

ANFIELD CIRCULAR

JOURNAL OF THE ANFIELD BICYCLE CLUB

(formed March 1879)

www.anfieldbc.co.uk

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From left to right - Bill Graham, Geoff Sharp, Graham Thompson, Dave Bettaney, John Whelan, Phil Mason and, with his new bicycle, Matthew Thompson at Parkgate, 4 January.

Farndon floods



The 1950s postcard (left) shows the ancient bridge over the River Dee on the English - Welsh border at Farndon on a summer day. Summer days seem far off at present. Since before Christmas the bridge has almost been submerged thanks to the storms and floods that have been such a feature of this winter. The lower photos were taken following the club-run to the Griffin, Trevalyn, 15th February. Only two of the arches were visible - the water level having topped all the others. Upstream for ten miles to Overton Bridge and down to Chester the river has spread to over a mile in width in places.



~ Runs List ~

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Saturday runs (lunch at 1215hrs)

March	1	Cross Foxes	Overton Bridge
	8	Dysart Arms	Bunbury
	15	The Plough	Christleton
	22	The Druid	Llanferres
	29	The Buck	Bangor on Dee
April	5	Old Ma's Cafe	Gatesheath
	12	The Goshawk	Mouldsworth
	19	Britannia	Halkyn
	25/28	Scottish Weekend	Portpatrick (Stranraer)
May	3	Red Lion	Parkgate
	10	Committee Meeting	Coddington Parish Rooms (1130hrs)
	17	The Miners' Arms	Maeshafn
	24	Carden Arms	Tilston
	26	ANFIELD 100	HQ Shawbury Village Hall
June	31	The Plough	Christleton
	7	Cross Foxes	Overton Bridge
	14	Nets Cafe	Denhall
	21	Dysart Arms	Bunbury
	28	The Raven	Llanarmon-yn-Ial

CLOSING DATE FOR NEXT CIRCULAR: 26 May 2014

President: Bill Graham

Hon Secretary: Peter Catherall, 49 Elm Grove, Buckley, Flintshire, CH7 2LU

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Captain: Geraint Catherall **Editor:** David Birchall, **WCTTA Dinner 2013**

2013 - 2014 Subscriptions

21 and over £15; Junior £7.50; Family member £1; CTC 3rd party insurance £16 – by Standing Order

Hon Treasurer: Phil Mason

YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU

Please help with the Anfield 100 - 26th May 2014

Volunteers are urgently needed at Event HQ (Shawbury Village Hall), at the start and finish, and at marshalling points.

Please contact Chief Marshal Nigel Fellows

Attending the event were Geraint and Peter Catherall, Bill Graham, Keith and Pippa Orum and Geoff Sharp. The Dinner was followed by the guest speech and the award ceremony. Geraint received a Certificate for coming 10th in the BAR competition, but the star was David Williams of Fibrax Wrexham who had won so many cups and medals that he needed a lorry to take them home. In his winner's speech he said that his main aim for the season had been the Anfield 100 and to get a time under 4 hours (he did 3:56). This result provided his motivation for the rest of the season.

Pippa had been invited as a special guest for her work in designing the WCTTCA's medals, and at the end of the ceremony, she was presented with a bouquet of flowers. The show over, we bade our farewells and made our way home.

Peter Catherall

Committee Notes (Coddington Parish Rooms, 22 February)

- The Secretary had received an e-mail from the archivist of Cheadle Hulme School which was used as a hospital during WW1. One of the patients was J A Grimshaw, a member of the ABC. The school is organising a commemorative exhibition about WW1, and, having read some of the WW1 Circulars on-line, the archivist had learned about our member J A Grimshaw. We were delighted to provide photos and to throw more light on an outstanding racing man in the years before and immediately after the war.

He joined the ABC in April 1911, having previously been a member of the Cheadle Hulme Cycling Club. At the time his address was 'c/o Sir Frank Hollis, Bart, Greyfriars, Preston' where he worked as a Groom. During WW1 he was an ambulance driver. He suffered from trench fever - hence his stay in Cheadle Hulme Hospital. He died August 31st 1957. The obituary notice described him as a strong racing man who was well appreciated by his fellow members. Amazingly throughout his membership he was never referred to by his first names ('James Albert') - it was always 'Grimshaw', occasionally 'Grimmy' or (inevitably) 'Happy' or 'Appy'.

- **2014 100:** CTT have advised promoting clubs to purchase additional large traffic signs. Six have been ordered for key points on the 100 course. Also discussed was reverting to the longer Shawbury - Shawbirch - Espley circuit (three times round) to ease pressure on the timekeepers and finish marshals. Unfortunately a finish that is both safe and acceptable to local residents could not be found. It was agreed therefore to continue with the existing course (four times round a shorter circuit) as the finish is at a safe lay-by and well away from houses.
- **Amazing Anfielders project:** The digitisation is now more or less complete and work is on-going to catalogue the data, and place it all on-line. Jonny Sharp is assisting David Birchall with help on the web-site. The Club has been asked to give talks on the ABC's history - the most recent request coming from Manchester Metropolitan University who are organising a symposium on the impact of WW1 on Sports Clubs.
- **Subscriptions:** 17 members were in arrears in January and after contacting them, 10 have paid leaving 7 still owing. The Treasurer will be issuing a final reminder shortly.

