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THE ARRIVAL OF THE BICYCLE IN SURREY

A Talk Given by Les Bowerman at the Open Meeting on 12/11/81

The object of the talk was not to trace the technical development of the bicycle, or the history of cycle racing or the cycling clubs, but to try to evoke the atmosphere of the times, particularly in this locality.

Generally, increasing prosperity in the 1850's and 1860's meant that wage earners in both town and country were better off than ever before, and the fact that there were no great wars for 100 years after Waterloo caused a general feeling of happiness and a belief in the inevitability of progress. By 1840 railway locomotives were capable of 70 mph, the SS Great Britain of I. K. Brunel was built in 1843, and the Great Exhibition in Joseph Paxton's "Great Glassen House" took place at Crystal Palace in 1851. There was primary education for all by 1870. Bank holidays in 1871, and the early closing of shops, meant that wage earners had more leisure, but there were still child chimney sweeps in 1875 despite Kingsley's "Water Babies" and the Act of 1864.

So far as transport generally was concerned, the heyday of water transport was in the 1830's-1840's (ave. speed 2 mph as opposed to 3-4 mph on foot). Eighteenth century investment in Turnpike Trusts improved the trunk roads, and from 1818 onwards Macadam's graded stones, with the smallest on top hammered down to form a watertight surface, consolidated by hooves and metal tyres meant that the main highways had been made satisfactory for the stage coaches which held sway from the 1760's until made obsolete by the railways in the 1840's. The last coach through Guildford was in 1849, although the "New Times" ran from 1879-1891. So by 1850 the great highways were relatively deserted, local horse traffic being ancillary to the railways.

The stage was thus ready for the coming of self propulsion. In 1870/71 Kilvert wrote "When the Queen comes over from Windsor to Claremont she drives at a great pace all the way, 12 miles an hour" for the 18 miles. It was slightly faster on horseback. With all the technology available for the construction of steamships, railway engines and stage coaches, it seems ridiculous that unless it was convenient to travel by rail, even the wealthiest were restricted to 12 mph by any other means.

Apart from a recently discovered Leonardo drawing of what is apparently a two-wheeled machine, the quest for self propulsion really began in the middle of the 17th century, leading to cranked axles on three and four-wheeled machines or two-wheeled machines to bestride and kick along (from 1819 known as Velocipedes). One rider beat a four-horse coach to Brighton. The fashionable craze of the 1820's for hobby- or dandy-horses waned, but experiments continued. In 1839-40 Kirkpatrick MacMillan rode 70 miles from Dumfries to Glasgow on a hobby-horse which he had built with treadles providing the drive to a cranked rear axle. But Scotland was then very remote and the machine was almost unknown outside its place of origin.

Over the Channel in Paris, Pierre Michaux, a blacksmith, manufactured perambulators, invalid carriages and three-wheeled velocipedes. In 1861 a hobby-horse was brought into his workshop for repair. His son Ernest tried it, complained of tiredness, and father suggested fitting handles like those of a grindstone to the front axle. Two bicycle velocipedes were made in the first year, 142 the next year and 400 by 1865. Michaux therefore became the first commercial producer of pedal-driven bicycles. In 1865, the Olivier brothers began to buy him out and in 1867 were selling their own high quality machines (polished aluminium bronze, wheels in a choice of six

different woods, handle grips of carved ivory, and grease cups) under the style of Compagnie Parisienne des Velocipedes. The speaker's French-built velocipede of about that date was at that moment ridden through the hall.

What was known as velocipedomania followed, with exports to America, and from there to Liverpool where at the end of 1867 the Liverpool Velocipede Club was formed. The first Michaux-type velocipede is believed to have been brought into this country from France in 1864, and these machines (soon to be known as boneshakers) were first produced in England in 1868 or shortly before.

1869 was the year when the bicycle craze hit the country in much the same way that "skate-boarding" was to do so many years later. The county reaction is perfectly encapsulated in the "Surrey Comet" for that year. Typical extracts follow:

"16th January - The Rage for Velocipedes - The Prince Imperial of France is learning to ride ... in the reserved garden of the Tuileries ... This machine of solitary locomotion, now the rage of Paris ... The resuscitation of this toy ... An expert velocipede can do ten miles ... quicker than he could walk them, and therefore we do not see why velocipedes which cost less than a very bad horse and eat nothing, should not be useful.

