

# CTC Coventry Celebrates 100 years 1921 - 2021



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Cover Photo: Riders in the Centenary Jerseys by Alan Jelley  
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## Formation of CTC Coventry in 1921



In 1921 a Coventry section of the Cyclists' Touring Club's Birmingham District Association was formed. In 1936, Coventry and the CTC sections in eastern Warwickshire (Nuneaton, Rugby and Leamington) split from the Birmingham District Association to form the Coventry and East Warwickshire District Association.

After the West Midlands council was created in 1972 the organisation continued until it dissolved in 2010. CTC Coventry and CTC Nuneaton became independent member groups of CTC with Rugby members attached to CTC Nuneaton.



In 2016, the Cyclists' Touring Club re-branded to become Cycling UK. In October that year CTC Rugby became attached to CTC Coventry.

## Message from the Chairman, Bob Tinley

*“I had no idea, having joined the CTC 50 years ago, that I would still be a member of the Coventry section when it reached its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary”.* These were Gordon Mead’s opening words in his Chairman’s message in our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary booklet in 1996. I am pleased to say that Gordon is still actively supporting us as Life President; he certainly has a wealth of cycling experience, touring all over Britain and in the Alps in the late 1940s. Very few of the roads were surfaced then and you would be fortunate to have a 3-speed gear. It would take several days to get to the touring area immediately after the war on a crumbling railway system and finding accommodation was somewhat hit and miss.

Reaching 100 years is a huge milestone and, just like our predecessors, we are still running a full programme of Sunday and mid-week rides. I suspect we may ride shorter distances these days despite having superior gears, brakes, tyres and lights: this may reflect changes in today’s work-life balance.

Change has been our constant companion in Coventry and Warwickshire; we are blessed with a network of attractive, quiet lanes providing excellent opportunities for cycling. In the 1960s the coming of the motorways closed and diverted many lanes and now we see the HS2 railway line heralding more closures and permanent diversions to our lanes.



A couple of years ago, when we started planning our centenary year, we thought that HS2 would be the biggest threat to our comfortable lives... little did we know that our lives would be turned upside down by a tiny virus that has caused the suspension of our rides and social programme. These are minor issues compared with many other problems faced by the country, but we have adapted to change and we have the necessary resilience to bounce out of the current difficulties. I would like to thank our ride leaders and committee members for their dedication in making our new runs programme such a success and we will continue the theme by adapting our centenary celebrations to the prevailing conditions. I am pleased that many more women are joining our rides and we will continue to welcome new riders from all ethnic backgrounds. We will ensure the Club thrives in a world that recognises the importance of cycle travel.



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## CTC Coventry As It Is Now *by Bob Tinley*

First thing on a Sunday morning our members may be found riding towards the War Memorial Park to be there by 9:00 ready for either a morning ride, or for a full day ride.

About six years ago, the council started redeveloping the station area in Coventry. We suddenly found that the dingy archway on the edge of the station yard by Starley House, where we met, was about to be demolished. This signalled a move to the Memorial Park and improved fortunes for the club. The park is a vibrant place on Sunday mornings with many people walking, running, or cycling there. It also benefits from plenty of free car parking which can be handy for riders coming from further afield. At the same time, the newly introduced morning rides have proved to be a great success catering for people who don't have the time to ride all day.

The morning rides, advertised as being under 30 or 40 miles, sometimes stray slightly over the limit. They follow the tried and tested formula of riding to a café, putting the world to rights over coffee and a toasted tea cake, bacon sandwich or whatever takes your fancy, then returning to the Memorial Park.

There is no fixed length for the all-day ride: it's up to the leader to decide, although it's usually about 60 miles in the winter with a coffee and lunch stop and 70 miles in the summer with a third stop for tea. Riders can opt to return home after morning coffee allowing them to do a slightly longer, faster ride than the standard morning ride. The all-day route provides an opportunity to explore some of the attractive lanes out of reach of the shorter rides.

Our Tuesday rides meet at 10:15am at a selection of cafés in the area with departure at 11:00am for a 15 - 25 mile ride to lunch and return home with riders



leaving the group when convenient depending on where they live.

This formula allows us to follow different routes from the Sunday rides and the total distance ridden varies from week to week depending on how far the meeting point is from home.

Over the last 25 years we have organised nearly 100 tours, of which 16 were overseas. They mostly ranged from weekends away to two weeks in length, using a variety of accommodation from camping to hostels and hotels. We have even had a month long tour from Coventry to Nice on the Mediterranean, taking in the Route des Grandes Alpes: riders with other commitments were able to join and leave the tour at convenient points on the route.

Our regular cycling events are supplemented by a winter programme of fortnightly “slide shows” where club members give illustrated talks about their adventures which may include cycling, walking, skiing or other outdoor pursuits. The internet has enabled the club to reduce costs over the last 25 years and has facilitated communication and connection with, for example, a weekly email bulletin. It has also affected the way the sections interact with HQ. The old hierarchical structure of District Associations (DAs) and Sections has gone and we are now known as CTC Coventry.



Subsequently the CTC rebranded itself as ‘Cycling UK’: officially “*CYCLING UK IS A TRADING NAME OF CYCLISTS’ TOURING CLUB (CTC)*”, thus we’re still fundamentally the Cyclists’ Touring Club.

Competitive events used to be an important part of club life in the early days: there was a 24 hour event when riders would cover upwards of 230 miles. Other popular events were the 100 in 8, the 50 in 4 and treasure hunts. In the halcyon days of the DA the various sections would compete against each other with cups being awarded. Perhaps it was the increasing average age of the group, but competitive events gave way to combined rides like the 50 in 4, an annual rough stuff ride and an annual night ride. These events have faded away although, curiously, modern lights and gearing systems should make these events easier to ride.



## It's The Future But Not As We Know It . . . by Paul Morton

As we celebrate 100 years of our cycling history we can also take the opportunity to speculate what the future holds for cycling in general and the Coventry club in particular. The Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has led to a significant increase in cycling – due in part to the guidelines about reducing the use of public transport - but also in part due to the individual's reluctance to sharing close space with others. During the lockdown period that started in March 2020 and staggered on for months, the reduction in traffic, coupled with (at the time) temporary changes to the infrastructure such as new and wider cycling lanes, led many new and lapsed cyclists to start cycling with confidence for the first time. The effect was so dramatic that many bike shops sold out of bicycles and were inundated with requests for repairs as some older bikes started to see the light of day again.

Time will tell whether this increased interest and take-up of cycling will last.

The increased interest in cycling has been helped by the rapidly changing technology in bike manufacture. For example, E-bikes in parts of Europe are already outselling conventional bikes – and not exclusively for the older or less fit members of society. They are becoming more popular here in the UK as well. The E-bike is no longer regarded with disdain by the cycle 'purist' as often they are seen as an addition to the keen cyclist's stable. *(I'm reminded here of the rule that determines how many bikes you need. The answer is  $N + 1$  where  $N$  is the number of bikes you already have! – Ed)*



**The shape of things to come?**

Lighter bikes and components, improved cycle clothing (not always Lycra) to cater for the peculiarities of the British weather, all contribute to make cycling more enjoyable and appropriate for both work and leisure.