Clubruns

The Goshawk, Mouldsworth

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7th December 2013

On this bright mild morning Geraint Catherall rode along the Millennium Greenway from Connah's Quay to Mickie Trafford, then through the lanes to Alvanley Hill and the Goshawk. He arrived just as the Editor, bound for Chester, was leaving, and just before the arrival of President Bill Graham.

Dysart Arms, Bunbury

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14th December 2013

After twenty five miles from Knutsford against a rising gale, the cosy Dysart Arms was a welcome sight. I locked the bike next to the Christmas tree by the front door and stumbled into the bar. Even more welcome, a voice said 'What will you have?' It was Nigel Fellows who, with Peter Catherall, had arrived just before me.

John Whelan was the next, and Geraint Catherall completed the party. We settled ourselves round a table in the lounge, where the walls are lined with books. My pint of Christmas special went down very well (thank you Nigel), as did the sandwiches. A fire crackled in the hearth at the corner of the room, and the conversation was convivial.

It was hard to leave, but outside a wintry sun was shining for the start of the homeward ride. Better still cycling in the lee of the Peckforton Hills we were sheltered from the wind, Geraint bound for Sychdyn, David Birchall for Christleton.

The Britannia, Halkyn

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21st December 2013

A wet Saturday morning, just what you need for a club-run. I usually take Peter to the club run but today he was indisposed.

The weather had picked up, sunny but windy. Too late to get the bike out though, as it was 1145hrs by then. I arrived at the Britannia to see Ben and Geraint with bikes and Jeff Lewis outside at the back of the pub. 'Be open in fifteen minutes', said Jeff. When we got inside, Jeff paid for our drinks (thanks Jeff, Merry Christmas) and we ordered food. Then we went back into the conservatory and the views over the Dee estuary. As we were talking Dave Bettaney turned up on his bike. Dave and Jeff have retired now, I told them they would find themselves busier now than when they worked (people find jobs for you to do ha! ha!). Anyway good luck to the both of them. A Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year to you all.

Nigel Fellows.

The Plough, Christleton

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28th December 2013

It was a crisp wintry morning, bright sunshine, pale blue sky, and, most welcome this season, calm for this enjoyable Christmas club-run.

First arrivals at the Plough were Dave Bettaney and Geraint Catherall who had ridden from Wales via the Chester Greenway and River Dee paths respectively. Tony Pickles also rode solo across the border, but he looked like he had worked himself over on the outrun. He also looked like he needed a back wheel home, although he had misgivings about returning via Farndon and Holt with Geraint, who, he protested, is fitter. For David Birchall and Club mascot Wilber it was a half hour brisk walk from one side of Christleton to the other; and the same back. Completing the party were Phil and Brenda Mason, Mike Hallgarth, John Whelan, and a supportive tribe of Twiggs - Mike and Pat, Stuart, Rebecca and Katie.

We all managed, more or less, to fit round tables in the bar, which made for a chatty and friendly couple of hours. "Here and Everywhere" was the motto of our founder members, and as if to honour it, though not necessarily as originally intended, the conversation flowed easily and widely - from Ken Dodd (performing his one-man show for John Whelan and his party and a house-full of others) at the Liverpool Phil - to the recent spring tides which washed flotsam and jetsam in large quantities across the Dee Marshes. We also learned that, such was the risk of flooding, that low-tech sandbag defences were deployed at high-tech low-lying Airbus. In between we were skiing in Aviemore, ordering extra club-kit, mountain biking in the Clwyds, riding sportifs in Macclesfield and South Africa, moving home at Christmas, and weighing in for cycle touring in New Zealand. It was a club-run I would not have missed for anything.

The Red Lion, Parkgate

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4th January 2014



High tide 3 January 2014 - Hilbre Island and the Dee Estuary from Hoylake promenade

One buff-bellied pipit, Siberian chiff-chaffs, twites, and egrets, plus many raptors great and small are currently on the Dee estuary. No wonder that Parkgate was crowded with twitchers, tripods, telescopes and cameras.

Very high spring tides have inundated the marshes recently, providing a food bonanza for raptors, as mammals flee the rising water, which explains the presence of so many owls and hawks. They and the buff-bellied pipit (a rare American stray, about the size of a thrush) in turn accounted for the presence of the bird-watchers and sightseers.

Sitting in the sand-bagged Red Lion overlooking the prom we had a grandstand view of today's approaching tide. We watched it move across the estuary from the Welsh side, covering more than five miles in an hour. Today, at its highest, the water just reached

the foot of the sandstone seawall. But Friday had been entirely different, with a westerly gale driving waves over the prom, which explained the sandbags.

Present were Nigel Fellows, Peter and Geraint Catherall, Phil Mason, Dave Bettaney, Ben Griffiths, David Birchall, Geoff Sharp, Keith and Pippa Orum, Graham Thompson and Mat (on his brand new blue bike, just like dad's), President Bill, and John Whelan.

