

AWHEEL

A HISTORY OF CYCLING



SOLIHULL
Cycling Club 1929 – 1985
By S.P.V. Bray

The author has been a cyclist since the age of seven, when, after learning to ride on an old lady's loop frame with flat tyres—lying rusting in next door's garden in Loughborough, Leicestershire—his grandfather bought him a Junior cycle, which he immediately realised was a "magic carpet" enabling him to travel anywhere!

He re-formed the Loughborough Section of the Cyclists' Touring Club at 16 and became the youngest District President at 19 when wartime conditions resulted in the call-up of so many cyclists.

Moving to Birmingham, in 1942, he and wife Jean joined the Solihull C.C., with which club they still serve. Their three children were brought up as cyclists and two are still active cyclists. They have cycle-toured in almost all the European countries.

Stan has had a very active racing career of 38 years, riding in 1,200 events, including 17 24-hour events and never being 'Did Not Finish'.

He has had a lifelong interest in editing, running a Form Magazine at school; the Loughborough Section's CYCLIST'S TRUE COMPANION for 5 years; the Solihull C.C.'s AWHEEL for 26 years; the Veteran Time Trial Association (B'ham Group's Newsletter) for 3 years; and is current editor of the Tricycle Association's GAZETTE. He produced the CYCLING-STARS' CALENDAR-MEMO for 30 years.

By training a Scientist. After 4 years research at Midland Agricultural College became a teacher on the King Edward Foundation, Birmingham, retiring as Senior Chemistry Master at Camp Hill School in 1980, having run a School Cycling Club for 25 years.

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THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF

SOFTBALL CYCLING CLUB

BY S.P.V. BRAY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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To our Founder Members, especially Eric Walker, and all those members who have built the Solihull C.C. by their loyalty and dedicated efforts. I would like to thank especially, Eric Walker and John Cordwell for encouragement and financial support, and my wife, Jean, for putting up with minute books and magazines about the house for eight years.

Also those who supplied the pictures, CYCLING WEEKLY, SOLIHULL NEWS, Bernard Thompson, John Shawcross, Bob Maitland, Dick Bowes, Harry Reynolds, John Carter, and gave permission for their use. Also to Clive Grainger for his help in getting the book printed. Also to Fred Robinson of the Dulwich Paragon for his photo of Bas. Francis.

PRELUDE

SOLIHULL C. C. GOLDEN JUBILEE
(7 APRIL 1979)

With four hundred and eight in St. John's
Versaille Suite,
Let us praise famous men who'd brought us to
this meet.

Ralph Dougherty of 'FIRST-MAN-TO-BEAT HOUR'
fame;

Stan Higginson 'THE UNBEATABLE' also there to
name,

Along with 'SOLS' own, like Reynolds and
Bowes;

Walker and Goodman, and Dowson, and those
Officials who'd carried the proud Solihull
on,

With editors such as Bray; Borneman and Don
Pinson;

Then Moss, Monk and Richards, and Watkins and
Hughes;

Road, Cross and Polo, with Randle and Brown;
Not forgetting such Tourists of equal renown.
Also bearded Howard Bayley top tricyclist for
years,

All present and waiting just for our cheers -
Yet with cross-toasting out were denied this
acclaim!

What opportunity missed for inspiring the
young

With the next fifty years to make rung by
rung.

Agreed, their deeds were in picture and print
On twenty large frames in the foyer on view,
Or SOUVENIR MENUS only read by the few.

But the missed chance to express hero-worship
aloud

Must ever remain in my memory a cloud
On otherwise fantastic events of which I was
proud.

The meal was first class as so be it, it vi
should,
The speeches light-hearted, humorous and
good,
BUT, the meeting of Clubmates parted by years
Was out of this world and caused some joyous
tears.
What a REUNION CLIMAX ne'er to be forgot,
So glad I was present, sorry if you were not.

Stan Bray

DEDICATION

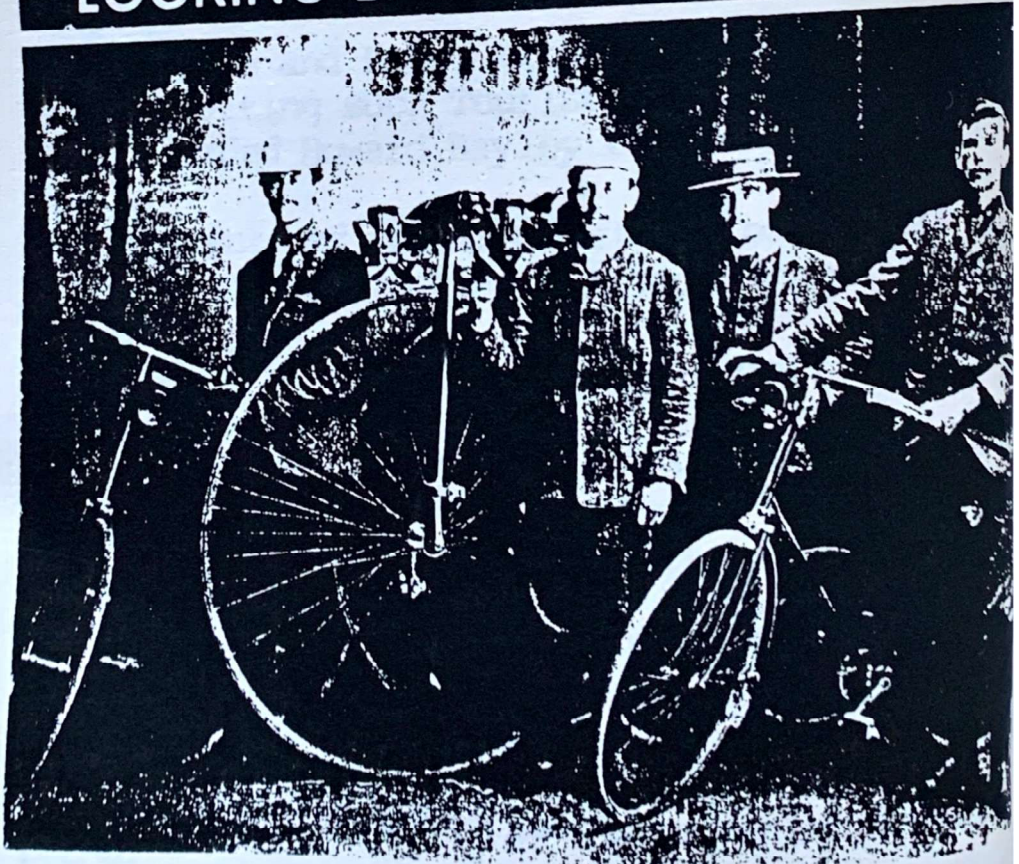
TO ALL WHO ENJOY CYCLING WITH A PASSION
AKIN TO RELIGION.

