

**A CENTURY AWHEEL 1889-1989**  
**A HISTORY OF THE DE LAUNE CYCLING CLUB**  
**WRITTEN BY MIKE RABBETTS**

This is not just the history of a cycling club. The fortunes of the De Laune C.C. over the past hundred years mirror the dramatic changes in the social life of Britain which have taken place in that time; and the collection of letters its members sent from the trenches of the First World War forms a uniquely personal record of their horrific - and light-hearted - experiences. The De Laune takes its name from a Kent landowner and philanthropist of the nineteenth century. It was formed as a strictly all-male club in 1889 when the Victorian cycling boom was getting under way - on roads that could be identified by their dust, and at the Herne Hill track, where quads, triplets and tandems rattled the boards.

The De Laune survived police raids on its racing men (and the Great Grape-throwing Scandal of 1903) to tour, race and dance its way through the 'twenties and 'thirties. After the Second World War it played a major part in a nationwide cycling revival, mainly through the efforts of E. N. Chippendale - the "Chip" to whom this book is dedicated. World-class riders like the international star Alan Jackson put the De Laune in the top rank; and pranksters like Jackson staged mud-battles on the river and hid bikes and pyjamas in trees.

From the "penny-farthing" races and garden parties of the 1890s to the discos and women's road races of the 1980s, the social historian and general reader - as well as the cycling enthusiast - will find much of interest here.

**The author**

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## FOREWORD

This is the story of the De Laune Cycling Club spanning a hundred years, during a period of great social changes which in turn has had its effect on all aspects of cycling. The De Laune has always been prepared to face up to changes when the need arises and is proud of its contribution to the Sport. It has grown from strength to strength and is one of the most respected cycling clubs, with its own purpose built Headquarters. The secret lies in the fact that over the years the Club has been fortunate to have attracted many members of considerable qualities and vision, but none more than the late Edward Neville Chippendale, to whose memory this book is dedicated.

E. N. Chippendale, known to his friends and acquaintances alike simply as Chip, joined the De Laune on 6th February 1936 after attending a recruitment cycle-run four days earlier. He quickly took an active part in affairs and although not very successful at racing, his administrative skills were soon apparent. In October 1937 he became Assistant Secretary as a preliminary to taking over at the beginning of the following year the combined role of General Secretary and Treasurer. This was interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War when, in 1940, Chip joined the Army and was later commissioned in R.A.O.C.

After the War, with so many far reaching changes taking place, Chip had once again taken over as General Secretary and Treasurer until in 1949 it was decided to split the two jobs - whereupon he continued as Treasurer for a further three years, a critical time for the Club.

In 1953, with the great upsurge in the interest for cycling, the Club held the first post-war Crystal Palace Cycling Festival - the previous one being in 1936 prior to the Palace being destroyed by fire. This was the brainchild of Chip, who organised and co-ordinated this most ambitious promotion embracing every facet of cycling which attracted over ten thousand spectators culminating with the grand finale of the finish of an international road race on the circuit. The £300 profit - a useful sum in those days - was donated to the British Red Cross Society and St John Ambulance Brigade. The Festival continued for the next five years with Chip taking a very active part. In 1949 he was honoured with the Club Gold Badge and subsequently made a life member. He became Club President from 1977 to 1979.

Chip's cycling activities extended beyond the De Laune Cycling Club. He had become an official of the National Cyclists' Union and was the Chairman of their Finance and Management Committee in the early 1950's. At that time there was also another competing Association, British League of Racing Cyclists', basically interested in massed start racing on the open roads. It was essential for the well being of competitive cycling both nationally and internationally there was one representative body. To this end, Chip was deeply involved in the long and delicate merger negotiations until in 1959 the British Cycling Federation came into existence with E. N. Chippendale as its first President.

Chip's sudden death in 1981, just as he was about to retire after a very successful business career, was a great blow. He was a man of immense ability and integrity and a great ambassador to the sport of cycling. It is, therefore, appropriate he should be remembered in a tangible way by the publication of a history of the De Laune Cycling Club, with whom he was so close.

However, this history was unlikely to have been written had it not been possible to persuade an "outsider" - Michael Rabbetts - to take on the task involving very many hours of painstaking research, poring through minute books, Club magazines and other material to produce this very absorbing story. Michael is a BBC Journalist who began his club cycling with the Swindon and District Road Club in 1947. He is now a member of the Lewes Wanderers Cycling Club.

DON WHITE  
Vice-president

## **IN THE BEGINNING .....**

Or: An essential piece of pre-history

If this were the history of any ordinary cycling club, it would probably start by saying: "The club was founded one-hundred years ago, in 1889....." But there's nothing ordinary about the De Laune. Its origins are closely linked with two old families the Delaunes and the Faunces; a country mansion Sharsted Court, at Newnham, in Kent; and a social centre that was a feature of Victorian South London - the De Laune Institute.

So for the De Laune C.C. the first significant date is not 1889 but 1582. That was when a French Huguenot physician and cleric, William Delaune, fled with his family to England. One of his two sons - Gideon - bought Sharsted Court for his son Abraham in 1625 with the wealth he had accumulated as apothecary to Queen Anne, consort of James I. (He invented a pill which was very well thought-of at that time; it certainly did him some good - he lived to the age of 97.)

Sharsted Court remained in the family for more than 300 years. It dates from the early 14th Century - a medieval manor house transformed into a Queen Anne mansion by Colonel William Delaune in 1711. One admirer described the house as "ancient, romantic, rambling..... set among furlongs of topiary and acres of beechwood on the Downland plateau some seven miles southwards of Faversham and Sittingbourne." But he also pointed to its inconvenience as a place to live in: its seventeen staircases, twisting passages and many rooms. One bedroom is said to be haunted: there are stories of terrifying shrieks, guttering candles and a hideous figure which rendered a footman speechless. But the main feature of Sharsted is not its ghost: it's the topiary garden - an extraordinary display of geometrically-shaped yew trees.

In the second half of the nineteenth century the garden was developed by the man who was to weave together the strands of history which brought the De Laune Cycling Club into being: Mr. Chapman Delaune Faunce-De Laune. He inherited Sharsted from his father, Captain Edmund Faunce - of a family whose ancestors came over with William the Conqueror. The Faunces and the Delaunes were linked through marriage - and Mr. C.D. Faunce-De Laune strengthened that link by adding "De Laune" (spelt as two words) to his surname.

Mr. De Laune was a man of some substance - a High Sheriff of Kent, a considerable landowner, and a magistrate. Much of his property was in South London (De Laune Street and Faunce Street are still there) so it was only natural that the parish priest of St. Mary's, Newington, Canon Palmer, should turn to him for help when he wanted to set up a social club for young men. Mr. De Laune did more than just "help." He gave No. 22 New Street, Kennington, for the young men's exclusive use; paid for the building of a gymnasium, dressing room and other improvements; became President of the Institute and actively encouraged its varied sporting interests. Each year until his death in January, 1893, he entertained a group of Institute members at Sharsted Court.

In more recent years, members of the De Laune C.C. have made an annual pilgrimage to Newnham, for a service at the parish church to honour the memory of the fourteen young men from the club who died in two world wars. A memorial plaque is on the outside wall of the church.

Sharsted Court passed from the hands of the De Laune family in the nineteen-fifties; No.22 New Street has long since been demolished; and the Institute is no more. But a spark that was ignited there a hundred years ago is still burning bright.....

## FIRST STEPS

In the spring of 1889 they joined together at the De Laune Institute in Kennington to add cycling to the already extensive list of Institute activities: cricket, billiards, boxing, football, gymnastics, dramatics, athletics, debating, singing and dancing. What kind of young men were they? In the fading photographs they are posed, stiff and stern; in reality they enjoyed the same kind of good fellowship, and revealed the same sense of humour and enthusiasm, as their successors have done over the past hundred years. Above all, they were bike riders; and they were on the threshold of the great cycling boom of the eighteen-nineties.

Some rode Ordinaries ("penny-farthings") and others the chain-driven Safeties which had first appeared five years earlier and which were to supersede the Ordinaries by the end of the century. Their machines would have had solid or cushion tyres. In 1889, pneumatics were only just being introduced to a derisive cycling world which was reluctant to buy them at £5 a pair.

And cycling was a summer only sport. Most road surfaces were poor, especially out in the country. Dry, hot weather would raise clouds of dust; rain would settle the dust and turn it into mud. In winter, most self-respecting cyclists would keep their machines warm and dry indoors, smearing them with Vaseline and lovingly wrapping them in bandages until Easter heralded a new season.

None of the drawbacks affected the enthusiastic ambition of the young cycling gentlemen of the De Laune Institute to form a section of their own. Towards the end of summer in 1888 they organised a number of runs into the countryside and spent the winter canvassing support from other members of the Institute. The outcome was the formation of the De Laune Institute Cycling Club, which opened its programme in the spring of 1889.

No detailed records of the club's first three years have survived. But we do know something of what happened that Saturday afternoon when a small band of pioneers turned up at the Institute for the inaugural run. The "swell" of the party was Johnny Holden, on a new Humber machine with cushion tyres. The envious others rode solids. The secretary of the Institute, George Joad, was there on a tricycle which had seen better days.

To make sure he didn't get left behind on this contraption, with its two large wheels on either side of him and a little third one trailing at the rear, he was given a push-off. This turned out to be a push-over instead: Joad and trike were sent sprawling into the gutter.

The run got started eventually - and an hour later about half the party returned without mishap after a tour round Clapham Common. From such small beginnings.....

In those very early years, there were apparently no properly - organised races: just a number of impromptu and hazardous "burn-ups" on the wood-paved road between Kennington Cross and Clapham. Danger came not only for the tram-lines but from over-zealous policemen anxious to nab anyone riding "furiously". Fourteen miles an hour was then - by law - regarded as pretty furious.

Much of the credit for the club's successful birth must go to the secretary, Harry Hart, and the 26 year old captain, Charlie Southon. And it must have been they who steered the club through the crisis of 1891/2 which was brought about by that very success. Many of the young men who eagerly joined the club did not belong to the Institute itself - and the Institute wanted them expelled. Captain and secretary stood firm - and cut the apron strings.

On March 19th, 1892, a small group met at the Institute to start drawing-up rules for the re-named De Laune Cycling Club. The entrance fee was fixed at one shilling and the weekly subscription at twopence. Members would have to buy their own caps; and preparations were made to order badges. The question of club colours was held over; it wasn't until 1896 that chocolate and light blue - the colours of the Institute - were chosen.

A couple of meetings later, six gentlemen were elected to form a committee. (The minutes of this and subsequent meetings of the nineteenth-century De Laune invariably refer to its members as gentlemen. This confirms the widely-held belief that the De Laune has always been a gentlemanly club.)

Plans were also made for the long-distance (paced) events which were a feature of Victorian cycling club life. It was decided to give a gold medal to anyone who completed 150 miles in twelve hours, a silver medal for 125 miles, and a bronze for 100. Members riding "pneumatics" were to be barred from winning bronze medals - probably because it was thought that 100 miles in twelve hours would be too easy for them. When no one had taken up this challenge by late summer, 1892, a Brighton-and-back "time-test" was substituted: a silver for under 8½ hours, and a gold "for the quickest time."

Club-runs, too, were being properly organised. On July 4th, 1892, the newly-elected committee ruled that on Saturday afternoon "the Captain be commissioned to start the run as the clock strikes four, also that he starts the run for home so as to arrive not later than 11 p.m." Club runs then started from Kennington Cross, where the club had found a temporary headquarters: a small confectioner's known as "The Tuck Shop." One of the attractions of the place, apparently, was its ginger beer, which had an advantage over bitter in that it quenched the thirst without wobbling the wheels.

So by the time the new-look club held its first annual meeting on November 11th, 1892, it had already shown itself well able to cope with independence. Here is part of Harry Hart's report to that meeting:

"I could not pass such an opportunity as this without briefly recounting the progress of events, the prosperous work which has been done and the short time there has been to do it in.

"The first meeting was held in the De Laune Institute on March 19th of this year, thus leaving only eight months in which to form a club, change and find fresh committee rooms, form rules and runs, arrange for a championship race and the distance runs, the latter of which to the regret of all fell through owing to the advanced period of the year, but however remain in abeyance until next season. The prosperous condition of the club has been plainly shown by the balance sheet just read, and I think you will agree that considering all things, it could not be better in the time. "

"In conclusion I would not forget to call special attention to your Captain and Sub-Captain who have had not only the meeting work to do but have so regularly turned out on runs, thus performing a double complement of the most important work of the club, and I would advise all of you who like myself have the interest of the club at heart, to let these stand another year, as I am sure you cannot better them at present. They have had the rough and unselfish work of starting the club..... now let them have some smooth."

Reading that now, a hundred years on, it is easy to imagine the "Hear hears" and ripple of applause which would have greeted it. Not that the applause would have been very loud: only fourteen members were there. Their names are worth recording, because they must have formed the backbone of the infant De Laune: Messrs. Southon (Captain), Errington (Sub-Captain), Hart (secretary), H. Douglas (assistant secretary), Mapey (chairman), Wilkinson, G. Douglas, Joad, Holden, Shoobridge (committee), Batchelor, Forsdick, James and Benwell.

Shortly after the annual meeting, the club settled on its first proper headquarters: The Ship public house in Kennington Road. It held its first meeting there on December 21st, 1892.



Club-Run 1910 (Arthur Williams seated)

## **STRETCHING THE LEGS**

The rules had been made, officers elected, a headquarters found and club-runs properly organised. It was time to be more adventurous. Two holiday tours were arranged for 1893: at Easter, three days were spent in Buckinghamshire and the Chilterns, with the Three Tuns at High Wycombe as "temporary headquarters"; over the August Bank Holiday, the tour base was Maidstone. And the 1893 runs programme finished with a flourish: an evening ride home from the country headquarters at The Bell, Kingston, with each member carrying a lighted Chinese lantern. The cost to club funds: six shillings.

Social activities, too, were growing apace. The first De Laune dinner and concert was held on January 21st, 1893, and that was closely followed by the first of many smoking concerts. Where the dinner was held isn't clear, but for three shillings a head, the members and their friends enjoyed food from a menu provided by a firm of caterers called Philcox and Son, of Bermondsey Street. As was the custom at that time, the members produced their own entertainment: they were expected to be able to sing romantic and comic songs, as well as ride bikes.

But the serious business of racing wasn't far away. The first recorded De Laune club event was a five-mile paced handicap on the Oxford road on Whit Monday, May 22nd, 1893. It was won by Johnny Holden, who had a 45 second start over the scratchman. Of the sixteen starters, all but four rode pneumatic tyres - an indication of how quickly the invention had been accepted. The best of the solid-tired riders was seventh.

Later that year, a two-mile handicap race was held on a track at Hyde Farm, Balham, apparently by arrangement with the De Laune Harriers, to whom a fee of 7s.6d. was paid. Shoobridge won, with Southon second and Batchelor third. The times recorded at these events are not known but Shoobridge seems to have gained sweet revenge over Southon and Batchelor: he had finished behind them in the five-mile.

Standard times for the Brighton-and-back came down rapidly as bikes and some road surfaces improved. Take 1894: Gold, seven hours; gold centre, 7½; silver, eight. In that year, Wally Foster won himself a gold medal by riding from the Alexandra Hotel, Clapham Common, to Brighton and back in six hours nine minutes. Eleven others beat the gold centre standard and three the silver. Stops had to be made at the Railway Hotel, Crawley and The Ship on Brighton seafront for "tickets" to be signed certifying that the riders had been there. Marshalling and checking by club helpers came a little later.

It's from the yellowing pages of the club records of 1894 that we gain the first complete picture of a De Laune racing year. A ten-mile track championship at Hyde Farm was won by George Wakefield in 30-50. Four competitors fell so heavily on the rough surface that they failed to finish. There were two road events: a 15-mile handicap, won by H. Courridge in 45-30 and a 25, won by Foster, hero of the Brighton-and-back, in 1-17-00. Of the eighteen entrants in the 25, only one rode an Ordinary - probably the last appearance of a penny-farthing in a De Laune event.

Road racing men of the 'nineties still had to contend with severe legal restrictions on their activities. It was usually safe to take part in "time tests" such as the De Laune Brighton and back, because they involved riders and their pacers starting in small groups at timed intervals and with nothing to beat but the clock. But the police often tried to stop the short distance races in which competitors started according to their handicaps, but usually finished in a bunch complete with pacers - which must have been frightening to behold.

The De Laune "15" of 1894 provides a good example of what racing cyclists were up against. The course was from Walton-on-Thames to Ripley and back. All went well until a policeman appeared at the finish. The club officials made off, but the policeman cunningly waited until the leading bunch came tearing along the road to the finishing line. He tried unsuccessfully to stop one rider after another. One man was very nearly caught, but managed to get away with the others after bowling the constable over.

Later in the day, the police called on the local hostelry - "The Black Boy" - which had been headquarters for the race. The landlady indignantly denied that the gentlemen of the De Laune would dream of doing anything illegal, like racing - and the officers of the law were foiled.

The De Laune tandem pairing of Billy Groombridge and George Le Grys were once chased across Mitcham Common by a policeman on horseback, but managed to outpace him. Another member was stopped near Brixton police station because he was riding too fast. A policeman took him by the arm with one hand and wheeled his bike with the other. As they neared the station, the policeman let go the arm so that he could lift the bike up the steps..... and the offender seized the handlebars, sprang into the saddle and was off along Coldharbour Lane.

The men who succeeded Charlie Southon as club captain in 1893 - Charlie Errington - wasn't so lucky. He was fined 15 shillings for speeding down Hillingdon Hill.

On that day, Errington was on his way to High Wycombe, where - like a good captain - he had found quarters for the club at the "Three Tuns." Half -a-dozen members who spent a weekend there in 1894 experienced another brush with the law. On the Saturday night, an after-hours singsong was started in the bar. At round about midnight, the revellers were interrupted by the sound of loud knocking on the doors.

The landlord, Mr. Young, hustled them off to their bedrooms, telling them to get between the sheets as soon as possible. Hardly had they done so when the police came into the bedrooms. It was a raid! The policemen apparently thought that local people might be breaking the Sunday Observance Law by singing loudly after midnight - or even drinking after hours.

Not until the De Launeites had shown them their "knickers" - those predecessors of plus-fours - and had taken them to the coach-house to inspect the bikes - were the police satisfied that they were genuine guests and not "locals."

That year -- 1894 - set the early racing pattern: a mixture of road and track events, paced and unpaced. There was always one long-distance "time test" for standard medals - the Brighton and-back until 1897, then a hundred-mile event on the Bath road. The "names" of that time were Foster - who slashed half-an-hour from his Brighton and-back time in 1895 and did a 1-11 "25" the following year; A. Choppen - the 50-mile champion of 1897 who, later the same year, recorded the fastest time. in the club's first 100-mile "time test" (5-59-00); and George and Will Le Grys, who shared a number of track victories between them - including the first De Laune event to be held at Herne Hill, on July 21st, 1897. George was also a good road man: he won the 1896 "50" in 2-33-03 even though he had to ride the final five miles (solo) on a borrowed tandem.

Another of the fast men, Charles Spender, is also worth a mention, if only because of what happened after he won the club five-mile at the Putney Velodrome in 1896. His prize was a chair - donated by a club member - but it was such a poor one that the De Laune committee considered it not worth having. An alternative prize was about to be bought from club funds when the donor was shamed into producing another chair, which Spender sat in and decided was satisfactory.

Tandemists were also making their first appearance on the result sheets in the closing years of the century. In 1897 the combination of Brooks and Swinson completed the club hundred in the same time as Choppen, and by 1899 Albert (Bung) Bannell and Wal Condy had done it in 5-11-30. Condy was a name becoming increasingly prominent in the racing statistics, for reasons which will soon become apparent. And Bannell deserves a place in De Laune history, because in 1899 he won the club's first entirely unpaced "25" in 1-18-30.

Don't sniff at these times, young man. Those Victorian gentlemen had what it takes despite their moustaches, funny caps, sports jackets and ungainly bikes. Look at the courses that were used. The early "twenty-five" were on the Portsmouth road, starting "at the first railway arch after Ditton", turning just short of Guildford and finishing at the top of Pains Hill, Cobham. For the "fifties" the club at first used the Brighton road - from Coulsdon to the bottom of Dale Hill, a mile south of Albourne, retracing to "the; milestone at Povey Cross" (Gatwick). Riders in the 100-mile time tests on the Bath road started (in small groups) at the 12th milestone out of London, passed through Maidenhead, Reading and Newbury, turned at the 63rd milestone just short of Hungerford, and finished at the 14th milestone. (The Bath road was later favoured for the shorter distances, too.)

None of these roads was easy, and some sections were positively appalling. It wasn't just the hills. To quote from the C.T.C. Road Book of the 'nineties: "The surface (of the road between Slough and

Maidenhead) is generally very sandy and loose, particularly in dry weather, and for a short distance near the 25th milestone the road is quite unrideable". And after Maidenhead: "For a considerable distance in the neighbourhood of Knowl Hill the road is shaded by trees, and is consequently often wet and heavy."

They were tough, all right. But the social side of club life was very important to them, too. As they did at the Institute, and as their successors in the De Laune do today, they enhanced their enjoyment of cycling by combining it with other interests. The programme for 1899 is a good example - there were far more social events than races: in January, a concert; in the summer, four garden parties at club teaplaces; in November, the annual dinner; in December, a dance. And the club bought dominoes, draughts, a chess-set and playing cards for use on clubnights.

The annual dinners of 1896 and 1897 were held at the Dover Castle, in Westminster Bridge Road; in 1898 the venue was the Manchester Hotel in Aldersgate Street. But the favourite spot for the winter social events was The Horns Assembly Rooms at Kennington.

The dinners and concerts were fairly elaborate affairs. Musicians had to be hired (perhaps just a pianist for the dinners) and singers found to supplement the renderings of the members themselves. To make sure the concerts went with a swing, a stage manager and even a musical director would be appointed. For the 1899 concert at The Horns, tickets cost two shillings. Mr. Larkin's seven-piece band was engaged for two guineas, and the doorkeeper was given a two-shilling tip. The best singer's fee was 10s.6d. for two turns; the others charged 7s.6d. These occasions provided a good source of income for the club when times were hard: 1897 was such a year - the prize values had to be reduced because there was so little money in the kitty.

Annual dinners and smoking concerts - like club membership - were strictly for men only. Garden parties were a different matter. In one 19th century photograph, taken at The George, Morden, some of the men are in their Sunday or Saturday best, with felt hats or straw boaters; others are in the customary cycling gear of knickerbockers, jackets and "schoolboy" caps. But it's the presence of large numbers of wives, sisters and lady-friends, dressed in all their finery, which takes the eye.

One of the club members at the garden party pointed out in later years than even in those days the gentlemen of the De Laune "must have had some little attraction for the fair sex." But, he said, the problem of transporting the ladies to the scene of revelry had to be overcome: "As there were no motors in those days, a brake was utilised by some members who were accompanied by their ladies who wished to be particularly smart. Others took the tram as far as Tooting and walked thence to The George - a very pleasant walk."

The club was jealous of its reputation for good behaviour. One of its members - the one who bowled over a policeman in 1894 - was expelled in 1897 because of another incident. Nothing specific is mentioned in the committee minutes - just a single terse sentence: "Having conducted himself on the occasion of the annual concert in a manner to the disadvantage of the club, his name be erased from the books of the club".

There was discipline, too, on club runs. In 1898 a rule was made which will strike a sympathetic chord with all those who have ever hung desperately on to the back of a club-run bash: "That in all club runs the Captain shall lead and regulate the pace to the capabilities of the least experienced rider present and no rider shall be allowed to pass him."

Recollections of those early runs are in the pages of the De Laune News - the club magazine which first appeared in 1929 and is still going strong.

Harry Hayter, for instance, emphasised the fact that when he joined the club in 1890 no one fancied riding too many miles because the bikes were heavy and the solid tyres extremely hard. So the first occasion a member rode Dunlops stuck in his memory. These tyres consisted of an inner tube, two inches in diameter (sometimes containing a kind of treacle to obviate punctures), and an outer cover fixed to the rim by hooks and laces.

The De Laune's Pneumatic Pioneer was a man called Bill English. Harry Hayter told what happened to him: "Four of us went to Brighton and Bill English showed us how to ride the hills. We stayed there

for a few days, during which the tyres gave out and we couldn't get any air to stay in them. Then we had a brilliant idea: fill them with sawdust! We started for London but at Crawley Bill was dead beat and the tyres worn out. So he had to take the train home."

Another old-timer, Charlie Hampson, pointed out that in the 'nineties, club cyclists were truly Kings of the Road. There were no motors and no traffic lights - and bikes were faster than most horse-drawn vehicles. But there was one great disadvantage - the dust:

"Oh, the dust the De Laune used to create when there were something over thirty riders out. Even in those days we had to split up, more to avoid making the last string eat too much dust, than to make a fast and a slow section.