It was an enjoyable and relaxed couple of hours in good company, the ideal way to celebrate the first club-run of 2014. Quote of the day came from Bill Graham who said he had not seen the buff-bellied pipit, but had passed several pot-bellied cyclists - too much Christmas pud perhaps.

Old Ma's Cafe, Gatesheath

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11th January 2014

On the 11th January the BBC celebrated the 60th anniversary of live broadcasting of its weather forecast, proudly claiming that 'the current four day forecasts are far more accurate than the one day forecasts made in 1954'. Cheered by this and the forecast for 'bright sunny periods', the Editor and I were looking forward to a good dry ride from Knutsford to Gatesheath with the sun on our backs. But this was not to be. Saturday morning started with heavy rain in East Cheshire and no immediate sign of it abating. There was nothing for it but to don complete weather proof gear and head west, albeit 45 minutes behind schedule.

We chose a well used route from Knutsford to Davenham through the back lanes of Plumley and Lach Dennis. At Davenham we picked up a cycle path alongside the A556, crossing the metal bridge over the River Weaver and then taking a muddy track towards Whitegate Golf Club. After passing the Clubhouse, the track opened up into a road which took us past a posh housing development to join the Whitegate road. Up the hill we headed for Tarporley via Oulton Park and Eaton. At last the sun came out. Looking back towards Knutsford, the clouds were still dark and heavy with rain.

From Tarporley we took the lanes towards Beeston Castle, arriving at Old Ma's muddied and wet, a little later than planned. Already eating were Geraint, Dave Bettaney, Jeff Lewis and his wife Jane, and Alex Young (a fellow Knutsfordian). Bill Graham was the last to arrive. The food at the cafe is good value, well prepared and tasty. The Editor seemed to get the deal of the day with a portion of beef stew that would have been enough for two men (though he was not prepared to share any).

After lunch, the Editor was mortified to see that his bike had a flat tyre. Further inspection revealed a massive hole in the inner tube and evidence of mouse droppings by the rim. (Or was it a rat?) No chance of a repair so a new inner was obtained before further rodent damage. At this point the Farmer sidled up to assess the situation and wondered whether it would be worthwhile him keeping a small stock of bicycle spares for anyone unfortunate to break down by the cafe ... I could smell another rat here.

Dave Bettaney, the Ed and I cycled back to Christleton along the lanes. Dave left us at Christleton and we rode a little further to meet Mary Birchall and mascot Wilber for the car journey back to Knutsford. A very enjoyable club run in spite of the poor start.

Alan Orme

The Druids, Llanferres

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18th January 2014

The sky was overcast though the rain was holding off as Nigel and I set off. As we neared our venue, we passed Geraint. Inside we ordered our food and drink, and very soon were joined by Geraint and David Birchall, and a short while later by Dave Bettaney. The last to arrive were Tony and Chris Pickles by car, but Chris had his mountain bike on the roof and was going to cycle home via Moel Famau.

Our discussions ranged from anomalies in the distances between a couple of the stage points in the "100", to the possibility of a day trip to Ulster whilst on the forthcoming Scottish weekend. Geraint was the first to leave followed some ten minutes later by the rest of us. It had now started raining but it proved to be a brief shower. As usual, the food at the Druids was excellent and the atmosphere was most welcoming.

Peter Catherall

Carden Arms, Tilston

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25th January 2014

The sun was shining as I set off to pick up Peter. We made our way to Tilston via Llay and Wrexham, and just had a five minute wait before opening time. It wasn't long before David Birchall turned up and then Geraint. The pub is very obliging, and the chef looked after us personally. We all had a nice meal and talk and finished at 1320hrs.

Homeward, we could see a very dark cloud was heading our way from the direction of the Welsh hills. Reaching the Holt / Wrexham road, we saw lightning rip across the sky and then the heavens opened and "the rain came down in stair-rods", as my Granny used to say. We were glad we were in the car. But David and Geraint were on their bikes however, quite a different matter altogether. I found out later David had sheltered at the Parish Rooms at Coddington, and Geraint at Farndon. Happily both got home safe and sound, thank goodness, as we did. Let us hope the weather is better next time.

Nigel Fellows

The first sign of something amiss had been a flash of lightning from cloud to cloud, a mile or two ahead, at which point wet weather clothes went on. Then the wind got up and a whitish mist swept down the road: hailstones sliced horizontally through the air like they had been blasted out of a shotgun. By now the lightning was much too close for comfort. A silvery orange ball of light exploded just to my right, and I'm sure I heard it cleave the air. I had also sensed it beforehand - the hairs on the back of my neck tingled. There was nowhere to hide and definitely no sheltering under a tree. Riding was scary - it was as bad a bit of weather as I've ever experienced on the bike. Half a mile down the road the porch of the Parish Hall at Coddington provided a safe refuge until the storm rolled away. My bargain Gortex jacket (£30 well spent at the Manchester Cycle Jumble) and over-trousers earned their keep.

DDB

The Pheasant, Burwardsley

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1st February 2014

On this blustery cold day no one supported the run. Which is just as well because the Pheasant was closed for refurbishment.