BOROUGH'S' FIRST CYCLING CLUB



"Four Pioneers"

LOOKING BACK ON OLD SOLIHULL



INTRODUCTION

1

Whispers from the nineteenth century indicate that there was a Solihull Cycling Club in the 1890's. Two photographs, one from 1891, a real gem, was reprinted in the SOLIHULL NEWS, March 24 1979. This shows a group of four riders in a studio in Le Havre. They were George and Ernest Powell of Solihull with their companions Oswald and Raphael Pipett. The former pair proudly stand beside their graceful 'Ordinaries', more descriptively if somewhat derisively and popularly called 'Penny-Farthings'. The latter couple exhibit their 'new-fangled' safety bicycles, more in keeping with today's machines, but all complete with oil-lamps and capes for they were on a tour of France, which was completed as could be confirmed by George's son Bernard who had sent in the picture for publication. Unfortunately he knew no more details.

The second picture, reprinted in the SOLIHULL NEWS, was of a group of members and officials which includes Sir Alfred Bird, MP, whose family was well known as the founders of BIRD'S CUSTARD POWDER: taken at Knowle in 1887. It came from the historic files of freelance photographer, G.A Joiner.

Also extant, in the possession of Bob Cross, a member of the current Cycling Club, is a membership booklet and Runs Programme for 1893 of a Solihull Bicycle Club with its Headquarters at Knowle. It is beautifully printed, bound in red linen, embossed in gold.

This rather delicate 'cycling seedling' did not flourish.

It was planted in the unsuitable soil of the wealthy strata for whom cycles were new exciting toys soon to be replaced by a newer development - Motor Cars. Thus the first SBC soon withered and died, leaving but few traces.

However, the second SCC Seedling, which this history is about, did flourish, for it was planted in the twentieth century in the much more suitable environment - the so-called 'working-class' strata of society, where the bicycle was not merely a toy with which to pass the idle hours, but also a useful tool and a magic carpet leading to cheap travel, hence glamorous excitements. It incorporated the 'spirit of adventure', was able to adapt to circumstances or even pioneer changes brought about in time, yet remaining loyal to the spirit of self-help!

Its flourishing state after more than fifty years growth is tribute enough to the generations of members responsible, and foundations more than adequate for future generations to build on.

This history, will, I hope, do justice to all who worked and enjoyed their leisure. It is based on the complete set of Minute Books, a History Scrapbook of Newspaper Cuttings started by one of its Founder Members, Eric Walker, the complete bound volumes of the Club's Magazines, and personal involvement with the majority of those concerned in its growth.

It is hoped that it will inspire the Club's future, while ever there exists anyone who enjoys cycling, and fellowship with others who enjoy the great outdoors.

Stan Bray
(1985)

THE FIRST DECADE : 1929-1938

TILLING THE SOIL

Tommy Hawks of Hermitage Road, Solihull, replanted the seed for a cycling club in the fertile mind of Eric Walker, one of a group of young teenagers, including Ivor Goodman and Arthur Houlston, enjoying life around Catney (today preferred as Catherine-de-Barnes!), a pleasant little hamlet straddling the Grand Union Canal east of Solihull.

Tommy was chauffeur to Captain Oliver Bird, M.C. who resided at Woodlawn, Solihull, (today an area of luxury flats opposite Beechnut Lane), whose father, Sir Alfred Bird, MP, a wealthy gentleman and great sportsman associated with the earlier Solihull Cycling Club, had once organised a bicycle polo match between his Gentlemen's Team and one from Ireland in the 1880s at Tudor Grange (now a Secondary School) where he resided. Sir Alfred was also an enthusiastic racing cyclist who had a special carrier on the side of his Rolls Royce, and on his regular recreation days would have his chauffeur drive him out into the country against the wind some fifty or so miles, or ride out with the wind, then ride back helped by the tailwind or be picked up. A nice way of 'getting the revs up'.

Captain Oliver Bird M.C. followed the pattern of his father's training and acquired something of a reputation as a hundred miler, as a member of that oldest continuously active cycling club, the SPEEDWELL BICYCLE CLUB, founded in 1877.

So undoubtedly Tommy Hawks, whose main love was cricket, a member of the Wootton Waven Cricket Club before the 1914-1918 War, when he came to Solihull, frequently played in the grounds of Berry Hall where the local lads also enjoyed watching the matches, when not birds-nesting or up to other youthful distractions like messing about on bikes - if you had one. Here was something of a link between the wealthy and not so well off - the old and the young. Furthermore, Mr & Mrs Hawks enjoyed tandem riding round the Warwickshire lanes.

Far enough away from the industrial city of Birmingham, some dozen or so miles, before the invention of TV, people still found full-time pleasure in making their own entertainment, which engendered a strong community spirit. Village Flower Shows occasioned great excitement and were an important feature of life in those days. Large marquees in which myriad arrays of colourful blooms were set out with loving competitive pride, were the focal points surrounded by refreshments tents and grassy areas marked out for competitive games, including cycle races. Throughout the summer months any lively youngster could get his fill of half-mile or 1 mile races on grass for which the prizes were, even by today's inflationary standards, remarkable - canteens of cutlery, carpets, beautiful wall clocks, and any rules were simple in the extreme. The 1 mile Open Handicap at Catherine-de-Barnes Flower Show appeared to be the height of athletic endeavour.

