

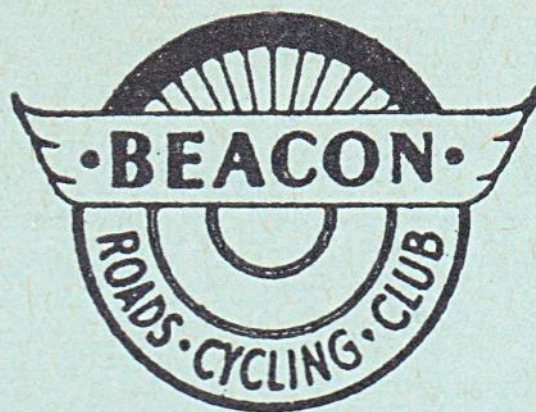
N.C.U.

W.C.A.

R.T.T.C.

M.R.R.A.

B.L.R.C.



Founded  
1946

**Past Presidents:**

H. Holmes, Esq.

T. J. Shipway, Esq.

J. B. Clements, Esq.

D. S. Cole, Esq.

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## 75TH ANNIVERSARY SOUVENIR

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**Foreword:**

By the president

**Recollections:**

From each decade  
of the club's history

**Features:**

On all the main  
fields of club activity

**Profiles:**

Of great characters  
from the past

**Photos:**

Covering the  
whole 75 years

**Press cuttings:**

Highlighting events  
in club history

**A tribute to seventy-five years of achievement and  
friendship and all the people who played a part.**









# *75 years of...* achievement and friendship

## *Foreword*

On 10 November 1946, thirteen young people met at a café in the Clent Hills. It was barely eighteen months since the war had ended. Food, clothing and fuel were all strictly rationed; Birmingham was littered with sites where buildings had been razed by bombs; everyone was feeling the pinch of postwar austerity. And yet there was a buoyant sense of relief and hope. Relief that the constant fear of losing children, siblings, lovers, friends was finally over. Hope that the future was bright. At long last, people could throw themselves into simple recreational pleasures. Huge crowds flocked to football matches; the dance halls were full. And those thirteen young people who gathered in the café took the unanimous decision to start a club through which to indulge their passion for cycling.

So it was that the Beacon Roads Cycling Club was born. Three quarters of a century later, we are a thriving community of more than two hundred people, active in almost every area of the sport and pastime of cycling.

All of us who today have the pleasure of belonging to that community owe a debt of thanks not only to the thirteen, but also to hundreds of others who have since added their energy, ambition and ideas, and have taken the club forward into new fields and on to new achievements.

This souvenir is a celebration of all those people. It does not pretend to be a history. What it seeks to do is open a series of windows, each of which affords a view of one small part of the landscape of the past, as seen by someone who knew it well. So that you, the reader, can form an impression of the breadth, diversity and richness of that landscape.

By taking that approach, the souvenir inevitably omits the stories of many people whose contributions to the club were no less significant than those of the people who feature. Unfortunately, the desire to produce something compact and accessible, combined with the fact that many wonderful characters are no longer with us to tell their tales, made it impossible to do everyone justice.

In the booklet, you'll find a description of club life in each decade spanned by our seventy-five years. Interspersed are features on the various fields of activity we're involved in. Together, the two sets of articles are intended to build a picture of the Beacon through time and across disciplines.

I hope you enjoy it!

*George Barker*  
*President, Beacon Roads Cycling Club*  
*November 2021*



# *Recollections of...*

## the 1940s with Harry Morris



***"If I could go back,  
I wouldn't change a thing"***

"We more or less all knew each other," says Harry, his hindsight barely clouded by the fog of time. "A few of us worked together at the Ariel motorcycle plant in Selly Oak, some of the others around the corner at Ward's. We were all cyclists, some were already in clubs. But we were keen, we wanted to race as well as doing social riding, and the only club nearby was just a family club.

"What you've got to realise is that it was right after the war. We'd only just got past that, and everyone was happy. We just wanted to enjoy ourselves. Nev Smith got us together. It was his idea to form a new club, so we could do things our own way. He was the organiser, really. I was just the babby of the group. Sixteen, I was. I didn't really say anything, just listened, and when they all voted I put my hand up too.

"Nev was a great organiser, did things properly. It was all very formal by today's standards, but very democratic. We discussed everything and voted on it; everything was agreed together. We chose 'Beacon' as the name because there was a chap who had a garage at the top of Beacon Hill that we used as a sort of meeting place, up above Rubery. But the decision to form the club wasn't taken there. We all met up at Walton Tea Rooms, Clent. That's where the vote was taken, and we all signed our names.

"The reason the club took off, I think, is that we had some very good riders in that group, combined with Nev

motivating everyone. We soon got more riders joining us, including girls. Some of them were very good. One weekend, we rode to Aberystwyth and back. Out on the Saturday, back on the Sunday. Johnny Pottier's sister Gill came with us. John won the very first stage of the Tour of Britain, and his sister was clearly cut from the same cloth. None of us blokes could shake her off at all.

"We used to go all over to race in time trials. Wales a lot of the time. We would ride down to Usk and stay in digs overnight. There was this place we used regularly, owned by an elderly couple. Five of us would go down, and the couple would move to an outbuilding for the night, so we had the run of the house. Brilliant it was. After riding down on the Saturday – a hundred miles, maybe – we'd get up early and race on the Sunday morning. And then ride the hundred miles home again. Norman Adams, he was something else. It didn't matter how tired he was, he just kept going. He never slowed down. We went on some amazing tours as well. Gordon Thurlow, Les Shaw and me, we rode down to Nice, over the Alps.

"After the racing season ended in September, every club had a dinner and dance. They would all be different weekends, so everyone went to each other's dances. You'd be at another do almost every Saturday. The social side of things was very important. As I say, that was the mood at the time, everyone was so happy, and we wanted to do all these things." Harry's eyes sparkle as he speaks; the vitality that took him on all those adventures still plays behind them. "It was brilliant! If I could go back, I wouldn't change a thing."





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# 75 years of...

## social rides and club runs



*A club run group photographed at roughly the time of Oscar's first ride. In those days, it was considered distinctly poor form to come on a social ride dressed as if you meant to go racing.*

*Anyone who did a Beacon club run between the 1950s and the 2010s is almost sure to have met Oscar Hopkins. For sixty years, Oscar was a club run institution in his own right. It's therefore quite hard for most of us to get our heads around the idea of Oscar turning up as green young novice for his very first outing with the Beacon. However, as he recounts here, there was indeed such an occasion.*

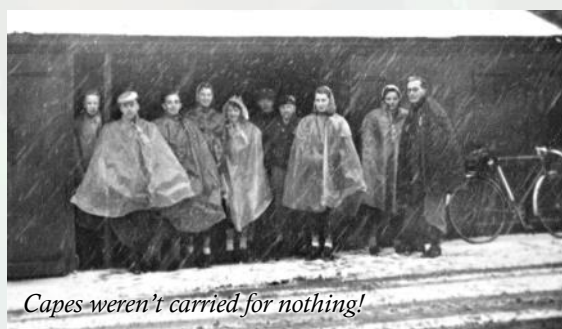
### ***My first club run***

My first club run was in the summer of 1954. The club used to meet next to the Rubery tram terminus, where the flyover is now. There was also a gent's urinal nearby, long since gone. Most club runs went south, as they do now, but this one went north to Church Stretton. With hardly any traffic about, we used the main roads, taking care to avoid the many tram tracks.

It wouldn't be long before someone shouted "Puncture!" or a bottom bracket would come loose, scattering ball bearings across the road. We all had large saddlebags, with a range of tools and food in them, and a rain cape strapped on top.

No cafés were open on Sunday mornings then. So we would stop at a pub and ask if we could eat our sandwiches inside, then buy a drink and a packet of crisps. For tea, we

would stop at a café. The run leader would phone ahead to make sure it would be open. On my first run, tea was in Lichfield, but I can't remember where. From there, we rode back through the city and home to bed. Then back to work next day!



*Capes weren't carried for nothing!*





*In recent times, club runs have twice been briefly suspended for Covid-related reasons. For large parts of 2020 and 2021, the number of people participating in a ride has been strictly limited and all café stops have been outdoors.*

*Club runs have been at the heart of things throughout the Beacon's history. As well as being an institution that underpins our sense of community, the club run is the mainstay of many members' riding and has made an important contribution to the development and training of countless racing men and women. However, the club run can sometimes be a testing experience. Dave Cole, a man whose tongue is rarely removed from his cheek, has therefore penned some sage advice on how to cope.*

## ***Beacon Club Runs – a User's Guide***

The Sunday club run is the staple of Beacon RCC's cycling activities and is the first experience most members have of the club. The club run is generally described as a non-competitive social ride, which is paced to accommodate the level of the slowest rider. This description was obviously written by someone who has never been on a Beacon club run. A club run is in fact the very opposite, being a very competitive, free-for-all ride. The objective being for each rider to exert their authority over the rest of the group, thus establishing their status in the Beacon RCC cycling hierarchy. Club runs are all about status and the rider can demonstrate his or her status in a number of ways.

The first way is by the type of ride that you join: A, B, C or D. Obviously those riders who join the A run are at the top of the club hierarchy and can treat riders on the B, C and D runs with a certain amount of condescension, perhaps giving them and their bikes pitying looks or even ignoring them altogether.

The way you ride on a club run can also get you noticed. For example, if you are strong enough, then go to the front and half-wheel the leader, increasing the pace so that you string out the group and maybe even drop a couple of

riders. Another technique is to overtake the leader on hills and if he/she complains tell them your gears are too high to go slowly and you need to take a run at it. The previous two manoeuvres are generally frowned on, but if you want to stay within the rules and still make a statement, then on the return route say goodbye to the group and ride up the road as fast as you can, leaving the club run behind. Saying, more or less, "I haven't got all day to crawl along with you lot."

The type of clothing you wear is often noticed before the bike you ride and it's easy to make a mistake here if you don't choose carefully. The riders with the highest status wear very expensive clothes, such as that produced by Assos and Rapha, usually in muted colours with discrete logos. Of course, Beacon club kit is absolutely fine. But, whatever you wear, it should be uncomfortably tight and definitely too tight to put anything in the pockets. And do not wear shorts during the winter months, i.e. between September and the end of April. You are probably asking, what is the point of paying over £250 for a pair of Assos Mille GTO bib shorts, when you can buy a similar pair of shorts from Decathlon, which are just as comfortable and hardwearing, for £25? Well, it's all about prestige and gaining acceptance from other members of the club run. Furthermore, what's a couple of hundred pounds to be confident that you are an elite Beacon member?

*Continued overleaf*



If you think that club cyclists pay ridiculous prices for clothes, this pales into insignificance when you realise the eye-watering amounts they pay for their bikes, especially those with electronic gear changers, hydraulic disc brakes and other modern technology. However, you soon realise that club cyclists are not really impressed by technology as such, only by the weight of components. When you show a new bike to a cyclist the first thing they do is pick it up. If it weighs more than eight kilos, they will pretend that it weighs a ton, struggling to lift it off the ground, and then ignore the rest of the bike and its components. If your bike passes the weight test, the second thing that gets noticed is the wheels. You should try to buy expensive, deep section wheels, so that the logo is prominently displayed, and fellow club members can see that you've laid out a fair bit of cash for them. These wheels will not make you go any faster, but they will enhance your reputation as a discerning cyclist.

As well as clothes and bikes, the club cyclist can also spend a fortune on bike accessories, from GPS computers and GoPro cameras to an amazing variety of compact get-you-home tools. Whereas some of these accessories may be useful on a long trek across the Gobi Desert, they have no place on a day ride taking you no more than thirty miles

from Birmingham or five miles from the nearest station. Some people suggest a small tool bag and a spare inner tube, but there will always be someone else on the run with ample tools. Some people even take two inner tubes, so you can always rely on them in an emergency. The advantage of relying on other members' tools is that the tools' owners will often do the job for you, demonstrating their expertise in roadside repair. In fact, two or three riders will often squabble about who will do the repair. Just stand back and let them get on with it. This saves you getting oil and grease on your hands. You may be in doubt as to whether a particular accessory is acceptable, in which case you should leave it out. And, seriously, unless you want to languish at the bottom of the C run for the whole of your time as a club member, you should avoid handlebar bags, cycle bells, rear carriers and those little mirrors that fit on your handlebars.

Food is an important indicator of your status, although you should never refer to it as food. It's either nutrition or fuel, and, if you want to be taken seriously by other Beacon members, you should eat as little as possible. An energy gel or a banana is the most allowed. Cyclists are body fascists and extremely image conscious, aiming for a BMI of 18 and 5 per cent body fat. So, when you get to the café, just have an espresso and a small biscotti (after all, as a Beacon

member, you will be wearing Italian colours). If you really must eat, take a couple of biscuits with you and eat them in the loo so no one sees you.

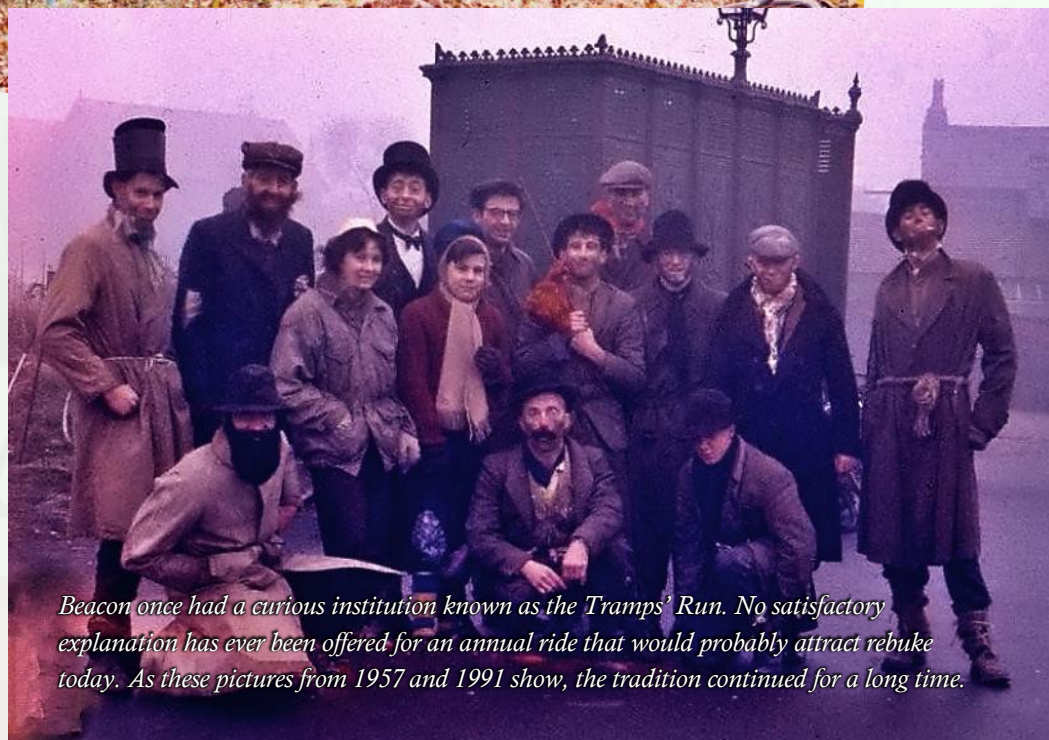
As you can see, club runs are far from being a sociable, steady ride where club members look out for each other. Instead, they are an opportunity for you to outdo your fellow riders in any number of different ways, and to establish your place in the hierarchy of the Beacon.



*On the right, you see Dave himself providing unsolicited mechanical assistance to a rider who might otherwise have been tempted to imagine that his expensive Italian bike afforded him some kind of parity with the experienced Mr Cole. As the black-and-white picture shows, the collectivist approach to the resolution of mechanicals is far from new.*







*Beacon once had a curious institution known as the Tramps' Run. No satisfactory explanation has ever been offered for an annual ride that would probably attract rebuke today. As these pictures from 1957 and 1991 show, the tradition continued for a long time.*



*Over the last five years or so, very long rides have returned to the club run calendar, albeit not on a weekly basis and typically as one of several options on offer. The Weston Run was revived in 2015 and through-the-night rides as long as 500 kilometres have occasionally been organised. This picture shows a 300-kilometre excursion to Mid-Wales and back.*





# *Recollections of...*

## the 1950s by Alan Nicholls



### *Junior Days*

I joined the Beacon, aged fifteen, on a summer evening in 1952, after school friend John Cooper had lured me to Northfield to try a Beacon training 'bash'. In a fit of youthful exuberance I also entered the following week's Handicap '20' time trial, and the deed was done! That Handicap '20' was my only race that year, but in 1953 I became more involved, joining club runs, getting into racing, and even attending committee meetings as Junior Representative.

Back then, club runs were all-day affairs as the membership was mostly single and not required home for Sunday lunch! There was a mid-morning café stop, and lunch was often at a pub, where we could buy a drink and eat our own sandwiches. Afterwards we would make for the tea stop, perhaps doing something 'exciting' on the way; maybe visit a place of interest, go boating at Stratford or even float Tony Webb's shoe on the Avon at Bidford. Popular tea stops included a café in Alcester, Mrs Powell's at Droitwich, Walton Pools Café and Stores (beans on toast 1s 8d) or ham and eggs at Mrs Beddall's at Clent. Then home after tea, although the really dedicated often ended the day at a favoured pub.

I rode some time trials as well; mostly club events, but there was usually an open time trial locally on Sundays, and the Worcestershire Cycling Association (WCA) also organised events at all distances. First man off was usually 6:01am and, as nearly everyone rode out to the event, an early start often meant you being on the road before 5am.

I also tried massed start racing at Handsworth, Dartmouth and Sutton parks, and at Church Lawford airfield near Coventry. Trevor Shipway had joined the club, and he, John Cooper and I scooped third team at Handsworth Park, winning cycle bells! I can still hear Stan Boyle, then club BAR remarking, rather sourly, "They can all ride time trials now," bells being a 'must have' in RTTC events.

1953 also saw my first involvement with the club's 'flagship' event, the Mountain Time Trial, then a 62 ½ miler. Starting and finishing at the Red Lion at Holt Heath, it traversed Clee Hill via Clows Top, then back via Tenbury to Great Witley and on to the Stanford Bank/Ankerdine circuit. Everyone was expected to help out unless riding the event, and we marshalled the whole course and ran two drinks



stations. I was on the Martley feed, 56 miles in, handing up grubby bottles containing a couple of mouthfuls of Ribena.

My stint as Junior Representative ended at the 1953 AGM. I was the strong silent type in those days and can't remember ever uttering a word in committee and was replaced by Trevor Shipway.

February of 1954 saw the first edition of the Weston and Back Reliability Trial, and 300 or so of us, in small groups, set off one Saturday midnight from the gents' urinal in Rubery and headed off through the darkness to the seaside.

The top shot off my Eveready front lamp in Gloucester, and I was grubbing around in the road for ages trying to find it. Nevertheless, my group eventually reached the Black and White Transport Café at Patchway, near Bristol, where we queued for soup, stepping carefully over the collapsed body of an exhausted youth. (I believe his dad tried to sue the club afterwards). From there we skirted Bristol and on to Weston pier, arriving just as dawn broke to reveal a poster bearing the legend, 'HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN'.

The return ride was uneventful and I got back in 14 hours 6 minutes, well inside the 15-hour medal standard, but I think David Duffield got back inside 12 hours.

The weather that February was benign, but the following year it was bitterly cold. On leave from the RAF, I was at the Worcester check, and I remember Danny Mason, Trevor and some others turning up with the contents of their bottles frozen solid. Trevor especially looked in a poor way with a translucent blue appearance reminiscent of a raw prawn.

The purpose of the W&B, as explained to me at the time, was to 'knock off the rough edges' before the racing season. Well, maybe...

1954 brought the Tripartite Agreement between the National Cyclists Union (NCU), the British League of Racing Cyclists (BLRC) and the Road Time Trials Council (RTTC), eventually resulting in the formation of the British Cycling Federation.

Up until 1952, massed start racing on public roads was banned by the NCU, as it was believed that it would create a negative attitude toward cycling generally. However, Percy Stallard's rebel BLRC organised road races in the UK, although their members were banned from competing in NCU and RTTC events. Finally, in 1952, the NCU gave in and began organising road races.

Trevor and I, along with Eddie Sumner and Charlie Whiteford, took advantage of the Agreement to ride a League road race organised by the Nuneaton Coureurs. The race started with a short neutralised section that ended at a halt

sign where the Coureurs riders, at the head of the field, were waved across immediately while the rest of us were held back while they rode clear! No idea who won that one, certainly not one of us.

Danny Mason had now started to take an interest in the juniors' progress and became our unofficial manager. His methods were unusual by today's standards and often involved team talks in public houses!