"When I say that the cyclists of those days were very much more attentive to their attire and general appearance than they seem to be nowadays (1938), I can assure you that the first thing we all did when we stopped for refreshments was to make a rush for the clothes brush and the shoe brush - yes, even before having a drink. And the bicycles! They were a sight, especially if one were dust-proud (I mean to say, if one wished everyone to know that one had been farther abroad than The Bell at Tooting or The George at Morden).

"Strolling along the Clapham Road on a Sunday night, it was our interest to note the different colours of the dust on the bicycles - for the Brighton road dust was light, the Dorking road deeper in colour, the Portsmouth road clayey and the Bath road quite white."

Then there was the mud. George Howard, who preceded Harry Hayter as club captain, has left us his painful memories of a two-day run to High Wycombe and back which began one Boxing Day. Six started off, but the weather was so miserable that four turned back. George and his companion pedalled on, in heavy rain along roads running with water and sand, their chains stiff with grit, without mudguards or adequate capes, wet through and caked with mud.

At Gerrards Cross they called at a pub for a drink and - they thought - an emergency bed. "Can you put us up, landlord?" they asked. "No!" said the landlord, looking them up and down with an air of disgust.

They made it to High Wycombe eventually, of course, in true De Laune tradition - but only through the inspiration of a threepenny tot of rum they bought in Beaconsfield.

Problems of a different kind confronted A. J. Pound and eleven fellow members who set out on a Saturday in the 'nineties for an impromptu weekend tour to nowhere in particular. And the problems were solved in a way which would surely be highly unlikely today.

The twelve reached Pulborough, but couldn't find anywhere to stay for the night. So, on to Bognor - and no room for twelve cyclists there, either. The Captain asked a policeman, who in turn asked a "stately, portly old gent" (A. J. Pound's description) who then spoke to the Captain and so .....

"A procession was formed following this stranger. A gate was opened and a key placed in the hole of an impressive door which opened into a fine hall. A kindly lady put in an appearance - the wife of our benefactor, evidently - and we were introduced to his friends. Then the maids were called and we were ushered into a large room, and blankets, pillows and rugs came like magic. Then we were left to make ourselves comfortable with the fine carpet as a bed for twelve .....

"Up in the morning early. The butler put in an appearance and escorted us to the place for a wash, shave etc., then advised us to get to the kitchens, where - behold! - bacon, eggs and coffee for twelve!

"This went with much success and our good host discreetly appeared with a jovial 'Good morning boys, I hope you slept well.' He wished us good day, a good holiday and pleasant going, whereupon our Captain expressed our heartfelt thanks and approached this great sport wishing a charge to be made for at least the good breakfast. But no, he kindly replied

that the pleasure it gave him to have been of service was sufficient recompense. A very fine English gentleman. We of course had a collection for the staff as a token of appreciation."

The 19th Century club-runs were certainly varied. Some were combined with cricket and football matches against such long-gone cycling clubs as The Idlers, Camberwell Wheelers and the Granville C.C. There were inter-club midnight runs and regular Bank Holiday tours to Hastings, Portsmouth, Oxford and other places.

The annual midnight run to Brighton on the July Saturday nearest to a full moon was a popular fixture for a while. In 1896 an estimated 200 members of the De Laune and other cycling clubs set off from Kennington Park at the stroke of twelve, on solo bicycles, tandems, triplets, quads, and one sixtet. To add to the sense of occasion (and certainly to the noise) they were armed with lanterns, horns and bells.

This joyous cavalcade - sometimes six abreast - made its first bacon-and-egg stop at Horley - and George Le Gry's had tucked himself in behind the fastest quad to make sure he got there first to reserve seats for the De Laune C.C.

On these runs, the leading riders usually reached Brighton at about six o'clock, and the last of the stragglers two-and-a-half hours later. Breakfast was provided at The Ship, on the seafront, no matter what time anyone got there. Most started out for home in the afternoon; a few fainthearts with sore bottoms caught the train. Altogether, a thoroughly enjoyable occasion but the police frowned on such mass rallies, and eventually put a stop to them.

From 1894 there were two De Laune club-runs each weekend in "the season": on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings. Saturday teapaces and Sunday "pull-ups" included The Greyhound at Carshalton; the Glynn Arms, Ewell; the Temperance Hotel, Coulsdon; the King's Head, Twickenham; the Rose and Crown, Riddlesdown; and Tagg's Boat House at Moulsey.

"The season" then ran from the middle of March to the beginning of October. But in the autumn of 1899 the committee decided on a radical departure from long-established custom - appropriately enough at the start of a new century: runs should be carried on through the winter when possible.

The club also entered the 20th Century with a new headquarters. The Ship changed hands at the end of 1897 and a move was made to the White Bear, in Kennington Park Road. This had the bonus of solving the problem of who was to be club president. A number of abortive approaches had been made to potential candidates ever since the break with the Institute in 1892. But at the annual meeting of 1898 the landlord of the new headquarters, Mr. Frederick Clay, a former actor, was elected the club's first active president - a position he was to hold for eleven years.

A number of those who had been with the club since the start, or soon after, continued their association with it - in one form or another - well into the 20th Century.

**Charlie Southon** kept in occasional touch with De Laune activities in his later years through letters written at the desk inscribed with the date "1889" and presented to him when he retired as club captain in 1893. He died in 1947 at the age of 82 - still proudly wearing his original club badge, which modern day captains later wore as a badge of office.

**George Howard** joined the De Laune in 1889, after seeing one of its first clubruns pass by Clapham Common, where he was playing cricket. He claimed to have set a club record by taking part in well over a thousand runs in his first 20 years of membership. He certainly achieved two "firsts" as long-serving handicapper and committee-man: first holder of the Gold Badge of Honour (in 1909) and first honorary life member (1925). It was said of him: "When youthful spirits overflowed he quickly discriminated between good fun and rowdyism and a quick remark from him was always sufficient to calm the most unruly." George had been a member of the De Laune for over 50 years when he died.

**Will and George Le Gry's** became a highly successful tandem pacing combination before retiring from racing. Will retained his close association with the sport as a trainer of leading trackmen - including the great Leon Meredith and an Olympic champion, Charlie Bartlett. Just before the outbreak of war in 1914 he went to Copenhagen as trainer of the English cycling team sent out by the

Daily Express to compete in the world championships. He was later well-known as an umpire at Herne Hill, scene of his youthful triumphs. In 1935 he was awarded a Gold Badge to mark the help and advice he had given to many racing men, on road and track.

**George Le Grys** was one of the best trackmen in the South of England. In 1898 he broke a Herne Hill record by clocking 55 min. 07 secs. for a paced "25" - on steel rims and heavy tyres. He was aptly described as the complete extrovert. After filling his trophy cabinet, he spent some years as a salesman in North America and then devoted his attention to "lecturing the lads, urging the active racing men to greater efforts, driving club officials to attempt the impossible and charming the ladies at club dinners with his floral gifts and the rest of us with his speeches."

George's anecdotes enlivened many a gathering. He recalled the day when crowds gathered on Handcross Hill to see a challenge match between him and two members of another club who held the 25-mile road record. The challenge was for the record holders, on a tandem with a fixed gear of 100, to drop George on the descent of the hill - with him on a solo "fixed" of 70 and no toe-clips. George sharpened the spikes on his pedals and bought a pair of boxing shoes with felt soles to get a good grip. And, of course, he stayed on the tandem's back wheel all the way.

George was President of the club for ten years from 1958, during which time he was honoured - like his younger brother - with the De Laune Gold Badge. He died in 1969, at the age of 91.

**Albert Bannell** the club's first unpaced champion, was on the inaugural club-run in 1889. He was prominent in the early social activities as keeper of the billiards saloon at the White Bear, and later at the Portland Arms, Portland Place, Clapham Road. He emigrated to Canada in 1905 but kept in regular contact through the De Laune News until he died in 1952.

**H. G. ('Arthur') Benwell** club secretary 1897-99, ran a bike shop in Kennington Road. He made a tandem for George Le Grys, who spent several years saving-up twenty golden sovereigns to pay for it. Arthur faded from the De Laune scene for some time before being reminded of "the good old days" in 1950. He rejoined - at the age of 82.

There are others of that pioneer band whose names have been forgotten over the years but who helped establish the traditions of which the De Laune is so proud. Charles Errington, for instance and W.E. Elwell, Harry Hart's immediate successor as secretary.

But for the De Laune of the early 20th Century, new names were coming to the fore: the Condys, Joe Stapley, Walter Niblett, and above all, Arthur Williams. It was to be an exciting era, but not without its problems...

**Committee: March 11th 1900**

*It was agreed that all proposed new applicants for membership shall, prior to their election as full members of the club, attend before the committee to answer satisfactorily the questions the secretary or anyone of the committee may ask him as to his abilities.*

**Committee: June 12th 1902**

*The 20-miles road race to start at 7.30 from the 14th milestone on the Bath road outside Hounslow to the 24th milestone, returning and finishing at the 14th. Competitors to be sent off at intervals of five minutes after the despatch of the scratchman; and to be strictly unpaced, no spare machine to approach within 100 yards of any competitor. Penalty to be disqualification.*

## **GRAPES AND WRATH**

At about half-past eight on the evening of Saturday, December 3rd, 1903, as more than sixty members of the De Laune and their friends were enjoying their annual dinner at The Horns, Charlie Wilson threw a bunch of grapes from one end of his table to the other. The grapes missed the intended target and hit a visitor in the face. People at the visitor's end of the table protested, but Wilson's response (aided and abetted by another member, Bill Williams) was to squirt soda water syphons over everyone near by. One elderly, much respected gentleman and one of the waiters were drenched.

The chairman, Mr. Clay, called for order but friends of Wilson and Williams joined in. Members and guests began rushing about, and a vice-president of the club, Alderman Bowers was "hustled, charged and insulted."

The official account of The Great Grape-throwing Scandal of 1903 hints that even worse was perpetrated that night. It uses such phrases as "amongst other things" and adds a few "etceteras." Modern-day ladies and gentlemen of the De Laune will therefore be relieved to know that Wilson and Williams were thrown out of the club.

Such goings-on have been so rare in De Laune history that it might be as well to get the painful part over quickly and deal here and now with another series of incidents which scandalised the members nearly seven years later - in July, 1910. Let the committee minute speak for itself:

"The hon. sec. reported that certain of the members were becoming rowdy, breakages of other people's property were frequently brought to his notice and all attempts to keep order and all appeals to these refractory members only brought down ridicule upon himself. The club was in great danger of having these acts of hooliganism brought into public notice and he asked the committee to adopt drastic measures in dealing with the members concerned.

"On Saturday evening last at the garden party (held at the Duke of Edinburgh, Kingston Road, Wimbledon) Mr. Walter Robinson was seen deliberately breaking the Japanese lanterns with which the grounds were illuminated.

"It was proposed by Mr. Will Le Grys, seconded by Mr. Will Condy, that he be brought before the committee. On being brought in, he admitted the damage and offered to pay but expressed no regret whatever. It was the general opinion of the committee that he considered he had done something clever."

The committee let Robinson off with a caution - but the hon. sec then revealed there was worse to come. On the evening of the same garden party a group of club members had caused a disturbance in the coffee room of the Duke of Edinburgh. One had thrown a showcard which struck the gas bracket and broke the globes and mantles, causing 2s,3d. worth of damage. The landlady, Mrs. Harding, had made a strong complaint about their rowdy behaviour.

One of the group was called before the committee and admitted causing the damage, but only accidentally. As he left the committee room, two of his friends - Walter Robinson (again) and Walter Chitty - were heard shouting outside and tried to force their way in. Chitty got through the door and loudly protested that they were "all in it together." He made it plain what he thought of the committee: "A lot of Bible-thumping two-faced hypocrites". (Or, as the hon. sec. reports laconically in the minutes "words to that effect.")

Now Chitty was a big man - as someone put it, he had "a commanding presence." At one garden party he hit a gatecrasher with what a contemporary described as "the best straight left I've ever seen ..... The guy's eye came up like an oyster." He was pretty fast on the road, too, perhaps because he ate a steak before each race; and he made an impact on the social scene with uproarious renderings of "The Galloping Major."

So it's no wonder that such a hugely-popular man (and his friend Robinson) should merely be suspended for a while after the Duke of Edinburgh affair.

But then came the annual dinner of 1910 at the Manchester Hotel, and the club was thrown into renewed turmoil. The minutes of the special committee meeting held on December 8th tell the story:

"A very serious disturbance was created throughout the concert and speeches on the occasion of our annual dinner by a section of the members, in consequence of which this meeting was called. Letters of complaint were read from Messrs. Walter Robinson and Walter H. Chitty because Mr. Will Le Grys in his speech publicly reprovved their section for their ungentlemanly behaviour. After considerable discussion it was agreed that for Messrs. Robinson and Chitty to retain membership of the De Laune C.C. was detrimental to the best interests of the club. Mr. G. Ivin proposed, Mr. Will Le Grys seconded, that they be expelled. *Carried unanimously.*"

More than 40 years later, Walter Chitty revealed that he had provoked the "very serious disturbance" by swinging on the dining-room chandelier. He was allowed to rejoin the club in 1927, and over the next few years proved such an asset that he was made a vice-president. In the years since his expulsion he had become a successful solicitor, so was able to solve some of the club's legal tangles; and in 1935 he presented the first of a series of trophies to be won by the "Club Road Champion" - the equivalent of the best all-rounder. Walter Robinson was also readmitted, in 1920, after he had sent a letter regretting what had happened at the Manchester Hotel.

Rowdyism was hardly a feature of the club's week-by-week activities, but there does seem to have been a strained relationship between the extroverts and the more conservative club officers. One member threatened to resign because of "extreme unfriendliness by one or two teetotal members of the committee."

## UPS AND DOWNS

There were other difficulties in those early years of the century. In April, 1901, 82 members were on the register but only 18 had paid their subs; in the summer of that year, George Eves resigned as club secretary because of "a little unpleasantness" - and there was only one rider in the 100-mile time-test; the 1902 AGM had to be postponed for lack of a quorum; a few months later there was mention of "want of interest" and "adverse weather"; at the AGM of 1903 the secretary spoke of a falling-off all round in finance and membership, losses on the concert and Cinderella dance, and of garden parties ruined by rain; and Wilson and Williams rounded off the year with grapes and soda water.

But that's enough of the gloom. Even Charlie Wilson had his better side. He won the 1900 unpaced "25" (on the Bath road) in 1-18-07, a time which wasn't beaten until 1905, when Will Le Grys became the first member to get inside evens with 1-14-15.

By this time the De Laune was beginning to adopt the ideas of F. T. Bidlake of the North Road C.C. - the originator of the modern style of time trialling. On October 5th, 1895, he had organised the first race in which riders started one by one, unpaced, at regular intervals. In this way, police objections to cycle racing on the roads were overcome.

The De Laune applied this system not only to the 20 and 25 mile events which were held each year from 1900 to 1914 but also to the 50 mile time tests in which members rode for standard medals, as they had done in the earlier paced "hundreds" and Brighton-and-backs. To try to ensure that all competitors rode entirely alone, they were sent off at three or five minute intervals in ascending order of handicap - scratchman first, longest-marker last. The timekeeper often had a very long wait.

The handicapper, too, had his problems. He had to base his decisions not only on past performances but also on the kind of bike and equipment used. In one instance, a rider had his handicap allowance slashed because he had changed to wood rims and tubulars.

Variety was added to the De Laune racing programme on Sunday, August 24th 1902: a hill climb held on Russell Hill - not precisely identified, but described as a "long drag from the crossroads." Perhaps at Purley? It was won by A. Judd in 3 min. 44 sec., which was five seconds faster than the two men who tied for second place.

Until the first world war put an end to racing for a while, subsequent hill climbs were held at Polhill (1903), Marpit Lane, Coulsdon (1904-5), and then Tilburstow - "starting from the bridge and finishing on the centre of the flat ground at the top of the hill." The pre-war Tilburstow record was set by Charles Condy in 1911: 2min.16sec. with a very strong following wind.

The prize values in the 1902 hill climb are typical of the period: there were only seven entries, yet £1 went to the winner and 15 shillings to each of the runners-up. That was a time when anyone shopping at the Army and Navy Stores could buy three shirts and a couple of fancy silk ties for £1, three Dunlop tyres for 18 shillings, and a bicycle suit (single-breasted Norfolk jacket and knickers in various shades of Scotch tweeds and Cheviots) for £1 5s. The actual choice of prizes in De Laune hill climbs, time trials and the annual clubrun attendance competition was made from such things as writing cases, silver teapots, hair-brush sets, silver matchboxes and umbrellas.

In the eight years from the beginning of 1901, most of the major prizes were shared by four men: Will Le Grys and the Condy brothers - Walter ("Wal"), William ("Will") and Charles. The eldest of the Condy trio - Wal - was top man in 1901/2/3, but in the following two years Will Le Grys showed his paces on road as well as track and took every first prize bar one. The exception was the championship "25" of 1904 - a special occasion because it brought the first winner of the De Laune Challenge Bowl, presented (at the committee's suggestion) by Mr. Alured Faunce De Laune, son of the Institute's founder. The winner: a popular younger member, Harry Thomas, in 1-18-20. A month earlier he had won the fastest novice prize in the club "20". Will Le Grys had beaten him by three minutes in that event, but did not ride in the "25", so missed his chance to be the first to have his name engraved on what is now the club's oldest trophy.

No sooner had Will Le Grys seen off one Condy than another arrived on the scene: Will Condy won the club hill climb of 1906 and **all** club races at 20 and 25 miles in 1907 and 1908. He and his brother Charles also won a number of gold medals in the 50-mile time tests - and were pretty good on a

tandem, too. On one very wet Sunday morning in 1907 they recorded 2-22-54 for a "50" - a time well inside anything accomplished in the club before. And this was despite puncturing four miles from the finish.

But Charles's strong point was hill-climbing. He was fastest up Tilburstow for five years in succession from 1907, and also did well in the Catford open hill climb, regarded by many as the equivalent of a national championship. He was certainly an enthusiastic competitor: in July, 1908, he rode in an open "hundred" on a rain-soaked Saturday - and was in a club "25" the next morning.

Will Condy kept a note of how each race went: "Wet roads" ..... "Tyre burst through wet. Mended tube and patched cover" ..... "Very windy homeward journey" ..... "Not very well" ..... "Punctured at turn - finished on old machine" ..... "Raining hard all the way" ..... "Punctured front tyre from Horley, then both tyres flat from Redhill to Coulsdon." The Brighton road was used for the "fifties" for the three years from 1905, when the Bath road came back into favour, as it already was for the shorter distances. The Brighton road course (worked out with a map measurer on an Ordnance Survey map) started at "the signpost to Kenley Common" in Whyteleafe, on the Godstone Road out to Horsham, round the bandstand and back to the 14th milestone on the Brighton road. A hard course, but for each rider a compensatory pint of brown ale was handed up outside the Joliffe Arms at Merstham. For the Bath road events, the White Hart at Cranford was event headquarters; bed and breakfast was booked there for competitors and officials who wanted to avoid long journeys in the morning.

Will Condy reckoned that the best race he ever rode for the De Laune C.C. was a "50" held on a windy day in August, 1908, on the Bath road - starting at the tenth milestone, turning at the 36th and finishing at the twelfth. He punctured at the turn, waited there for five or six minutes until he could borrow another member's old roadster, then battled his way to the finish against the gale. He was still second fastest, in 2-44-18, and well inside the gold medal standard. His comment: "Mighty hard!"

Punctures were indeed the bane of a racing man's life. In the Southern C.C. Open 100 of 1906, 32 of the 71 starters failed to finish: most of them had punctures - one man had nine. Will Condy rode in this event - he finished in 6-00-46, and won second handicap; the fastest time was 5-25-08, by T.A. Fisher of the Unity C.C. Complainants of early starts should note that the first man went off at four o'clock in the morning - "even before the milk carts were astir."

Heavy rain was also more of a hazard then than now, because of the mess it created on the roads. Last-minute postponement of races for this reason led to ill-feeling among these riders who turned up at the start only to find no officials there, so an emergency plan was adopted: if it was raining on the day before a race, officials and riders would meet at club headquarters at eight o'clock that evening to decide whether the race should go ahead.

And what with avoiding potholes, stones and mud, keeping a check on one's own time during a race was far from easy. It wasn't just a matter of glancing at a wrist-watch: the timepiece had to be pulled from the pocket. So we get the entry: "Wood reported losing several minutes through dropping his watch twice."

**Committee: March 23rd 1905**

*The secretary was instructed to order racing suits to the following design: Chocolate body for the jersey, with a 3-inch Cambridge blue band round the chest and upper part of the arms, also two Cambridge blue bands of about 1/4 -inch round the collar. The knickers to be chocolate, with a 3-inch band (blue) round the thighs.*

## THE ORGANISATION MEN

The names of Walter Niblett and Arthur Williams stand out at this stage of De Laune history - not for any prize-winning triumphs, but for organisational ability and strength of character which served the club well.

Walter Niblett joined in 1902 and was on the committee within a year. He took on the secretary's job in 1906, at what was later described as a "most critical time." To quote the citation which accompanied the gold badge he was awarded in 1913: "Nearly all the members had tired of cycling and club life and little support could be obtained for anything..... Had he given up or neglected the club at this critical period it would probably not have survived."

Niblett was secretary for only two years, but remained an active official for some time after that. In December, 1909, for instance, he helped Wal Condy organise the "Coming of Age" dinner at the Manchester Hotel. \*The menu card included Niblett's potted history of the club which has been quoted in articles about the De Laune ever since: in it he compared the difficult times of the past with the good ones of the present when things were "going mighty strong." Active membership was then in the eighties - about twice the 1902 figure.

**\*Footnote:** The six-course meal included "De Laune Pudding", the ingredients of which remain a mystery. Entertainment between the speeches was provided by (among others) Charlie Hardy on the piano, Alf Baldwin's banjo ("White Coon's Polka March"), Will Westlake singing "I Wish I Lived Next Door to You", a recitation, and guest artistes (songs and violin solos). And the tickets cost only 3s.6d.

Walter Niblett's successor as secretary was Arthur Williams, who joined the De Laune in February, 1906, when he lived - appropriately enough - in De Laune Street, Kennington Park (No. 37). He was elected to the committee in 1907 and was club secretary from 1908 until he joined the army in 1916. A year later he was killed in action in France.

Those are the bare statistics. They are fleshed out by the words of one of Arthur Williams's contemporaries: "He lived for the club and devoted all his undoubted gifts to the furtherance of the underlying good principles which mean so much to an organisation such as ours. He was outspoken and forthright to a degree, but so patently honest, true and steadfast that none could take offence." Arthur Williams once claimed that, without previous experience, he had had "to raise the De Laune from a decadent state." This was something of an exaggeration, since by 1907 the club - under Walter Niblett - was already recovering from the doldrums. But there's no doubt that Williams provided the driving force which capitalised on that recovery and created "one of the strongest cycling organisations in the South of England."

For nine consecutive years from 1906, the De Laune won the one-guinea prize for the largest muster of club members at the annual meet of the Southern Counties Cycling Union at Bushey Park (a history of success which was continued after the war).

These rallies were big affairs. In May 1910, 400 riders from 60 clubs took part; of these, 53 were from the De Laune. To quote the account in "Cycling":

"Afterwards they rode en masse through the park to Hampton Court Green for tea at Cleggs Hotel. During the interval, between tea and a Bohemian concert, a very spirited tug-of-war was decided between the clubs, and resulted in a final pull between the Southern Ladyback Tandem C.C. and the Gainsborough A.C. team, the latter defeating the former."

The other clubs must have been envious of the De Laune's full programme, as well as of the size of its membership. During the winter of 1911 the De Laune committee under Arthur Williams organised four whist drives, three concerts, two dances, a billiards contest, a draughts tournament, two weekend runs and an eight-mile walk. All this in addition to the annual dinner and the regular Sunday morning runs.

The walk was held on a course between Sutton and Ewell (the winner: Fred Giles, 1hr. 15 min.) and was followed by tea and an impromptu concert. In fact, concerts, dances and garden parties were an enduringly popular feature of cycling club life until everything was changed by war.

Few concerts were complete without Alf Baldwin and his banjo, Charlie Hardy as hon. pianist and accompanist (his rendering of the overture to "Tannhauser" was widely acclaimed), and Arthur Saxton singing "I'm Off to Philadelphia." Dances were taken seriously, too. Properly-printed programmes were available (folded pink card, deckled edges) on which Grace, Rose and Daisy could pencil their names alongside the dances for which they wished to have the honour of partnering a gentleman of the De Laune.

Perhaps because of complaints from Grace, Rose and Daisy - nursing sore toes after a De Laune hop at The Horns - the committee decided "that on any Thursday (clubnight) when there is no special event, members of the club who can dance be asked to assist to teach other members with the idea of making the dances and garden parties more successful."

