

A WORD OR TWO OF EXPLANATION:

This is not a complete history of the East Sussex Cycling Association. For one thing, the years after the mid-'seventies are compressed into a paragraph or two. This is not to dismiss the many fine racing performances in ESCA events during those years. Nor is it intended to denigrate the hard work of modern-day Association promoters and officers, who have maintained a racing programme in increasingly difficult circumstances. The fact is that ESCA's most interesting and exciting years were its formative ones: when its social promotions were just as important as those of racing, on road and track. If the names of some of those who helped to shape the Association are missing, apologies are due; but that doesn't make their contribution any the less. The same can be said of the many riders and characters (eccentrics?) who should have been mentioned, but aren't.

Michael Rabbetts, Chairman, ESCA

1. Midwifery at the Ash Tree

IT's hard to imagine Roy Humphrey as a Fairy Godmother: he hasn't the build or the looks (among other things). But it was he and Bill Collins who in 1946 provided the inspiration which transformed the status of cycling clubs in East Sussex - the Cinderellas of the Sussex cycle-racing world.

When cyclists in the county returned to normal home life after the second world war, many were eager to find their mothballed black tights and alpaca jackets and get down to racing again - or to try it for the first time. New clubs were being formed and old ones revived; and they wanted a proper racing programme which offered their members a chance to compete against each other on a county-wide basis. A co-ordinated effort was needed. This was the role of the Sussex CA; but while it did a good job for clubs in the west of the county, it promoted no events in the east. The racing men and women of East Sussex may have become fit and healthy on cod liver oil and hard work, and were more than capable of riding home from such events as the SCA 100 at West Grinstead; but getting there for an early start usually involved an expensive and time-consuming overnight stay. Car ownership was rare, and in any case petrol was scarce.

Over the first two postwar years, the cycling boom gathered strength and with it rose the frustration of clubs in places like Uckfield, Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells, who felt themselves cut off from the serious racing scene. That's why two men met at the Ash Tree Inn in Brownbread Street, Ashburnham, and over a few pints decided to do something about it. Roy Humphrey, the 30-year-old racing secretary of the Uckfield and District CC and Bill Collins, 41, of Eastbourne Rovers, called a meeting of East Sussex cycling clubs, to be held at the Ash Tree on Sunday, November 10th, 1946, *"to discuss the formation of a cycling association to further cycle racing in East Sussex."*

The Ash Tree was an appropriate venue: it was a favourite meeting place for local club riders, whose needs and peculiarities were well catered for by Mrs. White, the landlady (while her husband just sat and gave the orders). Robert E. Lawrence, of Royal Tunbridge Wells Albion C.C., took the chair on that November day. The other ESCA midwives were:

Bexhill Wheelers
(W.E. Griffin)

Eastbourne Rovers C. & A.C.
(Bill Collins, Ted Godden, Ken Champion)

Hastings and St.Leonards C. and A.C.
(George Jenkins, Jack Southerden)

Rye and District Wheelers
(Austin Price, Ken Padgham)

Royal Tunbridge Wells Albion C.C.
(A.R. Dick, Jeff Muir, Robert J. Lawrence)

Uckfield and District C.C.
(Ray Barnes, Norman Edwards, Roy Humphrey)

2. Roy at the helm

ROY was elected as secretary - a job he was to fill for all but one of the next 50 years. The Ash Tree was named as the Association's headquarters. The first couple of AGMs and some committee meetings were held there and the link has been maintained with the depiction of an ash tree on the ESCA badge. (The Netherfield Arms and the Rosemary Cafe, Magham Down, were other meeting venues in those early years.) An affiliation fee of two guineas (£2 10p.) was agreed but was halved the following year and has decreased in real terms ever since. It's now £3.

Planning of an ESCA "road programme" was left to a committee meeting a fortnight later. The only settled details concerned the event entry fees (2s., including the RTTC levy of 3d.) and a decision to run events *"on a course starting near Magham Down and proceeding in a westerly direction, turns for various distances to be fixed after measurements have been obtained."* The course was numbered G52.



At the committee meeting on November 24th, J.M.S. Barlow of Bexhill Wheelers was elected as the first President, in line with the system of each club being given the choice of nomination in alphabetical order. The 1947 ESCA racing season was to open with a hardriders '12', then a low gear 25. Two unrestricted 25s, and other events at 15, 30, 50 and 100 miles were to follow. There was also a tandem 30, which included tandem trikes, and a hill climb on Round Tower Hill, Penhurst - used until 1950, when Wellingford Lane, Burwash Weald, was preferred, because it was harder. The 15-mile event never took place, because of RTTC objections.

Ken Champion, of Eastbourne Rovers, won the hardriders '12'. Hastings riders were fastest in the hill climb (Peter Hughes), the tandem 30 (the Powell twins, Ron and Sid), and one of the 25s (Walt Jameson). Another Eastbourne rider, Tom McCaffrey, won the rest. And just in case anyone thinks that Roy Humphrey has always been an admin. man, please note that he was consistently among the top ten finishers throughout that season. He was second in the hardriders, behind Ken Champion. That's the event which will stay longest in the

memory of those involved in the first year of ESCA racing - and not just because it was the new Association's "opener".

It was held on a bitterly cold Sunday, February 23rd, 1947, with the first rider being pushed off from outside the Ash Tree at 11 a.m. The original plan to send the riders through Penhurst was abandoned for safety reasons; instead, they returned to the Ash Tree by way of Woods Corner, Netherfield, Stevens Crouch, along the Kitchenham road and down Hammer Hill. Was it really hard? Well, yes. Even on a pleasant summer's day the hills on that circuit can be painful. On that freezing February morning, with ice covering the course, the descents were dangerous and the ascents froze lungs as well as legs. At least it didn't take long to stagger from the finishing line to the Ash Tree clubroom's blazing fire.

The fact that even the top three riders finished outside evens is evidence of the tough conditions: Ken Champion, 39-21, Roy Humphrey, 40-10; Walt Jameson, 40-17. The Hastings club won the team award, in 2-20-48 (Jameson, Alan Dowsett, Ernie Spray). The timekeepers were J.M.S. Barlow (Bexhill Wheelers) and Freddy March (Hastings) and the recorder Ted Godden (Eastbourne).

