an easy couple of days riding, much of it through fruit orchards in harvest-time glory, down to Balclutha on the coast. This is the Scottish colonial country (Clutha is Gaelic for Clyde and Dunedin for Edinburgh, we were told) and it abounds in Scottish place and family names. At Balclutha we started our pre-planned train ride up the east coast with overnight stops at Dunedin and Christchurch. Dunedin is a rather dour typically Victorian Scottish city, complete with a statue of Burns; its citizens have evidently tried to brighten it up by liberal applications of brightly coloured wall paints, often with astonishing effect. For us, its main attraction was a colony of Royal Albatrosses, where a colony of these magnificent birds were nesting within sight of human observers (from a hide) and this was claimed to be unique.

The train that travels the entire east coast of South Island, grandly called 'The Southerner', trundles along a 3-foot gauge track at about 30 m.p.h. with generous refreshment stops every hour or so. It runs once every weekday but takes two days to do the 600 miles from Invercargill to Picton, with an overnight halt at Christchurch. We stayed in Christchurch for two nights with a view to spending a day riding around the Banks Peninsula - a not too successful idea. It was Sunday and all Christchurch was out this sunny day and the roads were too busy for comfort. The peninsula itself is very hilly and the little cove we chose to visit (called Taylor's Mistake) was approached by a very narrow, steep dead-end road, choked with cars. We could just have gone to Cornwall for this! There was no tea available either, until, once again, we were invited to take tea with a motoring couple. We saw a good many cyclists out that day, all riding stripped down bikes, French style, not carrying anything at all. Christchurch is a pleasant city, on a Sunday, perhaps not justifying a visit for its own sake - but we feel that way about most cities!

Here we decided to drop our plan to continue up the east coast in favour of the Trans-Alpine Express which cuts across the middle of the Island, crossing the Southern Alps at Arthur's Pass (about 3,000 feet). This was advertised as a miracle of railway engineering and we found it fully justified all the claims of the brochures. The line follows the tortuous valley of the River Waimakarri, crossing and re-crossing by dizzy viaducts and burrowing into the cliffs in numerous tunnels. Again the speed barely exceeds 30 m.p.h., uphill or down, an advantage when there is so much to see.

Both our train journeys were remarkable for the happy spirit aboard. Everybody, staff and passengers alike, seemed to exude cheerfulness and kindness, as if they too regarded these journeys as rather a joke. We had to reserve seats in advance for this trip and were booked in the observation car as far as Arthur's Pass; there were only two coaches and a luggage van. A young couple with window seats next to us quite voluntarily gave them up to us as we were strangers and they had seen it all before. At Arthur's Pass they exchanged tickets with us so that we could keep our window seats while they transferred to the other coach. This was typical of so many acts of kindness we met in New Zealand.

Clattering down from Arthur's Pass to the west coast at Greymouth we were in a different world. The parched late-summer pastures and dried up river beds had given way to green meadows and luxuriant forests of Kauri pine and tree ferns, evidence of the high rainfall on this side of the island. We had previously decided against the west coast road going south from Greymouth because it would have been a three day ride with no escape, little accommodation and with every chance of three days of rain! But

now we were taking the coast road north for a day or so; there was a little rain at times but not enough to mar our enjoyment of this splendid road. On this section we visited an old gold mine (there are many of them in New Zealand), maintained and worked for demonstration purposes by an English couple. Gold features strongly in the country's colonial history, which dates only from about the 1830s. Anything more than about 50 years old is 'historical'; you get a yellow road sign - 'Historic Site 400 yards' - to warn you of the approach to a bridge built in 1880 or maybe a stone marking the birth of some notable in 1904.

From Westport we struck inland again up through the gorges of the Buller Valley to Murchison, a 60 mile stretch of unfailing beauty and also notable for sparseness of refreshment - one bar and one village shop for much-needed stocking up of our fluids. Another couple of days brought us into the sunshine state - Nelson. We saw nothing to cast doubt on its claim to have the best sunshine record in New Zealand. We spent the Easter weekend along the shores of Tasman Bay; there was a fair amount of traffic about so it was a good time to take to our feet and get off the roads. On Good Friday we walked the cliff paths in the Tasman National Park; Easter Monday we spent in the hills above Nelson. On each occasion we rode the bikes on a minor road until the tarmac finished then found some kind soul to take care of them for the rest of the day.

Easter over, we had the roads practically to ourselves again for our last two days on South Island, bringing us to Picton, the port of departure for the crossing to North Island. Picton is delightfully placed in the Marlborough Sounds, an area about the size of Devon, a mixture of pastoral and forested land, deeply intersected and cut into islands by long inlets of the sea, the Sounds. The approach to Picton from Havelock was a particularly splendid road, high above one of the Sounds but following the contours to give us very little hill climbing; the descent to Picton was marred, however, by the road menders who had just completed a "New Seal", as the warning sign called it. Most roads are surfaced with a very coarse non-skid dressing of stones; it causes a bit of vibration to ride on but nothing to complain of. But when this material is first applied they leave a vast excess of it for the traffic to clear away. We found this bit of "New Seal" difficult to ride on the flat, impossible uphill and, eventually, perilous downhill. I cannot tolerate having to walk a bike downhill and managed to ride in the motor wheel tracks but Marjorie declined to attempt it. I waited for her at the bottom, hoping some kind soul with a commercial vehicle would overtake her and give her a lift but, for once, New Zealand let us down when we could have done with a helping hand, so she had a three or four mile walk.