Therefore we can safely predict a general increase in cycling. The type of cycling may change. 2020 saw a huge increase in UK holidays – the staycation – as overseas travel became somewhat problematic. It becomes far easier to load the bikes onto the backs of cars to take them to a holiday destination in the UK than transporting them safely on the plane to Spain or wherever. We will see – as a result – more families cycling together.

Is this an opportunity for organisations such as CTC Coventry to reintroduce a 'Family Section' – referred to with fond memories elsewhere in this booklet? The club has seen, in the past year or so, far more women joining rides. This has been a conscious effort by the club and has been made easier by introducing women-only rides as well as more conveniently paced Sunday morning rides. Again the club needs to support and sustain this new interest as well as broadening its appeal to attract more diverse and younger riders.

A mainstay of the club – touring – is also showing a resurgence with a number of fixed centre and 'moving on' tours scheduled for 2021. Easier access to route planning and booking accommodation – again mentioned in the booklet – makes touring more attractive and the experience far more predictable than ever. We now include the option to join part of a multi day tour, particularly in the UK, to enable cyclists with time constraints to enjoy some of our longer trips.

Is the future looking bright? For cycling in general there is no doubt. For clubs such as CTC Coventry it will depend on a number of factors: meeting the changing needs of individuals and families, introducing younger members to participate in rides, tours and other activities and encouraging more riders to get involved in the organisation itself, taking time and effort to promote the cyclist's cause at every opportunity.

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## The Bicycle (1921- 2021) by Kevin Rourke

There have been numerous technological advances in bicycles during the last 100 years, but many important developments go back even further. A lot of these and later developments were made in and around the Coventry area!

1817 - The ‘Swiftwalker’ which did not have any pedals (Karl von Drais).

1868 - Frenchman Eugène Meyer invents the wire-spoke tension wheel.

1869 - The first mass-produced ‘Velocipede’ with pedals (Pierre Michaux).

1872 - The ‘Ariel’, first ordinary or high wheeler (“penny-farthing”) made in Britain: the price was equivalent to about three or four months wages.

1880 - Hans Renold improved the chain by inventing the Bush Roller chain.

1885 - The “Rover” Safety Bicycle had a chain-driven rear wheel and with two similar size wheels it was more stable (John Kemp Starley).

1888 - John Boyd Dunlop patents the pneumatic or air-filled rubber tyre.

### Bicycle Technology

Many of the inventions dating back to the 1930s (e.g. indexed shifting, freehub) didn’t catch on because they were ahead of their time.

### Bicycle Frames

The frames of very early bicycles could be made of materials such as wood or cast iron, but by the late 1880s most frames were made from steel tube.

**Weight:** at around 35 kg (80 lbs) early bicycles were comparatively heavy and the frame alone could weight 22 kg (50 pounds)

The cheapest steel tubing is made from flat sheet rolled into a tube and then welded along the seam. Welding makes the tube weaker, so it needs to be thicker. The best tube is seamless, which means it starts with a hole being pierced through the centre and is then produced by ‘drawing’ or pulling through a die using a mandrel.

In 1935 Reynolds introduced 531 tubing, a Manganese-Molybdenum alloy steel.

**531** is merely a brand name, and the actual composition of 531 is:

1.5% Manganese, 0.25% Molybdenum and 0.35% Carbon.

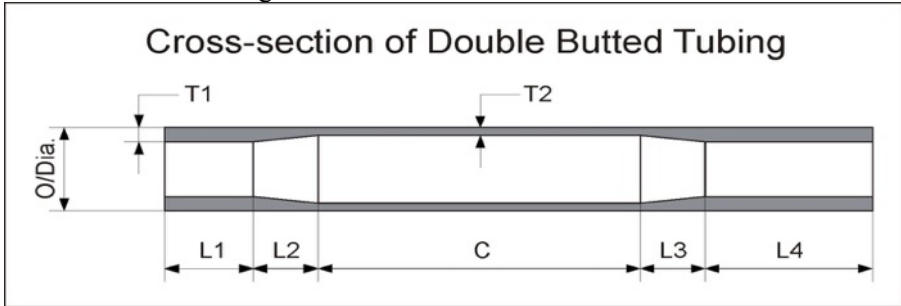




## Butted Tubing

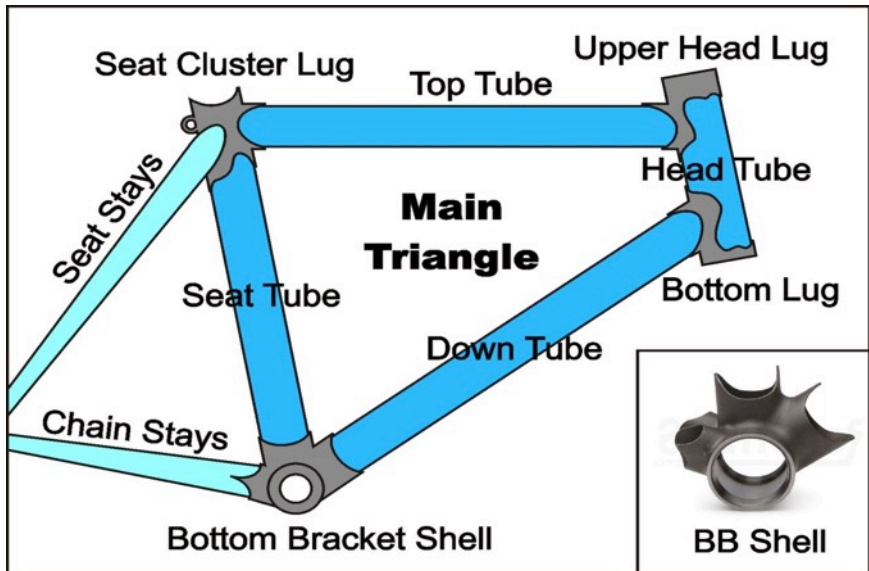
Manufacturers developed methods of producing tubes (butting) which were stronger where they needed to be. The outside diameter was constant, but the thickness of the wall varied (i.e. greater at the end than the middle). Tubes can be single, double or triple butted.

‘Double butted’ tubing is thicker at both ends than the middle section.



## Lugged Construction

The tubes making up the ‘main triangle’ of the frame are the down tube, seat tube, top tube and head tube. These tubes are connected using cast lugs (external sleeves); the lugged joints are then heated and brazed together.



Reynolds was the tubing of choice, helped by the availability of a wide range of butting, diameters and thicknesses of tubes, along with different chain stays, seat stays and fork blades. Reynolds also made special tubes for certain manufacturers and made-up complete sets of tubing for different applications, e.g. 531ST (Super Tourist), 531C (Competition).

