

CYCLISTS' TOURING CLUB

COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE D. A.

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CELEBRATES

1921-1996

**75**  
YEARS





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**75**  
YEARS



This is a booklet to celebrate  
the 75th anniversary of the  
birth of Coventry Section  
of Coventry and  
Warwickshire D.A.  
Cyclists' Touring Club.

## CYCLISTS TOURING CLUB COVENTRY SECTION

Coventry and Warwickshire D.A.

### Committee 1996

Keith Roberts-Honorary Secretary:  
99 Standard Avenue, Coventry,  
Tel: 421562.

Gordon Mead - Chairman

Sheila Woodcock - Treasurer

Roger Shelbourn - Minutes Secretary

John Callinan, Tony Benn,

David Hearn, Ray Hudson,

Terry Stamper, Robert Tinley,

Robert Watts.

### D.A. Representatives:

G Mead, K Roberts and R Hudson.

Sub committee responsible for the  
75th year celebrations:

G Mead, D Hearn, S Woodcock,

R Tinley and R Watts.

*For details of current activities please  
contact the honorary secretary.*



## Congratulations Coventry Section

The formation of a section of the Cyclists' Touring Club is always an act of faith and optimism by the founders, and 75 years on the optimism of those early members proved to be well judged. Doubtless, like many others, the section has experienced its ups and downs, but the determination of a spirited few kept the flag flying during the low periods.

Cyclists are remarkably resilient, they have to be to cope with all that the climate (and bureaucrats) of these islands can inflict. One might forgive those who expect to behold a rather lugubrious individual, but the magic of the cycle transforms the looked for vision into one of laughter, good humour and friendliness. These attributes are heightened when group riding is undertaken. A group laughs at misfortunes, makes light of the tough times, enjoys every mile of the way (well most of the time), be they easy or hard. Taking a full part in section activities is not only a way to physical fitness, one learns to be more tolerant and thus able to cope with the irritants that so often beset us in the rush and bustle of the 1990's.

Friendships made are very real, usually for life, what better tribute can be paid to our chosen pastime and organisation?

For 75 years Coventry Section has played its part in fostering this spirit of this great Club of ours. long may you continue to do so.

*Ted King*  
*President of the CTC 1996*

## From T'Chairman

I had no idea, having joined the CTC fifty years ago, that I would still be a member of the Coventry Section when it reached it's 75th anniversary.

During that time I have travelled to places both at home and abroad that in my early years would have seemed impossible. I have made numerous friends through the club and hope, health permitting, to continue to do so for some years to come.

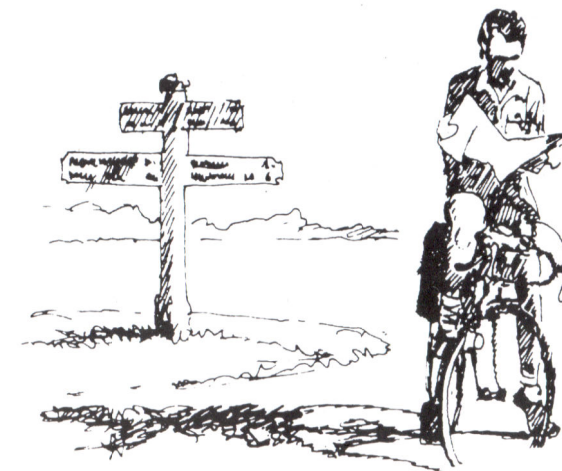
Many changes have taken place: The roads are more congested, motorways have been built, many of the byways we enjoyed have disappeared and there are more diversions to distract members.

Despite this members still join to enjoy the freedom and pleasures that only our activity can offer with like minded companions away from the pleasures of city life.

It is said that a committee is a group of the unqualified doing the unnecessary for the uninterested. Be that as it may, without the efforts of many members, we would never have reached our 75th anniversary.

Our next object is to reach our centenary. Perhaps you can help us reach it - and be there to see it.

*Gordon Mead*





## The Story So Far

In the 75 years of our existence very few attempts have been made to document the changing face of club life as it applied to us.

Changes there have been; some of a major nature, but others have crept upon us almost without notice. There were good times when we flourished and bad when we survived (just) but surprisingly club life does not appear to have altered to any great extent.

Our official records commence around 1938, earlier ones have presumably been lost or stored (hidden) beyond the present bounds of our District Association. Fortunately we have some early runs programmes, many photographs and a few

details of social events. These, plus stories related by older members, have helped to fill in the voids.