3. Making tracks

IT shouldn't be thought that ESCA riders were interested only in time trials. After all, the initial objects of the Association were *"to promote road time trials, track championships and social events."* Enthusiasm for track racing - mainly on grass - was one of the reasons why riders were dissatisfied with what the SCA could provide. ESCA's founders lost no time in trying to organise a league, and when it became clear that Tunbridge Wells Albion was the only member-club to have a track in regular use, others were spurred into action. Rye Wheelers overcame local opposition to their running an Easter Monday meeting and ESCA track championships were organised in Hastings (1000yds.), Uckfield (half-mile), Rye (quarter and one mile) and Tunbridge Wells (five-miles). A Mr. Martin, of Hastings, presented a bowl for the 1000yds. championship, "to be won outright after three wins, not necessarily consecutively".

Roy Humphrey claims to have won the first track championship gold medal, by half a wheel against a rider who, he says, lacked any bearings in his hubs. This success should be balanced against Roy's admission that he "brought the whole lot down" in a team pursuit final against Lewes Wanderers.

Track racing remained a regular feature of the ESCA programme until the 'seventies. Each year, member-clubs were invited to apply to run the various championships, which were usually held as part of an established sports meeting. Big crowds would turn up to watch a programme of bike-racing, running and perhaps children's events.

At Preston Park in 1948, an ESCA team took on the Sussex Cycle Racing League in an Italian Pursuit - and lost. In 1953 the Association organised an open track meeting at Princes Park, Eastbourne, where the match was against a Rest of Sussex team. ESCA lost again - but by only one point. The standard of racing was described as "very high" but ESCA made a loss of £18 on the day and never repeated the venture.

Support for track racing dwindled during the 'sixties, coincidentally with a decline in the popularity of cycling and in public interest in sports meetings. For ESCA, a sign of the times came in 1964, when its five-mile championship had to be allocated to the SCRL at Preston Park - and was then cancelled for lack of entries. Track championships were finally dropped from the Association's racing programme in 1973.

4. High jinks and high tea

CLUB cyclists of the early ESCA years were genuine allrounders, in the sense that they had just as much enthusiasm for clubruns and the social side of the sport as they had for competition on road and track. That was why the organisation of social events, to bring the ESCA "family" together, was one of the priorities at the first management committee meeting.

An inter-club run was arranged, to take place in January, 1947. Lunch was at Flimwell, and a "signpost quest" was held in the afternoon, followed by high tea (3s.) and a social evening at the Rose and Crown in Burwash. The weather on the day was atrocious and

only half the expected number turned up; but the figure of 40 would probably be considered not bad in January, 1997.

A second inter-club run was held in August. This time the lunch rendezvous was the Ash Tree and the "social ride" from there was to The Star at Waldron, where tea was provided at 1s.9d. per head. "Tea" meant piles of bread and jam, home-made cake and a very big teapot. "High tea" usually featured cold meats, pork pies and pickle - the working class equivalent of the middle class evening dinner.

It had been planned to hold the Association's first prize presentation (and high tea) at the Ash Tree but Mrs. White decided that "in view of catering restrictions" (left over from wartime) she couldn't provide a meal. So it was off to Burwash once again. There, 97 people enjoyed the Rose and Crown's good food and saw more than 50 medals and cups presented "with her customary charm" by Mrs. Roman, of the Netherfield Arms. It was Mrs. Roman (described as "a very good friend of all clubfolk") who had presented the Association with the Henry Gale Challenge Cup, which was allotted to the ESCA best all rounder. Tom McCaffrey was its first holder.

Less than a couple of months later, it was time to demolish jam sandwiches, trifle and cake at a combined Christmas and New Year party at the Rose and Crown. This knees-up by over 100 people was described as "a resounding success." The party was typical of the ESCA social scene. "Any excuse for a get-together" was the slogan. On some occasions, so many turned up at the Rose and Crown that *three* sittings had to be organised.

Ken Padgham, with Roy's help, was the social secretary in the early years. Writing in the first issue of the ESCA Handbook and Magazine in March, 1949 (Editor: R. Humphrey), he linked the young Association's success with the spirit which existed among its membership:

"So far the Association has served not only to provide adequate racing facilities but has brought together all members of clubs in East Sussex, in such a way that individual club members have got to know each other in a pleasant and friendly atmosphere...(which)...can only bring out the best that can be found in the grand cycling game of ours."

5. Boundaries and bother

ESCA's reputation spread pretty quickly - almost too quickly, because no one had worked out how far its territory should extend. Hastings Warrior CC became the seventh member of the Association in 1949 and three others followed in 1950 - Tunbridge Wells Road Club, Senlac RC and Lewes and Newhaven RC (soon renamed Lewes Wanderers CC, reviving a pre-war East Sussex club). But 12 months later, East Grinstead CC, Central Sussex CC and the Heath CC (based in Haywards Heath) successfully applied to be allowed in and ESCA's boundaries were defined for the first time: "To follow the A23 road from the Sussex/Surrey boundary to the boundary of Brighton, but excluding that town."

Six years later, many eyebrows were raised when a membership application arrived from Southborough and District Wheelers. ("*Southborough? Isn't that in Kent?*") The dust didn't settle until ESCA clubs had given Southborough the nod in a postal vote.

That was nothing compared with the high drama of Brighton Mitre's attempt to affiliate. At the 1960 AGM, a proposal that all clubs within the geographic boundaries of Sussex should be invited to join was ruled out of order. Two months passed, and the Management Committee refused the Mitre's application by six votes to three, after a long debate.

Boundary changes didn't seem to be the only issue. There were dark suggestions that there were wild men hidden in the Mitre, presumably hoping to jump out and frighten timid ESCAbods. But the Mitre's supporters didn't give up. A special general meeting was called, at which the ESCA boundary was changed to include Brighton. The Mitre were welcomed into the fold, by 15 votes to nine.

Other Brighton-based clubs also became affiliated later in the 'sixties: the Fortune CC (a racing offshoot of Brighton YHA), Prestonville

One of the mysteries of the 'fifties was why Roy Humphrey kept travelling to the West Country by train. It turned out he was having secret assignments in Yeovil with a CTC rider called Dorothy. They married in 1956.

Nomads, Brighton Premier CRC and Brighton Excelsior. Crawley Wheelers were another 'sixties addition.

Not that the issue of exclusiveness was over. It came to the fore again when a club from well across the border, Worthing Excelsior, asked to join at the end of 1974. Yet another SGM was called, to consider yet another boundary change. Some who were there felt that to extend into West Sussex would lose ESCA's compactness and finally abandon the original reason for its foundation. So a compromise was reached: any club based in Sussex as a whole would be eligible to join (which let Worthing in), but ESCA activities - cycling and social - would be confined to the county to the east of the A23.