*Continued overleaf*

SPORTS ARGUS. Page 6  
Saturday, February 6, 1954.

Cycling :: by Recorder

## FANCY A JAUNT TO WESTON?

HOW would you like a ride to Weston-super-Mare and back on February 21? You would? Then the Beacon Roads Cycling Club will be able to accommodate you, for on that day they are staging their Open reliability trial, starting from the Rubery bus terminus. The return trip will be approximately 200 miles.

Four classes of riders will be catered for: (a) women completing the course in 20 hours; (b) women (17 hours) (c) men (18 hours) and (d) men (15 hours).

The start will be at midnight on February 20, so that riders can travel in daylight as much as possible. Groups will be sent off at ten minute intervals, with the members of any particular club in their own group.

All in all, the event will present an opportunity for racing types to get into trim for the coming season, and for hard riders to prove their stamina and ability.

## DUFFIELD DOES IT

DAVE DUFFIELD (Beacon R.C.C.), the national tricycle 1,000-mile record holder, successfully attempted his club's standard of 6½ hours for the 117-miles Rubery - Worcester - Hereford - Gloucester - Worcester - Rubery record.

## Thousand miles on tricycle

WHAT a feast of sport this Whitsun provided. In the Midlands, there were track meetings at Salford on the Saturday, Halesowen, Lichfield and Burton-on-Trent on the Monday, and Coventry on the Tuesday.

Sunday and Monday mornings had their quota of time trials, but standing out above all there was a ride that started at four o'clock on the Saturday morning and finished at 4.24 p.m. on Tuesday. Yes, that was the period required by 6ft. 3in. Dave Duffield to cover 1,000 miles on a tricycle.

Previous record set up in bad conditions in 1938 by George Lawrie was four days six hours 32 minutes, and subject to confirmation, Dave has reduced this to three days 12 hours 24 minutes.

During the ride this Birmingham boy, a cycle firm representative by trade, passed through places as far apart as St. Albans, Shrewsbury, Newtown, Ludlow, Worcester, Weston-super-Mare, Bridgford, and Bridgford.

On Sunday, when approximately half-way through his journey a group of clubgirls gathered on the side of the road near Oswestry to sing "Happy Birthday to You" for sure enough Dave was 25 on that day. A broken spindle on the first day, stomach trouble, and very cold conditions during darkness were a few of the circumstances which had to be overcome, in addition to the supreme physical and mental efforts required.

### NOT SO BORING!

Duffield rode a specially-built trike with a 26in. frame, fitted with 7in. cranks, reinforced rear stays and an eight-speed gear. Asked after the ride how he prevented boredom, he replied: "You just have to look on the funny side of things."

Five hours after the end I was in "phone conversation with Dave, who chatted away gaily about various aspects of the ride.

Officials connected with the attempt are certain that on a trouble-free ride a further large slice could be knocked off the time by Dave.

*In the late fifties, David Duffield was breaking RRA and RTTC records seemingly at will.*



## Birmingham rider sets new 100-mile tricycle record

DAVID DUFFIELD, 23-year-old 6ft. 3in. Birmingham sales representative, set up a new Road Records Association national 100-mile tricycle record yesterday with a return of 4hr. 37min. 38sec.

The previous best of 4hrs. 40mins. 32sec. by H. E. Harvey, of Burton-on-Trent, had stood since 1932.

Duffield also beat two Midland R.R.A. records on his ride. He recorded 2hr. 7min. 30sec. for the first 50 miles as compared with the 2hr. 10min. 30sec. of J. Vaughan (Warwickshire Road Club) in 1940, and his final 100 miles in 4hr. 37min. 38sec. easily beat the previous Midland 100-mile figure of 4hr. 15min. held by J. J. Smith (Speedwell Bicycle Club).

## THREE NEW TRICYCLING RECORDS

Brecon rider's success

to confirmation, David of Beacon R.C.C., set up three new records yesterday, beating the 12-hour national record by 29 miles six furlongs, the 12-hour record by 29 miles six furlongs, and the 12-hour record by 29 miles six furlongs.

## Duffield breaks 'End-to-end'

MANY motorists would not care to cover the 873 miles from John o'Groats to Land's End in less than three days, as did 26-year-old David Duffield, of Birmingham, this week-end—on a TRICYCLE.

Setting off on Friday evening, he completed the distance yesterday in 2 days 20 hours 9 minutes, to beat the old record by 4hr. 29min.

He rode the first 250 miles without even a following car. Apart from some stomach cramp in the early morning cold over the Grampians, he had a trouble-free ride. His only major stop was at Carlisle, where he snatched three hours' sleep.



Trevor and I had had reasonable results in our races and we both got a ride in the National Junior Massed Start Championship at Finsbury Park. It was a 45-mile race on a pancake flat circuit, and some might consider our final training session the Sunday prior to be a trifle eccentric.

Our junior peloton set out from Northfield, headed over the Malverns and down through Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth to the Three Salmons at Usk for a cooked lunch. The meal was enlivened by a spirited altercation between Danny and a fellow diner, a lady, who, strangely, had taken exception to our collective table manners. I recollect that the word 'common' was freely banded. I got shot off over the Malverns on the return trip and was left to rot, completing the 140-mile round trip on my own.

The National, for me, turned out badly. Trevor's Dad drove Trevor, Danny and me down to London with the bikes on the back of the car, and outside Lords cricket ground someone rammed us up the back and annihilated my handlebars. There was a Claud Butler shop near Finsbury Park and I was given access to the workshop to fit new bars and I got to the start line just in time, albeit lacking handlebar tape. The race was won by our local rival, Don Smith of the Earlswood R&P. I think Trevor finished tenth, but I got dropped near the end and finished thirty-eighth, consoling myself with the fact that there had been a hundred starters.

Later that year, Trevor went on to win the WCA junior championship at Dartmouth Park and became the Beacon's first ever massed start winner.

We went touring in August: ten of us, led by Norman

Adams, went hostelling in the Irish Republic. We ferried to Cork, kissed the Blarney Stone, then travelled around the southwest, taking in the Puck Fair at Killorglin before returning via Dublin and Holyhead. The highlight of the trip was the bout of food poisoning at Foulksrath Castle Hostel in Kilkenny which left, I think, three of our number spending a night in a hospital staffed by nuns.

Weekend hostelling was a fairly regular feature in those days, mainly during the Social Season, and this year a sizeable bunch of us rode to Welsh Bicknor Hostel to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night. Some of us rode to the pub in Goodrich for an evening's 'relaxation', later returning down the tree-lined track to the hostel to be met by a barrage of bangers hurled by tree-lurking clubmates, resulting in a pile-up and a hospitalisation.

There was a group from one of the Coventry clubs at the hostel and some inter-dormitory banger activity ensued, swiftly terminated by the arrival of the warden's wife, threatening confiscation of our YHA cards. We were spared that disgrace by the Warden himself, a jovial Italian guy, who urged us to 'come again, come in a coach!'

And that for me was it, at least for a while. A few weeks later I was square-bashing at RAF West Kirby at the commencement of my two years of National Service.

I came back to the Beacon, of course, and 64 years on, still cycle, if ever more slowly. But I still look back with pleasure on those early years; having fun and making friends, some of whom, like Mavis Williams, Sheila Shays, Tony Webb and Pat and Ken Haddon are still around today.

*A bonfire weekend excursion, a couple of years before the infamy of Bangers in Bicknor.*







Left: tour leader and serial TT winner Norman Adams



Right: Ciss Burke

Below: Beacon members at the start of an NCU 100-in-8



One of the leading 25-milers in the Midlands, Norman Adams, Beacon R.C.C., is also holder of the Welsh 30-mile competition record. He won the Ely Wheelers event with a record time of 1 hr, 12 min, 59 sec.





# 75 years of... time trialling

**MAITLAND'S MOUNTAIN WIN**

BOB MAITLAND not only won the Beacon Mountain time trial over 65 miles by a 71 minutes' margin over Arthur Hunt, Broad Oak, but had the satisfaction of leading his team to victory in both the scratch and handicap team races. Conditions were cheerless throughout, and the riders had a trying time over an admittedly difficult course. Maitland was always on top, a fact that is readily proved by his ascent of Ankerdine Hill in 3 min. 16 sec., against Bailey's 4-22, Hunt, 4-44; Robbins, 5-1; Lewis, 5-6, and Hobson, 5-9.

	h.	m.	s.
1. R. Maitland, Solihull	3	0	40
2. A. Hunt, Broad Oak	3	8	10
3. A. Hobson, Solihull	3	8	50
4. W. Mizen, Coventry R.C.	3	20	21
5. J. Morton, W. Heath	3	21	17
6. L. Bailey, Solihull C.C.	3	23	20
7. A. Green, Beacon R.C.	3	24	30
8. D. Baker, Beacon R.C.	3	26	16
9. D. Law, Oldbury	3	27	40
10. T. Blount, Redditch	3	27	52

**Handicap.**—1. Mizen, Coventry R.C. (34); 2. Morton, West Solihull C.C. (34); 3. A. Hobson, R.C. (34); 4. W. Mizen, Coventry R.C. (34); 5. J. Morton, West Solihull C.C. (34); 6. L. Bailey, Solihull C.C. (34); 7. A. Green, Beacon R.C. (34); 8. D. Baker, Beacon R.C. (34); 9. D. Law, Oldbury (34); 10. T. Blount, Redditch (34).

**Team Race.**—1. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 2. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 3. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 4. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 5. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 6. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 7. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 8. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 9. Beacon R.C. (48-28); 10. Beacon R.C. (48-28).



Bob Maitland racing to victory in the 1948 MTT



Sarah Storey at the  
2016 LM TT

**CLUB AND ASSOCIATION RACING FIXTURES**

Date	Event	Distance	Course
March 3	W.C.A. Men's Medium Gear	25	K.8
	Ladies' Medium Gear	10	K.8
10	Club Men's	25	K.36
	Ladies'	10	K.36
24	W.C.A. Men's	25	K.8
	Ladies'	10	K.8
April 7	Inter-Club M.T.T. Men's	35	K.23
28	W.C.A. Men's	25	K.8
	Ladies'	25	K.8
May 12	Open Mountain T.T.	62	K.23
19	Club Men's	30	K.36
	Ladies'	25	K.36
23	Club Evening	10	K.36
26	W.C.A. Men's	50	K.9
	Ladies'	15	K.8
June 6	Club Evening	10	K.36
16	W.C.A. Men's	100	K.22
	Ladies'	25	K.8
23	Club Men's Championship	50	K.32
	Ladies'	25	K.33
27	Club Handicap	20	K.36
30	Ladies' Open	50	K.32
July 11	Club Evening	25	K.36
14	Inter-Club Championship	100	K.22
21	Club Men's	25	K.36
	Ladies'	15	K.36
25	Club Evening	10	K.36
Aug. 15	Club Evening	12hr.	K.22
25	W.C.A. Men's	25	K.36

Sept. 1	Club Championship	15	K.8
15	W.C.A. Men's	25	K.8
	Ladies'	10	K.8
29	W.C.A. Men's	25	K.35
	Ladies'	10	K.8
Oct. 6	W.C.A. Hill Climb	10	K.8
13	Club Hill Climb Championship	Clifton-on-Teme	

Entries for Club Events to  
J. Arnold, 49, Meadowvale Road, Rednal, Birmingham  
Evening Events only to  
P. Langard, 111, Cliff Back Road, Rednal, Birmingham  
Notification of Record Attempts to  
L. Thomson, "Sambourne", 56, Newlands Drive,  
Blackheath, Staffs.

## CLUB RUNS PROGRAMME

May 12 Marshalling: Open Mountain Time Trial  
June 30 Marshalling: Open Ladies' "50"  
Oct. 13 Clifton-on-Teme  
All other Club Runs are posted four weeks in advance on the notice board in the Clubroom

## SOCIAL DATES

October 4 DANCE  
November 2 DANCE  
December 7 DINNER & DANCE

Beacon has a rich time-trialling tradition. Started in 1948, the Mountain Time Trial was the first of its kind on British roads. It quickly became our flagship promotion, attracting the top riders. Olympic hero Bob Maitland was followed by the legendary Ray Booty and soon-to-be World Champion Graham Webb. Later, the race was scaled down to the Little Mountain TT; a women's event was added, and then a paracycling event, with Olympic and World Champion Dame Sarah Storey often on the podium.

The club has had many accomplished time-triallists. Norman Adams, Jim Arnold, Dave Duffield, Rod Goodfellow and Richard Bussell have all secured honours. However, our proudest claim to fame in this discipline is the number of outstanding women who have ridden to victory in red, white and green. Here, three of the very best – June Raw, Ruth Eyles and Jess Rhodes-Jones – share a few of their memories. You'll also find the reminiscences of June's team-mate Maggie Thomson in our feature on the 1970s.



*“It was the first time I’d ever been with a fast team,  
and it was great!”*



*Above: June Pitchford with stoker Chris Goodfellow  
after setting a new 30-mile competition record*



*Right (left to right): Chris Goodfellow, June Pitchford  
and Jan Crowther after winning the  
national 50-mile team prize*

“I was with the Oldbury, really,” recalls June Raw (Pitchford back in the seventies). “Chris Goodfellow joined us briefly to form a team. And I always said, if the Beacon ever got together a strong women’s team, I’d join the Beacon, to return the favour. A year or two later, there was Chris, Janet Crowther, Maggie Gordon-Smith and Janet Kelly at the Beacon, so I kept my promise and joined the Beacon. We wanted to make a team to beat Beryl Burton’s club, Morley CC. Beryl was so strong that Morley had a head start over every other club in the country.

“It was exciting, travelling to all these events and training together. Racing as a team and winning as a team was special. I’ll always remember when we broke the thirty-mile team competition record. Chris and I were off quite early, and Janet was riding later. Chris and I got our times while Janet was still out on the road, so we knew the record was a possibility. In the last five miles, we were running along the side of the road shouting to Janet, ‘We’ve got to get the record! You can do it!’ Poor Janet, she gave it everything in those last few miles to win it for the team. We pushed each other on. By supporting each other, but also by being competitive amongst ourselves. I’d be thinking, ‘I’ve got to do a good ride today, or Maggie will beat me.’ For three years – ’72, ’73, ’74 – Beacon was the top ladies’ team, the team everyone was trying to beat.”

Winning was clearly what drew June to the Beacon, but there was much more to it than that. “Beacon were a fabulous crowd,” she recalls. “They knew I was only there because of the team, but they always treated me like an insider. They were all very encouraging. I remember once, we’d entered the National 100. Rod Goodfellow gave up his ride to support Chris and the rest of us, so that we could go for the national title. It was such a shame for him, because it was a good day. We all did fast times, but he couldn’t ride. He would have won the club BAR if he’d ridden that day, but he gave up his chances so that the team could win. How good was that?”

June can’t help but laugh when she compares her training regime with that of a top modern rider. “I was so lucky: I had the right parents. I just had to ride my bike and try hard in the races. People would tell me that I needed to be doing interval training or whatever. But just I loved riding my bike, stopping at cafés, going on camping trips. I made friends with a lad called Peter, who became my training partner. We’d stop for lunch, and then we’d have a kip on the grass. Afterwards, my husband Ken would say, ‘What was your average speed?’ and I’d say, ‘Well, before we got to Clee Hill it was 12.5.’ And he’d be, ‘But it was meant to be a training ride!’ I was simply enjoying myself. I think you’ve got to get home and think, ‘That was a nice day. I wouldn’t mind doing that again tomorrow.’”





Looking back on her early racing career, Ruth Eyles recalls, "I'd more or less given up. I reckoned I'd found my level. After joining the Beacon in '97, I had a go at various things: time trials, track racing, road racing... more than dabbling, I suppose, but not really focusing. What really changed things was that a group of us went and rode the mountain stages of the Tour de France route in 2002. In preparation for that, I was riding from my home in Warwickshire to the Black Horse every Sunday morning, doing the club run, then riding home. We went off to France in the September and spent a week doing all the big climbs. Then early next summer I rode the club 50-mile championship.

"I went much faster than I'd ever done before. And I thought, 'Where did that come from?' It was a Damascus moment, if you like. Because I knew it had come essentially off the back of my residual fitness from all those miles in 2002. After that, I thought, 'Well, if I'm fit, I might as well ride the national 100 that's coming up.' It was a nice, manageable block of time: six or eight weeks, I think. The idea was just to do that one 100, then I could stop for ever. But it was cancelled at the last minute because of road works or something, and postponed to September. So, I thought, 'Oh. Better keep training, then.'

"So I did the event on a road bike with clip-on tri-bars. Ordinary wheels, no aero kit at all. But I felt amazing. It was like, 'I'm going so fast! How is this happening?' I was sixth in 4:18, and not all that far off the winner. I knew then that training really did make a difference."

Using the revelations of 2003 as the springboard for a serious season of time-trialling in 2004, Ruth took silver in the national 100 and a string of other placings. "Then in 2005, there was a major reorganisation at work, and suddenly I had a massive amount more energy and opportunity to train. I trained really hard that year and won the BBAR. I had worked out that training really mattered, and what it took to win."

Working things out for herself was fundamental to Ruth's success. "I suppose I've simply got more confidence in my own reading of the subject than in someone else's. Good training leads to better racing, both through physical

conditioning, and by teaching you to pace yourself. If you know how to pace an interval, it helps you pace a race, because you have been through the sensations before."

Ruth rates winning her first national 50 and 100-mile titles as two of the happiest moments of her career. "I can't deny that it's nice to win," she acknowledges. "But winning's not the only thing. In 2009, for example, I was second in the national 100. But I felt I was the fittest I'd ever been, and I'd done the best race I could possibly do. So I was on a real high driving home, having not won."

Despite being self-taught and focusing on cycling's loneliest discipline, Ruth sees the club environment as both the platform that launched her career and a source of great encouragement as that career progressed. "The older members took me under their wing. Dennis Baker and John Green in particular, but many others too. They really enjoyed my success. I would be riding a race on some bleak dual carriageway somewhere, and I'd see Dennis standing in a lay-by, shouting encouragement. He had seen I was racing and come out to support me. When I won the BBAR, a huge crowd of them travelled up to Nottingham for Champions Night. Their support was massive."





Jessica Rhodes-Jones didn't take up cycling until she started a graduate training scheme in her twenties. "I did a year in each of three places," she explains. "The first year was in Dublin. I thought that joining a few sports clubs would help me settle in and get to know people. I started cycling there and really enjoyed it. So, when the third year of the programme brought me to Birmingham, I looked around for a club to continue riding with. Beacon looked like a friendly and welcoming club with a good mix of riders and activities, so I picked the Beacon."

At that time, Jess wasn't focusing on time trials. "I enjoyed having a go at everything. I did club runs, midweek chaingang rides and, during the summer, there was a club time trial almost every week. I hadn't really taken to road racing, because I found it stressful. Time trials suited me better. It's very satisfying watching your times improve, and I suppose you just get drawn in."

"My first go on a proper TT bike was on one kindly lent to me by Beacon member Elfyn Jones. The willingness of Elfyn and others to help out with advice and equipment definitely helped me to enjoy my early days of TTs." Jess's already-rapid development as a tester was catalysed by meeting partner Xavier. "Xav has raced time trials for several years, and loves helping people both enjoy and go faster in TTs."

Winning the Anfield 100 rates as one of Jess's best memories, partly because it was among her first big wins and partly because of the event's historic pedigree. "I felt the same the first time I won the Beacon's Janet Kelly Memorial 10," she says. "Picking up the trophy and seeing my name added to a list that includes the likes of Beryl Burton, that was pretty cool."

Another highlight was the annual nine-up team time trial at the Silverstone racing circuit. "We had so much fun doing that. Beacon had two teams two years running, and as well as all the riders there were lots of Beacon helpers, with cakes and everything. The camaraderie, the social dimension, I love that as much as the racing."

***"People's willingness to help out with equipment definitely helped me"***







# *Recollections of...*

## the 1960s by Rod Goodfellow

### *“If only Lycra had arrived sooner!”*

I was introduced to the Beacon by Norman Adams in 1958 after riding a Beacon club 10 and being invited back to his caravan home for coffee. A few weeks later, he took me to the Thursday night clubroom at Frankley Beeches Community Hall, which I continued to visit from time to time. My then girlfriend Christine Dunn took up cycling with the B'ham Uni CRC, but joined the Beacon in 1960 to race with Margaret Webb, Shirley Sadley (Prescott) and others. I followed suit in 1961, forming a team with Jeff Gould, Dave Cane and Mick de Moulpiéd to ride the Welsh Championship twelve-hour TT. Jeff's pedal fell off close to his father's home in Pontyclun, so we did not win the team prize!