What knowledge we have gleaned has been assembled into some sort of order. Not a history as such but a series of reminiscences and stories interlinked with comments and explanations. It won't be complete - it never could be, but we hope it is sufficient to conjure up some happy memories of the times you had with the Coventry Section of the CTC.



*Red Lion at Ilmington 1927*

## Early Days

Since Coventry was a major manufacturing centre at the start of the British cycle industry it is probable that around that time local members were joining the CTC.

It is known that J K Starley was an active member before or by 1920 and that in that same year some members joined others to form a cycling club within the Barras Green Working Mens Club, not wishing to ride to Birmingham to take part in organised activities. The badge they adopted was based upon that of the CTC - a winged wheel, but instead of the wings, three in number, within the wheel, they had two wings outside the wheel.

Some were riding to Birmingham and in the 50th anniversary booklet of the Southern Section of the Birmingham and Midland

DA it states, "...and how much more enthusiastic can you get than to ride to the meet from Coventry as some young ladies did?".

But members were enthusiastic, especially the ladies since they were at least able to break away from the previously accepted rules of maidenly behaviour.

Eventually as numbers increased there was the desire for the establishment of a local Section though even after it took place some riders still travelled to Birmingham to continue their association with those who had become firm friends.



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## Coventry Section

First known as the South-eastern Section, the first run was held on 9th April 1921, when four members visited Fillongley. Then, in May, 1924, the name was changed to the present Coventry Section, and a tremendous advance was made in the two or three years immediately following. The need was felt for a longer distance run, and the Hard-riders were formed on 7th February, 1925, developing later into the A Sub-section, and this was successfully carried on until October, 1934, when it was abandoned.

Since November, 1925, the "100 in 8" and Hill Climb have been held, and were well supported last year. November, 1925 also saw the first week-end to the Olympia Cycle Show, but unfortunately it has been allowed to lapse during the past year, for the first time since 1925.

On October 1st, 1926, a room was obtained for use as a club room, at the Y.M.C.A., Coventry. The weekly meetings were quite informal and no programmes were at first arranged, but to-day our Social programme forms a considerable part of our activities.

The present Camping Section was formed on 3rd November, 1930. This Section is strongly supported, and last year the members divided to form a Long Distance Camping Section.

The Section has always specialised in arranging holiday tours for its members, and these have been well supported and eagerly anticipated. Practically every part of the country has been covered by these Section tours.

1935 sees us still growing and planning for the future of the C.T.C. in Coventry.

*Reproduced from the Birmingham and Midland D.A. Handbook for 1935*

## A Section is Formed

*Recalled by Arthur Simpson*

"An invitation to take part in a ride to see how work was progressing on the new cyclists' memorial at Meridan was placed in the Midland Daily Telegraph, at his own expense, by Bill May. Seven riders eventually turned up on the due date - 21st April 1921. It was discovered that the unveiling was to take place on the 21st May by Lord Birkenhead, Minister of Transport. The ride continued via Fillongley where tea was taken at Andertons the local bakehouse. While there plans were made for a series of both Saturday and Sunday rides but at first these attracted little support. The turning point was a lantern talk by Wayfarer (N M Robinson) entitled "The English Wonderland" which attracted wide support and resulted in many new members."

The period to 1935 is documented in the extract taken from the Birmingham and Midland DA Handbook reproduced opposite.

From 1936 the Section continued from strength to strength until the outbreak of war in 1939. At that time a full programme of events had been planned and every effort was made to keep the wheels turning. Members were called up for National Service making it difficult to form a full committee. Whilst Coventry Section managed to keep going, other Sections had problems and Coventry rides were for a time advertised as DA rides. Perhaps we were lucky that so many members were in 'reserved' occupations and avoided call-up.



*Bill May with Birmingham Section in 1920  
(but which one's Bill?)*



## The War Years and Beyond

*As remembered by John Stanton and Gordon Mead*

The working week was long. War work involved much overtime and Saturday morning working was normal. Many members had to do some form of 'voluntary' service so regular attendance at runs was not always possible - especially in the period of the air raids. The roads were virtually empty with car ownership being low and petrol on ration. Even the main roads were safe for the cyclist. Occasionally a military convoy was encountered but it was very rare. The Americans though, possibly because of their left-hand drive, tended to cut very close.

