

The



Christmas
Peace and
Goodwill



Coaster



the magazine of the

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

No 14

20p

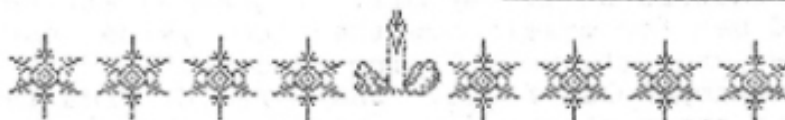


CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

EAST SUSSEX DISTRICT ASSOCIATION

"THE COASTER"

CHRISTMAS 1987 - Issue No. 14



PRESIDENT ANN RIX

Secretary

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Christmas edition of "The Coaster", now in a slightly different format. As some of you already know, Maurice & Esther Carpenter, who have been doing our photocopying for free since the inception of "The Coaster", have sadly had to tell us that they can no longer manage this. After discussion at the last D.A. Committee meeting it was decided that, since paying to have it photocopied would prove too expensive, we would produce it using the club's duplicator instead, with a double page of photocopied pictures when finances allow, and possibly approach local cycle dealers about advertising in the magazine. The D.A. Committee would like to express its thanks to Maurice & Esther for all the work they have done for us over the years. Also special thanks to Roy & Wendy at Alfriston Youth Hostel, who held a coffee morning for us there, on 1st November, which was well attended by the D.A. members, and the proceeds of which were donated to a Coaster Fund - they are doing another one for us on 12th March from 10.30, so make a note in your diaries and come along.

It is hoped with the changes in production methods that we can still keep up the standard of magazine that we have come to expect. Of course this would not be possible without the excellent articles that you send in, and this edition is no exception. We have, amongst others, Alec's report on his ill-fated Paris-Brest-Paris attempt, Ken's account of his trip to Montargis, and two articles from Roy James. There is also a competition, with a small prize, and, I am glad to say, we have been able to include the latest in Roy James' series of sketches of 'Everyday Sussex'.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition and maybe it will inspire you to put pen to paper for the summer one.

A Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year to you all,

David Rix.

After the Storm

by Roy James

The frenzied weather of mid-October had forced me to keep my cycle in the shed for more than a week, so when the forecast was for sunshine and showers on my day off, I grabbed at the opportunity to ride out and see for myself how the countryside had withstood the attack of "the worst storm in living memory".

Across Pevensey Marsh first, where floods from the recent heavy rain were more apparent than the effect of the near hurricane force winds that had swept the South of England three nights previously. Through Hankham and Rickney a few trees were down but across the marsh it was the extent of the floods that shocked. Vast tracts of land lay under water. Where sheep and lapwings could usually be seen, swans and seagulls were now in control. On either side of the road across Horse Eye Level the deep drainage ditches spilled water over the narrow tarmac strip. The whole appearance of the levels had changed. Perhaps this was how they had been centuries ago.

At Hellingly, the road past the old watermill was impassable, the mill stream had burst its banks and Horselunges Manor was an island surrounded by floodwater. Fine old trees were lying in fields and gardens, some torn up by their roots, others snapped off at the trunk. Those blown down across the road were being cleared by hard working gangs of workmen and the angry sound of chainsaws filled the air. Telephone lines were down, underground cables torn out of the earth by uprooted trees, and yet, amid the confusion, order was being restored.

The road from Michelham Priory was under water and I was only able to get as far as the bridge, but the sun had come out and it was warm standing there eating my lunch. Quiet also, for cars had been warned off by flood notices at Upper Dicker. A few came as far as the flooded section but quickly decided to reverse back when they saw the state of the road. I too returned to the Dicker and from there made for Alfriston. Passing the Leylands Barn conversion I noticed the tiles had been torn away from the roof of the building that had risen from the traces of the old barn. Berwick church has suffered badly. A few tiles still cling to the steeple, but the skeleton of the spire is all that effectually remains of this lovely silhouette that rises from the trees around church and vicarage.

In Alfriston the footpath over the bridge to the Litlington road was closed because of fallen trees so once more I had to turn back, this time to the road bridge in order to continue to Exceat. At Plonk Barn I left the bike while I tried the path back to the village. Two trees had been torn completely out of the ground taking the tarred footpath with them. I cautiously made my way round the gaping holes in an attempt to reach the bridge and was greeted with the most amazing sight. The river had burst its bank all the way along and was adding more water to the already flooded fields. Further down the valley the Exceat road had been cleared but sawn trunks showed how many of those lovely trees had been victim of the storm. Branches still lay in the road and these together with piles of leaves made slippery from the heavy rain made cycling tricky. There was a bonus however for very few cars were about that afternoon and I had the road to myself all the way to the West Dean turn off.

The trees through Friston Bottom showed little sign of damage and the ride along the forestry track was good but uneventful, so when I reached the start of the Butchershole Bottom footpath and discovered it to be almost completely blocked by fallen trees I chanced taking that route. After a bit of a scramble the way was clear and continued to be so until about twenty metres from the exit to the Jevington road where the path became impassable with fallen trees. Cars were going

by on the road a few metres away, it was asking too much to turn back, so shouldering the bike I pushed into the wood between footpath and road. A bit of a game climbing over fallen branches and tree trunks, but at least when I reached the wire fence at the edge of the wood it too had been broken down by falling timber and I was able to step on to the road without difficulty. As I rode away I looked back at the footpath entrance and saw that it was blocked solid with fallen conifers. The rest of the journey was without incident but I had seen enough of the effects of the great storm to hope we never again see another of such intensity.



THE YORK RALLY

by David Kiernan

The weekend of the 26th June saw some of the D.A. at the C.T.C. York Rally. The rally which is held annually is on the York racecourse known as the Knavesmire, and is very close to the centre of York - about as close as the D.G.H. in Eastbourne is from the Pier - and is connected by a cycle path running in part along the river Ouse. To me it seemed there were even more cyclists and campers than before - in any case there were 3000+ of us.

As is usual there were rides and events on the racecourse and led rides of varying length on the Saturday & Sunday. Some of the events held at the racecourse are very good, such as roller racing, cross country, the best turned out family group and antique cycles. The high point for me is the service in the cathedral and the parade back to the knavesmire, the cathedral is full of cyclists, the colours of all those cycling tops is very impressive. York comes to a standstill when we all cycle back to the campsite - real pedal power! The trade is well represented, two large marquees are erected and many traders small and large attend the two days, and many bargains especially in clothes are to be had.

York is a great place to meet old friends and make new ones, and it is very interesting to see how organised other D.A.'s are, there were several examples of D.A.'s buying old vehicles, usually the Social Security ambulance type - a large box van with windows and seats, the bikes in the back and plenty of room for tents and passengers. This enables large sections of their D.A. to get to York and share the cost of travel thus making it within the price of many of the members young old and family cyclists, how nice it must be to belong to a D.A. with real club spirit.

Hopefully I will attend this event next year and if any one is interested I will hire a minibus as this will mean quite a few people tents and bikes getting to and from York for a reasonable price.



ARE YOU A REAL CYCLIST?

(This article, which appeared in the Essex D.A. 'Spotlight', was sent to them by one of their Canadian customers.)

Real cyclists are easy to spot - they're always ahead of you. Even when they're not on their bikes their technical jargon can leave you in the dust (not to be confused with the club bore). At times, you yourself have probably wondered where, exactly, you stand. Real cyclist or wimp? Perhaps you have lost sleep worrying about it or even developed ulcers. This test has been devised to relieve your anguish. But instead of pushing pedals you push a pencil. Answer the questions honestly, tally your score and find out if you are a REAL CYCLIST.

