



BONK!



THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL

**EAST SUSSEX
CYCLING ASSOCIATION**

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EAST SUSSEX CYCLING ASSOCIATION

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A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS

MID-WEEK SECTION

Rumour has it that the Mid-Week Section - a maverick band of old age pensioners and beneficiaries of early retirement policies, is a hot bed of scandal and intrigue, especially the Heathfield cell! Fuel was added to the speculation when Grace Richardson accompanied Len Steel to the D.A. AGM at Hailsham, whilst Jean Steel was having tea with the vicar in Horam. Meanwhile, both Jean and Grace disappeared with Clem Armstrong after elevenses one Wednesday and in the pub at lunchtime on the same day, Jean pulled a couple of fellows even before she'd ordered the first pint of her favourite Old Speckled Hen. Peter Bratt, confined to the Dicker Ward in Eastbourne General for few weeks, had a constant stream of women (of all ages) beating a path to his bedside, and those who couldn't make it sent fond messages via their friends. B.T. must be making a fortune as all the ladies ring around for progress reports on their idol. Incidentally, we are often accompanied by a couple of qualified nurses on our rides these days, and a great deal of innocent interest has been shown in these young ladies.

The 'end of the month' joint Saturday ride in November was confused to say the least. After the peace talks between the MWS and the TS, it was agreed that if both sides submit venues to the DA runs list compiler, the TS selection should take precedence. On the day of Maurice Garrett's White Axle Ride one had a choice of elevenses at the Lagoon, Hailsham or the Home Maid, Horam then proceeding to lunch at either the Yew Tree, Arlington or the Yew Tree, Chalvington. Meanwhile Esther had told Maurice (Carpenter) that lunch was at the Brewers Arms, Vines Cross and sent him off without funds, promising to meet him there and buy him lunch. She made her way to the Lagoon where she was confronted by Maurice (of the White Hot Axle) and Dave Copping who turned her away from that building as, they said, the Cafeteria was closed. The trio made their way to the Old Loom on the Cuckoo Trail. Here they met Len Steel (alone!), and indulged in coffee, cakes and conversation, and Dave's mobile went two or three times. Then, suddenly, before anyone else had a chance to say "I'll go with you", Len Steel dashed off merely saying that he'd got things to do. I bet he had. Dave and Maurice G. proceeded in a leisurely manner to Arlington and Esther, as planned, made her way to Vines Cross where, you will be pleased to hear, she did buy Maurice C. his lunch out of the housekeeping. However, the saga is not over yet. Paul Davey was also lunching at Vines Cross and he had been to the Lagoon where he met up with John Bainbridge and they discovered that the cafeteria was not closed, merely being refurbished and the wherewithal had been moved to another part of the building. After enjoying a comfortable interlude together they split, with John B. dashing off down the Arlington Road. We can't wait to hear if he made contact with the Glowing Axles, or did he find another pub altogether? Were the nurses out that day? Read the next instalment!

Some weeks previously we held our AGM in the village hall at Arlington. The Hall was packed, with more than forty people in attendance, probably hoping for a repeat of last year's fireworks, when you may remember, the TS and the MWS Saturday rivalry came to a head, but as you will already have read the matter was resolved without a drop of blood being spilt. This tale is now a MWS legend and will probably be repeated for years to come. Those present at this year's meeting were very docile, the only contentious issue raised was the presence of peanuts in vegetarian meals. A suggestion to change the Section name was politely quashed and a move to form a hardriders sub-section was greeted with horrified silence as those who would be most affected struggled to find words to plead their case and to be allowed to stay with the main ride each Wednesday and join in the fun and laughter.

Our biggest disappointment is that Christmas Day falls on a Wednesday, thus depriving us of each others company for a fortnight. Fred Mehew though has come to the rescue on New Year's Day with a ride which, we hope, will usher in a happy and healthy 1997 for all cyclists.

On behalf of the trikies, bikies, folders, tandemists, etcetera of the Mid Week Section, I wish all Bonkers a very happy Christmas.

Baggy Shorts

SOCIAL CALENDAR 1997

Wednesday January 1st
Southborough Wheelers '10'

Sunday January 5th
E.S.C.A. ANNUAL LUNCH

Wednesday 8th January
Mid-Week Section Festive Lunch

Friday 17th January
Sussex Nomads Dinner

Saturday January 18th
Eastbourne Rovers Dinner

Saturday January 25th
Brighton Excelsior C.C. Dinner

Saturday January 25th
1066 Annual Dinner

Sunday February 2nd
Surrey/Sussex Lunch & Prize Presentation

SOUTHBOROUGH WHEELERS

After another long, dry summer the autumn has proved to be unkind to cyclists by choosing to rain almost every Sunday. Gale force wind and all day rain on 27th October caused a postponement to our club Tourist Competition but to little avail. The only free date - 17th November - proved to be almost as bad with early drizzle and later, heavy rain, persuading some to stay at home. Of the seven starters most completed the whole course and several backed out of the last, daunting, map-reading section. The event has been run by the club every year since the 1950s. It started one year after the CTC began the National one, and since they've now ceased to promote it's probably the longest running one in the country. Bill McNay proved a worthy winner though Martin Yardley won the speed judging section and Warwick Dunford collected most points in the nature questions.

Undoubtedly the finest performance at the end of the racing season was Ron Hayward's 39.31 ten in the Spearth Challenge event (open to real backmarkers). Ron, using sticks, can walk with much difficulty and only mount and dismount from his trike with assistance. Since contracting MS nearly twenty years ago he has dreamed of racing again on the Q10/19 - scene of many of his great performances in the past. This he did and his time sets an example to everyone on the value of determination in adversity.