Up to the 1990s around 95% of the quality touring cycles in the UK were still being built using lugged construction and Reynolds 531 tubing.

In California, modified 'Cruiser' bicycles with wide tyres were used for riding along mountain trails and freewheeling down rugged hillsides. The sport became popular in the 1970s and these modified bikes were called 'ballooners' and 'klunkers'. Joe Breeze, a frame builder, used this idea and developed what is considered the first all-terrain mountain bike.

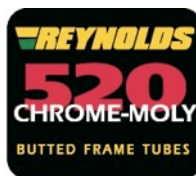
1981 - Specialized Stumpjumper the first mass-produced mountain bike.



### **'Made in Taiwan'**

During the 1980s Taiwan produced more bicycles than any other country. OEM frames were made with butt welded joints using Tungsten Inert Gas (TIG): the high temperature involved meant 531 tube was not suitable and they switched to new materials such as Reynolds 520 & 525 Cr-Mo tubing.

Companies such as Tange, Columbus and Trek had generic versions of Chromoly, or Chromium - Molybdenum alloy steel.

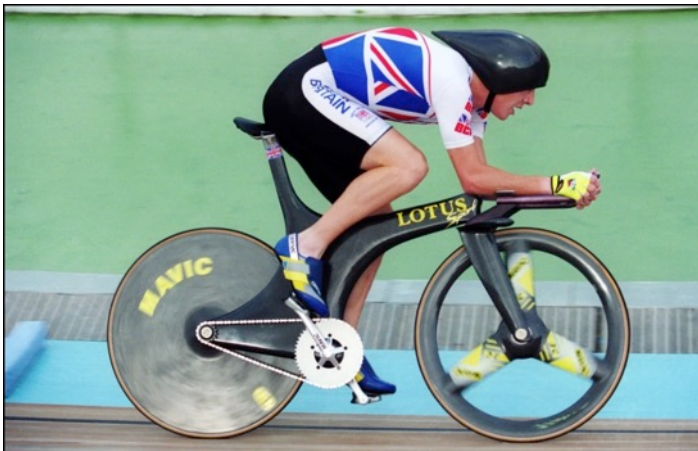


## Circa 1986

Kirk Revolution (MTB) and Kirk Precision (Road) Magnesium bikes: these designs featured an injection moulded magnesium alloy frame that took only a few seconds to manufacture. The marketing campaign included driving a motor vehicle over the frame to show how strong it was.



With his monocoque (one piece) carbon fibre frames and monoblade forks, manufacturers had considered the ideas of bicycle designer, Mike Burrows, as being too eccentric; but he finally received recognition 10 years later when Chris Boardman won the 4000m Individual Pursuit at the **1992 Olympics** in Barcelona on the Lotus bike which he had originally created.





In 1997 Burrows was working for Giant Bicycles and he came up with the GIANT TCR (Total Compact Road frame). The bike featured a sloping top tube and compact rear triangle, and was ridden by the ONCE road team. The concept revolutionised cycle frames and made manufacturing cheaper as bikes had been made in up to 10 different sizes prior to this development.



An entry level Claud Butler bike with a lightweight frame made from '7005' heat-treated aluminium alloy weighs 10.5 kg (24lbs), and the oversized, oval downtube gives the frame increased stiffness.





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## **My Life of Cycling** *by Mike Thomas*

I shall always remember getting my first bike. I came home from school and my Mum said I have a surprise for you, and proceeded to put a blindfold on me and lead me into the front room where I discovered a gleaming new bike. My second bike was passed down to me by a friend of my Dad's; a classic 531 Sun which became my main mode of transport as a teenager. As well as getting me to school it allowed me to explore Warwickshire with scouting friends. This bike also served me well lugging Sunday newspapers around Kenilworth that helped save enough money to buy four wheels, which became the start of 20 years of my 'dark ages' hardly ever getting on a bike.

Exercise in the 'dark ages' consisted mainly of climbing and walking the mountains and, in order to keep fit for this, I used to run with friends. Eventually we all suffered with knee problems and one by one started cycling as an alternative that was kinder on the knees. At this stage the cycling with the same friends was just a means of keeping fit, but after a while, some of us joined the Coventry Road Club and enjoyed their company on their Sunday morning rides, plus occasional weekends away. However, not really being competitive, I had no interest in their time trials, so didn't feel part of their core activity. Having been on their 75 year celebration ride to Napton, I was aware of the Coventry CTC, so I decided to join them for their Sunday rides, and soon realised that although the pace was slower, the CTC offered far more varied and interesting rides. I was soon joining them on UK tours and became inspired by the winter clubroom talks and recognised that touring was what I really wanted to do on two wheels.

The first tour I did with the CTC group was from Coventry to the East Coast, and I really enjoyed seeing the varied countryside go by, and re-visiting the lovely coastal places such as Wells Next the Sea which my Dad took us to many times as kids. Cycling with the group soon became a case of riding with likeminded friends, and we have enjoyed some super tours in Wales, Plymouth to Coventry, to the Yorkshire Dales from Coventry and Bob Tinley's imaginative tour following the River Severn almost to its source, and then the Wye back down to the Severn Estuary. However the overseas tours have really been my favourite: joining the group for part of their tour from home to Nice, and the tours in Provence, Normandy, and Sardinia were all great experiences.

Cycle touring has not only been with our CTC group; I've enjoyed some great

tours with a group of friends from the Midland Ski Club. Initially these were in the UK mainly following sections of the Sustrans National Cycle Network; the Lon Las Welsh route from Cardiff to Holyhead, Land's End to home, York to Edinburgh on the NCN Coast and Castles route, then Carlisle – Glasgow – Inverness. This group also ventured overseas to Sardinia, Provence, Tuscany, and Normandy.

However, some of the most memorable cycle tours have been abroad with my wife Ann. Our first was camping in Tuscany. We left home at 5:30am and cycled to Birmingham Airport for a flight to Pisa, and by 10:30 we were standing by the Leaning Tower of Pisa! Another happy memory was cycling from Geneva to Nice. Initially this was to visit our friends in Annecy then on to join the Route des Grandes Alpes going over the wonderful passes including the Galibier in amazing weather. We deviated from this famous route to visit the Gorge de Verdon and on to Nice.

We have fond memories of cycling the East Cape route on the North Island of New Zealand. This followed the very scenic Pacific Coast Road. Land's End to John O'Groats was something we wanted to do inspired by friends' photos. Seeing the varied counties roll by was superb.

However, our most enjoyable cycle tour was in Canada based on a four-week tour from Vancouver to the Rockies. This culminated in a three-day ride from Jasper to Banff with the most spectacular views imaginable.



