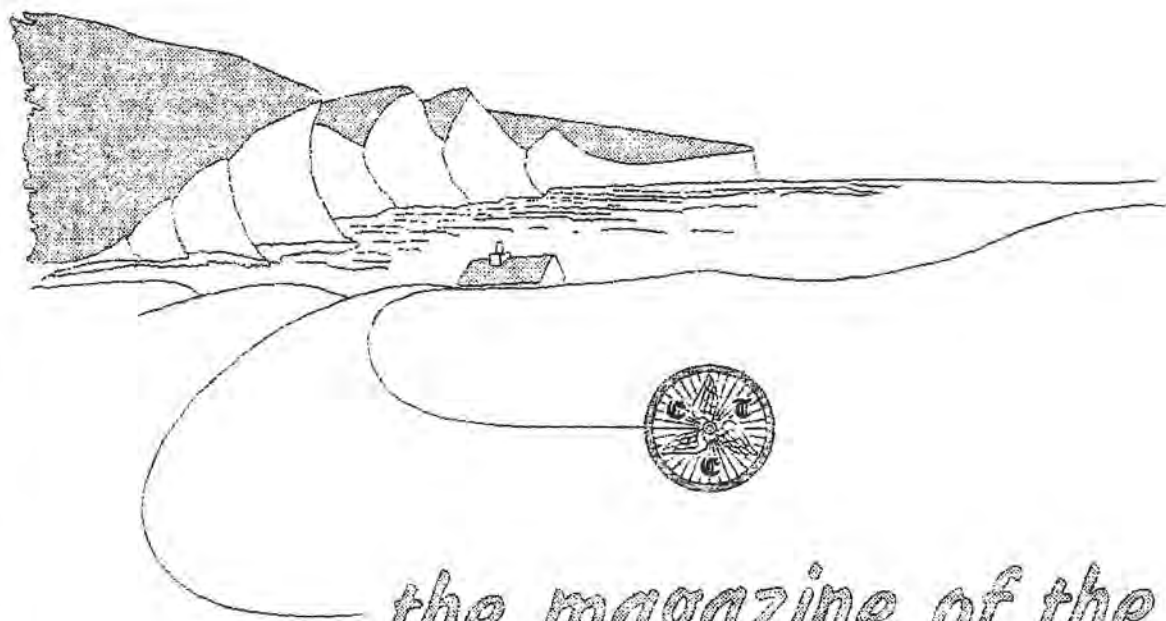


The
Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No. 22 Summer 1992

25p

East Sussex District Association
Cyclists' Touring Club

PRESIDENT MR DENNIS JAKEMAN

Secretary

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"The Coaster"

Summer 1992

Issue No.22

From the Editor's Desk

Summer has arrived, and finally so has this summer's "Coaster", it seems to take longer and longer each time, especially with people handing me articles at the last minute (hello mum!). A good selection this time of touring articles - including part two of my Paris-Brest-Paris article, and a couple of items from Roy James, as well as several of his excellent drawings (I already have another two in hand for the next edition!).

If your going on tour and feel like writing about it, or have a passion that you'd like to share with other members then put pen to paper. As I've said in the past I'll print almost anything - I've never turned down an article yet.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and have a good summers cycling.

Deadline for the Christmas edition is November 8th.



A Night and Day Excursion.
(A Report on the 1992 D.A. Night Ride) by Ann Rix.

A night ride is not what it seems, it means the next day as well doubling the usual mileage. It is scorned and rejected by some, wondered at by others and enjoyed by a few. Those who gathered at Lewes at 9.00p.m. on June 6th 1992 were of mixed ability, which the event had been advertised for, this proved to make for a very good ride and did not grind the riders into the ground. The two leaders, Geoff Boxall and David Rix, made sure all was well and if anyone had a problem we all stopped.

Leaving Lewes the misty rain which had been falling was getting thicker but the ten riders soon got into the rhythm in the bunch, but not too close so as to allow for wet brakes. A change to waterproof jackets at Ditchling and David Stace and Richard Colyer decided they had had enough, which was a pity as the rain eased off once we were away from the hills and they missed a good night. Clifford (Avery) said he didn't mind the rain, he was used to it.

The eight rode on through Hurstpierpoint, where Ann had to change her Vistalight; the batteries had gone so it was lucky that she had brought the spare as an extra light, not thinking that she would need it herself! We made for Henfield where adjustments were needed to Roger Bradgate's rear light, this had to be done several times during the dark hours with Astra (Morgan) and Ann wondering what messages the blinking light was sending back to them.

Down the main road to Bramber to take the lane to Lancing, from there along the coast, with comments at times from passing motorists, to Worthing where we stopped for an hour in the superb shelter on the seafront for a rest and a brew-up - with a cook-up too for some. Couples kept passing by wondering at the sight, we wondering at so many people about at that hour of the morn. As we left we discovered they had come from the pier where something was still going on. At 1.30a.m. we rode on to Bognor having amused a policeman in his car at a roundabout, as one leader had not told the other that Astra wanted to see the sea, so some followed David to one road, some turned left and some went right round the roundabout. When we came to the next roundabout, near Chichester, Clifford wanted to know if we were going right round that one as well. A conversation on Bognor seafront with a passing couple who were interested in our ride enlivened the early morn.

We rode on through the centre of Chichester heading for Funtington on the B2146 to comments from the thirsty ones as to when the next brew-up was to be. At Funtington the dawn chorus was starting up as we searched for a spot to stop but felt we might disturb the villagers. Two miles further on we stopped near Walderton at a bus shelter and out came the stoves again. With Clifford and Roger Gorringe in the bus shelter, Roy (James) on the grass nearby and the rest sitting on the kerb with legs in the road. Only one car passed while we were there and that on the other side. We were intrigued by the Doctor's Surgery opposite, only two hours one day a week but there were five chairs in the garden and we presume that was the waiting room! While there a badger galloped across the field nearby, much to Astra's delight.

We moved on again about 5.30a.m. and as we passed Watergate Hanger there was a crashing sound amongst the trees and several saw a deer. Then round a bend there were two more in the road ahead of us, eating from the hedgerow. Fortunately we were not travelling fast and so slowed right down so that they could make their escape through the hedge. We then saw there were several more in the fields either side.

With the humid air the scents of the countryside were accentuated - no not those! - I'm referring to the sweet or spicy scents, we passed one area of wild garlic and that was particularly strong. All this though was getting to Roger B. who had several sneezing turns but managed to survive. Gently on up between the hills with many patches of foxgloves amongst the trees, past Uppark, down the long hill at Harting, over the River Rother at Habin and on to Rogate and Rake where we reached the Happy Eater at 6.55 a.m., very well timed. We locked our cycles, waited a few minutes then, breakfast! After which Astra had a sleep - sitting up!

Roger Gorringe left us here to make a quicker ride home and we set forth on our travels once more. David led us through lovely lanes to Fernhurst, with Ann and Roy walking a few steep hills so as to enjoy the surroundings. On to Lurgashall and Kirdford where we stopped to read the tablet on the wall by the junction to "The Degradation of Drunkenness". Two Belgian cyclists stopped for directions to Ifold and were shown the tablet. We were hoping for 11's at Billingshurst but the cafe opens at 12 now, so we sat on the bank and had something to eat then carried on but now down to six, Roy James left us here to drop down to catch the train home. He told David he'd enjoyed it, wouldn't have missed it, but wouldn't do it again!

Barns Green to Southwater, here Ann made the mistake of mentioning the disused railway line, the Downs Link, next thing we knew we were following David and Geoff down a muddy track with Astra and Clifford protesting strongly at the rear. Fortunately the surface improved and a mile later we were on the road to Cowfold and lunch. Clifford and Ann made for the cafe for double poached eggs on toast and lots of tea while the others had a brew-up on the green.