They thought it was all over. And it (surely) is, now. Mind you, in 1977 ESCA members (at a third SGM!) were divided over whether *Croydon Road Club* should be admitted. Some said the ESCA 50 and 100 would benefit from increased entries; others maintained that Croydon was too far away - and they won the argument.



The friendly inter-club companionship provided by ESCA was, of course, part of its attraction. But it wasn't all sweetness and light. The 1949 AGM heard of complaints about noise and damage to property on one of the courses "which might eventually lead to curtailing of events"; and there were regular reports of pacing - the guilty ones being dealt with by an ESCA disciplinary panel. The men who ran ESCA applied RTTC regulations with a firm hand; but an attempt at national level to extend the "all black" clothing rule to events run by associations like ESCA aroused the spirit of rebellion in 1950. In a strong letter to the RTTC, the ESCA committee said that black alpaca jackets and black tights were all very well, but not everyone in East Sussex had black shoes and no one wore black track gloves.

The proposed new regulation was dropped, but as part of an attempt to retain the secretiveness of time trialling, riders still had to be "clothed from head to feet in a dark, inconspicuous costume". (And start sheets still had to carry the words "Private and Confidential".) In 1950 a Tunbridge Wells novice called Funnell ran into trouble because "while riding in an all-black costume he discarded the jersey,

disclosing a coloured jersey underneath." The ESCA committee men were kindly chaps and put his crime down to inexperience. The secretary was asked to write him a warning letter.

Clothing rules relaxed in 1953 but remained a sensitive issue years later. A committee minute of 1960 records the fact that "several riders in that morning's 25 had been reprimanded for riding with their clubs' names on their racing kit." A note was to be put on start sheets saying that this form of advertising was not allowed. Howls of indignation were heard from the ranks and succeeded in having the edict withdrawn. A bell was just as mandatory as inconspicuous clothing. A Lewes Wanderer was three minutes late starting in an SCA 25 of 1959 because he had to find someone who'd lend him a "ting-ting".

Another controversial subject was whether men and women should be allowed to intermingle in time trials. ESCA had always been careful to stick to the regulations and keep the two sexes apart by sending women off last. But a brief, unexplained, sentence in the minute book of August, 1960, says it had "been agreed that Mrs. Stevens should start in front of the field." Some (males) have said this was to reduce marshals' waiting time. Iris - who won all the ESCA women's events in that year - maintains it was more to do with getting her back early to make the tea.

"I was daft enough to fall for it," she says, "but women are more aggressive nowadays." (Intermingling *was* allowed nationally from 1969 but ESCA's sympathies remained with the marshals: it was ruled that women should still start before the men.)

6. Fast women (and men)

THE first ESCA event specifically for women was a 'ten' on July 18th, 1948; the first at 25 miles was held on July 19th, 1950, and by 1951 a women's BAR competition had been introduced over 10, 25, 30 and 50 miles. A Tunbridge Wells rider, Miss D. Leeves, won that first 25, and because 1950 was the year the Association began to recognise ESCA records, her time of 1-12-49 set the standard for others to beat. The following year, Joan Nyland of the Hastings and St. Leonards club, rode the fastest 'ten' in 29-24.

All such records were soon to be eclipsed by Sheila White, of Central Sussex, who began her ESCA onslaught with a '30' in 1-27-30 and won events at other BAR distances in 26-05, 1-08-07 and 2-22-50. Sheila was a classy rider, both locally and nationally. In 1952, at the age of 19, she held the first national women's 15-mile competition record of 38-49 and finished third in the National Championship 25. Her time of 1-05-32 was 1½min. down on the winner's.

Women's support for ESCA events fell off in the mid-'fifties and Roy Humphrey, for one, doubted whether they really wanted a full racing programme. There were exceptions. Heath CC's general secretary, Jill ('Half Pint') Cruttenden, flashed across the ESCA racing scene, before joining the Uckfield club and disappearing. A young lady from Hastings, Esther Rolleston, was said to be showing great interest in racing, "but it is regretted she has no female opposition." A revival was inspired by what were described as "the formidable females of Central Sussex", led by the form rider of 1957 and 1958, Barbara Atkins.

The first of the recognised men's records included the 2-12-18 '50' ridden by a 17-year-old schoolboy from Uckfield, Cedric Pearson, and a wet and windy 4-49-53 '100' by the Eastbourne rider, Les Springett, in his first attempt at the distance. Both were set in 1950. Also leading the way was the Uckfield fixed-wheeled strong man, Ken Griffiths, who finished 1951 with a 1-02-12 '25' and a 2-11-45 '50'. He partnered Ray Wickens to a tandem '30' figure of 1-07-58.

In 1953, the outstanding ESCA rider was Gordon King, of Hastings and St. Leonards, who was known for his "unfailing good humour and courtesy" towards helpers. He broke Association records at 25 and 50 miles and 12 hours and was BAR at a record average mph; but 1954 saw times tumbling as never before. That was the year when John Dutson, of Uckfield and District, had the honour of being first to get under the hour in an ESCA '25'. His 59-09 was ridden when national competition record was a middling '56' on a far easier course.

John was also the Sussex CA record holder at 25 and 50 miles; and

Ditchling Beacon was the scene of high drama in 1953, when an inter-club hill climb produced a surprise winner. Roy Humphrey, of Uckfield and District C.C., was said by onlookers to have "simply leaped up the Beacon."

in 1958 he returned from the Bath Road with a 1-58 '50' and a 4-10 '100'. He was a prolific winner of ESCA events, but had to wait until 1971, when riding for Central Sussex, to become the Association's BAR. As he was ESCA President at the time, he could claim a record "double" - one that has been matched only by Steve Dennis, of East Grinstead CC, in 1994.

Tunbridge Wells Road Club's star rider was Dave Patten, who had a string of track victories but was best known as an exceptional hill-climber - rivalling the best in Britain. He finished fourth in the National hill-climb of 1956, was third in 1961 and won the classic Catford climb in record time. Needless to say, he had no trouble in chalking up a good many ESCA victories.



One of the most notable of these wins was in the Hardriders' event of 1955 - an even more wintry day than in 1947, with snowbound roads and a driving northerly wind. Of the 42 entrants, only 15 started. The first three miles were uphill, straight into the teeth of the gale; and snow showers made even the faster stretches heavy going. Despite the conditions, Dave Patten's 36-40 for the Arctic 12 miles was only two minutes off the record. The surprise of the day, though, was provided by an Eastbourne Rovers' discovery, 17-year-old Dave Dunbar, less than a minute behind in second place; and young Mick Burgess, newly released from National Service, was praised for his sixth-placed 40-29.