Nets Cafe, Denhall

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8th February 2014

I do try my best to get to local club-runs as there are not that many, and whether it is Parkgate, Neston or somewhere on the Marshes of Burton there is always a choice of routes and a choice of riding machines. Today I looked at the heavy clouds and decided

it was going to be a wet ride so the machine of choice was my trusty Stump Jumper and the route would be the Wirral Way through Caldy, Thurstaston and Heswall.

The Harp has stopped catering so the new venue was Nets Coffee Shop, Denhall Farm, with a reputation for all day breakfasts. I arrived as the others were leaving. The group consisted of John Whelan, Dave Bettaney, David Birchall, Keith Orum, Billy Graham and Jim Gibson from Scotland (Peter, Geraint and Nigel having already gone). With no time to stop, I rode with Keith and Jim to Neston.

Then it was back on to the Wirral Way, ploughing on through the deep puddles, avoiding the many pedestrians and dogs off leads back to West Kirby, Hoylake and home. A thoroughly enjoyable ride, a bit muddy and damp, and despite having missed out on the all day breakfast. But, hey, you can't have it all.

Chris Edwards

The Griffin, Trevalyn

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15th February 2014

The week was one of ferocious storms, and with more rain and wind forecast for Saturday it was another no-cycling day. There had been calms between the storms when cycling was a matter of taking a chance with the weather. Even so, a 25 mile ride on Thursday had proved to be something of an obstacle course. Trees were down, the lanes were flooded, and the clear up was in progress.

It is better to support club-runs by car than to absent oneself (not my quote but one from a century ago). So Dave Bettaney, David Birchall, and Team Pickles were present at the Griffin by car, with President Bill the sole cyclist. Bill had ridden a roundabout route to post a letter, and had been lucky to escape the worst of the rain.

Inside we found a corner in the lounge next to the fire. Over delicious sandwiches, we put the world to rights and learned that Chris was having problems with his new state-of-the-art mountain bike. A wobbly wheel bearing, and dodgy suspension - so the bike was in the car on the way back to the shop.

No one seemed in a hurry to go, especially when a glance through the window showed that the rain was back. 'Do you want a lift home Bill?' 'No thanks,' came the reply, 'it's only six miles direct'. But as we left, the rain was so heavy that common sense prevailed, and the bike was packed away in the car.

It was not straight home though, as we splashed to Farndon to look at the ancient bridge and the swollen River Dee.

Coddington Parish Rooms, Committee Meeting

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22nd February 2014

As we approached Coddington the lane became full of hounds and people on horseback. Yes, the Hunt was out in force. Attending the meeting were David Birchall, Peter Catherall, Dave Eaton, Chris Edwards, Nigel Fellows, Bill Graham, Ben Griffiths, Jeff Lewis, Phil Mason, and Team Pickles.

Official business over, we all tucked in to sandwiches and tea before making our ways home.

You should not count chickens before they hatch, but there was a hint of Spring today. Pleasant sunshine, snowdrops in the churchyard by the Parish Rooms and daffodils budding. It was a good day for cycling. Let's hope that warmer Spring-time weather will tempt more of us to dust down bikes and ride. Club-runs deserve better support.

ABC forum ...

Traditional Values (or how to create debate over a club-run beer on the relative virtues of frame materials)

from Rod Anderson

As I approached a recent 'significant birthday', it seemed fitting to mark the occasion with a new bike. An easy decision then, especially with the vast array of high quality bikes that are now available, plus the power of the internet to search, compare and drool. Of course, the decision was only made more fraught by such plenty. So where to start?

Over the previous few years I had been using a fairly good mountain bike fitted with road tyres as a day ride bike. It offered reasonable speed and comfort, and was great for cutting through the occasional bridleway. However, it was still pretty heavy and over engineered for such light duties so a road bike was needed.

In my earliest Anfield days, the aspiration was always for a 531 frame and as much Campagnolo as I could afford (i.e. none!). With plenty of local builders, it was likely to be a Harry Quinn or a Dave Lloyd. I never managed a new one, but to this day I still have a rather crumbly relic of a Harry Quinn frame that had done good service for Dave Bassett prior to my ownership. Then came along the whole concept of well specified bikes straight off the shelf. After a lump of a very early mountain bike, I made my first foray into the exotic with a carbon fibre Giant - very refined construction and beautiful tubes uncluttered by the need for lugs. However, after a few years it became bendy and stressed, and obsolete. Onwards then to aluminium, firstly with a Klein mountain bike with fancy suspension at both ends. Actually this was a great frame with very unorthodox forming of a main oval 'fuselage' and then all the flexi bits attached to a subframe: needless to say all the flexiness became worn out and obsolete but the aluminium did inspire the purchase of a steep framed Trek road bike. Thud - how dead aluminium can be! Although a pricey bike and very light, it was pretty unforgiving, even with carbon forks and as fat a tyre as I could squeeze in.