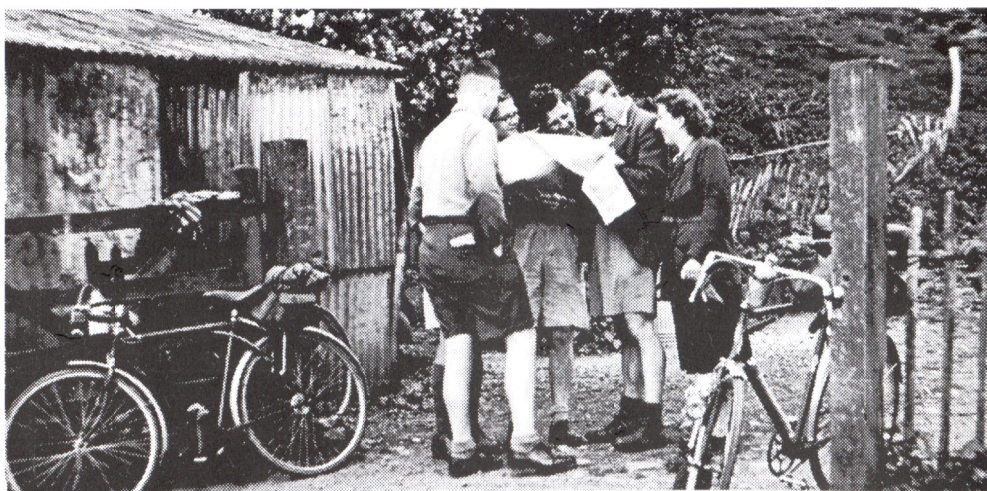
Map reading skills were essential as all road signs had been removed in case of an invasion. Bomb dumps and ammunition

bunkers lined some country roads: small airfields, camps (sometimes prisoner-of-war), sentry boxes etc. sprang up in the most surprising places.

The biggest dangers to cyclists at this time were probably the pot-holed roads and tram lines of the city.

Equipment began to wear out and couldn't easily be replaced. Tyres, tubes and chains were the biggest problem.

Several members sustained injuries during the war and were invalided home. One lost a leg at Dunkirk and was repatriated via Sweden but was shortly back on his bike and leading club runs! Another returned from the Navy with a badly damaged leg but was DA Secretary by 1943 and eventually became a CTC councillor.



*Little Stretton - Whitson 1947*



*Charlbury Weekend*

Conditions soon improved after the end of the war in Europe. Rationing was still in force but cyclists' teas were sometimes the highlight of the week. As many as 360 were catered for on Sunday at the Shakespeare Inn at Harbury. Often a tea would consist of bread, butter and jam, cakes or scones and as much tea as you could drink for about 1/6d to 2/- (10 to 12p). Not luxurious by today's standards but certainly filling. There was a saying that, "he who eats fastest eats the most" - not strictly true because there was always enough for everyone.

Some caterers provided that little extra - some a lot extra. Mrs Copley at Warwick was renowned for her trifle and custard - and sometimes bubble and squeak.

Lunch was always carried as sandwiches. During the afternoon it was common to have a game of rounders or football.

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## After the War

After the war cycling boomed: there were about 10 cycling clubs in Coventry. The first bonfire run for six years was held in the field at Mrs Chamberlains, Fen End, to be followed by bangers and mash.

Regular mid-week rides went to the same venue - with beans on toast for 10p. Many from the Section also attended the Tuesday evening racing at the Butts stadium. Hundreds of cycles were parked outside, unlocked. There was no problem with thieves at that time - but there was finding or even reaching your own bike!

All the regular events took place: 50 in 4 (ladies and juniors only) up to 200 in 24, treasure hunts, chalk chases, and the big event - Sports Day.

Members participated in the 1949 Courtesy Week procession around Coventry, riding, in costume, cycles from the Bartleet collection - which eventually formed the nucleus of the display at the Museum of British Road Transport.

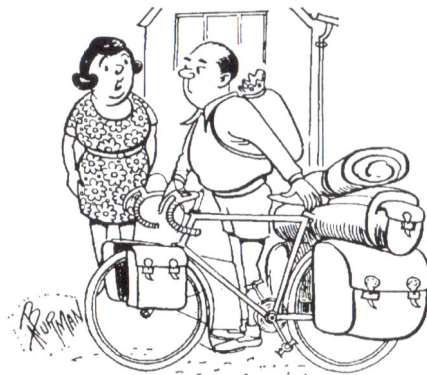
In 1950 Section members appeared, vaguely, in a Daily Mirror photograph taken at Stonehenge showing the Druids greeting the summer sun. This was the half way point on a 200 in 24, but with the finish at Weston Subedge over 230 miles were eventually covered. 38 riders took part.