This year's challenge match saw Graham Seath unseated by Doug Finch whose winning 28.33 was fastest of four 28s.

Malcolm Martin dominated the club hill climb events held over three hills. He also produced a late season 100 of 4.13.51 to give him a huge victory in the club B.A.R.

With several of our youngsters now getting real jobs they are frequently absent on club nights due to late working, career courses, etc. We were lucky therefore to 'commandeer' Jim Pursell and Andrew Harvey for the first roller racing event. Jim just visited the club to buy some club clothing and Andrew to join and pay his subscription. Both were press-ganged into service and both won as part of our 8-4 victory over Medway Velo.

The Social Season seems poorly named when it includes so called 'reliability' rides. A dozen members rode the recent KCA event where those of us starting and finishing near Horsmonden (a pub of course) overlap with some riders starting near Maidstone (part of the 310 total entrants). The result is often some undeclared road racing. In drizzle and strong winds this year most were shredded out of a screaming bunch led by Geoff Wiles though they did finish in their allotted times. Not so Doug Finch who, having seriously injured himself in a crash on River Hill earlier this year, blanched at the sight of the wet roads descending steeply at Sutton Valence and, later, Charing and called it a day. We await Charles' ESCA 50 mile event with interest.

The dinners have begun with a very lively KCA lunch at Aylesford. Southborough were in good voice. The Club President's Supper was well attended and we look forward to our club dinner shortly.

There's nothing like cycling and it's associated activities to make these dark November days fly by.

ROAMER

EAST SUSSEX CYCLING ASSOCIATION - 1996 RELIABILITY TRIAL

There were 151 entries for this year's Reliability Trial. Unfortunately I left Chris Wolfe of the Old Kent Road off the start sheet. A big entry of 36 riders from Lewes with 30 from Crawley and 29 from Eastbourne ensured some stiff competition for the Shield.

123 riders reported at the start and all were warned of the icy patches. However some of the riders were still caught out by the ice and either abandoned the Trial or went on feeling a bit bruised. I hope no one was badly hurt.

Lewes had 19 successful riders and are this year's winner of the Rally Shield. Last year's winner, Eastbourne, was second with 15 successful riders and could have challenged as they had 8 more riders only just outside their times. Third was Crawley with 13 successful riders. Worthing and East Grinstead had 5 and 4 successful riders respectively, making a total of 56 Certificate winners. 27 more riders recorded times that were either too fast or too slow.

The 56 successful qualifiers will each receive a Certificate, which will be presented at the E.S.C.A. Lunch & Prize Presentation at Framfield on Sunday 5th January 1997.

Organiser's Notes

I usually ride round the course the Sunday before the event, but this year I had the 24 Hour Fellowship AGM on Saturday evening, followed by the VTTA Surrey & Sussex Vets AGM on the Sunday, so this year I took Mike Hayler round in the van on Monday morning. Blue skies and sunshine, but cold. There were several similar days during the week including the Saturday. I left home just before 0700 on Sunday and the sun was just coming up. The hedges between Golden Cross and the garage before East hoathly were really red with berries, or are they haws?

The first rider in a car arrived at 0728 and I was off to check the Sports Pavilion loos and then to collect Timekeeper Roy Humphrey. We were back at the King's Head just before 0800 and Ken Griffiths was there resplendent in yellow jacket directing the traffic helped by Den Funnell. Mike Hayler soon arrived and then we were collecting purple cards, taking photos and warning riders of the icy patches before despatching the first group at 0830. One or two people decided not to risk the course and went off for a ride on safer roads. Others went off and then fell off. I changed the film in my camera with frozen fingers and evidently did not get the film engaged properly so I was not really winding on at all. I've probably got over 20 photos on one negative! In the end I realised something was wrong, rewound and put another film in, which worked OK. This accounts for the big gap in the photos, but I still took 40 successful photos.

Michael and Megan Rabbetts were at the first Checkpoint at Burnt Oak, where a chap on a tractor was hedge cutting and sprinkling thorns in the road. There was fun at the ford and some thoughtful riders had spread bracken over the road by the time we got there.

We drove on the Checkpoint 2 passing groups of riders and followed by Den and Ken in the Landrover. Mike Hayler was in charge at the Burgess Hill Checkpoint ably assisted by Sandra Weller and some of his excellent signs. Then there was the reunion between Ken Stevens and Den Funnell fortunately captured on film by yours truly. We were all waiting for the red vested and Sri Lankan knickered Geoff Boore to arrive not knowing they had succumbed to the icy patches. Still at least Sandra was spared the mouth-to-mouth resuscitation! Roy and I were going to have a cup of tea, but suddenly realised the time and pressed on round the course.

There were bikes outside the old railway station at Barcombe as we passed and we learnt later that some of the riders had second breakfasts. We got to Checkpoint 3 at Eason's Green where Deryk Greenway and Ernie Spray were in charge. Unfortunately we didn't have time to stop as we had to get back to East Hoathly ahead of the first riders. First man in was John Woodburn, one of the very few to finish (actually a few minutes too soon) from the ill-fated Group 4 (or should I say Group Boore?). The rain, which I had scheduled to arrive at 3pm, also got to us ahead of schedule and I was trying to write times on damp cards with my feet in a puddle.