The next morning we had a little ride out to Whatamonga Bay, an inlet off Queen Charlotte Sound, before going aboard the midday ferry for Wellington. Nearly half of this passage is through the Sounds before the open sea is reached. As we crossed the Cook Strait we looked back at South Island with a great deal of regret at leaving it. We had spent four weeks there and had had a wonderful time - and there were so many things to see and do there still. We had some misgivings about the North Island - more towns, more people, more traffic - before we left home and since then we had heard disturbing reports from the New Zealanders we met of increasing racial tension and crime in areas where this was almost unknown ten years ago. We had met very few Maoris so far but there would be more in the North. We were not too sure about the kind of scenery we expected. The travel brochures make so much of the volcanic features of the North Island and we wondered whether there was much else to compare with the glories of the land now disappearing into the heat haze astern.

(To find out how Jack & Marjorie got on read the second half of Jack's article in the Summer 1990 edition.)



Sussex Historic Churches Bike Ride, 9th Sept. 1989.

by Ann Rix

After the lovely weather we had had for so long it turned out very damp for Susan Drader and I (very wet in West Sussex for Helen) as we also struggled at times against the strong North-East wind.

We visited the six churches open in Seaford, starting of course at St. Peter's, East Blatchington, at 10.00am then on to St. John's, St. Leonard's, the U.R.C. (United Reformed Church, Ed.), Roman Catholic and St. Luke's. Next we headed out to West Dean, where the pond had dried up and the ducks were huddled near the small stream. A discussion about cycling with the people at the church who signed our cards, then on to Litlington. This is where our time began to disappear as the ladies of the village had a stall on the corner and coffee and tea was available in the hall. Having purchased chocolate raisin fudge and sampled the coffee and tea (with again a talk about cycling to a couple there), forty-five minutes later we reached the church!

Over the white bridge to Alfriston and the U.R.C., then up Winton Street to take the old coach road to Berwick. This part was alright but it was now getting very damp as the misty rain was blowing across the Downs. We continued on the coach road to Alciston, unfortunately just before we joined the road my rear tyre picked up one of those dreaded hawthorns, the slasher had been at work and the ground was covered with them. Repair time and a biscuit to keep us going. The green sticker unpeeled itself from Susan's jersey so I stuck it on the glass of my front lamp.

Selmeston next, then with the wind behind us it was a fast ride to Firle and as it was by then 1.00pm. we visited the Ram Inn for lunch where we were intrigued by the old game "Toad in the Hole". Up the hill to Glynde to St. Mary the Virgin, a fine plaster ceiling and fabric covered walls, a model piece of Georgian ecclesiastical design.

Back down the hill and along to Beddingham, then into Lewes for the twelve churches there. St. Thomas at Cliffe, along the river bank and up the track to South Malling, with a chat to the church minder there as to how they were getting on with the alterations - we had seen it a few weeks before with the floor up preparatory to being levelled. Through the Pells to St. John Sub Castro and its "Battenburg ceiling", then the U.R.C. at the top of Lewes before dropping down to St. Anne's, where a wedding was just about to start, (we saw the bridesmaids arrive in a vintage car) and then St. Pancras R.C. where they signed for both.

St. Michael's next where we left our bikes while we nipped across the road to Westgate Unitarian Chapel, where Mr. Goring (a descendant of the original owners) made us a welcome cup of tea while we had a look round. Back to fetch our steeds to find John Houghton, the organiser for East Sussex had arrived, he had been getting around his area rallying the troops!

Around the one-way system to All Saints, now a youth and arts centre, then Southover and the Priory and Infirmary Chapel ruins. Along the cycle way from there to head for Kingston and its Tapsell gate.

Time was getting on now but with the wind behind us we visited Iford, Rodmell, Southease and Piddinghoe, the churches now having their lights on which were very welcoming. Into Newhaven to St. Michael's on the hill, then just made it to the Baptist Church at five to six. Thirty-seven churches in thirty-seven miles and just four miles home.



Have you got six-foot legs?
(an informative article on gearing - believe it or not!)

The C & H Section had just stopped to buy ice-creams at the little shop in Horam when Gerald asked, "What does a 66 inch gear mean?" thus provoking much argument and discussion.

"Well," said David, (or was it Ken?), "I always understood that it was the distance that the wheel travelled forward for one revolution of the pedals".

"No, I am sure that's not it," said John, "I've read something somewhere about it and that's not quite right".

This resulted in John's fixed wheel bike, which had in fact been the reason for the original question, being wheeled up and down the pavement, with everyone trying to estimate the distance the wheels travelled. Eventually all agreed that it was far further than the gear size. So just what does it mean?

A few weeks later John found the item that he had read, a reply to a letter asking almost the same question that Gerald had, and we reprint it here for the benefit of anyone else who ever wondered about this.

"Your confusion is understandable. Most people seem to have only a hazy idea of how gearing is calculated and no wonder. The present system of gearing in inches goes back to the direct-drive high-wheeled Old Ordinary or Penny Farthing bicycles. Then when ordering a bike you specified wheel size, not frame size as you would today. Quite simply a 60-inch wheel became a 60-inch gear. It related to wheel size, not the distance travelled each revolution.