1951 saw members building and manning a display mounted on a horse drawn dray for the Festival of Britain Godiva Pageant.

This was a busy year with many special events around the country. A Section team

of 16 entered the North Wales open hilly hundred in eight, and after being goaded by a group of 'comedians' (BLRC; no guards, no tools, no sense!) we were stung into riding the event in 6 hours 25 minutes - despite our week-end hostelling kit. Some took an extra day to ride part of the route again, to see what it was like and admire the scenery, covering 390 miles in 3 days. 27 members joined the spring hostelling trip to North Wales.

In 1952 the CTC instituted the British Cycle Tourist Competition based on events that had been organised by various DA's for some years. They were popular with Section members who enjoyed a week-end away in fresh country. This first national event was won by a local member. Shame then that the tourist trial has lost its appeal due to the win-at all-costs attitude of some regular competitors.



*'Are you sure you've not forgotten anything?'*

## ACCOUNTING FOR TASTE

In a recent poll of current cycling opinion, an attempt was made to find out why cyclists drink so much tea. The replies received were as follows:

- a) Because everybody drinks tea - 1%
- b) Nothing else to do with it - 1%
- c) Unprintable replies - 98%

While these figures are interesting, they are not as useful as other information compiled at the same time. It was discovered that a cyclist drinks an average of 8 cups of tea a day. This set us a problem: How much tea does a cycling club drink in one year? Those who drink much more than average have a problem of their own, but that is by the way!

Let us assume that our cycling club consists of twenty members, all of whom 1) attend regularly every Sunday, 2) drink the average amount of tea, and 3) take sugar and milk.

In one year our club will have consumed on Sunday runs 8320 cups of tea, made with 2760 pints of hot water, 320 pints of milk and 12480 spoons of sugar.

The WATER would take over 7.5 hours to run through a village tap and would take over 11 days to boil, using one gas ring.

The MILK would require the services of one cow, day and night, for one week, and the bottles, if placed end to end, would stretch for 48 bicycle lengths.

The SUGAR would be sufficient to fill 65 inner tubes of the 26" x 1.25" size, if you could only get it in.

Our drinks would have helped to find employment for (amongst others): water engineers, chemists, plumbers, lorry drivers, glass moulders, farm labourers, sugar refiners and packers, salesmen, shop assistants and waitresses - and what has it cost us? At 2d per cup, a mere £69.6.6! Anyone for coffee?

*As published in "Fair Winds" the D. A. News Sheet for Jan-Feb. 1956*



## Bikes on Trains

In 1955 the DA hosted the first cycle-rail excursion from London to Rugby, with Section members playing the leading role in the event. A film, *Cyclists Special*, was made to record the event. The attendance on the train was not up to expectations due to a rail strike lasting until the Friday of the previous week.

The following year a full train load of 350 cyclists came to Coventry and the organisation we set up was used as a model for other events which followed nationally.

Coventry Carnival was an annual event around this time and for several years from 1958 onwards the Section put in an entry with titles such as 'The Travelling Circus', 'The Wild West', complete with chuck wagon, and 'Wares on Wheels', winning



*'What was that some reader wrote in the last issue about there being plenty of scope for a better brake?'*

first prize in the group for cycling clubs.

By the early sixties, cycling began to decline in popularity. Most people now had a car and the roads were becoming congested. Many children were told it was too dangerous to cycle.

Factories were dismantling cycle racks in an attempt to find more space for car parks.

A national scheme to train children in safe cycling was set up under the RoSPA banner. A number of our members were trained as instructors and over many years we were the backbone of efforts in the City scheme with as many as three groups of six operating at the same time.



*Trained instructors*



*Coventry Carnival 1956*

Another sign of the decline was the dramatic fall in the numbers attending the annual Meridan Memorial Service, and at one time the event was in danger of failing. It did survive and the later addition of the Arden Rides gave it a new lease of life.