Roy and I got into the pub eventually and the warmth of the stove in the hall was very welcome. Decorations were up thanks to our new landlord, Bob Wallace. Better support for the lunch this year meant that 38 of us sat down at 5 tables and had the most excellent lunch. The spotted dick went down particularly well! There were 11 entries for the Pub Quiz. The two nearest to the correct answer of 24 were Roy Humphrey and Stephen Dennis with 27. There were 5 that were 4 away and the lucky one picked by one of the waitresses was Esther Carpenter. The 3 winners each received a bottle of wine. A very good time was had by all and it was gone 3pm before the party broke up.

Finally my thanks to the team that make this event possible - Roy Humphrey, Ken Griffiths, Dennis Funnell, Deryk Greenway, Michael & Megan Rabbetts, Mike Hayler, Sandra Weller, Ernie Spray and last but not least my thanks to Esther Carpenter for producing the route details, check cards and certificates and loads of publicity in BONK.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and will now hand you over to our Special Correspondents :-

E.S.C.A. RELIABILITY TRIAL - THE BIG CHILL

The day didn't start well what with the freezing conditions as soon as I stuck my head out of the door, and a return home after five miles. I had swapped bikes at the last moment and forgot that Look pedals work better with Look plates rather than rubber soled touring shoes.

Arriving at the start at East Hoathly five minutes late I decided to join the Eastbourne Rovers group at 9.05 which included ex Southborough Wheeler Mark Brittle who rode on a mountain bike. This as circumstances transpired could have been a shrewd move although it didn't stop him falling off before the start.

So bidding farewell to Roy Humphrey and the professionally clad V.C. Bayeaux group who were to start ten minutes behind (and hoping to go round in 3.05) off we went.

Within a mile we could tell it was going to be a bad day. Dry but very cold and icy patches everywhere. Les Hayman came past returning to East Hoathly having, I subsequently discovered, crashed, breaking a pedal but not himself, although one side is badly bruised. A mile further on we were flagged down again because of another crash.

We waited for about five minutes at the first check at Burnt Oak for puncture victims and other problems. Getting cold I decided to forge on and try to make up time on my original group as I would not have expected the Eastbourne group to wait for me if I had punctured.

Things improved slightly with the descent of Oldlands Hill to the ford. Someone had just crashed and was walking gingerly around while his friends waved frantically to warn me. You could hardly stand on the road and I carried the bike along the footpath over the ford and fifty yards up the road before risking remounting.

As the course reached more major roads around the twenty mile mark it became easier. I got caught by Peter Price of the Lewes Wanderers at Burgess Hill and he lifted the pace above the 15mph average required. It also helped that he knew the course so I could put the route guide away instead of checking it at every junction.

The second check point was on the edge of a housing estate and involved retracing part of the course to get out. Thankfully the rest of the event proved fairly uneventful with the long drag up the Broyle being easier than normal with the lack of wind. You could see groups strung out all along this part of the course.

From the third check point at Easons Green to the finish is only a matter of two and a half miles with a long drag up ? Road as a final sting in the tail. I pushed on with Pete to finish at 12.28. Outside my original time but O.K. for my 9.05 start.

I didn't ride this event last year so I don't know if this is the first time on this course. I enjoyed it and at least it wasn't snowing. Well done to Lord Charles for organising and maybe next year he could fix it to be dry, warm and sunny.

Tim Chacksfield (Southborough Wheelers)

Weak but Willing

I am easily seduced, and sitting in the pub with my clubmates on an early autumn day, after a brisk morning's ride, persuading me to enter the ESCA Reliability Trial was a simple matter. Looking at the map when I returned home I realised that the organiser's claim that the 1996 course was the easiest yet could well be true and I had no doubts that I would be able to finish within my chosen time.

On the 24th November I arose from my bed and had a nourishing breakfast of yoghurt, bananas, toast, honey and about a pint of coffee - sweet and hot with plenty of milk. With that lot inside me and my finely honed body encased within thermal undies, hand knitted jumper, fleecy trousers, windproof jacket, overshoes, woolly hat and scarf and waterproof gloves, how could I fail?

I had loaded my bike into the car the previous evening together with my bag containing a change of clothes, towel, more bananas and a few Mars bars. Starting the car I drove out of the garage, the heater was soon blasting hot air all over me and energetic music was pulsating from the cassette player. East Hoathly, here I come!

What a pleasant drive and how encouraging to see my clubmates and friends congregating outside the 'Kings Head'. The village echoed to the sounds of merry laughter and droll quips. I climbed out of the car, eager to join in the fun. Pow! The cold hit my exposed face and gradually penetrated my many layers of clothing, I wondered whether to offer my services as a marshall but decided that standing around waiting for riders might possibly be more unpleasant than riding. I found my group and joined them for a spot of foot stamping before Roy dispatched us on our way saying "Go forth and multiply" or words to that effect.

I fought for a position at the back of our bunch - I'm not really keen on company riding, especially as I had a feeling that conditions might be treacherous once we got into the lanes and after a few miles was relieved to find myself alone. We had seen several casualties along the way and finding myself at the top of a heap of crumpled bicycles held little appeal. Approaching the ford near Fairwarp I took to the grass and later heard that there had been a multiple pile up there.

Another group absorbed me as we approached Burgess Hill and I found myself beside a fellow from the Tenterden CC. He was shy about identifying himself and told me that he was riding under an assumed name for reasons which escaped me but seemed to have something to do with the editor of this magazine trying to drive Sir Charles into having a nervous breakdown. Shame on you madam! Our beloved nobleman deserves better than underlings trying to sabotage the event.