We followed the Seaford & Newhaven Section's usual route back from West Sussex; through Twineham, Hickstead (where major alterations are taking place at the junction), Goddard's Green and Burgess Hill to Plumpton Green, where Clifford left us to head for Sheffield Park and home. Now it was five who carried on to Barcombe Mills for tea where we were joined by Susan & Martin, then John & Sally. Roger, Astra, Geoff and Ann rode about 160 miles all told, David 153, Clifford about 150.

Though wet at the start it turned out a good night, it was so still and warm, only a little dampness now and then. Fine after that and a warm sunny day on Sunday. Our thanks to David and Geoff for a most enjoyable time, Clifford and Ann want to book with them for next year.



ELEGANT.

WE MEMBERS OF THE C. T. C.
 A MERRY BAND OF CYCLISTS BE.
 BRONZE MEN WITH MUSCLES BURNING,
 PEDALS WHIRL, WITH LEGS A TURNING.
 CHANGE GEAR, THE HILL TO RUSH UP.
 OIL AHEAD, ON BRAKES TO PULL UP.
 THE MORNINGS HOT, WE'VE SWEATY BODIES,
 WISH WE'D TAKEN TO SOME OTHER HOBBIES.
 OUR CLOTHES ALL DANK AND WET.
 ALL SMELLY, SOAKED IN SWEAT.
 THE GIRLS: MORE REFINED, WITH-OUT VULGARITY.
 FULL OF DUTY, GRACE AND PIETY.
 NOT A DROP OF SWEAT, AS THEY EXPIRE,
 WITH MOISTURE ON THEIR SKIN ... THEY PERSPIRE.

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE
 SHAKESPEARE.

I'M NOT GOING TO
 ADMIT TO IT.

A Reader's Query - Can You Help?

I recently received the following letter from a member in Brighton, I wonder if any of our 'experts' can shed any light on the matter.

Brighton - 3rd June 1992

Dear Mr. Rix,

I have just read and enjoyed the last issue of your excellent magazine "The Coaster" and I wonder if what I have to say might form the basis of a technical contribution for the next issue.

Way back in the early '20's I had an uncle who was chauffeur and general handyman to a wealthy gentleman in Hurstpierpoint and from time to time I would go and stay with my uncle and aunt who lived over the garage which contained two elderly (even then) cars and, I suspect, an even more elderly bicycle.

I was allowed to borrow this bicycle for rides around the village - I don't suppose the owner knew - and its features have intrigued me ever since. It had a 4-speed gear!

I have never missed a chance to visit a bicycle museum but I have never seen the like of this one. There was no visible gear change lever and what one had to do to change down one ratio was to make a half backward turn of the pedals. It was not possible to change up just one ratio. If one were already in bottom gear it was necessary to make a full backward turn of the pedals and "whirr - whirr - clonk" we were back in top gear.

The whole lot was enclosed in an oil-bath gear case which was deeper at the back than it was at the chain-wheel end in order to accommodate a chain-tensioning sprocket. I suspect it was an early form of expanding chain wheel device, probably a prototype which never actually got onto the market.

The over-all gear ratio was fairly close so that when first mounting the machine it was not obvious which ratio was engaged. The whole contraption was enormous, 28 x 1 1/2 wheels with Westwood rims, the front brake was a short pull-up lever pulling large blocks which were hinged at the rear end. The rear brake was a single block operating on one side of the rim only and actuated by the heel. When not in use this was folded up out of the way of the heel. One needed notice of impending requirement for this brake. The saddle had lovely coil springs front and rear, my old bones could do with one like that nowadays.

I think the bicycle was of "Sunbeam" manufacture and some years ago I wrote to the Club Secretary in similar vein to the foregoing hoping that if the letter were published in the C.T.C. Gazette, as it then was, some reader might have come across with some information. However the letter never achieved print.

I would like to know what happened to that velocipede.

I might perhaps mention that I still pedal bicycles and have occasionally turned out with the Wednesday people in company with Yub & Phyllis Moore, and hope to again soon.

Yours sincerely,

George Spratt L. 3079
(Name & address supplied)

If anyone does have any knowledge of such a bike, or any ideas about it perhaps they could contact me and I can pass any details on or put them in touch with George and perhaps even print a reply. David. (address on page 1)

LOOKING FOR KING CANUTE.

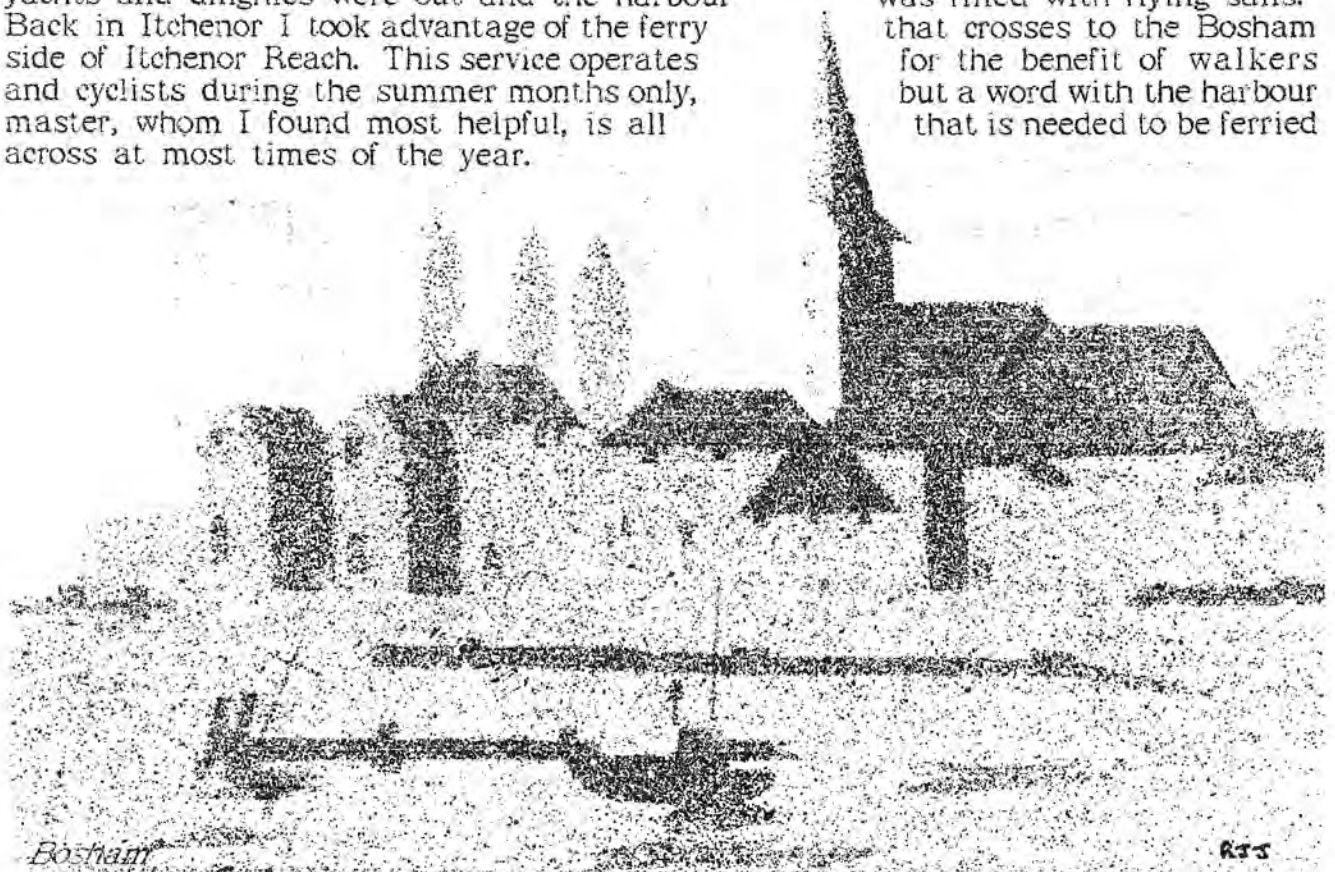
by Roy James.