Arthur Williams made a point of reminding the racing men that their medals were paid for by garden parties and dances. The ones held in 1913 made a profit of £10 19s.2d, which he said "must be placed on the shoulders of the splendid unselfish band of dancing men which the club possesses. Attending dances by the score, they are continually spending money with two objects: one, of course, is to enjoy themselves but the other is always uppermost in their minds - and that is to sell tickets for the De Laune. Although a non-dancing man, I am very proud of these men."

There is no better way of conveying the atmosphere of those garden parties, with all their pre-war innocence, than by quoting from "The Kennington Gazette". The scene: the Duke of Edinburgh, Merton. The date: Saturday, July 25th, 1908:

"There was no woe among the wheelers - a merrier, happier and more sociable gathering could not be imagined. Punctual to time, the Calorpheus Orchestra played the first bars of the waltz and speedily the lawn was covered with lovers of the terpsichorean art, under the capable M.C's, Messrs. W.E. Condy and G. Hume.

"The grounds were looking their best, and the lawn, which was in the pink of condition, was large enough comfortably to accommodate fully 200 couples. Some 250 members and friends of the club put in an appearance, making a busy evening for the general hon. secretary, Mr. A. Williams, supported by Messrs. F. Green, G. Ivin and W.E. Condy, who carried out their duties as stewards with that happy comradeship which is so essential to making visitors feel a hearty welcome.

"A long programme of dances was indulged in, and throughout there was an absolute freedom from unseemly behaviour. Just a big family party all bent on obtaining their full share of pure enjoyment out of the evening, and this they certainly obtained, aided by weather of the finest.

"Shortly before the interval, the illuminations began to twinkle from many vari-coloured fairy lamps, and the seats surrounding the bowling green in the dusk provided a happy hunting ground for that arch little fellow, Cupid, who is always delighted with functions of this description.

"Returning to the grounds, we spent a further hour watching the gyrations of the dancers, and it was noticeable that the charming ladies had no lack of male suitors for their company in the various dances. perhaps the De Laune Quadrille - composed of (1) 1st Caledonians, (2) Waltz Cotillon, (3) 4th Lancers, (4) 4th Quadrille, (5) 5th Lancers - found more favour. The dancers certainly put much energy into them, and so thoroughly enjoyed the dance, that an encore was demanded and won. 'God Save the King' brought a midsummer's dream of beauty and gaiety to an end."

A midsummer dream..... How could an ear-splitting disco compete with that? (Not to mention whatever was going on beside the bowling green.)

Other features of a typical summer programme would be cricket matches against the Morley C.C. (like the De Laune, an offshoot of a young men's institute); a paper chase; and a freewheeling contest down Tilburstow with strict rules to be followed: "The competitor shall take up whatever position on his machine that he may wish, but in the event of his altering the said position (or trying to add to the

speed of the machine by any movement whatsoever) after having been started by the official starter, he shall be disqualified."

Then there were the bank holiday weekends at Newnham: grass-track racing and attempts to ride up "The Bank" at Sharsted (when the pontoon schools weren't operating); rousing games of football and cricket played behind "The George"; battles between the occupants of the various bedrooms; and memorable sing-songs in the drawing room of Sharsted Court. Twenty-six members took part in the tour to Newnham in August, 1913.

## **GOOD WORKS**

In its first 25 years the De Laune had a mainly lower middle class membership - inevitably, because of the cost of the sport and the need to have enough spare time to enjoy it. But the De Laune middle class had a proper appreciation of the problems of the less fortunate.

The club's accomplished entertainers produced an annual concert for the inmates of a workhouse; and in 1913 and 1914 several dozen members donned striped pyjamas and funny hats to parade (on bikes) in the South London Carnival, held in aid of the Boys' Shelter Home. The department store of Swan and Edgar provided the pyjamas. ("Swan and Edgar Pyjama the World" was the store's slogan; "What Ho Bedtime" was the club's.)

And the De Laune rallied round when a member of the Putney C.C. called Bickford was permanently blinded as a result of crashing in a grass track race at Hounslow in 1910. As was said at the time: "This disaster was all the more terrible when it is known that his only support is a widowed mother who previously had depended partly on his earnings to keep the home together. It was hoped that could sufficient money be obtained from him it would pay some institution to teach him a trade for the blind."

The club committee sent a guinea to the Bickford fund and a collection among the members raised a further £2 13s.6d.

At this time a bitter battle was raging over which should be the national body for competitive cycling. The De Laune decided to join other clubs in sending a donation to the National Cyclists' Union "in view of its fight to maintain control of cycling against the alien body, the A.A.A., whose only desire to obtain control is for its own personal gain and not with any idea of protecting or looking after the interests of cyclists."

The N.C.U. saw off this threat to its supremacy. Its fussy application of racing regulations was an irritant, but it gave valuable help to cycling clubs trying to cope with the increasing number of legal problems which accompanied the growth in motor traffic. In April, 1914, the N.C.U. obtained the dismissal of a motor-bus driver who, it was said, "had endeavoured to injure De Laune members on a winter run." No other details of the incident are recorded, but it indicates that antagonism between the motorised and non-motorised is no new phenomenon.

A year earlier, a member of the club, Albert "Bunny" English, had been killed by a motor-bus in the Old Kent Road. Arthur Williams wrote to the Home Secretary and other authorities about the accident, and the bus company eventually paid £10 compensation to English's next-of-kin.

The 1913 minutes also record the expenditure of £2 4s.0d. on a Persian rug as a wedding present for Miss Margaret Jamieson, and the inclusion of her name in the membership register. Miss Margaret Jamieson? Surely not! The De Laune was an all-male club until 1976, wasn't it? Well, yes: except for this lady. For an explanation it's necessary to go back to 1909. In February of that year the club president, Mr. Clay, got to hear of strongly-expressed dissatisfaction with his hotel, the White Bear, as club headquarters. He resigned, and a new headquarters was chosen - the Perseverance Tavern, Vassall Road off Brixton Road. Mr. Alured Faunce De Laune - already a vice-president - was invited to succeed Mr. Clay as president; and when, in 1913, he became engaged to Miss Jamieson, her name was written into the membership register - as "patroness."

### **AGM: February 16th, 1905**

*There was uproar when the late hon. secretary (Joe Stapley) drew attention to the remarks which he alleged had been made by a member on his joining another club. He also complained of insulting language used to him by the present hon. secretary (Dick Whitby), who replied that whatever he said was in the best interests. No vote of thanks was proposed to the officers of last year and the meeting was consequently brought to an abrupt end.*

## THE GILES BROTHERS

By the time the 1914/18 war had begun, new names had replaced those of Le Grys and Condy in the prize-lists. There was George Jackson - fastest at 50 miles in 1907/8 and starting a long line of family connections with the club; Alf Styles, faster still - and fit enough in 1911 to finish a "50" in 2-41-40 despite knocking a man down in Horsham, injuring himself more than the man; Len, Percy and Cecil Tedd - with Percy setting a club record by winning the 1910 "25" in 1-11-30; Charlie Butler, three times fastest up Tilburstow, 1912/13/14; and Sammy Garbett - club champion in 1912 with a record "25" time of 1-09-31, and "50" record holder in 1913 with 2-32-06. Sammy was also a good boxer, and in his racing days was known for his habit of wearing a tall, stiff linen collar on training runs.

But the name most prominent in those immediate pre-war years was Giles: Fred, who joined in 1909, and his younger brother John, who joined the club two years later.

Fred won the club championship in 1911 with 1-11-07 but usually preferred to race on a trike. One of his best "barrow" performances was 2-49-04 in the West London Cycling Association "50" of 1914; and he used three wheels in a couple of Tilburstow hill-climbs, beating several two-wheeled competitors in the process.

John Giles surpassed his brother as a racing man. He was club champion in 1913 and again in 1914, when he set a club "25" record (on 84in. fixed) of 1-08-51. In the W.L.C.A. "50" of 1914 he broke Sammy Garbett's record with 2-29-06 - the first De Laune inside-evens "50".

John Giles kept a detailed account of his races and runs from 1910 to 1914. His average yearly mileage over that period was 8,800, which included a daily total of 18 miles to and from his work in a sugar refinery. "Pleasure" miles came from a mixture of clubruns, races and evening rides, with such highlights as his annual week's holiday in Hampshire, track racing at Herne Hill - and a trip to Epsom to see the 1913 Derby (won by Durbar II at 20-1).

A meticulous record was kept of expenditure. A Clipper wired-on tyre bought in 1910 lasted a total of 5,831 miles - 4,755 on the back wheel, 1,076 on the front. And in 1911, John Giles noted with obvious pleasure that he'd ridden well over 9,000 miles in the year but had spent only £2 15s.0d. on accessories - a cost of one penny for every 14 miles.

But 1913 was a more expensive year. Racing ambitions brought the need for a second "best" bike and good quality equipment:

### COST OF ACCESSORIES FOR 1913

Date		£	s	d
Feb 6	1pr pedals (Philips de luxe)		1	10
	*1pr wood rims		7	00
	1pr Bluemels Popular mudguards		1	11
	*1pr BSA hubs with cog and locking ring		9	6
	1 gross spokes and nipples		1	8
Feb 16	1pr steel rims		3	1
Feb 24	2 outer covers (Clipper Reflex Speed)		12	4
Mar 4	2 inner tubes		4	6
Mar 10	Reynolds chain		4	2
	*1pr Bluemels Popular mudguards		1	10
Mar 19	*Reynolds chain		4	2
	*1 gross spokes and washers for wooden rims		1	10
May 29	1 bicycle frame (BSA for racing)	3	4	00
	3 Smiths bands		3	4
Aug 26	New back fork ends		2	6
Oct 7	2 new outer covers (Bates and Clipper)		12	4
Nov 28	1 new outer cover (Clipper)		5	11
	*For new bicycle		<u>7</u>	<u>1 11</u>

The Giles brothers survived the war and helped the club through the difficult years afterwards. So, too, did one of their contemporaries, Frank ("Sparky") Sparksman, whose account of his early cycling years and initiation into the De Laune fold conjures up the true flavour of those times:

"In 1908 at the age of 16 and a wage of eight shillings a week I bought my first cycle. I became a proud owner of a Rover, which cost me exactly 15 shillings. A year later, not being able to keep the bearings in this decrepit mount any longer, I bought my first real bike - a Raleigh Road Racer with forward extensions and Kundtz wood rims. It looked very light, but wasn't as light as it looked.

"Having got into a sports jacket, some tight-kneed breeches and fancy-topped stockings, I kidded myself that I was a real cyclist. I was at least enthusiastic, and for two years rode unattached, pushing an 81 gear with back-peddalling brake at least 100 miles or more every Sunday, and about 50 on my half day.

"That, at least, was what I aimed at in the summertime. In the winter, 40 miles a day was good going on the sandstone roads of that period. The Epsom road was then six inches deep in mud, and if your front wheel dropped in a rut, you held on like grim death and plugged out of it - or you were down eating it.

"I used the Portsmouth road a good deal then, and always called in at the Anchor at Ripley for a drink. There was always a club having dinner there and I envied those happy fellows who seemed so full of fun and frolic. How I wished I could get into a good club!

"Living all my life in Brixton, I naturally used the Brighton road, and one Sunday I called in at the Halfway House at Lowfield Heath, then kept by Mrs. Tubman. After an enormous dinner costing 1s.6d. I sat on the lawn enjoying a cuppa when two cyclists asked me if I belonged to a club.

" 'Come along with us' they said. 'We are taking it easy back to Sutton for tea with the De Laune' .

"Having seen the helpings of roast pork, veg., Yorkshire pudding, marmalade pudding (two helpings) and stewed fruit which these two chaps had put away I was quite sure that, for the time being at least, they would be unable to tear up along the road. I was sure I could turn a nifty pedal if necessary, so I agreed to accompany them.

"I was quite happy to walk part of Reigate Hill when they suggested it. I began to wonder whether they really were the riders they claimed to be, twiddling their sewing machine gears like madmen. Why didn't they use an 81 gear like me? See how useful it was on that long run down into Sutton.

"Yes, we were still together when we reached The Angel, which at-that time was the country headquarters of the De Laune C.C. Upstairs, I found about 20 members already knocking back great platefuls of bread and butter, jam watercress and winkles. Plate after plate of cut fruit cake followed, and as quickly disappeared, together with lashings of hot tea. (Cost of club tea: nine pence.)

"After tea, someone they called Tibbels played the piano and some singing followed. rollicking songs by Frank Reed who really could sing; comic songs by Will Westlake with actions and comical faces thrown in; popular Scots ditties by Sammy Garbett, to the accompaniment of much barracking and grunting from the delighted listeners.

"Some played solo. Others went for a walk. But what did surprise and impress me most was the fact that when Mick Boothby (who was Captain then) called for drinks, only one or two took beer - most of the boys took pop! Well, that suited me fine.

"Anyone who knew Arthur Williams would not be surprised to hear that I hadn't been in the room long before he buttonholed me and explained all the advantages of joining the De Laune. Before you could say 'Crystal Palace' he had collected my sub. and I was in.

"At ten o'clock they called time, and we collected our bikes from the stabling outside. After Will Westlake had disentangled his machine from a couple of others and had tied the mudguard up with string, we lit our lamps (gas lamps up in front with the Captain, oil lamps in the rear) and happily trundled our way back to Clapham and home.

"One last remark: the following week I changed my gear to 68 and bought some black cashmere stockings in place of the fancy-topped variety. You see, I was learning!"

Two of the young men "Sparky" met that day - John Tibbels and Frank Reed -- were killed in the war. Will Westlake - then a fairly new member was to become one of the mainstays of the club, especially on the social side; and Mick Boothby was credited with keeping the De Laune alive during the war, first as captain, then as secretary. Both he and Will Westlake were awarded the club's gold badge.

Wal Condy and George Hume had been similarly honoured in 1910 for their work in organising social events. Walter died in 1932, but his younger brothers, Charles and Will, kept going until well into their eighties - providing further proof of how tough those early De Launeites were. (Charlie Spender was another. He was 89 when he died in 1961.)

## HERNE HILL NOSTALGIA

Charles Condy was still riding his old racing bike when he was in his later seventies - to do the shopping. A few years earlier (Good Friday, 1948) he paid a nostalgic visit to Herne Hill and looked into the De Laune cabin. There he found a group of veterans who were old-timers when he joined the club in 1904: Aubrey King, Charlie Hardy, Joe Stapley and "Tug" Wilson.

Aubrey King had been a voluntary official of the De Laune Institute and joined its cycling club soon after its formation. He lost touch, then rejoined about 1930 after a club rough stuff run passed the country cottage to which he had retired.

Joe Stapley had been club secretary for three years from 1902. He played a prominent part in founding the traditional Good Friday meetings at the Herne Hill track around the year 1900 - as Aubrey King explained:

"At the turn of the century it became necessary to drop the Easter Monday meeting. Poor support, principally owing to the weather had resulted in heavy losses. I remember the gates opening at the last meeting to a waiting queue of about two dozen and although a few hundred braved the drizzling rain, it had the atmosphere of playing to an empty house.

"In an effort to stop the slump a committee headed by Tommy Matthews, J.C.P. Tacagni and Joe Stapley as hon. sec. proposed to run the meeting on Good Friday. It had a chilly reception in the cycling world, where it was argued that if the public wouldn't support a Bank Holiday meeting they would not come on Good Friday. However, it was decided to take a chance.

"When the day arrived an anxious band of officials met at The Half Moon. We knew that failure would make us a laughing stock, but as the meeting had been well advertised, a fine programme arranged, and - best of all - good weather, it was hoped to pay expenses.

"Imagine our astonishment when we sauntered into Burbage Road to find a queue five to six deep stretching beyond the railway arches with more and more people hurrying to join. Our saunter broke into a run and it was a stiff job forcing our way into the ground, where in a few moments everyone was at his post. For economy's sake we had engaged but three commissionaires for the turnstiles. This was quite inadequate for such a large crowd so half a dozen stewards opened the big gates and the money was thrown into sacks as the spectators poured through.

"By two o'clock every seat was taken, the enclosures packed and a deep circle all round the ground. Although we were delighted, we could not understand the reason for such an unexpected crowd until the racing started.

"Good Friday was one of the few days when no horse racing was allowed and I think half the bookmakers in South London, with their staffs and followers, had come along to combine business with pleasure.

"When the first heat started, the enclosure seemed to be suddenly turned into a miniature silver ring at Epsom on Derby Day. The shouting of odds drowned everything else. I think the novelty amused the crowd, but it was serious for those in charge.

"Alf Willett wanted to stop the meeting, and unless something was done quickly there would be little chance for another meeting.

"Headed by Stapley we pleaded and threatened but it was no use; so with our one sergeant, two constables and every available steward we bundled the ringleaders outside the enclosure and locked the gates. But as soon as our backs were turned they tore up one of the long seats and forced the gate off its hinges to get back again.

"Things certainly looked ugly when we went after them, and it was a hard struggle before they were deposited outside the ground. Most of us bore the mark of battle and my chum, a big Scandinavian cyclist, had his right eye closed but he enjoyed every minute of the fun.

"Anyway, it stopped the betting and the crowd settled down to an exciting afternoon of sport. As I did not see a race that day and have mislaid the programme I can't give the results, but in the early years all the crack riders supported the meeting. Leon Meredith, Billy Pett, Charlie Bartlett, Vic Johnson, G.A. Olley, the Le Gryses, the Willises, Johnny Matthews, sic, used to provide some splendid racing.

"After its great start the meeting never looked back, but whether its success was due to the fine weather, the hard work of the officials, the splendid programme or our friends the bookies nobody could say. I think they all had a hand in it."

The Herne Hill track had been resurfaced in 1893 with the newly-invented wooden battens, about 3in. x 1in. and 1/4in. apart. They rattled when the quads and triplets were flying around, with the likes of Jimmy Walters and Frank Shorland glued to the wheels. The interior of the track was taken up with Dunlop professional pacers, workshops, canteens and rest tents.

Betting was allowed for a while at Herne Hill and the other tracks. The favourite in a one-mile race at Crystal Palace - for instance - helped George Le Grys to win because they knew "the boys" had their money on George. But the racing itself was still the main attraction. On one occasion a frustrated crowd which had gathered outside Herne Hill for a 24-hour race tore down the fence when they heard the starting pistol - and got in free.

The G.A. Olley mentioned by Aubrey King was a famous vegetarian champion. George Le Grys claimed to have followed him through the gates of the Catford track one afternoon, when the champion had "his bike in one hand and a nice young lady on the other." The Cockney ticket collector barred Olley's way and said: "Where's your ticket?" The champ. replied, in his lordly manner: "I'm Olley!" - to which the ticket man responded: "I don't care if you're Mistletoe - I want your ticket!"

One of the De Laune's fine trackmen of that time was, of course George Wakefield, who became its first club champion in 1894. He had the pleasure of seeing his two sons do well as time - triallists in the "twenties".

There was a less happy ending to Harry Hart's connection with the club. He gave up his membership soon after resigning as the first hon. secretary in 1894; he rejoined in 1911 and was immediately made a vice-president in recognition of his work in founding the club. Only a year later, however, his name was struck off because it was said, he "had no further interest in the club."

Another of the De Laune's early officials, Jimmy Wales (club captain, 1906/8) remained active as vice-captain, committee man and handicapper until the thirties. The hill-climb king, Charlie Butler, was a familiar figure in the cycling world for even longer: when in his eighties he would get up at six in the morning to ride round Richmond Park on his lightweight bike. At the age of 86 he grew a goatee beard so that he would make a better sheik at a fancy-dress party; and he was at the club's Newnham Service in November, 1975, a few weeks before his death.

In the months before the shattering impact of war, the De Laune was tiding high. It was, said Arthur Williams, far and away the most successful club south of the Thames. No other club could boast of such enthusiasm, support and membership. At a time when neighbouring clubs were dying for want of funds, enthusiasm and workers, the De Laune had all three. It was just as well that the club was strong. It needed all its resources to get through the next few years - and in doing so it produced a unique historical record of how individual soldiers coped with the minor irritations and major horrors of war.



Sammy Garbett 1914

## THE BUDGET

The outbreak of war in August, 1914, had one immediate effect on the club: twelve of its members who were in the Territorial Army went into uniform straight away. But at the half-yearly meeting in the following month, Arthur Williams said he hoped those who were left would carry on the winter programme much the same as usual. "We're neither helping our country nor our soldiers at the Front by postponing everything," he said. So plans were made for three concerts, a steak supper, whist drive, a dance, football matches and Christmas tour.

At that stage only one wartime restriction worried Arthur and his men: a police order that public houses had to close at ten o'clock instead of midnight. The consequent curtailment of Thursday clubnights at The Perseverance was made more bearable when De Laune members were invited to make use of the Cyprus Institute in Wyndham Road on Wednesday evenings.

Inevitably, as the war dragged on, the club's normal activities decreased. More than 120 members and friends sat down to the annual dinner in December, 1914, which was acclaimed as "a greater success than ever"; but it was five years before another dinner was held. During that time, there were no races, very little social activity, and few people on clubruns. Active members were so scarce in the two years from 1917 to 1919 that the entire De Laune membership formed the club's committee - but they never met as a committee between AGMs because there wasn't enough business for them to discuss.

The real achievement of the wartime De Laune lay elsewhere - in the way it upheld and strengthened the feeling of fellowship which had already put it into a class above that of its contemporaries.

At the end of 1914 - at the suggestion of Arthur Williams - the club opened a "Hamper Fund" for its members in the Forces. From then until May, 1919, the pennies and shillings of those still at home were used to send out regular supplies of biscuits, chocolate, toffee, lemonade powder, salmon, sardines, Oxo cubes, sausages, coffee, Wrights Coal Tar soap and cigarettes. Compasses and sou'westers were sometimes included - and Mrs. Faunce De Laune sent her own personal gifts.

But the outstanding example of De Laune "family" enterprise was another Arthur Williams inspiration. At the annual meeting in February, 1915, he read out letters received from members in the Army, who he said felt a great pride in the club: "Their thoughts seem constantly with us, even though they are suffering the hardships of active service. I propose that in future every one of our soldiers should every week receive a new publication called 'The De Laune C.C. Budget', in which they would get club news and news of each other".

The first De Laune \*Budget was printed and posted within three days of the AGM. The last one - No.220 - was published on April 29th, 1919. Over those four years, the compilation and writing was the work of (in turn) Arthur Williams, Fred Winter, Percy Williams and Walter Niblett; but the man who deserves much of the credit is Alf Baldwin. He printed, on average, forty copies of an eight-page Budget each week, using a hectograph - a messy process which reproduced handwriting and drawings by means of a gelatine plate. An evil-smelling mauve jelly had to be melted down - and it says much for Mrs. Baldwin's good nature that she allowed her saucepans to be used for the good of the club.

*\*Footnote: In those days, the word, "budget" was used to mean "a quantity of written or printed material".*

When Budget No. 1 was published, more than 20 members were in the forces, and by the end of the war 62 had seen active service. Some chose a Territorial battalion - the Queen's Westminsters - because the club President was its Colonel-in-Chief: several others joined one of the many cyclists' battalions, such as the 2nd Kent and the 8th Essex. Extracts from their letters form the main part of the Budgets. They wrote while under fire in the trenches, while sweltering in the Tropics, and while trying to adjust to Army life at home.

In the early issues, the most prominent contributors included three men of the Queen's Westminsters who were in the thick of the fighting in France: John Tibbels, his close friend Frank Reed, and Arthur Williams' younger brother Percy - who had become an officer's batman. Then there was Sammy Garbett, a cook in the London Scottish and never far behind the front line; Sid Williams, a cyclist despatch rider in the 1st Surrey Rifles; and Charlie Maxwell, in the 24th County of London Territorials.

**Frank Reed - March 1915**

Journeys to and from the trenches are rather exciting - with six planks on your shoulder and a sack of potatoes under the arm, to throw yourself flat in the road when German star shells come your way. I have a horror of belly-flopping in slimy mud and on one occasion foolishly gave way to my objections and did not flop. I have not repeated the experience..... As I write, a sniper is busy putting bullets in the sandbags above and the sand is descending in sprays. But the weather is improving and the mud getting firm.

**John Tibbels - March, 1915**

A German shell has wrecked the house of a chemist who possessed a fine piano that I used to get some excellent practice on. I call on Frank each day - invariably finding him asleep. He's getting fat and out of condition, but merry as ever.

**Sammy Garbett - March 1915**

Civilian spies are abundant. All London Scottish moves are accurately known beforehand and we suffer accordingly..... Excellent hamper was a delight, both to get and consume..... As for the stay-at-home rabid teetotaller who would prevent the soldier, wet and cold, in the trenches, from having his tot of rum - I would like to put some of these dogs in the firing line. I read my Budget many times and carry them in my pack. It's tricky work carrying dixies of stew over broken-down wires, Jack Johnson holes and debris.