*Photo:* Martin Toms  
Mike at Vrsic Pass, Slovenia



*Photo:* Mike Thomas  
Ann at Icefields Parkway, Canada



## Memories of the British Cyclist Touring Competition (the BCTC) by Margaret Hearn

The British Cyclist Touring Competition was held throughout the country with local heats organised by the DA (district association as it was then). There were categories for men, women and juniors and the scores were collected at the end of the day and positions awarded to the highest overall, highest woman and highest junior. The highest scoring man and woman went on to the national final held in a different part of the country each year. Trophies were awarded to the highest places in each category at a national dinner organised by CTC HQ later in the year.

I first rode the BCTC as a junior, the only difference was that you had to show your afternoon route to one of the organisers before you went so at least someone knew where you were.



Margaret asking for tips?

### Mornings

The route was pre-planned for the contestants and you were given a printed copy to follow. Contestants were set off at 5-minute intervals.

There were several checkpoints on the route, partly to check you were approaching and leaving in the right direction but at each checkpoint there was a challenge. You could be given a sheet with pictures of wildflowers or birds to name, road signs or OS map symbols to identify or general knowledge questions relating to cycling or the countryside. At some of the checkpoints you may have been asked to produce a first aid kit, tool kit or even a specific tool. There were also marshals who watched as you

rode a section of rough stuff to assess your bike handling skills. You may also have been asked to assess how long it would take you to ride between two specific places and your watch was sealed in an envelope. Your start time and

estimated end time was recorded and there was another marshal at the end point who recorded the actual time and checked that your envelope was still sealed!

The morning route ended back at the start point and you were allowed a short break for lunch.

## Afternoons

You were not given a written route for the afternoon; instead you were given a list of four or five map grid references you had to pass in order. In addition to the grid references was a list of instructions you needed to help you plan the right route. The instructions were very specific and if they were all used correctly there was only one route possible but it was very hard planning it. It may have included things like pass one church with a tower, two churches with a steeple and a church with no tower or steeple. Pass under a railway line twice and over a different railway line once. Pass one PH (pub) on a minor road, a school on a B road, two public phone boxes and a small lake. Travel for no more than 1/2 mile along an A road in a northerly direction and only 1/4 mile in an easterly direction but no other A roads. Coniferous/deciduous woods, lines of pylons, contours, bridal ways and canals could also have featured in the list.

There were marshals along the way who were often hidden so you had no idea if you were on the right route or not, but they marked you on arriving from and leaving in the right direction. Sometimes you saw another contestant going in a different direction and you wondered which one of you had it right.

I remember the BCTC as a really fun event; my mum and my sister competed too so there was some friendly family rivalry going on as well. My mum often got through to the national final by being best lady in the heats. In 1969 (the year before my dad died) both my parents were in the final, dad finishing in 8<sup>th</sup> place and mum in 6<sup>th</sup> place. Mum was also the highest placed female that year so came away with a trophy.

In 1987 I qualified for the national final and represented our DA, I didn't manage to bring a trophy home, as it was a bit more seriously competitive than the heats, but I enjoyed the experience anyway.

I understand the first ever BCTC was won by Harry Tope from the Coventry and Warwickshire DA

## 2019 Women's Tour *by Vicky Palethorpe*

“Why don’t you organize a women’s tour, Vicky?” asked Norihan. At the time we were on our coffee stop on the women’s ride in June 2018. I had arranged the ride as part of Cycling UK’s Women’s Festival of Cycling, and there were 11 of us out that day, some of us had not even met before. At that time, I had never been on a cycling tour, and had been part of CTC for less than a year.

So I asked Chairman Bob if I could lead a tour and was somewhat surprised when he said “yes” without hesitation. The committee seemed delighted when I offered the idea for the 2019 programme, and were supportive of my cautious plan for three days cycling up to 50 miles daily with two nights away, staying near to railway stations, in case people wanted to join us on the second day or leave us early for some reason.

I agonised over the route for weeks, trying to anticipate the capabilities of those who might join us and the terrain and climbs. I was familiar with quite a bit of the first day knowing various routes to Northampton and trusting on a National Cycle Route (NCR) from Northampton to Market Harborough for a good part of day two. What I hadn’t taken into account was the weather; the weekend chosen evolved into one of the hottest all year, which affected our overall speed and capability.



Vicky and the group starting from the War Memorial Park

We had a puncture within 20 minutes of setting off from Coventry. It only took 15 minutes to repair I am happy to say. The rough track from Sawbridge to Braunston wasn't everyone's cup of tea. However, lunch by the canal at the Millhouse was delightful and we didn't want to move. We chatted for ages and then I realized we needed to make up some time! Of course our route then progressed into the Northamptonshire Uplands and now the wide range of fitness in the group displayed itself. The tea stop didn't happen as we were five miles off target and instead we reviewed the route to follow the old Roman Road from Brington into Northampton, via Nobottle! (No kettle at Nobottle).

It was rather strange riding into the town. Lots of people were walking in the opposite direction, well dressed up, some drinking, and the pubs along the route were really crowded. Curiosity got the better and we asked a group where they were going? "To a Madness concert at the Saints, in Sixfields!" Well, this really added some humour to our final mile or two for the first day.

Our Travelodge was in the centre of town, in the salubrious Silver Street, but we got access to our rooms really smoothly, quickly got unpacked and changed, and were out on the town within the hour! With some decent food and a drop of alcohol inside us, we were all tired and ready to turn in by 9pm!

Day two setting off from Northampton, it got warm quite early and the heat continued to rise. The NCR was very disappointing; 15 miles on a rough track and missing a tea stop again! Oh and the tunnel; we weren't prepared for its length, the darkness and the slippery, muddy surface. Whilst the morning track was bumpy it followed a railway track which was fairly level. The saving grace of this route was the tree-lined track, which saved us from much of the searing heat building up in open spaces. Waterloo Farm, two miles south of Market Harborough, was a welcome sight and accommodated all of us quickly with food, ice cream and drinks. We had another hilly afternoon ahead in Leicestershire; longer, higher climbs in relentless heat.

The tea-stop was at Buttercups Tearoom, Billesdon. Our minds were distracted beautifully from the heat, by the ponies and llamas in the fields that came to greet us, Victoria sponge and cold lemonade. There were more hills to come, but we survived with lots of water stops, breath-taking scenery and constant encouragement from each other. Our B&Bs were scattered across Melton Mowbray so we went our separate ways and just three of us, who were located close together, went out for our evening meal in one of the many historic inns of the town. We were all so tired!

Sunday morning and five of us met in the town centre; Jill as planned, had left on the train the evening before and Norihan decided her hay fever was too much



to manage for yet another hot day. So Alison, Usha, Marina, Suzanne and myself set off to find the westward road along the Wreake Valley. There were picturesque villages and bridges along this sweep of land moving down towards Leicester. My conclusion from this trip is that there is no easy way to travel around the east side of this city. We had to pick our way southwards across hilly landscape, in a piecemeal fashion, to our late lunch stop at Countesthorpe. The Garmins and phones kept losing connection and we probably lost time on a wrong turn or two. The next hour to our planned tea stop at Ullesthorpe was not quite so challenging, but we were too late for tea!