If you want to visit that secluded area of creeks and inlets, seabirds and sailing ships known in ancient times as Canute's Land, then go before the wintering wild birds have left and the summer visitors arrived. Arundel hostel made a good base for me and that first morning as I rode along quiet lanes in soft spring sunshine the whole quarter surrounded by the Witterings, Fishbourne and Bosham appeared to be deserted. A group of children on horseback, the postman on his round and an old lady working slowly in her garden just prevented a feeling of total isolation.

Itchenor, a popular sailing centre, was the first village I wanted to visit. It is impossible to miss as the road runs straight on to the slipway. I left my cycle securely padlocked and continued on foot along the well signposted path to West Wittering that follows the uneven coastline of the Chichester channel, sometimes along the shore and at others through the fields that run to meet the sea.

The tide was out, leaving a vast sand flat, with weed covered rocks to make roosting spots for a variety of shore birds. Redshank, Dunlin and Oystercatchers probed the sand with their long bills; Shelduck swam in the pools left by the ever receding tide, while occasionally a Curlew flew overhead giving its strange, haunting cry of warning at my approach. The path continued beside hedges of Gorse and Blackthorn ablaze with white and yellow blossom on the sunny side, but bleak and bare on the side facing the salt sea air.

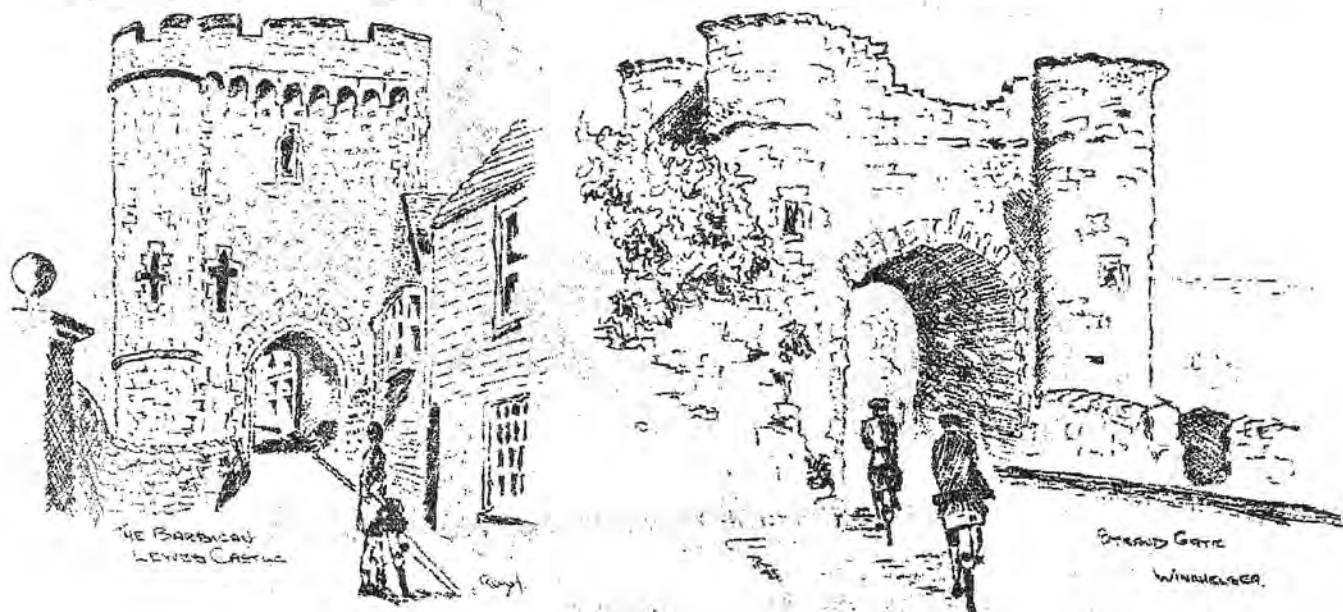
Slowly the fields gave way to sand as the channel widened on its approach to the sea. I turned the final curve in the shoreline and East Head came into view. A headland of sand dunes and coarse grasses which provides a natural protection for the eastern side of the harbour, it is only a short distance from West Wittering and belongs to the National Trust. In the village I visited the pub with the curious title of "The Old House at Home" and was then ready to return. With the incoming tide the sand flats had been replaced by silver blue water. The whole aspect had changed; yachts and dinghies were out and the harbour was filled with flying sails. Back in Itchenor I took advantage of the ferry that crosses to the Bosham for the benefit of walkers and cyclists during the summer months only, master, whom I found most helpful, is all that is needed to be ferried across at most times of the year.



Once on the other side, a clearly defined footpath follows the strand of Bosham Channel and offers a pleasant walk into the old fishing village of Bosham. But I was

awheel once more and took the lane that goes slightly inland. Reflected sunlight on water could be glimpsed over hedgerows and down little twittens, until almost in a dream this most beautiful of harbour villages came into view. The panorama of church spire rising over the old roofs of the houses above the sea wall, boats riding at anchor or cast upon sand flats cannot have changed in decades. The promise of that first sighting is fulfilled upon entering the village, for if Itchenor begs you on around its coastline, Bosham begs you to stay. In front of the Church of the Holy Trinity 'the oldest sight of Christianity in Sussex' is the tiny green known as Quay Meadow and must be one of the smallest National Trust properties in the country. King Canute started the existing building in A.D. 1065 although the tower may have been built as a watch tower before then and women and children may have been sheltered there during Danish raids. Tradition tells how a daughter of King Canute was buried in the church and a tablet marks the spot. More certain are the crosses on the doorway of the inner porch. It was the custom of the Crusaders on leaving their ships to enter the nearest church and blunt their swordpoints in such a way as a dedication to peace. Everyone knows that King Harold paused to hear mass in the church in 1064 before sailing for Normandy, an excursion which in two years led to his defeat and death at the battle of Hastings, and that his visit to the church is depicted on the Bayeux Tapestry. I often wonder if Bosham could be the spot where Canute made his pretence of turning back the tide, for if so he could not have chosen a better place. Here at high tide the sea rises under the harbour wall to a height of six feet. Go into the Blue Anchor pub in the village and see their picture gallery of cars parked, against advice, on the tiny strip of promenade and almost up to their rooftops in sea water.

I had no such problem and I left Bosham in the genial sun of a spring afternoon, convinced yet again that some of the most beautiful parts of Britain are right here on our doorstep.



Everyday Sussex 11 & 12 by Roy James

DOVER COASTGUARD TOUR.

by Ann Rix.

A slight drizzle as three left Seaford on 1st July one of whom was our organiser and leader for the three day tour, Tony Palmer, another was Dennis Jakeman secretary of the Midweek Section. We all met the other riders at Scolfes at Boreham Street for elevenses (well alright half past ten's) then six left with Tony for the tour while the rest followed Dennis for the Wednesday ride.

Tony led us out (after a photo start by Ernie) towards Ninfield to take the lanes to Catfield, heading for Battle then Sedlescombe where we were to meet Esther (Carpenter) at ten past twelve. We were five minutes early which wasn't bad but then our problems started - no Esther - we waited, and waited, what shall we do? Tony decided he would wait and the group move on, then Frank (Drader) said no he would and John (Bainbridge) too, in the end it was felt we should all keep together so moved on and hoped we'd done the right thing as Esther knew where lunch was to be, especially as there were steep hills ahead.