Another leading man of the moment was a Ringmer plumber, Dave Marsh, who took John Dutson's '25' record away from him with a '58' in 1955. Riding for Eastbourne Rovers in the ESCA 100 of 1956, he became the first Sussex rider to be inside 4-20. His time of 4-19-31 slashed eleven minutes from the previous record, which he had set himself three years earlier, while a member of Lewes Wanderers.

Dave Marsh was serving in the Forces at the time. He and many other clubmen found their racing activities curtailed by up to two years of National Service. Clubs' team performances - or even their chances of survival - suffered as a result. Tunbridge Wells Albion blamed their near-disbandment in 1957 on National Service men failing to return to them after demobilisation: "For many years our members completely dominated the Association's track events, hill climbs and,

of course, the tourist rally. Then suddenly, like a candle snuffed out, we sank into oblivion." (In fact, the Albion lasted a few more years.)

At one time, Uckfield and District (popularly known as "the Farmers") had nine of their best riders away from home - not that the club seemed to suffer all that much as a result. They had strong riders at all distances in the 'fifties. Ken Griffiths has already been mentioned: he remains a star performer at the Boship roundabout to this day. As for Cedric Pearson, when he left school he developed a liking for the longer distances. He was ESCA best allrounder in 1952 and 1955 and won the Sussex CA '100' in four successive years.

Cedric acquired an enthusiastic fan club, mainly recruited from the youngsters of Central Sussex, whose clubruns he supported. These admirers wore black woollen sweaters, and are remembered for their habit of jumping their back (fixed) wheels on the rubber pads which controlled traffic lights - until they fell off.

Uckfield's fastest 25-miler was Roy Siggs, with times around the hour, until John Dutson made the club's name known far and wide. The club also had a track star (and fast ESCA '25' rider) in Colin Whittingham, who dominated Preston Park meetings in the second half of the 'fifties. He was shortlisted as an Olympic "possible" in 1956, after a third place in the National Pursuit Championship, behind Norman Sheil and Pete Brotherton. But even Uckfield and District, once the biggest cycling club in Sussex, failed to survive the hard times of the late 'sixties and was wound-up in 1968.

Tunbridge Wells Road Club had disappeared the previous year. The young man who was their general secretary at the time, Graham Lade, must have thought he was putting the mockers on every club he joined: he had also been general secretary of Tunbridge Wells Albion when *they* were disbanded.

Uckfield's pre-eminence on the ESCA racing scene had been successfully challenged from the late 'fifties by the arrival of East Grinstead CC and (later) Southborough and District Wheelers. These two clubs shared a number of BAR team championships between them

ESCA's trophies and other awards were lost in the post in 1967, while on their way to the engravers. All except four plaques and four medals were eventually traced to a lost property office. Personal delivery has been the rule ever since.

over a period of eight years, mainly because Peter Crowsley won the individual title with East Grinstead in 1958 then with Southborough in 1960 and 1964. Central Sussex (Ken Atkins was BAR in 1961) briefly interrupted their progress, which was stopped only by the mighty Eastbourne machine in the mid-'sixties and into the 'seventies. Eastbourne's dominance was created initially by Cliff Sharp and later by the likes of Don Hook, Steve Chapman and Maurice Colbourne.

7. Twelve hours' hard

AS racing times changed, so did the racing programme. A 12-hour event was introduced in 1951 and two years later the Association held its first Open promotion - a tandem '30'. In 1957, it tentatively entered the road racing game.

A full description of the 12-hour course would provoke too many painful memories for those who struggled round it. It's enough to catch some of the flavour by saying that one stretch involved a climb from the Boship up to Horam and on to Cross-in-Hand.

In the first few years there was none of the support-vehicle activity typical of today's long-distance time-trials. There *was* a sitdown feed at the Brewer's Arms, Ringmer, where Mrs. Leister, the cycling-friendly landlady, was in charge of catering. But it was hard luck on riders who didn't stop there, because they were left dependent on the limited amount of food which supporters, especially Bill Collins and his CTC crew, could stuff into their saddlebags. It was eventually decided that a van should be used to carry the food and drink, and by the late 'fifties supporting cars had made their appearance.

There were then *two* sitdown feeds, whose menus were, typically, soup, bread pudding, rice pudding, fruit, and ham-and-lettuce sandwiches. There was tea, coffee and squash to drink, although some veterans of pub clubruns found that a pint of black and tan did both speed and stamina a power of good. From 1960, women were allowed to ride in the '12' and share in the suffering and the sandwiches.

The weather for the first '12' in 1951 was decidedly unpleasant. There were only six finishers, and Jack Southerden of Hastings was the best of them, with 217 miles. Entries picked up later, but it took a very good long-distance man, Dennis Stokes, of Eastbourne Rovers, to

beat 'evens' on that course. His 244 miles were ridden in 1954, on yet another day of strong winds and heavy rain.

Only four of the later winners exceeded 240 miles and it was 1968 before another rider from an ESCA club beat his record mileage: Michael ('Min') Morgan, of Central Sussex, rode just three-quarters of a mile further. Course and event record of 246.57 miles was set by a Bec CC rider in 1966, when the '12' had become an Open event.

Dennis Stokes' death in a road accident in 1958 deprived the sport of a first-class rider. He had moved from Sussex and in 1957 led Middlesex Road Club's competition record team in the National '12'. His contribution was 257 miles - only nine short of Booty's individual record.

For five years from 1964, there was much agonising over the future of the '12'. Marshalling problems were developing: Roy Humphrey, as Racing Secretary, said he'd been let down many times. The Association rejected an SCA proposal for a joint promotion and decided instead to make its event an Open one. Two years later, rejection turned into acceptance and there were "very friendly" meetings with the Sussex CA.

But as roads changed to take account of heavier traffic, so the course fell foul of RTTC regulations. This applied especially to the finishing circuit near Ringmer, which at one time was only six miles long. In 1969, several riders went off course because of a shortage of marshals - and that was the end of the East Sussex '12'.

The Tandem '30' - the only such Open event in Sussex - had met a similar fate after only four promotions. The first of them in 1953 didn't get off to a good start, because it clashed with other tandem time trials. Support for the remaining three wasn't much better; but at least the three-time winners were of national repute - the Powney brothers of Kingston Phoenix. They set the event record at 1-03-50 on

Marshalling should not be taken for granted. In 1950, there was no turn marshal in the ESCA 50. Of 52 riders on the start sheet, only 15 finished - and several of those had gone off course. In those days of trust and honesty, the unchecked times of those who said they'd turned at the right place were accepted. These included the time of a rider who had set course and event record.

a day when Uckfield and District pairs, in second and third place, easily outclassed the remainder: Arthur Thorpe and Cedric Pearson finished in 1-07-05; Ken Griffiths and Geoff Boxall, 1-07-17.