The seeds of today's confusion were sewn when high-wheelers went out of fashion and riders specified that gearing of the new small-wheelers should compare to that of their former mounts. Quite simply, for each revolution of the new-fangled chainwheel they wished to travel forward the same distance they used to cover on their old big wheel machines. So, bicycle manufacturers looked at the smaller wheel, which was roughly half the size of the big wheeler, and calculated what size chainwheel and sprocket were needed to achieve this.

If they divided the number of teeth on the chainring by the number of teeth on the sprocket and multiplied this by the wheel size, say 27 inches, they arrived at a gearing close to that of the wheel diameter of their customer's former machine.

A 52-inch big wheeler, for instance, translated to a 27-inch wheel bike with a 43-tooth chain ring and a 22-tooth sprocket. This equals a 52.8-inch diameter wheel, or gear.

This opened a new concept in gearing for riders previously restricted by the length of their legs. The invention of the chain, chainwheel and sprocket meant that they could have a 112-inch gear if they wished. This would have been impossible on the High-Wheeler as it would require a nine-foot diameter wheel!" (or a rider with 6-foot legs! Ed.)



Odd Cuttings.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Lester, Had State Parliament in hysterics yesterday when he said that the results of "random breast testing" had been "firm and positive".
Brisbane Courier

The first mistake that American burglar Scott Reyst made was breaking into the home of James Bannon, Detroit's Deputy Police Chief. The 18-year-olds second mistake was showing up to the preliminary hearing wearing the Deputy Chief's boots.
Glasgow Evening Times.



LOOKER'S
COTTAGE.

PEVENSEY MARSH

EVERYDAY SUSSEX No. 7

WE'VE MADE OUR POINT.
CAN WE RIDE SINGLE
FILE
NOW?



R. J.

A Tour to the Loire.

by David Rix

It was Susan who suggested our first independent French camping tour. We had been to France on three previous occasions with the D.A., twice to Normandy and once to Brittany, but was the first time we had considered going it alone. Could we afford it? Was our French up to it? Crossing the Channel we decided did not cost us much more than driving to the other end of the country, also camp sites were (on the whole) cheaper and with better facilities, the roads were quieter and our French we decided, would, with the help of a pocket dictionary, get us by (it's actually quite surprising how much comes back to you when you actually have to use the language).

So we were going, but where? Susan said she did not mind, just that we should take our bikes and camping gear on the ferry, get off in Dieppe and go from there. I had always wanted to see the Chateaux of the Loire, so it was agreed that we would head south towards Orleans and take it from there. We made no firm plans leaving it all to the weather and chance. We booked our ferry passage at the beginning of the year, I wrote to the French Tourist Information Office in London for information on the areas we would be touring in and details of campsites as well, and that, apart from buying the Michelin guide "Chateaux of the Loire", was most of our preparation.

We had decided to catch the night boat so as not to waste half a day on the crossing. Unfortunately Sealink had altered their sailing times since the last time we went and the boat now left at 10.30pm. arriving in Dieppe at 3.30am French time! Still, we could get a good mileage in before breakfast and rest up later in the day. So it was that we found ourselves riding out of a very dark and quiet Dieppe in the early hours of Friday morning. We saw very few cars and even less people, having the D1, one of the main routes out of Dieppe, virtually to ourselves.

Our route took us southerly down the D1 for about 12 miles to Meulers where we turned off and climbed towards Les Grandes Ventes and on to the Foret d'Eawy just as the sun began to rise. As we rode through the forest the sun was just starting to break through the trees catching the early morning mist, the birds were singing and everything was beautiful and peaceful, and we - well, we were getting hungry, it was just after 7.00am. and we had had just 1 cake each since leaving the ferry. We pushed on and in about half an hour reached St. Saens on the edge of the forest, where a boulangerie furnished us with bread for lunch-time and two croissants each for breakfast.

By 9.00am. it was getting hot and we were well on our way to Lyons-la-Forêt, where we had coffee sitting outside a cafe with a view of the ancient market hall. This day was typical of our first week; hot sun and clear blue skies, but a wind that, though not always very strong, seemed forever to be against us. After shopping for our evening meal we managed another 8 miles before lunch and a short sleep beneath some trees by the church at the little village of Doudeauville-en-Vexin.

By mid-afternoon we were travelling down the picturesque Epte valley and then climbing up to get our first view of the Seine Valley as we descended into the town of La Roche Guyon. It was here that we hoped to camp, but on enquiring at the Mairie (town hall) were informed that there was no camping, not even on the local Stade (stadium) and the nearest site was at Vernon 6-10 miles away. Being tired and not fancying the climb back up the ridge we decided to follow the slightly longer route along the valley, also hoping that we might find somewhere sooner. Four miles on, approaching Bennecourt, I spotted what looked like caravans in the trees across the river and there was a bridge. It was a caravan park and on enquiring we were told by the lady "Patron" that she could find us "un petit place". And so finally we pitched our tent beside a deserted caravan and tucked into our evening meal 14 hours and 84 miles after leaving the ferry. As you can imagine we slept well that night.

Next morning I returned from the wash house to find Susan struggling to light the stove. "It won't light at all," she said. She was right unfortunately, the tube that ran across the top of the Coleman stove had obviously coked up and stopped the petrol from reaching the burner. Not having our globetrotter with us, and not being able to

afford to eat out too often or wanting to pay out for another stove that we would probably only need for this tour, we were left with the fact that we would have to manage with cold drinks and meals for the rest of the tour. Luckily for us this is not too difficult in France with its large number of Charcuteries (delicatessens) and also the weather was such that we didn't really miss the hot meals.