1. You are cycling up a long, steep hill and well before the top muscles begin to ache and you feel exhausted. Then you spy a large rock. Do you:
 - (a) ignore the rock and continue up the hill;
 - (b) stop, sit on the rock to rest then continue up the hill;
 - (c) stop, pretend to examine the mineral content of the rock, then continue up the hill;
 - (d) stop, strap the rock to your carrier and then continue up the hill;
 - (e) turn around and go down hill.
2. You've been cycling for miles on a hot day and begin to feel fatigued. You become concerned about the possibility of heat-stroke, so do you:
 - (a) abort the ride;
 - (b) stop for a beer then continue on;
 - (c) neither stop nor drink;
 - (d) don't stop but take a few sips of water;
 - (e) don't stop but take several gulps of water.
3. When cycling, do you wear cycling shorts and shoes:
 - (a) all the time;
 - (b) often;
 - (c) occasionally;
 - (d) seldom;
 - (e) never.
4. Which of these accessories - chain guard, horn, safety levers, kickstand - is your bike equipped with:
 - (a) none;
 - (b) one;
 - (c) two;
 - (d) three;
 - (e) all four.
5. A chain stay spanner is:
 - (a) a wrench used to make fine adjustments to the chain stays;
 - (b) a vice that tightens the links in your chain;
 - (c) a spring on the rear derailleur that keeps your chain taut;
 - (d) the chain guide on the front derailleur;
 - (e) none of the above.
6. Which of the following statements applies to you since you bought your bike:
 - (a) I've made so many changes that it might be considered an altogether different bike;
 - (b) I have changed several components;
 - (c) I have changed one or two components;
 - (d) I'd like to upgrade the bike but I can't afford to;
 - (e) I see no need to change any components.
7. Which of the following statements is right regarding flat tyres:
 - (a) it never takes me more than 10 minutes to fix a flat;
 - (b) it usually takes me less than 10 minutes to fix it;

- (c) it usually takes me more than 10 minutes to fix it;
- (d) I have puncture proof tyres;
- (e) I don't know how to fix a flat.

8. In the middle of a long ride you hit a pot-hole and find that the front wheel is warped, do you:

- (a) continue riding;
- (b) stop for a beer;
- (c) pound the wheel back into shape with the large rock that is on your carrier;
- (d) use your Swiss Army knife to fashion a new rim from tin cans, then continue;
- (e) 'phone your mother.

9. Which of the following statements is most likely to apply to you when it comes to cycle maintenance:

- (a) I regularly overhaul my cycle every one or two thousand miles;
- (b) I overhaul my bike once a year;
- (c) sometimes I have my cycle overhauled at a bike shop;
- (d) my bike seems to work fine, I just oil the chain occasionally;
- (e) I don't ride enough for my bike to require any servicing.

10. Which statement best describes your cycling:

- (a) I like to take my time and view the scenery;
- (b) I go at a fair pace but I like to make frequent stops;
- (c) I keep a constant moderate pace;
- (d) I like to go fast and concentrate on maintaining a level of pain;
- (e) I like to look for large rocks while I ride.

11. How many miles have you cycled during the last 12 months:

- (a) less than 200;
- (b) 200-1000;
- (c) 1000-3000;
- (d) 3000-6000;
- (e) over 6000.

12. What is the approximate value of your bicycle(s)?:

- (a) less than £50;
- (b) £50 - £100;
- (c) £100 - £250;
- (d) £250 - £500;
- (e) over £500.

SCORING:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. a=4, b=2, c=1, d=5, e=0. | 7. a=5, b=4, c=3, d=1, e=0. |
| 2. a=0, b=1, c=2, d=3, e=5. | 8. a=2, b=1, c=5, d=4, e=0. |
| 3. a=5, b=3, c=2, d=1, e=0. | 9. a=5, b=3, c=2, d=1, e=0. |
| 4. a=5, b=3, c=3, d=2, e=1. | 10. a=1, b=2, c=3, d=5, e=4. |
| 5. a=0, b=0, c=0, d=0, e=5. | 11. a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4, e=5. |
| 6. a=5, b=4, c=3, d=1, e=0. | 12. a=1, b=2, c=3, d=4, e=5. |

45-60 points: You are a real cyclist. You are thoroughly familiar with all aspects of cycling and pain. To you, cycling is a challenge and you derive enjoyment from pushing yourself to the limit. You often find yourself riding alone as you have no patience with slow riders, although if there is sufficient stimulating conversation, slowing down can be interesting. But they also wish they could understand you better. They think you are weird.

31-45 points: You are a typical cycling enthusiast. When it comes to cycling you have both knowledge and some ability but you see these only as a means of adding to your enjoyment of the sport rather than necessities. Although you occasionally sprint up a hill you are mostly content to go at a speed neither taxing nor free of hardships. You get along well with most real cyclists, although some view you as mediocre.

16-31 points: You're a wimp. Forget about speed and distance records, you have enough trouble keeping up with the bunch. And it's as well you do keep up because, apart from fixing flats - even then you are no expert - most repairs are beyond your understanding. But you enjoy cycling, although you see little point in going up a hill when it can be avoided. Because you are willing to make some effort other cyclists tolerate your company.

Less than 16 points: You are a sissy. You usually ride with your mother or father - or your dog. To you, cycling is only a means of looking at the scenery. You like to think you are getting exercise although you are careful not to over exert yourself. And when it comes to repairs you are helpless, even a flat tyre disables you. Unknowingly, you usually ride in the wrong gear, but this does not detract from the pleasures of cycling. Even so, others are secretly glad they're not you.

Well, how did YOU fare?



VICTORIAN TRICYCLE QUOTES

(Quotations displayed at the Christchurch Tricycle Museum.)

"Tricyclists will generally be of a better class than bicyclists, seldom consisting of 'mere beardless youths', but rather of men of position and experience. Mechanics, day-labourers, chimney sweeps, costers etc. who are now hailed as 'men and brothers' in bicycle contests, shall never find a place in the National Tricycle Association."

(from a letter in 'Bicycling News' 1878)

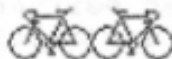
1 "The bicycle is the machine for long speedy journeys, the tricycle for lounging on; you may go as slowly as you please, or as fast as need be on the tricycle. If tired of looking around you, you may pull out a book and read, and you can rest when you like without coming off, or stop and sketch or write."

2 "Tricycle-riding, if not carried to excess and weariness, relieves brain fatigue and incipient congestion of the liver; it causes the kidneys to act more freely and lightens the whole system; it banishes ennui and lowness of spirit, strengthens the whole muscular system, induces a free action of the skin, braces the nerves, and insures a healthful sleep. More I surely need not say."

(both from 'The Tricycle: a means of obtaining Health and Enjoyment', by a Family Doctor, 1882)

"In some favoured towns the sergeants of police noiselessly perambulate the beats under their supervision on the three-wheeled steed, and occasionally pounce down on the wrong-doers in a particularly unexpected manner."

(from 'The Tricyclist', 1882)



A RIDE FOR TWO INTO THE SUNSHINE

by Ken Stevens

The ride was planned, if that's what you'd call it, early in the year when the weather was far from good; Geoff invited myself to join him on the annual bash to Montargis, 65 miles south of Paris, the aim being to meet the people of this busy French town or some of them and eventually accompany a number of them back, on bikes, to Crowborough as part of the twinning arrangements between the two towns, and which has been going on for quite a few years now.

I left home in a down pour and thought it must get better. We met on the boat at Newhaven on a wet Saturday morning, June 27th, left the port about 9.30 with the hope that by the time we reached Dieppe the rain would have stopped, but no if anything it was worse. We carefully left the boat, dodging cars, lorries and the railway lines which are to be found on Dieppe harbour side. I was ahead of Geoff and warned him about the rails, and since with a cape on it is difficult to see behind I made for the exit, only to find that Geoff had slipped off on the rails with minor cuts and grazes, but no damage to his cycle. We headed up the seafront into wind and rain, and after 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles are on the other side of the harbour to find the road that took us out to the valley road towards the Forêt d'Eawy, and a nice quiet road through the trees with a big hole in the middle. The road descends quite rapidly into this, zigzags and climbs out the other side, a left and right turn into a long straight at the end of which we decided to take the main road, the D915, to Forges-Les-Eaux for our first night stop. 43 miles done, feeling wet, tired and hungry we tried a hotel but with no luck, but were told that the Railway Hotel on the Amiens road would have chambres. Our luck was in, a double bed with shower and evening meal (with wine) which made us feel better; after the meal a gentle walk and so to bed.