**Sid Williams - March 1915**

Bully beef and biscuits ever since leaving Harpenden for France and no milk in the tea. Had a fine Channel crossing, but 22 hours in a cattle truck was rotten. Billets are bad: no sanitation, and rats do platoon drill on our faces at night; but they can't wake me.

**Charlie Maxwell - March 1915**

After leaving a camp near Rouen we were packed 40-60 in each cattle truck and sent on a 22-hour ride. No rest was possible. Then a 15-mile march in a snow-storm. Now we're living in a barn just vacated by Sid's detachment. Rats have got into my haversack and eaten my iron rations. I slept in the grass one night, but not again from choice.

**Percy Williams - April 1915**

Had tea with Frank and Tibs on Good Friday. Everybody thinks the Germans are whacked.

**John Tibbels - April 1915**

Am learning the machine-gun with Frank. The German trenches are occupied by Prussians and Saxons alternately. They hate one another. Recently the Saxons asked that their trench, which had been mined, should not be blown up until the Prussians occupied it. The Saxons fire few shots compared-with the Prussians.

**John Tibbels - April 1915**

Temperance fanatics will be delighted to learn that, in future, soldiers in the trenches will not get their tot of rum. Pity these fanatics cannot be exterminated with other vermin. I'm on my eleventh day out of the trenches on the machine-gun course and am very keen on it. I'm billeted with Frank and two others. We invited Percy round to tea on two occasions and gave the fat little beggar a first-rate feed, as presents from home were plentiful at the time. No bread for a week, but other rations are liberal, so no complaints.

**Frank Reed - April 1915**

Have finished the machine-gun course and am back in the Company. Had another concert in a much shelled school hall. Have also been digging trenches. When finished, the Germans destroyed them, but they were empty. You hear the shout for stretcher-bearers and enquire who's hit; if it's not a close chum you feel sorry - but soon forget.

**Percy Williams - April 1915**

Am back in the trenches, but have some good sleeps on my new air-pillow. I believe the German resistance will soon collapse..... The Germans have put another shell in the concert hall - won't be anything left of it soon.

**Sid Williams - April 1915**

It's very kind of Mrs. De Laune to think of us. Turkish are a change from the inferior cigarettes and tobacco obtained out here. I've had lunch with the London Scottish - Sammy serving me with steak, chips, tea and cake. And I've had a bath, but not worth stripping for: I fell in the tub and a bucket of cold water was thrown over me..... Conversation with soldiers who have been in some of the toughest engagements has excited my admiration for the British soldier..... I find riding at night exciting work.

**Charlie Maxwell - April 1915**

A shot struck a hurdle I was carrying to a trench..... Cigarettes arrived while I was in the trenches, so were especially welcome.

**Sid Williams - May 1915**

Never felt fitter in all my life. I carry despatches from brigade to regiment - and the roads between are often shelled. I have daily bathes in a small stream - rather novel and grand bathing in the hot sun and watching aeroplanes being shelled. Getting plenty of grub.

**Percy Williams - May 1915**

In Belgium now - a little country village where the people are very kind to us. Don't care how long we stay, 'cos it's like being on holiday in the country. Quite peaceful today - the sun is very hot. Few shells come over and it hardly seems possible than we are no farther away from the Germans that you are from Kennington Park. Now serving a much younger but very good officer. Government respirators have proved quite effective against German poisonous gases.

**Sid Williams - May 1915**

Plenty of excitement - night rides on greasy cobbles with stray bullets overhead. Nice fat job generally - can visit all my pals and, when in town, have posh teas. Often visit Sammy.

**Frank Reed - May 1915**

Went to a concert in the grounds of an old chateau - a handsome staircase at the entrance was used as a platform. Sang a solo, and took part in a duet which was the hit-bit of the evening. The scene was enchanting: only the officers in the front rows were visible. Behind that, all one could see was the ever-changing glow of hundreds of cigarettes..... Shells have sent my billet west, but there were no casualties.

**Percy Williams - May 1915**

A whole Saxon regiment surrendered - Saxons would a// surrender if they had the chance; they are unwilling fighters. The Germans usually place them in the front..... I've sent a packet of yellow flowers home - picked from the side of our trench where they were growing wild. Expect they'll be dead, but they were beautiful when sent.

**Charlie Maxwell - May 1915**

Now resting after seven days and nights in the trenches, No blankets, windows or roof, and a stone floor. Good, job the weather is warm and we have our overcoats. Bully beef and biscuits every day. Three days later. Returned to trenches on Tuesday. Am now on a stretcher in a field, with a shrapnel wound in my back. Waiting to be taken to hospital.

**Sid Williams - May 1915**

Brigade headquarters are now in the trenches, along which I have to travel. It has been raining for three days, so the ground is in a wretched condition - wet clay from head to foot. Had some narrow escapes from shells.

**Sammy Garbett - May 1915**

One of my long days: Sunday 6a.m. until Tuesday 7a.m. with only three hours' sleep. During this period, in addition to cooking, drawing rations, feeding the men, loading and unloading the cookers, we marched 28 miles and were for some time under shell fire. Grub is a bit rough in the trenches but not so bad when resting as the following menu will show: roast beef, baked potatoes; stewed figs; rice pudding. Every three days it is changed to boiled stews with suet dumpling. Breakfast: Quaker Oats, fried bacon, tea, etc. Teatime we usually contrive to serve out an extra cake or bread pudding in addition to the Army rations of bread, cheese, jam, etc..... Found a baker's oven and made good use of it in every way.

### **Percy Williams - June 1915**

Marched about 19 miles to a new position near St. Eloi. First day: nine miles. Rigged up tents with ground sheets - it was a fine sight to see little tents with flags made out of picturesque 'kerchiefs. Second day: started in a cart but it broke down, so I finished on Shanks's Pony - ten miles. Felt absolutely o.k. Road was like Epsom Road on Derby Day. Passed through Ypres. On fire in two places. Had the appearance of having been struck by an earthquake. Quite awful. Our trenches are rotten compared with those we left. No fires, so it's all bully-beef and biscuits.

### **Sid Williams - June 1915**

Our brigade have advanced and captured a line of German trenches that Regulars have failed to capture in three attempts. Congratulations have been showered on us from sundry generals etc. Our losses were terrible; about 1,200 men, or half our strength. My impression now of the whole affair is something like a horrible nightmare.

The brigade on our left were in horse-shoe formation and losing heavily from enfilade artillery fire. We had to straighten the line or retire. The powers decided on the straightening process and our brigade was selected to do the job. After three days' preparation, laying fresh lines of communication, etc., the brigade staff took up an advanced position just to the rear of the trenches.

After the usual preliminary artillery bombardment, our boys charged. It was magnificent. They swept the Germans out of their trenches, and those that did not bolt were either put out or captured.

Then came our losses. The Germans turned all their available artillery on to the captured and our communication trenches to prevent reinforcements, and kept it up for hours. In parts our men had to lay out in the open under a terrific fire. Yet they held on. Truly a marvellous performance for untried Territorials.

We have now consolidated the captured position, dug communication trenches, etc. and have been relieved. I was well in it for the greater part of the time. As soon as the Germans tumbled to the fact that something was in the wind they shelled our trenches like blazes. Bang went our telephone wires. Communication had to be kept up by the orderlies on foot. In my trips I had to clamber over dead and wounded by the score and a good many men were absolutely mad. One poor fellow they were holding down was trying to get at everyone who passed, swearing they were Germans.

The trenches were awful, smashed-in everywhere. The wonder is that our brigade headquarters was not hit. Shells were bursting all round it with deafening crashes, but beyond taking the majority of tiles off the roof and wounding an orderly the place was spared. Of course the staff and signals office were in dug-outs but I wasn't. I think we deserve a good rest.

### **Sammy Garbett - June 1915**

I've sent home some battlefield trophies - French 75mm shell-case, three English Starlight shell-cases and a few other items. Hamper from the club and cigarettes from Mrs. De Laune arrived at a most opportune moment, as also did Sid Williams, for he came along just as I and my friends were starting on our "posh" tea.

### **Charlie Maxwell - June 1915**

*(From 1st Eastern General Hospital, Cambridge.)*

Been under x-rays. Piece of shrapnel entered my back and came out of the side. You can drop pennies in the hole in my back. Surgeons say it is not serious, though it's very painful at times. While lying injured in the trench, men were dropping dead on me.

### **Sid Williams - June 1915**

Hamper arrived when I returned from the engagement in which Charlie Maxwell was wounded. Had been feeding on odds and ends so it was very welcome. Mrs. De Laune's present arrived two days after, so I'm doing well. I am at Bethune, only three miles away from Sammy, so have renewed my visits. I've been swimming and playing football, but the Brigade is in action again.

### **Percy Williams - June 1915**

Transport has to come many miles nightly, and at great risk to bring our rations. They are often shelled, so have to gallop the whole way. There is continual bombardment day and night. The town is always on fire in some places.

#### **John Tibbels - June 1915**

Cattle still roam about, both in the front and rear of our trenches. Went out early one morning and milked one.

#### **Frank Reed - June 1915**

Hamper arrived..... lemonade powder was a godsend. But I'll never forgive or forget the officers responsible for the rotten grub received on the journey from Armentieres to Ypres. The cooks are slackers and do as little as possible and this is considerably less than usual through the indifference of the officers.

Shells are coming across all day and every day. Shells of every description: fizzes that seem to tear lumps out of the atmosphere..... shells that look like overhead trams..... others seem to go strolling across the heavens as if they had no intention of stopping at all - but when they do stop, we know it. Smoke and earth go up like huge trees. It's perfectly hellish.

We received a good deal of attention in our trench from the Germans and the result was about 20 casualties. These trenches are as small and narrow as possible in order to make them shell-proof. Things are so uncomfortable that it is a treat to get out on to a digging fatigue.

#### **Percy Williams - June 1915**

After eight days in those bad trenches, we went into camp for 36 hours, and are now on the banks of the Yser Canal. Drinking water is now plentiful. Spent two days making a dug-out for my officer - quite a palace. Boarded floor, sandbagged roof, etc. My chums and self are in a comfortable dug-out. Plenty of materials from shell riddled houses. Have now china plates, kettles, saucepans, pails, wine glasses (for eggs), tables, chairs and all things that help to make life in the trenches pleasant.

Found an inhabited farm and get butter, eggs and milk each day. Also found the ruins of a magnificent nursery. Got some fine peas, asparagus and potatoes. In addition we now get an issue of half a loaf each day. On June 13 we had some stewed gooseberries. On June 14 for breakfast - eggs and bacon, sardines, bread, butter and marmalade. Dinner - cold meat, potatoes and peas. Tea - bread, butter, jam, cake, sardines and tea. Also had an allowance of six packets of cigarettes (Hill's Campaigners). Got some lovely carnations from the nursery.

#### **John Tibbels - June 1915**

Have only been fed-up once since leaving England and that was two days ago (June 10) in the gas area. Had no sleep for ten nights and only an occasional five minutes during each day. We were out digging at night on the tenth when it commenced to rain very heavily. It was bad to work in it but the return was much worse. With full equipment, rifle and spade we slipped up and down muddy banks, in ditches, over and into each other and had a bad time generally. Finally we had to walk 600 yards along the sloping muddy banks of a canal. 'Twas a dirty night. It is said we are to have a week's rest. It will be the first for seven months.

#### **Sid Williams - June 1915**

My favourite officer, Lieut. Hull, was killed at the start of that last dustup. He had only just returned from leave, during which he had got married. His body was brought to our headquarters, where it laid till next day because they could not find time to bury him..... The tennis ball Mrs. De Laune sent me provided some fine sport until somebody tried to emulate Jessop, and now we are looking for that ball in a potato field.

#### **Percy Williams - June 1915**

On June 17 I was one of a number waiting the word to charge down on the German trenches. During the preliminary bombardment a shell burst nearby and knocked me out with a nasty gash on the right cheekbone. My pal Phillips and another by my side were killed. As I began to recover I had a delusion that I was dead and while regrets were floating through my mind I heard my officer, Lieut. Webb, shouting for a field bandage. He bound my wound and ordered me to lie at the bottom of the trench. This was agony, as the noise of the guns, and the shocks, were intensified when at the bottom of the

trench. About an hour after, permission was given for the casualties to make their way to the frontline dressing station. Part of the way was along an open road. This seemed to be swept by rifle fire and shells. As the wounded made their way along, shells were bursting all round, yet the wounded men escaped them all. While receiving attention at the second dressing station, behind Ypres, a shell entered the building and appeared to wound all except me and the surgeon. After this, by motor bus to the base hospital and so to Hayle Place Hospital, near Maidstone. The wound has temporarily taken the sight of my right eye.



*Sid Williams at Bethune, France*

## DEATH AND DESTRUCTION

John Tibbels provided the Budget with regular and graphic accounts of life in the trenches. Even when his unit were pulled out for a brief rest they did not escape the horrors of war:

"Came out and marched back ten miles to a convent. Arrived 4.30a.m. That night we slept on the second floor, but at 2a.m. the Germans shelled us with heavy shells. We ran along streets with shells dropping all around. Reached a bridge same time as an artillery limber when a shell burst on the spot, killing two men, two horses and wounding others. Fortunately we escaped unhurt, although three of us were knocked down by the force of the explosion.

"The next two nights we slept in cellars but they shelled us badly at 2 a.m. each morning. One large house was completely blown down with one large shell. All this happened ten miles from the firing line. It was an unpleasant experience sitting in a cellar, expecting every moment to have the house blown down on top of you. I did not sleep first night but helped the wounded from 3a.m. to 2p.m.

"After three nights of this we were again moved up -near the firing line to a wood where wounded were lying. This was badly shelled. Our sergeant was killed there. We were then moved closer to the firing line, to a wood called "Hell's Forest". That was the only name by which it could be called.

"When we moved in it was pitch dark. Shots were coming through, and shells were bursting in the trees. That night our lieutenant was killed outright by a shell. He had only been with us three days. I was extremely sorry as he was my officer in London at first. A fine fellow. Everybody was attached to him.

"The attack was on a front of about 1200 yards, and on this all the Allies' and German guns were concentrated. A bayonet charge and taking a trench is nothing. The Germans hardly resist and our men take a trench with hardly a casualty. It's the terrible effect of the German guns when you are in that trench that works the havoc. They make it a living hell. I saw several men who went mad under the strain.

"It was like being on the edge of a volcano. The wounded could not all be brought in on the first night and many of them were eventually killed by the Germans. Next day they could not be got at owing to the terrific bombardment. At night our men went out to fetch the wounded but the Germans would not allow this and continually fired and threw bombs at the stretcher parties. However, they got a fearful hiding.

"We came out at midnight and reached our huts at 5 a.m., quite exhausted. Good luck has been with us and our casualties though fairly heavy are less than expected. Our little party expected a rough time so before going up we managed to get a champagne dinner".

By contrast, Sid Williams was reminded of De Laune garden parties when he went back for a rest:

"Had a fine time. Band performances every evening. One night there was a splendid concert in the grounds of Brigade Headquarters. A stage, fitted with footlights, was erected on a small elevation backed by some trees. Grounds and trees were decorated with Chinese lanterns. When lit in the evening the effect was great.

"Plenty of French ladies were present. To see couples strolling through illuminated grounds while the band was playing, or the notes of a song were trilling through the trees, made it difficult to believe that we were on active service. But in the distance could be seen the occasional flash of guns. It set me thinking of the pleasant times I might be having if it wasn't for this cursed war".

The "cursed war" brought Frank Reed's young life to an end in June, 1915, The Budget printed the letter which his father received from John Tibbels:

"On June 16 an action was started to take some German trenches. Frank's company was about a mile from the firing line while I with my machine-gun was but 20 yards behind it. The

attack began at 3 a.m. Everything went well until the difficulty of getting the wounded out was discovered by the Germans, who immediately commenced to shell the wounded and stretcher-bearers.

"Frank was in a trench at a bend in the road along which the wounded had to pass. About 4p.m. on the 17th a shrapnel burst over Frank's platoon, wounding I believe ten men. Frank was hit at the back of the head with a piece of the shell case. It is with heartfelt sorrow that I have to tell you that he never regained consciousness and was buried that evening at a spot known to me, of which I can give you a sketch should you wish it.

"In him his company has lost one of its best men, but I have lost the best chum I ever had. Only the previous night he was up like a Trojan, bandaging and carrying the wounded. There were not sufficient stretcher-bearers to cope with the heavy casualties. Many men are indebted to Frank for the attention they received. Without him they would have lain for 36 hours, as some did, before being bandaged and removed to hospital. He died, one of the many heroes who are known only to his friends who are left to deeply regret his loss".

John Tibbels also wrote an account of Frank Reed's death to the Budget:

"It all seems a nightmare. The first shells dropped all around us, but by sheer luck our little trench (only five yards long) was not hit. The reserves behind, however, had a rough time. The first night I went back to supports (one mile) for more gun ammunition. Coming back I saw a big, high explosive shell drop in the middle of a company of Scotch. It wrought terrible and ghastly havoc. I had kept clear of this party, knowing the danger should the Germans shell the road.

"Second day (17th) there were so many casualties that many of our men volunteered for stretcher-bearing. The sights were pitiful. Only those who could not possibly walk were carried. The Germans shelled the wounded and stretcher-bearers so badly that on the afternoon of the second day all this traffic had to be stopped. One shell, intended for the wounded, killed poor Frank..... My good luck has followed me so far and I sincerely trust it will follow me through."

John Tibbels' luck ran out four months later - on the evening of Friday October 22nd. He was killed by fragments of a shell which exploded on the parapet of his trench near Ypres. Arthur Williams wrote a glowing tribute:

"The nobleness of his character can easily be judged by his letters to the Budget, written under the worst of conditions in trenches which have been acknowledged to be the worst in the line..... His letters home have all shown glorious enthusiasm for the cause he was fighting. People who read them, without having previously known him, have stated that they immediately formed a mind picture of him and his surroundings, and their grief at his death is very real."

Members of the De Laune at home were able to fete one of their Active Service heroes when Sammy Garbett spent most of a seven-day leave with them in July, 1915. More than fifty people gathered in The Perseverance Tavern to hear him sing "It's Nice to Get Up In The Morning" accompanied by Charlie Hardy on the piano and then deliver a 2 1/2-hour lecture on his war experiences. At the end of the evening - during which the ten-o'clock closing regulation was flouted - some cartridge cases Sammy had picked up from the battlefield fetched 23s.6d. for the Comforts Fund, which was enough to pay for three big hampers.

Sammy was back in England again in the following October - with a rifle bullet in his shoulder. He and his cooks had been moved up close behind the firing line so that hot tea could be made for the men in the trenches. To quote from the Budget:

"Sammy was closing down the last dixie lid when a bullet struck the lid with a twang that sounded like the plucking of a banjo string. Picking up a large knife, Sammy proceeded to cut a huge cheese when he received a blow in the shoulder that was like unto a tremendous kick from a horse.

"Round he swung with the knife still in his hand and then down with a crash. It was fortunate that nobody was near, for the force with which that knife was swung round was sufficient to cut their heads off."

Five hours after being hit, Sammy was on his way to the coast in a train which he said was little better than a collection of cattle trucks; but no one on board seemed to care because - as Sammy said - they were going home:

"The pluck of these men when wounded is simply wonderful. One man, with a badly fractured thigh bone, managed to stagger 12 miles to the railway station. The surgeon who examined him there was amazed at the man's endurance, but the man himself seemed to think he had done quite an ordinary thing."

In that same month - October, 1915 - Sid Williams got what he called "a jammy one" in the thigh, but was soon back in France for the rest of the war. Percy Williams never regained the sight of his wounded eye and was invalided out of the army.

Of the other contributors to the Budget, the most prolific writer was "Sparky" Sparksman, who spent almost all the war in India. He complained bitterly about the heat, the food, and the attitude of the white civilians towards the soldiers, who "seemed to be regarded as lepers."

De Laune Service men at home had varying fortunes. One based in Wiltshire wrote of using his bike "to visit birds in neighbouring farmhouses - like a fisherman visiting lobster-pots" which just goes to show that "birds" in that sense isn't such a new word as some might think.

Another was only too pleased to spend some time "cyclist training" in Kent - scouting, finding positions for artillery and looking for "spies". But the same man also bemoaned his fate of having to do cookhouse fatigues - the filthiest job he'd ever struck:

"Three of us on the job. We washed out three greasy coppers, 15 greasy bacon pans, 20 dixies, 18 tea pails, two small baths, eight bread pans and so many carving knives, forks, ladles and small articles that the task filled us with dismay. After that we had to clean up the cookhouse and its surroundings - about 50 square yards. And after tea we had to go through it again.

The few De Laune members who still had time for normal club activities managed to keep the Saturday and Sunday clubruns going and even held the occasional weekend tour - like this one described by Arthur Williams in September, 1915:

"Leaving Kennington at 9.15a.m. we rode by back ways to Raynes Park. Approaching this place we were highly amused by a lunatic tram driver who kept making frantic exhibitions of a pretence to get at and eat us. He had often ate dozens like us before breakfast. Unfortunately Cliffy spoilt the joke at Raynes Park by giving him an opportunity to start on his feed.

"The Portsmouth road is looking at its best just now. In most cases where there is a clearing between the pines can be seen a gorgeous mass of heathers. Through Guildford a visit to St. Catherine's Chapel, Godalming and the great camps at Witley. Then the great four-mile climb up Hindhead. The scenery is so grand and you get so enthusiastic as view after view unrolls itself that the work of climbing is almost forgotten and you arrive at the top feeling quite fresh.

"Just below the Gibbet on a glorious bed of heather we squatted down to enjoy our lunch. The view from here must be one of the finest of inland views. Punch Bowl, Hogs Back, the North Downs from Guildford are but a few of the sights. We even had a biplane performing for our special benefit.

"Near Liphook we had to pass a regiment of soldiers looking hot and dirty, apparently returning from a long route march. Many were the chippings we received, but being hardened sinners we appreciated the attention received.

"Reaching Portsmouth at 6.30 p.m. we bought provisions for the next day, booked a seat at the Hippodrome, and then to Maddens for another feed. A stroll along the front at Southsea and then the music hall. It was a first-class company and we had a good time. Next morning along the front to Eastney Ferry. Here we saw some amateur fishermen slinging from the shore: the result of much excitement and the work of ten men was about 1/2 lb. under sized fish. The net used was about 200ft. long. We saw the joke.

"By motor board to Hayling Island, we stayed awhile blackberrying and then for the homeward run to Sutton, where we had tea with the club. To a fit man there is something in the air and scenery of the Portsmouth road that is quite intoxicating."

Another weekend tour incorporated a visit to the hospital in Chatham where Percy Williams was then being treated:

"Endeavour to get him out to tea with us but Sister said it was against regulations. NO!!!! Found that a Colonel Haines was in command. Finally ran him to ground at his private house. Interviewed his wife. Got her sympathy and then he was easy. Result was Percy was released from this place that is more like a prison than a hospital and had one of those eggs and bacon teas he had dreamed of for so many months."

A one-day run was also held to visit Sammy Garbett in hospital in Chichester - a round-trip of 126 miles. After a pleasant couple of hours chatting to Sammy in the hospital grounds and listening to the music of a band the visitors set off home on a journey that was slowed by "a puncture, heavy mists, wet sandy roads, potholes and villagers." Then hot tea and saveloys at Tooting - and home just after two in the morning.

The Budget's editorial team sometimes had their work cut out to meet the weekly deadlines. There are several mentions of printing problems which kept them up late into the night. And they had less and less spare time to spend on the Budget. Walter Niblett wrote in 1916:

"Boys! You may find your letters somewhat curtailed this issue. Those who have sent two may find only one. We are working 14 hours per day, six days a week, and on the seventh sometimes put in five more to prevent getting stale. This does not leave a great time for the Budget, neither is it conducive to a clear brain, so please do not be too critical."

## "WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?"

Conscription was the talking point in 1916 - and Arthur Williams used the Budget to rail against it. He had appeared before one of the tribunals set up to hear appeals against the call-up by men who claimed exemption on grounds of ill-health, conscience, or being a close relative's sole means of support.

"It's a lesson to attend a tribunal. You can see 'HUN' in the faces of the creatures of whom it is composed. They look on the appellants as so much sausage meat, to be pushed into the machine. They seem to say 'What does it matter about your business? Go out! Fight and die to save OUR business. You craven cur! How dare you ask for exemption?' "

Arthur's case was that his mother depended on him - an unmarried son staying at home. But the local tribunal said she could go to live with one of her married daughters. Arthur was outraged.

"If I go at my country's call, what am I fighting for? If the Germans come over here, will they treat my old mother worse than these tribunals would have her treated? Are not workhouse inmates under German rule as well treated as those under English rule? If this is so, what matters whether the English or Germans look after the workhouse into which my mother is to be forced?"

