

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.

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 National Cycle Tourer 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.