Day 2 started much as Day 1 finished, with less rain, more like mist but very warm. It was decided to leave capes off and as the day progressed it became very humid and overcast, needing very little effort to work up a good sweat. The route followed was on 'D' roads passing through villages, with very little traffic to be worried about. Passing the Forêt De Lyon we headed for the Epte valley which would take us down towards the Seine and Mantes-la-Jolie. Before crossing the two bridges over the Seine we filled our water bottles with water at the point where the barges fill up, one of the rare outside drinking water taps. By now it is beginning to get very hot and humid, we headed for Montfort-l'Amaury hoping to find a hotel, no luck, they all seem to shut on Sundays, so we decided to push on towards Ramboillet trying the small villages on the way but without success. We found a small grocers shop and bought some peaches which quenched our thirst before moving on to spot a sign for a Hotel Ibis, but this was not for us - at 200 francs a night without food it was far too expensive. We had two addresses of hotels on the D906 towards Chartres, but we must have been getting a bit tired and headed out on the wrong road, long and straight but very quick. Several kilometres passed and I realised we had gone wrong, but ahead a sign to the right, a small village hotel has chambres, but not on Sundays, there appears to be no call for it as this is not a tourist area. The nice young lady, who spoke English, did make some phone calls on our behalf but it was no good we were doomed to sleep under the stars, as we had done the previous weekend at home on the night ride. The time is about 9.00 o'clock and we are feeling hungry and tired.

We turned onto a main road with our lights now on as the traffic is quite heavy. We are looking for a right turn into country lanes when across the dual carriageway I spotted a caravan with a Kronenburg

sign, I said it must be a mirage; we crossed the dual carriageway chancing life and limb for a drink and possible food. We had sausage and chips, coffee and for dessert, 1 cornetto each - the ice creams cost us £1 each, but it was worth it, we could now travel through the night with a full belly.

We dived into the lanes again, heading South (we hoped). It is now dark, map reading very difficult, especially without a torch, so we had to improvise with the dynamo, which proved to be hopeless - you try holding a bike up and turning the wheel to produce light consistently. At the crossroads chosen to fix our map position we had the stars above in a clear sky and villages in all four directions, but we did not know where we were or which way to go. A guy line taken from the bag was attached to Geoff's saddle to lift the wheel off the ground and looped over the signpost, the pedals turned and we had light. At last we had a fixing, we continued on to a main road, N20, turned right to Angerville and found the railway station in the hope that we could sleep in the waiting room, no such luck, but we did get a coffee from the booking clerk. We decided to sleep under the trees outside the station on the grass, which turned out to be tinder dry, this had not been the case with other places of rest we had looked at, the humid day had left the grass soaking wet. We turned in for the night curled up in our capes, luckily for us it was a very warm night, at last sleep overtakes us both, but nobody had told us that the trains ran all night - about every hour an express roared through on its way to Paris or away from it - we slept in between times until daylight.

We moved on our way to find a village shop for bread, our breakfast was bread and cheese and water, it tasted very good, a chocolate drink was picked up en route to Montargis. We arrived about midday and the temperature must have been 80° plus. We found the digs where we were to have stayed, but unfortunately a death in Mariannes family left her no alternative but to find us a bed elsewhere. We were to go to André's for the afternoon, a meal was found for us with a beer and coffee, during the afternoon we went out by car, a visit to the chateau at Sully-sur-Loire plus the abbey at Saint Benoit sur Loire, we would have preferred to have slept in the shade somewhere but the hospitality was overwhelming, so we just followed. The car drive was more like a grand prix motor race, at times the on the car clock was 150 to 200 kms. What with the heat and hardly any sleep it was as much as we could do to stay awake.

About 6.00 o'clock we were then taken by cycle through streets busy with traffic to the outskirts of the town and what turned out to be an army camp, to end up outside the mess. A lot of talking of which we understood very little, proceed to bar, another beer, very refreshing and needed to quench our thirst. All types in the bar but none in uniform, it's more like a hotel than an army camp. The next move was to the eating department, and food was served by a batman of which there were several, after the meal we realised that we still had not got a bed to sleep in yet, but we were not worried as it was still very hot - I would have slept out on the grass. We waited a little while before Geoff asked the batman if he knew where we were to sleep, he spoke English better than we spoke French so it made things a lot easier, a word with his boss produced a key and a soldier escort to one of the blocks. I bet Geoff it would be on the top floor and it was, but who cares we had a bed, two in fact, a single and a double, we plumped for the double in a very nice big room complete with 2 wash basins plus there were 2 showers across the hall. The name on the door was a Colonel Haidan, we had come up a bit, eating in the officers mess and sleeping in their beds, the food could have been better but it was adequate, we cleared all that was put in front of

us. A good nights sleep and breakfast, bikes stowed away in the cellar safely, it was shanks' pony to the town for Geoff to visit friends and to do a bit of sight seeing. Montargis has rivers and a canal running through it, you criss cross rivers quite a lot wandering around the town, food was picked up for a midday picnic which was taken in the park in the shade as it was far too hot to sit in the sun.

A visit to Bernadette was a must for Geoff, his memory was good and we found the flat in the blocks without too much wandering about. Handshakes all round, another beer or two, lots of chat about all sorts, an album of photo's and press cuttings of the Montargis trip 2 years ago was got out, but sadly Bernadette was not coming back with us. The offer of an evening meal the following day was accepted, plus she would like to ride with us the next day as she was now on holiday, she is a teacher and had finished school until September on the day we got there. Next day's ride took in the local lanes and ended coming through the forest, at least it was shady, as was the spot we chose for our picnic beside the river. A very pleasant evening was spent with Bernadette, although most of the time it was an English-French lesson, but good fun.

Thursday has arrived, bags packed we say our farewells to the batman who looked after the food side and leave the camp to be at the town hall by 8.00 o'clock for the official send off, after cups of coffee and croissants. We shake hands with the Mayor, Mayoress, a General and various other people, a gift of a little front bar bag to everyone, a group photo and we are ready to travel. The luggage van has taken our bags, we travel back light, we start with 4 back up vehicles and police patrol to the edge of town, plus a few cyclists as escort, some stayed until we had done 50 miles. This was where Mon General turned around and returned to Montargis, we don't see many generals in this country riding a stripped down racing machine plus all the fancy vests and shorts.

The day's ride of approx. 170 km. to Mantes-la-Jolie was a fairly rapid affair, with different riders hitting the front to keep the pace up, with stops now and again to allow the ladies and older ones to keep up - no this was not Geoff or me, we kept the flag flying high for England. Bottled water was supplied en route, plus food, and the odd French cake shop was sought out by ourselves to keep up our strength. The midday stops on the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ day ride were to be seen to be believed, the scene is this:- a small village, obviously selected by the organisers, the village bar, a few words to the owner and in we all go, a complete take-over of the bar, drinks supplied by the bar owner, all food supplied by the organisers - chicken legs, French bread, rice puddings, yoghurts, eggs, hams, sliced pork roll, all washed down with wine - after the meal was taken everybody departs leaving all the debris to be cleared by the bar owner, it must have been worth the trouble!