"30th January - At the Liverpool Gymnasium there has been formed a velocipede club ... No just cause why velocipedes should not come into use ... The rider ... can with great ease travel ten miles within the hour ... Perhaps we shall soon see our bank clerks, etc coming into town of a morning at velocipede speed ... The time may come when suburban railways and omnibuses will have to contend against the competition of this new mode of locomotion.

"20th February - The Rev. Henry Ward Beecher recently said ... a new machine bound to play a prominent part in the category of amusements - a toy to some, an instrument of pleasure and great use to others.

"27th Feb. - As the Spring advances and the Summer comes on we shall no doubt have a frequent exhibition in the shape of - I suppose that would be the word - velocipedists. Three gentlemen have done the journey from Trafalgar Square to Brighton, each bestriding his two-wheeled velocipede ... but we hardly know how to speak of the new vehicle yet.

"27th March - A bicycle race ... is to come off on Saturday week at Birkenhead.

"24th April - Report of a visit to a Velocipede Riding School ... It seems reasonable to expect that this peculiar form of locomotion will increase, and that it will in time be no more singular to keep a velocipede than to carry a walking stick.

"1st May - Quite a new department of manufacture has sprung up, and the makers of velocipedes are all high busy. The new vehicle is now frequently seen in the suburbs, and we have also had a display of water velocipedes on the Thames.

"8th May - A turnpike collector was summoned before the Romsey Magistrates for illegally demanding and receiving the sum of 2s 6d as toll for a velocipede Velocipedes ... best fitted to the young and active ... not recommended to those who have passed 40 years Absurd though it may at first seem, I should not wonder if the velocipede mania may

have beneficial effects in time by saving the country and mission clergy the cost of keeping horses ... What now seems a folly for the vain and frivolous may become a useful means of rapid communication.

"22nd May - Four professional velocipedians had a race on two-wheel bicycles (sic) for a sweepstake of £10, at Streatham Common.

"5th June - Between the 2 great race days at Epsom there was a capital lot of races at the Crystal Palace on velocipedes in which it was pretty clearly shown that the French are at present rather superior to us both in manufacturing and riding these new toy-vehicles; but it was also agreeably proved that Englishmen can make and manage them ... 10 miles an hour was a pace that was frequently reached ... They are gradually coming into use, though still very slowly ... Velocipedes are quite a feature of this year's exhibition (at the Horse Show), but there is not much to look at in a velocipede without its rider, or driver.

"12th June - Riding hogs through the streets is recommended as a preparatory practice for managing a velocipede ... Advert: Samuel Fry & Co. 9 Surbiton Park Terrace have taken an agency for bicycle velocipedes ... 34" driving wheel 8 gns, 36" 10 gns ... polished steel springs, gun metal bearings, pig skin saddle, polished rosewood handles, patent balance pedals, & powerful brake" (sic) .

"19th June - Whether velocipedes will ever come into vogue as ordinary locomotive vehicles is rather doubtful, but their use, for amusement and pleasure is increasing. Along suburban roads may now often be seen the velocipede distancing omnibuses and keeping up tolerably well with cabs, though the smart butcher's boy with his fast trotting pony easily passes the bicycle ... Many large establishments are now selling velocipedes as fast as they can be made and their practising grounds have become quite a feature of London ... The manufacture of velocipedes has become quite a new branch of trade, and working men who have turned their attention to 'the toy of the hour' as it has been called, though it bids fair to become something more, earn good wages.

"3rd July - It is now becoming quite common to see velocipedes in the streets of London.

"7th August - ... in these days of velocipede wonders the following excursion may be considered the greatest feat yet accomplished ... - In America - 500 miles inside 50 consecutive hours.

"4th September - Why the bicycle keeps upright.

"18th September - Across Niagara on a bicycle.

