

first mass-start event and in such top class competition showed great promise. The Club team of Wal Bailey, Ken Topliss and Bernard Knight had won the team award in the mass-start at Woodstock and they had competed in the first official such event held in England at Brooklands in 1936. An unofficial event was claimed in 1933. So here again was evidenced a new facet of rapid growth. "I hope our entry will encourage more of our riders to have a go at this type of event as we seem to have had a finger in every pie except this one", commented the editor of the Club magazine, Dick Borneman, who had taken over from Eric Walker, March 1938. The latter had tried to arouse interest in another 'pie' - long distance racing, by his two accounts of his rides in the North Road 24 hours. A special meeting was called in April 1938 to consider if the time was right to build a Clubroom at Catney, Eric Walker having reported on the estimates he had obtained and the state of the Building Fund, £300. He had also got permission for building. However it was finally felt that another £100 should be obtained to provide a reserve and for expenses so this matter was tabled for twelve months. (Perhaps a most unfortunate decision, but who can tell? -Ed).

So ended 1938 with war clouds on the horizon; the outside environment was changing, how would our 'flourishing bush' of ten years growth respond to the shrill winds of this new climate?

THE WAR YEARS : 1939-1945

A "Winter of Disorder" was creeping over the world, and had been for several years, but in 1939 it became obvious to all as the dark clouds of German totalitarianism (Nazism) fostered by Adolf Hitler produced the chill showers of the occupation of Austria followed by Czechoslovakia and the attack on Poland in September 1939, which finally convinced the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, that any hope of appeasing the Nazi appetite for World Domination was impossible. On Sunday 3 September Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

Many readers will have their own memories of that fateful day. The day before the writer was cycling back from a tour of North Wales with his younger brother, and they were amazed to find the roads so busy with traffic; heavily laden cars, all making their way to the hoped-for safety of the Welsh mountains as the more wealthy, fearful and farsighted could see that Chamberlain's Appeasement Policy was finished and a declaration of war must be imminent.

It was next morning, out with the Loughborough & District Wheelers on a Sunday ride along the Trent Valley, the writer and brother accompanied by three companions, Albert Main, Ted Armstrong and Jack Littler, reached Hoveringham Ferry just before 11.00 am. On calling across to the ferryman they were told they would have to wait while he listened to the Prime Minister's news on the radio. Some ten minutes later, re-appearing at the cottage door the boatman called "It's war, lads, do you still want to come across?"

With the brash innocence of youth we replied "Of course, we might as well enjoy today in case we don't have a chance tomorrow!", and across we were taken for six pence each in a rowing boat.

Incidentally this was the last run of the Loughborough & District Wheelers because on September at a Special General Meeting it was decided unanimously that in spite of wartime conditions, cycling must carry on but would do so as the Loughborough Section of the Leicestershire & Rutland District Association of the CYCLISTS TOURING CLUB.

At the Solihull C.C. headquarters, Oak Farm Catherine-de-Barnes, a Cycle Polo Tournament was being held and on September 20 the Committee unanimously decided - "that the Club continue, with a modified programme if necessary, and a sub-committee would be called every month to deal with any business arising. Officials were asked to keep the books up-to-date so that they could be handed over to some responsible official if called up". One senses here the able administrative advice of the Secretary-Treasurer, R. Dowson, who played such an important part steering the Club through these war years. Committee meetings were frequently held at his home, 6 Moreton Road, Shirley.

This was the general attitude up and down the country. Carry on cycling, business as usual. One of hope.

Yet a curious hiatus followed. Conscriptio had been brought in earlier in the year, no black-out regulations applied to cycle lamps as well as car headlights and household windows. Air raid warnings were given to

screeching sirens; air-raid wardens were appointed to enforce the blackout and conduct people to whatever air-raid shelters there were, but the anticipated bombing raids did not come at first. Everyone wondered, - why not? - when they recalled the "Blitzkrieg" of Poland with the horrific obliteration bombing of Warsaw and overwhelming tidal waves of the Panzers. "Well, we've got the Channel to save us - it always has !" was a popular if inaccurate sentiment, and so life carried on hardly affected by the above precautions. Cyclists in particular accepted the challenge of night riding with inadequate illumination, just in case an enemy bomber did come and deduce where to drop his bombs from observations of lights we could hardly see ourselves ! I still have the piece of official metal with which to enshroud the bulb of my electric cycle lamp, but those enthusiasts who still swore by acetylene lamps were driven to using their own inventiveness such as blacking out the lower half of the reflector and upper half of the glass according to Richard Hulse of the Speedwell B C.

Gradually the call-up was felt as Club officials had to hand over their jobs to older or younger clubmates not yet due to depart on patriotic duty or exempt from call-up by virtue of their occupations. Home Guard duties or overtime at work played havoc with members' regular attendance on runs; gas-masks and identity cards were issued, the latter sometimes interfering with free movement as when in the 1941 Solihull Open 25 miles Time Trial, the riders were stopped for Identity Checks yet Fred Pape (Castlenau C C) won in 1-2-48 !

The death of Wally Jones in May 1939, who was killed riding home with Ken Topliss after the Shirley 50, by a motorist who did not stop, had really shocked the Club, for he was a young, very enthusiastic, member who had volunteered at the A G M to take the Racing Secretary's job which included the organisation of the Invitation Scratch 25. Fortunately he had had this task well in hand having sent out several invitations and arranged for Albert Lusty (Midland C & A C) to be timekeeper, enabling Gordon Gage the assistant secretary to step into the breach and ensure the success of this event. How successful we have already seen in the previous chapter. It produced a landmark in the history of time-trialling in England - "the hour beaten" for the first time by Ralph Dougherty (Leamington C & A C).

The year had started with a surge of enthusiasm, the AGM resulting in several new officials, like Wally Jones, filled with the desire to see their club achieve national acclaim. President Charlie Dawes had summed it up, "A no more enthusiastic body of men and women could be found anywhere!"

A party of 25 members had visited the British Best All Rounder Concert at the Albert Hall, London, and were inspired by the Monckton Wheelers' hero-worship of 'Shake' Earnshaw, while the more lowly gaining of a Certificate for beating 'evens' (20 mph) at 50, 100 miles and 12 hours by their own Bert Tyler gave editor Don Pinson the hope - "that one day we may produce a rider who would be good enough to hold his own against the cream of racing men in the country. I think it is quite feasible that in only a few years time we may have a rider(s) who will bring the name of the Club right to the fore".

The Polo team became champions of the Birmingham Bicycle Polo League for the third time, and John Jarrett, who had already played for England, was joined by brother Frank to represent the League against the Kent League at Westerham, so Polo Secretary Cyril Lovegrove was delighted.