The pace after lunch always appeared to be more gentle, but by mid-afternoon one or two would be stretching their legs a bit. All the route back you are marshalled over roads, through villages into narrow lanes, with the roads blocked by the back-up vehicles, rather like being in a road race. The night stops at the Hotels Ibis were quite luxurious, rooms with all mod. cons., tele/shower/toilet/single beds and telephone, plus superb food and plenty of it. A good breakfast must be had before a cycle ride, so everyone tucked into the self-service breakfast before the start. We follow the vehicles out of the town and into the open country en route to Rouen, 80 km. and another good nights rest - I always sleep well after a dinner with French wine. The 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ day ride to Dieppe for the midday boat was again quite quick and we had to wait quite a while, sitting in the hot sun, on

Dieppe seafront. The next bit by boat to Newhaven, to me is just one big bore, 4½ hours wasted.

Back in Angleterre, the weather still good, Geoff and I take over the front of the group as we now have to ride as in England, in an orderly group. But by now a few of our French friends are feeling the effects of the mileages done, and some know that it's a fair climb to Crowborough; cross country to Isfield, Ringles Cross and on up to the Crow & Gate on the Ashdown Forest, where a stop was made to enable the slower ones to catch up, by now we were a little late but nobody cared. Just a few miles to go and we arrive at the Crowborough Sports Centre. Handshakes and kisses are the order of the day and friends meet once again, and this part of the twinning of Montargis and Crowborough has again taken place. I enjoyed the weeks cycling and meeting new friends, I hope to be able to take part in this happy event again some time, if I'm asked that is.



ROY JAMES tells - A SORT OF GHOST STORY.

With only about 10 days to go before Christmas, a brief spell of fine weather persuaded me to cycle to Ypres in Belgium in order to witness the Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate. Under its impressive arches the Last Post is played every evening at eight o'clock by members of the town fire brigade. In this way the citizens of Ypres remember the tens of thousands of British soldiers killed in World War I. Such a trip had been in my mind for some time and now after a pleasant ride from Calais in unseasonable sunshine, late afternoon found me entering that city.

The Grotte Markt (Market Square) was bustling with late shoppers, buses were crowded and every parking space was occupied with expensive looking cars. In fact every indication here of a prosperous community. A far cry from the years of the first world war when Ypres was known as 'the most dangerous spot in Europe'.

I had been told of a pension in the Elverdingstraat that was owned by an English ex-patriot. His father had married a Belgian girl in 1946 and had settled in Ypres. They had run this little hotel for many years, doing a steady trade, catering in particular to British people who came over to visit the war graves. In the course of time his son had taken over the running of the business and after his father's death had continued alone except for his mother. It was to this address that I made my way and was quickly settled in a room on the first floor.

"Are you going to the Last Post Ceremony this evening?", asked my host as I signed my name in the school exercise book that he used as a register.

"Certainly", I replied, "It is my main reason for taking the trip."

"Then I should wrap up well before you go out. There is quite a fog settling down."

By the time I had changed and eaten it was nearly eight o'clock and calling out that I would not be late I opened the front door and stepped out into the night.

The square that had been so animated just a few hours before was now almost deserted. The sound of what little traffic that remained on the street was muffled in the damp air as I hurried across the

square toward the Menin Gate. On arrival I found a few people waiting in the gloom for the short ceremony to begin and reading meanwhile some of the thousands of names carved upon the stone of the archway. As the clock on the Lakenhalle (Cloth Hall) struck eight, two men stepped into the road either side of the gate and with swinging red lamps brought what little traffic there was to a halt. Three uniformed buglers took up their positions in the middle of the road and through the clinging night the poignant notes of the Last Post carried across the town. The simple ceremony was quickly over. Traffic started to flow again. The buglers got on their mopeds and rode away, while the little gathering of silent watchers dissolved into the night. I turned to go back to the pension feeling in a somewhat sombre mood, when I saw him.

An old man standing in the shadow of the gate. Upright and alone, he stood erect despite his obvious age and I would have taken little notice of him had it not been for the clothes he was wearing. A khaki uniform, mud spattered and torn in places, bandage like puttees, and a much creased peak cap, identified for me the uniform of an officer on active duty on the western front in World War I. Hiding my curiosity I nodded a greeting as I made to pass on, but he looked so pale that I had to stop and ask if he was alright. He didn't reply to my query directly. Instead, I heard him say as if to himself, "It's so good to be back with my boys at last. They are the best you know". A shiver ran through me and not wanting to get involved I hurried back to my hotel and a warm bed.

The next morning over breakfast, I was telling my host of my strange encounter and went on to describe the old man as best I could.

"Why, that sounds like the Colonel", he replied.

Briefly he told me how during the second world war his father had been batman to the Colonel. By the end of that conflict the Colonel had been at the height of a military conflict that had commenced in the trenches of the Ypres salient thirty years before. when he was posted to Brussels with NATO and discovered that his old batman ran an hotel in the town where he had first learned of the reality of war, he started to visit every year around christmas time. As a boy, my host used to listen to tales from the Colonel, of life in the trenches in 1914-1918. Stories of 'going over the top' in hundreds and returning in tens. Of gas attacks and constant shelling in dug outs. How life for him had never been the same since coming out of that first conflict unharmed while so many of his comrades were killed.

"After he left the army he still came to see us about the same time every year. Even after my father died and he was frail himself, he continued to come over with his grand-daughter in a big old fashioned Rover car."

"That must have been the Colonel I saw then", I said, "After what you have told me it must be him. Is he staying here this year?"

"As a matter of fact he isn't", said my host quietly. Reaching under the reception desk he pulled out an envelope and handed it to me. "You may like to read this letter I had two days ago".

I pulled out the single sheet of notepaper and read the hand-written note.

L.... House,
Staffordshire.
Dec. 1st 1986

Dear C

I am writing this letter to inform you that my grandfather Colonel M. passed away ten days ago and his funeral was last friday.

I wanted you to know how much he looked forward to his short stays at your hotel. He told me once that it was only when he was back at Ypres that he felt in the real world and that all his life since 1918 had passed more like a dream than reality.

Although much weaker this year than previously, he was once again looking forward to coming with me on what had become for him an annual pilgrimage, when he died in his sleep.

I regret I shall no longer be able to make the journey alone as after his death I feel it is the end of an era.

Yours sincerely
Cynthia M.

P.S. I wanted to donate his old uniform that he wore in the trenches as a young man (He was so proud of the fact that he never grew out of it) to the Ypres War Museum. You probably remember how he always insisted upon wearing it when he paid homage at the Menin Gate to his fallen comrades. But for some reason or other I cannot find it anywhere.

C.M.



TAKING A WHEEL

by Jeff Cloves

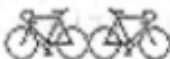
Beyond my wheel another rider dances
On the pedals sways and turns in time
Wind and moon at his shoulders too.
The pale road marks the shape of the fields
Beneath broken hedges
Dips to dried-up streams rears to
Gusty ridges where crying lapwings graze
In the bright night.

His breathing a private matter,
Unheard above my freezing gasps.

At certain corners I gain ground
Wheel to wheel we race ahead - but never equal
Soundlessly he pulls away forever changing shape
Now short he storms the hills with seeming ease,
Then tall he sprints away to mythic glory

I watch him go
Still visible in the battery glow
Listening to the whir of my chain
Tyres spitting grit
We converge again

My moonlight shadow racing by my side
Attached forever,
A part of me going for a ride.





see last article

Everyday Sussex No. 4



A Welsh Ride



Aberglaslyn Pass



The Glaslyn
BEDDGELEERT.



The road from
BUILT to RHAYADER



The
Old coach bridge
DINAS MAWDDWY.

A WELSH RIDE.

by David Kiernan

6.00 am. 20/6/87, 75 riders prepare to leave St. Arvans village hall near Chepstow, in front 623 km. of Wales and all the majesty of the principality's hills, valleys and mountains.