Apart from this there was another, (less 'pure'?), form of self entertainment available to the local youth.

The twelve and a half miles circuit race!

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Starting at Barston, organised by Jack Pearson, a tough old cyclist who had returned to the place of his birth to run a cycling business and sell the REDHEAD with a very attractive transfer on the head tube. Youths of all ages from eleven or twelve upwards were set off at minute intervals to ride via Catherine-de-Barnes, Solihull, Knowle and Temple Balsall returning to the start, on whatever machine they could scrounge. How Jack worked out the handicap was anybody's guess, but the fastest rider on a REDHEAD received a gold-centre medal as did the fastest on any machine, and the winner on handicap took one of those beautiful German 8-day wall clocks.

It was all good fun and innocent but for the hint of advertising the REDHEAD machines; in any case the Flower Show grass track events were "unregistered" meetings. This meant that they had not received the permission of the National Cyclists Union, a body formed for the control of cycle racing in 1878.

However, up and down the country there was a large body of youths and men who had never even heard of the N.C.U. and others, perhaps not so 'innocent' who found the excellent prizes, the simple rules, and their own prowess, resulted in a profitable return by going round the country attending such events. Such 'unregistered' riders (and they still exist today, though in much smaller numbers), naturally had their own talented 'stars'. We have to realise that it was quite easy, nay natural, for youngsters to ride in their local events without any thought of there being national rules and regulations. Who would blame them?

The youthful Eric Walker had essayed the 1925 event, winning second handicap with his 34-mins.47-secs. to the winner's 31.10. In 1926 C Mills was again on scratch but this time beaten by his brother H Mills with 30.11 but Eric again took second handicap with 30.16 and fastest rider on a REDHEAD, but a coveted German wall clock was denied him! Starting number 3 in 1927 he was soon out in front, surviving floods at Temple Balsall up to the top tube to finish in 31.23, and Eric's eyes glinted with fond memories as we looked across to the 54 year old clock still keeping good time on his wall at Oak Farm, Catherine-de-Barnes in 1980. He had been the only rider to have remained on his bike through the floods!

An interesting, if perhaps irrelevant item to our story; Jack Pearson later refused a Vice Presidency of the Solihull Cycling Club unless cycling was confined to weekdays only, as he had come to regard cycling on Sundays as contrary to his religious views.

This then was the rich environment in which the seeds of the Club were planted.

THE SEED IS SOWN

Daily riding to work in Solihull, Eric Walker frequently saw Tommy Hawks, and one day in 1928 they stopped to pass the time of day near a lamp-post in Hampton Lane, when Tommy asked "What do you think about the idea of a cycling club in Solihull?" Eric consulted with his friends Ivor Goodman and Arthur Houlston who agreed it seemed a good idea, although by now they had become members of a cycling club, the IVY WHEELERS (centred on the North East of Birmingham), due to contacts with a Jack Smith of Knowle, who was quite a local star track rider.

A meeting of the four, Tommy, Eric, Ivor and Arthur, was held at Tommy's house in Hermitage Road to discuss plans for implementing the idea. The result, an inaugural meeting was convened by T Hawks for Wednesday, 13 February 1929, at the Public Hall, Solihull. It had been well advertised in the local press and hand-made posters in the shops. It was actually held in the Gents Cloakroom, unofficially obtained through the aid of the caretaker, Bill Joiner. All was in darkness as those attending were let in by the back-way!

"The weather was very inclement" records the Minutes of that meeting. February is hardly the best month for any planting (!), but 28 people turned up - "a satisfactory number" continues the Minutes.

Mr Hawks, as convenor, explained the object of the meeting, to form a cycling club in Solihull, and just this was proposed by Mr Jack Smith, seconded by Mr A Houlston and carried unanimously. Mr J Martin proposer, Mr Boulds seconder, fixed the name - SOLIHULL CYCLING CLUB - with a five-shillings per annum membership fee, proposed and seconded by Mr W Joiner and Mr J Martin. It was to affiliate to the National Cyclists Union, with the essential officials and committee as follows :-

- Chairman : Mr A A Logan
- Secretary : Mr V Pegg
- Treasurer : Mr T Hawks
- Captain : Mr I Goodman
- Vice-Captain: Mr J Smith

Committee: Miss Hudson, Miss F Duckett, Mr Bethell, Mr Dyke, Mr J E Walker and Mr A Houlston

Notice: ladies were not excluded, as was usual in those times, and this simple fact was one of the Club's strengths in the future.

So the four Founder Members were all now committed to the running of the SOLIHULL CYCLING CLUB.

The design of the Club Badge; a Programme of Events; a Club Headquarters, Bascombe Cafe, High Street, Solihull; as well as a County H.Q. at Budbrooke Tearooms, Hatton; a meeting place, THE BARLEY MOW, Solihull; the collection of one penny from each member attending a run for a fund to compensate members sustaining injury or damage while on a run; a Supper and Social to be organised at the end of the year and the first Annual General Meeting to be held 27 March 1930, were planned along with the first run to Yarningale Common for lunch, tea at Leamington, held on 31 March, attended by 16 members.

Clearly there was a very lively and balanced germination taking place, perhaps the combination of the experience of Tommy Hawks with the youthful enthusiasm of Eric Walker, Ivor Goodman and Arthur Houlston. Things developed according to plan the first year.

The rigid, almost military, discipline of club runs of the older cycling clubs, like many other relics of Victorian times, was beginning to weaken, although Eric Walker recalls being ticked off by Club Captain Jones when out with the Ivy Wheelers when he and Arthur Houlston passed the Captain without his permission to start a 'burn-up' and being told "either obey the rules or clear off from the club!"

The new Club encouraged membership of both sexes and did not have whistles for Captains to blow but it did call for simple basic discipline on club runs. There are several incidents recorded in the Minutes for the early years of members being reprimanded by the committee for behaviour prejudicial to safety on runs and one even "for use of bad language in front of ladies!"