Club runs on Sundays always started at the Black Horse and were usually out for lunch and tea, returning after dark in winter. Most of us would use Eveready twin-cell front lights and a single-cell rear light. They were just about adequate, as there were few cars about and car lights were weaker than now. A favourite tea place was Mrs Beddall's at Clent, which was often followed by a massed ride with other clubs over the Clent Hills before dispersing to Halesowen, Redditch, Wolverhampton, etc.

Open TTs were held early on Sunday mornings, usually with a 6am start. Few of us had cars, so we rode out, often carrying race wheels on 'sprint' carriers. On arrival at the start, we changed wheels, wrapped non-race clothing and saddlebags in a cape and stowed it in a hedge. No changing rooms or toilets, and the HQ consisted only of a result



*Rod and Chris Goodfellow*

board (if you were lucky). Serious riders used tubular tyres for racing, but the norm was 27x1½ wired tyres and wheels. You had to remember to adjust the brake block position whenever wheels were changed.

During the non-racing season, the Beacon organised club YHA weekends about once a month to places such as Cleeve Hill, Matlock, Bath, Buxton and Welsh Bicknor. One hostel near Leominster gave us the use of a slide projector so we could bring our own slides for a club show. As the next racing season approached, there were reliability rides, which were disguised road races. They included the Beacon's Weston-and-back (starting 11pm from Rubery bus terminus and a certificate if you did the 204 miles on the A38!), and the Birchfield CC's Llangollen-and-back from Warley Odeon, where you had 11 hours for the 150 miles for your certificate. Three of those in four years gained an impressive enamelled bronze medal. Les Ladbury and I made the front cover of Cycling when leading the bunch across the Welsh border on Chirk Bank (see feature on long-distance riding).



*Hostelling weekend*



Also in the non-racing season, immediately the club championship was over, the social season started with the conker championship and the penny putting championship. There was also a football match with Bromsgrove Olympique CC and a roller race meet with the Redditch Road and Path CC. We also organised a two-up 24-hour roller record attempt in an empty shopfront in Corporation Street, which unfortunately was held on St Patrick's night, to the bewilderment of Birmingham's Irish population. Roger Shayes was an avid track racing fan who organised several Beacon open track meets at Salford Park, which were successful except for the one which fell on FA Cup Final day with a consequent paucity of paying spectators!

The centre point of the social season was the Annual Dinner and Dance at the Black Horse. This was a fairly formal affair with most males in suits and ladies in long dresses. The 1962 event saw the Birmingham debut of the then revolutionary Moulton small wheel bike, organised by Sales Manager Dave Duffield. The bike was ridden round the dance floor by then President Jack Clements. At another early sixties' dinner, the guest of honour was Ernest Marples, overseer of the Beeching railway cuts and, in his previous position as Postmaster General, the introducer of postcodes.

Our most famous event was the Mountain Time trial, sixty-two miles with climbs of Abberley, Clee Hill, Stanford Bank and Ankerdine. Perhaps our biggest event was organised by Nev Billington, who induced the reigning World Cyclocross Champion Renato Longo to ride the



The touring section of Beacon Road Club, Northfield, set out from The Bell on Sunday morning for a ride into Shropshire. The knot of riders who left the home "town" were, left to right: Mick du Moulpiet, Avril Clements, John B. Clements (club president), Ossie Hopkins and J. Green. They were joined by others en route for the Clees and Heathton for tea.  
7.2.64.

Beacon Cyclocross! Another international event was when the Beacon Open Ladies 10-mile TT attracted six Dutch riders, who stayed in Beacon members' homes (some went nightclubbing with their hosts, who shall remain unnamed). The event was won by Beryl Burton.

Looking back, the sixties was a good time to be cycling, with less traffic and roads better maintained, their surfaces not disrupted by gas pipes and cable TV ducts (although this may be a rose-tinted view, as we mostly used tyres which were the equivalent of 700x32-35). Time trial courses were available within riding distances all round Birmingham. I just wish Lycra, synthetic shorts padding and decent waterproof jackets had arrived sooner!



*Launch of the Moulton at the '62 Dinner*





*Top: Sheila Shayes and Pam Billington in TT action*

*Centre: Road race featuring Chris Goodfellow*

*Bottom: club run scenes with Derek Reynolds and others*





## *Future Word Champion slept through the Beacon Dinner!*

*Graham Webb, World Amateur Road Race Champion in 1967, won the '63 Mountain Time Trial in a record time that, as far as we know, was never beaten on the old 62.5-mile course. Many years later, he wrote:*

On that May morning in 1963, I had just turned nineteen and couldn't get in any major road races, so I entered the Beacon MTT. It was beautiful weather: it was cold but the sun was shining and the wind was calm. I wasn't seeded, so off number 31, one minute behind Roy Cromack, an established name in the same club as me, Solihull. All that I was wearing was a silk track jersey and a pair of shorts. Just before I was pushed off someone quipped, "Where's your food and drink?" I replied, "Food and drink? For God's sake it's only 100 kilometres!"

At nineteen, I was at my peak; climbing was as easy as descending to me. I kept on collecting riders on my way, never a moment in trouble. On one descent with a sharp hairpin bend, I caught another rider. I could see that he was freezing up on the gravelly bend so I aimed for the inside of the bend and sure enough he just went straight on through the hedge!

I had no idea of the circuit profile and didn't know any of the climbs, but I found out later that I had caught Cromack at the bottom of Ankerdine. I passed him just in the same way that I had passed all the others, without a

word, without a glance. This must have woken something up in Cromack, as he sprinted past me like a madman, I took no notice, unable to go any faster or slower than the pace that I was locked into. Cromack ultimately finished a handful of seconds in front of me, prompting many people to think we had ridden a two-up. Nothing was further from the truth. As I crossed the line, I raised both my arms in triumph, saying to myself "Beat that!" I bet people thought that I was nuts!

Just to tie this up. At the end of that season, I was invited to many club dinners, including the Beacon's and two others on the same night. I was so proud of my win in the MTT that I accepted Beacon's offer and turned the other two down. Now came that night. I got all dressed up for the dinner and sat down with a cup of tea until it was time to leave. I was so tired from working, racing and training, that I fell asleep and only awoke when the dinner had long finished! I don't think that I ever had the chance to apologise properly to the Beacon for my not turning up, so with this I'll do that now!

### Solihull riders **TWICE** best hill course record

★

**THE successful Solihull team**  
(left to right): Graham Webb (1st), John Monk (5th) and Roy Cromack (2nd).

★

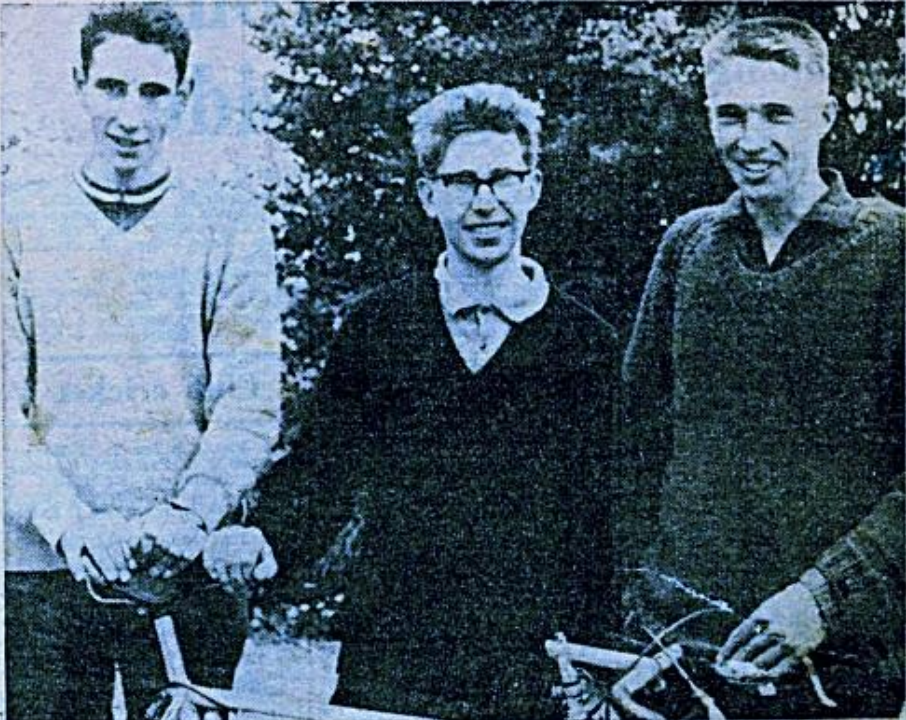
**CYCLING CLUB NOTES**

★

GRAHAM WEBB, the Solihull rider who is nicknamed Black Raven, flew to a brilliant victory in Beacon Road Club's 62-mile time trial, on Sunday, setting up a new course record of 2 hrs 48 min, 49 sec.

Twice this record was broken, each time by a Solihull rider. The programme had been so arranged that Webb started one minute behind schoolteacher Roy Cromack.

Webb caught Cromack and then ensued a battle, cleanly fought, between these friendly rivals. In the final miles, Cromack left Webb by eight seconds to cross the finishing line with a new



course record of two hours forty-nine minutes forty-one seconds. Then eight seconds later this new record was beaten by Webb.

So Webb reduced the course record held by Mick Ives, the Coventry international by 3 min, 39 sec, and gained second handicap award and a special prize for a new course record.

With Webb first, Cromack second and John Monk in fifth place, Solihull gained the major team award with a new team record of 8h 34m 44 sec. John Monk also gained the 2nd handicap award.

WITH WEBB FIRST, CROMACK SECOND AND JOHN MONK IN FIFTH PLACE, SOLIHULL GAINED THE MAJOR TEAM AWARD WITH A NEW TEAM RECORD OF 8H 34M 44 SEC. JOHN MONK ALSO GAINED THE 2<sup>ND</sup> HANDICAP AWARD.





# 75 years of...

## road and circuit racing



*Massed start racing in Dartmouth Park, 1947*

It's hard to imagine now, but road racing didn't exist as a formally sanctioned discipline when the Beacon was formed. Back at the end of the nineteenth century, with cycling in its infancy, a high-profile road accident occurred near London. Cyclists taking part in a pacing event startled a horse, and mayhem ensued. There was a general outcry against the 'dangerous' practice of bicycle racing and the police sought to put a stop to it.

Fearing that parliament would ban the sport altogether, the National Cyclists' Union ordered members and affiliated clubs not to race on the public highway. That led indirectly to the formation of the Road Time Trials Council. So it was that, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the only sanctioned racing on British roads involved riders competing inconspicuously against the stopwatch.

On the continent, things were different. In the twenties and thirties, bike racing captured the public imagination, especially in countries such as France and Italy. Many cyclists in the UK looked enviously at what was happening across the Channel. And the pressure for change increased when service personnel stationed abroad got to see big European races first hand. Against that backdrop, the British League of Racing Cyclists was set up to promote massed start road racing. A schism consequently formed in British cycle sport, which lasted for most of the forties. The opposing factions finally made their peace in 1949, and this glamorous 'new' form of racing won general acceptance in

the following decade.

As you'll read in Alan Nicholls' recollections, Beacon members embraced road racing eagerly in the fifties. Many, including Alan himself, did so with distinction. In the sixties, the Beacon's Chris Goodfellow (below, centre) was selected to represent Great Britain at the World Championships. However, few would dispute that the club's greatest road racer came along in the seventies, in the person of a quiet, unassuming young man named Steve Jones. To mark our seventy-fifth anniversary, Steve has shared his memories of competing at the very pinnacle of our sport.





## ***“We had the best times and the best racing”***

“When I was fourteen, I got given a bike,” Steve recalls. “A Falcon, it was. I just used to mess about on it outside the house. Then, one day, Mick Skinner passed me on his way home from work and said, did I want to join the Beacon? So I went up to the club room to see what it was all about.

“I wasn’t keen on the idea of racing at first. It sounded dangerous to me. But my mate entered a club 10 and talked me into it. It was down on the Clent course. I rode in a hooded jacket, with the hood flapping in the wind, and did 34:35. The next year, I did quite a few TTs, rode the track under the watchful eye of Roger Shayes, and had a go at circuit racing. I didn’t really have a goal until I was seventeen, when I started to ask myself, how good can I be?”

By that time, Steve was working at the Birmingham Battery and Metal Company. “I used to read cycling magazines in my lunch break, and I was spellbound by the stories about racing in Belgium and Holland. I knew that was what I wanted to do. In ’75, I won the national junior 25-mile TT championship and junior BBAR. Then, after I turned senior, I got selected for the Welsh Commonwealth Games squad. They invited me to a month-long training camp in Wrexham, but I said, ‘I can’t just up sticks and go to Wrexham for a month. How am I going to support myself?’ Their reply was, ‘If you don’t go, you can’t be on the squad.’ So I didn’t go. Instead I went off to France with Pete Hall, with the aim of racing and living off the prize money.”

Unfortunately, that adventure didn’t work out. But, instead of heading home, Steve decided to pursue the dream inspired by those pictures of Belgian crits. “I got the address of a family in the Netherlands who had once put up a team. So I went up there and knocked on the door, out of the blue, and said, ‘I want to race here. Do you know anywhere I can stay?’ I ended up staying with them for a couple of weeks, before being taken in by a race commentator I met over the border in Ghent. I was treated like one of the family.” Determined to succeed, Steve learnt the language and adapted to the culture. “It was a sink or swim situation. The only way to survive was to become a local.”

It wasn’t long before Steve was invited to join one of the Netherlands’ thirty or so elite amateur teams. “We got clothes and bikes, and all our racing and travel arranged for us, and there was prize money to be won almost every day. But we were counted as amateurs, because we didn’t get paid a wage. The team had brought through lots of big names, including Jan Raas, Henk Lubberding and Adri van der Poel, father of Mathieu. It was a really professional set-up: there was a lot of science behind the training and nutrition. We had to eat pasta exactly 2.5 hours before every race, and during the race we were given glucose bars, isotonic drinks and high-carb drinks. Once a month, we had our haemoglobin levels checked. If they were down, we had to rest for a few days. Amazing, really, for an amateur team in the seventies.”

*Continued overleaf*



## **Steve Jones—a cycling star of the future**

STEVE JONES, (above) the Northfield cyclist who has been prominent in the Milk Race which ends its 1,500 miles course at Blackpool tomorrow, is considered by many experts to be Britain’s finest hope of a medal in the Olympic Games road race in Moscow.

Steve, who was educated at Turves Green School and is a member of the Beacon club, first gave notice of un-

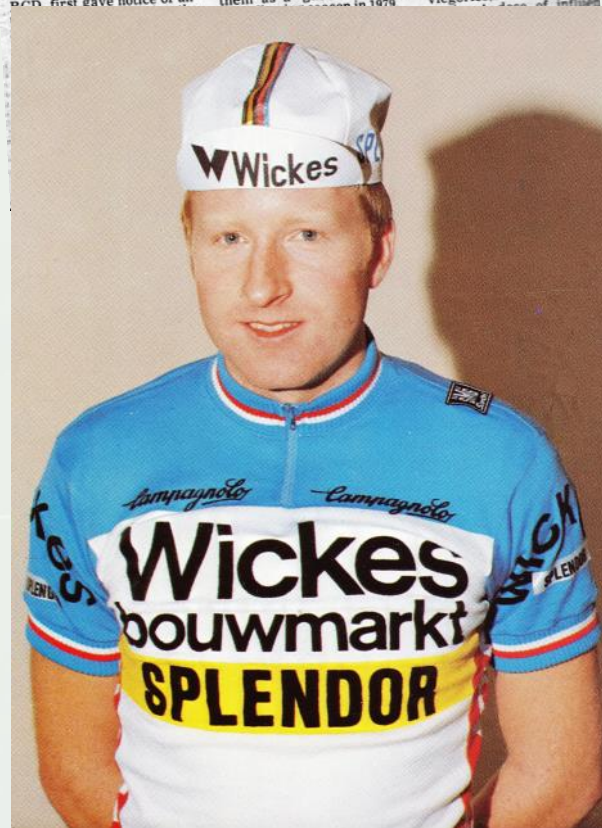
der the star riders. Something plainly had to be done and so, three years ago, Steve packed his gear and headed for Belgium, centre of the cycling world.

There he found the extremely fast, aggressive style of racing ideally suited to his temperament and abilities. Although lack of funds forced him to return to his Northfield home prematurely, he had been noticed by the manager of a Dutch amateur team and was offered a place with them as a ‘guest’ rider for

all, courage, impressed a whole of continental Europe. Not least of those impressed was British team manager, Jim Hendry, and during the past winter he prevailed upon Steve to remain an amateur and lead the British road team in Moscow.

In March Steve returned to Holland, this time with Sports Aid Foundation grant, to resume his place in the Jan Van Erp squad as he began his build-up for the Olympics.

Following early season vicories, a disaster struck





After doing well as an amateur in the Netherlands, Steve was offered a contract by the Belgian pro team Wickes-Splendor. "It was like going back to the dark ages!" Steve laughs. "After all that science in Holland, I joined the pros in Belgium and they fed us steak before the races! It was a totally different culture." He was in no doubt, though, that this was the realisation of his dreams. "We had the Planckaert brothers, Claude Criquelion, Marc Demeyer – guys who won classics, world championships, green jerseys. Five years earlier, I'd been reading about them on the shop floor at Birmingham Battery and Metal, and now I was riding with them."

"I rode all the classics – Flanders, Liege, Lombardy, the lot – and I did Paris-Nice the first year that Kelly won. My only regret is that I never rode the Tour. I was selected for it, but came down with bronchitis not long before and had to miss out. Mostly I was working as a domestique, but you're always hoping for your chance, of course. In my second season, I got a lot of placings, and there was one race where I got in the break, but on the final lap of the cobbled finishing circuit I punctured. That could have changed everything."

Steve's time in Belgium yielded a wealth of unforgettable experiences. "After the spring classics, the professional *kermesses* start. You can race almost every day from May to October. Always, towards the end of the season, there's someone who is desperate to get a win, to secure a new contract. One time, I was in a break with Walter Dalgat. With ten laps to go, the bartering started. He offered everyone in the break five thousand francs to let him get away, and a deal was done. There was a bit of cat-and-mouse to make it realistic, then he went clear. Unknown to us, another Belgian was meanwhile bridging across to the break. He really needed the win. But we said, 'Sorry, this one's Dalgat's. He's already away.' So this other Belgian says, 'How much is he paying you?' We said, 'Five thousand.' 'Okay, I'll pay you seven.' So we wound Dalgat in, and the other guy won the sprint. Needless to say, Dalgat wasn't best pleased."

When the time came to negotiate a new contract, Steve found himself facing a difficult decision. "I had contract offers from continental teams, but they worked on the basis of a low wage plus big win bonuses. A contract like that is a risk: what if you get ill or have a serious crash? About that time the pro scene in the UK was taking off, and Raleigh offered me a contract with a much better wage, so I came back."

Although racing in Europe had been his dream, Steve didn't see coming home as a backward step. "Racing over here was different, but it wasn't less competitive," he says. "Those Kellogg's city centre races were as fast as any races I ever did anywhere." Steve was a key rider first for Raleigh, and then for ANC-Halfords, a big-budget British team built to take on the Europeans. In the final years of his career, he rode as an independent professional.

"In that period, Phil Anderson, the Aussie who was famous for being the first non-European to wear yellow at the Tour, came over to do the Kellogg's series. He didn't have a team with him, so in the Birmingham round he pulled alongside me and said, 'Mate, when I go to the front, put the brakes on for me behind, will ya?' So I braked into the next corner, he got a gap, and rode away. A few laps later, British sprinter Phil Thomas came up to me. He was riding for the series win and was after a placing for points. 'I need this to stay together, Steve, so I can score in the sprint. But my team's falling apart. Go to the front, will you, and keep the pace really high, so no one else gets away.' I went to the front and put the hammer down. Thomas took the bunch sprint and won the series. So, after that race, I got paid twice, even though I wasn't on either team."

Steve feels that, for all the undoubted progress made in professional bike racing since his day, not all the changes have been for the better. "It's all so controlled now, with the radios and instructions from the team cars. Riders don't have to think for themselves. I was talking to Sean Kelly a while back. He said, 'Modern riders, they've got the adulation and the money. But we had the best times and we had the best racing. We've got our memories.'"