We are off on the road to Usk and a long graded climb to the top of Shirenewton Hill, some 5 miles of up gradient and then the swoop down to Usk and on to Abergavenny on a picturesque road, then through the Black Mountains on a well graded road, Crickhowell, Talgarth and Bronllys and the first check. A disaster, the small cafe was overrun with cyclists, the family who ran it with the help of arithmetically retarded teenagers could cope with neither the orders nor the costs of the meals - modern education seems to stop short of mental arithmetic. I left and purchased my food in the local shop and with 75 km. under my belt I headed off to skirt the Cambrian Mountains through Builth Wells, Rhayader, Llanidloes and Llandinam and the next control - a pub with even slower service than the previous control and much more expensive. Fortunately the small village shop was open and copious amounts of rice pudding were eaten. Although I had travelled another 75 km. since the last control everything was going well, the road was good, the scenery marvellous and the weather perfect, but the real hard stuff was about to begin.

The next control, 60 km. further on, was at Dolgellau. I started off on the road to Talerddig summit and then the fast descent to Dinas Mawddwy and the awful climb to the Cross Foxes Hotel above Dolgellau; the road because of the height of the surrounding countryside appears to be going downhill whilst in reality it is climbing, this is very disconcerting and morale sapping, however I arrive at last at the Cross Foxes for the first time and then almost freefall down the 1½ mile hill to Dolgellau and the next control at the National Milk Bar. Proper food lots of it and cheap. I took a ½ hour break here as I had a good time bank and 210 km. behind me whilst ahead is the ride through the Snowdonia National Park and the miles of climbing through Beddgelert and the Pass of Aberglaslyn to the lakes of Llyn Cwellyn where the road levels out before starting to gently descend towards Caernarfon. With my ½ hour break over I set forth on the route and by taking it steadily and not letting the constant climbing wear me down I finally arrived at Caernarfon and hit the worst road I have ever ridden on. They were resurfacing and rebuilding the A487 to Menai and it was like riding on a World War I battlefield for about 3 miles, all this as the light failed - protruding man holes, pot holes, gravel, you name it and it was there. Then at last the Menai Bridge, over it and the control was reached - 296 km. The local D.A. were officiating and very well indeed, once again plenty of anti-bonk food and drink and really cheap prices. I had a good feed and as darkness fell I left to push on to the next control where I was going to sleep for 2 hours, this being a further 72 km on near Harlech. I retraced the dreadful A487 to Caernarfon and then started the long climb over the shoulder of the mountains jutting down the Lleyen peninsula, quite a slog. It is now pitch dark and the climb continues until suddenly I reach the crest and can see Cardigan Bay and the lights of the seaside towns of Criccieth and Harlech like twinkling diamonds in the blackness. Immediately the road descended to sea level and through sleeping Porthmadog, over the Cob seawall and on across the coastal plain until Harlech Castle slips by in the night and shortly after the control is reached. This was at the house of Pat and Keith Durrant, who catered excellently turning their house over completely to the needs of the cyclists for sleeping and eating. After two hours I was woken and set off for the next control, just short of Aberystwyth, but

I knew I had got some real problems with the mountains in this region. After following the coast and estuary for 15 miles I arrived at Dolgellau and the severe climb to the Cross Foxes. I wind my way up to the hotel and then turn right for Machynlleth and the climb goes on until I emerge high above the junction of the Talyllyn valley and the Dovey headwaters. I turn left here and start to descend through the Forest of Dovey, down, down, down to Machynlleth then on along the flat country of the Dovey estuary until some 5 miles from Aberystwyth and a cafe control.

The weather remains good but I am beginning to feel a little tired - still, 430 km behind me only 190 left to go. More food and drink and without having a long break I pushed on to the next control in the Elan Valley. For me the worst section was starting; just outside Aberystwyth the road to Devil's Bridge was joined and I started on what was to be a 6 mile climb pushing gradually up the valley to the very head, then over the top and down losing all the height in only two miles to Devil's Bridge to join a mountain road and start the 8 miles of climbing through the valleys to the high ground above the Elan Valley right in the heart of the Cambrian Mountains. The ride was sheer mental and physical agony, I was sure I was never going to make it and I was now going so slowly that I was losing precious time. Eventually I emerged on the high plateau and made my way to the head of the Elan Valley and descended to the middle reservoir to the control, only to find a note saying it had had to be moved 4 miles down the road. I reached the control at last but had lost too much time only having 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours in hand.

The control dished up a good meal, surprising as it was only a caravan by the last reservoir, and I was told that the first part of the next section was all downhill and he was right. On to Rhayader, Builth Wells and then to Upper Chapel; I stopped and asked for the B road to Upper Chapel and Brecon and was told by an inhabitant of Builth that I would never cycle that way, it's very pretty but no road for a bike because of the hills, and he was right, immediately the road was found savage climbs started interspersed with very long drags. I climbed to 1370 feet to the secret control at the top, then it was all downhill for miles to Aberbran near Brecon to the home of Alec and Lil Tomkins and once again lashings of food and drinks were laid on. After refreshing myself I found I had 45 miles to go and some 5 hours to do it in, with only one severe climb at the end. I felt confident but still thought I had better set a reasonable pace just in case to get a bit of time in hand, so with these thoughts to the fore I set off to Abergavenny on beautiful evening sun lit roads parallel to the Brecon/Abergavenny canal then on to Usk. As I started to climb Shirenewton Hill my chain broke. I had 10 miles to go and 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours in hand so I slowly fixed the chain, not rushing anything, had a bit of a breather and then pushed on. At the top of the hill it was 5 miles downhill to Chepstow racecourse and $\frac{1}{4}$ mile climb to St. Arvans the finish, and I arrive with 40 minutes in hand to a warm meal and a nights sleep at the village hall. I felt very good to finish, it was definitely the hardest ride I have ever attempted by a long way, but it is so scenically beautiful and varied that I would recommend it to any long distance cyclist.



A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO BIG DAME HUNTING.

by Fred Fisher.

It has for a long time been a bit of a mystery to me that Big Dame Hunting should seem to be such a little known sport or pastime - or should I say pursuit? From my own personal experiences I am sure it deserves a much wider following, and if you will give me a few minutes of your time I will venture to elaborate on my reasons for saying this by recounting some of these experiences, and in this way perhaps I may encourage you to take it up on your own account.

You should realize right from the start that whatever the title I have given my discourse may make you think, Big Dame Hunting is by no means going to be all duck soup for you. There will be some sacrifices to be made, but they will really all be minor ones to an enthusiast. You will for instance have to be ready when it is necessary to get up at crack of dawn, or even before it begins to crumble at the edges, to go off in all sorts of weather and to travel over long distances to head off your quarry, for these are birds of passage that you will be hunting and they roam far and wide to reach the spots where they disport themselves, and even when you do reach these spots and set up your operations you must understand that what you are there to do is to watch and wait for your chance to make yourself useful, and it is only if you are very lucky indeed that you will ever be able to bag one of these birds to take home with you for keeps, and even then the limit is strictly one bird per person, and to tell you the truth I have never been able to pull this off myself for reasons that may become clearer to you as I go on, and in fact I have to tell you that I have so far not even managed to get any near misses.

The only time you are ever allowed to shoot them is when you have brought a camera along with you and if you do that then it is your duty to let them have a specimen of anything you get, because they are entitled to this and that is what they are knocking for when they start singing that song you may have heard them at, the one that begins 'Some day my prints will come'.

Now I am sure it will have become plain to you from what I have already said that mobility is something you simply cannot do without in Big Dame Hunting, and in fact something you cannot have too much of, so you will readily see that some form of transport ranks as basic equipment. But transport alone is not enough, you have to have the gear, the trappings, the wherewithal to minister to these birds when you finally run them to earth and if necessary to give them prompt succour, because what with the way they dash around and about before they finally alight they will quite likely have become parched, perhaps peckish, and maybe a little travel weary, and I can tell you that they really do appreciate such succour, although one of the nicest things about them is that they do not take it all for granted, which I must say is something I did not myself realise until the time I overheard one of them say, "Would you believe it, here comes that succour again".