Not wanting to rush we only did 8 miles before coffee at Mantes-la-Jolie the next morning, and only another 4 before lunch. We made up for this in the afternoon as pushed on to St. Leger-en-Yvelines and then joined an excellent surfaced cycle path through the Foret de Rambouillet to Rambouillet itself and our next campsite. Here we received a pleasant surprise - the patron started to fill in his form and then finding that we were English and camping with just our bikes, came outside to look at them and then told us that we could camp for free. He seemed surprised that we had come from England by bike with all our gear!

We continued south, stopping Sunday night at a virtually deserted site in the little village of Bouzonville-aux-Bois. At first we thought we had come unstuck, the sign on the gate said "Ferme" - closed! and the nearest site was another 10 miles. The place looked closed as well, but then the Patron arrived and explained that he always had Sunday lunch with the family and closed up while he was away. Soon we were tucking into the food, and drink, that we had bought earlier, together with a bottle of frozen water supplied by the Patron - it was very hot that day.

So far we had been travelling through mainly open country, with fields of maize and sunflowers as far as the eye could see. But now that was all changing as we approached the Loire Valley and entered the Foret d'Orleans. The Orleans Forest is not greatly mentioned in the tourist guides, a great shame I feel as we found it beautiful and a great place for cyclists - peaceful and serene, with very little traffic and many Routes Forestiere (unmade, but very well surfaced tracks). We had lunch beside an old lock on the Orleans Canal before continuing on to Jargeau and our first view of the Loire - a wide sprawling river at this point, set in flat open country.

We spent three nights at Jargeau, using one day to tour the local countryside with a visit to the Chateau at Sully-sur-Loire and also the Basilica at St. Benoit and the beautiful church of Germigny-des-Près, one of the oldest in France. The Chateau we found very interesting; not as commercialised as the big ones and the guided tour was in French - we were given a printed translation - but well worth the money. The Basilica at St. Benoit (St. Benedict) is a massive building and one of the finest Romanesque buildings in France. Its main claim to fame is that it houses the remains of St. Benedict, which are housed in a shrine below the altar that is open freely to visitors. The church at Germigny-des-Près



The Chateau of Sully-sur-Loire

founded in 800 A.D. has been carefully restored and has a rare example of Carolingian art. The east apse - the only original portion - has a mosaic fixed to its roof. The subject is the Ark of the Covenant, including two archangels and the hand of God. The mosaic was rediscovered in 1840 and can now be seen in all its original glory.

On the other day we visited Orleans, and spent the morning seeing the cathedral and walking round the city with its old houses and statue of Joan of Arc, before moving slightly south to visit the "Parc Floral de la Source", a beautiful floral garden laid out around the source of the Loiret, a tributary of the Loire.

After two days with only saddle bags we were loaded up again the next day as we moved on south-westerly across the Sologne - an immense and flat region with heaths, forests and solitary pools - towards Chambord.

After the hiccups of the first two days we were settling into an easy routine.

When we moved on we were usually away by 9.30am. after a breakfast of fruit juice and fresh croissants. There being no shortage of bars and cafes we had no problem over morning coffee. Lunch was usually French bread and whatever we fancied in the local shops, and occasionally one of their delicious cakes. Our afternoon drink was usually the remains of the lemonade we had bought for lunch, and then we would start looking for shops to buy our evening meal with, occasionally, a bottle of wine to wash it down. It's a hard life!

We reached our next site at Bracieux, 5 miles south of Chambord, by early afternoon and, having pitched our tent decided that since the Chateau was that close and did not close till 7.00pm. we would have time to go there before dinner rather than waste the afternoon. Chambord is built on the grand scale, a palace rather than a chateau, built for show not defence, with its multitude of turrets and its impressive double spiral staircase.

Staying a second night at Bracieux we visited the ancient town of Blois (twinned with Lewes) and enjoyed a walk around the old part of town with its old buildings and narrow alleyways. We also took advantage of some more Routes Forestieres through the Foret de Boulogne. In Blois we met a young English couple, on their first camping holiday in France, who were attempting to buy a camping carnet. We were able to offer some help by showing ours, but I did not hold out much hope for their being able to get one - they had been told that they would be able to buy one at sites in France, but had had no luck and even the Tourist Information Office didn't know where they could get one.

Over the next few days we travelled on via Chenonceaux, where the Chateau is built across the River Cher, to Montbazon, from where we visited the beautiful Chateau of Azay-le-Rideau and the ancient city of Tours, before turning our wheels northwards towards the other Loire (the one without an e).

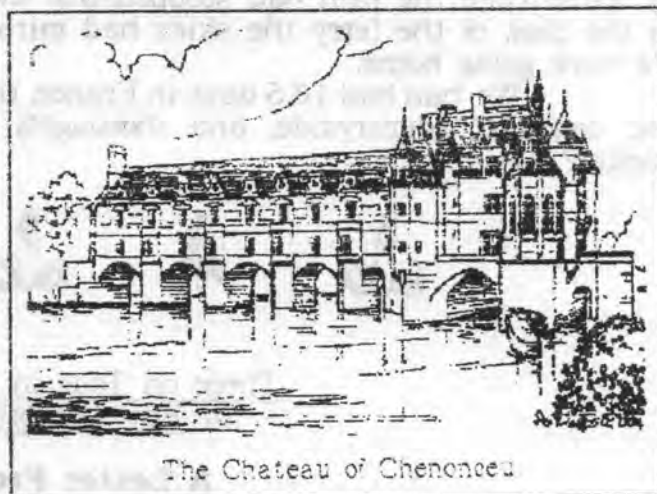
After the Loire, the Loir was a refreshing change, a picturesque little river running between trees and lush pastures and passing through pleasant little towns and villages, marred in places only by its proximity to the busy N10. We, wisely, kept to the tiny riverside roads.