*Congratulations to  
Coventry and Warwickshire  
D.A.  
on their  
60th Anniversary*

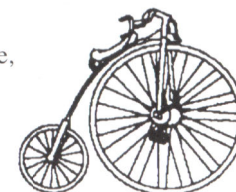
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## More Recent Years

*by Gordon Mead*

Section support in the sixties did slowly decline, but having a large group of regular and committed riders to start with, we fared better than most. However, because of natural wastage, we had only three or four active members by the mid 70's.

In 1976 attendances improved as members began to return. Some had taken time out to raise a family; others found that driving was no longer a pleasure, especially with petrol prices increasing; but best of all, there was a steady influx of younger members.

For the CTC Centenary celebrations in

1978 we organised a special ride, with certificate, of around 100 miles to Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum. It was a great success.

By 1980 good attendances were normal, with enthusiasm abounding.

Our Diamond Jubilee was celebrated in 1981 with a dinner and nostalgic slide show at the Maudsley Hotel. Morning and afternoon starts for the rides were normal at this time.

The CTC Birthday Rides were organised in our area by East Warwickshire and Birmingham DA's in 1986. Section



*Presidents Ride 1977*



*Monmouth Birthday Rides 1989*

members played a leading role in the planning and leading of rides. Since then we have supported these annual events with great enthusiasm.

The last 10 years have progressed smoothly with Sunday rides, hostel weekends and holidays, with consistent support for DA and nationwide events. This could have been written in the 50's!

And what of the future? Only time will tell but the omens are good. At last the public and those in power seem to agree that something must be done to limit the damage caused to the environment, both physical and visual, by traffic pollution. We have a clean conscience.

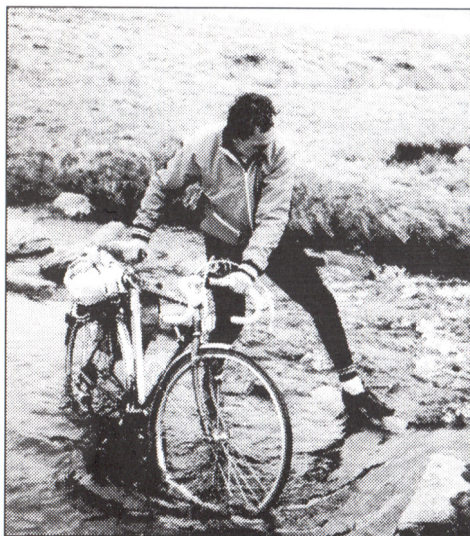


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*The Club of Good Companions*



## Sub-Section



*Wet feet in Wales, March 1993*

Section members have always been keen to go youth hostelling. In the 1950's a special sub-Section (then full Section for 10 years) arranged a week-end every two weeks throughout the year - plus longer tours for whenever they could find an excuse. We still have the week-ends and the tours, but less frequently.

This wasn't the only sub-section in our past: camping, hardriding, family (later a full Section with its own junior sub-Section) and Allesley - all catered for specific interests, but none lasted and the current trend is to encourage riders, for the sake of continuity, to stay with the main Section.



*Technical problems, Sunday ride 1995*

## Clubrooms

The clubroom has always featured strongly amongst our activities. From an 'Evening with the Wireless' and a Banjo Band in the early days, with quizzes and talent contests a little later.

During the war all clubs joined forces for the Coventry Cyclists Social Club, but returned as soon as possible to organising their own events. One event they organised was a sports day - an excellent do, especially as the CTC won most of the prizes!

We moved around to various venues after the war according to whatever we could afford: Pubs, schools, church halls etc. At one stage an unknown benefactor paid 10/- a week to keep us afloat. With many young members the preferred activities were darts and table tennis. As the average age increased there was a demand for slide shows. 35 mm colour film was now available and with more members travelling abroad we purchased our own projector and screen. Slide shows were eventually held every week throughout the winter. We have now travelled full circle: Very few slides are taken - print film having improved so much in recent years. We have already reduced the shows to one every two weeks and unless there is more interest the clubroom may fade away.



*"Remember that truck-driver yelling 'Get lost'? Well . . ."*



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## Cycling Towards the next Century

(or it's miles to the Millenium)

To mark the 75th anniversary I'd like to share some of my memories with you, although compared to Johnny Stanton and Gordon Mead, I am a newcomer to cycling.

I joined the CTC in 1977 and began to ride with the Section immediately and my only regret is that I did not do so sooner. There are however, those days that we all have when the rain pours, the wind howls, the tummy rumbles and we question our sanity, but still I say no regrets.