These were among the ESCA fast men. But the interests of slower riders were not forgotten. In the late 'fifties, an Association 25 and a 50 were each converted into separate events, one for shortmarkers and the other for longmarkers. This, it was said, provided just the incentive the slower riders needed.



The promotion of an ESCA road race was first suggested in 1956. The National Cyclists' Union (NCU) had earlier reluctantly agreed to reverse its long-standing opposition to "mass-



starts" on open roads, which were being organised in some areas by the British League of Racing Cyclists. (The NCU and BLRC eventually merged to form the BCF.)

The idea of exposing the innocent road users of East Sussex to the sight of large fast moving groups of colourfully-clad youths was greeted with dismay in some quarters. (Although several clubs in the area had already organised successful promotions.) A very senior member of Hastings and St. Leonards CC, Percy Bliss, resigned (temporarily) as an Association timekeeper, and his views were typical of the strong feelings aroused by bitter NCU/BLRC rivalry.

An ESCA road race course was agreed with the police: a circuit from Hellingly to Horsebridge-Boship-Horam-Hellingly. The start was to be 6.30 am, surely evidence of nervousness about public reaction, or possibly because the riders would be time triallists, used to racing early in the morning. So all was set for ESCA history to be made in August, 1957, but when the closing date came there weren't enough entries.

Less than a year later, on June 8th, 1958, that disappointment was forgotten when a successful road race *was* held on the Hellingly circuit. The only problems were caused by the unexpected appearance of temporary traffic lights and a pile-up at the bottom of Grove Hill on the last lap. Dave Patten, the favourite, won it. A second race was planned for 1959 but was cancelled because of doubts about compliance with the new MoT regulations.

Interest in making the "massed start" game part of the ESCA scene seems to have evaporated from that point. In fact, the only member-club which was formed mainly with road racing in mind - the Spartan CRC - was disbanded at the end of 1960. Then, in 1967, ESCA clubs were asked if they fancied repeating the experiment of 1958. The consensus was that there wouldn't be enough support; but when the management committee said "All right, we won't run a road race", someone wrote in protest and offered to promote one himself on the Rushlake Green circuit.

8. Times of change

SO who was mainly responsible for making sure that ESCA's racing activities on road and track were efficiently run and co-ordinated? Roy Humphrey, of course. He oversaw the track championships during the time they were run, and organised *all* the Association's time trials for the first nine years, after which he had the help of (in turn) Reg Eldridge (Lewes Wanderers) and Ken Stevens (Eastbourne Rovers), as assistant racing secretary/event promoter. In 1961, for instance, Reg was event secretary for the 25, 50, 100 *and* 12-hour.

The job wasn't made any easier by the decision in 1967 to send start and finish sheets to individual riders, instead of to their clubs. This may seem an obvious thing to do nowadays, but the original custom had been introduced to save postage and to make the racing secretary's job easier. (The change led to a sixpenny increase in entry fees.)

A change of greater significance came about in 1970, when the promotion of ESCA time trials was delegated to the clubs themselves. The racing secretary's job became one of co-ordination, rather than promotion, and was taken over by Iris Stevens. Mick Burgess succeeded her at the 1976 annual meeting and was still there 20 years later. As Roy stayed on as general secretary and treasurer, this means that only three people have shared the Association's three key jobs in all but one of the 50 years of its existence.

Roy described 1970 as the turning point for the Association, "a year when the clubs rallied round and shouldered their share of the work." He was right; but ESCA's changes were in line with those of the

'seventies cycling world. The last remnants of the pre-war era had been shaken off: baggy shorts, plus-fours, British components, fixed wheels, sprint carriers and regular long-distance clubruns.

The growth of car ownership had diminished cycling as a sport (by 1970, *fourteen* ESCA clubs had been disbanded); but it had also reduced the need for time-triallists to find somewhere to stay overnight before riding in some faraway event. In ESCA territory, this had mostly been a problem for outlying clubs from East Grinstead, Southborough and Tunbridge Wells. Members of Association clubs who lived near ESCA courses were asked if they had room for overnight guests, and favourite B and B places soon emerged.

There was Jasmine's at Boship, where the Tunbridge Wells clubs liked to stay; Mrs. Woodgate at Muddles Green, near Chiddingly, who looked after Southborough Wheelers; and Hilda Funnell, who kept the teapot on the go for East Grinstead riders. Mrs. Funnell was the mother of Dennis Funnell, of Uckfield and District, and without her help, it was said, some East Grinstead riders would have found it impossible to ride in Association events. She was such a frequent marshal at Bat and Ball Corner (Golden Cross) that it became known as "Den's Mum's Corner."

9. Eggs, spoons and parties

THE ESCA social scene was also to change, although there seemed little chance of that happening in the 'fifties and 'sixties. Interclub runs were soon discontinued, because too many of the old and unfit couldn't keep up with the young and muscular. They were replaced by inter-club summer rallies, staged in fields at places like Burwash and Ashburnham. They involved such fun and games as egg-and-spoon races (on bikes, of course), blowing up an inner tube, a bottle-dodging contest, and tug-of-war. At the height of their popularity, well over 100 people took part and a shield was awarded to the club with most points.

Unfortunately, this obviously enjoyable and well-patronised series of social gatherings came to an end in a cloud of misunderstandings, accusations, recriminations and demands for a resignation. After a successful rally at Ringmer in 1954, the committee decided not to hold

one in the following year. Meanwhile the social secretary, who wasn't at the committee meeting, was writing to the good Mrs. Leister at the Brewers Arms, to book 100 teas for a rally date of his own choosing. Mrs. Leister was rather miffed when no one turned up. The committee patched things up by giving her £2 as compensation but there was no such friendly feeling towards the poor social secretary. He was asked to resign. An earlier, minor, episode relating to an ESCA rally is worth recalling, solely because it reflects how our communication system has changed. The rally organiser objected to "a certain club secretary who demanded *by telegram* that I reply, advising him of the date of the rally."

There were no more summer rallies after 1954. In their place, an annual Touring Trophy competition was instituted in 1955. The first was based at the Yew Tree Inn at Chalvington, and was won by Norman ('The Prof') Edwards, of Uckfield and District. The competition attracted a patchy response during its 25 years of existence. Some of the best support came in 1971, when it was opened to "any means of transport". Of the 24 entries, 18 were on bikes and six were in cars. Stan and Joan Shirley gave the competition a further boost in 1973 by providing a huge tea for everyone involved; but after the 1978 version, when cars were once more excluded, member-clubs voted to call the whole thing off because of lack of interest.