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Chairman A A Logan played a leading part in the development of sensible, necessary rules, with Eric pressing for all members to approach their friends to join the Club; but business was limited to the number of committee meetings, called when required; like allocating payment to someone from the Accident Fund or dealing with the closing of the county H.Q. on Sundays and instituting the first race, of 5 miles; for riding cycles in company was the aim as some 41 weekly runs with an average attendance of 7 during March to December 1929 testifies. A successful Dance confirms the inherent social spirit and a photograph of very youthful-looking Ivor Goodman (still using his Ivy Wheelers vest !), holding a cup presented by Vic Pegg for the winner of the 1 mile handicap race at the British Legion Sports, with Arthur Houlston second and Eric third, highlights the interest in competitive cycling. The 5 miles road race was won by J Harris in 12 mins.43 secs., the year ending with a membership of 34 and the first annual Dinner held at the Public Hall, Solihull, with 40 present, so all seemed set for continuous improvement and had proved the need for a cycling club in Solihull.

The A G M saw Ivor Goodman hand over the Club Captaincy to Eric Walker after A A Logan had been elected President and Captain Oliver Bird, M.C., Councillor W H Painter, and Maurice Davis J P appointed Vice-Presidents. There were one or two changes in the committee, most notably the name of B Dickerson appears.

Perhaps the phenomenal enthusiasm of the first year was too much, but whatever the cause, 1930 saw the publication of a Runs Card with a well planned programme yet attendances on runs fell away. Suffice it to say, but for the determination of Eric Walker and John Hall, who with 51 and 50 points took first and second Attendance Awards later in the year, Club Runs would have ceased. This is the origin of that cross-toast often heard at Solihull Dinners since - "I would like to take wine with the man who treated the whole Club to dinner" - they were often the only two out.

Fortunately other activities were flourishing. The racing side increased to: 1-mile handicap; 5-miles; 15-miles; 25-miles and a cross-country race; also a 10-miles Inter-Club with the Ivy Wheelers. Again the three younger Founder Members were prominent amongst the winners, Eric showing a prediliction for the road races winning the 5, 15 and 25 miles races. Attendances were successful but membership had been static.

The A G M produced some changes but whether it was these or not, this year 1931, the Club took off after its period of hanging fire. With hindsight, one is tempted to say it was because a good team of officials resulted, the right men in the right place were all working in harmony.

Councillor W H Painter accepted the Presidency and started a tradition of Presidents who really have the Club's interests at heart and are willing to work for the Club, rather than be mere figureheads. A few new V Ps were added and two Honorary Life Members, Mrs A Parry and Mr W Johnson. Mr A A Logan continued as Chairman. Eric Walker became Secretary, and he had married Freda Duckett during the year, so Mrs F Walker continued on the committee along with Vic Pegg, G Dyke, S Parry, J Harris, Mrs Savage and A Houlston, while Bernard Dickerson took on the Runs Captaincy aided by John Hall and Ivor Goodman the Racing Secretary, J Bradley the Path Captain.

It was as if everyone had found the job which enabled them to give expression to their talents. More committee meetings were held because more business was being done! New names, later to be of note, appeared: Mr & Mrs Vokins, J Barlow, Frank Wells and Norman Lees. A wreath was placed on the CYCLISTS' WAR MEMORIAL at Meriden by the President, donations made to the W H S Walker Trophy of the Midland Counties Cycling Association (now the B A R Trophy of that organisation). A dozen badges were embroidered by Miss Dodd to the excellent design, so symbolic of the aims and environs of the Club, that had been proposed in the first year and one was sent to H Bruce-Penn who was making a collection of Club Badges. (We wonder if this collection is still extant or if Harold Scott the present day expert on Club Badges knows anything about it? - Ed.) Club colours of a red vest with a black neck star were settled and Councillor Painter presented a Cup for the 25-miles.

A Houlston, L Houston and J Hall were suspended by the N C U for riding at unregistered meetings - shades of those teenage days no doubt - yet a donation was sent to help the N C U recoup on a Sports Day loss at Perry Barr and also to the International Racing Fund. Club Headquarters had moved to Oak Farm, Catherine-de-Barnes. It had been a year of vigorous activity, the membership rising to 65 and Treasurer Tommy Hawks pointing out that the increase of cash at the bank was three times that of last year. Average runs attendance had increased and been maintained. Sadly, Chairman A A Logan had to resign due to business pressure and movement to London though remaining a member, J Barlow taking his place to keep the meetings in order. Otherwise this successful team of officials continued in office in 1932.

Many new ideas were proposed, Eric being one of the chief innovators: a competition for the ladies for the best knitted beret gives an idea of the fashion in headgear of those times; a paperchase (no thoughts of litter then !); 4 dances, the price raised to 2/6d (that would be about 75p today); Wednesday and Saturday afternoon runs; standards for races at 25, 50, 100 miles and 12 hours and 24 hours, also a scratch 10 miles Open for Novices who would not be allowed to use racing attire or sprints and tubs. With new members joining every month it soon became necessary for A and B Section Runs, the year ending with an average of 13 for the runs from 153 members, including Bob Cross, Dick Borneman, W Lockstone, J Willcocks, Ernie Rudd, A Bradley, Sid Wood and Fred Cleverly. After the Meriden Service an independent

Camera Run was held, films being handed in at teatime at Club H Q. This proved very popular and produced some excellent pictures, Fred Cleverly winning all the first places.

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The death of Maurice Davis J P of Berry Hall in November 1932, a Life Vice-President, who had taken a very close interest in Club affairs was one sad event in this year, the other, perhaps even more so to the Club being the death of 17 year old Gilbert Lorraine Barlow while out training near Monkspath. The sixth child of Jethro 'Jack' Barlow who was well known as an entertainer in the district and Chairman of the Solihull C C. This fatal accident was a real shock, as Gilbert was such a promising rider and the only remaining son of this ill-fated family, although his sister Peggy later married John Jarrett a top class Polo player. More than 100 cyclists attended the funeral in June on their cycles.