In fact, the 19 years have given me a wealth of memories, experiences and friendships. And not just locally. I have been lucky enough to have participated in CTC

tours overseas on five occasions, including three in the Alps, thus fulfilling an ambition by riding over several of the high passes.

In my experience it's not only friendships that are made within the CTC. I met my wife Margaret on a club tour and could list another five couples who have tied the knot following their meeting on club activities.

It is of course the Section that has pride of place just now, and although I don't wish to simply list events, a number ought to be mentioned.

With my fellow Section members I have enjoyed some superb holidays and week-ends away visiting many picturesque areas



*Cape Wrath 1989*

of England, Wales and Scotland using Youth Hostel accommodation or camping. Each trip carries with it, its own memories; the exploits and incidents too numerous to mention them all. There are always a few which stand out, like the time we arrived at York rally at midnight in the gusting wind and pouring rain to be faced with the near impossible task of erecting a six berth frame tent which we had never seen before. I think the Scottish midges, the Welsh rain and the snow on Cleeve Hill feature high in the memories too.

The Section regularly supports National events. The annual birthday rides remain the most popular. Following 1986, when we were heavily involved with organising the event, which was based at the University of Warwick, members have taken part in seemingly ever increasing numbers each year.

Two other events stand out. Firstly in 1982, eating sandwiches halfway across the Severn bridge at 3... something in the morning, watching the sunrise. It was the Section's 24 hour Standard Ride (240 miles), and myself and five other riders took part. We all finished successfully, including one who dispelled any theory that one could sleep and cycle simultaneously.

1989 saw 13 members negotiate the Semi-roughstuff Ride to Cape Wrath. A marvellous memory from possibly my favourite tour in the UK. We were the largest group to 'do' Cape Wrath that year, and memberships of the Cape Wrath Fellowship, with certificates and badges, were to follow.

It's not all where you go and what you do however.

The camaraderie between cyclists is, I'm



*Cape Wrath 1989*



sure, one of the reasons I've enjoyed being an active member of the CTC.

1990 saw the birth of our daughter, Ruth, who passed her first couple of summers idly sitting in her kiddy seat. Now, at the ripe old age of five, she is stoker (or sometimes shirker) on a tandem.

This brings me to the future of the Section which after many years without has now introduced Family/Easy Rides once a month. As well as reflecting over the last 75 years we also need to look to the future. It would be nice to think that in another 75 years Coventry Section could be planning an even bigger event. Hopefully, by contin-

uing with our Family Rides and encouraging newcomers of any age from all walks of life, Coventry Section can move into the next century, and continue to provide happy cycling for many people.

*David Hearn*

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## Message from the East Warwickshire DA Secretary to the Coventry Section

Although I have been Cycle touring since I was about 14 years old, I am amongst the newer/younger members of the Coventry Section! Over the years many miles have slipped away under my wheels in fair weather and foul, and, as the family has grown up, the number and the configuration of the wheels has changed.

After a few years off the bike, a club member encouraged me to get back on my bike and join the Coventry Section. This was a real breath of fresh air, in more ways than one, and I was made to feel at home immediately with the group.

Now was the time when I really started to learn about cycling: how to pace myself for the survival of a long run, how to match the route to the terrain and the weather, how to travel light and how to relax in an ever more stressful world. In short the camaraderie to be found in the Coventry Section will not be bettered elsewhere.

No names, but I remember the bloke who could fall off his bike in the middle of a straight stretch of road entirely unaided; and the pensioner who rode Rosedale Chimney on a 50 inch gear; and the packhorse; and the price of bananas; and the frustrated undertaker.

I remember communal cooking extravaganzas and nursing a hangover in York Minster. I think we all remember the good times and have an amazing ability to the storms and blizzards behind us. That's what keeps us all going with a united sense of purpose.

Congratulations Coventry to your last 75 years and may you continue to thrive with eternal optimism and a liberal sprinkling of cycling spirit.