In the end, Arthur had to go. He and one of his De Laune friends, Alf Clifton, joined the 3/4 Buffs together in April 1916. They adapted to army life very well. Not so Walter Niblett's brother Ernie ("Energy") who was also called up in 1916 and told the Budget all about it:

"A band of pipers escorted us from Whitehall to Victoria. Reached Brighton at noon. Left there 2 p.m. and arrived at Shoreham 2.30. What a hole! 'The Piggeries.'

"With mud to our ankles we were lined before some old boy who sent us to the cookhouse for dinner. Fitted with togs the same night. Sleep 34 in a hut. One mattress on the floor and three blankets. Isn't it b..... hard.

"*Breakfast:* two small slices bread and marg., 1/3rd pint tea.

"*Dinner:* one piece meat, one spud, 1/2 turnip.

"*Tea:* two small slices bread and dripping, 1/3rd pint tea. Grub is sloshed on the table and you feed like pigs, only not so well. Doctor examined my chest so I showed him my feet. He turned to the Captain and said 'This poor fellow is of no use to us at all.' Only my military training saved the doctor from being embraced and kissed.

"Asked my trade. 'Carpenter'. He said 'Oh well, you can go home and make coffins for Germans.' Couldn't see the joke, but as I wanted to be pally, forced a grin. The sergeant says I may be discharged, but it won't be for some weeks.

"Orderly today. Clearing the tables I had a basin of slops. One poor devil asked me for these slops and though I told him what it was he drank it. The thought and sight of our mess table makes my stomach revolt. Go to the YMCA after each meal and have something to eat.

"Officers and NCOs seem decent fellows, but the mud! the men! and the grub! ..... UGH! There are plenty of pig-stys where one could feed better."

"Energy" soon won his discharge. Arthur Williams, meanwhile, was increasingly enthusiastic about the Army. He became a batman - like his brother Percy - and as such saw a good deal of front-line action. He wrote to the Budget in December, 1917:

"Since I wrote last we have had a hell of a time. We marched back to a ravine - six inches of mud everywhere. It was raining and we dug ourselves a little funk hole in the bank and huddled up in the mud to try to sleep. Next night we slept in an open field.

"About two days after, we had to go up again. Hung about all night by the side of a road and then prepared to attack the Germans who had broken our line at this place. Then the Germans attacked us, and for two days and three nights it was hell - mud, no rations or water, and bitterly cold, shells bursting all round.

"Our Captain did not know what was doing on our right, so asked me if I would find out. The moment my head appeared, several machine guns started on me at 200 yards' range. Bullets in dozens hit the ground at my feet and hundreds must have narrowly missed me by inches, for on and off I was quite 15 minutes in the open on this job.

"Once, in a funk, I threw myself flat on the road and a bullet entered the road a few inches from my nose, sending the earth into my face. Getting back to the trench, a shell burst on the parapet and buried two fellows by my side. We were half-an-hour working like madmen to get them out.

"I am absolutely infested with lice, dirty, and in as rotten a state as it is possible for a man to be. Have not had a bath for months, nor a wash for ten days. Being in a big push is hell unless you happen to get wounded at the start."

The death of Arthur Williams in March 1918, was described by an S.C.C.U. official as a severe blow not only to the De Laune C.C. but also to the cycling world in general.

The officer commanding Arthur's company wrote to Percy Williams:

"During the Hun attack on March 22nd your brother chanced on the H.Q. of the battalion on our left, and had brought me a message. I asked him to guide me to the H.Q. and it was while we were walking there that a machine-gun bullet hit him in the stomach, coming out through the thigh.

"I got him away to a dressing station immediately. His first thought when he was hit was for his mother, and his first words were 'My poor mother; what will she think of this?'

"I know I am speaking for his comrades when I say we shall miss him very much indeed. We have lost a good comrade and a very brave man. It is especially sad, as his commission papers were going through."

There are five names from the 1914/18 war on the Newnham memorial plaque; Frank Reed, John Tibbels, Arthur Williams, Will England and Walter Webster. Will England was shaving at the door of his dug-out when he was fatally wounded by a shell a few days before Arthur Williams was killed. Lieutenant Walter Webster lost his life within a few days of being awarded the D.S.O. for picking up a German mortar shell which had landed among his men and throwing it to safety. He was last seen running towards some Germans who had got into his trench - firing his revolver as he went.

One of the original club members, Charlie Hampson, was another war hero. The French awarded him the Croix de Guerre "for conspicuous bravery in the field" while working as a front-line interpreter with French and Australian troops.

## PRISONERS' TALES

Two De Launeites who ended up as prisoners of the Germans - Fred Ventris and "Cliffy" Clifton - told their tales when the war was over. Fred Ventris took part in an assault on the German trenches near Becourt in September, 1916, after a couple of hours' sleep in a trench so crowded that there was no room for him to lie down:

"Before dawn we were aroused and after a hasty meal made ready for business. At six o'clock we had a short artillery preparation and over we went.

"My chum next to me was immediately struck in the head and fell back into the trench. We had covered but a few paces when our formation was upset due to the state of the ground, with shell holes and a mine crater we had to cross, and to the large numbers of men knocked out.

"I was possessed with the one idea of getting on as quickly as possible and get cover in the trench we were to take. Shells were falling on all sides and machine-guns were rattling a merry tune, whilst in the rear our artillery shattered the air with rapid fire.

"After covering with much effort about 100 yards of continuous shell holes, I looked around to find myself almost alone. I had been so engrossed advancing in a straight line and the ground being so difficult that I hadn't noticed the battalion had vanished.

"To get my bearings I then bore to the right, where we had been told there was a road running alongside the wood. But it must have been knocked out of existence, as no trace of a road could I see.

"I came to a trench, badly battered, running away to the right, so proceeded down it and - turning a sharp bend - came across five Germans at the head of a dug-out. Immediately I jumped to the 'on guard' and as quickly they put up their hands, except two who pointed to their wounds.

"On consideration I decided to keep them where they were until some of the mopping-up party came along. In about a minute, one of these made his appearance and I called him over. He happened to be a fellow who we had always reckoned was a bit of a madman, and as soon as he saw these Jerries he began to scream at them all sorts of oaths and threatened to bayonet the lot then and there, while he foamed at the mouth and jumped about in rage.

"The poor Jerries were frightened out of their wits, not knowing what to expect. After a minute or two of this panto I told him he'd better take this little lot back as f had to go forward. I said there wasn't any need to go barmy over a few prisoners. He replied that they were only a lot of B.B.s and he'd see they were duly put out of their misery. So I left him and went forward out of the trench.

"I searched the landscape in front for any of our fellows and espied a short distance ahead half-a-dozen helmets, so made my way thereto. I found one of our sergeants with a few of our men digging themselves in. In answer to my query he said he didn't know where the rest of the company had got to and supposed they had all been knocked out, but at any rate this was the line we had to occupy and that was good enough. So I joined the others in the digging business of connecting up the shell holes.

"I had been on this job a short time when the sergeant gave me a message to take to the company commander, who, he pointed out, was holding a piece of ground about 400 yards on our left front. So, exchanging shovel for rifle, I clambered out of the trench and started off.

"The ground was in a terrible state, impossible to describe. Not an inch of ground remained undisturbed. For miles one could see continuous shell holes. It resembled a rough sea of earth, all mounds and hollows. High Wood, on my left, was reduced to sundry trees and trunks devoid of all leaves and branches.

"It was no easy task getting over this ground, as I found I was being sniped from the wood, and consequently had to take advantage of the shell holes in my path. I found the C.O. with about 20 men in some big shell holes. Decidedly it was very unhealthy there. Jerry was just about getting a nice range and there was really no cover at all.

"I delivered my message to the C.O., who looked at the paper but said nothing. It was a rough plan showing the position of the party I had left. I asked the officer if we were to come up and join him. He made no answer, but went on firing his revolver. After a bit I asked again and he said 'Tell the sergeant we are coming back. It's no good remaining here.'

"So thankfully I left the spot and, dodging the snipers again, got back to the trench. Half an hour later they came back - about eight men; the captain himself had been wounded and gone to the dressing station. So we proceeded to join up the shell holes and make something of a trench.

"Whilst so engaged, there was an outbreak of rifle fire on our left and we saw numbers of Jerries making their way back to their lines. Evidently they had been passed in the advance and overlooked. We directed our fire on them, but as our trench ran at right angles to the wood we were enfiladed and consequently suffered some casualties.

"The trench where I was was extremely narrow and a chap next to me was hit in the chest. In falling, he became wedged across the trench and turned a complete somersault pivoted on his hips. Restraining a laugh, I carried him down the trench."

Later that day, Fred Ventris was knocked unconscious by a bomb explosion. When he came to, he was in German hands. In subsequent months he kept in touch with the Budget with regular accounts of hunger and boredom as a prisoner in Germany.

Alf Clifton had to wait until after the war to tell of his privations in a prisoner-of-war camp in Belgium. As the Budget reported:

"He speaks well of the Belgian people. Had it not been for the scraps of food those poor people secretly gave to the prisoners, not many of them would have survived. As it was, hundreds died of starvation and bad treatment. The Belgians were liable for three months' hard labour for speaking to prisoners, but they never flinched from helping them on all possible occasions."

The Budget also told how "Cliffy" was captured after one of those many acts of bravery which went unrecognised in the confusion of the battlefield:

"Our artillery was rendered useless by gas and hardly a round was fired. Our front line was soon flattened by the enemy's barrage and the occupants buried. Cliffy was one of a little party that held out to the [last. it](#) consisted of about five men, including a machine gunner who fired his gun till he was shot dead through the head.

"The others had a trench mortar which they fired until they found themselves being fired on and attacked from the rear. They reversed their gun and brought the attackers up short with their minnies. The Germans then began bombing along the trench each side of them and at last a bomb scattered them.

"'Cliffy' and two men rushed right into the Germans. They expected instant death but luckily they were taken by Saxons. As soon, however, as they got on the parapet a big German rushed at 'Cliffy' with rifle presented, but he stumbled and all 'Cliffy' got was a crack on the head with a rifle butt.

"His troubles were not over, however, for soon after a German officer rushed at him and presented a revolver at his head. Again poor 'Cliffy' thought his last hour had come; but after demanding 'ver de big guns ver' the officer rushed madly off. 'Cliffy' got separated from his two companions and never saw them again.'

Alf Clifton had a hard time as a prisoner-of-war; he ended up being forced to work in a cannon factory. When the armistice came in 1918 he got out of the prison camp and made his way to the British lines with the aid of Belgians who fed and housed him en route.

## **DERNANCOURT - - AND DEMOB**

As soon as the war ended, a brother of Arthur Williams who was serving in France visited the village of Dernancourt, near Albert, where Arthur died, and wrote to the Budget:

"Just a few lines to let you know that I have just returned from Dernancourt. Am sorry to have to tell you that I found poor Arthur's grave..... It is marked with a simple wooden cross and has his name, number and regiment stamped on metal plates.

"The village of Dernancourt is in complete ruin; just a few houses standing. The cemetery is just outside the village and is terribly torn, with shell holes, but Arthur's is untouched. There was not a soul there except myself, so could not get any information. Albert town itself is in ruins and quite deserted."

The same issue of the Budget carried an editorial by Walter Niblett under the one word: "PEACE". It provides an illustration of how Londoners reacted to the ending of four years of agonised worry over loved ones abroad and Zeppelin raids at home:

"I have been asked to write something for our Armistice issue of the Budget and have tried for several days past to work myself into a state of mind that would enable me to eulogise on the prospects of glorious peace. It is of no use. One cannot realise the change in our circumstances.

"London seemed so mad on November 11th and yours truly walked about in the rain watching them do it - until I was glad to go home and change into dry clothes. Perhaps the taking of such liberties with somnolent rheumatism would be brought up against me as evidence that I was carried away by the glorious vista of peace.

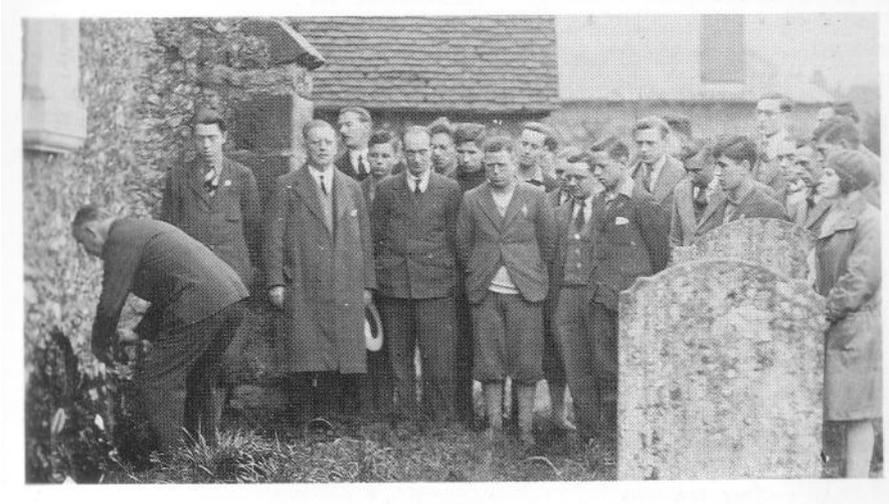
"Really out of London's millions of population, the number was very small of those who took part in the actual 'celebrations.' Most of the people were there to look on. That they were happy, there could be no doubt. Who would not be so after four such years as we have been through.

"But there are too many memories ever-present with the majority of people to allow of any settled change to take place so soon. That is the reason why - as a peace article - this is a failure. Perhaps in a month or so we shall be more used to the changed circumstances and begin to make plans for the club's revival.

"At present, we gaze at the moon and - unconsciously - wonder whether 'they' will be here tonight, until we pull ourselves up with a jerk and realise it is 'all clear' for good now. I think the moon is a false jade and am quite sure she appeared twice a month, last 'take-cover' season.

"Still, we forgive her all now; and may she light our way home on many a pleasant ride this coming season, and listen to the happy songs of the boys once again in Blighty. Then perhaps we shall fully realise that at last we have peace."

Publication of the Budget continued until nearly all De Laurie Service men had been demobilised. The club rewarded Alf Baldwin with its gold badge; and Walter Niblett wrote in praise of him: "Let every member who has received if only one copy of the Budget, sit down and think over these words I have written. Think of the days when the Budget was delayed, and he has longed for its arrival; of the pleasure it has given him, to see again the dear old club badge. Think of the worst conditions under which he was living, when its arrival brought a ray of joy to him. Then, write to Alf a personal letter, with your heart behind it. He deserves all you can write, and more."



*Newnham Service 1920 --- the first wreath laying*

## NEWNHAM WEEKENDS

The club was at a pretty low ebb immediately after the war. Membership was down to about 50 - a good 30 fewer than in 1914 - and only half-a-dozen stalwarts went on the clubruns. The postwar revival was led by \*Mick Boothby, as general secretary; Fred Giles, as captain and racing secretary; and Percy Williams.

*\*Footnote: Mick Boothby was in the club from 1905 until his death in 1957. He was captain, 1912-17, and general secretary 1916-20. He was made a life member in 1938, along with one of his contemporaries, Will Westlake. Both they and Fred Giles held the club's gold badge.*

They planned three races for 1919 - at 20, 25 and 50 miles. But the 50 had to be cancelled for lack of entries and very few rode the other two. But there were positive developments: the move to a new clubroom at the Grosvenor, Sidney Road, Stockwell, and a reunion dinner and concert at the Surrey County Tavern at The Oval, where 85 members and friends applauded the presentation of a gold badge of honour to Mrs. De Laune as a "thank you" for the many gifts she had sent to the club's Service men during the war.

The question of how best to remember those who were killed in action was resolved when a member called Spencer Searl suggested a memorial plaque. Another member, Willie Hudson Hartley, carved the five names into a stone tablet, which was placed on the wall of the parish church at Newnham. Getting permission to put it there wasn't straightforward: Walter Niblett, who was living in Newnham at the time, had to work hard to get the necessary approval from the Church authorities in Canterbury.

The plaque was unveiled by Capt. De Laune on Easter Day, 1920. A weekend run to Newnham was organised for the ceremony - as a new recruit, Alf Marshall, recalled in later years:

"There were quite a number of members at the meeting place at Kennington Church, by the Children's Hospital, and we journeyed via West Wickham to Polhill, turning off at Riverhead through Seal for Maidstone. Just after Seal, near the Crown Inn, we went into a clearing for what is now termed elevenses - and as it was Good Friday, we had all brought sandwiches. Here, Dick Roberts, who was a good singer of humorous songs, treated us to an impromptu performance.

"East of Maidstone we turned off for Hollingbourne - and not one of us climbed the hill! At Newnham we met other members who had ridden down on their own; some who had travelled to Faversham by train and walked from there to Newnham, arrived later. Of course we took our meals at The George, but a number had to sleep out at houses in the village."

Newnham had for long been a regular venue for Bank Holiday tours, but 1929 saw the first of the "Newnham Weekends" - the time each November when members gather at the memorial to commemorate the De Laune war dead. For that inaugural visit, some went by bike, others by car. As before, most put up at The George, where solo schools were soon in full swing. Others preferred more active pursuits:

"After tea some of the members adjourned to the Doddington Palais de Danse. Here, a rough-house nearly ensued through the sheikh-stuff of certain notorious members proving rather objectionable to the lawful spouses of ye village belles. However, by means of a little diplomacy and the exercise of a cautious restraint, we managed to journey home without any incident, much to our relief. Upon returning, supper was partaken of, and so to bed (but not to sleep).

"Sunday morning dawned bright and several members were up betimes, some playing football and others running. But the sunshine was not to last. After breakfast, rain fell in large and heavy quantities. At 10.45 a move was made to the church, several members arriving at the last minute including Sammy Garbett and family. In all there were about thirty members at the service. Alf Styles and one or two others accompanied our President to his private pew.

"After the church service we all gathered outside, where Mr. De Laune, after making a short speech in a few well chosen words, placed our wreath on the memorial and we then stood silent for a few moments in memory of our lads who are gone."

The same writer also gave an account of a visit later that day to Sharsted Court, at the President's invitation:

"Just after 3.30 p.m. a crowd of plus-foured figures, with strangely clean shoes and faces, and margarine-smarmed hair, could be seen wending their way up the greensward of 'The Bank' en route to Sharsted Court.....

"We were greeted with a kind word and a handshake by our President, who led us into the Great Hall, where tea was waiting. Amongst the majority of members stage-fright seemed to have taken the place of appetite, but the lads with me took full toll of the groaning board and relieved it of its fare.

"After we had eaten our fill, and more, we started on an inspection of the house, guided by our host. Passing into the library, with its rare and old books, we noted the crested fireplace. We then came to the ballroom, where I must confess to a regret that time and opportunity did not allow of us stepping a stately measure or shaking a glad foot.

"We passed along and were shown part of the old building of chalk, built, it is believed, at the time of Bluff King Hal, the divorce king. We also saw what I took to be the original old oak chest, if not of 'Mistletoe Bough' fame then it was the one the old Squire kept the £10,000 in which he did not give away on his daughter's wedding day.

"Passing on through various rooms and halls we were struck by the collection of wonderful tapestries and curios. Of special note was the knife and fork given to an ancestor of Capt. De Laune by King James I. After a visit to the upper portion of the house to view the splendid collection of pictures and to hear tales of the haunted room without which no respectable country mansion is complete we had to say a reluctant farewell to our host and make tracks for home."

In the succeeding years, a group of old-timers whose pre-war membership gave them strong links with those whose names were on the memorial plaque acquired the nickname of "The Four Just Men" because of their regular presence at the Newnham Weekends: Will Westlake, Alf Styles, Mick Boothby and Percy Williams.

## THE CLUB-RUN SPIRIT

The club-run starting-point Alf Marshall mentioned in his account of the 1920 run to Newnham - at the end of Clapham Road, Kennington - had been used for some time, but was abandoned later in 1920 in favour of the Windmill, Clapham Common. It was much quieter there, and involved much less riding over tramlines.

From the Windmill, regular runs were held from mid-March to mid-October - on Wednesday evenings, Saturday afternoons, and all day on Sundays.

Between the wars, favourite destinations on Wednesdays were The Chequers at Colnbrook, The Plough at Worcester Park and Uncle Tom's Cabin at Burgh Heath. Saturday runs often ended up at the Oak Tree Cafe at Cobham; and Sunday tea-places included The Bakery at Abinger Hammer and The Cosy Tea Rooms at Windsor.

George Stubbs, who joined in 1920, went on his first club-run on a Saturday afternoon:

"The Captain rode in front and set the pace and it was understood that no one should pass him. The usual attire on such runs was a Norfolk jacket, trousers fastened just below the knee and woollen stockings; and of course everyone had a cap.

"It was the custom to have a fair-sized leather bag fastened to the back of the saddle to carry a waterproof cape, scarf, gloves and tools. Much hearty banter passed among the chaps on the ride, which was most amusing. There was a spirit of camaraderie which appealed to me.

"The venue for this run was the Oak Tree Cafe, Cobham. Such places catered for cyclists, and a tea meal consisted of bread and butter, jam and cake, washed down with plenty of tea; and the price was reasonable. After tea one of the members played on a piano in the corner and we all gathered round and joined in singing the choruses - all very cheerful.

The camaraderie of club cycling is still one of its attractions but all-day runs with bread-and-jam and cake at the end of them are for the most part just a happy memory. George Stubbs again:

"Cycle touring was very popular in the 'twenties. Those who had only a week's holiday would be likely to tour the Wye Valley or North Devon. Those with a fortnight's leave would probably go as far as Land's End or Snowdonia.

"I greatly enjoyed touring and returned home feeling fit and happy. CTC and NCU plaques were to be seen on the walls of some houses in most towns and villages, indicating that the cyclist could obtain meals or bed and breakfast accommodation. It was reckoned that 10s.6d. (52p) would cover a day's touring expenses, made up somewhat as follows: bed and breakfast 3s.6d. to 4s.6d. per person, especially if two shared a room. Midday meal about 2/- and high tea and various drinks en route would make up the total."

One of the reasons why cycle-touring has lost some of its appeal is the great increase in motor traffic. But at the time George Stubbs was riding there were other hazards. One club member, sprinting head down, ran into the rear end of a horse and ended up sitting in the middle of the road with a mouthful of horse-tail. On another occasion, an elderly man stepped into the middle of a club-run in Upper Beeding and was knocked unconscious. The riders discovered his name was Tanner and that his home was near by. They carried him there, and when the door was opened one of them asked: "Does Widow Tanner live here?"

That didn't end the day's adventures. The club-run report continues: "After this contretemps, we went on to Worthing and there saw a man drowned."

## THE OLD v. THE NEW

As the 'twenties progressed, so the club discarded, one by one, the customs and practices of its Victorian days. Ever since the club was formed, the closing run of the season in October had been marked by a concert or supper; but in 1929 it was cancelled through lack of interest. The last of the old-style garden parties was held at The Crown, Morden, in 1920 and ladies were invited to the monthly clubroom concerts.

This acceptance of the fact that wives, sisters and girl friends could add to the enjoyment of what had always been regarded as all-male social occasions was a gradual process. (it took even longer for them to be allowed into the club itself.) The half-yearly general meeting of 1923 discussed the revolutionary suggestion that ladies (they were always ladies, never women) should be invited to the concert which, as usual, would follow the eating part of the annual dinner. It was rejected.

The following year, a proposal that the President's wife, Mrs. De Laune, should be a dinner guest was turned down. Then, in 1925, came the historic decision: ladies would be invited to the annual dinner at the London Tavern, in Fenchurch Street.

The traditionalists saw this as the thin end of the wedge - and of course they were right. It took only two annual dinners to convince the majority that to have both sexes merely sitting together all evening was a wasted opportunity. So an experiment was tried at the 1928 dinner at the Talbot Restaurant, London Wall. After the meal, the tables were pulled back and a band struck up for dancing.

One tenuous link with the old days was provided by the Humourettes Concert Party in between the waltzes and valetas. But although concerts remained a feature of annual dinners for a few more years, club members never again provided the main entertainment themselves, with banjo, piano and song.

In the 'twenties and 'thirties, regular public dances were organised by several cycling clubs to raise money to pay for racing medals. The De Laune held them on three or four Saturday evenings each winter - usually at The Horns. Sometimes as many as 300 people were there.

The dances were elegant affairs, with some club members in evening dress; and the bands were carefully chosen - short-listed and then auditioned by a sub-committee. Most of the girls who went were nurses from hospitals in Epsom - and the young men from the De Laune who took them back afterwards often had to walk home because the last train had gone. At least one member must have thought the effort worthwhile - he married one of the nurses. (in the De Laune parlance of the time, girls were referred to as "waffle." Members who missed club-runs were often accused of waffling).

Not that it was all wine, women and song. The serious business of cycling was always a priority. By 1929, membership was almost up to 90, the racing men were consistently breaking records and club-runs were described as "booming." The guiding lights were the new generation of officials - like Jef Butcher, Ted Jackson and Frank Holland (general secretaries) and Percy Reeve, Ernie Filmer and Archie Collison (captains).