A sequel of this was the presentation of the GILBERT BARLOW MEMORIAL CUP by Gilbert's friend Eric Walker, awarded for the Club 'Best All-Rounder' as determined by the best average time in all the Club Time Trials. Subsequently over the years the method of award has been modified to the rider gaining most points on the Club 25, 50, 100 and 12 hours, thus making the Trophy an incentive and an acknowledgement of the member who most loyally supports Club events.

From now until the end of the Club's first decade there was no stopping developments. It was already making its presence felt locally and soon National recognition would be accorded this 'Go-ahead' Club as the local papers termed it in reporting the first

Gala and Gymkana held at H Q. The DAILY SKETCH published a photograph and report of the Solihull Cycling Club's decorated bicycles in the Carnival Procession of 1934, yet this was only the forerunner of the highest acclaim in the Cycling Press to follow shortly after. It is clear that a very vigorous 'Club Spirit' existed with members taking part enthusiastically in every conceivable facet of cycling, like new shoots on a plant in Spring. There was a personal pride in belonging to the Club.

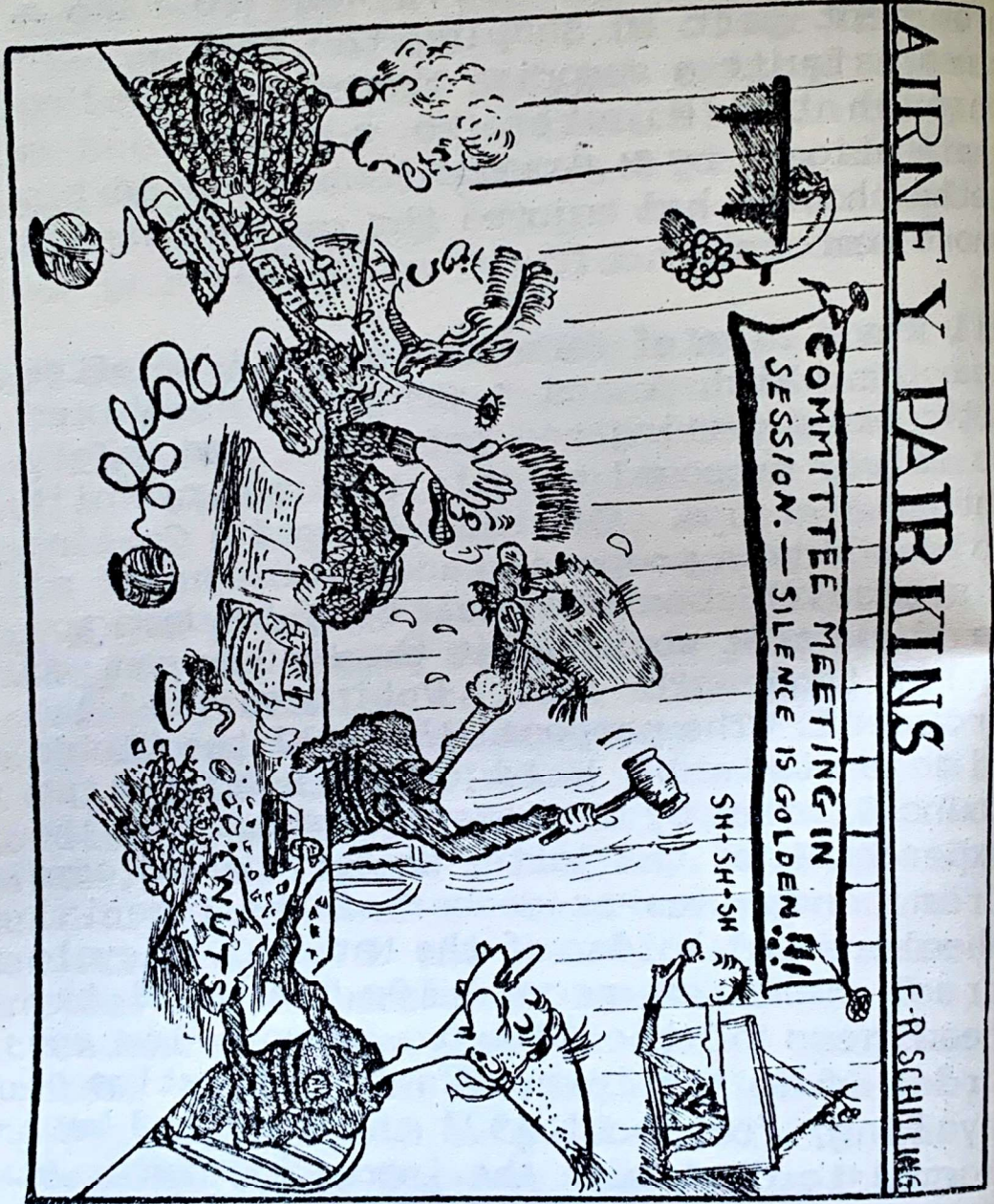
1933 saw few changes in officials at the A G M. The new idea of two Runs sections needed two Captains, A Collins leading the A riders and A Vokins the shorter B rides, the respective Vice Captains being E Davies and Miss Vernon; the very successful Runs Captain of previous years, Bernard Dickerson, taking on the Racing Secretary's job, which required J Bradley to look after all the Track Racing, which was expanding. N C U and M C C A delegates included B Dickerson, A Collins, C Lovegrove, J Hall, B C Hall, F Barnes, E Davies and J Bradley, while W J Burkhill continued to be Timekeeper and Handicapper. All the usual events were proposed and an increase in awards to six for attendance, 3 for ladies and 3 gents. Numerous attempts on the Solihull-Warwick and back record with a gold medal for the fastest at 31st October became quite a feature, seventy being made, more than justifying the original proposal by Cyril Lovegrove and Eric Walker in March 1933, and the latter took the medal with 1-9-1.

Regular reportage of events in the Birmingham Gazette, Solihull News and "Cycling" increased throughout the year. The award of

a silver Club Badge for the member getting the most new members was another simple yet very effective idea which encouraged growth and amongst the many new members of this year, Miss Flo Malpas, Ken Humphries, Miss L Parsons and C A Lovegrove were to take a prominent part in shaping the future. It comes as quite a surprise therefore, reading through the Minutes to come across a resignation - by H Hammond - who said in his letter how he had enjoyed the runs during his short membership.