The Association had earlier emphasised its role in promoting *all* aspects of cycling through a competition for a Clubman's Trophy. This was decided on a points basis, with candidates sending in details of how many times they had been on clubruns, how often they had turned out for marshalling, and whether they'd volunteered for other jobs.

New Year parties had been held regularly from the start - first at Burwash and later at Stone Cross, Ringmer, and Hellingly. A typical party evening would include a film or slide show and entertainment, as well as plenty of food. The films usually had a cycling or travel theme. On one occasion, though, a police publicity film was shown, when some partygoers would have preferred to see bike racing. The committee's reasoning was that it was just as well to keep in with the police.

That particular party, in 1968, was over-subscribed, partly because so many family groups wanted to go to it. The solution adopted was to hold separate parties for children. These were very successful. The one in 1971, for instance, catered for 40 children and 46 adults. By contrast, the adults' New Year parties were losing their popularity: at one, there were complaints of a shortage of food. In 1972 there was a unanimous decision to discontinue them.

The job of social secretary had been scrapped two years earlier. During the preceding "party era" it had been held in turn by Ken Padgham, Dennis Neeves, Iris Stevens and John Dutson. They had made a significant contribution to what had been an essential aspect of ESCA life for more than 20 years.

Even the AGMs had a social flavour - from the serving of coffee and biscuits to roller-racing (organised by Eastbourne Rovers). At today's ESCA meetings in Framfield Village Hall, there's not even time to adjourn to the Hare and Hounds. There are other differences. In the 'forties and 'fifties, uplifting spiritual knowledge could be gained at annual sportsmen's services in various Sussex churches. (The one chosen by ESCA in 1949 was in Battle: 63 sat down to tea in Crowhurst afterwards.)

In 1952, a tour of Hastings Corporation's Pumping Station at Brede was organised for Association members. Some of those who took part may have been less interested in water than in the man who showed them round. He was George Jenkins, otherwise known as the Hastings Locomotive, who'd been a top rider in the 'twenties.

George was one of the first men to get below a 2hr.10min. '50' and in 1929 rode for England (along with Frank Southall) in the world's amateur road championship in Switzerland. Thirty years later, riders from Hastings, Tunbridge Wells, Eastbourne and Polegate were painfully reminded of George's continuing power whenever he joined them on the evening bash to the Chestnut Tree at Boreham Street.

From the Committee minutes in 1972: "Mr. Willcocks, promoter of the 100 for Lewes Wanderers, conveyed the apologies of the Uckfield marshals who, not knowing that the event had been started 11 minutes late because of confusion regarding an amended start, had convinced each other that they had got the wrong day and had gone home."

10. Social season togetherness

SOcial seasons of the 'fifties were seen as opportunities to enjoy non-cycling entertainment, and to cement friendships between clubs by sharing in various social activities. The existence of ESCA widened these opportunities, but the clubs themselves were perfectly capable of organising their own social events. In 1955, for instance, members of Central Sussex and Uckfield had a joint outing to the Victoria Theatre, in London, to see the Crazy Gang; and the Hastings and St. Leonards and Uckfield clubs held regular dances in the White Rock Ballroom and State Hall in Heathfield, respectively. A coach trip to the annual BBAR concert at the Royal Albert Hall was considered an essential part of the season, although one year ten *real* cyclists rode there from East Grinstead. They reached home at 1.30 in the morning, with time to have a few hours' sleep before the Sunday clubrun.



Club dinners were well supported. East Grinstead and Uckfield reckoned to be represented at about half-a-dozen each year. The Uckfield dinner of 1958 was so popular that 47 of the 147 people who'd applied for tickets had to be accommodated in a separate room. They included a coachload from Central Sussex.

Cycle/rail excursions to places like the Cotswolds and the New Forest added variation to the clubrun programmes; and in 1953 there was an Uckfield run to London to see the Coronation decorations, and to picnic in St. James's Park. But it was Southborough who claimed to have the most varied programme. It consisted of a year-long social season with racing superimposed: for example, a visit to the Kilburn State Theatre for a Louis Armstrong concert on the eve of the ESCA Hardriders' 12. (Those who heard Louis did not do very well in the morning.)

The Wheelers had an activity for each evening of the week in the summer, from clubruns to rock-climbing, swimming, rough-stuff, time-trials and clubnight. And they still had time for a tiddlywinks match with Uckfield at the Half Moon pub at Forest Gate, which they lost, 70 points to seven.

From all this, it's possible to conjure up a vision of a typical ESCAbod of the time: a jolly, sociable kind of person, fond of a spin through the lanes after an early-morning race, probably feeling a twinge of conscience about not having been to church, and having an enormous appetite for jam sandwiches and jelly.

Such ESCAbods may have found their natural exuberance restricted at some of the Association's annual prize presentations (and "luncheon" from 1950). The two speeches allowed at the present-day lunch at Framfield would have been considered inadequate. The lunch of 1957 was typical: in addition to the loyal toast there were three others (to the Association, Ladies and Visitors, and The Press) and four responses. That's *seven* speeches.

But the audience didn't all sit in respectful silence. At a committee meeting, Norman Edwards commented that "the noise and applause at the luncheon was rather overdone" and requested that "this should be restricted in future."

It was the Uckfield contingent who seemed to be the liveliest (or "rowdiest"), and it was that club's President, Maurice Chauncy, who wished they weren't. Maurice worked hard for ESCA, and was a generous donor of trophies and other awards, but he clashed with his younger members over social rules. They accused him of officiously trying to "sort them out" at the 1956 lunch and of being heavy-handed in "slapping down" someone who tried to cross-toast *after* the loyal toast to the Queen.

Maurice, being a stickler for accuracy, made extensive inquiries about cross-toasting protocol and graciously admitted that he'd been wrong: there was no set ruling on the subject. That didn't stop him from getting in a final dig at a Central Sussex (and former Heath CC) member, Reg Tew, who had also gone beyond what Maurice regarded as correct behaviour.

Reg owned a suit of vicar's clothes: knee breeches, jacket, shirt and Spanish-style flat black hat. These he had worn at many non-cycling functions in the area, at which he acted as M.C. or in a similar role. Possibly egged-on by clubmates, he had decided to wear the outfit at the ESCA lunch. The head waiter noticed him and approached Norman Edwards to ask "if the Reverend gentleman would be saying Grace."