We trudged back into Warwickshire and came into Coventry on the Ansty Road. It had been a long day, over 50 miles in challenging heat once again. But the next morning, quite a number of us thought, “Wow, where shall we go next time?”





THE COWSHED  
CAFÉ



*Congratulations to CTC Coventry on your  
Centenary!*

FROM YOUR FRIENDS AT THE COWSHED

## CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

We are delighted to be sharing in the celebrations of the CTC Coventry's 100th Anniversary! We are pleased to have been able to serve many riders over the years and hope that we can continue to do so for many more to come. It's been wonderful to hear that so many members of the group are supporters of our café too. Thank you and Congratulations!

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## Sustrans Proposed Development to Local Route 41

The National Cycle Network Route 41 between Warwick and Rugby railway stations is designated as the Lias Line. From Leamington Spa the route is along the Grand Union Canal to Radford Bottom Lock and along the Offchurch Greenway to Long Itchington Road. From here it follows Stonebridge Lane to Long Itchington where it briefly follows a disused railway branch line before re-joining the canal as far as The Croft (The Boat Inn). From here the route is on road north through Birdingbury where it re-joins the disused railway and onwards past Draycote village. There is a brief on-road section that takes you to Draycote Water where you go on off-road paths around the reservoir, then via Dunchurch and along the Ashlawn Cutting into Rugby.

### The changes

Over the next two years Sustrans proposes to create a new path along the disused railway line from the Fosse Way to Birdingbury. This would remove the need to travel on roads such as Stonebridge Lane and Calais Lane as well as shortening the route from around 12km to 7.5km. Sustrans also wants to retain the link to Long Itchington so it also proposes to create a path along the disused branch line from the junction at Ridgeway Lane to the existing section of NCN41 at Long Itchington Cutting and towards the Blue Lias Inn at Stockton Reservoir. The path will be constructed similarly to the existing off-road sections of the route.



*CTC Coventry Riders on Route 41*

to commence late 2020. The on-road sections that currently form part of NCN41 along the route will be de-designated and will no longer form part of the National Network.



# The 100km Centenary Challenge Ride

In September 2021, as one part of the year's celebrations, CTC Coventry are organising a challenge ride for its members and other cyclists who want to stretch or just confirm their capabilities on this circular route around beautiful countryside in Warwickshire and Northamptonshire.

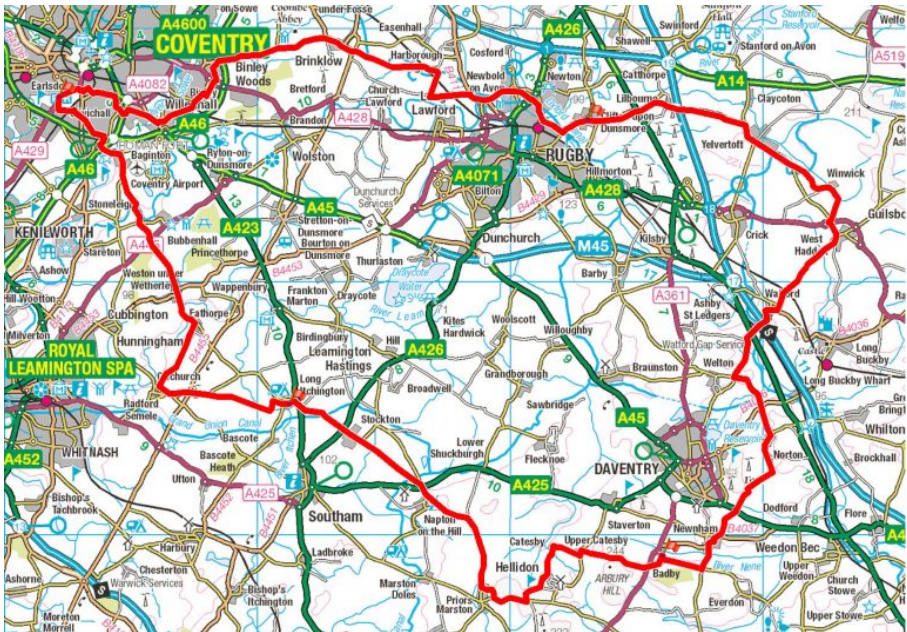
Starting at the War Memorial Park in Coventry, riders will set off at spaced intervals with each group having its own leader to Long Itchington for coffee, on to Badby for lunch and then back to the War Memorial Park stopping for tea at Clifton-on-Dunsmore on the way.

*If you normally do just shorter rides then maybe this is just the thing to challenge yourself.*

Entry details can be found on the CTC website:

<https://live.coventryctc.org.uk/100-km-centenary-challenge-ride>

The outline route is shown here in **red**.







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## It's been a Long Journey . . . *by Gordon Mead (President)*

I started cycling with CTC Coventry in July 1945. Rationing was still in place and would continue for several years. Many things were scarce and of poor quality – particularly tyres and tubes made from reconstituted rubber.

We wore army surplus clothing – there were no padded shorts. Single free wheels were common – I had a Sturmey Archer 3-speed. The cycles were all steel. But we were happy with what we had – there was nothing better available.

I soon had aluminium accessories fitted in place of steel but it was still not light compared to today's machines. In the next few years that bike was to take me over many of the highest Alpine passes – and I cannot remember ever feeling that I needed more gears.

They were a great cycling group – keen, young, some still at school but with a few older hands to keep things in order. We started rides early and finished late – often a 12 hour day. Sometimes we had a kick-around or played rounders – any field was good enough.

Sandwiches were carried for lunch but a light tea was ordered. At this time hot meals were seldom available. The tea would consist of bread and butter, jam and a couple of homemade cakes. Some caterers provided a little extra. Mrs Copley at Warwick could be relied upon to surprise us. She normally accommodated jockeys as her terraced house was opposite the racecourse. Jockeys being skinny (deliberately) she tried to feed them up but they wouldn't have it. We benefitted. We could get anything from 'bubble and squeak' to bananas in custard – and it was all free!

They were great times. Gradually the group developed and more ambitious projects tackled. In fact Coventry CTC gained a reputation for the quality of any event they organised. We were praised for the success of two special Cycle Rail excursions – one of which was filmed. The 1986 birthday rides based at Warwick University were better supported than any other – before or since.

We had characters . . .

Tiny **Eileen Sheridan** (née Shaw) changed from a woman's bike to drops and became national women's cycle champion at both amateur and professional level. (*For more on Eileen see [cyclinguk.org/article/cycling-guide/eileen-sheridan](http://cyclinguk.org/article/cycling-guide/eileen-sheridan), Ed*).