Arthur Hobson, the new Track Secretary, was looking to the Club Pursuit Team (Ken Topliss, D Hague, A Hobson and J Pearson), to go further in the National Team Pursuit than the previous year when honourably knocked out by a strong Walsall Roads team. They did, but met their fate at the legs of Lichfield C & A C, this time in the semi-final of the Midlands.

In September another new member, George Juggins, won the Club 12 hours with 233 miles 3 furlongs at his first attempt, a distance that would have won many an 'Open' event at that time, showing promise of being a great 'stayer', beating Bert Tyler last year's champion (227m.3f) but Bob Cross, Runs Captain, and a stalwart of the A Section, suffered the disappointment of holding the Club Record for just 4 minutes with a magnificent 233 miles 2 furlongs. The name Bernard Knight in fourth place equal with Ken Joyce, 221 m. 1 f. occurs later in our tale.

By October the magazine editor, Dick Borneman, was reminding members that, "Our country is at war! It seems hard to believe; apart from certain inconveniences, conditions do not seem to have changed", then goes on to remind them of the decision to carry on with as full a programme as possible and concludes with the promise to publish all letters received from members called up to

the Forces and to try to ensure that they receive the magazine to enable them to keep in touch, as had been suggested by Eric Walker. Ron Dowson, Secretary/Treasurer, in his regular monthly chat - "MY BIT" - was booking the Gala and Gymkana which later had to be cancelled due to wartime restrictions.

The main business of the last committee meeting of 1939 was to decide how the various club activities should carry on, under the discretion of the section secretaries: Ken Humphries and Ken Topliss proposed running the road racing and track events as permitted by the Road Time Trials Council and National Cyclists Union, while Social Secretary, Don Pinson, said dances would be held according to Government War Time regulations. Meanwhile, Cyril Lovegrove was organising friendly Polo matches until he heard from National Headquarters. Runs Secretary, Bob Cross, reported that the runs had started well with the A, B and Tuesday evening runs well attended until the beginning of the war. There had been a very fine Easter Tour to Wild Wales; a night ride to Rhayader (written up by Sandy Sandford); two reliability trials; a Ladies 50 in 4 and a Gents 100 in 8, as well as several hostel weekends to Derbyshire and Rushall.

The February 1940 issue of the magazine, still without a title but with a bright heading of Club Badge and cyclists riding along, a rainbow over trees and countryside, contained the first letters from members in the Forces, namely Gordon Wheeler, Naval Rating Jim Cross, and Tommy Husler. A large advertisement on the back page blazoned Hubert Opperman's world record of 505 miles in 24 hours on a B.S.A.

A significant entry in the corresponding Committee Meeting Minutes was the name R J Maitland amongst the new members.

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Encouraged by President Charlie Dawes and organised by the undefatigable Eric Walker, gifts were sent to members in the Forces, their letters published each month and this continued throughout the war and for sometime after until conscription ended, with successive FORCES SECRETARIES, as first Eric enlisted (July 1940) with Freda Walker taking over until pressure of running on her own Oak Farm, which became a well-known cyclists teaplace, forced the election of Kitty Davies at the 1941 A.G.M.

In spite of falling membership - down to 95 - largely due to call-ups, concern about running the Scratch 25 and having to cut expenses, the SOLIHULL SPIRIT remained high. "It is in times like these that the true Club Spirit makes itself apparent and it is fairly obvious from results that this Club has a large share of this spirit. If this spirit can stand the strains of a war then we have a truly great Club which we shall be glad to return to after the war", commented editor, Dick Borneman.

Sound advice, given in MY BIT by ARD: - "Subscriptions are due on 1 January and contributions are urgently needed coupled with the fact that I should like to get as much surplus as possible in order to leave my successor (if and when?) in a good starting-off position". Yet this did not preclude him from supporting the proposal to send the magazine to ALL members in the Forces. L S Woods volunteered to pay the postages.

Thanks to the organisation of the Birmingham Time Trials League by the Birchfield C.C. and Bert Hollier's foresight in amalgamating Clubs to run events, racing was flourishing. Pete Possart, a very popular new member, not only won many of these events but carried the name of the Club farther afield, coming third in the Westerlay (1940) 100 with 4-37-31 and undoubtedly played a large part in the Club coming third at the end of the year in the B.T.T.L. as well as setting up Club Records at 25, 30, 50 and 100 miles.

R W Bowes and B Francis are names appearing amongst new members which became nationally known in racing spheres, but Miss Kathleen Shough in that same list, later was awarded the George Medal for bravery in the Coventry and Birmingham blitzes of 14 and 15 April 1942, when she rescued a family from a burning building in Coventry and the next night, although wounded in the back herself and never having driven before, drove the ambulance 8 miles to the hospital. She served in the A.T.S. and married in 1944 becoming Mrs Millward.

Returning to 1940: by the end of the year even the Vice Presidents, who paid subscription in those days, were finding money tight, so ARD proposed that they make it a voluntary donation, and G F Harper and Capt. Oliver Bird M.C. were elected Honorary Vice Presidents for the duration. A Jarrett was very upset by this.

Even the magazine printers, B.S.A. Cycles had cut two pages due to paper rationing resulting in the new acting editor, Don Pinson, (who took over when Dick Bornema went into the R.A.F), arranging with Mr J

Bryan, through Mr H N Brealey, for a smaller sized print to be used. From April 1941 the quality of the paper deteriorated and was coloured blue for a time (probably recycled!), then in July 1943 good quality art paper, but still with small type was used and the Colmore Press was printing it as before, but now the Club was having to pay for it, although helped by advertisements supplied by B.S.A. New ideas were tried, like a title - THE SPINNING WHEEL - and reproductions of pen and ink sketches by Ted Schilling, such as Polesworth Gateway and Hartington. How to mend Tubulars by Sandy Sandford reflected (a) Don Pinson's enthusiasm for improving the magazine and (b) possibly the first signs of the country emerging from the darkest days of the war: the retreat from Dunkirk (May 1940) and the Club's first war casualties, George Entwhistle, R.A.F., last seen over Bremen on a daylight raid, and Bernard Knight, a Prisoner of War.

After Pearl Harbour in December 1942, Japan's horrific declaration of war on America had resulted in Britain getting desperately needed supplies of new tanks which enabled General Montgomery to reverse the tide of battle against the German forces at El Alamein. Also, the Russians had stubbornly defended Moscow in the winter of 1942 and suddenly the prospect of world domination by Germany, Italy and Japan seemed less likely. Some gleams of sunshine were appearing.