So the thirty-plus year journey of happy miles, needed to move into it's next chapter based on the best of the best. Yes, you might have guessed, it took me back to Reynolds and Campagnolo aspiration again. Both aspects came with big learning points. Firstly, what a shock to see how few frame builders are left - a small fraction of the old days, and quickly evident that it is a dying art that is lacking new apprentices. I eventually settled on Ellis Briggs in Shipley (being so convenient for Hampshire!), and then started the joy of angles, lugs, braze-ons, enamels and chroming. Great excitement. The Campagnolo part of the equation never quite worked out. For real availability, design and price, I have to concede that Shimano came up trumps with most of the groupset but the finishing touch was an outrageously expensive Brooks saddle with titanium rails.

So how about the final result - truly wonderful. Responsive, comfortable, rock solid on fast descents, and limited only by its rider on climbs. As I write, I have just done a fastidiously detailed 'Whelanesque' clean and polish and I am counting down the days to the next weekend riding day ... and the Anfield Circular has just arrived, so my day is complete!

Go Ride Events from Graham Thompson

Thought I would send you some pictures of the children at last summer's *Go Ride* events at Bebington Oval. They raced in age categories in a 1 lap TT of a grass track and then in a second race which was a handicap bunch race. The *Go Ride* events were run weekly on Monday nights through the summer by the Birkenhead North End CC and culminated in a prize presentation in September.

Matthew, Toby and Charlotte (right) had craftily worked out that if they took it easy in the time trial they would have a better handicap in the road race and more chance of glory in the sprint to the line! They all rode very well especially as the grass track required extra effort for the little ones on small bikes. Matthew racing in the 8 to 10 age group received a bronze medal, Toby in the under 8s a silver medal and Charlotte (aged 4 1/2!) a gold medal in the under 8 girls! To top it off the event was recorded in the Liverpool Echo along with a photograph of the prize presentation.

Many of the riders taking part look fantastic prospects for the future of cycling on the Wirral and it was a highly enjoyable experience for all involved.



Fun rides and a tour to Le Tour from John Moss

On 17th November in the South African summer heat, John rode a 94.5km "fun ride":

I got a free entry from Mitsubishi as Greg (Carina's partner) works for them. Also a free cycling shirt, which I will show off when in the UK.

It was very hot and I dehydrated even with two bottles and food. The ride was about 95km and I got round in 3hrs 57min. That was the problem - as I was close to four hours I decided to try and get inside 4. I was OK for 70km (my training was a total of 400km, longest ride 60km), then the legs gave up. The last part of the ride was the hardest, so it was a case of riding with my head trying to use a small gear on the hills. I checked afterwards $39 \times 23 = 45.8"$ I used to race on 42

x 21 so I think age is catching up, as I thought the problem was too big a gear, but now realise it was the legs that are now 'too small'.

The back of my hands are peeling from the sun burn on the bits which weren't covered by the gloves. I SAID NEVER AGAIN. Carina forced re-hydration drinks down me then I got cramp, really enjoyed the day. After a couple of hours I managed a beer, then the bar ran out! I had to go to the cycling club's area - they had plenty ...

John also reports he will be in the UK from 1 July to 21 August. To welcome him home, ***a club-run has been arranged to the Red Lion Parkgate for Wednesday 2 July.***

He is planning on taking in the UK stages of the Tour de France, and perhaps some of the French too - if you would like to join him let him know - mossj78@yahoo.com.

John assures us that the ABC's member for Northallerton, Jim Morton, has more or less an "open house":

I've booked the floor, then I hope that we can get a group to ride back. The idea is as follows:

Leave Northallerton for the Yorkshire Dales to Skipton and stay there. Next day over to the Trough of Bowland staying around Preston / Longridge. Third day through to Southport and down the railway line to Liverpool (it's now a cycling path from what I can gather on the internet). Stay in Liverpool, where anyone who hasn't ridden can come from the Wirral for an evening meal / drink.

Depending on how many "or few" are interested, we could get a large van/truck to collect the bikes and take them to Yorkshire in advance. Another idea depending on cost is a coach, taking people plus bikes.

John adds that Dave Jones would like to join in but would need a lift.

Weekday Rides 2014 - from Keith Orum

A reminder to members, several of us are regular visitors to the Eureka Cafe at Two Mills on Wednesdays between 12.30 and 2.00 pm, to take on fuel and exchange banter before the ride home. The Eureka is ideally located to inspire those of us who use a bicycle less frequently to make that determined effort in 2014 to fire up the enthusiasm which inspired the purchase of the 'Dream Machine' those years ago! The benefit now being local 'Cycle Paths' which bring us together from Mickle Trafford, Chester, Queensferry and the surrounding area, similarly, Neston and those who live on the Wirral.

In addition, there are thoughts of impromptu rides, whereby, three or four of us, given a week's notice, and weather permitting join up for a day out. Examples being, park the car in the Hawarden free car park 10am to leave 10.30am, ride over 'Worlds End' to Llangollen and back to the cars via the Horseshoe Pass. Another thought, park in Ruthin, ride to Denbigh and back to Ruthin via Cerrig-y-drudion. There are many routes for early season rides with possibly a lunch stop, not to forget the Cheshire lanes.

If you are interested, speak to Keith.