It wasn't all plain sailing. Some of the established members couldn't reconcile themselves to the influx of young, fresh-faced lads who felt no affinity with the old traditions and paid little attention to the club motto of that time: "Style Before Speed" - which usually meant club-runs at 12 miles an hour.

Things came to a head in 1921, when Joe "Tiddler" Robinson started to go out with the club. He was 18 years old, but was so small that some members objected to riding with him. When his membership application came before the committee there was an unprecedented demand for a vote. "Tiddler" was elected, 5-3, but the affair left a legacy of ill-feeling and caused a few old-timers to resign.

"Tiddler" twiddled his little legs fast enough in 1923 to win a club "50" in 2-32-35; and he was showing promise at 100 miles when he left to join a racing club - the Southern Elite - in 1924. He later became a prolific record-breaker on Southern roads.

## THE RECORD BREAKERS

It took a couple of post-war years for racing to recover from its faltering start. The men who led the way initially were Fred Giles and Alf Clifton (Cliffy set a tandem "50" record with Billy Marshall of 2-10-27). Then came Alf Marshall, with an inside-evens "50" of 2-29-45 in 1921 and victory in the first post-war hill-climb in the same year. (Tilburstow remained the venue until 1930, when the choice was Shaw Hill at Whyteleafe.)

The racing seasons of 1923-4-5 were dominated by the Wakefield brothers, Allan and George - sons of the 1894 club champion. Allan was the star man. He twice set new records at 50 miles; and when the club held its first 100-mile time-trial in 1925 he was fastest in 5-19-30. In that year he also took 11 seconds off the 25 mile time of 1-08-51 set by John Giles way back in 1914 - although R. "Bunny" Smith went even faster in the same event and pushed the record down to 1-08-00 where it stayed for a further four years. Allan Wakefield was the first outright winner of the Holmes Shield - the trophy presented for the best aggregate time over 25, 50 and 100 miles. The following year - 1926 - he joined the Rodney C.C.

The Wakefields' immediate successors in the prize-lists included Bill Bennett, who took the "50" record down to 2-21-42 in 1927; Arthur Dance, who was a stylish "25" champion 1927-8, and lowered Bennett's "50" time by 1/2 minutes in 1928; Ted Jackson, vegetarian son of an Edwardian racing man, and winner of club events at all distances; and Tam Smith, who took the "25" record down to 1-07-49.

But the push that was needed to give De Laune racing records a 20th Century look came from a youth of 17 who was to ride in the club colours for only two years - Geoff Deane. His father and uncle had been members some time before. He surprised his clubmates in 1929 by taking a few seconds off Tom Smith's "25" record - then astonished them in the following year with a time of 1-04-00. Few other time-triallists in Britain had ridden as fast over the distance. Unfortunately for the De Laune, Deane - like others before him - succumbed to temptation in 1930 and joined a racing club, the Centaur B.C.

The organisation of the first club "100" in 1925 was made easier by the existence of the De Laune C.C. Motoring Section, formed a year earlier. Affluent members with Fords and Morrisies were very useful for covering the far turn and feeds on the Bath road.

Track racing then formed only a minor part of De Laune activities. In fact, in the early 'twenties the club's colours were seen to best effect on the crew of Charlie Spender's pacing quad. Charlie was one of the De Laune's pioneer members, so must have been in early middle-age; but he had the strength to pilot this monster machine, with its two-inch wired-on tyres and four man crew - No. 4 sitting right over the back wheel.

Charlie's quad made its last appearance at Herne Hill in 1923, when his crew was Jef Butcher, Joe Robinson and Charlie Walker. On that day they found it impossible to achieve any great speed because there were too many riders on the track. But while training at the Hill the previous night - and going full-pelt with crack rider Billy Pett hanging on behind - their front tyre burst. The inner-tube came out and was cut into pieces, but by magnificent steersmanship Charlie Spender manoeuvred the quad on to the grass and no one was hurt.

So far as individual track achievements were concerned, Tom Smith was the man who kept the De Laune flag flying. After he'd won the 880 at Herne Hill in June, 1930, one of the popular national newspapers of the day, the Daily Herald, carried a cartoon of him sprinting to victory above the caption: "Nothing faster has been seen since dye was invented."

In that same year, the club was pleased to get as far as the third round of the NCU team pursuit championship. The quartet of Tom Smith, Geoff Deane, Ted Jackson and Frank Holland were narrowly beaten by the Kentish Wheelers, but in the process clocked 4 min. 24 2/5 sec. - the fastest then accomplished by a De Laune pursuit team.

Ted Jackson and Jef Butcher crewed the tandem which paced some of the fastest trackmen of the day. They shared the pacing in the last national 24-hour track championship at Herne Hill in 1926. The track surface wasn't all it should have been - as Ted's wife Hilda recalled:

"On one occasion after a pile-up they were taken to King's College Hospital in an ambulance - and had a competition to see how many bruises and cuts they had between them. Ted's mother had a pink fit, seeing him covered in bandages when she arrived home from the cinema. The club tandem was 16 years old when it was sold for £5 in 1939."

The Butcher/Jackson combination also made a number of successful road-record attempts. In May, 1930, for instance, they donned black tights and black silk alpaca jackets (according to regulation) to try to better the 100-mile time of 4-37-08 set by Jef Butcher and Frank Holland two years earlier. They used the Bath road, because there were no traffic lights to worry about. And there were other differences between then and now, as Ted made clear:

"We started at the allotted time at the 19th milestone and proceeded to London, turned and started for the next turn at Newbury but after about 14 miles we had a puncture in the front wheel. The tandem we were riding had steel wheels, 26in. x 1 3/8 in., with wired-on tyres, but we had a spare tube and tyre levers and spanners so we changed the tube, pumped it up and continued on our way, reaching Newbury inside our schedule. We turned for the return to the 19th milestone but on going through Reading it had been raining, making the surface of the road very greasy. We found out how greasy when going over the railway bridge at the bottom of the hill where we had to cross some tramlines which turned from our left side on the A.4. We skidded on the bend of the lines and came off, but being only a bit shaken and not hurt we carried on to the finish, having a time of 4-33-21 to beat the existing record."

On that morning the record-breakers were going so well they overtook (and surprised) a pair competing in the Marlboro A.C. open tandem 50.

**General Meeting. May 15th 1930:**

*Frank Holland drew attention to the practice of some young members of polishing their badges until the nickel wore off and they resembled Gold Badges. He thought this detracted from the honour attaching to the Gold Badge, and was not in the best of taste.*

**DLN: June, 1930**

*Young members need have no fear that the night ride to Marlborough and back will do them any harm. A steady ride through the night after a good evening's rest does nobody any harm, and once you are out you will not miss your bed. A word about lamps: if you have a gas lamp you must bring with you spare carbide and water as the average gas lamp will not last through the night on one filling. Should you have an oil lamp you will find that one filling immediately before starting will carry you through.*

**DLN: January 1935**

*Fred Bakker has begun wearing his new scarf, knitted by his sister over the past four years to replace the one raffled for 38s. 6d. at the 1929 club dinner. It measures some 24ft. long by 15 3/8 inches wide and is double thickness and will wind upwards of 15 times round Fred's neck. The tassels measure 6 5/8 inches.*

**DLN: February, 1936**

*Whilst several members were traversing the crowded environs of the Metropolis last week they overtook a cruising cab. Beefy, with his ready wit, bawled "Taxi!" The cabby, scenting a fare, pulled up with a jerk and Tubby, unable to follow suit, was precipitated into the rear of the cab. The damage to his machine was slight, but we understand he has put in a claim for damages which seems likely to be successful.*

## **BUTCHER'S BASINS**

The De Laune personality of the 'twenties - in administration and racing - was J.E.F. Butcher, whose first name was James, but who was never called anything other than "Jef."

Jef Butcher joined the club in 1921. He was general secretary in 1923 and 1924; had a two-year flirtation with the Southern Elite; was back in the secretary's job in 1927; was captain from 1929 to 1931; and filled in as acting secretary at the start of the second world war. The Newnham Weekend of 1929 was one of his many inspirational ideas, and not surprisingly he was awarded the club's gold badge.

Jef won only a couple of club races, yet could claim to have more racing medals than any of his predecessors or contemporaries. He presented and bequeathed most of them to the club. Jef was the first man in the De Laune to break evens for 100 miles - 4-59-54 in an inter-club \* event with the Bellingham Wheelers in 1930; he was probably the first in the club to complete a modern-style 12 hour time trial - 177 miles in the South-Eastern R.C. Open of 1924; and he several times helped to lower the club's tandem records at 50 and 100 miles.

*\*Footnote: For this and similar events, Jef Butcher and his clubmates stayed overnight at The Ostriche, Colnbrook. They slept in old four-poster beds in wood panelled rooms; and the mattresses were very very hard.*

It was Jef's proud boast that he had achieved all this - and more - "without clips, straps, blocks or other mechanical aids". He was regarded as a bit of a character - "aggravating, generous, helpful, obstinate, even infuriating at times; but respected - one may even say loved..... There was nobody quite like Jef."

That writer recalled evening training runs in the depths of winter to Ilydene, Epsom, and to "Ma" Stanley's at Burgh Heath - lung-searing affairs which became known as "Butcher's Back-Wheel Basins." No one talks of "basins" nowadays, but they are still endured - and hurt just as much.

It was Jef who first tried to start a club magazine - just two issues in 1927, after the idea had been mooted at the AGM. Jef's effort obviously made little impact, but a committee meeting in December, 1928, revealed renewed interest:

"The secretary stated that as a large number of members (chiefly old boys) heard very little about the activities of the club, he proposed to send out a monthly news sheet in future. It was agreed unanimously that this was a good idea and the secretary was thanked in anticipation."

The "good idea" in the shape of the De Laune News is still going strong. The club secretary who conceived it, saw it through its birth pains and was three times its editor was Frank Holland. He joined the club in 1925 at the age of 17 and stayed in it until he died nearly 52 years later. He spent ten years as general secretary and treasurer and was a gold-badge holder, club president and life member.

He wasted no time in getting the DLN started. Jef Butcher helped him with the writing, but because the club had no typewriter, he had to cut the stencil at work, during his lunch break. Then, in January 1929, they laboriously rolled off one hundred copies on a flat-bed duplicator - purple ink on one side of a single sheet of paper. The following month's DLN No. 2 was double the size - printed on both sides of the single sheet, and the Editor suggested that members should add a shilling to their annual subs. to help cover the cost of postage.

In no time at all, the magazine became an established part of the club. The editorial staff, brimful of confidence gathered on one Monday evening each month to drink pints of cider and try to think up alliterative headlines: "Handsome Hooper's Hurricane Hustle"..... "Tireless Tich Treads Terrifically"..... "Mitcham Miracle's Marvellous Mobility"..... "Fun and Frolics on Friday".

Luckily for DLN readers, this frantic phase didn't last long.



*First Captain: Charles Southon*



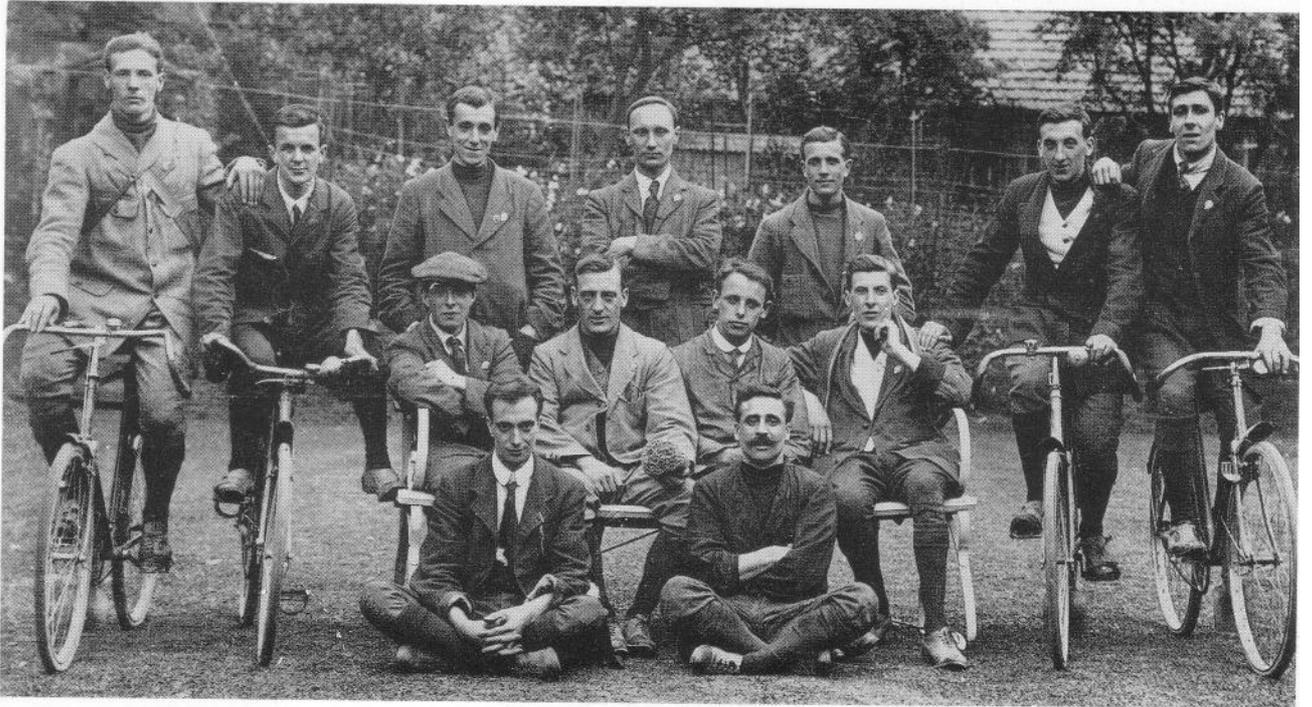
*William Condy (on bicycle) and Charles Condy*



*Christmas Day Run 1929*



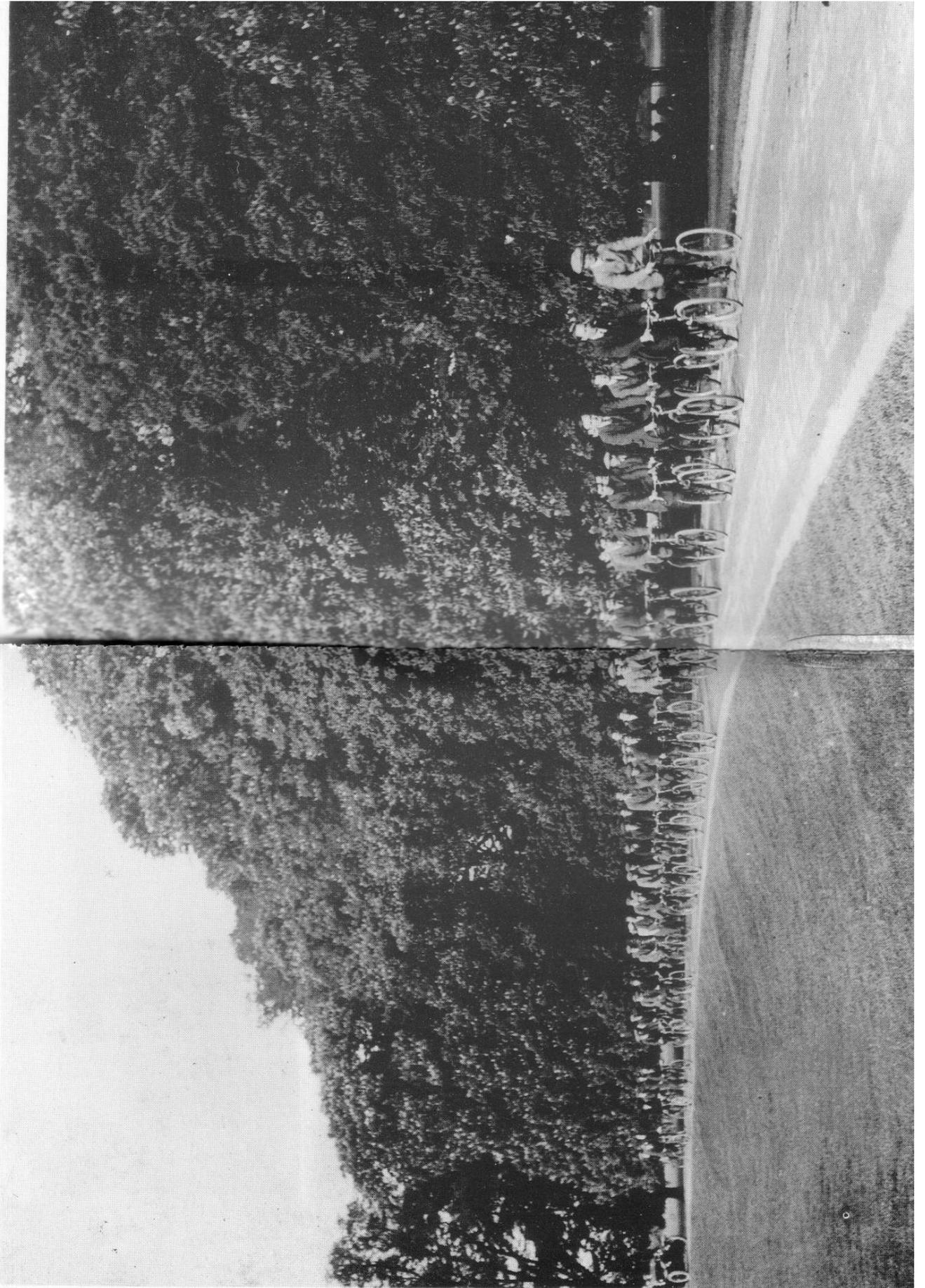
*Fred Hooper and the Olympic Team 1913*



*Caterham Club Run-1914  
(Arthur Williams second left, Mick Boothby arms folded, back row, Giles brothers second and third from right)*



*Fancy Dress Ball 1939*





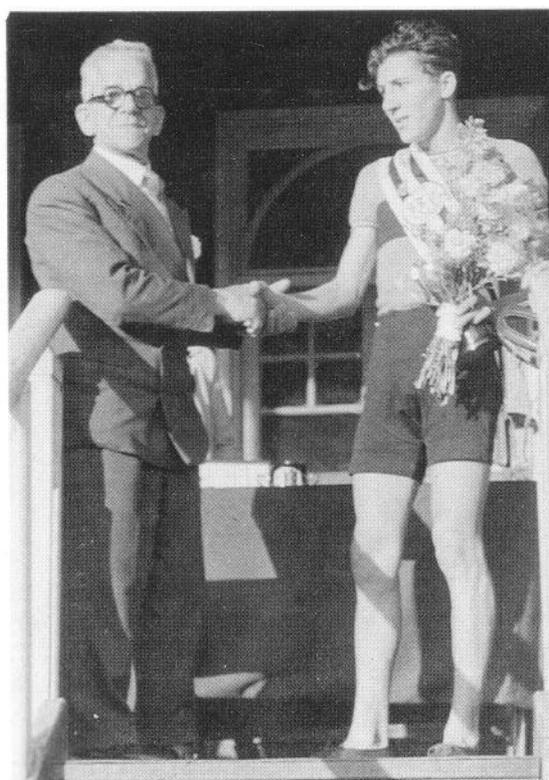
*Ken Hill Catford "24" 1937. Club record 393 ¼ miles*



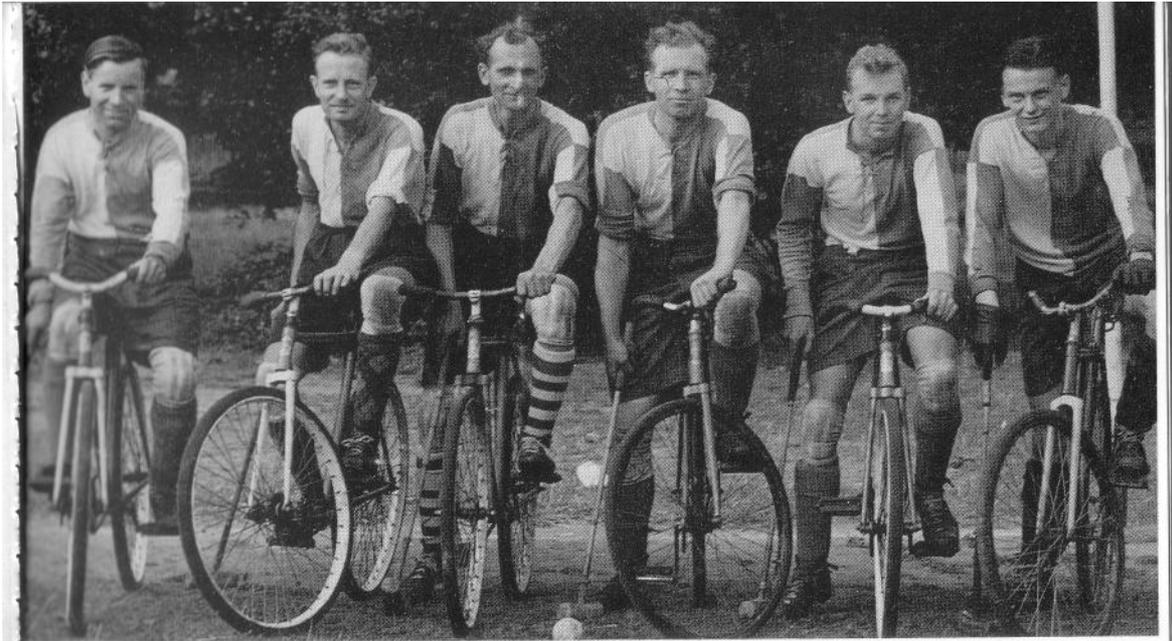
*Ron Hoare and Ken Hill 1936*



*Ron Hoare Anerley "12" 1936*



*"Chip" riding at Burford 1947 - Alf Wasson and "Tiny" Johnson, Herne Hill 1949*



*Bicycle Polo ' Team 7946*



*Supper at the "RED COW" 1939  
Mill Westlake presents Les Gillingham with the Junior Track Cup. John Giles junior is one the left, Chip on the right.*



*The Derelict Church Hall which became the De Laune Clubroom*



*Don White and the Mayor of Camberwell opening the new, Clubroom 1973*



*New Clubroom, 1973*



*Old Members outing 1969*



*Invitation Run 1964*

## THRIVING IN THE THIRTIES

Frank Holland lived for the De Laune. He had to give up the secretaryship in 1938, when he and his wife moved to West Wickham, but was determined to keep firmly in touch by staying on as editor of the DLN. He used the magazine not only for reports on club activities but also as a means of reminding members of their responsibilities: riding discipline on clubruns, compliance with racing regulations, good behaviour at social events, and no bad language:

"For some weeks there has been too much fooling around and matters reached a climax last weekend at Godstone, when there was some unpleasantness and one member sustained rather severe personal injuries. I will not go into details but this sort of thing must stop. Those who play practical jokes should never lose their tempers and should be prepared for their victims to turn the tables and be able to laugh if this does happen.

"You know I am not a spoil-sport, but I must insist upon horse-play being stopped. You get just as much fun from a more subtle form of humour. I think it will be better for everybody and that we shall all get increased pleasure from our cycling.

"Whilst writing in this vein I take the opportunity of asking several members who are rather loose-tongued to curb their loquacity. There is no need for the flow of language which is sometimes heard."

As always, the De Laune managed to move with the times as well as continuing to uphold its traditions. The 'thirties saw its clubruns become more varied, and its Bank Holiday tours more ambitious; its racing men widened their horizons and its social organisers became even more inventive.

Under the captaincies of Ron Hoare and Ken Hill (each awarded a gold badge in 1938) it was quite usual for a Sunday run to extend to more than a hundred miles. A typical day out would include a lunch stop at an inn for beer and sandwiches (the food probably brought from home); perhaps a spot of boating on a summer's afternoon - and certainly a stroll after tea; then a game of cards at the teaplace or later at a convenient hostelry, before reaching home between nine and ten o'clock.

One prominent member of the 'thirties, Bill Tanner, won himself ten shillings in a DLN competition with his account of an all-night ride home from South Wales with his brother Lawrie, in 1933. They were certainly no softies:

"We had been down to South Wales on holiday and having spent most of our time tramping the hills during the day and ejecting foreign bodies from the bed at night, we finally decided to pack up on the Saturday afternoon and ride home through the night. We left Cwm Carn about three o'clock, feeling very drowsy from lack of sleep all the week, and before we had covered twenty miles a leaky patch in my front tyre had me remove the inner tube three times without finding the trouble. However, as the cool of the evening arrived, the tyre decided to behave normally and remained sufficiently hard for us to reach Gloucester by eight o'clock.