At the Burgess Hill check Mike Hayler was busy taking cards assisted by one of the Lewes Wanderers' sex kittens. Through my rheumy eyes I was sure I recognised the glamorous Sandra Weller and handed her my cards hoping that her soft hand might make fleeting contact with mine. I obediently returned from whence I had come and rejoined the course. By now I was feeling warmer but shortly down the road a preliminary drizzle increased to heavy rain and the raw cold attacked my muscles and nerve ends. 'Should I', I asked myself, 'take the easy way home?' You will find the answer to my question if you can recognise me and find my name (or not) in the finishing list. Suffice to say that when I eventually arrived back at base camp I was soaking wet and bitterly cold. However, dry clothes from my bag and a pint or two at the bar soon restored my spirits and I began to look forward to the apres trial meal.

The pub is now in new hands and mine host had provided a benevolent welcome. The pot bellied stove (No, not the editor you idiot! I'm talking about the fire) glowed, giving out a friendly warmth, and Christmas decorations hung from the walls. Soon the diners were assembled and the young waitresses served the food. Piping hot soup and a large plate of meat and vegetables filled my stomach, the spotted dick I had ordered was almost too much but I told myself that I deserved it and it disappeared without too much trouble.

Thank you Charles for another well organised event and cheerful company at lunchtime. I'm not sure if I will be around to celebrate the next big ESCA anniversary but I shall certainly remember the 1996 reliability trial with pleasure and, who knows, I might just consider having another go next year!

Weak Willy

How I Survived The Esca Reliability Trial (Short Cut Version)

As an 'ex-racer', I normally leave Reliability Trials to the hardened tourists as I find that the timed aspect conflicts with my idea of how I should pass my hobby time. One of the great attractions of cycling with the 'local group' has always been that it is not undertaken at the pace which seems to be a factor of modern life.

BONK arrived with the entry form/lunch details, and after many weeks with my cycling restricted by weather/health/family obligations I felt that I should make the effort, despite my obvious lack of fitness - especially as I was the only person in Punnetts Town 'invited' to ride. So I selected an easy(!) time 4 hours for the 50 mile circuit seemed quite realistic - if not easy. **How wrong could I be?**

I arrived at event HQ (Kings head, East Hoathly) only to find many people in my group sporting full race regalia! Some even in shorts. But it was so cold! 8.45am and we were off! at a pace not short of flat out (for me anyway!). I didn't know the route so clung to a group of like paced Wanderers who knew the way.

The ice on the unsalted lanes was perilous and with a route that crossed the valleys of the Ashdown Forest, some of the descents were difficult. Our committed group pressed on. Happy to see Mr. Visible - Ken Griffiths - at the first check point, warning of ice ahead. Even so, Dave was grounded on the sheet ice adjoining the ford near Fairwarp, he valiantly remounted and continued but later decided to cut for home when he realised how far behind schedule we had dropped.

I was now suffering big time, just keeping up with Yvette and John. We had completed twenty miles! Even though we were going flat out we found ourselves needing to average evens to achieve the planned 12.40 finish!? It was still so cold. We were chilled, lacking the motivation to achieve the required speeds (at least, I was) and we collectively decided that in order to finish at about the required time we should short cut the circuit and head back to HQ.

I found out how unfit I am! But we plodded on and got back to HQ with fifteen minutes to spare - having cut 25 miles of the 50 mile circuit!!.

As most riders finished the rain started forcing all into a very handy nearby pub, where luckily they were able to serve the forty strong group with a fine lunch, catering for the late arrivals and special tastes among the group and weren't the waitresses nice?!

Ernie Spray's seventy second birthday was celebrated and he was presented with a cake, which he refused to start (much to Esther's disappointment) following such a large lunch! Esther hung around hoping for some cake in spite of the obvious need for her, as Section Secretary, to attend the D.A. AGM in Hailsham.

The Anniversary Pub Quiz results were announced, with bottles of wine for:

Roy Humphrey & Steve Dennis (tied with nearest correct answer)

Esther Carpenter (next nearest correct answer)

For me, I like to think that I learn by experiences, my lesson from Sunday 24th November 1996 has to be - "keep up regular riding ... **STAY FIT!** and/or **never give up racing!**

Paul Davey (Occasional Mid Week Section Rider [when work permits])

Reliability Trial (circa 1996)

What was I thinking about prior to November 24th the ESCA Reliability Road race, the end of season culmination, where you meet up with all those persons for a chat and a ride 'en masse', whom you have hardly seen over the last twelve months.

This year's event was loosely described as an easier ride by mine host, who, I carefully noted, had not made the 'cut', as an additional bonus, a bottle of wine was up for grabs, a little 'chateau' from Sir Charles' wine cellar in Winchcombe. All you were required to do was to nominate the correct number of pubs en route.

Watching the weather at this time of the year, you get preoccupied, almost bordering on the paranoid, as to what to wear; is it worth going?; are you fit enough? Years ago there was some nostalgia in running the event, I believe this in part was due to the management at the Kings Head, who could be relied upon to create a nice cosy atmosphere, certainly for the meal's asking price. There was generally a full house notice, even before a final week had elapsed. Before the event you could spend some time with your friends, in the knowledge it was probably going to be another year before you met again.

Regrettably I fear the momentum has gone and it is doubtful whether it will or can return, this has, I might add, nothing to do with Sir Charles' organisational skills, it is like the old adage - you can take a horse to the water but you can't make him drink.