The Middleton Contingent from Phil Whitehead

There are four of us (soon to be six!) Anfielders based in the Midlands near to Sutton Coldfield. We started riding as a group about eighteen months ago and have regular Sunday outings in and around our 'patch'. We can have up to 20+ riders when the weather is good and we even managed to do regular Wednesday evening rides last year, eventually ending up at our 'HQ', The Green Man at Middleton. This is the village where most of us live.



We are a 'mixed bunch' in terms of age and experience. One rider has turned 70 (an ex-triathlete and member of the ABC) although the average age is probably about 45. There can be a strong contingent of women riders on the Sunday runs as well as a number of couples who have taken up cycling.

As well as completing in charity rides, we have organised a number of mini-tours including: Birkenhead to Middleton via The Horseshoe Pass, Kings Lynn to Southwold, and a week riding out from Puerto Pollentsia in Majorca. We just missed a meeting with Sir Brad at his favourite restaurant on that tour, but did chat to Roger Hammond who was very engaging and extremely modest.

People over the year and a half have upgraded their bikes and have started to become more serious about diet and training. Some riders have invested in rollers and in the local gym. At the moment we are planning a number of mini-tours and we are seriously thinking about riding again in the sun in the Autumn.

If any Anfielders pass down this way, do get in touch. We would be delighted to see you. We also intend getting up to The Wirral for some Saturday club rides and look forward to seeing fellow club members.

Phil Whitehead

The photo above (Phil Whitehead third from left) is at the Cyclists' War Memorial, Meriden, near Coventry. Famous Anfielders W P Cook and Percy Beardwood took leading roles in the fund-raising and the successful national campaign to build the memorial. The unveiling, in May 1921, was performed by the Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain (Lord Birkenhead) and the dedication carried out by the Rev B G Bouchier in the presence of a crowd of twenty thousand cyclists. The ceremony was captured on film by Pathe news. The ABC made a weekend of it, riding from Liverpool to Meriden and back. The party stayed at Crackley Hall, the home of Anfielder Lord Kenilworth, an outstanding racing man in his day, known to his Anfield pals as "Jack" Siddeley. The report of the weekend suggests that the Anfield party was memorably wined and dined at his Lordship's residence.

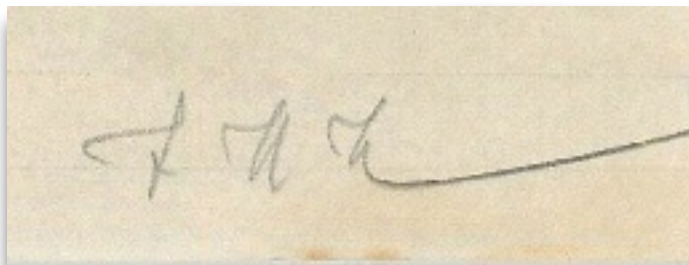


F H Koenen 1896 (top), racing at Belle Vue track Manchester 1890 (middle), and "The Amsterdam Birds of Passage" - Frederik Koenen in centre (lower)

The Anfield's Flying Dutchman

by David Birchall

The starting point for this article was a faded letter written in shaky pencil headed “*in bed after heart attack*”, discovered as part of the **Amazing Anfielders** digitisation



project. The letter and its envelope postmarked 1938 were lucky finds. The letter to fellow Anfield BC member Bob Leigh Knipe was signed with barely legible initials deciphered as “FHK”. We had found a link to Frederik Hendrik Koenen (pronounced Koo-nen) who died 23 December 1946.

Reading his obituary we now understood why the ABC archive included cuttings and photos of Dutch penny-farthing riders and early track racing at Belle Vue Manchester. Koenen's distinctive handwriting confirmed their origin. Then in one of the unsorted boxes of manuscripts came another discovery: the first, abandoned, attempt to record the early history of the Club. The documents were written at the time of the Club's Diamond Jubilee in 1929. Amongst them were notes about the development of the bicycle in the 1880s and 1890s from the “Ordinary” to the “Rational”, annotated in Koenen's unmistakable hand. Whilst there are excellent books about the history of the “Ordinary” bicycle - and Koenen refers to his own copy of “Badminton” - to find this first hand account is a delightful link to a man who rode the machines.

Amazing Anfielder Frederik Hendrik Koenen was known as the “Flying Dutchman”. Born in Haarlem, Holland, in 1866, he came to Manchester in 1887, where he worked as a shipping merchant. He married a Salford girl (Louisa Wood) in 1891, raising a family of one son and three daughters in the family home at Hazel Grove and later Stockport. He joined the Anfield BC in 1895.

He had learned to ride in Holland whilst still at school, and by 1886 he had won his first track race in Amsterdam. As a path racer in England he was very successful too, at Belle Vue (Manchester) winning three races in one afternoon:

In those days the general public flocked to race meetings and “F.H.”, with his debonair air, striking appearance and good sportsmanship, became very well known and popular. The track frequenters called him “The Flying Dutchman”.

He also raced on the road, with success. As an Anfielder in 1896, with D H Simpson, he held the 50 miles and 100 miles Paced Tandem records - in 1899, with J V Marchanton, the Unpaced 50 Tandem record - later in the same year the Paced 50 miles Single Bicycle record, and again in 1901, the Paced 50 miles Tandem record with W R Oppenheimer.