*Steve's third place in the 1988 Kellogg's Tour of Britain was commemorated with a special Annual Dinner menu cover.*

*Beacon remains active on the road racing scene, with Dave Hughes winning the national masters' road race and criterium championships.*







# *Recollections of...*

the 1970s by Maggie Thompson

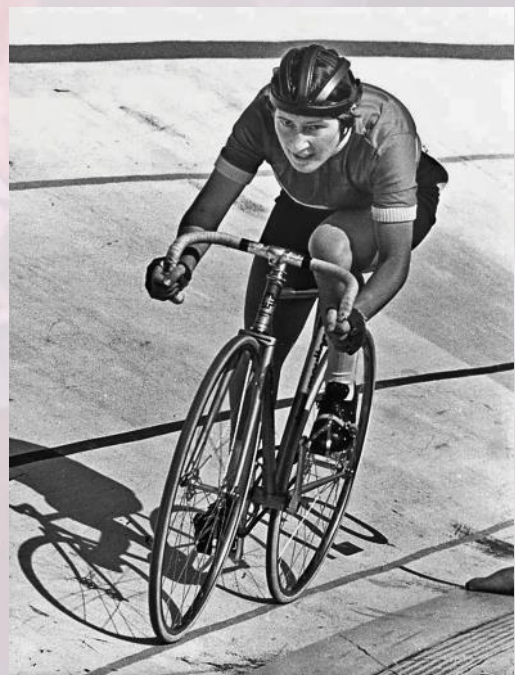


*Maggie Thompson (Gordon-Smith) won national pursuit silver in Beacon colours (above) and stepped up to the top level of the podium shortly after she left the club (below).*

## ***“Club life was great!”***

Having been a member of Evesham & District Wheelers, I joined Beacon RCC in the early seventies when I moved to Stourbridge, and so that I could join Chris Goodfellow, June Pitchford and Jan Crowther to form a ladies' racing team. The four of us had raced against each other in time trials for some time, and we thought that if we joined forces, we could gain some team competition records. I have found amongst my memorabilia an RTTC team Competition Record certificate for 10 miles for June, Chris and myself with the aggregate time of 1-12-13, dated 8 June 1972. I know that Chris, June and Jan gained many more team records at the longer distances. Our ladies' team was joined by Beverley Horwill in the mid-seventies.

I recall joining them to go for the fifteen-mile team record and made my way to the race start. Unfortunately, there were two races taking place at the same time and I was directed to the twenty-five-mile start, missing my start time for my event!





Our ladies' team was formidable on the time trial scene and took high placings at national ten, twenty-five, fifty and hundred-mile championships. June inevitably took second place behind Beryl Burton and second in BBAR.

In 1973, Chris and I rode the Ladies' National Road Race at Yeovil. A pretty hilly route, and I soon began to struggle to stay with the bunch. Chris came back for me time and again to support me, but I simply didn't have the form or the skill at that time. She took third place at the finish and rode in the World Championships that year.

Chris and Rod Goodfellow lived at Highley, Shropshire at that time and on Thursdays they rode to the club night meeting in Longbridge each week. I used to join them at Hagley roundabout and ride with them to the clubroom. Oh, how I used to suffer trying to keep up with them, particularly as it is a hilly route to Rubery and on to Longbridge to the club room. They both had tremendous stamina.

Club life was great, and I used to love going on the Sunday club runs during the winter. Oscar Hopkins would invariably be one of the leaders, looking after the younger riders.

I got to know several of the up-and-coming lads in the club: Dave Sinar, Chris Duffield, Rob Murray and Steve Jones. Like myself, they soon became keen to ride on the track, and I used to collect them in my car so we could all compete at Salford Park track in Erdington every Wednesday. Steve Jones went on to turn professional.

Whilst with Beacon RCC, I gained the bronze medal at Ladies' National Pursuit Championship in 1972, 1973 and 1974 and silver in 1975, missing out on gold by two fifths of a second. I got the silver riding a Dave Moulton frame, built by Andy Thompson who later became my husband. It had a very steep seat angle so that I could achieve the best position for optimum performance. The design was ahead of its time in many ways.

In 1976, I married Andy Thompson from Bromsgrove Olympic CC, and we set up home in Malvern. It was too far for me to continue my membership of Beacon RCC, so I joined Gannet CC, where I won the Ladies' National Pursuit title in 1977 and 1978. Andy and I went on to create the Thompson Bicycle Company in Huddersfield.

## Decisive win for Margaret

DESPITE the fact that Beacon Roads Cycling Club riders were taking part in events spread from Wales to Lincolnshire, all the races had one thing in common — weather conditions more suited to trans-Arctic exploration than cycling.

Margaret Gordon-Smith opened the account for the ladies with a decisive win in the Abbotsford Park 10-mile event in a satisfactory time of 26m 19s, beating Terry Riley by over a minute.

The following morning, Steve Jones, riding the Peter Buckless Junior event in Lincolnshire, was unlucky to find himself on the wrong side of the gap when the field split.

Steve was unable to finish any higher than twelfth position in the shattered field.

Several Beacon riders performed in the Callow End road races. In the first event Dave Sinar was constantly on the attack, despite snow storms.

His aggression was rewarded when, on the last climb of the Old Hills, he broke clear and burst across the finishing line length ahead of Jim Kemp of Wolverhampton.

With this ride Dave became a First Category rider only weeks after the opening of his first senior season.

*Maggie's successes were not confined to the track. She was also a top performer in short-distance time trials, securing individual and team wins and an RTTC competition record.*

## TEAM PRIZE FOR BEACON LADIES

MEMBERS of the Beacon Roads Cycling Club travelled to Liverpool on Saturday, and the ladies came home with personal triumph and the team prize.

The two women were Margaret Gordon-Smith and Christine Goodfellow, whose husband Rod was also riding in the men's event at the same venue.

Christine won the event with a time of 27 min 15 sec, and Margaret ran on a good second with a time of 28.11. Both girls received a handicap prize, coming first and second respectively.

However, their two male compatriots found their competition a little harder, and Rod Goodfellow finished fourth in 25.36 with Bill Oakley, a little out of form, second 26.27.

## THE ROAD TIME TRIALS COUNCIL



### This is to Certify that a COMPETITION RECORD

was established by

Beacon Roads Cycling Club

whose team, June Pitchford, Christine Goodfellow & Margaret Gordon Smith  
rode 10 miles unpaced, on bicycles

in an aggregate time of 1 hr. 12 min. 13 sec. on July 8th, 1972

in accordance with the Record Conditions  
laid down by the Council

*[Signature]* Chairman

*[Signature]* National Competitions Secretary







# Colin's classic double

## Pendleton second in Catford and Bec

FOR the second weekend running Beacon RCC's Colin Purdy staged another classic climbing display by winning both the Catford and Bec events in championship-chasing style.

And again the man who was twice hammered into second place by Purdy's vertical take-offs was the ever-trying Max Pendleton, Luton Wheelers.

Purdy started his onslaught in the bitter cold on Catford's Yorks Hill — 660 yards of muscle-melting agony. Pendleton was hoping desperately for a win, as it would have given him the honour of equalling Ernie Hussey's record of nine wins in the event.

Hussey was there to see if the Luton Wheeler would notch the ninth, but he went away with his record still safe.

Purdy stormed up the climb in 2-0.4, a massive seven-second margin over Max. As usual the hill was tricky and slippery with a carpet of wet leaves, but the cold was the main enemy.

Third was another in-form Colin — Summerfield from Normads (Hitchin), and he also trailed by a stinging seven seconds.

Unable to find his Purdy-beating form of last week was young Dave Sinar, who could only manage 2-18.6, but his time was still better than clubmate Rod Goodfellow, whose 2-22.4 tied up the team title for the Beacon.

Pendleton's attempt at revenge on Titsey Lane hill in the afternoon also failed, — but not by much this time.

He gave everything he had to try and extinguish the Beacon

man's hopes, but was nudged out by just over a second.

The weather had warmed up for the Bec CC golden jubilee promotion and Purdy, off one from the end of the 63-strong card, soared to the heights in 2-9.8. He did not have to wait long to know that the £15 first prize was his.

Pendleton, winner last year and in 1971, established a breath-bursting rhythm and clocked 2-9.8.

The private battle between Goodfellow and Sinar this time ended in a dead heat, both clocking 2-15.8, a time also shared by Summerfield. It went without saying that the Beacon won the team award again.

### CATFORD CC (Yorks Hill, 660 yd.)

Colin Purdy, Beacon RCC	2 0.4
M. Pendleton, Luton Wh	2 7.0
C. Summerfield, Normads (Hitchin)	2 14.6
R. Hoy, Haslemere & D CC	2 16.0
D. Sinar, Beacon RCC	2 18.6
L. Brambleby, Weybridge Wh	2 20.4
R. Goodfellow, Beacon RCC	2 22.4
P. Davey, Normads (Hitchin)	2 24.0
Team — Beacon RCC (Purdy, Sinar, Goodfellow) 6-41.4	

### BEC CC (Titsey Lane, 700 yd.)

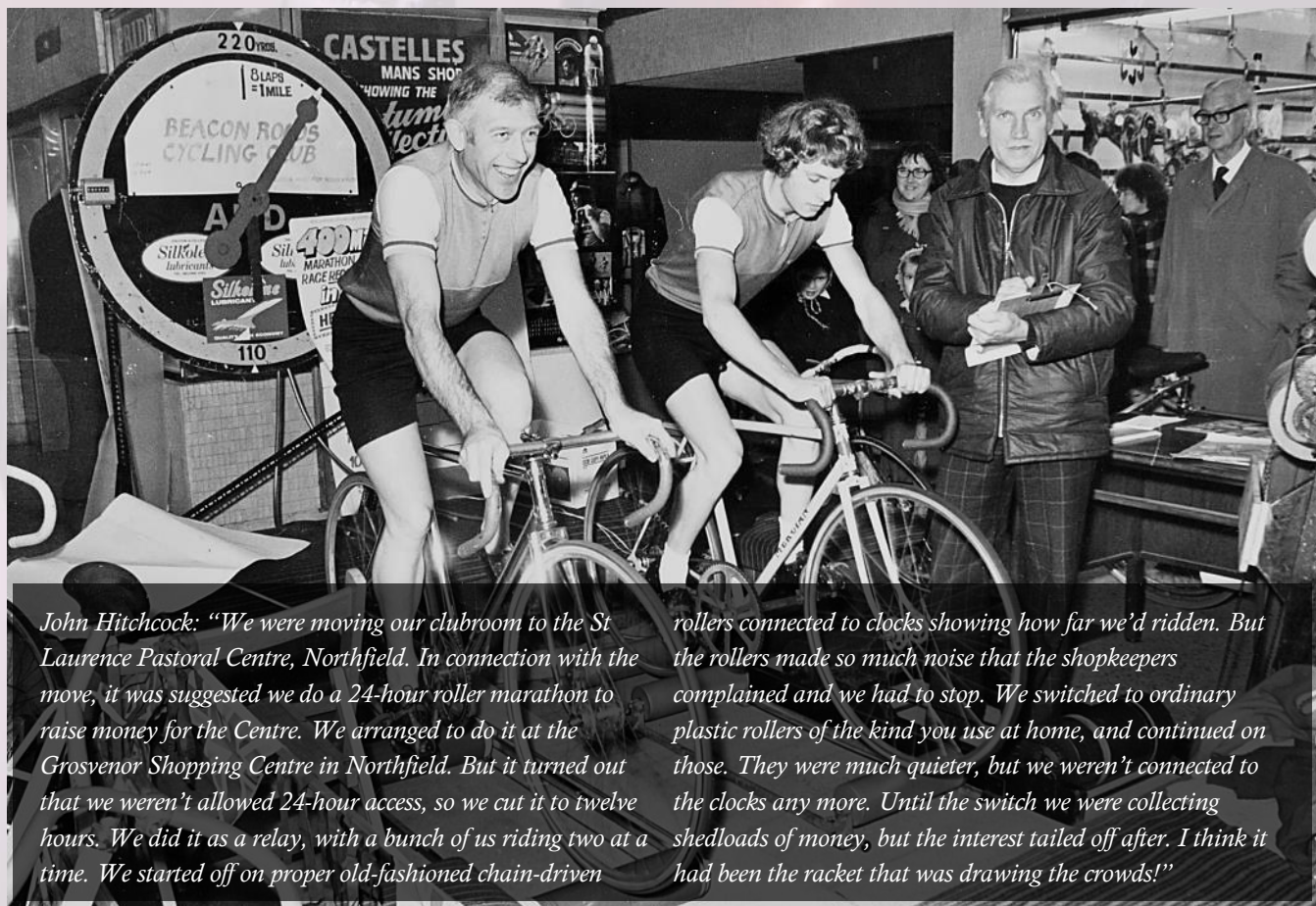
Colin Purdy, Beacon RCC	2 9.8
M. Pendleton, Luton Wh	2 11.0
R. Goodfellow, Beacon RCC	2 15.8
D. Sinar, Beacon RCC	2 15.8
C. Summerfield, Normads (Hitchin)	2 15.8
L. Brambleby, Weybridge Wh	2 22.2
S. White, De Laune CC	2 23.6
R. Callum, Middlesex CC	2 25.8
Boys — P. Elliott, Gemini BC	2 50.8
Juniors — Sinar, Team — Beacon RCC (Purdy, Goodfellow, Sinar) 6-41.4	



### Rod Goodfellow:

*"In 1972, Colin Purdy won the Bec CC Hill Climb.*

*Colin, Dave Sinar and I got the team prize. Colin and I, with Dave Sinar, Pete Ruff or Steve Jones won a number of hill climbs. We also had an interclub hill climb with five other clubs on the full three miles of the Horseshoe Pass on Remembrance Sundays, usually with around a hundred riders."*



*John Hitchcock: "We were moving our clubroom to the St Laurence Pastoral Centre, Northfield. In connection with the move, it was suggested we do a 24-hour roller marathon to raise money for the Centre. We arranged to do it at the Grosvenor Shopping Centre in Northfield. But it turned out that we weren't allowed 24-hour access, so we cut it to twelve hours. We did it as a relay, with a bunch of us riding two at a time. We started off on proper old-fashioned chain-driven*

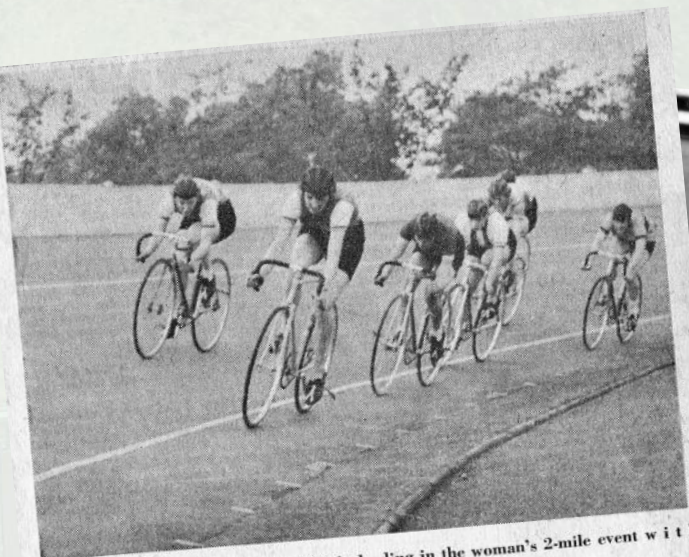
*rollers connected to clocks showing how far we'd ridden. But the rollers made so much noise that the shopkeepers complained and we had to stop. We switched to ordinary plastic rollers of the kind you use at home, and continued on those. They were much quieter, but we weren't connected to the clocks any more. Until the switch we were collecting shedloads of money, but the interest tailed off after. I think it had been the racket that was drawing the crowds!"*





# 75 years of...

## track racing



Chris Goodfellow of Beacon-road Club, leading in the woman's 2-mile event with the pack in hot pursuit.

**T**HE Beacon Club was fortunate last Saturday when the early morning thunderstorm eased off in time for the time trial rounds of the Women's C.R.A. pursuit championship to be held on the drying out Salford Park track.

From the ten entries for this 3,000 metre event the two fastest qualifiers were to ride the final in the meeting proper in the afternoon. The third and fourth fastest were then to ride off for the third place medal.

The four fastest were National Pursuit Champion Beryl Burton, National Sprint Champion, Barbara Mapplebeck, June Pitchford and Beacon's Chris Goodfellow.

When the meeting proper started the weather had improved with the sun making a weak appearance.

The first event was a "Devil-take-the-hindmost" where the last rider dropped out each lap until the last four sprinted for the first three places.

From the thirty four riders, international Harry Jackson of Portsmouth got his wheel across the line with John Clarey of Woolwich second and local boy Roy Cox of the Wyndham third.

Next came the event with most interest for the Beacon supporters when Chris Goodfellow rode against Barbara Mapplebeck for third place in the pursuit championship.

For the first two of the seven and a half laps Chris was trailing by one second against the sprinter, but then built up a lead of three seconds until the last lap when she lost a couple of them, winning by just one second in 4 minutes 30.5seconds.

This is Chris's first attempt at pursuing and many were pleasantly surprised at this performance.



Above: Pam Billington racing on the track in the early sixties

Left and top left: Press cuttings about our open track promotion, Salford Park, 1966

Below: club track championship, Salford Park, 1981





## *A look at the world from 42 degrees*

*By Dave Hughes, British flying 200-metre masters' record holder  
and Masters World Sprint Champion 2019*



You wend your way through the high-roads and back alleys of everyday life without much in the way of 'due care and attention' and you suddenly arrive at a fingerpost signed 'Retirement'. How can that happen and you not be fully prepared for it? Over sixty years' advance notice for goodness' sake. I had a plan, do nothing. Laze around. Luxuriate in the now and to hell with the future. That's fine for some time, but then you get lured down a side road that you hadn't planned to travel at all.

Finally I decided to go racing again. A promising early career had been side-tracked in all the usual ways. So, one day, I sat at my computer and 'surfed' the net to find the latest means of training that would propel me into the hurly burly of 'Masters' racing; purchased the *de rigueur* carbon-framed road beast; ordered Beacon racing kit and off I went. It went well. I won, lots. I was amazed.

Now to do what I had always done, go track racing, just to add that blast of pure speed that trackies should have. But where? It had to be the new fast and furious environment of an indoor velodrome.

First session had to be the intro. In with all manner of wannabes and just curious types. I arrived, stared down

from the top of the banking and blanched. Supposedly only forty-two degrees but surely nearer ninety, possibly even an overhang. It can't be done, can it? Two youths sailed by and somehow remained attached to the sheer Siberian pine below my feet. I got changed, gulped and joined the nervous bunch gathered at base camp one. A month and many sessions later, I was a proud owner of 'track verification', meaning I could go racing. So I did.

So what can I tell you that I have learnt? I can tell you that the world moves on and standing still means you've gone backwards. Open up to new ideas; often the old ways aren't the best ways. For example, at the age of seventy, I now push gears on the track that are much bigger than Reg Harris used when he won world titles.

I can also say, with hand on heart, that the last six years of competitive cycling have been some of the most satisfying years of my life. I can tell you that there is a thriving world of older-generation athletes across the globe that wasn't there in my youth. I also know, with crystal clarity, that the wins, titles and the records are far less important than the friends made and good health obtained. Whatever you do, enjoy it and stay healthy.





# *Recollections of...*

## the 1980s by Dave Cox



*Learning the ropes from the one and only Oscar Hopkins*

### ***“Happy hours in the local lanes... without too much suffering!”***

It took me a while to join the Beacon. I'd started commuting on a £5 bitzer in 1974, liked it and became a typical 1970s 'born again' cyclist. Joined the CTC in 1976 and spent a Christmas with Richard Ballantine's Bicycle Book and the Holdsworth catalogue. Riding to Belbroughton on a summer evening was an adventure, and I took a bike on family holidays for early morning rides. By 1981, I'd done the London Brighton ride and a trip to Woodstock with a friend. I'd also ridden out to watch a race that must have been the LMTT.

I'd got to know Derek Reynolds through our children, and he took me to a Thursday evening gathering at St Brigid's Church Hall on Frankley Beeches Road. All the talk was of suffering, punishment and sore legs. I remember Dave Hughes laying this on thick and Graham Kelly describing grovelling back from somewhere. I didn't go back for two years! My first club run was with a French club in Auch as a visitor, and my first event a sportive-like tour of the Ardèche vineyards on a hot day. Fortunately, I'd been into the village and bought my first pair of cycling shorts to replace cut-off jeans.

By September 1982, I had the courage to turn up at the Black Horse on a Sunday morning, and then became

addicted to the Beacon club run. The club was at a bit of a low ebb at the time. There was no introductory ride and you had to hang on to establish yourself and not get dropped. But the rides were relatively short and not too fast.

Groups were small, with regulars like Johnny Marshall, Sheila Shayses, Oscar Hopkins, Graham Kelly and a young John Hitchcock. My diary shows trips to Flyford Flavell, Stourport, Grafton Flyford and the Beacon Hill Climb, but the first ride I led was to Kinver. This was a new and elusive destination for me. It had been published in the cyclostyled runs list, but the leader failed to show on the day. So, one wet Sunday, there were four of us at the Black Horse, all determined to go to Kinver but no leader.