Two days after leaving the Loire we reached Chartres, or rather a campsite outside at St. Georges-sur-Eure, 8 miles to the west. We had intended to stay two nights, allowing a day to visit the city, however the state of the site - disgusting and uncleaned facilities - and the presence of some rather unsavoury characters put us off. We decided to move on in the morning, spend the day in Chartres, and then find another site somewhere north of the city.

Chartres is another city well worth a visit, the Cathedral of Notre Dame with its 3,000 square yards of stained glass is magnificent and the walk around the old part of the city was very enjoyable.

The camp site we eventually settled on, at Maintenon, was a far cry from the last, a modern site with brand new facilities and early morning bread deliveries - essential when you like fresh croissants!

The following day saw our first real rain of the tour. We had had some little showers around Chenonceaux and Azay, but nothing to cape up for. This was different, it poured heavily during the afternoon as we headed for our next stop at Evreux - another let down, the site being beside what seemed to be the busiest road out of the city. Then we were headed back towards the Seine and Jumieges, to reach which we had to go via Elbeuf and then cut across two loops of the Seine. Though the second was relatively easy the first entailed a long hard 2 mile climb out of the river valley followed by an exhilarating descent back down to the next loop. A breather was taken



The Chateau of Chenonceau

at the top first however with a look round the Chateau of Robert le Diable (Robert the Devil), a ruined Norman fortress, now housing a reconstruction of a Viking longship and a wax museum. The castle is still very imposing and the views across the Seine Valley are magnificent - for this alone it would be good value for money.

A near change of route was almost brought about when we came upon road closed signs as we headed up the Seine Valley. To follow the diversion would add miles to our route, so sticking to the usual cyclists thinking, that a bike can get through where a car can't, we pushed on. A mile up the road we found the reason for the signs, the right hand side of the road was collapsing into the river! Work was going on to mend it, thus blocking most of the road, but we passed through with no trouble and were soon speeding towards the ferry crossing at Duclair.

We were nearing the end of our holiday now and leaving Jumieges we headed north towards the coast and the campsite at Offranville, where we had stayed on a previous tour with the D.A. Having most of the afternoon still available we headed for the Mammoth supermarket outside Dieppe for some last minute shopping, and then in the evening went for an excellent last night meal at a local hotel.

Sunday morning, our last in France, dawned grey and wet. After two weeks with only an hour or two of rain it just had to pour on our last day. We had no choice but to pack up a wet tent and then we rode down into Dieppe for coffee. We then had time to shop for some last minute presents and have lunch before boarding the ferry. By coffee time the rain had stopped but the skies were still grey. When we came out on the deck of the ferry the skies had miraculously cleared and the sun was shining. We were going home.

We had had 16.5 days in France, travelled 756 miles, seen some great sights and beautiful countryside, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. Where to next year I wonder?



Three on Tour in the Cotswolds.
by Roy James.(In the style of Enid Blyton.)

A Letter From Chris.

"How about a few days cycling in the Cotswolds," said the letter from Chris that fell on the doormat shortly after the Christmas holidays.

"What a super idea," said Roy to himself, "Good old Chris. Trust him to think of that." He read the letter again.

"Daniel is off school at the end of July and things are pretty dull in the middle of the hols., so the three of us could slip away for a few days and I bet we wouldn't be missed."

Roy got out the writing set he had been given for Christmas and sent off a reply straight away.

"Wonderful idea," he wrote, "we could meet at that little Youth Hostel in Inglesham. It's a funny place, just a tiny cottage really, but the lady who runs it is ever so nice and it would be a great place to start from. See you soon. Roy."

The Meeting.

"What a lovely little place," said Daniel when the three chums met at the beginning of their cycle tour. "We are in the boys' dorm at the back of the house. It's ever so cosy, with a wash basin in the corner and in the house there is a tiny kitchen where we can do our own cooking."

"And," said Chris excitedly, "Daniel and I have been exploring already. We've found

a bridle path at the end of the village that goes across the fields towards Kempford. I vote we go that way in the morning, we don't want to go on any busy roads if we can help it."

"Good idea Chris," said the other two chums eagerly.

"Now let's go and get something to eat," said Chris, "I hope they have some baked beans in the hostel shop. That's what I really fancy." "Me too," said Roy.

Setting Off.

"Come on you two," called Chris over his shoulder as he set off on the bridlepath the next morning. "We want to keep together. There's a river marked on the map and we don't want to lose anyone in it."

"Hear, hear," said Roy, "we don't want a soaking on our first day."

The path across the fields was very twisty and bumpy and the three pals had a job to keep on their bikes as they rode across the yellow stubble, all that was left of the corn that had grown there until recently. Suddenly they came to a tiny stream twisting beside the path.