As a minimum outfit to get you started you can do quite a lot with a few vacuum flasks of tea and coffee, some cold drinks, some biscuits (my tests show that Garibaldi are the currant favourites) and some washing tackle spread out in the tail end of a car, and in fact this is how I got going myself, and indeed it is all you may need for your small-scale sorties; but Big Dame Hunting soon gets hold of you and if you really want to go places you ought soon to begin thinking along more ambitious lines, and what I suggest is that you think of something along the lines of a motor caravan, which can carry so much more clobber, has gas and water laid on, and can even be rigged up

with curtains if the situation should call for it, because there may be occasions when it is possible that your birds might like a nest of their own to themselves for a time. There is just this one snag then, that you have to lay off other activities meanwhile, and so if you become really dedicated you may find like I did that a small tent can come in very handy and then the main show can still go on.

Now to get on to the personal side, it is obviously an important thing to be able to make an immediately favourable impression on your quarry, and so it will be a big help to you if you are fortunate enough to have the sort of appearance that inspires confidence and trust, for what you must remember is that the birds you will be encountering are thoroughbreds and as such will naturally tend to be wary and suspicious of careless moves from strange quarters, and I can only hope for your sake that you will not have to face any initial disadvantage such as my own of being a bachelor of some considerable years and - as my best friends are among the first to admit - of a not particularly engaging appearance, and although I hasten to assure you that my real nature is completely the opposite of my appearance, yet judging from the jumpy way people seem to behave when they first meet me I have to concede that an initial disadvantage of this sort is a very formidable one to have to overcome, and it is one that could easily have turned out to be an insurmountable handicap to me as a Big Dame Hunter if it had not been for my sister Dulcie.

My sister Dulcie has had as many years in this game of ours as I have had myself and, very luckily for me, has the same interest as I have in Big Dame Hunting and the same ideas as well, or at any rate very nearly. So when my sister Dulcie is at hand to take care of the brewing up, the washing up, the chatting up, and the softening up, the proper conditions are readily established and when this is done I can manifest myself without making too much of a stir, from when on it is up to me to make the most of things, and I will go so far as to say that it gives me something like a fifty percent chance, give or take a percent or two either way, and it just goes to show that a 'trained sister' is a much better proposition to have around than one of those things that may sound the same but all they do is give out pop music and suchlike and have to have new batteries every so often.

There is only one Dulcie however and I have the option on her services, and so if you are in my position you will just have to do the best you can for a substitute with a sister of your own if you have one, or with a girl friend if you can get one, or even with a wife if you are all that stuck, for if there is no other course open to you then getting married is surely not too much to expect of a really determined Big Dame Hunter, and it may actually turn out to have other benefits besides, because after all you are not going to be out Big Dame Hunting all the time and for all I know you may not be the sort of person who has an alternative hobby that he can resort to between hunting seasons, and especially one that can darn his socks as well.

This I think is about as far as I can go to prepare you for your adventures, so get your outfit together, put up the bans if you have to, and the best of Big Dame Hunting to you.

But before I finish off this little chat I ought to warn you that you must not make the mistake of taking me too literally when I am sounding off about Big Dame Hunting and go out thinking that these Big Dames you are chasing after are a crowd of giant birds, because of course this is not the case at all and the truth of the matter is that these dames come in all the sizes there are in the catalogue, and if you really want to know why I keep on calling them Big Dames, then I will tell you that it is because to my way of thinking they are big in heart and mind and spirit and in the way they are devoted to their

sport and in the friendship that binds them together, and I know that you will all agree with me when I say that they are a thumping great credit to this game of ours and deserve the very best we can do for them, and so let us go and do exactly that, wherever and whenever and however we can; and I will end by telling you this, that if your experiences turn out to be anything like my own you will know that your efforts are appreciated to a degree not easily put into words, and you will not be likely to forget the abiding feeling of pleasure that comes back to you from it all.

And as for this little thing of mine that you have just read, it may inspire you or on the other hand it may nauseate you, but either way I can't possibly lose because either way you may say it is strictly for the birds.



GUIDING LIGHT

(As a service to our readers, we thought they might like to read this report from Classic Car Mechanics about an innovation in the motoring field that could pose a new danger for cyclists.)

You've probably seen BMW's before, sleek German machines with tinted windows that usually have no difficulty whatsoever in overtaking your 50's side-valve classic. What makes this all the more extraordinary is that many of these cars are being driven by animals. These are specially trained 'guide dogs', German alsatians mostly, because the chap in the passenger seat is often unable to see a thing. These canines have been trained since they were puppies in Munich to understand the Highway Code, the layout of BMW controls and to read the various gauges and dials, and at the BMW Car Club Open Day earlier this summer the chairman, Roland Andrew, announced the club's intention to raise money to buy eight more guide dogs for the blind. Furthermore, if they reach their target BMW GB will provide funds for a ninth.

Doggy drivers are often extremely proficient and, according to the AA, not one has yet been responsible for a collision whilst behind the wheel. The problem, according to Ivor Pooch, a near-sighted owner of a BMW 750i, is that loose bitches, seeing a handsome alsation at the wheel of a £30,000 car, often lose all control and run out in the road, with disastrous results.

"He gets a bit fidgety then," said Ivor, "and once bit my hand when I said 'stupid mutt' after he'd jammed the anchors on, but the can of Chum welded to the bonnet seems to keep him going.

If you'd like to find out more, or know someone you think drives worse than an alsation, contact the BMW Car Club at 588 London Road, Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 4EP, or call 01-568 0131.



Odd cuts.

An uncrowded road always makes me nervous, I'm afraid everybody else may know something that I don't.

THE PARIS-BREST-PARIS

by Alec Dewhirst

Bonjour everybody. This is the story about the ride, that I did not finish but I did try very hard to, but for all my trouble I ended up in a French hospital.

It seems like a long time ago when I set off on my journey. It was on Friday afternoon, 21st August when I set off on the train to Lydd in Kent where I was to meet my friend Alan who was doing the ride with me. He was supposed to meet me at Ham Street, Railway Station, but just like me I missed the train. So when I did arrive he was nowhere to be seen, so I hopped on my bike and started to ride to Lydd, after about five minutes who should I see coming down the road to meet me but Alan. "Where have you been", he asked. I told him what had happened, he said he had come to meet me an hour earlier and found I had not got there, so he had waited for a while and then went back home. By then I had phoned his wife to say I had just missed the train, so when she told him the good news he turned round and came back to meet me, he is one of the best chaps I have met. We put the bike on the roof rack and off we set for his house. We arrived at about 6.00 o'clock in the evening, and it was then that I met Steve from Loughborough and his girlfriend Karen, and also Eddie from Southampton - Steve and Eddie were also riding in the Paris-Brest-Paris. Alan's wife had laid out a lovely tea for us and afterwards I laid out on the settee to have a rest before our departure to Dover to catch the ferry. I dropped off to sleep, next thing Alan was waking me up at 12.30 am. and we started to load the bikes on to his car and put all the gear in the back. After all the work, a cup of tea, and then we set off for Dover to catch the 3.30 am. boat to Calais.