"6th November - Blondin is again at the Crystal Palace ... he crossed the centre transept on a bicycle in midair, the only support being a tight rope.

"4th December - Liverpool magistrates have decided that a bicycle is a carriage, and have fined a young man for driving one on the pavement. Very proper, too ... It was long ago decided that velocipedes must keep to the road. They are now becoming too numerous, by the way, that something else should be decided - that they should carry lamps."

So there it was - 1869 covered the whole gamut from initial wonderment at the new craze to the routine criticism which is still familiar today.

By the end of that year Velocipedes were on sale and for hire in Guildford as an advertisement in Hooke's Almanack of 1870 shows. They were not crude individual copies of the French machine, but skilfully produced by London engineers. The Guildford Museum specimen is most likely one of these, in spite of the long-standing suggestion that it is of Guildford coach-building make. The date of 1869 attributed to it is therefore about right. A photograph by Lewis Carroll of his brother on one, apparently at The Chestnuts, could be another one of those sold in Guildford.

John Keen, initially an apprentice carpenter in Surbiton, rapidly became a key figure. The "Surrey Comet" reported on 29th January 1870 that "J. Keen of Surbiton Hill competed with J. Johnson of Kensington in a bicycle race over a mile course. The former was defeated easily, owing in great measure, if not entirely, to the driving wheel of his machine being two inches less in diameter than that of his opponent's Paris-built bicycle. Keen's was his own make, Johnson's too had the advantage of India rubber tyres ... The race came off at Fairmile, Esher, but was not on a good piece of ground. There was a numerous company to see the race and the velocipedists mustered in great force." In April 1871 Keen's speed over 5 miles at the Surbiton Hill Track was over 15 mph (cf. Queen Victoria's 12 mph to Claremont). He set up records at all distances and became the finest professional all-rounder. By 1876 he was world champion at 50 miles with a speed of about 17 mph. The British Amateur 4-mile Championship at the Lillie Bridge Track at West Brompton was won on Keen machines for 6 out of the 7 years 1871-77. His friend, F. V. T. Honeywell of Surbiton Park Terrace, Professor of Music and organist of Kingston Parish Church, won the event on a Keen bicycle in '72, although he was also noted as a long distance rider. In August '71, Keen won a 1-mile handicap race at Lillie Bridge against Mr J. Smith's well known pony Black Bess and a running man. Keen's bicycle, of his own make, had a 42" wheel and was therefore a transitional model midway between the velocipede and the high bicycle (in lay terms Boneshaker & Penny Farthing respectively).

Interviewed by the "Bicycling Times" for its edition of 1st January 1880, Keen claimed that he had invented the cone-centred steering head, roller bearings (1871), the direct spoke, the hollow fork (1876), the lever brake acting on the front wheel, and the "rat-trap" pedal (so called because somebody said it looked like one), and the toe clip. Not all of that has been substantiated, but Caunter in the Science Museum publication "The History & Development of Cycles" agrees that he built higher and lighter than anyone else had previously thought possible. The spur for his competitive and technical success may well have been that initial defeat on the Fairmile.

To be continued

ORNITHOLOGICAL REPORT

November: Papercourt's "bird of the year" award went to a first year glaucous gull which spent November 11th on "Manor" Lake. Throughout November pochard were building up in numbers, reaching 184 by the 23rd. Shoveler were present in small numbers: a sparrowhawk was regular in the area, as were 300 Canada Geese; lapwings reached a peak of about 800.

December was remarkable for its weather early on and its birds later: Wigeon were a main attraction after the cold spell with up to 30 by Christmas and a flock of about 60 on the 30th: three immature cormorants took up residence on one of the electricity pylons: siskins, snipe and little owl were all seen on the 19th with a massive influx of fieldfares: the bird of the month was a bittern which spent Boxing Day at Pembroke House totally eluding all the local birders.

David Nurney

CHANGE IN THE PARISH - PART 2.

The article in Newsletter No. 33 by L. G. B., commenting on the closure of some village shops of long standing in the 1960's and 1970's, served as a reminder that this is not the only facet of parish life which has slowly and quietly undergone considerable change during that period.