Oppenheimer, reminiscing about the 1901 event, later recalled how he had visited Koenen “*at his place of business*” to discuss “*the projected tandem attempt on record*”. They walked to a nearby pub for lunch: “*In my mind's eye*”, said Oppenheimer, “*I can see him now - a billy-cock [bowler] hat, a morning coat over a black jersey - and cycling pants and shoes*”.



In all things Frederik Koenen was an individualist - *“He wore what he liked and put such gadgets on his machines as he thought fit ... but always there was a good reason for the departure from convention and chaff did not move him to change”*.

He was “clubbable” too: *“Always a charming companion, he shone in the entertainments held under Club auspices, his recitations, delivered in his inimitable style, bringing down the house”*. And, as an *“authority on English roads and historic remains he had the faculty of peopling them and bringing before the mind’s eye the daily life that had been lived in them”*.

It strikes me that Frederik Koenen would have been a good friend. But until the ***Amazing Anfielders*** project, his place in the Club’s history was unknown to current members.

During his cycling career he amassed a large collection of newspaper cuttings and books on the sport. Although there is no record of what happened to these after his death, at least some appear to have found their way into the ABC archive.

From Ordinary Bicycles to “Faciles” and “Kangaroos”

Throughout the 1880s and 1890s change and innovation in bicycle design was very fast. Bicycle makers and component manufacturers attracted the best engineers in pursuit of the goal of creating reliable and quick personal transport. Fortunes were made and lost in a technological race which culminated with the invention of the internal combustion engine, motorised bicycles and tricycles, and the car.

Koenen began by charting the twists and turns in the evolution of the “Ordinary” bicycle. Having raced penny-farthings on the track, it is evident he knew as much as the makers about the strengths and weaknesses of their machines. “Roadsters” were

heavier but stronger on rough road surfaces than those built for Path racing. As a result, riders who made the mistake of racing light Ordinaries on the road *"had their troubles with saddles, tyres, and broken backbones"*. In the quest for reliability, weight reduction, and speed, makers experimented. Improvements included *"larger back wheels ("slightly affected cornering on the track"), easier saddles and springs, and improved steering"*. Ball bearing heads *"then classified as 'Stanley heads' or 'American heads'"* improved handling, but were either *"too clumsy"* or *"too light for wear"*.

Others sought a way to build a safer *"much lower machine with less chance of headers"*, like the lever operated *"Facile"*, or the chain driven *"Kangaroo"*. Koenen owned a Regent *"Kangaroo"* which retained the rotary pedal action of the Ordinary *"by gearing the front wheel up to a chosen height"*. But it was far from a success: *"Its fault was that it was bound to have two chains, one for each pedal, and the slack of each chain was not taken up until the next half stroke - the slack acting always with a jerk"*. Koenen's verdict: *"The Kangaroo never possessed the virtues of the Facile which it was meant to replace"*.



Tinkering with the design of the Ordinary proved an evolutionary dead-end, and towards the end of the 1880s *"makers were giving all their attention to Safety bicycles"*, which had become much more viable on rough surfaces after the invention of *"the Pneumatic Tyre"*, which Koenen considered *"a complication"*.

"The first failure in the Attempt at a tandem bicycle"

The development of machines for two riders followed as convoluted a path as that for the bicycle. As a tandem specialist, Koenen recorded how early attempts invariably ended in failure. M D Rucker (venture-capitalist, sometime owner of the RY Britannia, and a member of the Anfield BC in the 1880s) tried linking two penny-farthing drive wheels with a tube and two saddles. But they led only to *"Falls and Spills"*. Subsequent efforts were little better: the machines were often uncontrollable, with inevitable consequences.



"The supposed Tandem Kangaroo"

Leading the race in tandem design were Hillman, Herbert & Cooper of Coventry. In 1886 Koenen was one of six riders the company invited to test their latest machines at a track race meeting in the Hague. Three variants were tested:

- A) *front steering by the front rider,*
- B) *rear steering by the rear bar, and*
- C) *joint steering by interconnecting the two handle bars.*

They had not previously been ridden in competition, and so Koenen (on the dual steerer) was able to lay claim to be *"one of the six oldest tandem performers ON EARTH"*.



“Tricycles and Tandem Tricycles”

Anfield riders were well acquainted with racing tricycles and tandem tricycles. G P Mills and Lawrence Fletcher had both set records on singles and tandems, and *“in 1890 the Brothers Siddeley rode what was then the last word”*.

Innovations included replacing direct drives to the two axles with differentials and gearboxes. Humber & Lambert discovered that placing one rider in front of the main axle *“made steering child’s play”*. Koenen commented: *“Demand grew enormously and the Premier Factory of HH&C made the machines under license side by side with Humber”*. He owned one himself:

“and though [the machine was] not the latest word, the author spoke the last word in keeping it in his bedroom and proving the ease of detaching it in four portions, carrying it upstairs piecemeal:

(Stage) 1: The backbone, with its back-wheel and rear-man’s saddle;

(Stages) 2 and 3: The two 36 inch side wheels;

(Stage) 4: The combined main axle with head, front seat, and 2 sets of chains and pedals, and two chain-stays.”