1996 I fear proved beyond any further doubt that cyclists attitudes have changed beyond all recognition. The general feeling for this year's event was, i.e. to celebrate fifty years of the ESCA implementation and to make it a memorable occasion, certainly something to savour in the years to come, knowing Sir Charles' panache for being ambiguous in his course design and description of same did not deter me in checking out the course preparatory to the 24th, without an aerosol marker, which I had promised myself! The weather initially was favourable, although rain mid-morning was prescribed. On arriving with Hickey jnr. I was requested to attend the obligatory photocall, and pressed immediately by 'Roy the Boy' for my start cards. Mike Hayler, all glowing, wished me well, clearly there to give credence to the event on behalf of the London South R.T.T.C.

By this time the Crawley had already gone, I cannot recall a year when the Crawley (the entire club) have not opted for an early start in the maximum period allowed. I suspect this is due to the necessity of taking a head count to see how many members are still in the club! I hardly saw a face I recognised. That hardy annual, Alan Hale, greeted me in his usual tribal way. Mike Cross who has never wished to be identified with any club, looked his usual self bedecked in a totally forgettable team two piece with matching accessories. Les Hayman pleased me no end when he confirmed that he had only managed a 2.9. for a fifty this year.

Off we all went, off being particularly apposite, since we had only travelled some two miles when down we all went like skittles. Black ice had taken its toll before we had actually started. Thankfully apart from cuts and bruises we all left the scene without being any the worse. However, it put paid to any further progress we may have contemplated. After returning to the Kings Head the rain worsened. Clearly the pub had not been able to attract many to the bar since I fear the great majority of the participants had nothing to come back for, and those who had not done the entire course had slunk off anyway.

The meal followed, unlike previous years the atmosphere was gone, the food was adequate, no seconds though, and the only noticeable degree of urgency STAFF WISE was when the gratuity tine was passed around, like some offertory box at your local C of E.

Even allowing for the conditions, it should have been better. The venue has now clearly gone past its sell by date. The distance is too far, the exactitude of the finishing is too stringent, the area has been used too many times, the entire sameness of the event has killed the occasion. What I feel should have happened is that the event should be approximately forty miles, in the afternoon, back to H.Q. for a shower, evening meal, the prize presentation, followed by a dinner/dance, thereby combining the event and the ESCA dinner in its proper year. Most certainly the ESCA could have easily sponsored part of the proceedings. In this way you expect a spontaneous response and it is a fitting pinnacle to the year.

Let's hope the ESCA 'think tank' try most urgently to change the current formula.

W.H.

P.S. My personal thanks to the following for their help and kindness in assisting myself and Hickey jnr. off a certain East Hoathly lane:

Les Hayman for giving junior a lift. Monsieur Alain and Kevin Harding for helping with the walking wounded and Dave Challis for pushing my bike back.

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LEWES WANDERERS

Last summer, Paul Gibbons and Matthew Rabbetts took bikes, a tent, some spare spokes and a change of underwear to Vancouver. They spent the following nine weeks riding down the west coast of the United States inland to Santa Fe, northwards up the spine of the Rocky Mountains, and back over the Canadian border as far as Jasper. They had covered almost 4,000 miles of beautiful forest land, arid deserts and spectacular mountain passes. They were also bitten by mosquitoes, eaten by horseflies, threatened by weirdoes, frozen in snowdrifts, dehydrated by intense heat, and punished on long uphill grovels. These modest fellows are only just revealing details of their heroic journey. Paul's account is being serialised in our club newsletter, *The Lewes Wanderer*, but it's only fair that other people in Escaland should be able to read brief extracts.

"After an enormous self-service buffet breakfast in St. George, Utah, we headed off into the midday sun: temperatures were around 100deg.F. This is when trouble struck. I was struggling to ride at more than ten mph, had no energy and chronic stomach cramp. Stopping every ten miles or so for me to rest, we pushed on... seriously wishing to be back home..."

"Cycling (next day) through a canyon of multi-coloured curtains of rock, we passed out of Zion and headed out of Utah into Arizona. Still suffering with a bad stomach and the afternoon's ride through a desert plateau in strength-sapping heat took four hours to cover 30 miles. Even Matt slowed down..."

(A couple of days later, exhaustion forced them to catch a bus the rest of the way across the desert to Santa Fe. On this 24-hour journey they had to share seats with assorted weirdoes, who all travel by bus because it's cheap.)

"From Santa Fe we headed north into the Rockies.... We were chased out of New Mexico by a drunken, knife-wielding Spaniard who thought we were a couple of faggots" (*Well they were sharing a very small tent*). We assured him we believed in God and he left, to resume his efforts to rule the world. The first major pass (10,857ft) nearly finished me off - possibly one of the hardest climbs I've ever tackled. *Several high passes later*. After a ski resort, Estes Park, we tackled the climb up the highest paved road in the U.S. Ever upwards we toiled, taking in the breathtaking views as we went.... Eventually we broke out of the tree line, hitting an icy wall of wind. Taking it in turns at the front, we crawled on, and slowly but surely we reached our goal. We had made it to 12,200ft after 22 miles: an exhilarating achievement amongst the clouds, looking out to nothing but snow-clad mountain peaks."

The boys were later chatted up by four women who said they had a deep-seated passion for cycling and young men's thighs. The only snag was that their combined age was at least 280.

The rest of our news is pretty mundane by comparison. A number of members are undergoing scientific training under the direction of Pete Roberts. It is said that for the first two months they had to repeat to themselves, 100 times a day, "I think I'm getting fit." That's followed by "I'm sure I'm getting fit" and so on up the scale until the ESCA Hardriders TT, when the words may well be unprintable.

