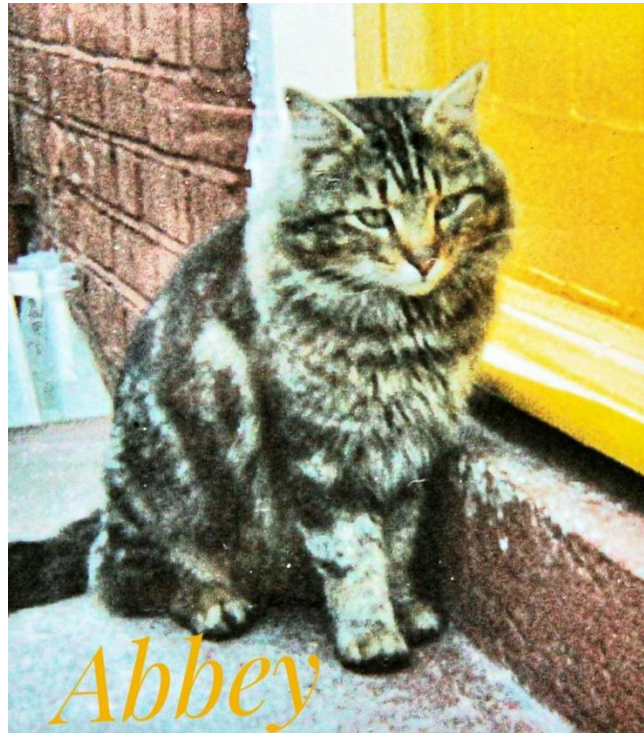


THE CAT AND THE BIKE – TALES OF A PAPER-ROUND BOY!

By Ian Welland



'Bill, you won't believe this. I think I have just seen a cat in a paper round bag riding on a bike!'

'Ah! Morning John, that'll be our paperboy.'

'What, the cat?'

'Haha, no. Ian. The cat goes with him on the paper round and the cat jumps in the bag for the return down the hill. The cat can't read the papers cos he's slightly boss-eyed!'

It was true. On most days, my cat would accompany me on the paper round.

Abbey was a long-haired tabby stray found in the grounds of Wycombe Abbey School and a friend gave him to my brother who lived in a flat in High Wycombe Town Centre at the time. When my brother had to move, Abbey had nowhere to go so was given to me to look after, and we developed an instant bond. Within weeks, Abbey had settled down at his new home off Totteridge Hill, even preferring Weetabix to his usual brand of cat food for breakfast. It wasn't too long before, Abbey was following me down to the end of the street to the corner shop. At 05:30, the papers would arrive at the shed adjacent to the shop and for the next hour or so, I would mark-up the papers ready for the rounds and then take my first round out.

Patently, Abbey would sit waiting for me to emerge from the shed with my papers and would then proceed to follow me on the round, unless it was raining hard, or snow had fallen. A sort of a fair-weather companion you might say. The route was always the same for four years. Starting at the bottom of Totteridge Hill, I would deliver to houses in adjacent streets, finally ending at the Common at the top.

Bill, the owner of the shop would take my second bag of papers for Totteridge Common to the Wingate signpost and also padlock my bicycle ready for the ride back down the hill with no time to spare.

So, having followed me for the first four streets and making it to the top of the hill, Abbey would jump into the second bag and off we would go to Totteridge Common. Abbey liked the Common. A kind-of a pit stop for him whilst I delivered to six cottages accessed down a rotted trail – the trail is a poorly tarmacked potholed road these days.

Once I had delivered the Daily Telegraph to Bay Tree Cottage, it was all downhill back to HQ. I would call Abbey and he would come running out of his pit stop bush and jump into the bag. Abbey had a rather large head, and this would poke out from the bag to enjoy the full blast of breeze as we sped down Totteridge Hill on the bike!

These were the days before Disney's 'ET' of course, but I like to think of Abbey and I being the pioneers of such a delight!