Along the lane from Sedlescombe to Brede, up the arrowed hill, the name of the wood there gives you an idea of what it was like - Steephill Wood - it didn't help that Peter Bratt's Derailleur refused to move into the bottom two gears which meant a walking job. Frank had had several attempts to adjust it since Sedlescombe but to no avail, it went into bottom when forcibly moved by hand so some felt the spring had gone. Added to that as Peter was carrying a heavy load one side - a spoke went in the back wheel! Another lane and another arrow(!) to reach the B2089. Shortly it was down and down a lane to the River Tillingham to run along just above the river valley, evidently a habitat for herons with such a house name as Heron House on one side and a thatched house on the other with a Heron standing proudly on the ridge.

Lunch was to be at 'The Cock' at Peasmarsh where Jean (Steel) was to meet us but - guess what - it was closed for alterations and no sign of Jean! what do we do now? We found there was a pub further on and so headed there to find Jean and husband Len (who had gone ahead) while some waited for Peter and Jack (Dunn), and Frank who was our tailender, making sure all was well at the back. They just managed to get their meal orders in before the deadline. Jean took Peter's pannier in the car so that made it easier for him as the rear wheel was getting quite a buckle.

At 2.30pm we moved on, crossing the Rother valley and on to Wittersham and the Isle of Oxney with the lovely names of parishes like Stone cum Ebony, then Appledore to cross over the Royal Military Canal. We saw Jean here, she was scouting ahead for tea places but could find nothing so said she would see us at Folkestone.



We passed St. Thomas Becket Church at Fairfield, standing alone on the marsh - except for the sheep. In days gone by before the causeway was made the only way to reach the church when the marsh was flooded was by boat.

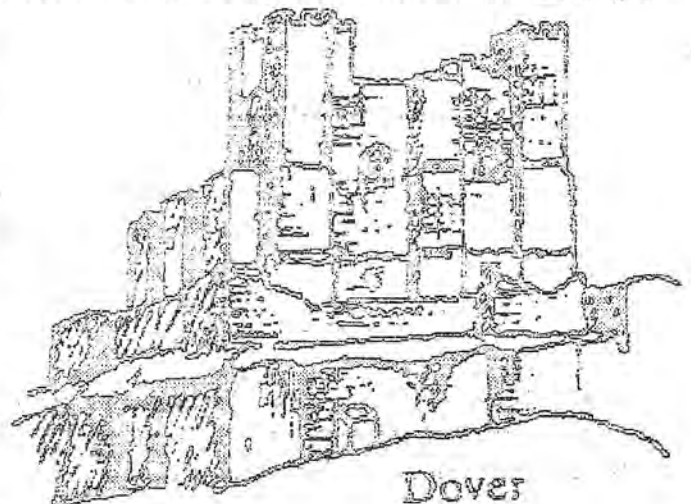
Snargate, Newchurch, we were now on Romney Marsh with the sheep in abundance. At Botolphs Bridge Len, a keen collector of Letter boxes, showed us the only old Victorian letter box still in use today. It just has Letter Box on it - Later ones have Letters Only. On by way of Burmarsh and Hythe to Sandgate, then before long the much appreciated cups of tea. Two more miles and we'd reached Folkestone and our B and B for our two nights stay, nowhere for our trusty steeds under cover which was a drawback we felt. Another session of phone calls trying to find out what had happened to Esther, to no avail. Finally found she had had bike trouble and couldn't reach us in time. After a freshen up it was out for a meal and a stroll along the front.

Helen (Palmer) and Jean were now riding with us so we were up to 9. A wet start to the morning and this continued till after lunch, which was a shame as it meant the view from the Coastguard Station was very poor, also across to Dover Castle, so not worth getting the camera out. We left Peter and Frank at the cycle shop in Folkestone for Peter's spoke and derailleur to be sorted out while we headed for Dover. Along the main road for a while which, as we were climbing up and up, was horrendous, with heavy traffic continuously passing. Fortunately we left it at Capel le Ferne into quiet lanes through the Hougham Valley. Into Dover and traffic again, then the climb up to take the quieter roads towards St. Margaret's. We reached the Coastguard Station at 11.00am, the time arranged for our visit, much to Tony's relief. The station is on the edge of the South Foreland cliffs exposed to all weathers, so the building was suitably designed with aerodynamic lines. An explanation of their work and then a tour by two of the Coastguards was most interesting. Esther managed to get there by car for most of this; her derailleur had gone into her wheel just short of Sedlescombe which was why she didn't join us on wednesday. Jim (Berryman) had brought Dennis, Grace (Richardson) and Ernie by car for this too which was just as well as it turned out, it meant that we had two cars on the spot when needed.

The riders had arranged to meet the drivers at St. Margarets at Cliff for lunch where Frank and Peter were supposed to be. We all arrived but where were they? Tony and Helen went down Sea Road to find them only to be stopped by a Police car and ambulance. Frank had come off and needed hospital treatment. Apparently he didn't make the sharp bend at the bottom, and on a wet day too. This is where we needed the two cars as the woman who kindly looked after the two bicycles (Peter went with Frank in the ambulance thereby missing lunch) till we arrived was leaving to go abroad at 4.00pm, so after lunch Esther took two of Jim's passengers and one bike, while Jim took the other bike and Dennis, and they all went to Dover hospital to collect Peter and see how things were with Frank. They then left Frank's bike at the Folkestone B & B (for Helen to carry back) and left Peter and Esther to wait for the rest of us.

We, meanwhile, headed back over the hill to Dover, passing the South Foreland lighthouse where Marconi carried out early experiments, and seeing the memorial at the top of the hill to the Dover Patrol, erected in 1921. Then John showed us the path to Bleriot's Memorial where he landed in 1909. A flat granite aeroplane imbedded in the grass beside the memorial in a small clearing amongst the trees, we would have missed it without John's local knowledge. Bleriot's was the first flight across the channel and to land safely. Because he landed on English soil the Customs Officers soon appeared but hadn't forms to fit the circumstances so it was classed as a yacht!

Dover Castle dominates the area, wherever we seemed to be there it was above us. John took us across the main road to another quiet one, with more superb views of Dover, then down between large cemeteries to find friends of his at a tea place they run, but guess what? They closed at 4.00pm and we reached there at five past! There was a cafe



nearby fortunately so all was well. John went to visit his mother, who lives in Dover, but yet another thing to happen - she was out! So it was back to us for a cuppa.

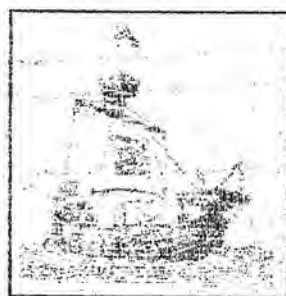
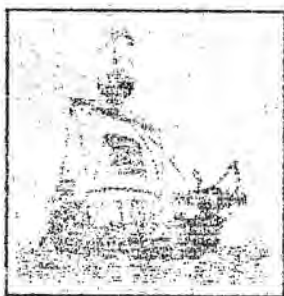
Back through the traffic to the road we came in on that morning, through the Hougham Valley, taking a slightly different route at West Hougham so as to avoid the trunk road into Folkestone. Esther and Peter were glad to see us and after a shower we all headed into the town for a meal at the Pizza Bar. Very good spot to see the cosmopolitan throng going by. The strangest sight was a teenager in a sari - on roller skates! Very incongruous.