"We had had no tea, Lawrie having announced that 'Gloucester is not far now and we'll have tea there' at every bend in the road for the past thirty miles. Anyhow, after losing our way in Gloucester, we found a really top-notch place for tea where we ate and ate - ham, tomatoes, bread and butter and jam and cakes ad. lib. for two shillings. Finally we stuffed our pockets with sixpenny-worth of truly enormous buns to sustain our weary bodies during the night.

"It was getting dusk and before long lights had to be lit. The sky was very cloudy and shortly after nightfall steady drizzle set in, which lasted throughout the night.

"A blacker night was impossible to imagine: Lawrie kept to the nearside of the road and followed the grass verge, while I kept to the offside and did the same. All we could see of each other was our lamps. However, just before reaching a village we had changed over: I was on the inside and Lawrie on the out, when suddenly he shouted 'Out'. I got out, and succeeded in grazing the flank of an enormous cart horse which, but for Lawrie's warning, I should have rammed in the rear.

"We had not gone many more miles when Lawrie said that unless he had a few minutes' sleep he would fall off his bike asleep. I therefore suggested that we should find somewhere where there was a light and I could keep awake whilst he slept. We found a storm lamp fixed at a cross-road and I sat down beneath it and Lawrie rolled over and went to sleep. Needless to say, before many minutes I, too, was asleep....."

Bill and Lawrie found it too uncomfortable to say for long under the flickering flame of the storm lamp, so they carried on to Oxford railway station, where they tried to get some sleep on a luggage trolley - until the night train arrived and a porter turfed them off.

"From there on the road seemed to be continuously uphill and we must have walked for miles. Eventually, just before Nettlebed, we decided that an adjacent field was an ideal place for an hour's sleep and there we rolled ourselves in capes and scarves and slept - waking finally to find ourselves completely surrounded by rabbits.

"It was just past dawn and we were getting into Henley when it started to rain really hard. Having climbed out of Henley we decided to sit under the trees and wait for the rain to ease. After we had sat there for a long time and I had twice rolled on to the grass bank asleep, Lawrie went into the middle of the road and made the brilliant discovery that we had merely been getting drenched by drippings from the trees under which we had taken shelter!

"We came to the Bath road just above Maidenhead, along which progress was quite good for some miles. We saw large numbers of 'riders' (and other people in tights) and when we arrived at the Great West Road there was a crowd waiting for riders to finish. Just as we drew level, I skidded (at least so I think, but Lawrie says I fell asleep) and went down. I left my bike in the road and crawled on hands and knees to the kerb, there to let out a terrific howl of anguish - much to everyone's amusement. Some people do have a peculiar sense of humour!

"Thereafter we proceed without further incident until we reached home at church time on Sunday morning. By this time we could have passed as nigger minstrels without any makeup, but a hot bath and the afternoon in bed sufficed to restore us to a state more or less to normal. It was a great ride - all the twenty hours and 178 miles of it."

Note the complete absence of any mention of motor traffic on the roads! Bill and Lawrie later opened their own "refreshment rooms" on the Great North Road, near Welwyn. Bill was the De Laune's social secretary for ii time; Lawrie kept up his club associations until he died in 1975.

One of the De Laune's outstanding captain's in later years, Jack Young, gained his clubrun experience as a lad in the 'thirties with the Effra Wheelers. This South London club, which became defunct during the war, was named after a river which once ran through Brixton and now flows underground and into the Thames near Vauxhall. Jack found the pre-war clubruns much more fun than racing:

"Elevenes, lunch and teapaces were in abundance, and almost invariably the proprietors of these places provided simple washing facilities. In my own club it was the recognised thing to always carry a small towel and a piece of soap in the saddle-bag and we always had a wash-and-brush-up at each of the stops.

"There were recognised places on the runs where, with the club captain's permission, we would indulge in a rare tear-up - Guildford High Street, complete with cobbles, was one: someone would shout out at the foot of the hill 'Allez up!' and a mad sprint developed right to the top. Godstone Hill was another, and if ever a run finished down Acre Lane or Brixton Hill, these too invoked a flat-out dash, down to the Town Hall.

"The hill was dodgy because of the tram lines and people trooping out into the road to board the trams at stopping places and there was a centre line between the tracks where the trams picked up their running power. We certainly knew how to negotiate those deadly lines even when - eyeballs out - we sprinted, head down, for the Town Hall and for the coffee stall which stood opposite the church.

"I remember on one of these sprints, the football one lad was carrying strapped to his bag came adrift in the middle of us and was bouncing madly down Brixton Hill at 30 miles an hour. All night runs, breakfast runs, swimming runs, boating runs, weekend runs, what fantastic times they were!"

Club runs were never short of incident - particularly in winter, when a stretch of rough-stuff was usually included. Mechanical trouble, spills and punctures were a common feature. The vice-captain's tool-box was often in use - and so was iodine, that brown liquid out of favour nowadays but which hurt so much when applied to cuts and grazes that it must surely have been doing some good. Here's what happened on a De Laune run one dull and drizzly Sunday in November, 1938:

"With nothing definite in view after lunch we struck off into the woods (Burnham Beeches) for some cross-country riding, until we came to a wide ditch. Most of us carried our bikes across, but Ken Hill tried to ride down one side and up the other. He landed on his ear instead.

"Back on the road there were cries of 'More!' and once again we were slithering and sliding along muddy tracks through ferns and bushes in real rough-stuff fashion. Reaching terra-firma, it was seen that the captain and others were missing; the time spent waiting for them was occupied by watching a display of broadsiding and skidding by Wheel-Wobble Watkins, Dare-Devil Donegan and other rough riders at a clearing near by.

"Still no sign of Ken Hill and Co., so with our vice-captain (Ken Fletcher) in the lead we continued. Another diversion and we were ploughing our way up a bogged lane with our wheels choked with mud. Further on we made a sudden turn left and began to descend a steep hill. Gathering speed, we were on our mettle for a bend ahead, but as luck would have it, a car was coming round just as we got there. Fortunately, the motorist pulled up, but Fred Treavet and Len Gillingham suffered nasty spills. Ken and Rob doctored their wounds with the usual iodine, Don Hammond also receiving attention for a fall some way back.

"When we finally reached Chalfont St. Giles, Ken and Co. were already there with their own mishaps to relate. Blackmore showed us a bump on his head and explained that he hit a tree..... When he woke up, we were gone.

"Staceys provided us with a splendid tea, and when we rose the plates were still half-full. Fireworks were in evidence during our usual walk, and then we headed towards London. We hadn't gone far before a few of us at the front missed the rest. A dark, jumbled mass in the road made us hurry back to where most of the club were sorting themselves out of a pile-up, caused by Harold's chain jumping off and jamming between cog and wheel. A garage saved Harold a long walk home, and the remainder of our run was completed without further mud or blood."

Ken Hill strongly advised the use of fixed wheels on clubruns - and said that those members with gears should ride on the inside. His vice-captain Ken Fletcher noted the many instances of unshipped chains, broken brake cables and similar mechanical faults, and gave warning that he would be keeping a record of "trouble-makers" in future.

Ken Fletcher himself had had his problems soon after he joined the club in 1932. He came a cropper at the bottom of Salt Box Hill, during a paper chase:

"To my dismay, my front wheel had taken on a peculiar "S" shape and in my ignorance I visualised problems in getting home. However, it was not long before I was in the saddle again with my wheel having been straightened --- very expertly - by Beefy Russell with the aid of a five-barred gate. This was a helping hand from a member which I have never forgotten and really highlighted the good-fellowship which existed and which I have enjoyed over more than 50 years."

Several other instances of similar first-aid treatment for buckled wheels are recorded in the DLN. Perhaps the modern equivalent of Ken and Harold would have gone to the nearest telephone and asked their mothers to come and take them home in the car. And would they have been tough (or

foolhardy) enough to take part in a clubrun in deep snow? In the winter of 1938, fifteen members were in the Kent countryside as grey clouds gathered:

"Leaving Chiddingstone, we soon reached The Kentish Horse, Mark Beech, for tea as snowflakes began to fall. A good tea in company with a blazing log fire was followed by cards, while outside a blizzard was piling the snow against the walls that sheltered us.

"What happened on going outside is easy to guess - it was just thud, thud, thud, as first an ear, then an eye, and finally a nose became the victims of a strenuous bout of snowballing. Unfortunately these winter sports could not continue all night, and after the usual dynamo trouble we left for home, with several inches of snow crunching beneath our wheels.

"A walk up Crockham Hill with the full moon making the snow-covered hills a sight worth seeing, and we slid into Westerham for another hike..... and so home, after a good day in Kent, with not a spot of rough-stuff, which has finished until next winter, as we must get in some mileage in preparation for the season of speed."

The Kentish Horse at Mark Beech had just been "discovered" as a teaplace. Cycling clubs had a wide choice in the 'thirties. The De Laune held a teaplace-popularity poll in 1934 which resulted: 1. Top Shop, Redhill; 2. The Shanty, Stanwell; 3. Hillcroft, Eynsford; 4. Sunny Villa, Ide Hill; 5. Stacey's, Chalfont; 6. Curd's, Godstone; 7. The Volunteer, Abinger; 8. Ivydene, Epsom; 9. Somerset Farm, Elstead; 10. Rising Sun, Charlwood; 11. Newman's, Hoddesden; 12. White Horse, Cowden.

This was a time when the club's Bank Holiday tours began to venture further afield - to such areas as Cornwall, the Lake District, and North Wales. For the previous thirty or so years, Newnham had usually been the Bank Holiday choice. In August, one of the attractions was the sports meeting at Sharsted - and it was to there that ten De Launeites journeyed in 1931, sat on a couple of sofas in the back of an open van. All went well until the sports finished and the rain came down in buckets:

"Standing about in the open we were soon soaked and in this condition went in search of our moving parlour. By some unfortunate *lapis mentis* our driver had omitted to provide any protection from the weather other than a very wet and holey tarpaulin. After fortifying ourselves with sundry whiskies and bags of crisps we started, very tired and extremely wet, on our journey home.

"No words of mine can express the acute discomfort of that ride. Our feet were wet, our trousers soaked, water in our shoes and rain down our necks - everything we touched or sat on was wet, and still the rain fell!

"Slowly the miles dragged by and darkness fell, until after a long time the Old Kent Road hove in sight - and we were like mariners sighting land. How it is we haven't all got double pneumonia I don't know. Perhaps it's the Kent air. It never has done a De Launeite any harm and I don't suppose it ever will."

The annual run to Newnham for the memorial service remained an established fixture. But solemnity was reserved for the service itself. One character of the 'thirties was Spencer Searl, who once turned up at Newnham with a bowler on his head and a furled umbrella under his arm. He made the mistake of letting his clubmates get hold of them - and in no time at all bowler and broly had been lowered down a well.

Pillow-fights and apple-pie beds were a feature of overnight stays at The George, under the benevolent eye of the landlady, Mrs. Foreman. And some of the bright young lads took advantage of the nearness of Guy Fawkes Day to make the Newnham runs go with a bang.

It was an explosion of another kind, however, which marked the beginning of an eventful Newnham weekend in 1931: the bursting of Adrian Collison's back tyre. Adrian travelled the last few miles to Newnham on Jef Butcher's crossbar, while Frank Holland pushed his bike alongside his own. The next day saw the journey home:

"The large cycling party left Newnham about three o'clock and soon reached Doddington by a circuitous route. Here, our adventures commenced, for Royston Jones's machine gave up the ghost. We therefore apportioned it out amongst one another, while Arthur Dance rode Percy Shrimpton's bike and the latter was carried standing upon the rear handlebars of the Tanner tandem.

"So we journeyed for several miles, until - the tandem crew being tired - Adrian took Percy upon his crossbar for the descent of Hollingbourne Hill. The hard application of brakes was too much for Adrian's repaired tyre and at the foot he found it necessary to execute another repair, whilst the others made enquiries as to train services.

"Finding that the next train did not leave for several hours, we tied the damaged machine into a convenient parcel and put it, with its owner, on to a bus bound for Maidstone, where we - having now made good progress - last saw Jones walking up the High Street with the remains under one arm and his bag under the other. We learned later that he soon got a train and was home in a short space of time.

"Thenceforth nothing untoward happened, and we were soon at the end of our third pilgrimage to Newnham, even more successful than the predecessors."

The advance notice of the 1931 Newnham run, printed in the DLN, ended with a sentence which put womenfolk firmly in their place: "As before, we would remind members that this is a purely private club affair and therefore the absence of ladies would be appreciated." The word "absence" was underlined.

Five years later, one member was so worried about the way things were going that he wrote to the DLN, posing the question "Are we to be a mixed club in everything but name?"

"Whilst we fully appreciate the fact that we are dependent upon the members' wives and girls for support in the social functions, and are more than grateful for their aid in feeding arrangements, we might be happier if they avoided our usual haunts for bathing and tea."

## RACING AWAY

The 'thirties brought about a greater interest and higher standards in racing - on road and track. Jef Butcher's exploits of the 'twenties were soon outdone by those of John "Beefy" Russell, who took the club 50 record to 2-17-44, the 100 to 4-53-24 and the 12 hour to 219 miles. Beefy also partnered Bill Tanner in tandem records at these distances. But Beefy's supremacy was short-lived. In 1932, the club captain, Fred Hooper - nicknamed "Tich" because there wasn't much of him - began a series of record breaking performances. Over three years he produced fastest times for 25 and 50 miles of 1-03-36 and 2-10-51. In 1934 his 100 time of 4-38-15 was among the best in the country. He won the De Laune Challenge Bowl for five consecutive years - until Ken Fletcher took it in 1938.

Fred Hooper showed so much promise that the club helped with his train fares when he travelled to Open events - like the Notts Castle 50 and the North Road 100; but he was rarely at his best away from home, and even when he was doing well he was plagued with mechanical problems. In the Belle Vue 50 of 1934 he had the doubtful consolation of knowing that he was one of sixty puncture victims.

The NCU selected Fred for the World Road Championship trials at Donnington in Leicestershire in 1935 and 1937; and he was one of five from the De Laune who took part in the Olympic trials in 1936. He did fairly well in all three, but wasn't picked.

Because of Fred's lack of success in "opens", his main rival in club events - Ron "Oscar" Hoare - made a greater impact on the national scene. (Ron earned his nickname because he was going prematurely bald; he reminded people of a continental roadman of the time, Oscar Egg, who didn't have any hair at all.) Ron was the first member of the De Laune to qualify for inclusion in the equivalent of the BBAR (Best British All-Rounder) competition - then run by "Cycling" magazine. He beat the minimum standard of 20 miles an hour in 1935 (101st in the table) and in 1936 (80th).

Ron Hoare made the 12-hour his speciality. In August, 1938 he put his name in the club record books with 227 3/4 miles in the Anerley 12. The following month, he rode 230 1/2 miles in an inter-club event with the Southern Elite; and only one week later he was on the 12 hour record trail again. He and Ken Hill, who had also ridden in the inter-club race, set new tandem figures for the Southern Road Records Association of 253 1/2 miles which stood unbeaten for 12 years. The account in the DLN pointed out that this was 9 1/2 miles better than the previous record:

"This bald statement is far from the full story, because the weather left a lot to be desired - there being a strong wind which almost reached gale force, whilst rain fell at intervals through the day. Furthermore, the tandem unshipped its chain no less than seven times; they suffered a burst back tyre, and fell heavily at 195 miles through colliding with a dog.

"These misfortunes would have been more than enough for most riders, but our doughty men were not daunted and kept smiling right through to the finish. It was a magnificent performance worthy of all the congratulations we can offer; we know every member must feel proud of them."

The Hoare Hill tandem combination was only one of a number which were active in the De Laune at that time. In fact there were so many of them that the club found it worthwhile to hold separate tandem "fifties."

By now, the De Laune name was prominent in Open start sheets as never before. It wasn't yet appearing in the main prize-lists, though. The first piece of positive encouragement came in the Anerley 12 of 1936, when Ron Hoare's total of 225 miles came within ten miles of the winner's. With Tom Bartlett riding 218 miles and George Francomb 198, the De Laune came second in the team race - which, as Frank Holland said, was "the nearest we have ever been to obtaining such an award in a big race."

Fred Bakker broke new ground for the club in 1934 when he rode in the Catford 24 - and finished with 377 miles. He was fed and watered by Percy Shrimpton and Stan Endean, riding windswept in Percy's Chittybeng Jowett open tourer. Long-distance races like the Catford became very popular in the 'thirties. They attracted a breed of time-triallist rarely seen today: men like S.F. Wynne of the De Laune, who was still pounding land smiling) his way round every kind of course well after the war - and indeed was club champion three times. Frank Wynne joined the De Laune in March 1936, and

two months later won its Novices 25 on what was described as "one of the worst crocks that can ever have been used for speed work..... It has to be seen to be believed." Frank scorned the use of toe-clips, or of anything flamboyant; and the prediction was that with better equipment he would go far, and fast.

Frank may not have improved his equipment all that much in the years that followed, but it wasn't long before he fulfilled the promise of 1936. The following year, he and Ken Hill rode in the Catford 24:

"Frank appeared to enjoy the outing right from the start and was travelling well, but having a poor light he left the course at Washington and did not realise his error until reaching Shoreham, about ten miles away. He was fortunate in receiving a lift back to Washington from a motorist, but valuable time had been lost.

"Meanwhile Ken, who was making his third attempt in this event, was riding steadily and covered 203 miles in the first 12 hours. He maintained a good average speed for the rest of the day and ran out of time with a total of 392 miles 7 furlongs, which is the new club record and 153/4 miles better than Fred Bakker's 1934 distance.

"Despite his misfortune, Frank Wynne still rode on and was credited with 387 3/4 miles..... a sterling ride at his first shot at this type of race. (These figures were later amended.) We understand that although he had a return ticket for the train journey, he preferred to cycle home after the event - what a man!

More of Frank Wynne later. But it's worth noting here that in 1952 he rode from his home at Caversham, near Reading, to Llandudno to take part in a contest organised by the National Federation of Fishmongers - and won a challenge cup as the National Champion Fish Craftsman. What a man!

One of the newcomers to the racing scene in the late 'thirties was Jack Zarfes, whose immaculate style and equipment were the very antithesis of Frank Wynne's. He caused some eyebrows to rise by winning the Novices 25 of 1937 at the ripe old age of 34.

The novices event of two years later provided a link with the past: it was won by young John Giles, whose father was breaking club records before the first world war. And John senior - who had become a club timekeeper - was there to cheer him on. "Young John" kept the link going by following his father as timekeeper when his racing days were over.

There were comparatively few traffic problems to worry the racing men of the 'thirties; but some precautions were necessary. Riders using the club "50" course through Colnbrook, for instance, made use of reflections in shop windows to see if the way was clear round a sharp bend in the town. Tom Bartlett did just that in 1933 and ran slap into a police constable, who had been bending over his bike to adjust something and so was not reflected in a window. The next rider to round the bend saw Tom and the policeman trying to disentangle themselves from their machines, each on opposite sides of the road - and exchanging a few words.

That didn't stop Tom finishing the race, of course, any more than it did Alf Styles when he knocked a man down in Horsham back in 1911. For the record, Tom's time was 2-27-41.

## **NEW ROADS, FRESH TRACKS**

The racing secretaries of the 'thirties - Percy Shrimpton, Tom Ferris, Ron Hoare, "Ginger" Smith and Bill Miles - had much more to do than their predecessors. They had to book overnight accommodation for riders in club events, and find up to 30 marshals and other helpers willing to get up at an extraordinarily early hour (sometimes 1.30 a.m.) to cycle to points many miles from home. There were at least two 100-mile races each season in addition to the shorter ones; inter-club events with the Bellingham Wheelers and the Oval C.C.; sometimes an inter-club 12-hour; and the forerunners of cyclo-cross - rough-stuff races which were run either as time trials or as massed-starts.

Then there was the need to find and measure new courses: traffic lights were being introduced on more and more roads, major roadworks were being undertaken, and new regulations were being applied by the R.R.C. and its successor, the R.T.T.C. It was no longer feasible, for instance, for races to be based entirely on the Bath road. The De Laune worked out a 100 course which started at Datchet, near Windsor, and then meandered between Staines, Chertsey and Colnbrook before turning west through Windsor and Maidenhead to Reading, and back to finish outside Windsor racecourse. Some 25 and 50 mile courses were also based on these roads. The Brighton road was used as an alternative, with the starting-point just north of Horley. In 1938, however, yet more re-measuring created figure-of-eight courses south of Guildford which continued to be used after the war.

The club had its own racing headquarters in Guildford - Mrs. Mac's boarding house at No. 2 Mount Street, run by a large, forbidding-looking woman with a heart of gold. So club events were weekend affairs for most riders, marshals and officials: a ride down to Guildford on the Saturday afternoon, a stroll to the "local" for a drink or a session of bridge at Mrs. Mac's under the expert eye of the chain-smoking Ron Neale. To bed in the early hours; then the race; down to the river for swimming or boating; perhaps a walk or a game of football - or just a nap on the back lawn. Mrs. Mac's was later run by her son-in-law, Charlie Dain and his wife Eileen.

For the annual hill-climb, Brasted was the consistent choice - and Percy Shrimpton the consistent winner. He was fastest in nine of the ten years in which he competed.

A number of club members also tried their hands at the new-fangled massed-start racing - on closed roads, such as the motor-racing circuits at Donnington Park and Brooklands. And a revived interest in track racing brought about the election in 1935 of the De Laune's first "path secretary" - Len Beretta, who was succeeded the following year by R.A. "Monty" Banks. Gold medal standards were agreed: 27 <sup>4</sup>/<sub>5</sub> sec. for the <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-mile flying start; 1 min. 19 sec. for the 1,000 metres standing start; and 24 miles for the one-hour standing start. (It should be noted that most of the club's riders used their one-and-only road bike on the track.)

"Monty" set everyone a good example by winning the five-mile club championship in 1935 and 1936; but it was a different story at Herne Hill in 1937:

"Thirteen entrants started and the pace quickly became very fast, with Frank Wynne, Ron Hoare and Les Tooke at the front. In the fourth lap, Ken Fletcher unfortunately punctured, and his tyre rolling off caused him to fall heavily, resulting in a broken arm and sundry cuts. Bonnicks also fell, but was lucky in landing on the grass, thereby only sustaining bruises. About halfway through the race it was seen that "Monty" had punctured and of course he had to retire.

"All this time Fred Hooper had not been prominent, leaving the pacemaking and sprinting to others; but with three laps to go he made his effort, immediately after one of the lap sprints, and succeeded in opening up a clear gap of some 15 to 20 yards.

"Tooke and Chapman set off in hot pursuit, but despite 'bit-and-bit' riding they were unable to recover any ground. When the bell rang for the last lap, Fred seemed to ride with even more determination, and slightly increased his lead to finish a comfortable winner in the keen time of 12 minutes."

The new-found enthusiasm for track racing was no passing fancy. In 1939 the De Laune caused a stir in the cycling world by getting unexpected permission to have a new club cabin built at Herne Hill

"complete with curtains, massage table, and lino, and resplendent with a brass plaque over the door."  
It was the first new cabin allowed at the track for more than 25 years and was seen as a tribute to the status of the De Laune.

## **BUNFIGHTS, PING-PONG - AND BLUEBOTTLES**

Membership was buoyant in the early 'thirties and reached 100 in 1931. To celebrate the occasion, a bunfight was held at Ma Stanley's, Burgh Heath. Ladies were especially invited; the member bringing the largest number of them ("grandmothers and aunts barred") was given a free tea. It was an afternoon of thick fog, but 61 members and friends turned up:

"Those present arrived by varied means, some by Southern Electric, Green Line, Underground and General, while others, strange to relate, cycled up. 'Gangster' suits were well to the fore among our lads, much to the amusement of the Bellingham, Oval and Centaur members who joined us.

"The plain but wholesome fare provided was disposed of with alacrity, albeit several missiles in the shape of wet celery flew about from table to table, in particular from the corner where the Oval and Centaur were ensconced. The presence of a fair number of ladies, however, prevented the fun from getting too hilarious.

"After the mess had been cleared away, dancing was soon in full swing to the strains of music ably provided by Miss Doris Langdon at the piano, Bert Butler on his 'sax' and Adrian (Collison) with his fiddle. Jack Gurney also assisted at the piano.

"During the evening one of the Centaur lads entertained us with humorous recitations, while Miss Edie Blackwell led us in singing some old English 'soak' songs. 'Milky' of the Oval, not to be outdone, started several acrobatic exploits and was soon joined by Jef, Long John (Oakley), Adrian, George (Gardham) and many others, all eager to show how many times they could walk around a walking stick.

"Had any stranger looked in at this time he would surely have thought himself in one of the hospitals for which the Epsom district is famous. When one of the ladies essayed the feat of walking round the stick there was great competition among the males for the honour of catching her as she fell, stricken with giddiness.

"Time passed all too quickly and we were soon on our way home through the mist-enwrapped countryside after an evening which was voted a great success, so much so that we have already been asked for a repetition.

Our journey home by train was enlivened by the antics of Beefy, Hooper, Sansom and Co., who performed on every possible occasion."