For four months the "Wheel" spun after an article by Harry Sandford, "What kind of Club is this?", querying the spate of theatre visits and other social activities as encouraging the wrong type of member, and the

acceptance of Bicycle Polo, which had lost the Club some of its best members - "who never get further than the Polo field at Catney! If this is to be a cycling club let's keep it pure!" Naturally, this started another war within the Club as the writer fully realised it would, bringing opposing replies from the Chairman and Polo enthusiast, Cyril Lovegrove and Welsh Polo International, Tommy Watkins, and Harry Spencer, the active Social Secretary responsible for organising visits to the Birmingham Repertory Theatre on which the whole of the balcony was booked and members of other Clubs invited to share. Fortunately this "storm in a teacup" was soon over, with the Club Secretary, Ron Dowson, on behalf of the committee, stating that the original article was not written with any personal grievance but purely in response to requests for some controversial subject, which would, by the replies, create further interest in the magazine. Indeed it did, proving how lively and loyal members were about all branches of cycling.

Apart from such internal ferments, which only served to stimulate Club activity, in 1942 a happening outside the Club but within the Midlands occurred at Wolverhampton, which was to have more drastic effects on the whole of the British cycling world than the Second World War !

To understand this properly, if, dear reader, you were not around at the time, some knowledge of the circumstances of cycle racing in Britain and on the Continent is necessary, consequently a brief digression from our story is taken.

From the start of cycling, man's competitive instincts had resulted in long distance rides (once Patrick Macmillan had fixed treadles to two wheels called a "Boneshaker" in 1839), and this inventive genius had developed through Velocipedes, Ordinaries to so called "Safeties" somewhat similar to today's mounts. By 1869 times for rides between places like London and Brighton were being reported, such as John Myall, who, with two friends, Charles Spencer and Mr Turner, covered the 53 miles in 14 hours. Soon racing on the roads and on tracks was a rapidly developing pastime. In Britain; while on the track it flourished, more or less the same as on the Continent; on the road, after some years of races with riders starting in a bunch or sometimes handicapped to try and get all the riders finishing together, opposition arose from the public who disliked the silent approach of what was the fastest thing on the roads, for riders had beaten stage-coaches. For example, in 1890 F W Shorland on a "Facile" (a type of "Ordinary" fitted with treadle gearing on the front wheel), but fitted with pneumatic tyres, beat the best recorded time by a stage-coach from the White Horse Cellars in Piccadilly, London, to the Old Ship, Brighton, and back in 7 hours 50 minutes by 31 minutes. Police interference using the charge of "scorching" almost drove cycle racing off the roads until in 1891 Jimmy Blair of the Catford C.C. succeeded in forming the Southern Roads Riding Association, which measured many new courses and acted as an advisory body on road sport, while in 1895 the North Road C.C. which had opposed the idea of entirely leaving the road

and organising races solely on the track, organised the first ever unpaced road race over 50 miles, won by Gordon Minns in 2 hours 54 minutes 26 seconds. F T Bidlake (North Road C.C) later claimed to be the originator of this idea, in which riders were set off separately and no pacing was allowed. So with public and police antagonism, even some opposition from the N.C.U. which in 1897 did officially ban racing on the roads, encouraged by the track promoters who with an eye to their profits wanted to steer more riders to track racing, cycle racing in this country developed along the lines of unpaced riding, that is individual time trials which it could be argued in law was not racing but merely riding against the clock. As this procedure was well established under the auspices of the Road Records Association, founded in 1888 to adjudicate and certify place to place records we can readily see how cycle racing in Britain evolved into Time Trialling. A sport for the participants rather than the spectators, and not one easy to cash in on.

On the Continent the evolution was entirely different. There was not the same amateur enthusiasm for riding cycles rapidly from place to place. Almost from the start, finance entered into it. Track racing grew as a public spectacle into a flourishing business and on the roads, (possibly because there was not such a well developed transport system of stage-coaches which changed into motor traffic around the turn of the century, as in Britain), professionalism was accepted with paid riders advertising their employers' goods, consequently the sport grew into a national sport in most of the European countries with the majority of the populace

enthusiastic followers of the exploits of riders much as we follow our national sport of football. Mass-start racing was no problem, and the acceptance of professionalism resulted in big business probably best exemplified in modern times by the celebrated TOUR DE FRANCE, usually billed as the greatest cycle race in the world. But even on the Continent the Time Trial was recognised as the "RACE OF TRUTH".

Although at first, in International events, these two differing modes of racing did not cause much trouble, some of the World Road Championships being Time Trials as in 1922 when held in England, but more often, mass-start races were chosen by the International Ruling Body, the U.C.I. As would be expected, the standard of riding obviously improved over the years and more so under the influence of "big business" on the Continent so that by the 1940s there was a feeling in Britain that our riders, brought up on strictly amateur time trial lines, were handicapped when in competition with the professionally supported bunch-riders from the Continent. How far this was true is debateable, as illustrated by the creditable placings of these so-called handicapped British riders over the years. For in the last analysis, in any fair, well organised race, the winner should be the man with "class" and fully trained. However that be, let us now return to 1942.

These feelings of being at a disadvantage in International competition felt by British riders, were crystallised by the formation of the BRITISH LEAGUE OF RACING CYCLISTS in 1942, round the person of Percy T Stallard of Wolverhampton R.C.C. who had been selected

for England and had experience of racing on the open roads in a bunch on the Continent. Of course we must remember that British riders did get some experience of racing in bunches on the track and on closed circuits, which is probably why the "expected time-trial-handicap" was not as serious to the onlookers as imagined by riders up against the world's best. The "crunch" came with the organisation of a continental style mass-start race from Wolverhampton to Llangollen, on a day and route when traffic could be expected to be light, but in defiance of both the National Cyclists Union ban on road racing and the accepted law of the land. Obviously riders under N.C.U. auspices were forbidden to enter on threat of suspension. At a Solihull C.C. committee meeting on 12 October 1942, Ken Topliss thought Solihull members should abide by N.C.U. rules and it was decided to hold a meeting of racing members at Club Headquarters in order to give them an opportunity to express their views so that Club policy could be defined at the A.G.M. In fact, although the meeting was held, there are no records of it and no proposition appeared at the A.G.M. so it seems that at this time the Solihull C.C. was not seriously affected.

The Wolverhampton-Llangollen Road Race has gone down in history as a crucial landmark, for it attracted large crowds of spectators. Fortunately there were no serious accidents and no police prosecutions, as had been expected by many people. It had set a precedent for mass-start racing on the open road in Britain. Over the following years the B.L.R.C. organised more and more events and attracted to their ranks such cyclists who favoured the bunched-game as it

was often called, and preferred it on roads rather than parks and closed circuits as was permitted by the N.C.U. Thus members of racing clubs were presented with a dilemma - to join the League or the N.C.U. - which put quite a strain on their Club loyalty.

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The sport had become divided into two camps, often with enthusiastic and destructive rivalries. This situation remained until 1959 when both the N.C.U. and the B.L.R.C. disbanded and reformed as the BRITISH CYCLING FEDERATION, when it had become clear that the divided leadership was harmful for the sport.