He added: *“It was this latter combination that put the owner on his metal, half way down the stairs.”* It was also just as well he was not yet married.



An Appreciation

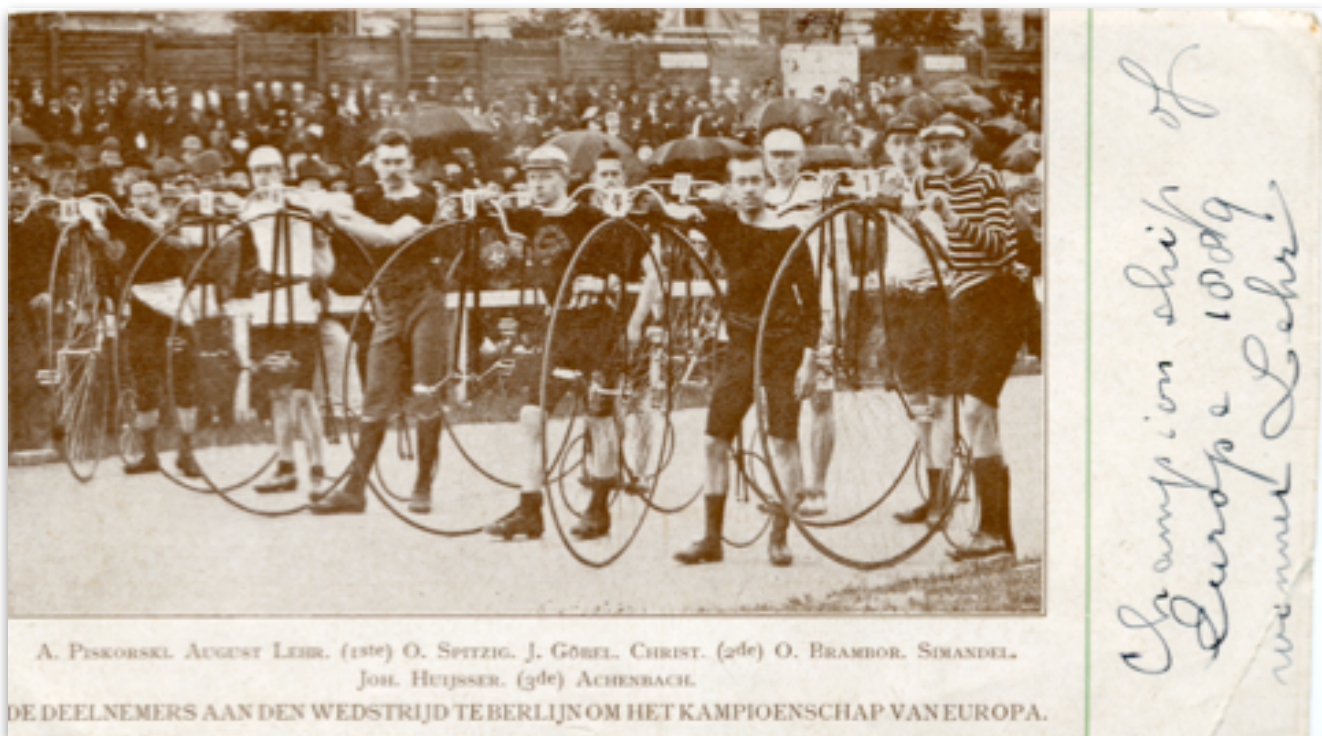
The story of the bicycle has been well documented in the ninety years since Koenen committed his thoughts to paper. In addition, “Badminton”, to which Koenen frequently refers, charted the rapid changes in cycling technology through the 1880s and 1890s as they happened. What makes Koenen’s reflections so fascinating is that they are based on personal insights and first hand experience of riding and racing the machines as they evolved.

In old age Koenen’s life was blighted by poor health making *“it impossible for him to continue to ride, and in his last year or so his activities of all kinds were cut down”*. Nevertheless his enthusiasm for cycling was undiminished. The last word, as Koenen himself might have said, goes to his friend and tandem partner, W R Oppenheimer, recalling their 1901 record ride:

“It was a paced fifty and there was a triplet out to help, steered by a man by the name of Buck, but it was no damn good, it never really got going! F.H. was in the rear seat, but do you think he would allow me to steer the tandem - not a bit - coming to any corner he would lean out, violently, and literally heave the machine over in the required direction. At the time I must confess it was somewhat disconcerting to the nominal steersman.”

Oppenheimer concluded: *“When I knew him F.H. lived for cycling. He was a great ‘character’. Long may his memory live.”* Now, thanks to the **Amazing Anfielders** project, Oppenheimer’s wish has been fulfilled: Keonen’s memory is now recorded for posterity.

Images from Frederik Koenen's collection



"The Championship of Europe 1889 (Berlin) - won by Lehr - then mile champ of England"



"Scratch race in Amsterdam 1889, won by Roosdorp"



"The 1st 100km scratch race in Germany won by J H Adams of London"



5000m tricycle race Nijmegen, 1890