Friday morning we were all heading for home, Helen in her car to Seaford, Jean in hers to Heathfield and Esther in hers to go via Canterbury, where we had heard Frank had been transferred, to see him and then report to us at tea at Boreham Street and also give Peter his pannier which she had been carrying. The riders headed along the road to Hythe, then along by the Royal Military Canal to take the lane to Botolph's Bridge and the Victorian letter box once more, then it was on to Burmarsh (after a detour) and elevenses at Old Romney. Capes on as we left here for a while. On to Lydd past the danger areas and rifle ranges to Camber then to Rye for lunch at "The Ship". Out by the Udimore road to Broad Oak and then descend to retrace the route we came out on via Sedlescombe and Battle to Boreham Street for much needed tea.

This is where the weather really deteriorated; we had had capes on from just before Sedlescombe till climbing Boreham Hill but nothing like the torrential downpour that met us as we left. No good waiting we thought so started our swim home, Tony & Ann to Seaford, John riding a way with Jack to keep him company on his way back to Buxted before heading to Hailsham, and Peter heading for Ratton. Shoe-fulls of water from the flooded roads and passing traffic and then Tony had a puncture at Horsebridge!

What can I say? A very memorable three day tour. Our thanks to Captain Tony for arranging it and trying to cope with (at times) an insubordinate crew who wanted their tea stops, though the crew were soon to realize why tea was late - Tony, as an ex-seafarer, had to make sure the sea was still there and we couldn't stop till we reached it - no matter what! The numbers went up and down like a yo-yo during the tour, we had to keep making sure all were present and correct.

(Tony's article about the tour of the Coastguard Station will be in the next edition.)



ODD CUTS.

Signs of the times?

The sex war has come to traffic signs. In the small North-Rhineland town of Marl, feminists complained that signs relating to bicycles always showed a man's bike, with the extra bar across the top between the saddle and handlebars. The town council has now agreed that half of all cycle signs must show a woman's bike.

When cycling pays.

Cyclists riding out on official business for a council are now being paid the same mileage allowance as car users. To encourage staff to keep their cars off congested streets, Leicester Council is offering bikers 22.8p per mile. It is also offering them cheap loans of up to £500 to buy a bicycle. Officials say cycling is both environmentally friendly and provides good exercise.

HELLHOLE

Breathing hard, I pushed against the bars of my machine as, stumbling over rambling tree roots, I wheeled it over rough grass and a rank growth of weeds.

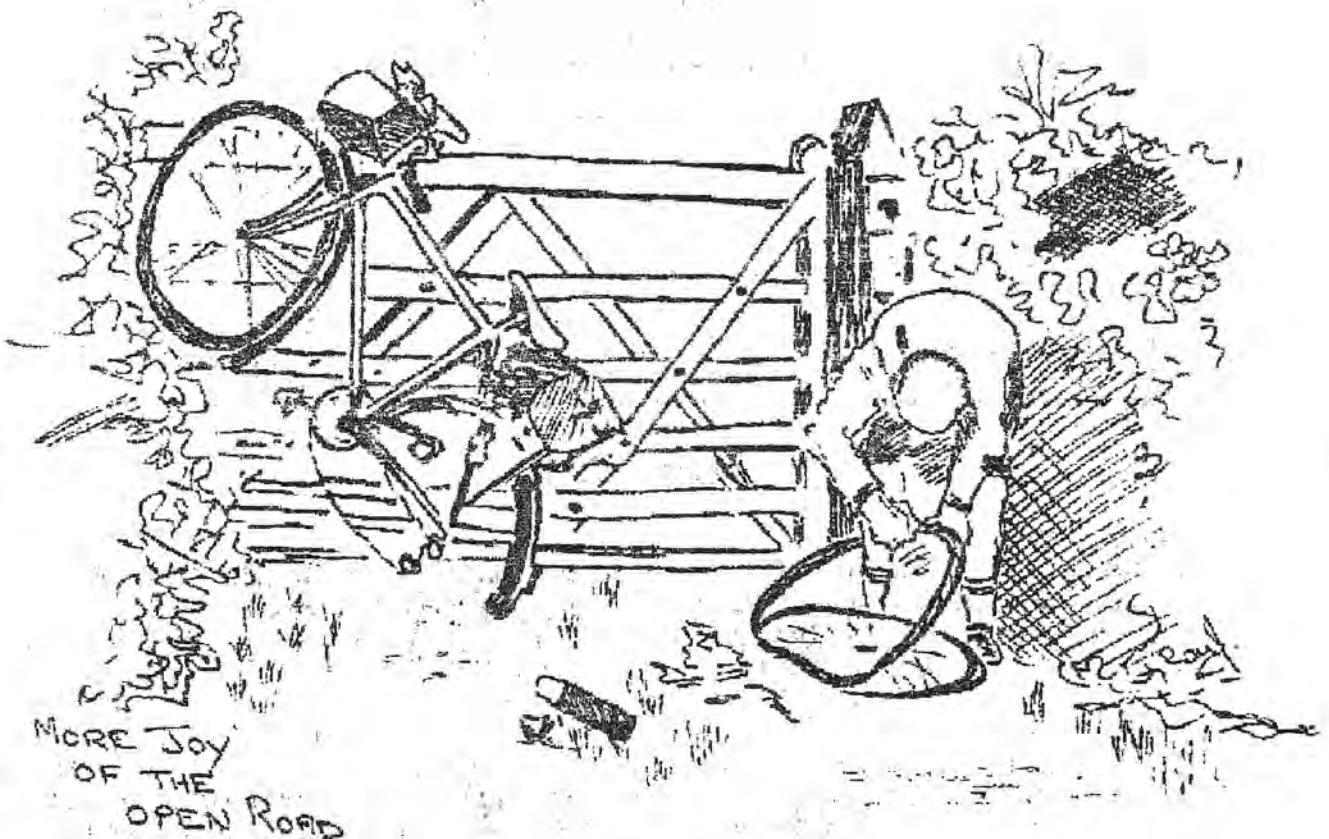
The path I was trying to follow had seen better days; old broken lumps of concrete that were a hindrance rather than a help stubbed against my toes. I was none too fit these days, I reflected, and in any case had never much cared for this off-road stuff. A stretch of thick, glutinous mud slowed my progress even more, the wheels churning it up over the brakes and rear mech. and clogging the guards. Grabbing a piece of stick to try and clear them, I slipped on a loose bit of concrete, my shoes sinking into the mud and pitching me onto my bare knees which became scratched and stung by clumps of nettle and thistle.

Beginning to perspire, I savagely hauled the bike forward only to be abruptly halted as a trailing bramble caught in the rear spokes. Using my mitts as much as possible to avoid the thorns I nevertheless

felt several pierce my unprotected fingers as I tore it free. Just ahead now I could see my goal, a rickety gate beyond which the sound of car engines denoted the road. As I resumed the struggle a wayward branch protruding from a thicket dislodged my pump which, pressed into the mire by my back wheel, immediately acquired a coating of sticky mud. As I jammed it back into place, an eldritch screech made me look round to see a figure approaching, fists shaking and face contorted with rage. I made a supreme effort to reach the gate which swung open with a squeal of rusty hinges as I staggered through.

I paused for breath, streaming with sweat, spattered with mud, bloodstained but triumphant. I had made it from the bike-shed to my front gate, even though I had annoyed my wife by carelessly trampling on her annual seedlings. Hastily I mounted and set off, just in time to reach the club at the start of the day's run.

The Ancient Mariner



The P-B-P Part 2 - To Brest and Back.
by David Rix.