Agriculture in the parish in the 20th century has never been solely in the hands of the working family farmers, known generally as yeomen. Owing to its proximity to the Capital in an area favoured as the residence of professional and business persons, some farmland has always been in the hands of farmers who looked on their farms as an amenity, and who did not derive their main income from them. However, from the 1960's to the late 1970's several hundred acres of farmland have passed into other hands for other uses. With the dispersal of the last remains of the large estates of the Earls of Lovelace and Onslow, a condition of potential fluidity was created. The deaths of the Durmans, father and son, at Bridgefoot and Ryde Farm, the Hunt family at Holride, the Humphrey brothers at Grove Heath, W. A. Secrett at Heath Farm and W. L. Keene at Gosden Hill have contributed to a considerable acreage being put to other uses. The retirement of J. Royle at Jury Farm (his hobby was schooling a couple of hunters each year and with one of these "Nickel Coin", he won the Grand National in 1953), of M. R. Claydon at Dedswell Manor in 1978 and of J. Oliver at Send Court Farm in 1979 added to the considerable list with a total approaching 3,000 acres or perhaps in excess of it.

It may be of interest to consider a few of the outside pressures which have absorbed this land. A large proportion is in the hands of a titled international caterer and hotelier, a West End restaurateur, a broker at Lloyds and several other insurance and institutional concerns, investment companies and speculative developers. The needs of motorway construction and building in general have led to more mineral extraction and more land designated for mineral extraction, albeit a main condition of extraction being consequent refilling and reversion to farmland. From the affluent society have emerged many whose ambition and pleasure it is to own a children's pony or a light hack, and the parish seems at present congested by these establishments.

It is likely that the parish will experience further erosion of farmland in the future. A building boom will break out again some time and planning applications at present refused will be resubmitted. It is pleasant to remember that in the midst of a not inconsiderable upheaval in this small piece of countryside in recent years, one yeoman farmer remains immovable. This is of course Mr David Gribble, who has followed his grandfather, father and uncle at Papercourt, one of the ancient manors of the parish.

Mr C. HOLEHOUSE

With the death of Mr Charles Holehouse of Send Road, the parish loses someone with a special claim to fame. A regular soldier in his younger days, he served in the Brigade of Guards and was one of the six Bearers at the funeral of King George V in 1936. Although not a member of this Society, he was well known and had many friends in the Society.

THE CLANDON CARRIAGE DRIVE

Les Bowerman referred to the road which bounded the Western side of Burnt Common in his article in Newsletter No. 40. This road is not the present Clandon Road, but runs parallel and about 100 yards West of it, and was from the 18th century the carriage drive from Lord Onslow's mansion in Clandon Park to his lodges on the Portsmouth Road. (These lodges, now removed to another site, were the birthplace of George Snelling, an old Send resident and uncle of A. V. and E. A. Bedser, the Surrey cricketing twins.)

That this road is of some antiquity, and not the Clandon Road, is borne out by its forming the boundary of Burnt Common, a feature of the Manor of Send and Ripley and the Manor of West Clandon, from the mediaeval period. But may not this road be earlier? Ivan D. Margary, MA, FSA, farmer, geographer, historian and archaeologist, benefactor extraordinary to the Surrey, Sussex and Kent Archaeological Societies, and the foremost authority on the Roman Road Systems in Britain, thought so, and set out his opinions in "Roman Ways in the Weald" (Foreword by O. G. S. Crawford); Phoenix House, London, 1948, 2nd Ed. 1949. Here he traces the course of the Farley Heath Spur from the Roman Stane Street at Rowhook through Ewhurst and Winterfold in various stages of decomposition, by the scatter of road metal, the slight aggers and the lines of ancient hedgerows, and finally loses the alignment near the Roman Temple on Farley Heath. Then, with the experience of the leading authority on Roman Roads in Britain, he continues to trace a continuation of the road as a heath track over Albury Heath, across the Tillingbourne Valley, to the ascent of Newlands Corner by a primitive zigzag much on the line of the present A25 trunk road. Here the track descends the North slopes of the Downs to enter Clandon Park close to Leoni's great ~~Palladian~~ Mansion of 1713-29, and proceeds along the line of the 18th century carriage drive, across the entrance to Dedswell Manor to the Portsmouth Road at Burnt Common Crossways, which he considered a Romanised (or earlier) track from the Hogs Back and Guildford to London. He cites Stratford Bridge, Stratford Farm (Ripley) and Street Cobham as Anglicised Roman place names on this road. Margary's untimely death in 1976 prevented further work and speculation on this subject, but the whole chapter has a ring of considered authenticity.