We arrived at Dover Docks in plenty of time to catch the boat, so Alan parked the car up ready to board. I said I was going to get a cup of tea and something to eat, and they said we all will so Alan locked the car. I bought the teas and had a hamburger and then went to change my money into francs. On the way over we had breakfast on the ship, and we arrived in Calais just as it was getting light and headed on down to Paris. The region is very flat on the North coast, and on the way down to Paris it looked very bleak, just a few towns and slag-heaps, factory chimneys and blast furnaces. Then I remembered my history, this was Flanders. This is very poignant now as I am writing my story at the beginning of November. We had just passed a place called Arras when Alan said there was a War Memorial on the left through the trees, it had flags flying on the top. This was the huge and imposing memorial on Vimy Ridge, a moving tribute to the 75,000 Canadians who died there in 1917. Suddenly on a sign post you see the names of battles. We were going through the Somme, the place was called Albert, the memorial at Thiepval for the British was 6 km. N.E. Just down the road on right, across the fields you could see rows and rows of white crosses, and then we crossed the Somme. 3 km south of Corbie, outside the village of Villers-Bretonneux, is the Australian War Memorial and Cemetery on the site where 10,000 Australian soldiers were killed halting the German spring offensive in 1918. It was all very moving and I intend to go back to visit it some time in the future.

We travelled on and we were soon on the outskirts of Paris. Now the fun would start, we had to find Rueil-Malmaison, the start of the Paris-Brest-Paris, so we got on the Paris ring road and round we went. I was reading the map - well I can read one if it is up the right way. Well we took the right turning of the ring road and were heading for Rueil-Malmaison, but we got lost. Someone said, "look, there are two French cyclists, stop and ask them the way", so we did. Alan showed

them the map, then started using his fluent French (you must be joking). They showed us where to go, and we did, and we were still lost. Then Eddie said he would have a go, he can speak good French. He got out to speak to a man outside his house, then another Frenchman got in on the act, eventually Eddie came back to the car and gave us the story; he said the man had wanted to get in his car and we would follow him, but Eddie had said no, just show us the route on the map. So that is how we finally got to Rueil-Malmaison and Alain Mimoun Stadium where the start was.

There were hundreds of cyclists there already, Alan and I went to the shops to buy some food for our journey ahead and then we went to have our bicycles checked at the controls. By now it was evening and we had had our dinner in the main hall early. Steve was staying with Karen at a campsite that night, and Alan, Eddie and I had to find the hall where we were going to sleep, so we drove around trying to find it and eventually did, and then we had to take the car to a car park and ride back to the hall. It was unbelievable how many cyclists there were, hundreds and hundreds, and we were split into three groups for the sleeping arrangements, one group for each of the starting times. Alan and I were starting at 4.00am the next morning, then Eddie was starting at 10.00am and Steve at 4.00pm. Well we handed our tickets in for our bedsheets and went to bed on the top floor. We were only going to get a few hours sleep because we were getting a call at 12.30, so I shut my eyes and then opened them as we were being called. I felt quite good, ready to go.

As we stepped outside, yes you've guessed it, it was raining, we found our bikes and rode to the hall for breakfast. Afterwards Alan sat in a bus shelter while I had a walk around ready for the check in, and the rain was still pouring down. Just after 3.00am we were herded into a market with all the iron stalls, we had our Brevet cards stamped, and we wheeled our bikes into the stalls, I laid down on one of the stall tables for a last rest, but I was gee'd up to go. We had four French policemen on motor bikes who went all the way to Brest with us, as 4.00am approached they were the first off, then the time came, a horn sounded and the trikes were off, then another blast and the rest of us were off, a great feeling. The lights of the bikes could be seen for miles ahead, it was a great sight, hundreds and hundreds, I could just see Alan ahead so I rode up and stayed with him as best I could. You had to watch where you were going as the road was packed right across with bikes, but I was getting into a groove now and it was starting to get light.

It was Monday 24th and I had waited three years for this chance and I was going to do it. The rain was still pouring down as we travelled on, by now I had lost Alan, he was behind me somewhere. I had arrived at the first check point, 162 km. at Bellême, I did not stop to eat as there was a long queue but decided to push on to the next checkpoint. I met some British Audax riders, they were from Bristol, and I rode along with them, we arrived at the next checkpoint, Villaines-la-Juhel 235.5 km at 4.25pm. I didn't stop there but carried on, then cycling through a village I saw a cafe, so I stopped for coffee and a sandwich, which was hard with my French. Off again towards the next checkpoint, Fougères, arriving at 9.40pm. with 323 km done. I rode up a hill and round the corner and there was Fougères Castle, it looked great with the lights on it, quite a sight to see.

I arrived at the next checkpoint, Tinténiac at 2.35 am. I had covered 379 km. It was here that I stopped for a hot meal, but you had to queue so I joined the line, it was then that I felt sick so I had to rush to the toilet. I really felt ill, I just laid on the floor, I was hot and not too good, after a while I seemed to come round and I hadn't been sick, but someone in the next toilet was, it

sounded as if he was dying. So, feeling better, I joined the queue again, and after a meal I had a hot shower. I felt great again now, and I was off down the road. I was riding along when ahead I could see some lights, as I got nearer I could see it was a long line of candles across a driveway. I could not see anybody at first, then I saw a lamplight, it was a little girl, she must have been about seven or eight years old. She started to shout "Pa-pa, Pa-pa", and out of the darkness came a man carrying a tray with hot coffee and biscuits, so I had to stop, they were so kind and she was a lovely little girl. I thanked them and was off again.

I have now reached the point in my story where it all went wrong; I was riding along, and had just gone round a right-hand bend when I hit a low branch of a tree which was sticking out, and off I came. I felt a sharp pain in my right knee, I sat up, and then got up and then got up and went back for my bike. I had a look at what I had hit, and I broke the branch off to stop anyone else hitting it. My knee did not hurt so I checked the bike, and then I was off but just as I was arriving at the next checkpoint, Loudéac, my knee began to hurt. After having something to eat, I went to the Red Cross where they massaged it, so after a rest I moved on. Every town and village you went through the people cheered you on. By now my knee was getting quite bad, so I stopped at a chemist to get a bandage to strap my knee up, but then I could not bend my knee. But I carried on to the next checkpoint at Carhaix, where again I went to the Red Cross for a massage, I knew this was the last check before Brest so I would carry on.

This part of the route went through Huelgoat, with wild barren hills, and there is one hill which I won't forget, you turn a bend and see it in front of you miles up in the air, it makes you want to say a rude word. You see the cyclists in front of you, halfway up, and they look like ants. Up and up we go, stop for a rest and on we go, stop for another rest, we are at the top of the first hill, round a bend and still on upwards, now a long straight, still going up, a slight turn to the right and we are there, on the top. Then it's up and down hills all the way in to Brest, by now some of the cyclists are on their way back to Paris. I am on a long downhill and then there it is, Brest, I have made it! I follow the arrows marking the route to the check in at the Yacht Club. I had arrived in Brest at 8.20pm on Tuesday 25th. having covered 609 km. I handed my check in ticket in for a hot meal and then hobbled over to the Red Cross. My knee by now had swollen up quite a bit. A girl gave me a massage - on my knee, I don't want you to get the wrong idea. She said she didn't like the look of my knee, and I said it was my knee and I liked it, so there. She got the top man to have a look at it and he said that was it, I had to pack up. I felt terrible, I nearly cried, I said I wanted to carry on, so I went and got on my bike, but now my leg was stiff and the pain so bad I could only go a few yards. So that was it, the girl took me to the railway station to find out the time of the train back to Paris in the morning, 10.30, and then I went back to the Yacht Club and to bed, I had a real bed with sheets and I slept like a log.