The social season, meanwhile, has produced some evidence of a scientific approach to barn dancing by the Baker family (including Sarah and Tom), who helped Doug Roberts bring a sort of order out of chaos at the clubroom. Ken Stevens bravely had a go but ended up looking bewildered; and Ian Landless lacked co-ordination. Oh yes, that leads smoothly on to the reported sighting of a brown faced, greying-haired man in a Safeway supermarket coffee bar, who was allowing his wife to do all the work with the trolley. Asked why he had bothered to go shopping in the cold with her, when he could have stayed at home in the warm he said: "There's no heating there. It's turned off when she goes out."

Rotrax

IT'S A LONG, LONG WAY TO JOHN O'GROATS

Day 10 - Tuesday 3rd June

Entering Scotland was disappointing as the sign over the border bridge said Dumfries and Galloway and it looked as if another word had been painted out. I passed through Langholm and Bentpath and then Ettrick Forest and St. Mary's Loch. During the day I met an Australian and Kiwi Cycle Racing Team on stripped down bikes, they were hoping to cover one hundred and fifty miles a day, with a following camper van carrying all spares and facilities. We swapped a few words, I got change for the telephone and off they sprinted away. I stopped at the Gordon Arms for a pint of lager shandy, but again no food, crisps or peanuts, but I did use their phone. Having arrived in Peebles, I was not happy with the welcome at Viewfield. Just having completed 69 miles, I was not allowed to have my bike in their extension with their sons bike but had to leave it in the garden chained to a ring in the wall of the house. I did have a saddle cover which was good as it rained all night. The landlady said that as she was giving me a double room that meant I must not spread any of my luggage etc. on the double bed. In the meantime I had to tighten up a mudguard bolt which in fact was the only mechanical problem, apart from computer breakdown, during the whole ride.

Day 11 - Wednesday 4th June

Forth bridge here I come. I was quite excited to see the famous rail bridge which I had only seen pictures of over the years. They advised me to go into Edinburgh rather than round the lethal A720 ring road. I stopped for a bar of chocolate and headed out over Crammond Bridge. I had a worrying time with the traffic racing along the A90 and stopped for a break at the South Queensferry service area. I spoke to two soldiers cycling from John O'Groats to Land's End. They looked well shattered in heavy tracksuits and trainers, plus panniers front and rear and mountain bike tyres. Cycling across the Forth Road Bridge is exciting because you get the best view of the famous Rail Bridge alongside. At half way there were painters and engineers and one of them volunteered to take my photo while I hung on in the gale force wind.



Inverkeithing is the first town on the other side of the Forth, I visited a very fine cycle shop and at the train station I was able to re-schedule my train times for the Wick to Inverness return journey home. I decided at this stage to ignore my planned route and save miles for the day by heading towards Perth. I soon regretted this rash decision as I was out on the very busy A9 again and the B&B at Bunkfoot was a further 8 miles. Mr White, owner of this hotel, was a retired schoolmaster from Hackney East London. I had a nice chalet with plenty of heat for drying purposes plus my bike in the room and later in the bar we reminisced about London with an American visitor and a couple of farmers.

Day 12 - Thursday 5th June

After passing through Blairgowrie it was a long steep and straight 13 mile climb over Glen Shee on the A93. Mile after mile it appeared to be never ending so I kept my head down so as not to see the top - this was psychological. Luckily, the ski shop was open and I had a tea and cakes and bought cards and stamps before the staff all packed up, jumped in a mini van and hurtled down the six mile drop to Braemar. I followed down at 50 mph, my shimano STX brakes were very efficient on the bends. I felt more confident than on a racing bike. The Cheltenham Cycling Club were on route to Lands End, several on tandems. We exchanged greetings and went our own ways.

Magnificent rivers and pine forests was the main scenery through Braemar and Ballater. Having soon to retrace 10 miles, I eventually found the Hunting Lodge called Gairnshiel completing a days mileage of 75 miles. The Lodge was frequented by the Prince of Wales and Mrs Simpson at the time of his abdication so Monica, who was a buyer at Marks and Spencer, informed me. She and Martin, the owners, were in the process of making charcoal, it was in great demand in the DIY stores.

Day 13 - Friday 6th June

Another day of severe climbing taking in the A939 to Tomintou over the Lecht ski area. Gasping at the top, the shop was shut and I had to use my own drink and Isotar bars. My left knee was taking punishment today and rather than aggravate it further I decided to cut out a few miles. I went on through Grantown-on-Spey and Dava Moor and stopped at a B & B in Redburn, which was run by an ex RAF type who was retired. I called it a day at 6.30 pm and 45 miles. To get back on schedule I needed to complete 90 miles plus the next day, at least I got 9 hours sleep to prepare for it.

Day 14 - Saturday 7th June

Macbeths castle of Cawdor I passed by but time was short. I did however visit the famous battlefield of Culluden which wasn't too exciting. As the road turned west to Inverness I took the full force of the wind into my face all the way to the Kessock Bridge which crosses the Moray Firth at Inverness. Half way, I got blown over by the gale and found it extremely difficult to control my bike or ride any further so I walked. The next crossing over Cromarty Firth was on the Connel Bridge. The cycle path being very uneven and it was so close to the traffic, in fact the worse bridge to cross on a bike.

A short stretch of the A9 again before I turned off and headed to Almer and Evanton. Don't ever go near the latter's 'Novar Arms' pub as they have no food, peanuts or crisps, and that was after riding for 5 hours. Escaping the A9, I headed inland toward Bonar Bridge & Lairg, now it was half way through the afternoon and there was 31 miles to get to Altnaharra over the bleakest mountain road I have ever been on. It made me think I was on the moon. Of course the famous Crask Inn was empty, I peered in the window, so I pressed on. I had completed 96 miles when I found the hotel. I couldn't have gone on to the next town it was 21 miles further on.