This may be an opportunity to remind members that Margary did not subscribe to the ideas of Watkins set out in "Old Straight Track" (1911) or by Hippisley Cox in "The Green Roads of England" (1914), and usually referred to as "Lay Lines". O. G. S. Crawford (and when the history of archaeological progress in the first half of the 20th century is written, Crawford will probably head the list of those making the greatest contribution to the advancement of the discipline with his pioneer work in aerial photography before and after his term as first Archaeological Officer of the Ordnance Survey) was of the same opinion as Margary, and scathing in his remarks on these "crazy" ideas in "Archaeology in the Field" (Phoenix House, 1953), page 269. A somewhat kinder warning is given by E. S. Wood, President of the Surrey Archaeological Society, in "Field Guide to Archaeology in Britain", Collins' 3rd Edition 1973, page 338. With the views of these authorities the writer wholeheartedly concurs.

This then is the present state of knowledge concerning the Clandon Carriage Drive. Perhaps it is a subject one of our members may care to work upon.

J. Oliver

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, 25th February ... 7th Annual General Meeting of the Society at 8 p.m. in the Church Room, Send Road. The meeting will be followed by an illustrated talk by our member Bob Claydon based on his agricultural experiences.

Thursday, 18th March ... Open meeting at 8 p.m. in the Church Room, Send Road, when Mrs Mary Alexander, Assistant Curator at Guildford Museum, will give an illustrated lecture on the History and Archaeology of Guildford's 13th Century Dominican Friary.

Last Week in March ... Evening visit on a date yet to be fixed to attend the Court Leet of the Manor of Stockbridge, Hants, by kind arrangement with Professor Rosalind Hill, the Lady of the Manor. Since numbers may have to be restricted, members wishing to go should make their interest known to our Secretary, Les Bowerman, as soon as possible.

Thursday, 15th April ... Open meeting at 8 p.m. in the Church Room, Send Road, when Lt. Commander R. C. Whitehead will give an illustrated lecture in aid of the Mary Rose Trust on the excavation, and raising later this year, of the 700 ton Tudor carrack of Henry VIII which has lain at the bottom of the Solent for 400 years. It is anticipated that the audience, after hearing the lecture, will wish to assist in a small way in completion of the venture, and a contribution of at least 50 pence per head is suggested.

Thursday, 20th May ... Evening walk around Ripley.

Thursday, 17th June ... Evening visit to St Catherine's Chapel, Guildford.

Sat/Sun, 10th/11th July ... Southern Veteran-Cycle Club Camp and Rally based on Ripley Green.

Thursday, 23rd September ... Open meeting at the Church Room, Send Road, when Mrs Daphne Grimm will speak on some aspects of "The Inside of a Victorian Cottage".

Arrangements are being made for all-day visits during the summer to the Augustinian Michelham Priory in Sussex and the Meon Valley in Hampshire. Details will be given in the next issue of the Newsletter.

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the Society:

Mrs M. Neech, The Cottage, Send Marsh Lane.
Mrs L. Hillman, 41 Send Barns Lane, Send.

Total membership stands at 277 (106 double and 65 single subscriptions).

Annual Subscriptions - Attention is drawn to subscriptions which are due on 1st February. To assist the Treasurer in the orderly conduct of the Society's finances, it will be appreciated if these are paid promptly. The subscription at the time of writing is still £1.50 for couples and £1 for individual members, but this may be increased with effect from the AGM on 25th February. Payment, please, to our Treasurer or our Secretary (addresses on page 1).