**Karl Barton** became national track speed champion but was nothing special on the road.

**John Hathaway** was the first 'round the world' cyclist accepted by the Guinness Book of Records. He also had the fastest times for rides across the US and Canada.

**Harry Tope** was the first winner of the CTC British Cyclist Touring competition.



**My first bike (1927)**



**My last bike (2016)**

How things have changed: we now have many pensioners as members. Clothing is brighter and designed for the job. Bad weather gear is far better. Cycles are lighter, have more effective brakes and more gears than you can find a use for. Fashion is now as important as fitness for purpose. I've enjoyed every moment of my cycling past. I've made many friends. A cycling friend is often a friend for life. I've travelled widely and held a number of positions within the club. I hope I've put back a little of what I've got out of the club. I can no longer take an active part – and miss it – it's over but I wish it wasn't.

Thank you for all your comradeship. May the club endure for another 100 years.






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## Overseas Tour to Sardinia 2019 by Vicky Palethorpe

If you had told me less than two years after joining CTC I would be cycling through mountains in Sardinia, I would have laughed sarcastically. However, with seven fine gents we travelled for 10 days. Every day was an adventure, either in terms of the journey or the place we sojourned.

We spent two nights at our base Hotel Daniel in Murta Maria, just outside Olbia, a simple hotel but with a swimming pool, good breakfasts, nice walk to the beach and restaurants near by. This was a great find by Mike Thomas who led the group.

### *First day cycling - Olbia to Oresi:*

It rained! I hadn't packed for cold, wet days. At our first café stop we were dripping wet and the lady gave us cloths to sit on inside. We had two coffees hoping it would soon stop raining. It didn't. So travelling on we got to the west coast, near Budoni; the waves were huge and we sat in a very unprepared restaurant listening to the roaring sea. Then we hit the hills and started climbing. It kept raining!

At **Oresi** we had rooms in a fairly modern hotel and got there with relief. However, the room situation took an hour to resolve and most of the chaps were kept standing around in soaking wet gear whilst negotiating the location and size of rooms.

We spent three days riding over the centre of the island; mountain after mountain, great view after great view. At first it was hard, then it just got to be normal and I got a bit competitive.



We seemed to spend half an hour or an hour going up one side and 15 minutes, if you were lucky, flying down the other side. As we climbed we saw many riders on electric bikes go past, but as far as we were concerned - we were travelling the conventional way.

Here the towns and villages

were very traditional in some ways, many of the older women dressed in black with long skirts and shawls.

**Mamoiada:** old fashioned town, two very Italian lady hosts! Not prepared for men wanting rooms with twin beds - and not speaking a word of English. However, the hosts did direct us to a very traditional restaurant with good food and wine and spontaneous musical entertainment.

**Fordogianus:** an old Roman spa town, delightful with a water pond in the square with shelters to sit underneath for precious shade.

We diverted from the main road for a shortcut. At first it was smooth and sandy. Then gradually stones and then large boulders appeared. We needed to lift the bikes over them. Mike came to rescue me on several occasions as, laden with saddlebags and walking down a steep slope for some half a mile, I was straggling behind. We discovered later this short cut was labelled as a goat track on the map!

From **Oristano** we rode to **Bosa**. There was an amazing descent with great views of the sea that was welcome after the mountains. The hotel had potential, but also mosquitoes! I was savaged the first night and felt too low to go with the lads off to town on our rest day. (It was raining anyway). Bosa had good restaurants and ice cream shops.

From Bosa, we travelled to **Sassari**, second city of the island, quite industrial, and the Indian meal was the best aspect of this place. Our next stop was an agrotourismo, near Vignola Mare. It was an easier route that day, though the last 10 miles were slower than expected.

From **Sassari** onwards we were travelling along the north east and north west coasts, the latter called the Costa Paradiso and Costa Smeralda. The colour of the sea was constantly breathtaking and such a reward to see after another steep climb. On our last riding day we rode through **Olbia** and stopped to see the beautiful church of San Simplicio, with its square and café, (coffee and ice cream!).

I haven't mentioned all the places we visited or stayed. But nearly every moment was brilliant. Most days we travelled 80km and on a couple of days climbed more than 1500 metres.

Mike, it was a fantastic experience, thank you!

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## SARDINIA TOUR – The Planning Process *by Mike Thomas*

When I first cycled in Sardinia, I was very impressed with the scenery, interesting medieval towns, good quiet roads and value for money. But the best attraction was the wonderful seafood, so when the group looked for a destination for a tour in 2019, I suggested Sardinia with a promise of these benefits. Having cycled down the west coast, and read about the inland mountains and attractive northern coast, a tour of Northern Sardinia following the coast and crossing the island through the mountains seemed like a plan. What I want to explain in this article is just how easy planning a tour is now we have the benefits of online digital mapping, flight and hotel bookings.

My first priority was to identify flights not too far from Coventry, and EasyJet soon provided the perfect solution flying from Luton to Olbia in the north east of Sardinia. The flights were at sensible times and dates looked ideal for a 10-day tour.

The next stage was to carry out a feasibility check for the tour, working on the basis of two days travelling, nine days cycling and one rest day. Each day's cycling should ideally be no more than 80km and 1500m of ascent. I used a fabulous online cycle mapping site called [cycle.travel](#) recommended by Alan Jelley.



*A slightly rougher track than planned?-Ed*

The next step was to go back into [cycle.travel](#) and look to see where there were possible stops for refreshments and places of interest. At this stage you can obviously do some research on the internet.

This is where [cycle.travel](#) is great because the distances along the route are shown and, if you see a likely town to stop off on the route, you can zoom into that area and 'hey presto' cafes and shops etc. are then shown. Once a stop was identified the route created by [cycle.travel](#) can be 'dragged' to it. In order for

the group to navigate exactly to the hotel, I saved the day's route in [cycle.travel](#) as a .gpx file, and then re-opened it in BikeHike ([bikehike.co.uk](#)). I used this to amend the last part of the route and extend it to the precise location of the hotel.

The [cycle.travel](#) planning tool quickly provides a suggested cycling route between two locations, and will identify the distance, ascent, and the nature of the roads; main roads, quiet roads or off road. So at this stage I put together a preliminary itinerary identifying possible places to stay.

Due to problems flying with bikes on previous tours, I was very anxious that our bikes were transported in bags or boxes. This meant that we needed to store them. I identified possible hotels near the airport and I emailed them asking if they could store our boxes for the duration of our tour. Fortunately I had an email back from Hotel Daniel in Murta Maria saying this was not a problem. So I booked this hotel for our first and last nights, and the manager there was really helpful. For each subsequent day of the tour I used [cycle.travel](#) starting at the hotel we were leaving and ending in the centre of the town I hoped to stay next. This was to re-check the distance and ascent.