*The annual Conker Championship was fiercely contested*



Undaunted, I popped down to the Shell garage and bought one of their cheap motoring maps. We set off in the rain and did well until we realised that we'd turned right too early and were heading north on the A449. The map was now mostly papier-mâché. Fortunately, we spotted a footpath with a Kinver sign. We pushed and pulled the bikes through a muddy field and woods. Eventually, one of us remounted and lent against a foot path signpost which promptly collapsed into the mire. But we made it and refuelled triumphantly in the high street tea rooms.

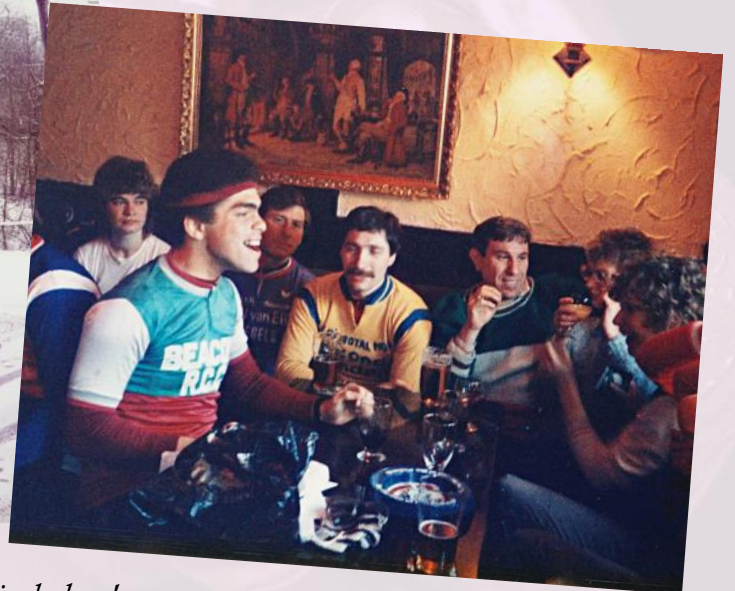
I had a year away with arthritis in 1983 but came back and by the end of the decade had served a route learning apprenticeship with Oscar and done the 100-in-8 and various audaxes and was riding the End-to-End as pilot on Roger Green's tandem.

"For a racing club it's a good touring club," was Oscar's assessment of the Beacon at that time. The regular club run was at the heart of this, with traditions like the Tramps Run and Charlie's Saturday Family Rides. On my desk, I've got

mugs from the 40th and 50th anniversaries and it's a great privilege to have seen the club develop and to have spent so many happy hours in the local lanes in good company... without too much suffering!



*Cancel the club run on safety grounds? It's only an inch deep!*

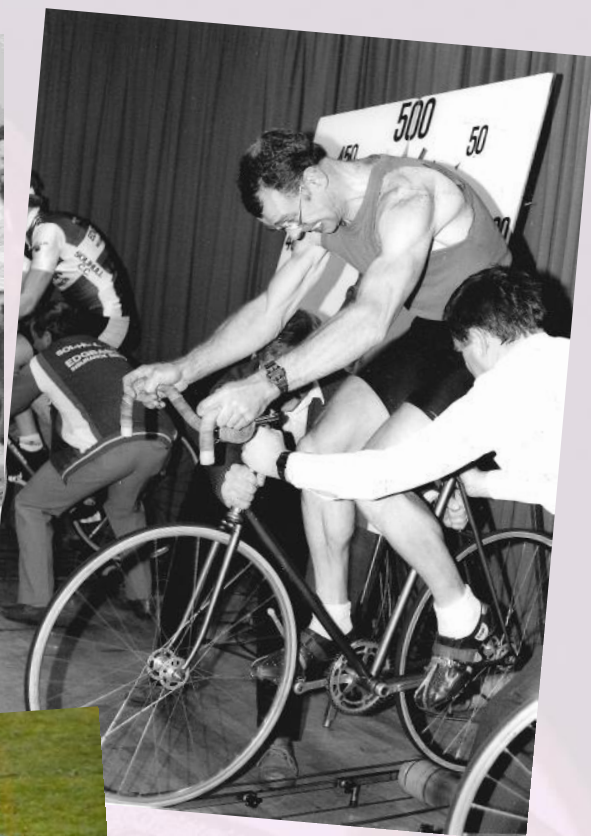


*Pre-Christmas drinks*



*One person who joined in the eighties was Roger Green. Roger became a keen tourist and audaxer, twice gaining Super Randonneur status. At the turn of the decade, he and Dave Cox rode the End-to-End, fully laden (left). What's so unusual about that? Lots of other Beaconites can make similar boasts, after all. Well, Roger is completely blind. He's still riding and touring today at the age of seventy-eight, giving his steersmen directions to cafés across the Midlands.*





*Top left: Tony Webb and Dave Hughes in the Flying Greenhouse*

*Top right: Trevor Bull roller racing*

*Left: showing off new winter tops*

*Below: Without securing any top honours, Beacon was well represented on the TT scene. Regulars included (L to R) George and Pete Barker, schoolboy Jason Hogg and junior Richard Gordon.*





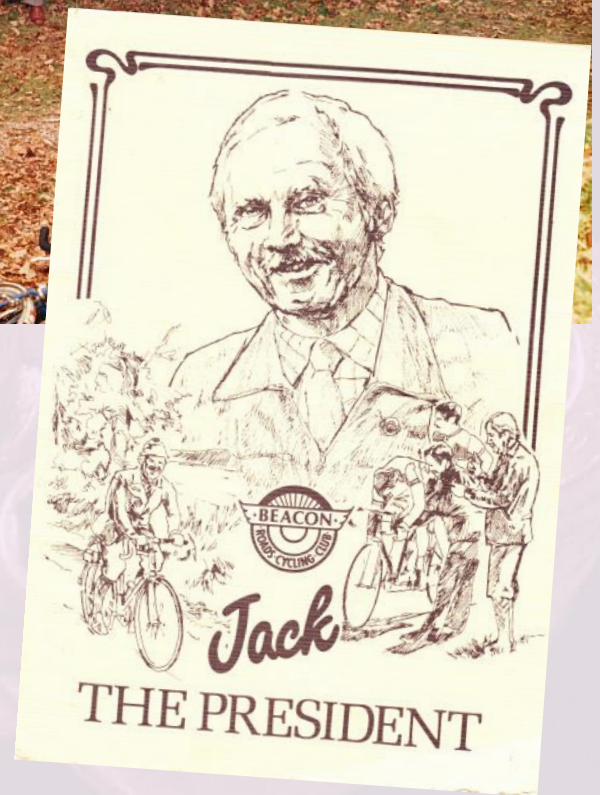


In the late eighties, Beacon lost Life President Jack Clements. Born in Wicklow, Ireland, in 1917, Jack was the son of an affluent family. Despite moving to England in 1938, he always retained his gentle Irish accent. After the war, Jack moved into the cycle trade, first as a retailer and later as a salesman and Sales Manager at Dawes. He also ran the Dawes Professional Racing Team.

He joined the fledgling Beacon Roads CC in the late forties and became the club's second president in 1947. He served as chairman of the Birmingham Division of the BCF, as a commissaire and as a track judge. With his wife Jeanne, he was also a busy RTTC and RRA timekeeper.

Jack Clements was not a remote, titular president. He regarded the membership as an extended family and urged the rest of us to do the same. His door was always open and he was a fund of thoughtful, quietly considered advice. His steady guidance at meetings steered the club through many difficult times.

After his death, the Mountain Time Trial was renamed in his honour. A bench and plaque were erected in Stanford-on-Teme churchyard. The main picture above was taken at the unveiling ceremony. The bench overlooks the current Little Mountain course so that all riders taking part in the race today ride past it: a beautiful place, loved by Jack himself.



Jack's successor, Trevor Shipway (above), presided over the club in a similar style before stepping down due to ill health. Trevor passed away in 2019.





# 75 years of...

## long-distance riding



***“You don’t get wi-fi up here,  
but I’ve never felt more connected  
and happy than I do right now”***

*Phil Richards reflects on the Beacon’s  
curious obsession with long-distance cycling*

Long-distance riding has always been part of the Beacon’s DNA. Back in the early days, many riders did everything: they nearly all raced, but they also went on longer rides than would now be regarded as sensible.

In the early fifties, founder member Harry Morris and his mates somehow got to Nice in southern France, then cycled home. Club runs regularly went to places like Llangollen, and each week the call went out not only to suggest a café for lunch, but – equally important – where they were all going for their evening meal on the way home. No Beacon Bursts for those early riders! Guys like Alan Nicholls, the Goodfellows, and the much-missed Norman Adams, Trevor Shipway and Dave Duffield used to race, certainly. But long-distance riding was how they prepared. It was the staple fare of the Beacon rider.

*Top: Rod Goodfellow and Les Ladbury  
leading a reliability trial to Llangollen, 1961*

*Above: Jean Clements, 1962 Weston run*

*Opposite: John Williams, Chris Ashford and  
Phil Richards at the finish of the 2019 PBP*





Take the Weston run – the annual reliability ride from Birmingham to Weston-Super-Mare and back in a day. Although it has recently been resurrected, it's now ridden in July, whereas it used to take place in February! Half the ride – or more – therefore had to be done in darkness... usually in freezing, icy lanes, with heavy bikes and lights that provided as much illumination as a Swan Vesta match. A tough ride but somehow rewarding... apparently!

As the seventies gave way to the eighties and nineties, these endurance rides fell away slightly. Granted, there were pockets of riders keeping the tradition alive, including guys like Eddie Sumner and Roger Harris riding the big endurance events, such as Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP). Then Audax began to take over: long-distance rides organised under the rules of a national governing body, with its own award schemes and community of adherents. Beacon became a regular Audax event promoter, and interest in endurance riding began to rise again. Organisers like Alan Mason, John Porter and more recently Philip Whiteman led the revival. As a result, the love of endurance riding in Beacon has now come full circle. A dozen or more Beaconites are now obsessed with distance riding and embracing this new hardship. 'Pushing the Boundaries' club runs now take place, with 400 and even 500-kilometre rides a fixed part of the summer programme. In 2019, a dozen Beacon riders turned up to pedal from Birmingham to Skegness and back without an overnight stop.

Few experiences can be as memorable – or as funny – as when you get a few mates together and go big:

- A bunch of us set out at 11pm for a 410-kilometre club run and were lucky enough to pass a lone drunk in Droitwich at 1am, twerking with a lamppost to the song 'Jolene'... that's something you can't unsee!
- Have you ever wandered into a McDonalds at 2:30am and been accosted by a bunch of 'high' sixteen-year-olds wanting to do a wheelie on your prized carbon bike?

- Have you ever arrived at the back entrance of Corley services on your bike at 3am, so tired on a 500-kilometre club run that you fall asleep head-first into a raspberry muffin?
- Have you ever started a 200-kilometre ride in foul winter weather, and thought as you ride higher and higher into the mountains that perhaps you ought to turn back?

Beacon's current long-distance endurance riders are trying to keep alive the heritage of fearlessness handed down to us by riders past. Local audaxes now always have a strong Beacon contingent, Land's End to John O' Groats seems to have more and more Beacon riders every year, and the great international endurance events such as Transcontinental and Paris-Brest-Paris now rarely take place without Beacon representation.

Beacon is now renowned as a long-distance cycling club. Each year, Audax UK compile a league table of cycling clubs in the UK that ride AUK events. The table reflects the total distance ridden by club members on these gruelling excursions, which typically take place on strength-sapping back lanes, and often involve serious climbing. In this year's table, Beacon finished sixth out of 250 clubs! So why not experience the joy that is endurance riding? In the Midlands, there's no better club to do it with than the Beacon.

Because with the hardship comes camaraderie. With the foul weather come endless laughs. With the exhaustion come extreme satisfaction and an overwhelming sense of achievement. As someone once said to me, "You don't get wi-fi up here, but I've never felt more connected and happy than I do right now."

It's not average, it's not the norm, it's not everyone's cup of tea. But endurance riding is part of the enduring spirit of Beacon Roads Cycling Club.



*In 2017, the Beacon's Adam Green and Stuart White took on one of cycling's greatest challenges: the Transcontinental Race. The principle of the event is simple: go from A to B (via a number of control points) as fast as you can. What's so hard about that? Well, A and B are thousands of miles apart. And the controls are in fiendishly inaccessible places. You're not allowed a support crew, and you've got to plan and navigate your own route.*

*Adam and Stu's edition of the race was from Geraardsbergen (Belgium) to Meteora (Greece), via Schloss Lichtenstein (Germany), Monte Grappa (Italy), High Tatras (Slovakia) and Transfăgărășan (Romania).*

*Stu has written a detailed and very readable account of his trip, which will soon be available on the Beacon website. This spread gives a flavour of the ride in the form of a number of short excerpts from Stu's memoir, with related photos.*



#### **Excerpt 1, Belgium**

It's 7am on Sunday 29 July and I've just woken up in my luxurious shed on the outskirts of Geraardsbergen. Another couple of riders are up and outside their sheds opposite. Without asking, you can see they're involved in this stupid bike ride. My chums Justin and Mike chaperoned me to beautiful Belgium via the Dover-Calais ferry yesterday (a gruelling whole-day affair that saw us arrive after midnight despite leaving first thing Saturday morning), so they can use waving me off as an excuse to sink vast quantities of strong, local beer. The day is long, and I spend most of it flipping between weird underlying nerves and frustration that I can't manage to squeeze any bonus hours' kip in prior to the off.

#### **Excerpt 2, leaving Belgium**

Although evening, it's warm, and I soon motor through all of my water. I get a coke from a vending machine and start getting a little concerned. I'm a few hours into a two-week race and already running out of stuff. Then, from out of the darkness, it appears: a neon oasis – my first petrol station. I refill my bottles, then push on all night and all day at a steady 15 mph. Then four hours sleep and up with the sun to do it over again.



#### **Excerpt 3, Slovenia**

I set off into the darkness and begin two and a half hours of strenuous climbing. The road is empty, carving through rocks. It's really tough... it's getting hot, then windy... the climb is endless. But so are the views. The line on my GPS shows an end point. I'm so close I can taste it. A tailwind after the last switchback pushes me up a steep ramp. The sun is just building up, the valley lighting up. I feel like I have the place to myself. An amazing moment.





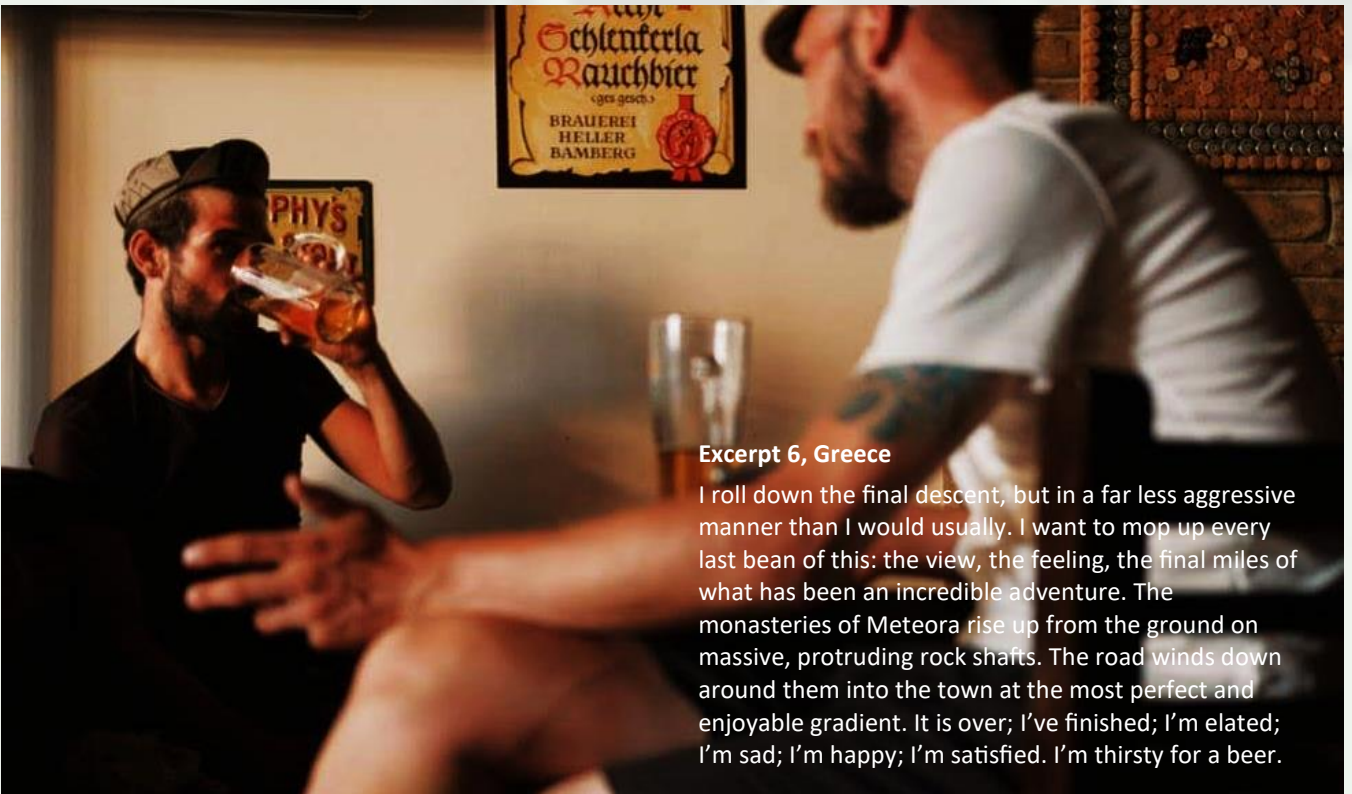
#### Excerpt 4, Czech Republic

I find a lovely bus shelter and bivvy down. You never sleep well when you bivvy, and here's one of the reasons: about two hours in, I am abruptly awoken by a car pulling up right outside. A bloke gets out, stumbles to the front of his car then starts projectile-vomiting everywhere: the ground, the bonnet, himself. It's almost impressive. Am I dreaming? He finishes up, wipes his mouth on his sleeve, stumbles back to the car and he's gone. As I fall back asleep, I remember: they drive on the right over here. So he's just got in the driver's seat! I am glad to be in this bus stop right now.



#### Excerpt 5, Bosnia

I experience what I had seen a lot of chat about prior to this race. Dogs. No noise to start with, until you hear the sound of claws on tarmac. Then they're up beside you, barking, snarling, sometimes trying to have a little nip. This goes on for the rest of the night. I try sprinting, barking back, even completely stopping. All of which have fleeting success. But, overall, I make very little progress in my dog-whispering career. The action does, however, mean I'm not focusing on the miles. Before I know it, I'm scaling the climb to checkpoint 4. Another middle-of-the-night, pitch-black ascent. Tomorrow it's the CP4 parcours: a nice little ten-kilometre gravel ride to the abandoned ski station at the very peak of the mountain.



#### Excerpt 6, Greece

I roll down the final descent, but in a far less aggressive manner than I would usually. I want to mop up every last bean of this: the view, the feeling, the final miles of what has been an incredible adventure. The monasteries of Meteora rise up from the ground on massive, protruding rock shafts. The road winds down around them into the town at the most perfect and enjoyable gradient. It is over; I've finished; I'm elated; I'm sad; I'm happy; I'm satisfied. I'm thirsty for a beer.





# *Recollections of...*

the 1990s by Deb & Paul Deane



## ***Deb: "I have fabulous memories to look back on"***

I can ride a bike, in the same way that I can play table tennis or swing a golf club. However, I don't do any of these things really well! I am not a 'sticker', nor particularly competitive, so have never felt the need to join a sports club. To be honest, I didn't know that cycling could be considered a sport, rather than a means of transport. I remember well the discussions with Paul regarding his interest in longer distance cycle rides. And I particularly remember the one around the cost of a new bike!

At this time, cycling was not a popular activity, no one had heard of Sky, and the Beacon was in a transitional phase. However, the members welcomed newcomers with open arms. Paul signed us up, and I started to attend the social activities and a few club nights. It was apparent that this was a male-dominated environment. The only female I

was aware of was Jane Herrin. From what I could see the role of wives and girlfriends was to support club events, usually providing tea and cakes in the kitchen! I was to learn later that the club did indeed have a rich history of female cycling talent, but like the majority of cycling clubs, having no clubhouse or trophy cabinet, the history of the club and its achievers was not immediately obvious. At least not to a newcomer like myself. Nowadays, with websites and social media having mostly taken the place of the clubhouse, the club's history and achievements are in full view.

What I haven't told you is that, up in our loft gathering dust, was a beautiful tandem, albeit in many parts! Before we had a family, we had hired a tandem for an afternoon whilst on holiday in Padstow. Paul had surprised me the following year with a gift of a brand-new Peugeot Tandem bought from Tommy Godwin for our wedding anniversary. However, a few weeks before the tandem arrived, I had surprised Paul with the news I was pregnant!