Paris - Brest - Paris
1991 - 1991



Paris - Brest - Paris
1991 - 1991

10.20pm Monday 26th August 1991 and finally we were off on the road to Brest and back. Ahead of us 1218km and up to 90 hours in the saddle. Our group comprised myself, East Sussex D. A. club mate Geoff Boxall, and two friends from S. W. London D. A., Stuart Downie and Derek Monkhouse.

This being the Centenary year of the P-B-P they had the highest entry ever, over 3000 riders in three different categories. Believe it or not the 90 hour category which we were in was the slowest and also had the highest number of riders, about 2100. This necessitated us being released in 3 lots of about 700, thus the 10.20 start time - 20 minutes behind the first group.

As we left the stadium there were crowds outside cheering us on our way, there was no need to watch for the special route markers (green outward & red return) to start with as all the busy intersections were marshalled, and we were waved through on red lights, with more groups of spectators cheering us on. We felt like Tour riders. With the numbers on the road we only needed to follow the people in front and were soon speeding along passing slower riders - surely this couldn't last. Leaving the lit and built up areas the sheer scale of the event became more obvious as we saw the rear lights of other riders stretching in a steady stream for several miles down the road ahead of us. Several times each hour we were passed by motorbikes or cars with orange flashing lights - marshalls keeping an eye on us and watching out for anyone without proper lights showing. We noticed the occasional rider fixing faulty lighting; no such problems for us - we didn't even need to use any of the spare bulbs we all carried.

Around midnight and 30km on the road we entered the Forêt de Rambouillet, and then suddenly a warning shout and we were on a stretch of gravelled road - more like a forestry track - and the pace slowed with the concern about coming off at this point in the event, especially at the point where the road descended to the village of Gambais. Then suddenly the gravel was passed, we crossed a stretch of paved road in the village and the pace took off again. As we tackled the next long ascent a familiar voice was heard and we found ourselves passing the tandem trike ridden by Pete Gifford and stoked by (then) Audax Secretary, Noel Simpson. A cry of "Good morning Mr. Simpson", was greeted with, "Morning Who's that cocky little bugger?". The other over-riding memory from this part of the ride was of passing through a small village and seeing a Frenchman and his small son, sitting, outlined by the light in their doorway, watching the riders go past and urging them on - it was well after 1.00 in the morning!

By now we were really moving along, well ahead of Geoff's minimum schedule, and the riders and villages seemed to be slipping behind us with ease. Perhaps too much ease? This was the longest stage of the event, 141km from St. Quentin to Mortagne-au-Perche, but it seemed no time at all before we were rolling into the control point to hear Astra's voice, shouting a warning about the dangerous kerb. Parking the bikes we went to find the check in only to discover that this was a feeding only control on the way out - if we had looked on our cards we would have seen that there was no space for a stamp here! Back outside Roger directed us to the car and we were soon tucking into plates of food and steaming hot drinks.

We weren't doing badly at all - 5 1/2 hours on the road and 141km covered we were over an hour up on Geoff's schedule. At this rate we could be back in under 80 hours, but it was unlikely to last. Well fed and with our bottles refilled and bags of food in our back pockets we were back on the road, still dark but with the promise of dawn on the horizon.

When we had left Dieppe on Sunday morning it had been in thick fog. This had

soon cleared as we headed south and we had been treated to a blue cloudless sky. The start had seen the sky still clear with the stars glittering and a full moon shining down on us. It was a warm and balmy night. Now, heading on through the French countryside, we wondered what weather the day had in store for us. As the sun rose slowly behind us, the light early morning mist cleared and the sky again showed blue and clear. Our spirits were up and with a tail wind pushing us we sped on westwards. Having been up on our expected time we agreed to 'take it steady from now on' - this resolve lasted less than half an hour before we were off again. As the day, like the pace, warmed up we were glad that we had stripped off our thicker night clothes and were down to shorts and lightweight tops.

We seemed to be clocking up controls with ease. The comment, "take it easy from now on", became a standing joke among us. We would start off at a moderate pace only to drop into the same rapid pedalling rhythm we had been keeping up. The months of training rides seemed to be paying off.

Four controls down and nearly 5 hours up on schedule we rolled into Loudeac for our first planned sleep stop of the trip. With 445km behind us, and after nearly 21 hours on the road, our legs muscles were starting to ache and we decided to take advantage of the free massage service being provided by the French Red Cross. Astra had done a training course but felt we would be better in the hands of more experienced people. I found myself having my legs massaged by a young lady who's name, much to Astra's disgust, I had not bothered to ask.

"I'm a married man", I had replied.

"That doesn't stop you asking", said Astra.

"Actually," I said, "I was too busy looking down the front of her t-shirt"! (Astra insisted I put this bit in.)

Thus relaxed we crawled into our sleeping bags and fell straight to sleep. It seemed we had only just closed our eyes when, four hours later, Roger roused us with, "Your off in half an hour", and handed out cups of tea.

Breakfast inside us we headed off into the early hours of Wednesday morning. Another clear moonlit night as, with countryside and villages slipping past in the dark, we headed on following the green route arrows towards Brest. The countryside was now becoming familiar as we passed through Huelgoat and on towards the Roc Trevezel; Geoff and I had been here in 1987 on the D. A. camping tour of Brittany.

At various times we had attempted to get groups working, doing 'bit and bit', but many did not understand or didn't want to know - most of the Americans were like this, they'd take a back wheel for a rest but not help out. One American who did work with us said of his fellow countrymen that, there were some Americans born with a shortage of brain cells and unfortunately most of them were cyclists! On this stage we dropped in with a group of Norwegians, who raised our speed somewhat for several miles until they pulled over for a break - then suddenly some Canadians appeared and passed us and we were off after them at a cracking pace. After only a short distance Stuart and I decided it was too hard trying to catch them and slowed up, but Geoff and Derek kept going, dropped on to the back and disappeared into the distance. Stuart and I carried on at our previous pace. It was about half an hour later, as we reached the top of the last and steepest hill before Brest, that we saw them again. It seemed that Derek had shot onto the front of the group, with Geoff at the back, it was only when they managed to speak again that Geoff said he thought they ought to wait for us. It then turned out that Derek had thought we were ahead of them! We also later learned why the Canadians were in such a hurry - they were in the 80 hour group!!

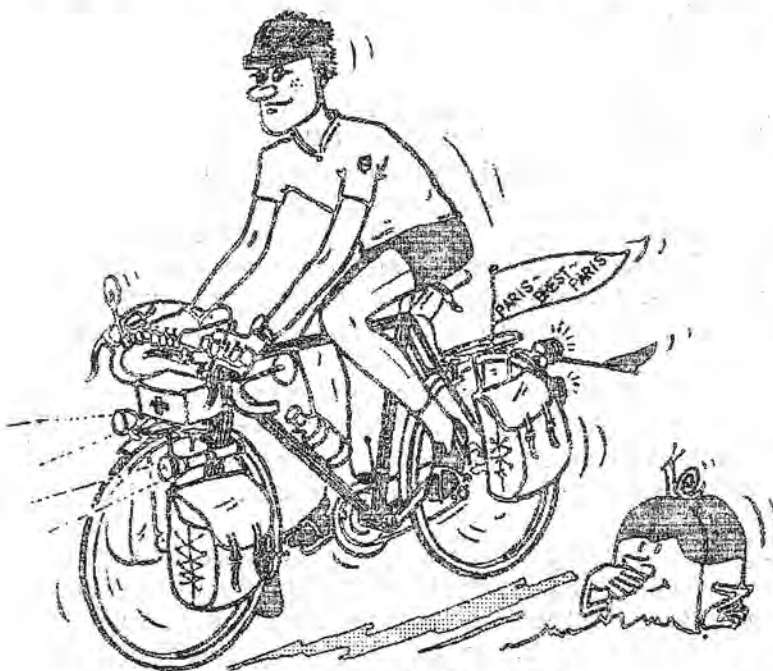
Brest, finally, and after several kilometers of suburbs and dock warehouses we arrived at the control to be greeted as ever by a smiling Roger and Astra. More food and drink, a massage and a shower, a chat with Noel Simpson who appeared to have temporarily lost his tandem trike steersman, Pete Gifford, and, just under 2 hours later, we were off again. Half down and half to go, over 4½ hours up on schedule, but could we keep it up. Now came the test; the wind which had been pushing us all the way from the start showed no sign of changing or dropping, if this kept up it would be hard work all the way back. The sun still beat down out of a clear sky

making it hot work as well, with the wind drying the sweat on our faces plenty of drink was the order of the day to insure that we didn't dehydrate without realising it.