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Returning to (our story of S.C.C.) 1942, the same Sandy Sandford who had stirred up discussion about the aims and purposes of a cycling club, had also written for the Club magazine several interesting mathematical puzzles as he was well qualified to do as an engineer, one of which settled once and for all why the best conditions for an "out and home" ride by a racing man were a flat surface and no wind.

Consider a course d miles long. A cyclist riding at v mph would take $\frac{d}{v}$ hours so $\frac{2d}{v}$ hours

for the out and home journey. Suppose now that a wind (or a hill for that matter) reduces his speed by x mph to $(v-x)$ mph on the outward leg so it would take him $\frac{d}{(v-x)}$ hours. The return

trip would be at $(v+x)$ mph so would take $\frac{d}{(v+x)}$

hours, giving a total time of $\frac{d}{(v-x)} + \frac{d}{(v+x)}$

hours, which reduces algebraically to $\frac{2dx}{v(v-x)}$

hours, which is clearly longer than $\frac{2d}{v}$, or

put in non-mathematical terms "you are travelling longer at the slower speed". Thank goodness for the pleasures and thrills of time trialling and record breaking such factors as the use of variable gearing and human psychology can still hold sway over this logic so there is no need to wait around for the perfectly calm day !

In the July, Bob Maitland and Dick Bowes rode the Marlborough Tandem 50 miles and gave signs of their potential soon to be revealed, recording 1-55-13, a new Club record.

J W Bryan (Sales Manager, B.S.A. Cycles) who had been a Vice President of the Solihull C.C. since 1935 died. As a humorous Dinner Speaker he was quite a loss to the Club, but it opened the way for his assistant to be appointed in his place at the B.S.A. and to become a Solihull V.P. - one H N Brealey.

"Dear Care & Maintenance Dept. ..."

Throughout the war and after letters poured in to the various Forces Secretaries all expressing what a lot the Club meant to these members away from their favourite sport and so thankful to receive the magazine with news of its continuance, from all corners of the world. As there is not room to quote them all, what better summary, the very epitomy of their contents and thoughts about the Club, than to quote the above start of a letter from Joan Heely (an officer in the WRENS). Does it not put a Club's real purpose in war time in correct perspective?

1943 came, and the election of John Cordwell as Touring Secretary, following short spells by Alf Price and Phil Davies. Problems about the cost of prizes and loss of advertising revenue were met and solved by the skilled financial advice of the treasurer and enthusiasm of the editor, officials and committee. Ideas like Certificates instead of Medals for standard and record rides, or even members foregoing prizes in Club events, were accepted.

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The President's Prize Run, suggested by Don Pinson in 1941 and supported by Charlie Dawes who offered an award to the leader of the run voted the best of the year by members, encouraged new and novel runs. (This scheme worked well throughout the war years and on into the 1950s, being continued even when Noel Brealey became President in 1947 until fading out as racing became the predominant feature of Club life).

In October 1943 a novel run took place, a HOBO RUN. The idea had been suggested by Bob Wright, who sadly was killed in a motorbike accident before he could see the fruits of his idea, and this event has been held annually to his memory ever since, on the nearest Sunday to 5 November, with members competing in their efforts to be the most realistic hobo, riding decrepit cycles out into the countryside, where they enjoy cooking luxurious meals over bonfires. As dusk falls the most realistic hobo is elected (with curious ceremonies!) as Chief Hobo, with the responsibility for organising the following year's event, then the fires are put out and all slink home. The Chief Hobo receives a wooden shield on which are "burned" the names of previous Chiefs,

together with a photograph of himself in full regalia, presented at the Annual Dinner, which he holds for a year. Surprisingly, or is it (?), this event still attracts members who regard it as quite an honour to be elected Chief Hobo.

The question of the magazine title was finally settled by a committee resolution in May 1944 - That the name should henceforth be "AWHEEL". What could be better? So succinct and to the point, although there is some doubt about who first suggested it. Harry Sandford or Ted Schilling? But it is certain that E R Schilling (alian Herr Von), whose pen and ink sketches were appearing in the magazine from time to time, later created the character "AIRNEY PAIRKINS" an egg-headed Brummie cyclist whose humorous adventures entertained members monthly in the magazine for six years.

By this time, in spite of 65 members in the Forces, the Solihull C.C. was a dominant growth in the Midlands racing scene, having come third in the 1940 Birmingham Time Trials League and been well placed each year since, thanks to Pete Possart's many wins, backed up by Ken Topliss, Wal Bailey, Bert Tyler, Ray Shuttleworth and others, including the name R W Bowes. Denis Moreton and Bob Maitland also appeared, increasingly, and were soon hitting the headlines every week. Moreton came third in the Manchester 12 hours; Dick Bowes won the classic Warwickshire 50 in 2-14-55 as well as many wins on the Rollers in the Red Cross Competitions. In 1942 Maitland and Bowes, who had indicated their potential together the previous year by some fast Club times, smashed the Club tandem 50 record in the Marlborough event with 1-55-15 and Bob

was getting numerous Open wins. The Scratch 25, run principally through the enthusiasm of Bob and Dick, who thought that - "if it was dropped it would be admitting that the Club was unable to run a successful event" - turned out to be a success in every way, not least for Racing Secretary, Ray Shuttleworth, as a first time organiser. Jack Simpson (Barnsley R C) won in 1-1-44, with everyone wondering what Ralph Dougherty (prevented from riding by work of National importance), would have done? Young Bob Maitland came thirteenth with 1-4-47, his best to date.

(Note: this Jack Simpson should not be confused with the unfortunate professional named Tom Simpson who died of a drug overdose in the 1967 Tour de France, but a most consistent 25 miler at the time when "beating the hour" was the aim of every top class rider. He recorded twelve successive rides very close to the hour before finally getting under).

The Seal of Quality was placed on the Solihull C.C. INVITATION SCRATCH 25 by the R.T.T.C. making it the first National Championship in 1944 when Jack Simpson again won in 1-0-55; but before we continue in this year, we must complete 1942 and 1943.

Cycle manufacturers had formed a Centenary Club in 1939 and the Solihull Vice Presidents, Noel Brealey, H R Horden, W P Dawes and H S Capener, attended its annual ride in Warwickshire in 1942.

Out east in Cairo, a Johnnie Walker formed a cycling club for members of the Forces, the BUCKSHEE WHEELERS, which met when possible and held races on whatever "irons" they could

obtain, while back home in Solihull we have noted already the Cycling Club was very active in all spheres, lively discussions in the magazine, well supported club runs on Tuesday evenings and Sundays as well as Hostel Weekends, on one of which to Warwick Hostel Harry Spencer ran a social evening, Messrs. Yates, Bowes, Maitland and Burden entertaining with their unique spectacle "The Horror Surgeons of Catney", and this did not prevent the first three being winners in Roller Contests at the Friends' Institute, Moseley Road, Birmingham.