We used the tandem for a couple of years with the addition of a baby seat, but once our second child arrived the tandem was consigned to the loft. As the girls became teenagers, they were content to be left to their own devices, allowing us the opportunity to revive the tandem and join in a few club runs. For a number of years, the role of tandem stoker remained my only cycling involvement. Whilst my fitness levels improved, the lack of any involvement with steering and braking left me thinking that perhaps I was ready to take my cycling up a level. The decision to ride solo was made one fine afternoon returning from a Knighton weekend. On the descent of Clee hill, at fifty miles an hour and with cars trying to overtake us simply because we were on a bike, I closed my eyes, used the breathing technique necessary when in labour and, on reaching the café at the bottom of the hill, said never again! I want my own brakes!

Paul, being a supportive husband, rapidly provided me with my first road bike with drop bars. We went on our first ten-mile ride, and I promptly fell off trying to steer round a corner! This was clearly a step too far, so it was back home (in a straight line), in order to change to a straight bar set up. This made a big difference and I quickly gained confidence. By this time, we had made some good friends in the club, but club runs were way above my ability. Jane

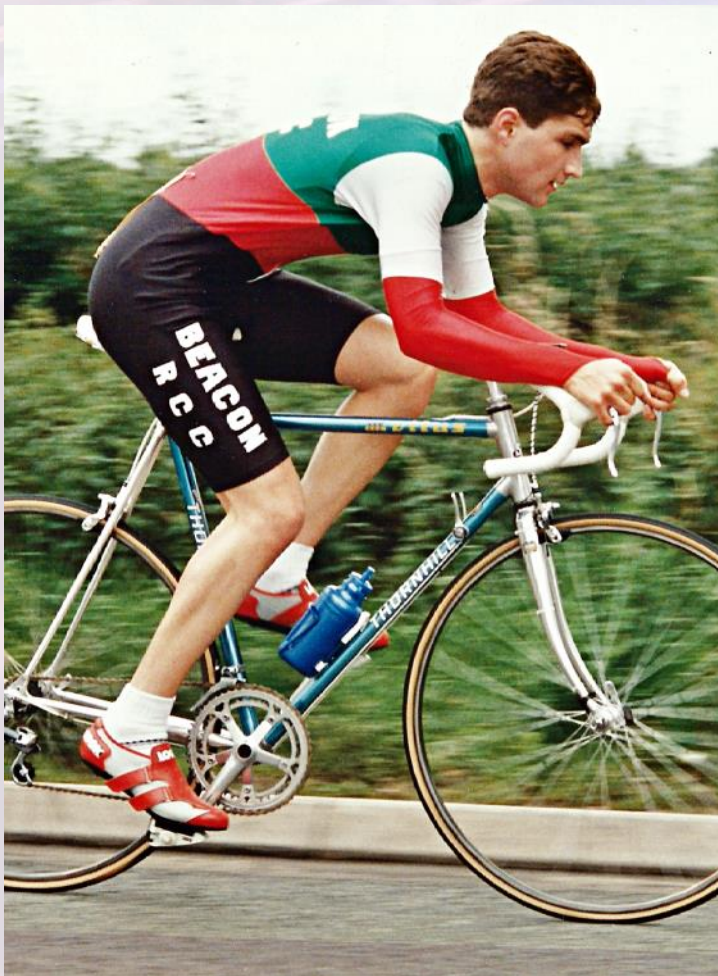
Herrin, who I had met in those early days, had now become a close friend. She continued to encourage me, offering guidance on riding technique and arranging some great days out on the bikes. Whilst I was never good on hills, I became, thanks to the hours spent on the back of the tandem, a good descender.



The other woman in my life with the Beacon was the brilliant Ruth Eyles. Ruth persuaded me that I would enjoy riding more if I had a road bike and offered to lend me one to try. Bearing in mind my first experience of riding with drop bars, I accepted her offer with a little uncertainty. But I will be forever thankful to Ruth, for this really did transform my experience of bike riding! I found I could go further and faster without more effort. It was not long before I was enjoying Sunday morning rides with Pat Haddon, Sheila and Mavis. These lovely ladies were such an inspiration to me in those early years. I never did get to the heights of a club run, but Beacon RCC

and its members have played a big part in my life. I have many good friends and fabulous memories to look back on. Riding the End-to-End as part of a female-only group remains one of my happiest memories and my only sporting achievement. An achievement I couldn't have achieved without Paul, Jane, Ruth and Beacon RCC!

It's wonderful to see how the club has grown over time. I'm pleased to say Paul and I still ride our bikes regularly, but sometimes with a little help from an electric motor!



*With the exception of Hughie McGuire's veterans' road race title (see overleaf), top honours were generally elusive in the nineties. However, club members continued to compete in all the major disciplines. Simon Hughes (above) enjoyed a successful spell on road and track, while Richard Gordon (left) secured numerous creditable placings in local time trials and road races.*



## *Paul: “Success, woe and the smell of Johnny Marshall’s pancakes”*

Cycling was not my first sport of choice, but I did have an early start. At the age of twelve, I decided to ride from our home in Selly Park to Worcester. I’d never been there, but I’d seen it on a map and reckoned all I had to do was keep riding down the Bristol Road until I got there. I got as far as Droitwich when I decided that I was going to struggle to get back in time for tea, so I turned back. I had told my mom and dad of my plan. They just said something like, “That’ll be nice son. Have a nice day.” What was wrong with parenting in those days? I reckon that was probably the longest ride I would do for another twenty-five years.

At the age of forty, I was a good squash player and half decent at golf. I decided to buy a second-hand bike to improve my fitness. It didn’t take long to discover the joy of bike riding. It was 1990 and I was regularly riding Audax events by myself. I was riding the Solihull 200 when I found myself in the company of six local guys who, I learned, were members of the Beacon. Three of them, I remember were Dave Mortimer, Eric Gill and Sean Hanley. During the next few hours, they told me much about the Beacon. Correction, Sean told me much about the Beacon. Their enthusiasm for the sport and passion for the club was contagious, and a couple of weeks later I turned up at the Pastoral centre in Northfield for my first club night.



The place was buzzing with excitement. Tales of success and woe from the weekend’s racing or how good the latest bits of tech were. The smell of pancakes being cooked in the kitchen wafting into the meeting room and friends in groups with a beer and much laughter. I obviously looked a bit like a fish out of water because Trevor Shipway sought me out and made me feel welcome. Trevor was one of those people that made everyone feel special. Suddenly the chat and hubbub fell quiet, and Oscar Hopkins announced all the latest club racing results and gave information about events, including club runs and social evenings to come. A few weeks later I was approached again, this time by Eric Hogg, and, encouraging me to get involved in the running of the club, told me that I was the sort of chap that would be good at organising and distributing the club’s clothing and racing kit. Yes, okay, I’m a sucker. It would be seventeen years before I finally relinquished the job of Clothing Secretary. Thanks Eric. If only I had known at the time that you had your own executive recruitment agency!

During those first ten years, I developed a real love of cycling and, thanks to the Beacon RCC, now have a host of memories. The joy of a Sunday morning club run on a bright spring morning contrasting with the freezing start of the Snowdrop Express in February. The camaraderie of bunkhouse weekends and the lung-busting weekend rides to Knighton for a few beers and a plateful of the legendary steak and kidney pie at the Red Lion. Piloting Roger Green on his George Longstaff tandem and riding home in a blizzard with hands so numb I couldn’t feel the brakes. Then there were the fun events that are part of the history of the club, like the Tramps Run and the President’s Run. One of my earliest memories of one of the wackier ones was the Winter Olympics on Beacon Hill. Our president Trevor Shipway had a large bowl of punch in the boot of his car which he assured us was alcohol-free. In the years that followed, as I got to know Trevor and his wicked sense of humour, I would realise how naïve I was! I smile about that even now. As my fitness improved, I tasted the excitement and anticipation of my first efforts at time trialling, and at the end of the year we would get all dressed up for the Annual Dinner. The list is endless.

I do regret that I didn’t find cycling earlier in my life. But what the Beacon has given me will remain with me for the rest of my years: a garage full of old bikes and most importantly some great friends.



Jason Hogg: "Beacon had a strong junior team in the early nineties. This photo is Roger Webb, Michael Counter, me and Paul Brodnicki at an early season road race. We had a few good years of training and racing together until we all went our separate ways around the age of eighteen. Paul and Michael both got their first-cat licences and Michael won the club road race one year. We used to ride the club time trial on a Tuesday, Salford Park track on the Wednesday, Birmingham Wheels on the Thursday, then a road race or TT on the Sunday.

"Richard Gordon was a stalwart of the club with his dad Gerry. Hughie is a club legend, of course. We were all pretty active in the club with an annual trip to Weston-super-Mare, training runs to Knighton and social runs, as well as the training bash. They were great days and fond memories!"



Above: juniors Michael Counter, Paul Brodnicki and Jason Hogg under the watchful eye of Dave Sinar (left), the 'star of the club', whom the youngsters looked up to.

Right: Gladys and Eric Hogg timekeeping at the LMTT, a watercolour sketch by Frank Webb



Hugh McGuire (centre) with Richard Gordon (right)

In this era, a roundish middle-aged Scotsman joined the club. Supportive and encouraging to younger riders, he soon won friends. But few initially thought him remarkable as a cyclist. By degrees, however, Hughie got leaner and faster. And, by degrees, we learnt who Hughie really was. In his youth, he'd been a prolific winner north of the border, gaining international selection and riding the Peace Race (the 'Soviet Tour de France'). By the late 1990s and into the 2000s, Hughie was training and racing with people half his age and younger, giving as good as he got. At the end of the decade, he won the national over-sixties' road race title. Sadly, he died of a heart attack aged seventy-one, riding home from a weekend in Wales. He'd had a heart condition for years, but hadn't taken the medication because it slowed him down. A handful of relatives came south for his funeral. They were amazed to discover a large crowd of cyclists there. Because, of course, Hughie hadn't told them he was a minor celebrity in his adopted home. Hughie's premature death was a blow to us all, but we knew he'd gone out just as he would have wanted: with his cleats on.





# 75 years of...

## touring and adventuring



*“Falling asleep to the sound of a river, under a sky full of stars and realising that I have everything I need, right here”*

*Claire Dignon describes the joys of touring*

I'm not going to lie. I was really nervous before my first club run with the Beacon back in January 2011. Turning up with my newly purchased Dawes Super Galaxy complete with pannier rack, I feared the Lycra kit, featherlight bikes and incomprehensible language involving gear ratios and derailleurs. But my apprehensions were soon dissipated by a warm welcome from members who were generous with their time and knowledge – namely, offering Garmin expertise and inside knowledge on how beans on toast could be procured at airfields and fisheries! – helping me to complete my first tour from John O'Groats to Land's End just three months later.

Arguably, the Beacon is therefore *entirely* to blame for

the bike touring addiction I've suffered from ever since.

Don't get me wrong – I adore the occasional road outing on the carbon bike I was, of course, compelled to buy (n+1 etc) but the wondrous unknown of a multi-day, week or month-long bike tour is my happiest of places – 90 per cent satisfaction at the time but always 100 per cent in retrospect!

Everyone's different, but I gradually came to learn how I like to tour. For example, I love a linear tour – an end-to-end, coast-to-coast, border-to-border. So, while my cycling style is far from focused – just check out my tour photos of butterflies, mushrooms, slugs and road signs as evidence – I need an overall tangible objective.





*The pictures show Claire in the South Dakota Badlands (opposite), on An Turas Mor (upper inset) and on the Great Divide (lower inset and above).*

I meandered 6500 miles across the USA, but it was the Oregon coast that kept me going vaguely westward. I absolutely love to push myself in tough terrain – river crossings, high-altitude mountain climbs and downhills far beyond my mountain-bike technical skills – and thrive on the physicality of riding long distances day after day. But I have zero interest in the stats. Which is probably just as well given my propensity to faff. And drink coffee. I more often than not find myself riding late into the evening with only my own silhouette for company in those glorious golden hours.

I tour with friends from time to time, but I have also learned that I like to tour alone. It's made me more confident and self-sufficient. I still sometimes scare myself with my own breath when wild camping, but I'm getting better at it. Going to sleep to the sound of a river and (therefore) waking up for a night wee to a sky brimming with stars is ample recompense for the initial trepidation.

Except in bear territory, when you realise you've left a packet of peanuts in your pocket.

And, of course, being on a bike and being alone more often than not gives you a superpower of vulnerability, where people want to be unfathomably kind to you. My most cherished bike touring memories are not on the bike but off the bike, when someone has offered me a bed or a meal or just conversation. And I've learned to be more receptive to that with the vow to pay it forward.

Above all, I love the sheer simplicity of life on tour. The rise, ride, refuel, rest and repeat rhythm of each day. Bathing in a cold river, laundry hanging off my bike as I pedal, honestly believing that the packet potato and tuna I have just eaten is worthy of a Michelin star. The satisfaction of looking at my (not always expertly) packed bike and realising that I have my health and everything I need right here.





In the late 1950s or thereabouts, Eddie Sumner cycled around the world. In terms of distance alone, Eddie's expedition is certainly the most ambitious tour ever undertaken by a Beacon member. And he did it on a bike that now seems impossibly crude, before the advent of GPS, Booking.com, Google Translate or any of the other things that facilitate modern touring. Sadly, it wasn't possible to locate details or photographs of the trip in time for inclusion in this souvenir. But this feature would have been woefully incomplete without an acknowledgement of the most remarkable achievement of a man whose Beacon history stretches from the early fifties to the present day.

### 300,000 Mile Club

One of the more obscure aspects of Beacon club life is involvement with the 300,000 Mile Club. To be a member of the '300 Club', you need to have ridden and recorded the mileage that you have cycled using your own power on real surfaces.

Beacon has two members: Graham Kelly (85, with 445,522 miles) and Oscar Hopkins (87, with 338,028 miles). Sadly both are unable to ride now. Graham was the 300 Club's third Secretary (and everything else) for over ten years.

The 300 Club's founder and first Secretary was Frank Fischer, who recorded 512,209 miles in his lifetime. The second Secretary was Bernard Blow, who did 731,000 miles. His wife Joyce, the first lady to join in 1980, was at 545,000 miles, as of December 2020. The present Secretary Wilf Lawson is a mere 61-year-old, who has 686,000 miles to his name. The youngest member to join is Harry Lodge at 34 years 10 months. His brother Richard had connections with the Beacon.

Russ Mantle tops the membership list, having done 1,006,846 miles by December 2020. As far as we know, Russ is still riding daily. Heading the ladies' list is Sue Swetman, who has done more than 700,000 miles.

Each January, the Secretary compiles a list (plus anecdotes) of who has done what during the year. In 2020, there were 64 active members and 108 inactive/deceased members.

Sue Kelly

*Life is simple when all you have to think about is your bike, where you're going to sleep and what you're going to eat. Let go of the to-do list and the time pressures and just cycle day after day dealing with challenges as they come and enjoying the little patches of history, beauty and kindness that you find along the way.*

*When I'm touring, my faith in humanity is restored a little bit every time I find my bike is still where I left it without locking it. Or when someone offers me a fresh mask after I lose mine, buried in a pannier. Or when they take time out of their day to let me use their washing machine. Everyone who chats*

*with me over lunch or recommends a place to see adds a little bit to my experience until by the end of the trip I've fallen in love with spending time with strangers I'll likely never see again.*

*Carrying everything I need on my bike, fully in control of when I stop and where I go is the most freeing and joyful experience I've ever had. I always come back with new friends, new perspectives and a refreshed outlook on life, planning the next trip and wishing that this one didn't have to end.*

**Helen Colson**





# *How I became a cyclist*

*By Simon Woodward*



I've always owned a bike but never thought of myself as a cyclist. Even though I used to commute to work on my bike, I was well aware that six miles a day didn't make me a cyclist.

Following an accident in 2011, I decided to join the CTC for the insurance. Included with my membership pack was a flyer advertising the British Cycle Quest: the leaflet that changed everything.

The Quest is designed to encourage people to get out exploring on their bikes. There are six checkpoints in each county, which you 'collect'. It sounded like the perfect excuse to get out on my bike. First, I decided to visit two checkpoints in Warwickshire: Meriden and Packwood House, 44 miles in total. I was completely exhausted by the end, and couldn't believe how tough it was. Cycling such ridiculous distances was obviously for professionals. I didn't attempt such a crazy distance again that year.

Having reflected on it over the winter, next year I resolved to do better. In May 2012, I did three rides, the longest being 49 miles. I sent off my first card of 10 checkpoints to Jeff Eaves the validator and got my first certificate back. I was hooked. At the beginning of August that year, I completed my first century ride, picking up eight checkpoints in Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire.

I was loving it so much, I managed to persuade the family that I should take my bike with me on our holiday to Cornwall. Riding around the Cornish countryside would make a pleasant change. Hills – I had no idea! After 25 miles across Cornwall, I was on the verge of quitting and throwing my bike away. I was saved by a very friendly bike shop in Callington that gave me both coffee and encouragement.

By the summer of 2013, I'd completed over a hundred

checkpoints, but was starting to struggle. I was rapidly running out of checkpoints that were within a short train journey. I was also regularly breaking spokes in my rear wheel. Jeff Eaves volunteered to have a look for me. I caught the train to Stamford and Jeff met me at the station. It was my first experience of the distinctly eccentric nature of cyclists. He met me on a very old Moulton that was towing a trailer that was obviously handmade, with two Jack Russells inside.

Whilst Jeff was putting my bike to rights, I told him that I was struggling to get to any more checkpoints because of the distance. Jeff fetched several articles he'd written in the sixties on cycle touring. I never looked back. As soon as I discovered touring, I was hooked. I was soon touring through the Pennines and the Lake District and loving every minute of it. If you've never toured, you really have been missing out on the greatest thing cycling brings. Freedom.

In 2017, I was planning several long tours through Scotland with the first trip taking place at the end of April. To prevent myself losing too much fitness over the winter, I joined Beacon RCC in December 2016.

Next year, I toured through the Outer and Inner Hebrides, the north-east coast of England, the east coast of Scotland and also Shetland and the Orkneys. After battling through the blizzards and constant gales of Scotland and the islands, I realised that I had the one key attribute all tourists need: not speed but pig-headedness.

In 2019, I became the eighteenth person to complete the British Cycle Quest. It took me eight years, and I can honestly say that I loved every minute of it.

I'm still not sure that I can call myself a real cyclist, though.





# *Recollections of...*

## the 2000s by Ed Moss

### *“Nearly as good as a Stephen Roche tea towel”*

I joined the Beacon shortly after moving to Birmingham in 1999 and still remember turning up on my new aluminium, most uncomfortable, stiff Cannondale bike, made for Cipollini, for my first club run after a few years off the bike. Of course it was a meet at the Black Horse.

I joined because I wanted to race, 2001 was going to be a comeback year for me, so I trained long and hard all winter, just like I did in the eighties... only to be met at the start of the season by foot and mouth. Think I only raced once that season, at the Birmingham Wheels Park, and got dropped fairly early on. Not a good start.

Club runs usually had around ten to fifteen riders and I'll always remember Hughie McGuire pedalling the big chain ring, everywhere.

The next few seasons I got the odd top-ten road race finish and my second-cat licence, but it wasn't really working out like I hoped. Then, one Sunday, I went on a club run and one of the riders mentioned something called Level 2... getting dropped on the climbs but keeping the same power (or heart rate as it was then.)

What alchemy was this? You mean you don't go longer and harder if you are slow, like we did in the eighties? Those two words from Ruth changed a lot for me and my approach to training and racing.

In 2005, I was getting a bit bored of road racing, so switched to time-trialling. At the time, it seemed a lot more sociable, fun and less dangerous than sitting in a bunch with eighty other riders. All the same, I did miss the Friday evening crits up at Lichfield and watching Lichfield CC try to control a break, only to chase down their own rider!

Around this time, I made the best bike-related purchase I've ever made (apart from my 1987 Stephen Roche tea towel): a power meter. I think I was the first Beacon rider to own one. I also managed to get hold of a copy of the Black Book, a must-read training manual at the time. It's probably very dated now, but the Black Book structured how to train and race. A few of us were using it and, coupled with better wheels, frames and a basic understanding of aerodynamics (mandatory flat back), it helped us go a lot faster than before.

Ruth had won the women's BBAR in 2005, and in the 2006 season her success provided inspiration for a lot of us, to train smarter and go faster. Never did get the proper flat back, though.