*Bob (rough stuff) Tinley, April 1996*



## OFFICIALS THROUGH THE YEARS

	CHAIRMAN	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1921 - 24	-	W F May	-
1925 - 28	W F May	R W Slattery	-
1929 - 30	W F May	Miss Elston	-
1931	H A Whiteley	N Southall	-
1932 - 33	-	A J Cox	-
1934	-	-	-
1935 - 36	A Simpson	A Astill	R Tooby
1937	A Astill	C Partridge	A Simpson
1938	R Saffery	H Allen	A Simpson
1939	R Saffery	H Hollyoak	Chignell
1940	C Partridge	H Hollyoak	Chignell
1941 - 44	C Partridge	H Hollyoak	B Martin
1945	C Partridge	J Gibson	H Tope
1946 - 47	C Partridge	J Gibson	Miss M Attwood
1948	H Tope	N Wilson	Miss M Kirby
1949 - 50	H Tope	J Stanton	Miss M Kirby
1951	N Wilson	Mr & Mrs A Nicholas	S Jones
1952	G Mead	Mr & Mrs A Nicholas	S Jones
1953	G Mead	J Stanton	G Collins
1954 - 55	G Collins	O Ward	G Collins
1956 - 57	O Ward	D Carter	G Collins
1958 - 60	G Mead	B Seager	S Jones
1961	G Mead	N Smith & Miss S Pallet	Miss E Williams
1962	M Queen	Miss S Pallet	T Outram
1963	M Queen	J O'Brian	J Willis

Officials cont:-

	CHAIRMAN	SECRETARY	TREASURER
1964 - 69	G Mead	M Queen	D Phillips
1970 - 72	G Mead	M Queen	Mrs S Queen
1973 - 76	-	G Mead	L Shale
1977 - 80	G Mead	D Bowers	G Mead
1981 - 85	G Mead	S Jewsbury	G Mead
1986 - 88	G Mead	K Roberts	G Mead
1989 - 95	G Mead	K Roberts	C Lewis
1996	G Mead	K Roberts	Ms S Woodcock

Any assistance in filling the gaps would be appreciated. There are many other officials we are regrettably unable to list due to limitations of space.

We must also mention N I K Wilson who acted as Section Auditor over many years.

## SPECIAL HONOURS

### RECIPIENTS OF THE CTC CERTIFICATE OF MERIT

1936	A Astill	1975	G Collins
1949	R Kemp	1978	Jim & Janet Willis
1950	W F May	1981	A Cox & G Mead
1967	O Ward	1991	R Hudson

### DISTINCTIONS

1952	Harry Tope:	1st place in the first BCTC
1956	John Stanton:	awarded the Alfred Bird Memorial Medal following the very successful cycle-rail excursion to Coventry

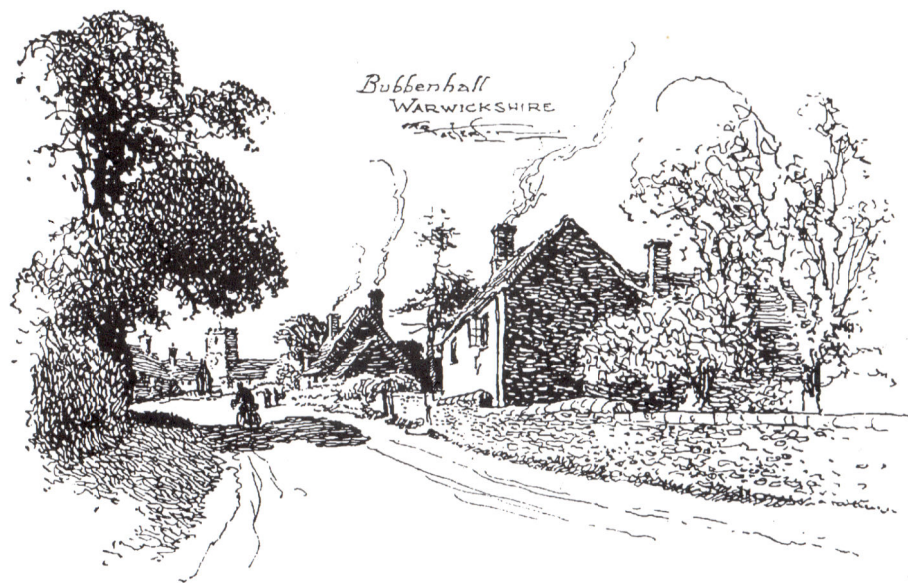


**75**  
YEARS

## CYCLE SPORT

Both Eileen Sheridan, national ladies amateur, and later professional, road racing champion and Karl Barton, national track sprint champion, started their riding with Coventry Section.

Many Section members have also done yeoman service in official DA positions and will no doubt receive due recognition when the DA history is recorded.



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ETB

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