The names Maitland, Bowes and Moreton were becoming more and more linked as they rode mass-start events under N.C.U. rules on closed circuits. They had finished 1, 2 and 3 in the Club Time Trials Best All-Rounder Competition of 1942. Maitland in 1944 came second in the National M/S Championship and led the now famous trio to team victory.

In 1943 a new name, Basil Francis, appeared well up, often winner of Midland Open 25 miles posing a serious challenge to Bob Maitland's supremacy.

The magazine celebrated its 100th issue in July 1944 and amongst the many new members elected during the year appear the names T Kempshall, S P V Bray, Mrs J L Bray, W Thomas and W E Baillie. The latter eventually resigned while on National Service, and on demob joined the Saracen R C C becoming a valued member of the R.T.T.C. until his unfortunate death in 1977.

1945 opened normally judging by the Minutes of the February Committee, dealing with the reports of various secretaries, treasurer

Dowson reporting £60 in hand, editor Pinson being told the Colmore Press was very expensive, and Harold Musgrave asking if Gordon Gage, who had been invalided home from India, could be invited on the Pantomime Visit which Social Secretary, John Cordwell, reported had 255 seats booked, 10 reserved for wounded soldiers free.

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Likewise the January AWHEEL contained the usual WITH OUR MEMBERS IN THE FORCES, Secretary, Maude Neilson, with letters from F Burden, Gordon Gage, Jumper Cross; articles: CYCLE THREADS by Bill Thomas, TECHNICAL TOPICS by Technicus, which dealt with the mathematical formula governing the balancing and riding a bicycle seeming to predict things contrary to experience, an appeal by VP H H England (editor of CYCLING) for the Charles Fearnley Fund for Maimed Ex-Service cyclists, WAYS AND MEANS OF BRINGING UP BABY by "Spiv" and TOURING PROGRAMME for January and February with A and B Section Runs from the Barley Mow, Solihull at 9.30am. and 10.00am. The editorial reported the Christmas Party a great success, thanks to Mrs Walker, Dennis Moreton, Gladys Weeks and Harry Spencer, and the unusual offer by Audrey Packmore of Club activities recorded on magnetic wire - forerunner of modern tapes.

However, the report of the Annual Dinner and Prize Presentation organised by Ken Topliss included this remark by Bob Maitland, the lion of the evening, in reply to "Mick" McCormack's toast to the "Prizewinners" - "the best way to heal the split was for the N.C.U. to promote better massed start races on enclosed circuits, than the B.L.R.C. could promote on the public roads".

A "straw in the wind" that all was not well with the national scene, but for the Solihull and the country it turned out to be wonderful. Bob Maitland and Dick Bowes set up a Competition Tandem 50 record of 1-47-05 beating the old record of E V Mills and W G Paul by 1-min.1-sec; in the Solihull's Invitation Scratch 25 Bob came second to Cyril Cartwright 1-1-13 to 1-1-27 with Jack Simpson fourth 1-1-55. He also won the North Road Invitation 50 miles and came seventh in the British Best All-Rounder with Club records at all distances from 10 miles to 12 hours and numerous open wins. At the end of the season he won and led Dick and Dennis to the National Hill Climb Championship at Chapel en le Frith. All this to boot while organising the Club events as Club T.T. Secretary! Little wonder it was reckoned the Club's most successful year so far.

The resignation of Ron Dowson as Secretary and Treasurer in August was marked by appreciation of his essential sterling work behind scenes by the presentation of a silver cigarette box and award of Honorary Life Membership, and the invidious task of finding anyone to fill the gaps. With the Solihull Spirit that "first Solihull Flyer" Wal Bailey, volunteered out of loyalty and with Ron agreeing, to become Chairman. Charlie Brown took over Runs Secretaryship: Assistant Ted Schilling.

In May the war with Germany ended and later with Japan. V E Night August 15th being celebrated by a bonfire at Catherine-de-Barnes. All was rejoicing. The Solihull Cycling Club, like the sturdy plant it had become, was seething with excitement, the sap rising in all its branches, just bursting into blossom, ready to bear fruit.