Plenty of chance to get out of the saddle now. I'm still not sure whether it was 7 km or 7 miles (it seemed longer) on the main climb out of Brest, but most of this leg appeared to be uphill with only brief respites. With the headwind and the almost constant climbing we tried getting a group together. It wasn't easy, we had a problem with the Americans, most of whom were "wheel suckers" who'd drop on the back for a rest and then shoot off again but weren't prepared to work. Many of them also had tribars which proved useless for group riding. Eventually we got a group of ten riders of varying nationalities who were willing to work together, and when, after 30 km, we finally seemed to reach the highest point there was a small crowd to cheer us over the summit.

Carhaix was reached just before 3.00 on Wednesday afternoon, less than an hour to eat, drink and refill water bottles and we were off again - still fighting that headwind. Through to the next control at Loudeac we were still encountering a few odd stragglers heading out, mostly in ones and twos and appearing to be suffering (We heard later that a good number took the train back). We were all still going reasonably well and, with the odd bit of help from the occasional rider and even with the headwind, managed the 77 km to Loudeac in just under 4 hours.

Geoff's "worst case" had allowed for three stops of four hours, including three hours sleep, at certain chosen controls, with half an hour for food and drinks at intermediate controls. We managed to keep within about 15 minutes of this as far as the first sleep check. Consulting the schedule showed we were well up, having made almost an hour on each leg and decided a longer sleep stop could be allowed. From there on the schedule more or less went to pot with all our stops being longer than predicted, but as we continued to make up time on the road it seemed to matter very little - and time taken for a massage was time well spent. By the time we arrived at Loudeac on the return we were still 5 hours ahead of schedule. It was somewhere about here that Stuart's knee started to cause him serious problems, he would drop off the back for a while, and on a couple of occasions arrived at controls a little after us. For a while he took to leaving ahead of us, in the hope that his knee would have 'warmed up' by the time we caught him. He told us afterwards that he even rode using only one leg for a while, and with the other hooked over the rear carrier!



A Typical P-B-P Rider?

behind us for quite a few miles was American and female. What she made of our recitals heaven only knows!

A quick massage of the legs, food, drink, a three hour sleep and at 1.08 thursday morning we were off into the dark again. The early hours found us fighting drowsiness. Geoff, who had been following the white line with the super-powerful torch that was strapped on to his front carrier, was suddenly noticed to be riding on the wrong side of the road. A quick shout, Geoff started and then realised he had been drifting off. What anyone else must have thought I don't know but during these stages we were singing and reciting almost anything to help stay awake; old music hall songs, the Goons, Monty Python - and Derek's repertoire of Rugby songs was interesting to say the least. Slowing up at one point to check for route arrows we discovered that the rider who's lights we had seen close

It was leaving Loudeac that we made our only mistake of the trip. Not very far along the road, and probably half asleep, we missed a left turn arrow as we left a small village. About 4 km. and several junctions (without arrows) later I questioned our route just as we passed through another village. We stopped, as did the two (British as it turned out) riders who had followed us. Out came Geoff's strip map of the route - photocopied by Astra and then pieced together and carefully marked out by Geoff. Sure enough we had gone astray. "I knew all this down hill was too good to be true", said Stuart. Geoff thought we'd have to retrace, but I pointed out that if we took the last left we had passed we could eventually rejoin the route without missing any towns or villages and thus keep the extra mileage to the minimum. So



One of Stuart's more interesting items of equipment

with Geoff's map on my bars and my torch in hand we set off into the dark. The other two Brits. decided to stick with us and in less than half an hour the lights of a built up area appeared and we were back on route. A call of "compliments to the navigator" drifted from the rear. It was on this stretch that one of Stuart's more interesting items of equipment proved useful - his headlamp. Stuart's headlamp, I should explain, was a caver's lamp attached on a band round his head, and it proved invaluable for reading the sign posts since all our dynamos went out as we stopped. Geoff christened it his brain surgeon's lamp!

By now places and countryside were starting to blur together, though we occasionally recognised places we had passed on the way out. Back at Villaines-la-Juhel it was a two hour stop with another massage and shower before continuing to Mortagne-au-Perche which was to have been our last sleep stop, this time taking advantage of the indoor facilities, before tackling the final night-time section. We had originally been told that support vehicles would not be allowed at Nogent-le-Roi, the last check before the finish, and were prepared for 141 km with no support. However, we were told that a last minute change had been made and that support would be allowed. A quick map check and Roger and Astra agreed that they could manage it. They had hoped to drive straight back and get a good sleep at the finish before we arrived. I wonder if overall they actually got less sleep than we did.

About half an hour after leaving Mortagne Geoff caused panic for us all when he suddenly stopped - he couldn't find his Brevet card. These we had in a plastic wallet on a cord around our necks. After Geoff made a mad search through his bar bag in the dark Derek suddenly noticed the cord around Geoff's neck, and it was discovered that his wallet was hanging down his back! It must have got swapped around when he had changed jerseys at the control. We were all very relieved - we hadn't been looking forward to the extra kilometers needed to retrace to the last control, especially Stuart although his knee seemed to have returned almost to normal now.

Reaching Nogent-le-Roi just after dawn on Friday the early morning mist and cold was slightly more than usual, and it was only Astra who realised that we were starting to show signs of hypothermia and quickly got us wrapped up to keep us warm while we eat and drank, Geoff and Derek even slept for an hour in the car.

7.25 on Friday morning. The sun was coming up and bringing a bit of warmth to the day as we set off on the final 57 km. to Guyancourt. The four of us were alone now and surprisingly feeling pretty good (Stuart's knee trouble had disappeared almost completely), the pace had not varied much from an average 20 km (12½ miles) per hour for the last five stages - not bad on only four hours sleep a night. As we rode we passed the odd rider, who then dropped on for a little while and either dropped off again eventually or, in some cases (mainly Americans), had a rest and then shot off past us. We were all getting a little fed up with this attitude, so when Geoff said, "Right lads any Americans pass them four feet out", we all thought why not. Now when any rider with helmet and tribars came in sight the pace picked up, we shot

out into the middle of the road and swept past giving them little chance to jump on the back. It sounds rather childish I know, but it gave us great satisfaction and it worked very well until we got closer to the finish. We now started to encounter the traffic lights we had been waved through on the way out and our last few kilometers found us stopping and starting with great frequency. The time was ticking by, we had looked to be inside 84 hours but, with all these delays, this now looked unlikely.

As we approached the final roundabout and turned into the entrance of the gymnasium we were applauded by the large crowd waiting there, and there at the entrance to the main hall were Astra, Roger & Stuart's wife Maureen. Roger insisted on a photo and then we were checking in for the final time. 10.05 Friday morning, 83³/₄ hours after leaving Paris we were back, although our validated Brevets and medals gave the official time as 84 hours and 5 minutes - not giving allowance for the 20 minute late start. We all suddenly felt at a loose end and not sure what to do, there was a feeling of "is that it?". Dizzy with accomplishment and too psyched up to sleep we wandered around the hall looking at the stands and the photos taken at the start - was it really four days ago?