There were two days of the tour when I produced optional routes for us to choose on the tour. From Bosa to Sassari we had the option of going on a direct route through the mountains or continue following the coast. I'm pleased that we chose the latter because we found the medieval town of Alghero delightful, and the ice cream wonderful. Later in the tour we had a choice of routes from Vignola Mere to Arzachena. A direct, short option would allow time to visit prehistoric sites near Arzachena. The alternative route was to follow the coast round the north east corner of Sardinia. I'm pleased we chose the coastal route because the views of the islands, such as La Maddalena, were excellent and through a haze you could see an outline of the mountains of southern Corsica.



But that's another tour to look forward to . . .



## CTC Coventry supports the Air Ambulance



This year through to October 2021 all riders on Sunday, Tuesday and Wednesday rides will be asked to make a donation to the Air Ambulance (Registered Charity No. 1098874).

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## Early Photo *courtesy of John Crighton*

(How many people does it take to mend a puncture?- Ed)



## The Cyclists' Memorial Service *by Dave Hearn*

The year 2021 is not only the 100th birthday of CTC Coventry. It is also the 100th anniversary of the Cyclists' Memorial Service; a national club event that has always been held on Meriden Green on the third Sunday in May.

It should be mentioned that 2021 will not be the 100th service. There were a number of years in the 1940s during World War II that the event was not officially held. However, it is known that on those few occasions a number of cyclists did in fact gather on the green to pay their respects. Sadly of course the events of 2020 saw the coronavirus pandemic that meant that again the service did not take place. Despite these absences 2021 will still be 100 years since the inaugural Cyclists' Memorial Service.

An excellent alternative in 2020 was provided by the Reverend Lynda Lilley of St. Laurence Church, Meriden who, with the aid of modern technology, produced a virtual service viewable on 'YouTube'. Our thanks went to Lynda for a very professional half hour's viewing enjoyed by all those who watched it. Lynda would, I know, agree that one of the biggest drawbacks of not having a traditional service in 2020 was that we were unable to partake of the excellent cakes supplied each year by the local Women's Institute.

Of course, both historically and geographically, the event is linked to Coventry since we are so nearby and cyclists from in and around the area have always supported and attended the service. The service has followed a similar pattern, several short readings, three or four



hymns and a wreath laying ceremony with wreaths provided by numerous sections of Cycling UK plus other clubs and organisations with the music supplied by the Bulkington Silver Band.

## A History of the Cyclists' Memorial on Meriden Green

The council of the CTC passed a resolution to erect a memorial to those cyclists who had died during the First World War. District Associations of the CTC and other cycling clubs contributed to the cost of building the grey granite obelisk that stands on Meriden Green, reputedly the centre of England.

10,000 cyclists assembled to witness the unveiling by Lord Birkenhead, the Lord Chancellor, on May 21st 1921. Riders came from all over the country, some having ridden through the night. The cyclists' MP, W.G. Howard Gritten gave a memorable address.

The original inscription on the memorial reads:

***To the lasting memory of those cyclists who died in the Great War 1914-1919.***

This has been added to by two plaques, the first of which reads:

***In remembrance of those cyclists who gave their lives in World War Two 1939-1945***

The most recent addition reads:

***In lasting memory of all cyclists who gave their lives when serving their country.***

On the green stands the CTC memorial seat designed by J.H. Hunt and unveiled in 1959 by H.H. England, vice president of the club. The seat was provided from a fund organised by the Birmingham and Midlands D.A. of which **wayfarer**, the famous cycling journalist, W.M. Robinson, was president for a time.

The inscription on the bench reads:



***To the memory of wayfarer (W.M. Robinson) who died 17th September 1956. His devotion to the pastime of cycling inspired many to enjoy the countryside and the open road.***

***Erected by the Cyclists' Touring Club.***

The halcyon days for attendances were in the 1950s when huge crowds attended - one year an estimated 22000 cyclists gathered.

I first attended the Cyclists' Memorial Service in around 1978. Since Margaret and I were married in 1984 we've perhaps missed one. I have organised the

service with Lynda Lilley and with unstinting support from my wife, Margaret, for the last five years. It is both an honour and a privilege to do this.

Harry Child, from Sutton Coldfield, had organised the event for 25 years and had decided it was time to pass on the reins as he was not in the best of health. Sadly, Harry has since passed away but Sheila, his widow, is still a committed attendee at Meriden.

Harry announced his decision to stand down at a CTC committee meeting. I think by this point we had all consumed a glass or two of wine in the host's cosy living room on a cold winter evening. Our chairman asked if anyone would take over from Harry. There was a silence. Margaret and I 'always' attend the service and I thought it would be a worthwhile job to take on. I put up my hand looking around the room to see how many other hands had gone up - **none**.

So I became the latest organiser of the Cyclists' Memorial Service. There were plenty present who were doing more time-consuming jobs for the club than I was and I should add that, not for one moment, have I regretted my decision.

Since then the vicar has been very keen to make the service welcome to all faiths and none. The Sikh Cycling Union attend without fail and one of their number presents a reading on the Green. We encourage not only members of Cycling UK to attend but other cycling clubs and individual cyclists with no particular club affinity.

In 2019 we welcomed sizeable groups of the Warwick Lanterne Rouge and Cannon Hill CC from Birmingham . We hope that the service continues in its



traditional format with a mass gathering of cyclists on the green, with, of course, the additional bonus of cakes afterwards at the village hall.



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## The Certificate of Merit *by Dave Hearn*



The Certificate of Merit award was founded in 1936: it is a pleasant experience when a fellow club member is awarded this recognition for their contribution. From time to time members will nominate someone who, in their opinion, deserves a Certificate of Merit award. It then goes to club headquarters for approval and confirmation. Possibly the greatest challenge is to keep the whole process a secret from the person in question.

Until recently the award consisted a pair of A4 paper certificates. One was awarded by The Council of the CTC who *'have placed on record their warm appreciation of the services rendered'*. The other gave a brief resumé of the recipient's cycling history whilst being a member. Both were framed by the recipient's clubmates prior to their presentation, often at a Christmas dinner or another social event. The frames were accompanied by an enamel badge depicting the club's iconic 'Winged Wheel' and the words 'For Merit'.

Recently the award consists of a single A4 certificate, sadly without a badge; how times change! It is however, no less of an accolade in winning this award than in its previous guise. Our latest recipient of the award was Mike Thomas.

Mike's wife, Ann, knew about the presentation and so had to keep it under her hat (or perhaps it should be under her helmet) until the evening.

David Cox OBE (former chair of Cycling UK's board of trustees) presented the award to the unsuspecting Mike.