A National Champion

Basil Francis

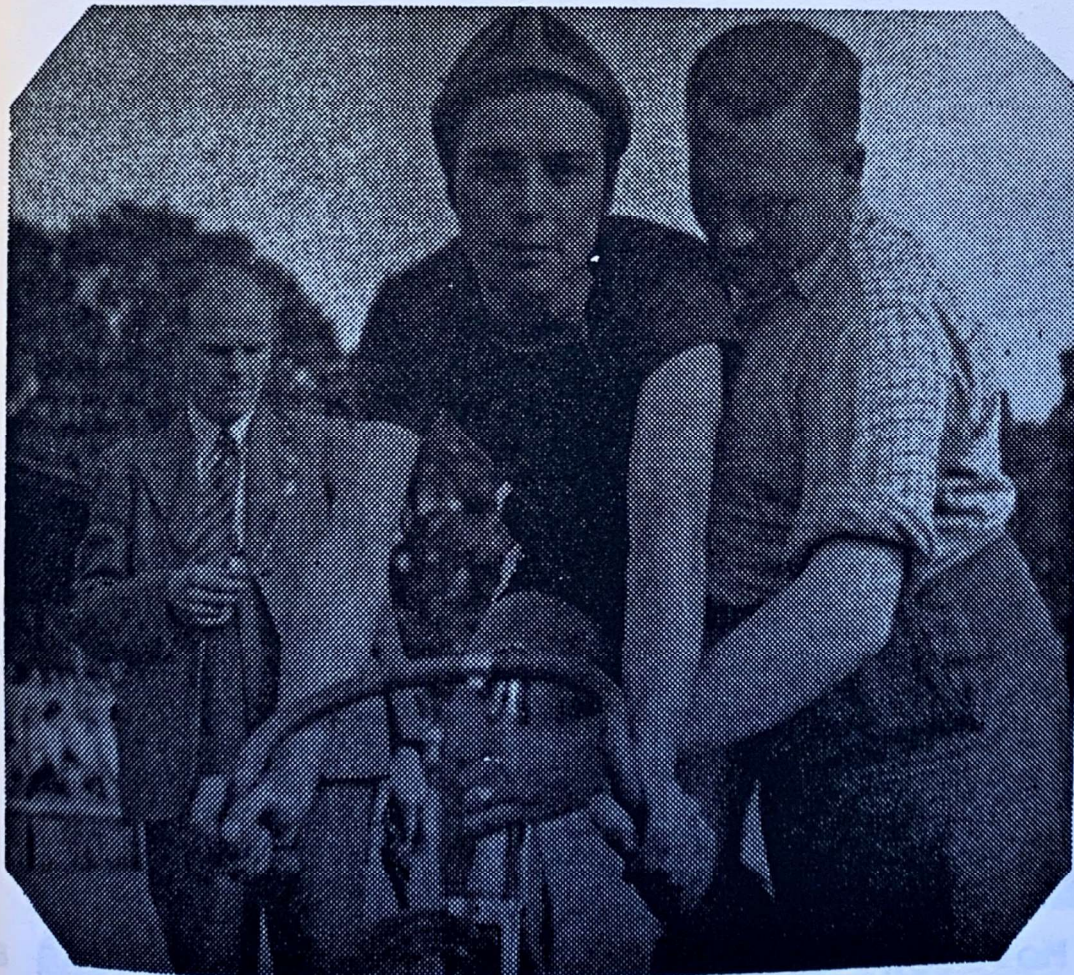
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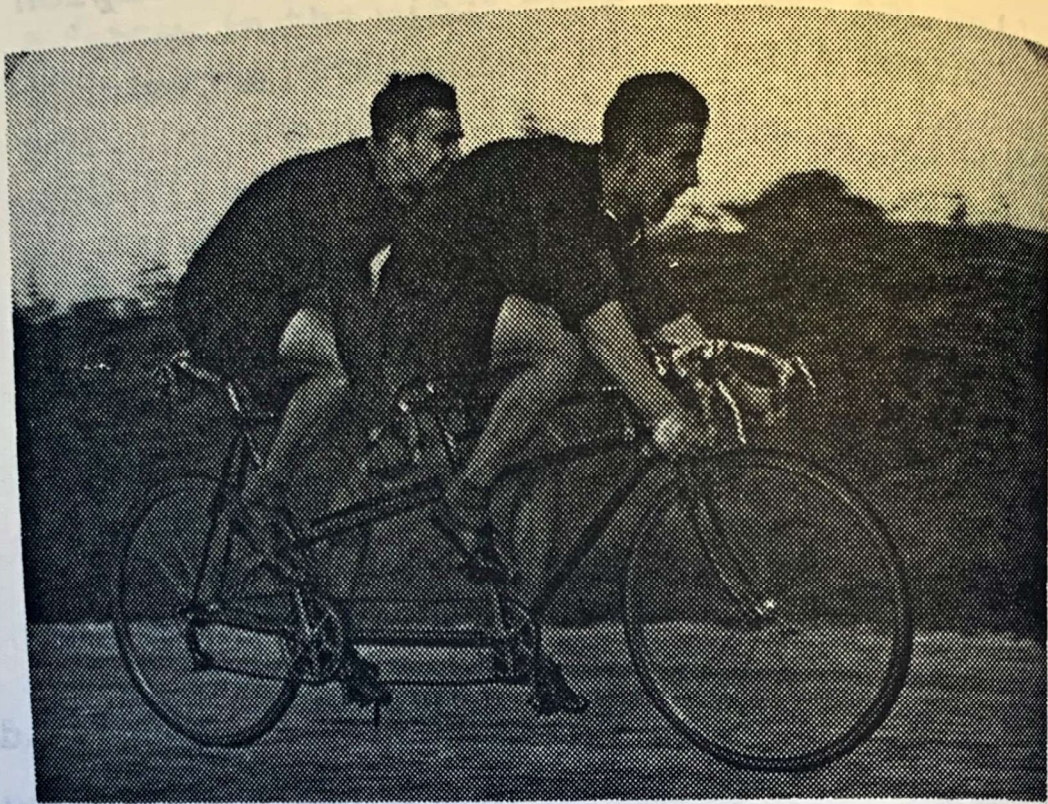


Below - Herne Hill

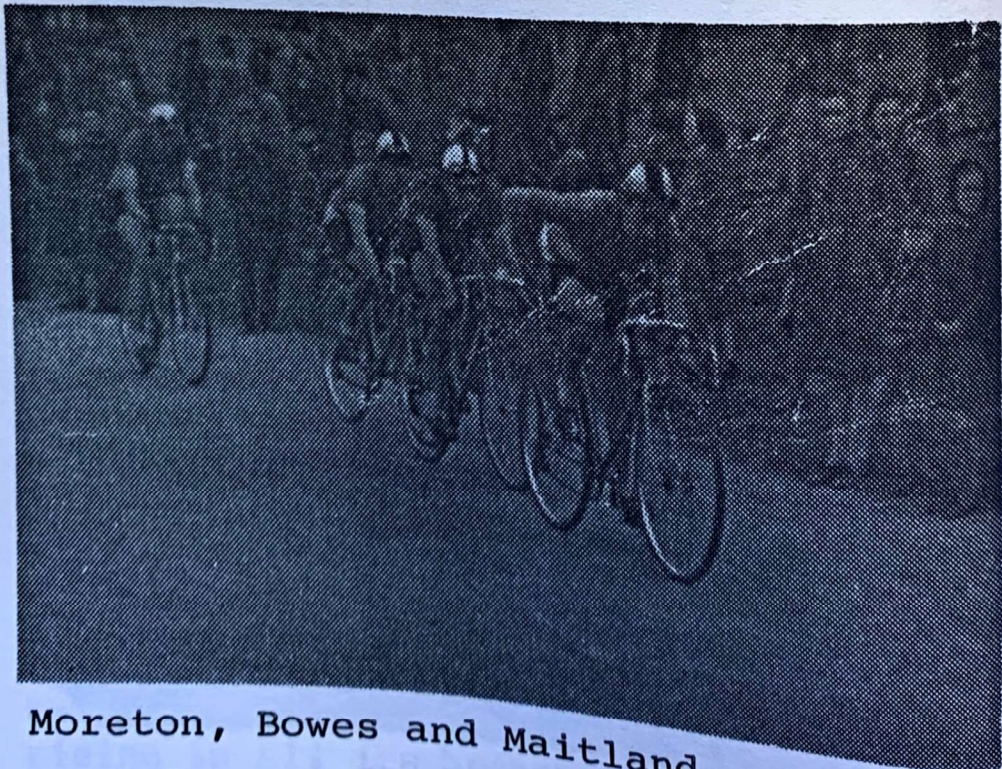
July 1946

Bas Francis held up by the great Frank Southall, holder of the 1 hour track record. A strong wind prevented him beating the 26 miles 838 yards.





The Club's first National Record -
Maitland and Bowes.



Moreton, Bowes and Maitland - 1st, 2nd &
3rd - Nottingham Forest 1946

THREE VINTAGE YEARS : 1946-1948

If some branches of the well established, sturdy tree had been unable to await the Spring of Peace and borne fruit in 1945, the following years saw almost the whole tree bursting forth, every branch annually bearing a crop of finest fruit, racing, touring, bicycle polo, and organisation.