I awoke at about 8.30, had a shower and left the Yacht Club to find a cafe for some breakfast. I couldn't ride my bike, so I had to push it around. After breakfast I went to the station to catch the train, I had to pay for my bike but it did come on the same train as me, the fare back to Paris was 60 francs, which was good value. The train was quite empty when we left Brest, just a few cyclists who had packed in. I had some food left, but I had to buy some drinks for the trip, the train takes 8 hours to get to Paris and by the time we get there the train is packed. We arrive at 6.30pm and I have to wait while my bike is unloaded. Now what to do, how to get back to the start? I wheel

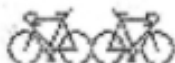
my bike to the left luggage at Montparnasse Railway Station and tell them I will collect it in the morning. I don't know if you have been alone in the middle of Paris on your own, it is quite a mind blowing experience. I tried to phone, but no luck. I went to the Police Station to see if any of them spoke English, but no one did. I showed a taxi driver the address, no luck. I was beginning to get worried, so I went back to the taxi rank again, and this time the boss was there who spoke English, he asked the driver to take me to Rueil-Malmaison, but she didn't know where to go and she had to look at her map and we passed all the sights - Champs-Élysées, Arc de Triomphe and the Eiffel Tower. We arrived at Rueil-Malmaison and I payed the fare, 86 francs.

I went again to the Red Cross, and they didn't like the look of my knee so I was taken to hospital in an ambulance. They x-rayed it, and then put it in plaster, and told me I must see a doctor in a hospital in England. So I was driven back to the stadium, where I had to wait for Alan and the others to finish. I laid down on a bench and fell asleep. After a while I was woken, it was Alan. He then told me his story; he was the first of us to pack up - at the first checkpoint - then Eddie had run out of time by the third checkpoint, he had had three punctures and couldn't make the time up. Finally, Steve had come off and cut his hand badly, and his leg, so had to give up. So none of us got to the end. But I will be back in 4 years time, and I will do it.

I would just like to thank Alan and Betty Burdis of Lydd, Kent, for all they have done for me, especially Alan for taking me to Audax Events, they are two nice people.

Happy Christmas to everybody.

PS I went to the hospital when I got back home and was off work for 7 weeks, but am back at work now. I have got to go back to the fracture clinic on 27th November, and I hope It will be alright this time. I have been out on my bike once since this happened, with Ann Rix and Susan Drader, we had a nice gentle ride. The knee is still not quite right, but I hope for the best in the future.



PRESS CUTTING

You Sirry Fool! - Mr. Fuh thinks yellow lines are bike lanes.

A Chinese cyclist took wun look at the double yellow lines on Britain's roads and decided they were...bike lanes. For weeks, he wobbled about in the 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ inch gap between the road markings. The odd oriental - known only as Mr. Fuh - got some wheely funny stares from fellow bikers in the cycle-crazy city of Oxford. But it took a near accident to put him right about our yellow peril. *Mr Fuh was almost knocked of his bike as he went the wrong way up a one-way street.* He made a frantic phone call to police. They couldn't make much sense of it, so inspector Gordon Rose sent two officers to investigate. They found that one-way streets were the least of his problems. "He was convinced that the gap in the yellow lines was a cycle lane," Inspector Rose said yesterday. Mr. Fuh, who is on holiday in Oxford, was told it might be safer to walk - on the pavement.

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East Sussex D.A. Tourist Award 1987

There was a good turnout, as usual, for the Freewheeling Contest, the last of this year's events to qualify for the Award. In fact events throughout the year have all been well supported, with 8 even turning out to ride the 100 mile in atrocious weather conditions.

The events that qualify for the award are:-

The D.A. 30 mile, 50 mile & 100 mile standard rides;
The 100 km or 200 km Randonnée rides;
Touring Competition;
Freewheeling Contest;
and the Hillclimb.

Ten points are awarded to each D.A. member for each of these events in which he or she competes.

The winner of the 1987 Award is Robert Wimble, who acquired the maximum of 70 points being the only person to complete all the events necessary.

The full placings are as follows:-

Robert Wimble	70	David Morgan	20
		Jon Parr	20
Bruce Allcorn	60	Allan Parry	20
David Rix	60	Stephen Phippen	20
Susan Rix	60	Les Springett	20
		Margaret Springett	20
Clifford Avery	50	Jenny Boxall	10
John Gallsworthy	50	Nicola Boxall	10
Ted Haynes	50	Cedric Clemerson	10
Gerald Pryce	50	Jon Cooper	10
Ann Rix	50	Paul Cornford	10
Debbie Springett	50	Jonathan Dalton	10
Iris Stevens	50	Jack Dunn	10
Tony Worcester	50	Marjorie Dunn	10
		Trevor Jones	10
John Bainbridge	40	Andreas Morant	10
Ken Stevens	40	Adam Pierce	10
		Michael Skues	10
Colin Axon	30	Tony Vaughan	10
Alec Dewhirst	30	Jeremy Verrall	10
David Kiernan	30	Stephen Whitehead	10
Fred Mehew	30	Joyce Wickens	10
Heather Stevens	30	Brian Wilkins	10
		Susan Wilkins	10
Geoff Boxall	20	Andrea Winchester	10
Fred Foulger	20		
Russell Kiernan	20		

David Rix, Award Co-ordinator.

COMPETITION CYCLESEARCH

by Colin Axon

All entries should be sent to Colin Axon, 18 Searle Ave., Peacehaven. Not to the Editor. Closing date is 24th January 1988.

There will be a *small* prize awarded for the first correct entry drawn after the closing date. The organizer's decision is final.

R	S	P	A	S	P	O	K	E	C	N	D	S	U	N	S	H	I	N	E
E	F	R	A	M	E	Z	C	E	A	H	C	A	E	M	B	S	C	T	L
V	O	A	B	Y	S	D	O	S	S	G	A	E	R	K	R	P	T	D	O
I	R	P	M	U	P	F	L	H	R	G	I	I	U	Z	A	P	E	E	H
R	K	M	S	D	C	R	D	O	I	A	P	G	N	M	I	R	K	A	T
D	S	D	S	W	A	E	A	R	E	C	B	O	M	R	A	C	B	I	O
W	B	N	T	C	F	E	P	T	L	F	G	E	H	I	L	A	D	E	P
E	F	I	O	E	E	W	B	S	E	S	J	K	L	O	R	Q	B	B	C
R	E	W	V	B	A	H	S	S	T	R	E	E	T	D	P	U	M	O	E
C	A	K	E	S	J	E	R	A	S	C	U	E	V	A	N	G	O	T	C
S	E	L	L	C	S	E	E	P	O	R	C	F	T	T	N	A	O	T	E
O	L	L	A	E	U	L	I	G	H	T	E	H	S	I	W	S	H	L	E
A	I	B	G	Q	C	O	N	X	D	L	E	V	P	M	R	I	U	E	F
H	L	L	A	Y	S	T	N	A	B	C	E	M	E	N	I	T	Z	A	F
E	P	A	C	D	H	O	A	B	H	J	A	S	W	L	M	O	A	N	O
R	E	I	A	P	Y	M	P	U	N	C	T	U	R	E	I	R	R	A	C
I	R	F	R	A	K	A	Y	H	A	R	E	E	A	Q	C	T	K	M	H
T	P	B	R	E	N	N	A	P	S	A	N	T	I	M	E	D	N	A	T
R	J	E	R	S	E	Y	E	S	T	M	A	Z	N	L	A	T	B	A	K
G	A	B	E	L	D	D	A	S	S	K	L	E	H	W	E	E	R	F	C

WORDS

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-------------|
| BELL | DYNAMO | PUMP |
| BOTTLE | FORKS | PUNCTURE |
| BRAKES | FRAME | RAIN |
| CABLE | FREEWHEEL | RIM |
| CAFE | HANDLEBARS | SADDLE |
| COFFEE | HILLS | SADDLEBAG |
| CAKES | HOSTEL | SCREWDRIVER |
| CAMPING | HUB | SHORTS |
| CANTILEVER | JERSEY | SPANNER |
| CAP | LANE | SPOKE |
| CAPE | LIGHT | STOVE |
| CAR | MAP | SUNSHINE |
| CARRIER | OIL | TANDEM |
| CHAIN | PADLOCK | TOURING |
| CLEATS | PANNIERS | TRICYCLE |
| CRANK | PEDAL | TYRE |
| DERAILEUR | POT HOLE | WIND |

Entrants Name Address