These are the CTC Coventry  
Certificate of Merit recipients:

1936	Arthur Astill
1949	Bob Kemp
1950	Billy May
1967	Ollie Ward
1975	Geoff Collins
1978	Jim & Janet Willis
1981	Gordon Mead
1981	Alec Cox
1991	Ray Hudson
1996	Dave Hearn
2005	George Riches
2012	Bob Tinley
2019	Mike Thomas

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## More Early Photos and Memories - *courtesy of Melvin Cox and John Crighton*

(Observations: The complete absence of Lycra, helmets and quite a large proportion of women riders. A lot of stopping at junctions wondering which way to go, pushing bikes uphill, oh for GPS and a few more gears... **Ed**)



**John Crighton** has written many memories and anecdotes from the 1960s – you can read the full account on the CTC website under ‘Veteran Voices’ – see [coventryctc.org.uk/veteran-voices](http://coventryctc.org.uk/veteran-voices).

Here is a taster:

*“I joined the CTC Coventry section in the autumn of 1960 when I was 22 - it was a turning point in my life and all for the better. I have made lifelong friends and have happy memories of the people I met, the places I visited and the adventures I had. All this, even though I lived in Coventry for only two and a half years - thanks to Gordon Mead.*

*I had moved to Coventry to start work with the GEC and was very fortunate to be under the guidance of Gordon, a design engineer. That was in Radio Works, Crow Lane, the former Rudge Cycles factory. Wherever practically possible, Gordon managed to incorporate cycle components such as a chain or down tube gear lever and cable into his designs. His inspired creations were often hatched after a bit of quiet reflection studying a drawing after a refill of tobacco in his ever-present pipe.*

*Early in my training, when I was still new to Coventry, Gordon introduced me to the CTC and life became much more interesting, enjoyable and eventful. It gave me the chance to have fortnightly escapes from my digs for the whole weekend and to explore places such as the Peak District, without question my favourite area”.*



## Memories from a CTC member who joined in 1948

*a letter written to Dave Hearn by Kath Shipley*

Hi Dave,

Sorry I have been so long in sending these notes to you. We have been busy doing nothing and going nowhere for 4 months.

Before we had the children we used to cycle for every holiday and week end. We often did 2000/3000 miles a year.

When we retired at 60, we bought bikes and started cycling again, taking them on the back of our motor homes for the next 20 years.

I have listed the members of the family section. You have probably heard of some of them. Although by now they would be about 120

Arthur & Floss Simpson - Noel & Roger

Jack & Connie Read - Jill

Ony & Rose Ward - Edward

Jack & Ada Ward - Trevor

Jack & Rose Greenhill - Peter & Susan

Arthur & Doff Dadeley - Paul

Wal & May Adler - Gerald

Hope this is helpful to you

Kath Shipley

## Happy Memories of Cycling

I joined the family section of the CTC with my parents in 1948  
I was 12.

My mum and dad rode a tandem, because my mother had never ridden a bike.

There were about six fathers riding tandems with children on the back, and one mother with a child seat.

Arthur Simpson being small had a drop back tandem, others had different pedal arrangements.

We would all take sandwiches and buy a cup of tea for lunch, and then have a tea of bread & jam with a cake.

By the time I was 17 a junior section section was started.

It didn't last very long, because a lot of the youngsters stayed late playing cards at the tea places and the cafe owners complained.

In 1954, I joined the social and youth hostel sections. My first hostel trip was to Broom and we stopped off on the way to Jola and Maie Stanton's wedding, where we held wheels up for the photos.

Sunday 11th May 1958 was a very exciting day for most of us. Jim Willis had organised an air trip from Baginbun to Southampton with our bikes. Most of us hadn't flown before. We cycled 70 miles around the New Forest, before we flew home in the evening.

# Join Cycling UK

**CTC Coventry** does not charge a membership fee or ask that riders pay to join our rides. As potential members you are welcome to ride with us up to three times to see what we do and to get to know us. After that we ask that you join our umbrella organisation, [Cycling UK](#), which will not only allow you to continue to ride with us and participate in ongoing events and activities but will also give you access to a wide range of [Member Benefits](#):

- [Cycling UK](#) acts as an umbrella for a network of cycling groups similar to ours across the whole of UK and as a member you have free access and support to ride with all of those other groups nationwide.
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- Access to [Cycling UK cycling holidays and tours](#) in the UK, across Europe and throughout the world.
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- Free access to the [Cycling UK incident line](#) and [cycling-related legal advice](#) should you be unfortunate to be involved in an accident.
- [Cycling UK](#) has negotiated an ever increasing number of discounts across a range of cycling related Retailers and Services (*check the [Cycling UK website for the latest list](#)*), but currently –
- 10% off cycles and cycle-related products and services at [Halfords](#)
- Many bike shops and leisure retailers (including some local ones) offer discounts to [Cycling UK](#) members including:
  - 15% at [Cotswold Outdoor stores](#), [Snow+ Rock](#), [Runner Need](#) and [YHA accommodation bookings](#)
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Your membership supports [national](#) and [local cycle campaigns](#) to get more people on their bikes and to improve cycling infrastructure for all.

In addition your membership supports [Coventry CTC](#) (we receive a small contribution from [Cycling UK](#) each year) and gives us greater access to [Cycling UK](#) resources.

### ***How much does membership cost?***

There is a range of membership types. Rates from November 2020 are:

<b>Individual</b>	£48 per annum or £4 per month
<b>Junior/Student</b> <i>(in full-time education)</i>	£24 per annum or £2 per month
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<b>Household</b>	£75 per annum or £6.25 per month
<b>Affiliated</b> <i>(linked to an affiliated club - no magazine or legal incident line)</i>	£28 per annum or £2.33 per month

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# Club Organisation

President	Gordon Mead
Chairman	Bob Tinley
Secretary	Vicky Palethorpe
Treasurer	Keith Jeacock
Promotions Officer	TBC
Welfare Officer	Mike Thomas
Registration Officer	George Riches
Clubroom/Social Organiser	Dave Hearn
Committee Member	Pip Milton
Committee Member	Peter Seamen
Committee Member	Simon Clarke
Auditor	Paul Whitehead
Weekly Bulletin Editor	Bob Tinley
Rides Publisher	George Riches
WordPress Apps Support	Alan Jelley
Web IT management	George Riches
Centenary Booklet Editor	Paul Morton
Ride Leaders/Event Organisers	As identified and registered by the club committee.





**Dean from BIKEWRENCH says**  
**“Congratulations to Coventry CTC Cycling**  
**Group on their Centenary”**

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*This booklet marks the Centenary celebrations of the Coventry section of Cycling UK - a charitable membership organisation with more than 68,000 members with the objective of supporting cyclists and promoting bicycle use.*

*It records the progress of the Coventry club since its formation in 1921, with stories and memories from its members but also looks to the future of cycling as we enter a new world which is less dependent on fossil fuels. Since the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 there are already signs of an increased adoption of cycling and a greater awareness of the health and cost benefits that the joy of cycling - for work and pleasure – can bring.*

*We hope it will inform, entertain and bring you closer to the world of cycling.*

*With thanks to all the advertisers, supporters and contributors, the booklet is dedicated to cyclists everywhere . . .*

***CTC Coventry Centenary – Celebrating our first 100 years ... and building a Club fit for our next 100***