All was a hive of ferment, the run home after tea (at which A and B Sections sometimes met), were getting too large for road safety so it was proposed to rule that riders split into two groups. Carried. A Captain Collins objected to a proposed tandem time trial as his section consisted mainly of tandems and he thought it would split them! (How can you split tandems? - Ed). Voting carried the proposal. The proposal that all the Club's Time Trials be held under Road Racing Council rules by C A Lovegrove shows both the experience of the latter member who had come from London (an ex-member of the Imperial Wheelers and holder of the National tricycle track 5 miles record 10m.57s.) and the readiness of the Club to support law and order if in the interests of the pastime of cycling, for about 1924 the R R C had been formed to deal with the increasing number of races held by individual clubs, often on courses which overlapped and at the same time, causing congestion and confusion.

But all growth is not smooth necessarily and a curious proposal, to make anyone joining after 16 May 1933 ineligible for Club Records, Standards and Trophies, put forward



by Eric Walker and Cyril Lovegrove, then a further one to limit these awards to members who had attended 25 per cent Club Runs during the past 12 months, draws attention to attempts to retain a true Club Spirit, under pressure from amoral persons only interested in their own selfish ends who presumably felt they could win more awards by joining the Solihull C C as second claim members. Needless-to-say, this created a lot of ripples throughout the next year. Two visits to the MIDLAND COUNTIES DAIRIES LTD.; 24 hours ride to Symonds Yat and an invitation to Hubert Opperman to visit the Club HQ - (he had come over from Australia to attack Road Records Association records for B S A Cycles Limited getting the 12 hours with 243 miles and the London to York 9-23-0 in 1934. The following year he returned with E Milliken and W F Stuart who went for the tandem records); with the Gymkana and Gala being a tremendous success illustrates the broad nature of the Club's activities at this time. Amongst the names of new members in 1934 was one A R Dowson, who had attended the Birthday Run having been introduced by Dick Borneman, destined to play an important part in the future Solihull story.

1935 witnessed an event which although born of enthusiasm for cycling and the desire to help a good cause, caused a national furore, yet foreshadowed what was to happen 7 years later. A MASS RACE ON PUBLIC ROADS! The horror with which this happy event was viewed at the time can barely be understood today, but perhaps CYCLING's (13/5/35) report will help to recall it :

"AROUND THE HOUSES TRIAL IN SOLIHULL"

The Solihull C C held a 25 miles club event over a circuit of 5 miles in the streets of Solihull on Jubilee Day.

The event, an unpaced time trial, was part of the local Jubilee Carnival celebrations and was held under usual road riding rules. The police gave permission for it to be held and mapped out the course. There were 30 riders and the fastest time was returned by N Lees with 1-20-1.

Whilst we are the first to appreciate that the Solihull C C organised the race solely in order that local charities may benefit, it is to be hoped that holding time trials on public roads, even with public permission, will not become common features of all carnivals. The road game in the past has thrived without the limelight of dubious publicity from which only harm can accrue.

However, more farsighted observers took a less pessimistic view:-

"HIGH JINKS AT SOLIHULL" (Sport & Play, May 1935)

At Solihull there were happenings which in all my dreams I never saw. A Time Trial in a main street with police keeping the crowd back. Oh boy, what a sight for jaded cycling journalists! The Solihull C C had organised a T T round a course for five miles to be ridden five times.

The start and finish were in the High Street, Solihull, and the time if you please was just after noon. A loud speaker was installed so that the latest information could be imparted to the crowd: - "here comes Bill Smith doing 30 mph good lad", and that kind of talk. It was all amazing and exciting and I fell to wondering if ever road racing on bicycles would attain to such distinction. I was most amused to hear the police telling motorists to step on it and keep out of the way of the cyclists. Fancy that, Mr Hore-Belisha. Oh Solihull, your policemen are wonderful! In with the race was a tyrechanging competition, which same took place in the Square. Billy Burkill was the timekeeper and I'll bet he never thought he would be doing such a job in the main street of a highly respectable town.

I hand it out to the Solihull Club, they are nothing if not enterprising. Their Secretary is one of the most active I know, in fact the whole committee are alive to their jobs which naturally is to the good.

(Note: The Riders started at minute intervals and had numbers on armbands. The tyre changing in the Square was on the 2nd and 4th laps. - Ed).

Programmes cost 2d and showed 35 entrants, W A H Bailey on Scratch. Starter: Capt. Oliver Bird, and contained a Solihull C C membership form.

If we have regarded Tommy Hawks as sowing the seed, then Eric Walker was the gardener who nurtured it. He worked enthusiastically to ensure that the Club continued to develop, always coming up with new ideas; organising or smoothing over rifts in the otherwise steady progress. For example, what disagreements were hidden in the accepted resignations of Dick Borneman and G P Shelley (23 January 1935)? Dick does not remember the incident. Fortunately he was there in 1938 when needed, probably because Eric Walker had persuaded him to return to the fold. G P Shelley had disagreed with the rules governing the award of trophies but became a second claim member.

On 19 January 1936, the AGM elected Eric Walker an Honorary Life Member for services rendered to the Club, and appointed a new President, C F 'Charlie' Dawes Esq., proposed by a Vice President, J W Kinchin (who had been an Olympic Runner and directed a motor car showroom in Solihull), and a more suitable person could not be imagined. Founder of DAWES CYCLES LIMITED, once President of the Midland C & A C he was deeply interested in cycling and moreover a 'perfect gentleman' in the best senses of that phrase, presiding over the Annual Dinner and other public functions with a friendly but firm demeanour which radiated pride in the Club. By his own request Esq. disappeared from fixture cards as he wished to be known as Charlie.