"Ha, ha," laughed Roy, do you call that a river? We'd have a job to get a soaking from a little ditch like that. Oh! what's that?", he nearly jumped out of his skin as two great birds who had been silently fishing in the stream flew up beside him, "Gosh, what are they?"

"Don't be silly, they're only herons," said Daniel, "buck up, we want to be at Duntisbourne Abbots hostel by tea time and it's an awfully long way."

The Old Rectory.

All through the hot day the three friends rode along the quiet lanes, up and down steep hills, often having to get off and walk. Stopping for ice-cream and ginger beer in the pretty villages until, late in the afternoon, they tackled the last steep hill before Duntisbourne Abbots.

"Golly isn't it hot," gasped Roy when they reached the top of the hill, "I can't wait to get to the hostel and have a cup of tea. What are you going to have to eat Chris?"

"Baked beans I think," replied Chris. "Look, that man in the garden is pointing towards the church, I guess he knows where we want to go."

They soon found the entrance to the hostel and continued up a driveway of frightening shadows cast by trees on either side. As the building came into view Roy gave a gasp of despair, "I say, look at those beastly cars parked outside, I hope there's room for us."

"Don't worry," said Chris, "I wrote and asked the warden to save us three beds."

"Thank goodness for that," called out Daniel as he rode off looking for the bike shed, "you are brainy Chris. I wouldn't have thought of that."

The hostel was a rectory at one time. A big, rambling old building with lovely grounds including a beautifully kept kitchen garden. Inside, the three chums found it very comfortable and with plenty of spare beds.

After a long, hot day they were hungry, thirsty and tired.

"I'm going to bed as soon as I have had something to eat and drink," said Roy.

"Good idea," Daniel agreed, "Chris is buying our supper at the hostel shop."

"What have you got?", they asked when he returned. "Baked beans," he replied.

A very exciting ride.

The friends left early next morning taking the bridlepath west of the village. The path was good for a little way but then it began to get very bumpy.

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" questioned Roy, "I don't want to end up with a buckled wheel."

"Oh, don't be such a spoil sport," replied Daniel, "look the track is getting better."

Sure enough they were soon back on a narrow road and going north towards

Cheltenham. Then without any warning they were dropping down a frightening 1 in 4 hill that seemed to go on forever. Daniel was away in front, Roy coming up fast behind him.

"Tally ho," called out Roy as he went flying past and they reached the bottom of the hill together. Here they stopped to wait for Chris.

"Come on slow coach," they called out as Chris came round the corner and over the little bridge.

"I say, you two are brainless idiots," said Cris, "I don't suppose you know we should have turned off this road about half way down the hill?"

"Gosh, that means we have got to walk back up again," said Daniel, "still it was an exciting ride wasn't it."

The other two agreed that it had been the best bit of the holiday so far.

"Where are we Chris?", asked Roy.

Chris took the map out of his saddle bag and announced, "Well, I think this is Bubbs Hill and the village where we should have turned is Cockleford."

"Everything has such funny little names," said Daniel, "I don't think I shall ever forget them."

"Phew, I shall certainly never forget coming down that hill anyway," called out Chris, "come on, there is another long down hill into Cheltenham and be careful, the road may be busy!"

So the friends made their way through the town and out the other side. By four o'clock they were climbing the steep, steep hill to the youth hostel at Cleeve Hill. This really had been an exciting ride.

The Ford.

A fine rain was falling when the three friends left the hostel at Cleeve Hill.

"That really was a super place," said Roy.

"Yes," agreed Chris, "it used to be a golf club-house and being here right on the edge of Cleeve Common it is perfect for walkers and cyclists."

"Come on," said Daniel, "it's Stow-on-the-Wold tonight and I want to try out the stocks in the market square. I've heard they are very old."

"Well mind you don't get locked in then and can't get out," answered Roy as he struggled to put on his cape.

The sun peeped out sometimes. The rain fell in short, sharp showers, but the three adventurers rode steadily towards the next hostel. Then they saw a sign pointing towards a ford.

"Come on, let's see if we can find it," said Roy, turning onto a narrow, unfenced road that led towards Kington. A beautiful scene of green fields and wooded hills was all around them, with no sight or sound of cars. Then the road began to dip and the cycles started to gather speed downhill towards the ford.

"Wait for me," called out Roy, who had stopped to put his cape away again. But the others were well ahead and disappeared from view as the lane suddenly turned. The next time they appeared Roy gasped with amazement and then had to start laughing, for there was Daniel sitting in the middle of the ford with his upset bike beside him. Daniel was laughing as well.

"Just thought I would cool off," he said. His tyres had slipped on the wet stones and he had lost control, but he was not hurt and soon picked himself up and staggered to the edge of the little stream where the three stood joking together.

At that moment a car came round the bend and, without slowing down, came splashing through, giving Chris a good soaking as well.

"You t---," called out Chris after the driver as the car sped off.

"I say, what a jolly good word," commented Roy, "I must remember that one."

"What was that funny hand signal you gave as the car left us?" enquired Daniel of Roy.

The intrepid three continued on pretty lanes until the final long climb into Stow was completed.

"Do you think they will have any baked beans at the hostel?" asked Chris. "Oh I expect so," answered Roy.

A Quiet Day.

The next day Chris and Daniel remained in Stow while Roy went off on his own. "You be careful," said Daniel, "you know we promised we would all stay together." "I know," answered Roy, "but if you don't say anything when we get home, nobody will be any the wiser. Anyway, there's a bridlepath I want to follow from Little Rissington."