Norman replied that Reg was neither a reverend nor a gentleman. Maurice was most upset. But he seems to have calmed down a little by the time of the next committee meeting, to which he sent a letter merely pointing out that the words "informal dress" on the lunch invitation did *not* mean "fancy dress."



That particular "luncheon" was at the Regent Hotel, in St. Leonards-on-Sea. In other years, the venues included the Ship Hotel, Newhaven; the Hayworthe, Haywards Heath; the Pier Hotel, Eastbourne (not very satisfactory - only a curtain separated the ESCA guests from the hoi-polloi); the Hassocks Hotel; Langney Community Centre; Netherfield Hall ("rather bleak") and the Maiden's Head, Uckfield.

Contrary to popular belief, the man responsible for first having this annual celebration at Framfield Village Hall about 25 years ago was *not* that village's most respected inhabitant. It was John Dutson.

As Social Secretary in 1972, he had to move fast when the intended venue for the prize presentation - the Elephant and Castle, in Lewes - failed to get an extended drinks licence. So he arranged a "cycling supper" at Framfield for the evening of February 12th. Seventy people paid 85p. for a three-course meal and volunteers from the village ran a bar.

It's been Framfield Village Hall ever since. Nothing much has changed, except that, in 1977, a midday get-together at the Hare and Hounds was introduced as a preliminary to food, a mere couple of speeches and the prizegiving in the hall. Oh yes, and a photographic display, courtesy of Charles Robson, annually provides distressing evidence of how the ageing process works.

The annual 'do' at Hassocks in 1963 provided an embarrassment for the Hastings peppermint rock purveyor, Dennis 'Neevo' Neeves. He travelled there by train and at the station asked a taxi driver to take him to the Hassocks Hotel.

The driver said "Certainly, Sir" and did just that, dropping Neevo at the hotel entrance, on the other side of the station, all of 100 yards away.

11. Bonk! The true(?) record

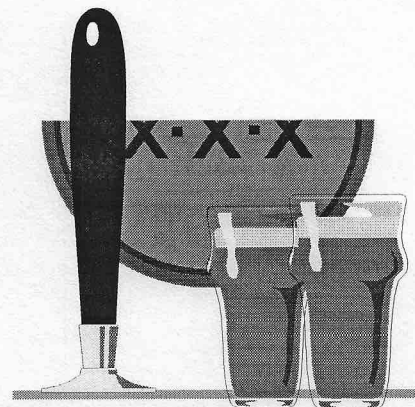
LITTLE of this potted history could have been written if it had not been for published records of ESCA life and times, - first in the form of a handbook, then as a magazine called Bonk! - the sometimes-scurrilous quarterly we all know and love. The handbook, initially edited by Roy Humphrey, first appeared in March, 1949. Its contents were on similar lines to the present-day Bonk, except that the club reports were longer, more gossipy, and consistently well-written. ESCA's ambitions to bring out a *magazine*, financed by advertisements, weren't realised until 1951, when Jack Rogers, of Tunbridge Wells Albion, produced Bonk!

The title didn't meet with all-round approval and clubs were asked to suggest more dignified alternatives. The only idea forthcoming was Norman Edwards' "Awheel in Sussex", which had been the name of the Uckfield club's magazine; but it didn't fit the fashion of "stirring", in articles full of nudge-nudge, wink-wink innuendo. (Presentations of wooden spoons were a common feature at annual dinners.) So "Bonk" it has stayed, despite renewed reservations in the 'eighties about the Sun newspaper's unfortunate coining of the word to describe an intimate social activity.

The original titlepiece, which incorporates a bonk-afflicted rider and the initials of its designer, has also been retained. Those initials, incidentally, are well-hidden. Just one clue: they probably belong to Jack Rogers' brother, Ronnie.

A succession of editors brought out regular and well-received issues despite production problems, and the inability of clubs to send in their reports on time. Ron Newman (Polegate and District RC), Geoff Willcocks, Dennis Neeves and Dave Patten were among them. The

Stag nights and birthdays were among the excuses for 'fifties bashes to to a pub. Roy Humphrey says at least one divorce resulted from a late return home. To avoid such a thing happening again, the clock at a hostelry in Bexhill was turned back two hours.



humorous significance of the gossipy content will be lost on those who weren't around at the time; but the Bonks of the 'fifties were the source of debates which have relevance today.

Arguments raged over the spread of "mass start" racing. On the one hand, it brought colour and excitement the sport had lacked for too long; on the other hand, mass-start riders were merely showmen, who rode in their cars to their events, then caused untold havoc, to the delight of their rowdy spectators, before going home again in their cars.

One writer from Hastings thought the MoT regulations, introduced partly to control all types of cycle racing on the road, represented the thin end of the wedge: "In a number of years it may not be possible to ride a machine on certain roads....The motorist has won a certain victory. Your Sunday tour may soon become a memory; and as for riding in club formation, it may end tomorrow."

Bonk's editor, Dennis Neeves, thought that, with the NCU/BLRC merger, this was no time for recriminations: "Some blame the BLRC for this state of affairs; but although the League contributed with its predilection for midday events on busy main roads, it seems to have been inevitable with the motor industry (aided and abetted by the Government) ploughing ruthlessly on towards its goal of filling Britain's roads with crawling and parked cars."

Neevo was not so perceptive in his final prediction: "The 'in-line' (mass-start) boys will have to get used to getting up in the ghastly small hours."

Road racing hastened the supremacy of multiple gears over the fixed wheel. Lewes Wanderers were holding low gear (62in.) clubruns in 1957, when *real* cyclists rode fixed and only tuggoes and mass-start

Attempts are being made in ESCA's 50th Anniversary year to revive The Battle of Chainwheel Creek, often mentioned nostalgically by greybeards, to the mystification of yawning youngsters. At first it was a mythical duel between Dennis Neeves and Geoff Willcocks, in events on the Marshes. It later took shape (chainwheel and all) as a competition for a trophy which the unfit could set their bloodshot eyes on.

men used gears. But two years later the weight of opinion revealed in the pages of Bonk! was leaning the other way. To quote one convert:

"Experienced riders know that the single fixed gear is very useful in city traffic, is a 'must' for aspiring track men and is usually no disadvantage on the average time trial course; but it is surely stating the obvious that using fixed for any other purpose is making hard work of cycling, wasting physical energy stomping up hill and nervous energy twiddling down."

The Association's medium gear (fixed-wheel) 25 was last run in 1960. A year later, John Woodburn became the first 25-mile national champion to use gears.