A french bread sandwich and a glass of beer, a shower back at Derek and Stuart's hotel and then it was goodbye as we headed off to Epone and our Chambre d'Hote. Greeted as heroes by the proprietor's family, Geoff and I were just pleased to collapse into bed for several hours sleep followed by another of Denise's excellent dinners and then a full 8 hours sleep before the return to Dieppe and the ferry home.

Definitely something I wouldn't have missed. A lot of hard work in training and planning went into it, but it all paid off in the end, it was a great experience and well worth doing. The satisfaction was made greater by the arrival of our medals several months later. I almost hesitate to call it a medal; measuring about 4¹/₄ by 2¹/₄ inches, ³/₁₆ of an inch thick and made of solid bronze, it's not the kind of thing you wear, it's the kind of thing to mount and take pride of place in your collection.

I would like to pay tribute to Roger & Astra, who worked almost non-stop for the entire event, and put a lot of work in beforehand as well, to insure that everything went well for us. Thank you both, we couldn't have done it without you.

Will we do it again in 1995? Well... let's wait and see, anyway there's the London-Edinburgh-London in 1993 to come first!

For those interested in facts and figures.

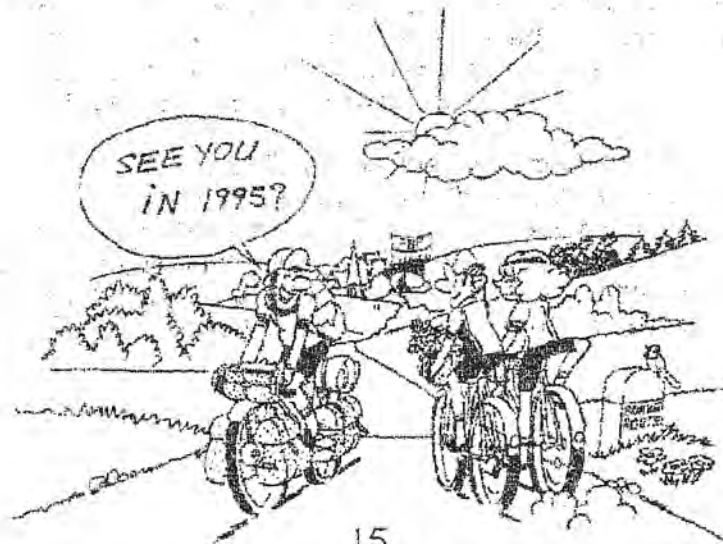
Total distance was 1218 km with 14 controls plus start & finish.

Total time taken - 83hrs 45 minutes of which 27 hours was spent off the bikes - 56hrs 45 minutes on the road

Making an Average riding speed of about 21.5 km/hr (or 13.5 mph)

Best time between controls was Carhaix to Brest when we averaged 29.58 Km/hr.

Facts & figures thanks to Roger & Astra who bothered to keep a record.



AN ENGINE ON THE BACK

Mother shut the curtains, it's pouring down out there.
Me! Go out cycling? That I wouldn't dare.
Come on lad I've got your cape and a cap to fit your head.
No! Mother: you cannot be serious, I want to stay in bed.
Come, the girls are up. And donning on their clobber.
You can only lay there, and slobber, slobber, slobber.
Mother dear! Those girls of ours, are made of sterner stuff,
They can ride in wind and rain, no matter how they puff.
Me! I'm just a simple lad, of a soft and cuddly race.
Not a bit like Ann: Maggie: Dawn: Thelma or Grace.
They don't mind the wet, or those rotten hills.
Don't know where they get their togs, must shop at Brian Mills.
I know! . . . I'll get an engine, and fit it on me bike,
A leather jacket, leather trousers, also tight.
Then a little floozy, to sit upon the back,
With her dyed pink hair, earrings, and a shiny plastic mac.
No longer will I ride behind looking at their back,
I'll whistle by, me, me bike, and girl in plastic mac.

A Nony Mouse.

ALTERNATIVES TO AUTOGEDDON.

by Jonathan Dalton.

The southern part of East Sussex is threatened by highly destructive and totally unnecessary schemes to provide a dual carriageway road between Lewes and Hastings.

The justification for this project is to cater for extra motor traffic and save travelling time for the motorist - in other words countryside is at risk to give the motorist commuting from, say, Eastbourne to Lewes (a journey easily done by train) 5 minutes extra in bed!

Regrettably, as is usual for Department of Transport road schemes, the alternatives have not been considered. It also seems that many people, having spent a lot of money to buy, tax and insure their cars, become slaves to them and will not consider more efficient and safer alternatives for their journeys. Many of these journeys are short and can easily be undertaken by cycle or bus, while electrification and redoubling of the Hastings-Ashford rail link, and possibly the reinstatement of the Polegate-Stone Cross spur, would allow the existing train service, which is largely used for local traffic, to be supplemented by a fast Ashford (connections to Channel Tunnel & East Kent) -Hastings-Brighton-Portsmouth (and westwards) service. This would provide an efficient alternative to car travel, with far greater safety, together with minimal use of resources, fuel and land. People from outlying areas could make their way (preferably by cycle or public transport if beyond walking distance) to suitable railheads, and a small investment would enable the facilities for storing bikes at stations to be improved, as well as maintaining the ability to carry them on trains.

Although there is not the volume of freight in Sussex that there is elsewhere, scope exists for the greater use of rail and coasting ships, especially if the authorities were to take a more positive attitude to wagonload and other small consignments on the railways, together with the provision of a comprehensive network of local freight facilities, both private and public sidings, where goods could be easily exchanged between trains and small environmentally friendly road vehicles.

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

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

Golly first saw the light of day when Frances Upton discovered a grotesque doll that her grandmother had kept in a cupboard for many years. This gave her the idea for a story that was popular in victorian nurseries for many years. Published in 1885



"Two Dutch Dolls And A Gollywog" was an instant success and several gollywog stories followed. Manufacturers were quick to latch on to such a popular figure and the character we know today was launched on the toy market where it became increasingly popular. Just before the first world war, a son of James Robertson the preserve manufacturer, while on a visit to North America, noticed children playing with these popular dolls and decided they would make an appealing trade mark. So Golly came out of the nursery and into the world of commerce.

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

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

Roy James.

* * * * *

Can You Help?

Calling all Ephgrave or Hetchins Owners.

We have been contacted by George Cheeseman, who is trying to compile an information file on Ephgrave and Hetchins frames. There is already a register of all the frames built, but George is interested in knowing where those frames are now, and what has happened to them since they were built. Also if you have a Hetchins or Ephgrave and can give George the frame number he can tell you when it was built, etc. One thing that it is hoped will come out of this is an owners club, so that people can swap information and ideas.

If you're interested and can help, then you can write to George at -
6 Hillfield Road, Dunton Green, Sevenoaks, Kent. TN13 2UA

C.T.C. Signs.

Do you know the whereabouts of any of the old C.T.C. signs? Keith Matthews, Wessex D. A. Secretary & National Councillor is making another attempt to compile a list of all the old Winged Wheel signs, the only stipulation being that they must be a permanent fixture to the building and on public view, whether they are in their original location or not is unimportant. He would like details of location; Address of building, Grid Ref. (if possible); Type of sign - "Headquarters", "Quarters", "Repairer", etc.; Condition of sign - painted over, neglected or restored.

It is hoped eventually to produce a list of the signs found around the country with a view to creating some publicity for the club.

To avoid any duplication, information on any signs can be passed to the editor (address at front) for forwarding to Keith.