And find it he did. A stony track that started south of the village slowly worsened into a nettle covered path that finally emerged in a farmyard at Great Rissington.

"Phew," said Roy to himself, "I was jolly lucky to get through that one. Good job the ground was hard and dry or I would be in a fine mess."

After that he kept to the many quiet lanes until after leaving Burford he had his sandwiches beside the river at Widford.

"What a super place," he thought to himself as he sat by the swift flowing river and watched a kingfisher flying to and fro. "I must say these sandwiches make a change from baked beans."

That evening as the three friends sat over their meal, Chris said, "Well, did you have a quiet day?"

"I suppose so," said Roy, but he didn't say anything about his struggle on the bridlepath.

The Last Day.

"Come on you two," called Chris as he packed his saddlebags the next morning. "We have to get home today and I'm not sure how far or hilly it's going to be."

But they need not have worried, for the back lanes to Oxford seemed to be downhill all the way. Their cycle tyres zipped on the smooth roads, the sun shone all day and a faint breeze was behind them. They stopped for a cup of tea at the "Shaven Crown" Hotel in Shipton-under-Wychwood, and sitting in the flower filled courtyard of the old building they agreed it had been a good adventure.

"But I don't think I'll have any more baked beans for a bit," said Chris.

"Do you think we will ever be famous like the famous five in the story books?" asked Roy.

"Shouldn't think so," replied Chris, "we're far too ordinary."

N.B. All characters in the story are real people, although considerably older than they appear. Particularly in the case of two members of the party, who might be said to be in their second childhood.

O.S. Map 163. Grid references.

Bridlepath to Kempford. 205,904

Bridlepath from Duntisbourne Abbots. 968,078

Bubbs Hill 967,135

Ford 087,259

Bridlepath from Little Rissington. 193,197



Randonneuring gets sexy!

(David Kiernan passed on this item produced by the Bicycle Association of British Columbia.)

Recently, the editors of Bicycling Magazine conducted a survey of its readers about their "thoughts and experiences regarding sex and cycling". (Bicycling Volume XXX, No. 8, Sept. 1989).

Not to be outdone, your intrepid Randonneur Newsletter Reporters and Editors have conducted their own study on sex. For those that are over 18 the results are published below. For those under 18 you should ask your parents permission before continuing. Here then are the revealing results of our "Randonneurs Get Sexy" Survey:

- * 89% of the respondents knew what sex was, 9% were pretty sure but were to embarrassed to say and 2% thought it was a new type of indexed shifting.
- * 55% of respondents have postponed a ride to have sex. Of these 95% wondered why they had bothered and the other 5% never got back on the bike again once they found out what they had been missing.
- * Sexual Orientation: Heterosexual 85% Homosexual 15% Bisexual 10% Cyclesexual 08% Not Interested 11% (You are right, this doesn't add up, but then we have seen some of the route cards they have handed in so it's not too surprising).
- * 40% of our respondents daydream about cycling more than sex, 40% daydream about sex more than cycling and 20% don't get up in time to have daydreams.
- * 50% have thought about cycling during sex and these people are all now divorced.
- * If forced to chose between sex and cycling 60% would choose sex, 30% would choose cycling and 10% would choose door number 3.
- * 99% said that cycling has made them better lovers. However, when told of this their partners uniformly responded..... "get real!!!!".
- * Of the Randonneurs surveyed, 72% said they had experienced genital numbness after a long ride and the other 28% didn't know where the genitals were.
- * 29% have had sex during a rest break, 69% wish they had had sex during a rest break and 2% still think it's a new form of indexed shifting.
- * One of the most controversial questions in the Bicycling survey mentioned above asked something like, "if stranded on a desert island which would you rather have: a) your mate, b) a resourceful friend, or c) a mountain bike?". When we asked our survey group the same question the surprising results were: 40% wanted their mate, 20% wanted someone else's mate, 10% didn't have any mates or friends, 5% wanted a mountain bike only if it had fenders, lights, a rear reflector and two water bottle cages and 5% wanted to know who set the damn route that got them onto the desert island in the first place.

The last question on our survey asked, "which is more fun, riding a 600 km randonnee or having sex?" 100% said, "It depends if it's raining or not"! So there you have it folks, our 1989 sexy randonneur survey.

All comments regarding this survey should be sent to the Editors, Bicycling Magazine, Emmaus PA, U.S.A. After all they started it!

Choosing the right size bike.

With so many members acquiring new bikes we thought the following article, that appeared in one of the bicycle magazines a few years ago, might be of interest. We leave it to the individual to decide on its usefulness.

The most important aspect of buying a bike, whether it's new or second-hand is to get the right frame size. Correct size is critical if you are to maximise your performance, avoid physical injury and get the best out of your bike.

The following method allows you to isolate your nearest correct size from the wide choice available. Remember, though, this test must be done on each bike you are considering for purchase, as frame manufacturers often vary their frame design formula.

Where manufacturers make cycles with two or more inches between sizes, you will be faced with a compromise if your exact size is not catered for. As a general rule of thumb, always choose the smaller size and compensate by raising the seat and bars.

For Symmetry's sake, seat posts should neither be all the way out or all the way down. Approximately 4" of seat post should show after adjustments for leg extension have been completed.

The Test:

For sports, touring and commuting bikes:

Straddle the top tube with your legs 6" apart. You should be in stockinged feet. Lift both back and front of the cycle simultaneously pulling it up as firmly as



possible into the crotch. You are now reproducing the effect of your passive

weight on the saddle in reverse.