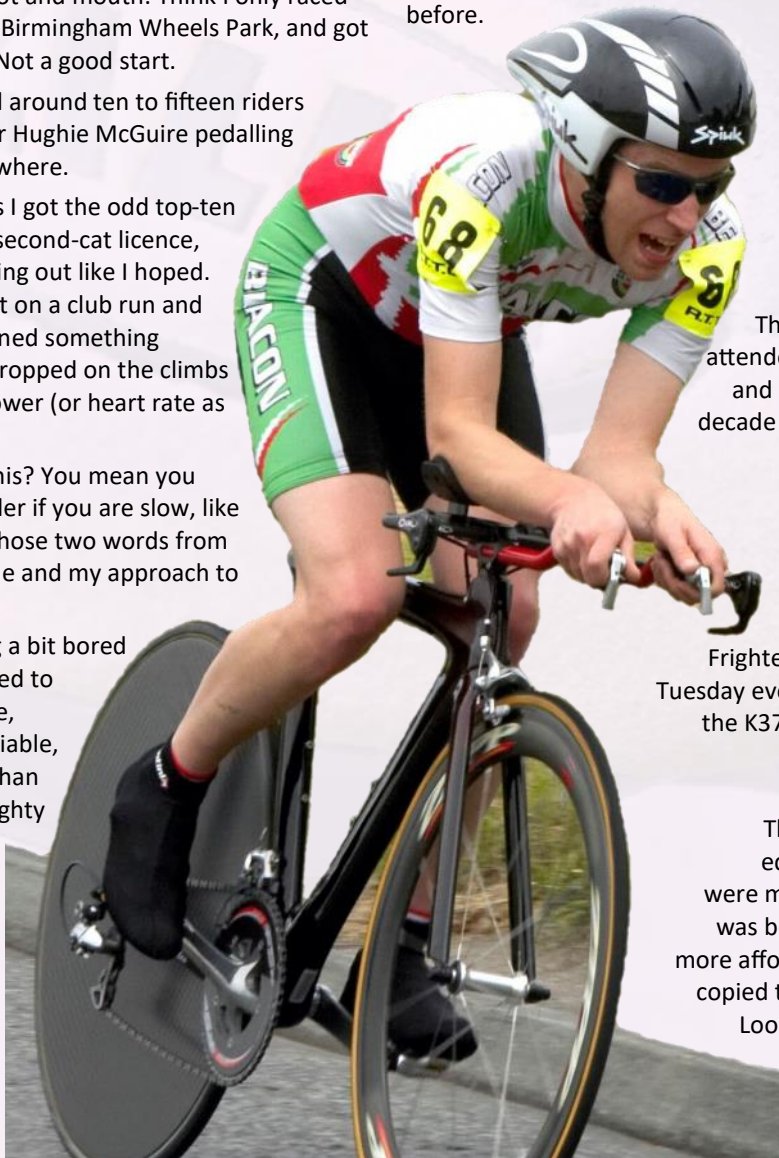
The club TTs were fairly well attended throughout the decade and numbers got better as the decade went on. I'm proud to say

I never got lost on the country 20 course. First time I rode it though, I did write the directions on my arm – it was before GPS computers.

Frightening to think I spent most Tuesday evenings going up and down the K37/10 on the Alcester Road, but there were fewer cars on the road then.

The changes in training and equipment from 2000-2010 were massive, carbon everything was becoming very popular and more affordable. I just wish I hadn't copied the Jan Ullrich TT position.

Looking at the pictures today, I reckon might have gone a bit faster otherwise.





*Around the turn of the millennium, Alan Mason launched the Snowdrop Audax: a low-threshold opener to the audaxing season. It soon proved so popular that a sister event, the Sunrise Audax, was added. Riders in the two events do the same course in opposite directions.*



*Building on the success of the Snowdrop and Sunrise, we remodelled our summer audax rides through the Cotswolds. Routes to suit various ambition levels were offered, based on pretty, rural lanes with welcoming controls and generous post-ride hospitality.*

*The format was a hit and the Cotswold Audaxes attracted fields of up to 400 riders.*



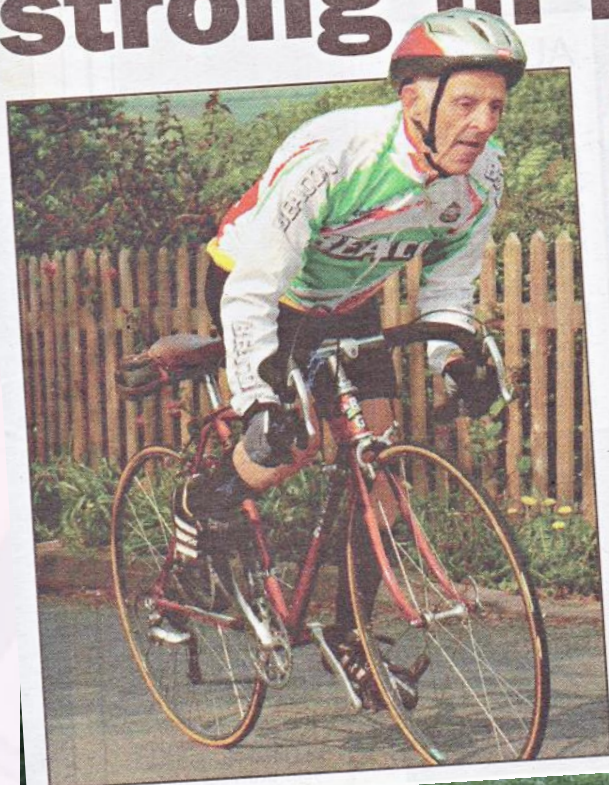


*In recent decades, the average age of the cycling population has increased a lot. Of course, it's great that many people are living longer and staying active. But we still want young people entering the sport. And we want our sport to be accessible and welcoming to all. In the 2000s, Beacon therefore started running low-threshold Introductory Rides for people new to organised cycling (above). And Ruth Eyles promoted a women's time trial series made up of events throughout the district (left and below). Run on quieter roads than most TTs, the aim was to create a friendly, safe environment to help women get involved in racing against the watch.*





# Legend is still going strong in his eighties



A CITY cycling legend celebrated his eightieth birthday taking on 100 whippersnappers in a gruelling, classic race.

Norman Adams first took on the Beacon Road Cycling Club's historic Mountain Time Trial 58 years ago.

So what better way to enter his ninth decade than by competing in the Great Witley-based race again.

Almost 40 miles long, the race includes the severe climbs of Stanford Bank and Ankerdine Hill.

With gradients approaching 20 per cent, most cyclists would ride a long way to avoid these hills.

Adams, however, was undaunted. He took the race in his stride, completing the whole distance in less than three hours.

Food rationing was still in place and the country was recovering from years of war in 1947 when Norman joined the Beacon club. In those days cyclists enjoyed quiet, traffic-free roads, though the bikes and equipment they used were heavier and not so well designed for speed as modern machines.

The young rider soon showed that he was one of the strongest cyclists, not only in the club but also in the Midlands.

After breaking his first club record in 1950, he set new marks again and again throughout the decade, winning many races along the way.

Even after Norman had finished racing at an elite level, his records stood unchal-

BY VICTORIA THOMAS  
victoria\_thomas@mrn.co.uk

lenged for almost 20 years.

He counts a 25-mile time trial win in 1953 as his best performance. The event, run by the Birchfield Cycling Club, was oversubscribed, attracting riders from all over the country, such was the prestige attached to winning.

On that day Adams beat the whole field to record a superb win in just 59 minutes – an outstanding performance.

Club chairman George Barker said: "Norman is an inspiration and an example to us all. The times he recorded on a single-gear bike 50 years ago would put most modern riders to shame."

Norman said: "It was my Father who got me into cycling and I haven't looked back since. He bought me a bicycle for my sixth birthday and took me to places all over the Midlands and into Worcestershire – places difficult to get to by transport then."

"After the war I started racing with the Beacon on a cracking good bike bought from cycle manufacturer in Northfield and continued to race for many years after that."

"I am still enjoying cycling. When I was a lad, Father and I used to cycle out into the countryside and pitch camp at the side of the road. I just started to revisit those old camps to take photographs – it is just like living all over again."



*Flick back to the features on the forties and fifties, and you'll notice that the name Norman Adams crops up quite a lot. In that period, Norman set a string of club time trial records. So, what was he up to sixty years on from the club's formation? Resting in a care home? Nope. As the press cutting recounts, Norman was competing in the Little Mountain Time Trial.*

*Later the same year, a Beacon group rode out to the very same spot to watch the Tour of Britain. A five-hour ride and a two-hour wait (just ask John) for a free hat and a thirty-second glimpse of the pros!*





# 75 years of...

## cyclocross and mountain-biking



*In the early fifties, Nev Smith, ever the innovator, organised a pioneering series of cyclocross events over the Waseley Hills. As these photos show, the races attracted large fields of enthusiastic competitors.*

*Later, Neville Billington became the Beacon's cyclocross promoter. Although no photos of his events survive, Nev's recollections of them remain intact...*

### ***"I thought the World Champion would create a bit of interest"***

"I joined the Beacon in '54, but I did national service from '58 to '60, so it was the early sixties that I got involved again. Nev Smith had moved on by then, so I stepped in.

"The first event was in '62 at Rollswood Farm, Alcester. I got talking to the organisers of a motocross meeting who thought it would be a good idea to put on a cyclocross race in the interval, to keep the crowd interested. It was a spectator event, which the public paid to attend. We got a generous share of the gate receipts, meaning I was in a position to pay appearance money.

"With the help of Enzo Mannari, an Italian lad who joined the Beacon while studying nearby, I wrote to Renato Longo of Italy, the World Champion, and invited him over. I thought it would create a bit of interest. Anyway, he agreed. We had some very good 'cross riders at that time, but Longo absolutely walked away with the race.

"Combining motorsport and cycling wasn't ideal, though, so we decided to run our own event at Chadwich Manor, near Bromsgrove. That was an excellent venue. Life was different in so many ways back then. If you put on a good event, you were more or less guaranteed to get the top British riders. We regularly had Mike Stallard, the British Champion.

"I wanted to keep the international flavour though. So I contacted the Cologne Police. It probably sounds odd now, but they were renowned for having a very strong cyclocross team. And that's how we came to have a squad of German policemen cycling around in the Worcestershire mud."



*Renato Longo  
(Wikimedia Commons)*





*Beacon interest in cyclocross has waxed and waned since Neville's heyday, but never died. These pictures show Adrian Ravenscroft (left), Helen Jamieson (centre) and Nic Vipond (below right). The bottom picture is the 'Beacon crew' at a joint promotion with Redditch R&PCC about five years ago.*







*Keri Harris on an Alpine trail*

*Of course, back in 1946 there was no such thing as mountain-biking, so the title of this spread is perhaps a little misleading. When the sport crossed the Atlantic decades later, the Beaconite who took it up with greatest enthusiasm wasn't a hip young dude in a backwards baseball cap, but Oscar Hopkins, already by then approaching sixty. As the clipping opposite relates, Oscar was not only a regular competitor, but also led Beacon off-road rides, which attracted many youngsters to the club.*

*Thirty years on, he shares his recollections of those...*

## ***Happy days as an MTB pioneer***

I started mountain-biking in 1991, doing local rides, then local races. Bob's Bash near Henley in Arden was the nearest at the time. MTB races sprung up in many areas, until the tax man caught up with them!

Largest of all was the Malvern Hills Classic in Eastnor Deer Park. Several of us used to camp there and take part in the mainly cross-country races. There were hundreds of riders taking part in the various categories on the Saturday, with the finals on the Sunday.

Many riders will never forget the famous Bomb Hole,

with riders flying into the air and landing in all directions. Hundreds of spectators would attend over the weekend as well.

At the event, there were numerous stalls selling clothing, bike parts and food. Lots of social events took place over the weekend as well. The most popular was the lake-jumping event, where riders rode up a steep ramp, then hurtled down and landed in the lake to cheers from the watching crowd.

Happy days!





Another sexagenarian who ought to know better is Barry Evans...

**“Ooooooooooh s\*\*t!  
what have I done!”**

For my impending sixtieth birthday, I got myself a new toy: Merlot the Mountain Bike. It might sound like it's named after a wine, but it isn't. It's named after a chicken. Maybe the chicken was named after the wine; I don't know.

Anyway, me and Merlot have been having lots of fun. So much so that I had a rush of blood to the head and entered my first ever mountain-bike race, the Noosa Enduro 100. A baptism of fire if ever there was one.

It's a beastie off-road 100km/2200m cross-country event around the beautiful Noosa hinterland. Not that I got to see much of it, as I was hanging on for grim life trying to stay upright! Just a couple of minor falls, though.

At the beginning, the course was technical, tight single-track through the forest, made harder by passing heavy traffic. Otherwise, I managed to survive the really scary climbs and rock-garden drops. The attrition rate was over 50 per cent, so despite battling quad cramps for half the race, just finishing was an achievement.

Afterwards, I was even happier to learn I'd come second in the silly-old-fools-who-should-know-better age category, well beaten by an ex-world champ who lives locally. Unfortunately no podium pic, as while we were out racing, the whole of SE Queensland went into a snap Covid lockdown, so they had to pack up the race village early. But these pics tell the story quite nicely: “Ooooooooooh s\*\*t, what have I done!”

*(Barry is a man of leisure who used to divide his time between the UK and Australia, until he carelessly got stranded in Queensland by the pandemic. Some people have it tough.)*



● STILL pedalling: Oscar Hopkins and his off road bike./M Davies

OFF-road fanatic Oscar Hopkins reckons he's the oldest mountain biker in Britain.

The 62-year-old Northfield cyclist is already blazing a trail at city-based Beacon Roads Cycling Club and reckons he can hold his own with the youngsters when it comes to the rough stuff.

"They seem to accept me for what I am and I get a lot of pleasure from cycling with them," he said.

In fact Oscar's such a success he's leading a recruitment drive

## Oscar pedals off road riding

at the Club with mountain biking video nights to bring in new members - he also organises weekend trips to wild Wales.

"We have some fantastic fun and everyone has a great time," he said. Anyone wanting to get involved in Oscar's off road section at BRCC can contact him on 0121 476 4217.







# *Recollections of...*

## the 2010s by Gemma Johnson



*Gemma at a club TT with Geoff Mann, Keith Adcock and... you guessed it, Dave McCann.*

### ***“Christ, there’s a lot of people called Dave!”***

When George asked me to write a few words about the Beacon in the 2010s, I thought, what am I going to write about? So I did what everyone does these days... I googled it... and it provided me with absolutely no idea whatsoever. So this blurb is all from me.

I joined the Beacon probably late 2015 early 2016. My first interaction was with Dave Cox, who sent me a welcome e-mail. My first impression was, ‘Christ, there’s a lot of people called Dave’.... I was assured by Dave Cox who kept me going during my very early rides with bags of encouragement on them super long, super steep hills, that being called Dave is a sign of the decade they were born. My second impression was there were a lot of men, but it really didn’t matter. It didn’t matter that I was often one of the only girls on the club run because everyone made an effort to welcome me.

One of my first Beacon social get-togethers, I sat there looking around, not knowing really what to say or who to

talk to – I realise this is a truth that is unbelievable, given I’ve been told I don’t stop talking – but I was saved by this loud northern girl rabbiting on about something. That northern girl turned out to be Helen, Beacon’s go-to girl for a really good cake. That same meeting, right at the end, this older guy stood up: dark blue jeans, smart blazer, perfectly formed moustache and slick coiffed hair... enter another Dave... Dave Hughes. Full of every story you could want to hear about racing, crashing and socks and sandals, happy to give as much advice you need or don’t need and on anything you want. If you want to be entertained, talk to Dave. He’ll keep your attention for an eternity.

The final Dave to mention in our trio of Daves, is Dave Cole, Beacon’s ex-president: probably one of the guys I’ve relied on most to help with time trials, and genuinely one of the funniest men around. He tells me he only helps at time trials because he gets to hold a clipboard and wear a high-vis jacket, which makes him feel important.



For everyone who missed his speech at the Beacon Dinner, listening to Dave talk about seventy minutes of turboing as an achievement for his seventieth birthday to the miserable sounds of Leonard Cohen may not sound funny, but when it comes from Dave Cole it's hilarious.

There are others in the club who made the 2010s a special decade, full of achievement. There's Jessica Rhodes-Jones UCI Gran Fondo World TT Champ. Without Jess, I'd have never started time trialling, I wouldn't have become obsessed with wheels, watts and whining about not being fast enough at a race, and I'd definitely be a whole lot richer than I am now. My first time trial race was February 2017. I rocked up on a bike that was two sizes too big, mudguards, thick winter jacket, two water bottles. Still, the welcome to race was great. It was freezing and there was Dave Hughes and Jess telling me what I needed to. As I raced to the end, Jess was shouting at me to 'push, push, push' willing me to be faster and encouraging to be as good as I could. Things are very different with my time trialling

now. Instead of a big, warm jacket, there is a tiny skinsuit that leaves you freezing if you ever race in February.

I guess this whistle-stop tour of the 2010s wouldn't be right without mentioning the time trials, where the Beacon race scene comes to life. People on all types of bikes, all with different equipment, Neil racing in his Adidas Grazers, the rivalry between Roger Cutler and George Thorne, and me getting a lift with Ian Taylor to every open I could manage, everyone with different degrees of race ability. The one thing everyone has in common is they all come together to chat and talk and cheer on their fellow Beacon mates, to commiserate on a poor race and to celebrate a three-second personal best like you'd just won the national championship.

The impression I've wanted to create writing this is that the

2010s for me has been really welcoming. There are so many people with so much knowledge to pass on, and so many people who made a really good impression. The 2010s was a great decade for the Beacon.



*It was a decade  
of friendships,  
turbo work and  
prizes for Gemma.*







*In the 2010s, Philip Whiteman expanded Beacon's stable of Audax promotions considerably with a range of calendar and permanent events, including the notorious Kidderminster Killer, pitting riders against some of the toughest and most spectacular terrain in western England and mid-Wales.*



*Another highlight of the decade was the revival of the Weston Run.*







*As well as scoring some notable racing successes in the 2010s (see features on road racing and time trials), we promoted a number of crits on the newly opened Stourport circuit.*

*Several very popular cyclocross events were promoted in conjunction with Redditch R&PCC.*



*Bunkhouse weekends were a staple element of the early spring programme for most of the decade. As the upper picture shows, the activities weren't confined to cycling.*

*Dave Cole incurred the wrath of many for misrepresenting the arduousness of his hikes; Alan Nicholls and Bob Green endeavoured to relive their youth but ended up falling into a pub after five miles, and Jane Herrin's spaghetti Bolognese entered into Beacon folklore.*

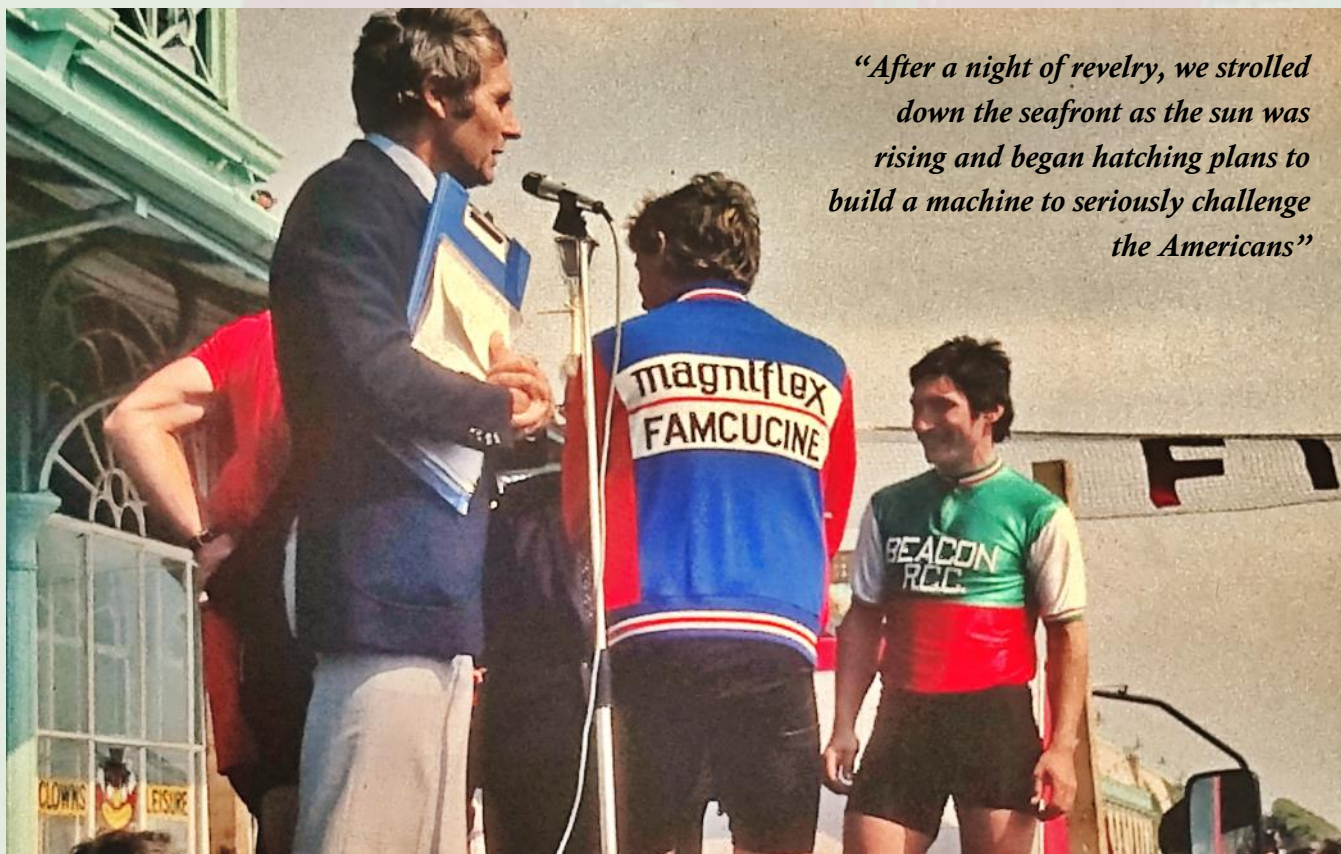






# 75 years of...

## big ideas and big personalities



*"After a night of revelry, we strolled down the seafront as the sun was rising and began hatching plans to build a machine to seriously challenge the Americans"*

*One of the most remarkable chapters in our club's history was written in the 1980s, when a Beacon team took on the world at a series of human-powered vehicle competitions. Tony Webb tells the story...*

In 1976 Dave Hughes and I borrowed a tandem from Beacon President Jack Clemens and used it, with some modifications, to set new figures for the Midlands RRA 25-mile record. The following year we also lowered the Welsh 25-mile record. The tandem was then hung up on a rusty nail to gather dust.