Day 15 - Sunday 8th June

I felt very fit and enthusiastic as I started out on the last day. It was 25 miles before I saw the North Sea at Betty Hill. Further along the A836 I passed the famous Dounreay Power Station and at the St. Clair Hotel in Thurso I met up with Mark, Willy and Gilbert my Belgian cycling friends who were touring the north and had started at Hull,

We rode together to John O'Groats, they staying at the Youth Hostel and I went on to the John O'Groats Hotel where I had to get the official stamp to prove I had done it. 1,149 miles and fifteen days after leaving Land's End. The Hotel was run down but the food was excellent and when you are tired who cares what the room looks like. After phoning home, I put the bike in a barn, had a bath and a meal. Next day I said good bye to my Belgian friends who caught the ferry to the Orkneys and just for a change, prepared myself for the seventeen mile ride to Wick in the pouring rain. There, I got the train for a four and a half hour journey to Inverness where I hired a car to drive to Eastbourne.

Weather

Despite having rain at times during twelve of the fifteen days of riding the average temperature hovered at 15C in the south and colder at times in the north. I was blessed however with winds that blew generally from the south and south west.



PETER LEE (Catford CC. High Wycombe CC. Mid-Week Section)
July 1996

SUSSEX NOMADS C.C.

The end of another totally eventful year draws nearer. So it's club runs, constant sprints and bonus primes for most of the Sussex 4th category clubs.

S.N. riders competed on road, off road, triathlons, biathlons, hill climbs, you name it, we did it. Notable last gasp performances were some meaty 10 times by Adrian Morris, mostly on the Worthing drag strip. I cannot recall but I think young Dan Bennett recorded the fastest prior to going to Sunderland University. Everybody is glued to school these days. William Davies is at Southampton University, Roger is at the Legal & General University, Monsieur Alain is still Frenching at night school, the Snapper is trying to get enthusiastic at Varndean and I believe Tony Kennedy is attempting to learn Italian somewhere. It's nice to have a club whose academic achievements surpass their cycling efforts. However, on that front, Geoff Boore managed a 2.7. fifty without any help, but required some assistance in the Ashford 2 up in Kent here young Kevin Harding obliged. The Snapper finished 3rd in the Leith Hill climb (club event between Crawley Wheelers and Redhill), he followed this up with a 7th place in the Sussex hill climb at Kitts Hill.

We complete the season with a club 10 on december 15th 1996, using the Wineham circuit. We hope some of the other clubs will compete. Demi Moore has promised to push the riders off.

Club runs start in Ditchling village at nineish every Sunday morning. The club dinner is in January 1997, again at the Hollingbury Golf Course, price £12.75. names to Monsieur Alain. Guest speaker to be announced. We are also having a Fish & Chip Supper on Friday, December 13th and a Skittles Match in March 1997, as well as a 100 in 8. Details for all these events can be obtained from the number below.

The club, members, wives and girlfriends wish all Sussex and ESCA clubs and their members sincere best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Joint Managing Director.

PLEASE NOTE. The date given for the Nomads Dinner in the Social Calendar on page 3 is **WRONG**. Correct date is **FRIDAY, JANUARY 24TH 1997**. The venue is **HOLLINGBURY GOLF CLUB**. Tickets are £12.75. 7.30 for 8.00pm. More details from Alan on ☎ 01273 558511

**CLOSING DATE FOR THE SPRING 1997 ISSUE OF BONK
IS FEBRUARY 14TH**

WORTHING EXCELSIOR

AUDAX UK

SOUTH COAST NATIONAL 200K

SUNDAY MARCH 9TH 1997

Start Worthing 7.30 (or 08.00 if you wish. 1st control at Petworth does not close until 9.38)

As years go, 1996 I feel has been as mediocre as most other years; nothing has really enlivened the scene. New faces periodically appear, some old faces just fade away, never to be seen or heard again. However, not all has been doom and gloom, we have high hopes that the best is yet to come. I had to have a little smile at the London South Chairman's photo in the mag last quarter. With the braces and leather track bottoms he could easily have been mistaken for a member of the Third reich, or is it the current dress fashion of the London South (whoops, sorry ed!).

As for the picture of the golden oldies, this is surely a picture of some of our boys in a p.o.w. camp in Ben Ghazzi. Peter Crowsley looked as if he was the only one to get a Red Cross parcel, there is also a picture in the middle of the Camp Commandant with his S.S. cap on. Roy paid Graham Obree to put his arm on Roy's shoulder. What Roy didn't say was that Graham hadn't had his fee and was making bloody sure that Roy took him to the ESCA bank so that a cash payment could be secured, never for one moment think you can catch a Scotsman out.

I received a call in October as to whether I was available to accompany some of the 'lost souls' in the Lewes CC to participate in some friendly one to one training consultations at a Sports Centre in Haywards Heath. This I was told was an exploratory meeting so no paper money would be changing hands. With this in mind nearly all the Lewes turned up with the exception of Chris Hill, who I believe punctured. Mine host welcomed his disciples and immediately stated that he was an ex French Foreign Legion conscript and had been breaking bodies for over five years. Clearly this had an effect on poor old Lewes. Even Nigel (I have run out of houses to sell) Siberry had to receive some stimulation or simulation from the legionnaire's henchman called Jules. Clearly Nigel enjoyed this as he never moved for over an hour, in a collapsed state he just about made the bar with a shout "the milky bars are on me", sorry ed, I meant drinks, whatever am I thinking about. The piss de resistance was left to the end when the legionnaire suggested a knock down "I won't fleece you boys" one off sum for six weeks of total brutality and induced sadism, for the princely sum of £40. Jules could be bought for £12 for half an hour or £20 for a full hour. Extra services by arrangement with the management. You have never seen so many people leave the room in so short a time. With a quick 'bon jour' and a hasty wave our lads in green, yellow and brown beat a hasty retreat. Even the management of In gear were relieved by all this.