The Birmingham Time Trials League which had served the sport so well during the war, was disbanded, leaving the Clubs to organise their own events, which the Solihull did under the leadership of its Racing Secretary, Ken Humphries.

A new national "star" was born when Basil Francis won the National Championship 25 miles on an exposed course in the Eastern District in 1-0-29; beating Cyril Cartwright (Manc.Clar) 1-1-17 for the third time, when winning the now Classic Solihull Invitation Scratch 25 a week later in a new competition record time of 58-49, the first time "under 59" in England, trouncing such champions as George Flemming (Belle Vue C.C); Jack Simpson (Hemsworth Whs); C Cartwright (Manc.Clarion); Eddie Larkin (Hemsworth Whs), and Charlie Marriner (Southern Paragon C.C). As if to underline his superiority, he later cut competition record to 58-35 in the Rugby R.C.C. event and added the 50 mile record 2-2-19 in the Twickenham C.C. event beating Albert Derbyshire's recent time of 2-2-32 and that after "selling-out" over the last few miles!

The time-trialling branch was now in full fruiting, Bob Maitland and Dick Bowes won the Oak Tandem 100 in the second fastest time ever of 3-56-42. Bob took second place in the National 50 mile championship on the Bath Road with 2-5-35, followed by fourth in the 100 miles with 4-36-24 and third in the 12 hour Championship with 245 miles to come third in the British Best All-Rounder Competition, won by Albert Derbyshire (Calleva R.C), signing himself off as it were by second place in the Hill Climb Championship. Under this kind of inspiration most of the Club's other riders showed improvements, like Tommy Kempshall and Dennis Moreton who clocked 4-20-58; John Cordwell and Les Bailey 4-30-36 to back up our winning pair in the Oak Tandem 100 and take the team award. With 68 placings in the first three and 24 team wins and 13 club records at all distances from 10 miles to 12 hours, including Gladys Weeks Ladies Records at 25, 30 and 50 miles, the racing had reached new heights.

The newer aspect of racing, mass-start, was likewise booming, Maitland and Moreton selected to ride for Britain in the World Road Championships at Zurich, with everyone surprised at the non-inclusion of Dick Bowes, who was a "key" part of the almost invincible Solihull team, so often 1, 2, 3 in events and as if to make this point, he won the first race in which there was a confrontation between riders under the N.C.U. banner and those of the so-called "rebels" the B.L.R.C. at Bleinheim Park in August meeting the League "Stars" Ernie Clements, Ray Jones and H Burton, who had been reinstated by the N.C.U. With Bob third and Dennis fifth, the "Sols" won the team, as usual.

In the Isle of Man International event "Oscar" Moreton came third, behind the Frenchmen, Baldassari and Coste, Bob twelfth on an off-day and Dick thirty-second after puncturing on the second lap. Tom Kempshall forty-third after a crash had smashed his gears and veteran Wal Bailey D.N.F.

There was a feeling about that something must be done to solve "the split" as it was generally referred to. The threat from increasing traffic called for a unified voice to speak for road racing, be it time-trialling or en masse, if cyclists were to retain any freedoms to use the roads, but it would be several more years before the N.C.U. and the B.L.R.C. were able to get together, drop both the established names and unite as the British Cycling Federation.

As if in response to the League's mass-start racing on the open roads, N.C.U. clubs organised more and more such events on circuits in Parks and old wartime airfields so that Solihull members became familiar with Handsworth and Dartmouth Parks in the City of Birmingham, Finsbury Park, London, Gaydon, Wellesbourne and Church Lawford Airfields and even Sutton Park, although this latter necessitated early morning starts, as did Time Trials so was not very popular. In point of fact, a very strong feature of the attraction of League races at first was that they were often in the afternoon. However, the N.C.U. held the power of selection for International events such as World Championships under the Union Cycliste Internationale so "Leaguers" were debarred from such selection even if of the required standard. Thus Ray Jones (Wolverhampton R.C.C) "came-over" and joined the Solihull

C.C. in 1947 with Ernie Clements with the intention of making a super team, along with Maitland, Bowes and Moreton, but as so often happens with such opportunist changes, little actually came of it and soon they reverted to the League. In reverse, Arthur Hobson and Les Bailey, staunch trackmen of the Solihull C.C, resigned during 1948 to join the League, Arthur eventually winning one of their top class events, the Tour of the Clees.

What of the aspects of cycling other than racing in 1946? With 157 members, 50 still in the Forces, February saw editor Don Pinson's last issue of AWHEEL. Having produced a superb VICTORY issue, No. 117, December 1945, in which Gladys Weeks featured as Club Personality No. 7 of Roy Day's series of cartoons, he suggested in his last editorial that a Club magazine was very important and the, bigger the better! The new officials for the year were:- General Secretary and Treasurer, Wal Bailey; Social Secretary, John Cordwell, and Runs Secretary C. W. "Wagger" Brown, a cheerful, ever-smiling "Brummie" who did nothing to discourage the view that he was forever getting lost. "It's not far now, only just round the corner" was his usual encouraging remark to any riders on the A Section runs whose spirits were flagging as they followed into a muddy dead-end farmyard! It may have had nothing to do with this that the Committee sanctioned the purchase of a set of Bart's Half Inch maps, Whatever the truth, Wagger was very popular and did a tremendous amount to vitalise a friendly Club Spirit as well as serving in numerous other official capacities over the years, which resulted in him being awarded the Club's highest accolade of Honorary Life Membership in 1952.

In March, Stan Bray, who had been contributing to the magazine since joining the Club and longing for the privilege of editing such a top-class Club magazine, took over from Don, in full agreement with the latter's expressed opinions as to the importance of a "Club-Rag" as an essential ingredient, like cement - binding together the various interests which in such a large and growing club tended to result in members' losing contact with each other. He was fortunate in meeting a top-class photographer, Tom Bassindale, who had had a picture selected for the front cover of a new National magazine, the BICYCLE. The two became friends, Tom joining the Solihull C.C. in 1947. Improvements followed rapidly. More advertisements were obtained, which allowed more pictures and increased the circulation as copies were sold to non-members and free copies sent each month to every Secondary School and Youth Club in Birmingham as well as Midland Regional Youth Hostels, consequently advertising Solihull Cycling Club just where new members were likely to come from and they did, membership increasing rapidly over the next two years. Clearly a Magazine Distributor was needed and the hardworking Gladys Weeks volunteered in the August.