With the wheels parallel to the ground, have an observer measure the gap from each wheel to the ground. The gap under the wheels should be between 1 and 1.5".

Women's step-through and mixte frames present a problem as they have no top tube. In this case, measurement should be made on a gents (diamond) frame and the results applied to the nearest women's frame.

Racing bike riders may prefer a slightly smaller frame to retain stiffness, in which case they should allow a maximum of 2" ground clearance and use a higher seat setting.

Mountain bike riders should also allow 2" top tube clearance. They should choose a machine that allows the rider to slide off the back of the saddle when it is at its lowest position and while his feet are still on the pedals and his hands are on the bars. At the same time he should still be able to obtain full leg extension without raising the seat post past its maximum extension mark. Mountain bike frames need to be smaller than road ones as you are more likely to be moving your body weight back on steep descents.

Position on the bike:

Having chosen the model and correct frame size, your next task is to position yourself correctly on the machine.



Sit astride the cycle in stockinged feet. Have a helper balance the bike while you place the heel of each foot on the pedals and pedal backwards. Your leg should be straight at the bottom of each pedal stroke. It is important that you do not over-reach and that you do not try to compensate for lack of leg length by tipping your bottom from one side of the saddle to the other to reach the bottom of each stroke.

If your leg is still bent as you pedal, raise the saddle. If you lose contact with the pedal at the bottom of each stroke, lower the saddle until you are able to rotate the pedals correctly.

FORE/AFT SADDLE POSITION

Your saddle should be positioned so that you can exert maximum power



downwards on the pedals. If you are too far forwards or too far backward, you lose efficiency. You will need a helper again. Sit on the saddle in your normal



riding position with both pedals parallel to the ground. A line drawn from the centre of the knee behind the knee cap should fall through the pedal spindle. Move the saddle fore or aft to achieve this.

CORRECT STEM LENGTH

Whilst sitting on the saddle in your normal riding position, reach forwards to the brake levers. Your arms should be slightly flexed and your head up and looking forward. Your back should be approximately 45 degrees to the top tube. In this position, a line dropped from the tip of your nose should pass through the stem 1" behind the bars.



A Few Thoughts on Christmas.

Christmas Eve.

December 24th. In modern times this is a day of frantic last-minute shopping and preparation, coupled with an air of expectation. The children go reluctantly to bed, parents stay up late to wrap their presents, while those between parenthood and childhood disport themselves throughout the land. For many the day ends with a rare visit to church. There, as elsewhere, a general feeling of benevolent goodwill predominates. It is one of the good days of the year, to use Dickens's phrase, and it is Dickens, above all, who has made himself master of the Christmas literary scene. 'Once upon a time - of all the good days of the year, on Christmas Eve - old Scrooge sat busy in his counting-house.' There, in *A Christmas Carol*, Scrooge's nephew finds him, and hears him say that 'If I could work my will, every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding, and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.' Fred, the nephew, defends the season:

I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round - apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it

can be apart from that - as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one common consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the grave, and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.

Scrooge, as we know, is eventually persuaded to his nephew's view. One of the miracles of Christmas is that, in spite of the blatant and sometimes ugly commercialism that now accompanies it, most people still are affected by the Christmas spirit.

Christmas Day.

December 25th. The feast day of Jesus Christ, celebrating his birth, otherwise known as the Nativity. The day was fixed by the Church (originally January 6th, Old Style) to coincide with an ancient period of celebration, linked with the winter solstice. Various customs have clustered around the day, some of them left-overs from pagan time, others - such as the Christmas tree, Christmas carols, the giving of presents, the sending of cards - more modern contributions. The Puritans were opposed to Christmas, and indeed the town-crier in Canterbury proclaimed on December 22nd, 1647, that by decree of the English parliament, Christmas would no longer be celebrated. It was by that time too well established, however.

An idealistic account of a Victorian Christmas Day is to be found in 'A Christmas Dinner', one of the *Sketches by Boz* of Charles Dickens. The day also figures strongly in Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy*: Clyde Griffith is invited to share Christmas Dinner with his rich relations. This introduction to society precipitates his eventual downfall. The '-mas' of 'Christmas' is the word 'mass' used in its Old English sense of 'feast day', though anyone could be forgiven for supposing that it refers to the mass of food and drink, consumed on the day. A comment on the drinking aspect was made by M.D., writing in *Punch Almanac* (1945). His poem begins:

I'm dreaming of a tight Christmas,
Just like the ones we used to know,
When the port was flowing
And faces showing
That lovely alcoholic glow.

Boxing Day.

December 26th. The name used in England, Canada, Australia, etc., for the day after Christmas Day, unless that day is a Sunday, when Boxing Day is moved to the Monday. The name derives from the custom of giving Christmas boxes to tradesmen, postmen, servants, the like on this day. 'Christmas Box' now indicates a present, usually of money, no longer associated particularly with a 'box' of any kind. The original 'boxes' were usually made of earthenware. Money was put into them which could only be retrieved by the breaking open of the containers. Boxing Day is observed as a holiday in the countries that acknowledge it, though the Christmas presents associated with it are now normally given before rather than after Christmas. The day itself tends to be a period of quiet recuperation after Christmas Day excesses.



DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE - 1ST WEEK OF JUNE