People with the knowledge have frequently posed the question 'where were you when J.F.K. was assassinated' nearer home 'where were you on the morning of the 7th April 1996'. If you were a rider on the G839, a timekeeper, watcher or just a casual layabout, you may have been the victim of 'an ambush' by a team of dedicated egg throwers, possibly a chapter of the local Hitler Youth, who lay in wait for 'us vets' and anything else that moved that day. Although I rode, luckily the enemy missed me, certainly I was not selected and only heard about the incident when a competitor came into view at HQ totally covered in yolk and complained that if a bit of bacon had been thrown he would have had a fry up there and then. It seems a car load of these morons patrolled the Dicker upwards throwing a fusillade of eggs at each competitor. target for the day, or perhaps mission impossible if you are prepared to accept this assignment, was the timekeepers, their vehicle and, I believe, the Snapper, who was doing running duties. Unsuspecting Barbara was just putting the finishing touches to another rider's abysmal time when she, Ken and the Snapper were met with a barrage of grade 4 Tesco's free range bombs. Taking protection behind the car, the assailants sped off leaving a trail of debris, some say to the Crowborough area. A spokesman for the VTTA confirmed that the matter was being handled at the highest level; and that a number of youths were helping with inquiries.

Turning aside from the Excel, I hadn't gone five lines into my column when I received an anonymous message that young bank clerk, Steven Woodbridge, had agreed financial terms with the Stella. A spokesman of the Stella initially denied the new acquisition but agreed finally that young Steve would take the pressure off Mike, the doctor and co. for 1997. Speaking to Mike Marchant he told me in confidence, and not a lotta people know this, that when he feels particularly charitable he rides second claim for Brighton Mitre in ESCA events but insisted that this is only when Frank Blake can afford his start money.

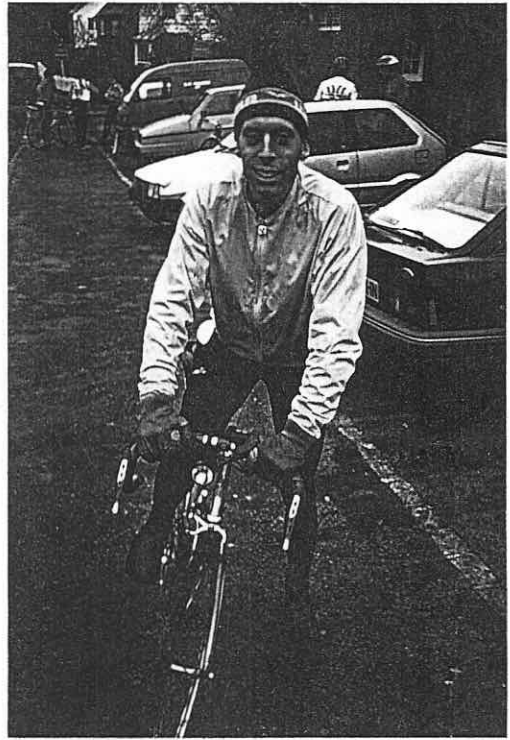
Talking of the Brighton Mitre, whilst only a skeleton of the old club remains, their members have been putting themselves around of late. Young Brian James, the southern coast weather man has enjoyed a particularly good 1996. Brian hibernates around the H courses with an occasional ride in an F event if he feels particularly frisky. he did a 59 this year, albeit an evening event. I enjoyed Robin's 25 on the obligatory partridge Green 'sloggo'. As usual another immaculate production. Nice to see Sean Yates on home soil. Another good presence at the hall afterwards for Robin to distribute his goodies a la mock auction style. Dr. Mark again and his merry cohorts took some money and prizes but I noted no signings.

I did see a fleeting glimpse of Brian Rex (once a part Lewes member, neighbour of the ESCA President [much lamented]) endeavour to persuade some unsuspecting punters to purchase a job lot in cycling shoes and some very unforgettable Bernard Hinault self portraits. Brian was in his usual enigmatic mood, I received a cursory nod of approval and the words "you're still alive". I left Steyning hall with a 'free' plastic bottle and a 1995/96 Evans magazine.

Next event in my busy schedule was Sussex Nomads' promotion of the SCA hillclimb, held as usual at Kitts Hill, Amberley. Another immaculate S.N. event. Master of ceremonies was Monsieur Alain Limbrey assisted by other *elite* club members. Dr. Mark once again collected a brown envelope from the promoter. Times were reasonable in view of the conditions. The 'Snapper' came a creditable seventh Chris Hill obliged by puncturing. Keith Balcombe complained that Dr. Mark had made no attempt to buy his services from the Excel. Mick Kilby was not only timing but asking for his subs/levies at the same time (nice one Mick!).

And now for the ESCA 50 Year Reliability Trial/Road Race. Now poor old Roger has gone, who is going to do the 'paint job' on the course? All will be revealed in the next issue. I will be commenting on the SCA dinner and will be examining closely the Bike Stores' move to new premises, where the management will be endeavouring to find a 'big name' to launch the new shop.

W.H.



RELIABILITY TRIAL PHOTOS