However the larger membership brought new problems. Basically, a big Club needs officials that think big. Fortunately they were forthcoming as we shall see. The continuing rivalry between the N.C.U. and B.L.R.C. made things more difficult and often seriously tested members' loyalties as already seen. These were the fermenting conditions over the next ten or twelve years, and in the hope of helping keep discussions

open and above board, a monthly feature READERS' PARLIAMENT with a title-block of the Houses of Parliament of readers' letters was commenced in November, acting as a safety valve for several years. C A Mera was the nom-de-plume of Tom Bassindale for a monthly series, FOTO-QUIZ, of first-rate pictures of local beauty spots, such as Kenilworth Castle for readers to identify over the year, and a prize for the one getting most correct. Surprisingly, no-one bothered to enter !! Another of Tom's brilliant ideas was a composite page advert of various trademarks under the heading SIGNS OF THE TIMES, changing to THE EXPERTS' CHOICE another year, or THE PERFECT SPECIFICATION which brought in a useful income towards magazine printing costs. (This idea seems to have been used in recent times by Ron Kitching, the Yorkshire Cycle Components Importer). How few of that first collection are still in business? PERRY, MONITOR BRAKES, DAWES CYCLES, JOHN BULL TYRES, CHEMICO REPAIR OUTFITS, B & T COMPONENTS, LUCAS, BELSTAFF OILSKINS and BAYCLIFFE BAGS. BLUEMELS: HARDEN HUBS and BRITISH HUB CO. LTD.

The offer of two prizes for the best articles each year as selected by members' votes stimulated the flow of articles from members and non-members. Two other vital features of the new editorship were:

1. the promise to get the magazine out at the Clubroom on the first Thursday of each month, so that members could be sure of picking it up so saving postage, and ensuring attendance at the Clubroom, and

2. the aim to ensure that the magazine paid for itself with no cost to the Club. In fact the first year it made a profit.

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Although "demob" was in operation and Fred Baker, Jim Hague, Tom Joiner, Geroge Juggins, J Walsh, A Poole, Jim Pearson, Bernard Knight, Steve Westwood and John Hall, had been demobbed by June, there was still "call-up" for National Service, so John Barklam, John Neilson, Bill Wells, Alan Rickman and Bert Childs continued to let Forces Secretary, Maude Neilson, have details of their enforced holiday. Ken Humphries and Art Hobson sent letters of thanks on behalf of forces members for all the Club had done for them. Those members who had lost their lives in World War 2 were recorded in remembrance on the frontispiece of the bound copies of the Club Magazine presented to the Club, to be retained by whoever was the current Editor, by Eric Walker in 1950. They were: G Entwistle, J Latham, A Price and E Judd.

The idea of a Club Calendar was broached but nothing came of it at the time, by tricyclist Gordon Gage, a superb artist who produced a series of scraper-boards illustrating the months of the year, together with events, under the title "COUNTRY ALMANAC" in 1948. After army service, being invalided out from India, he formed his own very successful advertising business, but unfortunately this resulted in him having no spare time for cycling and he dropped out of the Club leaving a tricycle 12 hour record and his taking on of the Racing Secretary's job on the tragic death of Wally Jones in 1939 along with several artistic magazine cover blocks as memorials to his talents.

During 1946 a committee meeting decision to allow B.L.R.C. publications to be sold in the Clubroom indicates the open-minded attitude in the Club towards the changes taking place in the national cycling world, while pushing ahead with its own efficient organisation. Sandy Sandford produced a new Club Handbook costing 2/6d. (equivalent to 75p. in 1980) and Club Time Trial and Track Standards were updated. Amongst the new members this year were J T Moore, D S Osmonde, R T Griffiths and R Murray, who played important roles in the Club later. Ken Bungay, who had taken over the Polo Secretary's job on the call-up of John Neilson, was reporting that the field at H.Q. had been weeded by volunteers and some matches were planned. The December issue of AWHEEL was planned to be used as a Club Christmas Card with special articles by well-known cyclists :- Tourist Frank Urry; the Midland's best handicapper and ex-competition 50 record holder Frank Greenwood; "Ragged Staff"; a cycling crossword puzzle and No.14 of Roy Day's Club Personalities, Basil Francis.

1947 brought a change at the top! A new President.

Respected Charlie Dawes had intimated that although still very enthusiastic about the Solihull C.C., a younger man should be appointed and he had recommended H N Brealey who was Advertising Manager of B.S.A. Cycles. Noel was elected after most sincere and appreciative vote of thanks had been accorded for the way in which Mr Dawes, always the "perfect gentleman", had represented the Club with dignity and success.

Here was one of the "think-big" members the growing club required and he was to inspire the Solihull by his very active participation and ever-ready help for many years. His firm handling of the many tricky meetings thrown up by the dissentious in the "cycling world" turned out to be a "Godsend" which prevented the Club being split wide open like so many other clubs at this time.

Bob Maitland and Dick Bowes had been elected Honorary Life Members in 1946 for their achievement in gaining the Club's first National Record, the Competition Tandem 50 miles. It was only fitting that 1947 saw Bas Francis and "Oscar" Moreton similarly honoured, the former for his 25 and 50 miles competition records, the latter for his selection to represent Great Britain in the World Road Race Championships at Zurich.

An Associate Life Membership was introduced for older members who in the opinion of the Committee, to be ratified by an A.G.M., had done sterling work for the Club worthy of recognition but were unable to be active any longer for some reason such as ill-health or leaving the district. On payment of two guineas they would become Associate Life Members. A list of such members will be found in Chapter X.

Another change which caused quite a rumpous, ending in a Special General Meeting, was the sequel of Dennis Moreton's and Bob Maitland's visit to Zurich, where they acquired a set of new jerseys, was the changing of the Club Colours for Road Racing to blue jerseys with white and red chest bands. The Club's star team of Maitland, Bowes and Moreton had been granted special permission at the 1946 A.G.M.

to wear their new vests when representing the Club, but they felt that they were much smarter than the original red with black neck stars often of different shades of red, also it was important to be able to recognise one's team-mates in mass-start racing and suggested a change to rule 26 at the next A.G.M. It is tempting to think that selection for their country might have encouraged this patriotism, that Official Club Colours should be Red, White and Blue. Naturally much heated discussion ensued during the year, those with the old colours not wishing to have to buy new vests; some nostalgically attached to the old colours, pointing out that red, white and blue were the Manchester Wheelers colours, if different design. Finally a Special General Meeting on 5 March 1948 decided in favour of the new colours and design, ratified at the next A.G.M. which have been worn with pride by most members to this day, but the Polo Team stuck to the original red and black star.

Through 1947 interest in encouraging Junior riders resulted in the institution of a JUNIOR B.A.R. based on the best average speed of 5, 10, 15 and 25 miles; also the appointment of a Training Organiser - foredating present day practice by years! - and it is reasonable to think that this led to Ron Murray becoming the Birmingham Centre N.C.U. Junior Mass-Start Champion that year with Pete Hughes and Colin Cobill completing the winning team. Harry Gardener won the Junior B.A.R. and Ken Topliss the Senior B.A.R.

Evergreen Founder Member, Eric Walker, instituted the Reunion Run in July as a scheme to retain old friendships as helpful