When no one wanted to be editor of Bonk! in 1976, a move was made to close it down. This was defeated at the AGM, 12 votes to 5. A couple of months later, Esther Carpenter stepped into the breach and, with Maurice, has edited the magazine ever since. Over 20 years, they have not only produced an increasingly professional publication (now with *coloured* pictures of bare chests and bottoms), but have significantly helped the Association's finances. It may not be generally known that they bear the cost of Bonk's production. (In the old days, ESCA was kept afloat financially by the profit from various horse-racing draws.)

12. A quieter time?

THE years from the mid-'seventies to the present day have been relatively quiet for ESCA. Five clubs have affiliated since the admission of Worthing Excelsior in January, 1975: Sussex Nomads (with links to the disbanded Prestonville Nomads), VC Etoile, Regent Road Club, the Gatwick Racing Team, and (in 1996) VC Bayeux.

Racing high points have been less common, although there have been impressive performances from clubs like Central Sussex (Kevin Harding and Paul Lipscombe, to name but two); Southborough Wheelers (the Abraham brothers); and the Lewes Wanderers' record-breaking team led by Tony Deacon, who were followed in the 'nineties by the all-powerful East Grinstead combination of the three Steves: Elms, Dennis and Blackmore. Yet another Steve - Steve Willis, of

Eastbourne Rovers - produced a memorable course and event record of 4-03-51 in the 1995 ESCA 100 and in 1996 was helping Rovers to a time-trial comeback. In women's racing, the outstanding rider has been Andrea Winchester, Eastbourne Rovers' best all rounder of the early 'nineties. Her time of 4-23-14 in the ESCA 100 of 1991 beat most of the men and would have been fast enough to have won the majority of previous ESCA hundreds.

A feature of these later years has been the sharp increase in the number of veteran riders, who usually form the greatest proportion of time trial fields, especially at the longer distances. This phenomenon was recognised by ESCA in 1984, with the introduction of a vets' BAR. The first winner of the championship trophy was the man who presented it to the Association - Charles Robson.

Most of ESCA's 'official' activities have been concerned with countering the impact of greatly increased traffic and the building of new roads. New and revised courses have had to be measured each year - the brunt of this work falling on Charles's shoulders. It was Charlie, too, who initiated the successful series of reliability trials which began in 1985 and which may have revived something of the spirit of the early ESCA days.

With only the annual lunch surviving from what was once a busy social calendar, and time trials its only racing commitment, there have even been suggestions that the Association has outlived its usefulness. The hill climb and one of the 50s have gone in recent years - one through lack of support, the other for lack of a promoter; their absence seems hardly to be noticed by the modern car-borne rider who has plenty of time trials to choose from.

But pessimism hardly seems justified, when the ESCA membership of 15 clubs is much the same as in the heydays of the 'fifties; and when, in its 50th anniversary year, it has promoted the Men's National Championship 25 under the leadership of one of the county's foremost racing organisers, Mick Burgess.

As Roy Humphrey and Bill Collins drank their pints at the Ash Tree Inn in the autumn of 1946 they could hardly have imagined that, fifty years later, a world champion would scorch along an ESCA course, and produce a 25-mile time of 48 minutes and 55 seconds.

Graeme Obree is a bike-racing hero; Roy Humphrey has been one for 50 years.

ESCA CLUBS: the comings and goings

(Clubs shown in **bold** are current members)

	JOINED	LEFT	
Bexhill Wheelers	Nov.1946	1960	Founder
Eastbourne Rovers	Nov.1946	----	Founder
Hastings & St.Leonards	Nov.1946	----	Founder
Royal Tunbridge Wells Albion	Nov.1946	1953 & 1958	Founder
Rye & Dist.Wheelers.	Nov.1946	1969	Founder
Uckfield & District	Nov.1946	1968	Founder
Hastings Warrior	Jan.1949	1956	
Tunbridge Wells Road Club	Feb.1950	1967	
Lewes Wanderers	June 1950	----	
Senlac Road Club	June 1950	1955	
East Grinstead	Jan.1951	----	
Central Sussex	Jan.1951	----	
Heath C.C.	Mar.1951	1957	
Polegate & Dist. Road Club	Jan.1952	1953	
RAF Wartling	1956	1957	
Southborough & Dist.Wh.	Mar.1957	----	
Spartan C.R.C.	Feb.1958	1960	
Brighton Mitre	Jan.1961	----	
Fortune C.C.	Apr. 1962	1966	
Prestonville Nomads	Feb.1964	1967	
Brighton Premier C.R.C.	Dec.1964	1965 & 1970	
Crawley Wheelers	Jan.1966	----	
Brighton Excelsior	Mar.1967	----	
Worthing Excelsior	Jan.1975	----	
Sussex Nomads	1977	----	
Velo Club Etoile	1979	----	
Regent Road Club	1985	----	
Gatwick Racing Team	Nov.1989	----	
Velo Club Bayeux	June 1996		

Thanks are due to those people who have contributed to this potted history with facts, figures, anecdotes, criticisms, suggestions and photographs. They include Norman Edwards, Peter Crowsley, Roy Humphrey, Ernie Spray, Esther Carpenter, Geoff Willcocks, Horry Hemsley, Iris and Ken Stevens, Jane and Graham Lade, Ken and Barbara Atkins and Mick Burgess. Any mistakes in the following pages are not theirs.

The member clubs of the East Sussex Cycling Association

SALUTE THE ESCA DYNAMO



ROY HUMPHREY

This is the man who, for the past 50 years, has done more than anyone else for *all* aspects of bike racing in East Sussex. With Bill Collins, he inspired the creation of the East Sussex Cycling Association in 1946 and half a century later is still leading it. He's been ESCA's general secretary for all but one of those years. That was in 1955, when Geoff Willcocks filled in; and even then, he retained the key job of racing secretary. Roy was with the Uckfield and District C.C. in the 'thirties. During the Second World War he rode (and raced) with various clubs, from Southampton to Yorkshire. He returned to the Uckfield club and when it was wound-up in the 'sixties, joined Eastbourne Rovers. Keeping ESCA in good order has been only one of his many jobs in the county's cycling world - as timekeeper, promoter, commissaire, handicapper, and general organiser. Time trialling, road racing and track racing have all benefited from his hard work and experience.

Roy somehow found time to earn a living as an electrician, which makes a quote from the 'fifties even more appropriate: that ESCA members "enjoyed a warm feeling of security that Roy Humphrey was able and willing to be the dynamo of East Sussex cycling."