Until...

The Aspro Clear Speed Challenge 1980 was announced. This was billed as a European Human-Powered Vehicle Championship, but nonetheless attracted a fair number of entries from America alongside British and European machines. Lured by the prize money, we took the tandem off its rusty hook. The only problem we faced was that regulations required some form of aerodynamic input to the machine's design.

Very hastily and crudely Dave and I (helped by John Hitchcock) constructed a full fairing from scrounged plastic conduit covered in transparent plastic film and fastened it

to the tandem with an assortment of twisted wire, bolts and brackets. This first attempt proved to render the tandem unridable and had to be rapidly modified with a hacksaw. The mods worked, and the 'Flying Greenhouse', as we dubbed it, was good to go. A fair-sized crew of Beacon members travelled down to Brighton to watch the fun.

A claimed 20,000 spectators lined the course: about 400 metres of run-up followed by a 100-metre timed zone. Everyone did two runs, and the fastest counted. The top three machines then did one more run each. There was live commentary along the length of the course, but this didn't extend to the pits. Those of us beaver away in that area therefore had no idea what we, or any other competitor, had done.

A runner was accordingly dispatched to get information. He came back with the staggering news that we were second overall and fastest European machine. Only the World Champions – the Vector team from California, with a machine designed and built by rocket engineers and ridden by two junior world tandem sprinters – were faster. After giving interviews to BBC Nationwide, US network NBC and others, we took the start line for that last run, facing a wall of flashing cameras. When the line was crossed for the last time, we officially became European Champions.



In terms of crowd support, we benefitted enormously from the live commentary being delivered by the Beacon's own David Duffield (who also loaned us a Halfords Transit van to take our awkward load down to Brighton). At the prize presentation, a cheque for a generously large amount of cash was pressed into my sticky little hand, to applause from that 20,000-strong audience. Followed by a night of rowdy celebration in a nice little Italian restaurant which we eventually left at 5am.

On the way to our modest B&B, we strolled down the litter-strewn seafront as the sun was rising over the sea. Plans began to be hatched to build a machine to seriously challenge the Americans. This was to become the Dark Horse.

An ordinary Monday morning at work was terminated by a request (via my employer's publicity department) to attend a filming for ATV's evening news programme – we (Dave Hughes and I) were also required to turn up, with the Flying Greenhouse, at ATV's studio for a live interview. We also wangled a visit to BBC's Pebble Mill studio for a specially arranged viewing of the Nationwide item. There followed a visit from BBC producer Roger Casstles, who on hearing our sketchy plans to design and build a completely new machine, asked if he could arrange filming of the whole process to produce a thirty-minute programme for Midlands regional consumption. How could we refuse?

Having indulged in a little industrial espionage in the pits at Brighton, we had a fairly clear idea of the sort of machine that was required. This was to be a three-wheeled tandem with a pair of steerable wheels at the front and a single rear drive wheel. The riders would be lying down to allow for minimal frontal area, drive components would be bicycle-derived as far as possible, and the whole machine would be covered by an aerodynamic shell.



The bait of free BBC publicity helped enormously in drawing support from business. From drawings produced by Dave Hughes, John Hitchcock and I first built a mock-up. This was then turned into a jig on which the skeleton of biased Reynolds 551 tubing was built. The layout of a pair of steerable front wheels required some serious engineering from John, with the required geometry being based on work published by WO Bentley in the 1920s. There was also the small matter of devising a chain line through the bird cage of tubes, from a chainset in the very front of the machine to

its single driven rear wheel. The air was frequently heavy with the smell of burning midnight oil, and a lot of bicycle components were destroyed before we got it right.

While John and I were larking about with welding torches and lathes, Dave was constructing a full-sized model of the nose cone, over which would be moulded the front section of the outer shell (designed and wind-tunnel-tested by Dr Geoff Howell at Warwick University Aerodynamics Laboratory). The moulding of reinforced Kevlar, carried out by Arrowcraft Canoes, was delivered in sections which were glued together in Dave Hughes's living room (while Mrs Hughes was away on holiday).



One major component remained: the windscreen. ICI offered a supply of Perspex and the names of three companies capable of making it. Of those, only one, William Cox of Birmingham, could do exactly what was required. Their Works Manager, Brian Taylor, a fellow cyclist, agreed to carry out the work if we could provide the tooling.

Hastily assembled, and hurriedly sprayed black, the Dark Horse was delivered to Halfords' HQ the evening before a press presentation. David Duffield and his assistant presented the machine, now with HALFORDS emblazoned on almost every surface, to a gaggle of press and television crews while Dave and I pedalled towards them. A presumably bribed motorcycle policeman stopped us 'for speeding' in front of the cameras.

Attention then turned to the competition and our preparation for it. David Duffield, bearing in mind his responsibility to the Halfords board and his observation of our workload,

decided that some more powerful legs should be recruited to ride at Brighton. Accordingly the great and newly retired ex-British Professional Sprint Champion Trevor Bull, riding with British Tandem Sprint Champion Paul Sydenham, were invited to ride in the Aspro Clear Speed Challenge 1981. On the big day, the Dark Horse recorded a speed of 45 mph on its best run: fast enough to satisfy the Halfords board, but not quite fast enough to defeat the American Vectors.

We raced for several more years and, in the absence of the Vector team, were unbeatable. We took the Dark Horse abroad just once, to an invitation event on Zandvoort. On another occasion, we rode it, using relay teams of riders, from Birmingham to Harrogate, where it remained on view at the Annual Harrogate Cycle Show for a week.

Eventually retired, the machine was loaned to Coventry Museum of Transport, from where it was mysteriously lost. Its ghost lived on for quite a long time, because a section of the BBC film was used for an Open University course. The BBC programme – The Dark Horse – was aired as part of a Midlands region series entitled 'Enterprises'.



*Cycling seems to attract strong characters. Independent-minded, self-motivating and, yes, often eccentric people abound in our sport. Certainly the Beacon has had plenty of them down the years. And characters don't come much bigger than Dave Duffield. Carlton Kirby shares his memories of the record-breaking tricyclist, visionary, bon viveur, broadcaster and all-round Beacon legend that was Duffers.*



## *A man who knew that the secret is having fun*

I learned a lot from David Duffield – undoubtedly one of the finest cycling commentators.

Duffers, as he was known to friends, came into cycling via the bike trade. Here was the man, unsung, who helped to bring the Raleigh Chopper into our world. He had to fight for it too. The bosses were into 'proper bikes', but David was convinced the 'American cruiser' had a place in Europe. It was a huge success. Then came BMX. David couldn't believe how much fun these were, and again he had to fight to get what looked like 'little bikes for big kids' off the ground. On both counts he was a genius who took a modest salary yet made millions for the companies he worked for, including Raleigh, Halfords, Falcon, Claud Butler, Pashley and Muddyfox. When Alex Moulton, who'd developed the ingenious suspension system that enabled the Austin Mini to succeed, decided to have a go at bicycles, it was David Duffield who got the call to help develop the market for his revolutionary small-wheel commuter. Everybody knew the man and knew he was the touchstone for anything cutting edge in the business.

Such out-of-the-box thinking might be part of the reason he became the established 'alternative' voice of cycling. The hugely popular Phil Liggett was at ITV and had wrapped up the Tour de France gig and more. Four-time Individual Pursuit World Champion Hugh Porter was at the BBC, meaning the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and most other major events were spoken for too. That left David

## TRICYCLE END-TO-END INSIDE 3 DAYS

*Duffield's brilliant ride starting from John o'Groats*

DAVID DUFFIELD (Beacon R.C.C.), 6 ft, 3 in. 26-year-old Birmingham cycle manufacturer's representative, added to his considerable cycling stature over the holiday week-end, by lowering the tough 873-mile End-to-End solo tricycle record of Herbert Parkes by 4 hrs. 29 mins. The new time (subject to R.R.A. ratification) is 2 days 20 hrs. 9 mins.—average speed almost 13 m.p.h.

The attempt was planned during petrol rationing and Duffield elected to start from John o'Groats. He arrived there on Thursday evening, and the ride commenced at 8.0 p.m. on the Friday in dry conditions with a strong following wind. After only 17 miles the helpful breeze turned round, and a further delay occurred at 71 miles, when a puncture caused Duffield to change an inner tube. The night was bitterly cold and the rider wore a track suit, but nevertheless his knees and stomach were affected approaching the Grampians, and at Dalwhinnie (200) he was 1½ hours outside a schedule aimed at beating the record by 2 hrs. 18 mins. At Perth (257) he had made 30 mins. up, and despite chain trouble which required assistance from his helpers, the rider had made a further 23 mins. improvement by the time Abington (345) had been reached.

From Garstang (478) came news of drizzle, but a slight following wind, and at Whitchurch (551) he was one hour up on schedule but now suffering from the unsettled Whitsun weather. From Bridgnorth (587), where Duffield was 1 hr. 10 min. inside schedule, the 27 undulating miles to Worcester into an adverse wind saw 20 min. of his lead disappear, but at Bristol (675), where he arrived at approximately 11 p.m., he was still one hour up.

Rain was falling and continued during the night, but he maintained his advantage through to Exeter (754). Here he was given hot soup and food to combat the cold conditions, and he was soon off down the road again. News of the final miles was sparse but he reached Bodmin (817) at 11.28 on Monday morning exactly 1 hour 13 min. ahead of schedule, and it was Land's End.

Duffield had no following car until he reached



*The Duffield style.*

a point five miles north of Auchterader, where Tommy Barlow picked him up and followed through to Whitchurch. From there to Worcester Alan Tomkins, and Beacon president Jack Clements and for the final stretch Jack Wrightson and Idris David were observing the ride. The tricycle was that used in his successful 1,000-mile record last Whitsun—26 in. frame, reinforced rear stays, eight speed 55 in.-90 in., and high-pressure rims with wired-on tyres.

Duffield with the remnants.

"The crumbs on the plate – but tasty crumbs," as he put it. He was, as he said himself, The Third Man; he used to sing out the tune from the classic film for comedic effect on entering the office – followed, for some reason, by "Morning, campers!"

Duffers was from Birmingham, the heartland of manufacturing. Initially, David's 'crumbs' usually involved tribune work; calling races home for the benefit of the crowd in market squares or city parks. He was the live voice on site. While Liggett and Porter were inside their cosy studios with lip mikes and headphones, David was under a brolly on the public address system, geeing up a crowd of damp fans at, say, the Lincoln Grand Prix. If you attended a UK cycling event from the 1970s onwards, then you knew David's voice.

This was a man who stood tall in so many ways – 6'4" in his stockinged feet, with a fingertip-to-fingertip span bigger than his height. He would extend his canoe-paddle hands on thin wrists in every direction and the returned handshakes were warm and frequent. You couldn't go to a bike show and walk three paces with him before someone would shout: "Duffers!" And another long chat would ensue with either a fan or one of the many thousands of folk he was connected to in the business. He was a genuine gent with a big heart and a bigger sense of mischief. I loved him.



*At the 1961 MTT*



So how did Duffers move into the cosy studio of Eurosport? Well, back in 1989 when the channel started, it was, frankly, regarded as a little lowbrow by the other two busy boys on terrestrial TV. They passed David's name to a desperate producer in Paris who needed someone to call home the Milan-San Remo. David jumped at the chance and never let go. He grew with Eurosport and became the most prolific commentator of his generation. Sure, he was 'only' on satellite TV, but he didn't care because the races were plentiful. He was a boy in a toyshop and the door was now locked behind him.

Without the strictures of ITV or the BBC, Duffers developed his own style. In the absence of any production guidance, or even a co-commentator, and with hours and hours of long stage races to fill, he relied on his experience on the PA in Preston and beyond – and that stood him in good stead. Being able to regale the audience with his musings and his tales both big and small from the cycling world, he was a wonder to behold. That, coupled with a rapacious appetite for good food and, ahem, the products of the grape and hop, meant that he could fill dead air like no other.

In the early days of our pairings, he said to me with a wink and a tap on the side of the nose: "Tomorrow we are in the Algarve, so tonight we are going to sample a bit of it!" We were to voice the race from a studio just outside London, but that night David and I went to a Portuguese restaurant called O Galo Negro. It was in Lewisham, I believe. Anyway, we had Portuguese wine and spiced chicken, all written down in his notebook with the correct pronunciations. He then informed the owner that he would be mentioning his place on television the following day and would he like to seal the deal with one of his finest port wines? This was a given. David enquired after the owner's

original place of birth and other bits and bobs. The next day, before we went on air, David said: "We won't be saying we are actually in Portugal, but we won't be saying we are not there either. We will, however, be helping the audience to believe we are there. Leave it to me."

I did my welcome and teed the race up. David then had his moment: "Thanks, Carlton. Well, I'd just like to take a moment to thank our friend Jose Balan from Tavira, whose Frango Temporado is the talk of the town; it's spicy chicken and was all washed down with a spectacular Galitos Red." And on he went. There was nothing happening in the race because the breakaway had gone early, we had three hours to kill and David's trip had not only covered twenty minutes of quiet time but also framed the day and made the audience assume we were in Portugal, adding credibility to the rest of the week's broadcast. Genius.

Sadly, David is no longer with us. I presented a eulogy at a celebration of his life in the spring of 2016. The mood was naturally sombre as I began with: "David told me a few secret truths about cycling. Many of which I can't pass on. But one thing I can share is this: He once told me that Lucozade Sport, in a see-through bottle, is exactly the same colour as Scotch and Ginger!" The place erupted. Having fun is what life is all about. And David knew that. He showed me that being on the telly as a commentator is not about fitting in, it's about being yourself. Anyone can impersonate a commentator, but being a unique one is the goal. "Be yourself," he told me, "and if they like you, then you will fly. Never forget that nobody else will ever be as good at being you as you are." So I duly made a pact with David, who I'm sure still hangs around, to simply be myself. So far, it has stood me in good stead.

*Out with friends on his Moulton in 2007*



*This feature in an abridged extract from Carlton Kirby's book The Magic Spanner, reproduced with the author's kind consent.*





# *Recollections of...* the 2020s by Chris Yan

*"Hillier on the way back?"*

*What! How am I going to survive this?"*



It seems a lifetime ago that I turned up at the Black Horse pub in Northfield on a cold, damp Sunday last December for my first club ride with Beacon. I was quite nervous as it was also my first ever group ride and I had only been cycling seriously for a couple of months. I knew nothing! But it was time to take the plunge, and so my first group ride began...

To begin with, it felt as if I was in another world with some of the fancy bikes on offer compared to my heavy entry-level alloy bike. The knowledgeable people and the terminology. The "car ups" and "car downs", pointing out potholes and "what gear ratios do you have?" I was beginning to think I was out of my depth but after I settled down I realised we were just cycling, in a way no different to being ten years old again and riding with my friends in the park.

My fellow Beacon riders were really friendly and helpful, quickly making me feel at ease. Thank you, Mariana, Dave Jones and everyone else that was part of my first club ride

experience!

From a weather point of view it could have been a lot better as the drizzle soon turned into pouring driving rain. I began to wonder why I had turned up at all if cycling was this uncomfortable. Why hadn't the ride been cancelled? However, after a while, once you are soaked through, you cannot really get any wetter and as long as we kept moving everything (except my hands) was warm. Of course, I had the wrong sort of gloves on! It didn't seem to matter anyway as I was enjoying myself.

The miles seemed to rush by, helped by enjoyable conversation, views of the countryside and even some jogging Santas! And, all of a sudden, we were halfway through and 15 miles in. We arrived at the café, which was closed of course, as we were in a pandemic. This was a "Beacon Burst", so a quick five minutes' rest and time for the return leg and the uphill bits started to appear.



"Yes, it's always hillier on the way back," I was told. "You normally get a headwind on the way back in these parts." What?! How was I going to survive this? I was going to look like a proper amateur getting off and pushing my bike up the hills!

Were the hills hard work? Yes! But all of a sudden it wasn't raining anymore. I managed to get up and past the Lickeys and I think I did myself proud. Shortly after that the ride was finished. I had survived my first group ride and thoroughly enjoyed it. You can't beat the sense of achievement and camaraderie, even as I tried to flex my frozen fingers during the last stretch. The weather did its best to put me off group cycling but it hadn't.

I know for certain I would never have gone out cycling on that cold, wet Sunday on my own.

Frustratingly, just a few days after joining the club, we were plunged into the depths of another Covid lockdown and group rides were banned until March. When they started again, I was back for more. As the pandemic eased, the cafés opened and another element to group rides came into play. Which café would this week's ride take us to? Would I be able to climb up St Kenelm's carrying a quiche in my stomach?



So began a season of wonderful group rides. Friends and memories made over a great spring and summer. Ride leaders would take me to places I had never seen before despite living in the Midlands all my life. How could I resist getting up on Sunday to cycle to "that Windmill", "that amazing café" or "those churches"?

Then things got serious. I bought a better bike. Don't ask me what gear ratios it has! All I know is that I am faster going uphill! I managed to complete my first ever 100-kilometre ride. Then it was 100 miles! I may never have achieved those things without being a part of Beacon. I even planned some cycling routes so that I could lead some rides myself, something I could not have imagined doing when I first joined.

I know there are many more facets to life in Beacon Roads Cycling Club and I have barely scraped the surface over the past twelve months but I am happy in the knowledge that, if and when I decide to dive into time trials, audaxes (whatever they are) and maybe even cyclocross, I will receive the same level of support and camaraderie that I have felt since joining the club.

Happy Birthday Beacon Roads. Here's to another seventy-five years!



*Matt Clegg at the 2020 Hill Climb*



*A successful programme of midweek club runs was started*





# 75 years... and counting!



In 2015, we launched the Beacon Academy. The Academy is the club's youth section. It provides cycling coaching for children aged five and upwards who can ride without stabilisers. The emphasis is on fun and improving skills, confidence and ability to ride and race safely around others. At various venues in south and central Birmingham, kids learn cornering, braking, riding close to others, racing, dismounting, pedalling and how to use gears.

Emerging from lockdown, we have established links with community cycling clubs who have helped promote our training sessions. Thanks to our partnership with British Cycling, we have been able to offer a 'borrow a bike' option at our training events. That has meant that we have been able to welcome families to our sessions that don't have bikes at home. It has been a genuine pleasure as coach to watch riders gain skills, stamina, confidence and most importantly have a great time on their bikes.



Highlights of the year included academy participation at our own track championships, success in the regional hill climb and hosting the BSCA Grass Track Championships in June, where several of our riders excelled. Beacon Members also kindly donated kit that their own children had grown out of so that the Academy riders could proudly sport the red, white and green on the day.

One of our young champions had a 'come dressed as your sporting hero' day at school shortly afterwards. He went in his Beacon jersey as himself!

Birmingham has more than a quarter of a million children. And just three accredited cycling clubs that offer training for children. With the other two clubs being based in the north of the city, it's hard to overstate the potential that exists for developing our sport and our club through the Academy.

*Adrian Ravenscroft*







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