Also in 1936, before National Championships had been instituted, the germ of an idea which had appeared in CYCLING, for an invitation event to try and get together the many 'local champions' up and down the

25th INVITATION SCRATCH 25
for the
B.S.A. TROPHY



- 1—E. Larkin (Hemsworth Wheelers)
1936—1-1-57
- 2—H. Earnshaw (Monckton C.C.)
1937—1-1-52
- 3—G. H. Fleming (Belle Vue C.C.)
1938—1-0-15 (Competition Record)
- 4—R. Dougherty (Leamington C. & A.C.)
1939—59-29 (Competition Record)

- 5—E. Leece (Lancashire R.C.)
1940—1-0-46
- 6—C. Cartwright (Manchester Clarion)
1945—59-48. 1947—59-13
- 7—B. B. Francis (Solihull C.C.)
1946—58-49 (Competition Record)
(1st ride inside 59 minutes)
- 8—G. Fell (Becontree Wheelers)
1948—59-15

The Birth of the
Solihull Invitation Scratch 25.

country, was seized upon by Eric and translated into fact by the Club promoting the first INVITATION SCRATCH 25 MILES TIME TRIAL. It was limited to riders having beaten 1 hour. 5 minutes for the distance and to quote Eric "We hope it will develop into a classic event and so help to bring our Club before the eyes of the sporting world". Indeed it did! Bernard Dickerson was the organiser and the winner Eddie Larkin (Hemsworth C C) recorded 1-1-57. Such names as H H Hill (Sheffield Phoenix) 1-2-9 in second place, and 'Shake' Earnshaw (Monckton C C) sixth in 1-3-15, destined to become national heroes, appeared in the results. The B S A Cycles Company presented a fine silver trophy, and the Club's own Wal Bailey was fourth, 1-2-57, beating Albert Burman (Warwickshire R C) fifth, 1-3-4, who became a famous cartoonist.

Wal had suggested a Club Cycle-Polo section and was showing interest in riding mass-start races. Along with Ken Topliss and Bernard Knight he rode the first official such event organised in this country, at Brooklands Motor Racing Track by Vic Jenner of the Charlotteville C C in 1936, and finished in the Isle of Man race.

A brief service, once a month at the Congregational Church, Solihull, was instigated at the suggestion of the Rev R M Goodfield (who had been a well-known Rugby player), to take place before the start of the Club Run.

The Birthday Ride to Yarningale Common followed by a party at the Club Room attended by 48 at which President C F Dawes cut the cake; a Birthday Dance; Fixture Cards of A and B Runs; Reliability Rides, members Frank

Jarrett, Eric Walker and Bernard Dickerson winning the Coventry Road Club's Reliability Trial for the third year in succession, all indicate the very strong spirit of fellowship which permeated the Club at this time and for many years to follow, that the "SOLIHULL SPIRIT" became a by-word amongst other clubs and received national acclaim, quote :-

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"One of the most remarkable clubs that have come into existence this last few years is the Solihull C C. From a few enthusiasts that Club has grown until at the present moment there are over 170 members and their programme of events during the season embraces everything; hill climbs, reliability trials, 50 in 4 for ladies, 100 in 8 for men, mixed tandem events and even a fishing contest with of course serious events at 25, 50 and 100 miles. When I perused their fixture card and balance sheet I was really amazed at the go-ahead methods adopted. The Balance Sheet, printed, shows a turnover of £193 and a substantial bank balance; a mutual accident fund from which grants are made to members who meet with mishaps, and a Building Fund approaching £100. This remarkable state of affairs is the result of the go-ahead methods of enthusiastic youngsters plus the foresight of men who know what is wanted. The moving spirits I believe are: the Chairman and Founder Members, Mr A E Hawks and the Honorary Secretary, Mr Eric Walker!!

(From a newspaper cutting 1935, probably SPORT & PLAY. - Ed).

The N C U became a limited company and the Cyclists Touring Club celebrated King George VI Silver Jubilee with a cycling relay ride round Britain, in the national sphere, 1935.

Ideas were forming for a Club magazine, as a result of a suggestion from the B S A Cycles Company offering to print such a publication if the Club supplied the copy. On 4 February 1936 Mr Dawes proposed that if Eric Walker could find the time he would be the right man for the job of editor. Eric willingly agreed, thus in April 1936 the first issue of the Club magazine appeared and as would be expected, with this organ of publicity, Club growth became even more spectacular.

Apart from the increase in membership to 180 in 1937, the idea of a Polo Team began to take practical shape with the appointment of Cyril Lovegrove as Polo Secretary.

In his first editorial Eric Walker quoted one of the Club's twenty Vice-Presidents, non-other than H H England (possibly the finest editor of the national magazine CYCLING): "Your activities thus far and particularly in 1935 have earned the support of all those interested in cycling, and I am pleased to find myself in the company of your Vice-Presidents".

The name of Fred Baker consistently appears in the magazine as an enthusiastic clubman who crowned his 1936 racing activities by winning the Club B.A.R. with times of 1-6-13 for 25; 2-19-30 for 50; 4-59-51 for 100 and 220 1/8th miles in 12 hours; all personal bests and the latter a Club Record. Fred is still racing today as a veteran, but no longer with the Solihull C. C., the war

having resulted in him moving to Carlisle where he continued to live on demob until retirement from work, going to live near Newcastle-on-Tyne. He remains most interested in the Club, one of the keenest "OLD SOLS".

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The magazine editor discussed suggestions by the Midland C & A C for changing the method of calculating the National Best All Rounder. This problem is still with us, as you cannot please everybody and it seems that the average speed over 50 miles, 100 miles and 12 hours is so simple and easy to follow so with all its faults it survives.

"A TANDEM TOUR IN GERMANY" by Der Englander, the nom de plume of Harry Sandford ('Sandy') a pipe-smoking enthusiastic tricyclist, brought the earliest whispers of events outside the cycling world. Sandy and John met the Hitler Youth and saw the Nazi black and red flags amongst the Olympic display.

The following year he toured the Black Forest and met with a lad whose father had been imprisoned for opposing the Hitler regime, also the greeting 'Heil Hitler' with upraised arm was common. At Freiburg he enjoyed a swim in some excellent baths built for the people but 'Jews were forbidden'. In his 1939 tour he mentioned, diplomatically, agreeing with a German cyclist he met up with that Hitler was a great man!, but wasn't convinced and was concerned by the arrogance of the Hitler Youths.

So soon these isolated whispers were to grow to a crescendo of complaint as Hitler's policies for Germany impinged upon Europe.

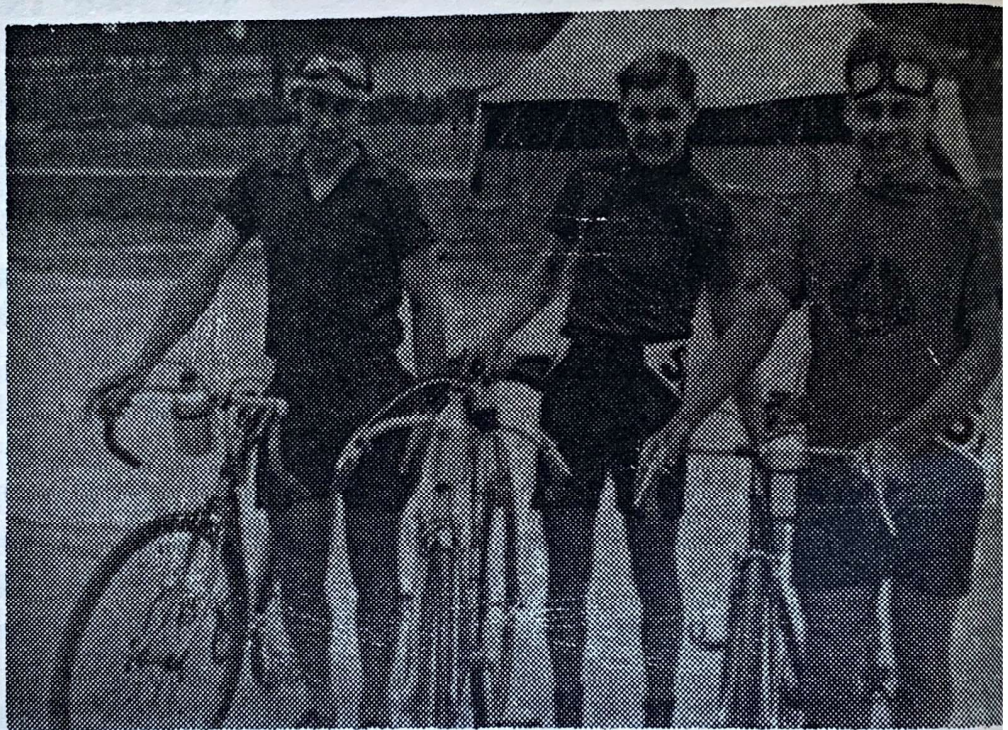
Meanwhile, the Invitation Scratch 25 'got off the ground' as its winners were unofficially regarded as the National 25 miles Champions, their names engraved on the beautiful B.S.A. Trophy. In 1937 'Shake' Earnshaw (Monckton C C) won in 1-1-52 with George Flemming second, A Logan (Vegetarian C & A C) third, E Higgs (Bristol South C C) fourth, and Harry Hill fifth 1-3-5. The following year saw Flemming take the top spot with a Competition Record of 1-0-15, described in 'CYCLING' as 'Poetry of motion' and later in the year he achieved an amazing 'under the hour ride' of 57 mins. in Ireland, so the event was stamped as a Classic as Eric Walker had hopefully predicted, this being reiterated by Dick Borneman (who had taken over from Eric as editor of the magazine in March 1938); - "I now look forward with keen anticipation to next year's event in the hope that someone will beat the hour for the distance -", and Ralph Dougherty (Leamington C & A C), a Midland rider did just that recording 59-29, Competition Record coming for the second time in succession to the Solihull C C event, now termed a classic by CYCLING, but this is overshooting our first decade.

Bernard Dickerson, an ex-A Section Captain raised the possibility of forming a bicycle polo team at the 1937 AGM held 17 January 1937, and Cyril Lovegrove became the driving force behind it. During 1937 Wal Bailey won the Golden Arrow 25 miles T T and backed up by Bernard Knight and Ken Topliss the Club won its first Open scratch team award that season. The newly formed Polo team of Alf Collins, John Jarrett, C Lovegrove, B Dickerson, Ken Bach and Eric Walker won the Birmingham Cycle Polo League in its first season, and decided to start a second team, The Nomads, as a kind of nursery but under the captaincy of Frank Jarrett.

Polo reports occupied a large part of the magazines during 1937, 1938 and 1939. The Nomads, Frank Jarrett, Fred Bond, Gordon Wheeler, Alec Worwood and Tommy Watkins started in the Birmingham Bicycle Polo League in 1937-38 season and rapidly emulated the first team ending up eighth at the end. A third team of Norman Lees (V.Capt), Eric Walker (Capt), Fred Baker, Ken Joyce, Arthur Houlston, and Harry Hitchcock was organised for the Summer Season and called The Aces. A driving force behind the League was Albert Lusty of the Midland C & A C, its President, who, along with Eric Walker, played a part in establishing a polo pitch at Catney.

During 1937 the retirement of Mr & Mrs Parry looked like leaving the Club without an H Q, but with his typical enterprise and enthusiasm for the Solihull, Eric and Freda Walker arranged to rent Oak Farm, Catherine-de-Barnes, and to continue catering to cyclists. This resulted in Eric having to give up as General Secretary for the following year, which saw the S C C a flourishing bush in full blossom. Fortunately, the "Gardener's" driving spirit was not entirely lost to the Club when a new name, Ron Dowson, took over the joint task of General Secretary and Treasurer. He had been prominent on committee and as a hard working member of the A Section with tandem partner Bob Cross almost since he had joined in 1934.

In 1938 Wal Bailey organised the N C U Birmingham Centre Mass-Start Championship at Donnington Park, where this form of 'continental-type' racing had become a regular Sunday morning event when the track was not being used for motor racing. A new member Bill Wyatt, came sixth in this his



Wal Bailey, Bernard Knight, & Ken Topli

The Club's first mass-start team.

Brooklands 1936