Over the following few years there were similar bunfights at Burgh Heath and at The Ostriche, at Colnbrook. From looking through the DLN, it's obvious that the fun didn't end when the bunfight was over: "..... And on the bus going home, the conductor was a sport and turned off the lights for the benefit of the wafflers."

There was fun of a different kind to be had in the scavenger hunts, when members had to arrive at a venue having collected a variety of extraordinary items on the way: a live bluebottle, a threepenny bus ticket, a wrinkle, a knitting needle and a potato, to name but a few.

Finding a satisfactory headquarters for clubnight activities was much more of a problem for the social organisers. Card schools were popular in the St. Paul's Tavern in Camberwell Gate, to which the club had moved in 1928, but the landlord objected because, he said, they were playing for money.

So on to a new clubroom at the Lorrimore Hall, Lorrimore Street, at the invitation of the Malvern sports and social club. There, ping-pong became the rage, at three games for a penny; then back to the old headquarters at The Grosvenor, in Stockwell, and in 1937 a move to the Red Cow, on the Albert Embankment, where the landlord, Jack Johnson, was a member of the club.

## CHIP AND THE GOLDEN JUBILEE

Recruitment slowed to a trickle in the mid-thirties, despite a rise in the popularity of cycling in general. But a well publicised invitation run in February, 1936, produced very satisfying results. So many turned up at The Windmill that separate groups had to be formed. Then off to Ide Hill, a freewheeling contest, and tea at Charlwood. After the bread and jam and cakes (and a "small entertainment") Frank Holland addressed the gathering on the delights of cycling with the De Laune and distributed some literature about it. The recruits gathered in as a result included Frank Wynne, Tom Bewsey - and a fair-haired, talkative lad called Edward Neville Chippendale.

Chip soon made his mark by enthusiastically joining in every aspect of club life. He'd been a member for only six months when Frank Holland wrote this assessment of him:

"Chief characteristics, a bright countenance, waving fair hair, a sailor's gait, ready wit, well spoken but voluble. A very keen tourist, contributor to cycling Press and an enthusiastic clubman. Altogether one of the best recruits we have recently acquired."

Less than 18 months later Chip succeeded Frank Holland as general secretary and began more than 40 years of service to the club he loved so much.

As we have seen, it was a club which expected high standards of its members, but its officials were never out of touch with real life. They saw only too clearly how some members were affected by the economic depression of the 'thirties. Those put out of a job were given free membership and anyone who couldn't afford to go to a club dinner because he was unemployed or simply too poor was urged to let the committee know in confidence, and he would be given a free ticket.

In fact the club had financial troubles of its own - brought about, it was suggested, by giving too much prize-money. In 1936, there were nearly 50 prizes in club events, and 37 standard medals were won. So the old-established entrance fee of a shilling was abolished; it was replaced by an annual senior subscription of ten shillings, which included the cost of the DLN. Members aged under 21 paid six shillings, unless they wanted to race, when they had to pay the senior rate.

But a temporary shortage of money couldn't be allowed to hinder plans for celebrations in 1939 - Golden Jubilee year. Chip and Len Beretta master-minded much of the fund raising, but it was a Tom Bewsey inspiration which gave the fund a final boost and set the scene for the jubilee itself: a magnificently ambitious presentation of a revue called "Treasure Hunt" - described on the tickets as a "musical extravaganza in ten cycles."

Tom Bewsey and his co-producer - Eddie Bristow, a band-leader - wrote the words and music; members and friends made up the cast of 30 and the backstage workers; and an orchestra was under the baton of the impressively-named Whittred de Cresse. The weekly rehearsals at the Rod Cow were never short of volunteer helpers, though Chip's theory wits that the presence of a couple of attractive tap-dancers called Myrtle and Joan had something to do with it.

The big night was Thursday, October 27th, 1938, when St. Mary's Hall, Clapham, was packed with 600 people who had paid between two shillings and 7s.6d. for three hours of high-class home made entertainment:

"It was a grand show! Mere words cannot hope adequately to describe the enthusiasm of the reception accorded to our gallant performers. The critics were astounded, and we have heard nothing but praise - which was lavish indeed. The audience was very mixed (one man came all the way from Manchester), but there is not the slightest doubt that every person present went away thoroughly satisfied with all they had seen....."

"But to get to the show. The plot was quite simple, involving the imaginary adventures of two new members of the club taking part in a scavenger hunt, and being led astray by being handed a list of book titles by the Captain instead of the proper clues. Their adventures take them into Scotland, Germany, India, and Texas before the curtain closes on their return to Clapham Common some years later, laden with the strange objects collected on their quest. "Len Beretta and Charlie Renel played the principal parts right nobly, the latter in particular being devastatingly silly, with Len as an excellent foil....."

"Taking a broad view of the whole affair and the consensus of opinion afterwards, we feel that our familiar blue pamphlet, which reached into the homes of so many of your friends, stated no more than the bare truth in the words 'The most ambitious show ever presented in South London by a cycling club.' "

At that year's "pre-jubilee" dinner at the Quadrant Restaurant there were a record 152 members and friends. Frank Holland was presented with an engraved silver tray and tea-set, to mark his "ten years hard" as secretary; Eddie Bristow's band played for dancing; a singer called Bryn Gwyn was cheered for his rendering of "The Cobbler's Song", and there was the annual comic turn by George Wall, a veteran club member who travelled up from his home in Bridgwater.

The following month saw the first event in the Jubilee calendar - supper for more than 100 at the Red Cow, then by coach to the London Palladium to see (at the club's expense) Flanagan and Allen in "These Foolish Things". The occasion was also a celebration of the production of "Treasure Hunt" - but no women members of the cast were included. They were each given a box of chocolates as a "Thank you" instead.

St. Mary's Hall was the venue for another De Laune enterprise in March of that Jubilee year: a fancy-dress ball. Plenty of advance help and advice was given to wouldbe guests. Fancy-dress pattern books were made available in the clubroom, and Tom Bewsey took a party to Morgan's Carnival Shop, opposite Lambeth Baths, where 40 or 50 ladies' and gents' costumes were available for hire at two or three shillings a piece. On the night, Chip won a second prize as the Pope; but the main award went to Monty Banks, the track man, whose impersonation of a Roman Gladiator was described as "magnificent, from the top of his enormous brass helmet to the tip of his long golden boots."

The De Laune's racing men marked the Jubilee with an Open 100 - the first open event the club had organised. They did it in style: entry forms and start and finish cards were printed in club colours - chocolate lettering on light blue paper. prize values were well up to those in classic events. And it all paid off. There were 165 entries, and some of the country's top time triallists were in the 100 selected to ride: Butler, Fenn and Hockham of the Norwood Paragon; Mills, Paul and Hobbs of the Addiscombe; Logan, Pickersgill and Hodges of the Vegetarian C. and A.C.

The course was one used for several established events - on roads between Oxford, Theale, and Savernake Forest near Marlborough. De Leune's Rob Fletcher was first man off at four o'clock in the half-light A dawn. A couple of hours later a strengthening wind and heavy showers killed hopes of competition record from one or other of the "cracks" - in fact a number of them gave up after puncturing on a stretch of newly-tarred road.

The eventual winner was E.V. Mills of the Addiscombe, in 4-31-11, and Castlenau won the team award. All three De Laune riders finished with personal bests: Ron Hoare was 19th fastest with 4-47-08, Bill Miles took first handicap with 4-49-49, and Rob Fletcher did 4-59-46.

But Bill Miles wasn't the only De Laune member to win a prize on that day. After the riders had gone through the feeding station at Hungerford Bridge, the helpers there began to dispose of the many bananas that were left. Don Hammond sat on the kerb with a skinned banana in each hand. Lee Pyne draped the skin of another banana over the top of Don's head; and as Don tried to eat yet more bananas, the club's expert photographer, Len Beretta, took a picture of him. The outcome was a first prize for Len in s "Cycling" photographic competition, entitled "The Feeding Station".

The Open 100 was the last of the Jubilee events. The others disappeared with the declaration of a war which had been threatening for 12 months of more. Frank Holland finally abandoned his attempts to write a club history; the Jubilee dinner was cancelled, and so was the autumn 25 for the new Golden Jubilee Bowl; Sunday clubruns were restricted, so that everyone could be home by nightfall; and club trophies were distributed for safe keeping among members who lived a long way from London - such as George Wall in Bridgwater.

Chip had spent his August holiday on a Continental cycling tour, and had intended to write about it in the DLN. Instead, he gave an account of what happened on the clubrun on Sunday, September 3rd 1939:

"It had been a typical Sunday morning gathering, but perhaps not quite as many as usual. A number of the regulars were missing, and one could hear explanations being given - 'Ken? Oh, he's standing by!' and so on.

"There was perhaps a soberer atmosphere than normally. Hitler had crossed the frontier into Poland! Everybody realised the significance of that action and it was without doubt the chief matter for conversation.

"Evacuation plans had rendered certain main roads well-nigh unusable, and it was through some not so frequented side-roads and lanes that the run was led. By way of Carshalton, Banstead Village, Chipstead Pond, Gatton and Mugswell, we eventually reached Lower Kingswood for elevenses at Cambridge Cottage.

"Healthy appetites were soon disposing of tea and cakes for fifteen, whilst in the background could be heard the usual BBC Sunday morning programme. Suddenly the music ceased, and we became aware of a voice that caused first one and then another of us to stop our conversation to catch the speaker's words.

"The Prime Minister,' said someone. There was a hush. He was speaking in a sad and weary voice, yet with a measured firmness of carefully considered thought. We realised that here was something vital indeed, and you could have heard a pin drop.

"We all know, we have all read, and some of us heard, that speech: '..... a state of war exists.....' We listened on. Mute.

"Finally the speaker finished, and there was a sudden release of the tension which had held us. 'So that's that,' said someone, and there was a murmur of agreement. There was no elation, none of the 'up and at 'em' feeling which was supposed to have been prevalent in 1914, but rather a serious consideration of what the future held.

"For my own part, the announcement had brought a dull feeling of disappointment. So this is the best that civilisation of 1939 can do! I thought of some of the acquaintances I had made in Germany and Austria - wondered what they were thinking at this moment.

"This train of thought was rudely shattered. As we idly watched the main Brighton road before us, air raid wardens appeared from nowhere, blowing whistles, stopping cars, waving their hands frantically. 'War is on! An air raid warning has just sounded! Take cover!'

"Soon the road was clear of moving vehicles. A warden came running up. 'You had better get inside' he said. Finally came the all-clear signal.

"It did not take long to decide not to go on to Jolesfield, and we wandered up to the little inn which graces Walton Heath, Mogador is the name of the place, I think. We had lunch and there was only one subject for discussion. Some sat on the heath or laid in the sun. Others, including myself, took a long walk over the heath.

"About three o'clock we started back to London, and whisking downhill from Banstead Downs, soon found ourselves back to a very frenzy of sandbagging, etc.

"A remark passed by Ken Fletcher during the homeward journey seemed full of portent. 'They surprise me,' he said. 'Somehow I thought the news would have come more as a blow. But everyone seems determined to be cheerful.' 'Well, 'I said, 'What else can one do?'

" Let us hope that whatever the news may bring, whatever obstacles may arise, we shall not lose that ability to remain cheerful and with it the determination to keep the De Laune on top."

## **COPING WITH WAR**

The Second World War proved the truth of the adage that a club is only as strong as its officials. The De Laune was fortunate in having a number of first-class men who had done good service in the past and who were willing and able to return to the fray as the younger ones joined the Forces. When Chip disappeared into the Army, his job was first done by Jef Butcher, then by Ken Hill; Frank Holland, who had been succeeded as DLN editor by Tom Bewsey just before the war, resumed the editorial chair from Hereford - and later from Duffield, in Derbyshire; and in 1940, Harold Edmonds started an eleven-year stint as club captain which was to earn him a gold badge of honour. As Charles Condy said at the time, "There seems to be some magic in the name of the De Laune that draws so many good men to carry it on so successfully."

More than 80 club members were in the Forces or full-time Civil Defence at one time or other during the war. As in 1914 a Comforts Fund was started - organised this time by Allan Furze - with the "comforts" taking the form of postal orders or cigarettes. And the DLN became the Budget of the Second World War, incorporating as it did a flow of letters from Servicemen at home and abroad.

The initial shock of being at war virtually paralysed the club's activities for a few months, as it did those of Britain's other sporting and social organisations. Then came a short lived return to near-normality. The De Laune organised another outing to the Palladium; clubruns and YHA weekends were well supported; some members rode in track meetings at Paddington, and even more in club time trials.

The Newnham Weekend of 1939 was the last of the wartime trips to Newnham which it was possible to make without first getting police permission - that part of Kent became a restricted area. It was quite a memorable occasion. The club clown of the time, Ron Neale, was among 20 or so members who spent the night at the Stallisfield Green Youth Hostel. The boys were in high spirits, and did a good job on Ron's bike, parked with the others in a barn. When Ron discovered that his pedals, saddle and handlebars were all turned the wrong way round he took his revenge by letting down all the tyres he could lay his hands on, and throwing away any non-high-pressure valves he came across. Unfortunately, the rubber valves belonged to a group of foreign tourists, who swore loud and long.

But Ron didn't stop there. At bedtime, 20 pairs of pyjamas were missing. Ron had his. In the morning, all 20 pairs were found hanging from a very tall tree. Chip's green specials were at the very top.

The enjoyment of such weekends made it difficult to realise there was a war on.

The De Laune was even bold enough to go ahead with its second open promotion - a "25" on the Portsmouth road on May 26th, 1940 which drew more than 200 entries. Of the 100 on the start sheet, 28 didn't turn up, because they couldn't get time off from war work. Of those who did, F. Granger of the Sorian R.C. was fastest in 1-02-59, and George Laws of the Catford was second with 1-03-10. The best De Laune rider was Johnny Giles, son of the pre-1914 champion, in 1-07-31.

The club's first wartime race had been a novices "25" in April. Riders, marshals and general supporters set out for the start near Esher at 4.30 in the morning, in the light of a full moon; and afterwards they rode to Guildford to empty the teapot at Mrs. Mac's, where the club's racing men often stayed:

"As is usual when we visit Guildford the river attracted us, our Captain included, and we were soon seen to be either canoeing or spreading along its banks. The canoes were paddled along to the Parrot Inn and there beached whilst we had lunch, which was much improved by a glass of the usual. We then wandered back to the river in groups.

"It is by now a well known fact that whenever the De Laune goes boating, something has to happen and our Captain saw to it that this tradition was well and truly carried out. "Oscar" returning to the river was just in time to see his canoe, which he was sharing with Harold, floating upside down in midstream.

"Harold at first wasn't to be seen, but after a few seconds had elapsed a struggling mass, which proved to be he, was espied striking out for the far bank, where he grabbed hold of some overhanging shrubs. Much spitting out of water and weeds was observed.

"Les Pyne speedily came to the rescue and brought a thoroughly drenched Captain to our side of the river, where a process of disrobing took place. The wet clothes were hung upon a telegraph pole to dry, whilst he sat huddled in an outsize sweater and a wet pair of cotton pants.

"Harold wasn't left in peace for long, for two small girls came over from the road to find out what the excitement was about, whereupon Chip caused much amusement by shooing them away and explaining that Harold wanted to put his trousers on..... His clothes were still far too wet when the time came to leave and he had to make do with some of them as they were.

"As it was still too early to return for tea, we lazed on the bank partaking of ices and making eyes at numerous pretty girls, whilst "Oscar" gave accounts of the patter of some comedians, and also of a striptease act which he witnessed the previous evening.

"When five o'clock came we decided to return to Mrs. Mac's where we filled up with her good fare. Numerous calls were made for Eileen (Mrs. Mac's daughter) and when she eventually came she was accompanied by her infant son, who found that Uncle Ken Hill was a great attraction. As usual Ron Neale was kept quiet for half-an-hour or so by a game of cards when the tables had been cleared.

"It was still quite hot and the sun was still shining, as it had been all day, when we left on an uneventful ride home which meant the end of another really enjoyable time, one which will surely remain in Harold's mind and quite a few others, too, for many a long day."

It was near Guildford later in the year that two club members Ted Donegan and Les Banks, were made only too aware that there was a war on. They had pitched tents on the river bank and were strolling back after an evening in the town when they were stopped by a uniformed member of the LDV - forerunner of the Home Guard. He asked them to produce their identity cards, but they couldn't because they'd left them at home in London:

"The armed man became suspicious, and keeping them covered with his loaded rifle, informed them that they must come with him to appear before his sergeant - but he could not take them until his relief arrived in some thirty minutes.

"This period slowly passed, and the relief having arrived and had the situation explained to him, our young friends were marched off by their captor. The distance was not great but the hour was late and our heroes were anxious for bed and one can imagine their dismay when the sergeant showed little interest in their story and decided to march them off to his commander, some two or three miles away.

"A little procession formed up with an armed man at front and rear of our friends and off they went. At a river bridge, regular soldiers were on duty and they were all challenged - and more delay ensued before they finally reached the man who mattered. He listened carefully and enquired if anyone locally could vouch for them, so they thought of Mrs. Mac at the well-known teaplace. The 'phone was used and Mrs. Mac brought from her bed but though she knew them quite well she was unable to associate them with a name.

"Eileen, her daughter, being present did know our unfortunate friends and vouched for them, but still the guardians of our land were not satisfied and suggested a 'phone call to a local police station in London. This horrified Ted and Les because they knew that such a summons at such an hour would cause a great deal of anxiety to their people, so after much further talk they persuaded their captors to return with them to the camp.

"Here they had to turn out for examination the whole contents of their tents and bags and after a minute examination were allowed to retire after promising to produce their missing identity cards at a later date. By this time the hour was quite 3.30 a.m. and a much chastened

pair of cyclists wearily laid themselves down to sleep, firmly resolved never, never, to go anywhere again without their cards."

By September, 1940, of course, everyone in South-East England knew there was a war on - with a vengeance. Bill Miles ("25" champion, 1939) was on a club-run which seems to have encompassed the problems of war and the pleasures of a peaceful countryside:

"The run on September 29th was to have been in Kent, but as this is now largely a restricted area, we made for Surrey where one can still roam about unmolested. Six of us left the Common, Les Pyne and young \*Binda riding sprints, a risky business with so much broken glass about. After the usual detours, caused by bomb craters, we were soon in open countryside enjoying the splendour of autumn tints.

*\*Footnote: Dennis Evans, a small boy who earned his nickname by wearing the same kind of huge goggles as did a leading continental roadman.*

"The absence of signposts is at first a little disconcerting; how we used to rely on those symbols of direction, but a little brushing-up of one's map-lore soon puts things right. Apart from W.D. lorries and an occasional car we had the roads entirely to ourselves, which made cycling an increased pleasure. With a keen edge to our appetites we made for a favourite haunt of ours at Albury and dined off the inevitable bread and cheese.

"After swapping various experiences of the blitz - and all had some tale to relate - we paid a visit to the local beauty spot, "The Silent Pool". Situated amongst richly wooded country it has a most perfect setting. The water is crystal clear with a curious blue tint, and there is a legendary tale of its being bottomless.

"Time was getting short so we set off in a rather troublesome headwind for home. A brief stop in Epsom to replenish the inner man and we continued a ride which was uneventful apart from a stop to survey the remains of a Heinkel 112 near London, which had as its mascot the German eagle with the British lion underneath.

"Although our runs need certain alterations, restricted mileage and early teas to be home before blackout, please remember they still provide the means for an enjoyable weekend."

Despite Bill Miles's appeal, numbers on club-runs declined until they virtually disappeared altogether. But just as the DLN kept Service members in touch, so the officials at home made sure there were regular contacts between those still able to ride with the club.

In 1941, Jef Butcher organised a get-together lunch at County Oak, Crawley. This probably provided Ron Hoare with the inspiration to suggest a monthly series of such gatherings which began in 1942, initially at Edser's, in Leatherhead. They were hugely successful in bringing together young members awaiting call-up, those in reserved occupations, Servicemen on leave or stationed within travelling distance of the venue, and old-timers like Charles Condy, Joe Mayo, John Giles, Percy Williams, Alf Styles, Will Westlake and \*Arthur "Merrie" England. Gunner Wynne rode 60 miles to the first monthly meeting at Leatherhead - in Army boots. And on one Sunday afternoon, the sixteen members sat down to tea on the lawn at Edser's were joined unexpectedly by George Wall.

- *Footnote: "Merrie" England was a typical cycling old-timer. He was 80 when he rolled off his bike and died at the CTC triennials vets' ride at Charlwood in 1962. His widow said: "I can hear him saying 'What a glorious end!' "*

He'd cycled about 75 miles from his home in Bridgwater to Andover, where he caught a train to Woking and then rode on to Leatherhead. After tea he returned the same way - reaching home at 4 a.m.

The cycling clubs of wartime Britain managed a restricted programme of time trials. The De Laune ran a few events each year in combination with other clubs such as the Kentish Wheelers, Norwood Paragon, the Addiscombe and the Fountain C.C. Two youngsters who joined the De laune early in the war - Fred Leckie and Wally Fraser - were the club's most prominent racing men of the period. Fred was discharged from the Army after a lorry ran over his legs - but within a few weeks he rode in the

SCCU 50 and wasn't far outside evens. He later set the club's "30" record at 1-18-33, and with Wally Fraser established a best tandem "30" time of 1-07-34.

The few who rode with them in at least some of those war years included Jack Zarfes, Eddie Sharp, Arthur Burcham and the racing secretary himself, Ken Hill. The competition they encountered in open events wasn't all that fierce, but Fred Leckie was well-pleased with his third place in the Catford 50 of 1943 (2-16-27). Wally Fraser was fourth - a minute slower - and a year later took second place with a 2-18.

Fred suffered from bad eyesight - he wore glasses which had lenses described by his contemporary Bill Miles as being like the bottom of beer bottles:

"I'm sure if he could have seen where he was going he could have gone a lot faster. Night riding must have been purgatory for him. If he lost contact with the back wheel of the chap in front it must have been like a ship at sea in a storm. And on foggy nights you had to lead Fred by the hand."

## THE CASUALTIES

The first wartime tragedy directly to affect the De Laune was the death of Len Beretta and his wife, June, in an air raid in September, 1940. They were together in a newly-completed shelter at their home when a bomb fell in the next-door garden and caused their shelter to collapse. Len Beretta had made a significant contribution to the life of the club in his ten years of membership. He initiated the Golden Jubilee Fund, inspired the track-racing revival, and ensured the club's activities had first class Press publicity.

Ken Hill's home was wrecked by a bomb in the same summer blitz, and Charlie Condy's wife and daughter were killed by a direct hit on their shelter. Later in the war, flying bombs destroyed the homes of Will Westlake, Mick Boothby and Will Le Grys, and made the Chippendale family's house unfit to live in. The club president, Capt. Alured Faunce De Laune, was also experiencing the war at first hand at Sharsted:

"Air battles over here all day today, but we take no notice. We had bombs in the park and many windows broken. I've the whole place full of troops - a very nice crowd.

"I have been worked to death in charge of military welfare over a large area besides a section of Home Guard and my own affairs as well. I'm what you call 'done up' but carrying on o.k. just the same. The other evening I lay down on a long chair with a book and the next thing I knew it was 6 a.m. and a raid on into the bargain!"

The president kept in touch through the DLN - reporting in June, 1942, the birth in South Africa of his first grandson, Baudain Alured. The wartime DLN made a deep impression on him:

"In reading the De Laune News, it strikes me in a way I think never before to the same extent, what a marvellous club it is. I don't mean from a sporting point of view - something greater than that - I mean what wonderful friendships it has been the means of creating.

"Everyone, as they go through life, no doubt find something to regret, but I feel sure none can feel regret at one thing, that is the day he joined the De Laune Cycling Club. Money will buy most things, but one thing it cannot buy is the lasting friendships brought into being by the club.

"Not only has the club brought to pass many such lasting friendships - it has done more, with its runs, its outings, and its sport, memories are left which only death can efface."

The letters from soldiers, sailors and airmen in the DLN contained very few first-hand accounts of military action, as they had in the Budget, because censorship was strict, but Bernard Palastanga, an enthusiastic member marked out by Frank Holland as "potentially a second Chip", contributed some colourful accounts of his pilot training:

"So far I have spent five hours in the air - and what hours they have been! It is a marvellous, indescribable feeling which comes over one on being told for the first time that 'You've got her.' One concentrates on every movement of the 'plane and there is great satisfaction to be gained from observing how it reacts to correct movement of the controls.

"I am afraid the feeling is not so marvellous, nor the satisfaction great when an incorrect movement brings the earth looming up ahead as the 'plane goes into a spin or dive. What great chaps these instructors are! But for mine I should have been reposing in a grave long ago. Nevertheless despite a shaky start I feel I am making progress and it is now only a matter of practice before I can take off alone."

Bernard failed his pilot's course because he didn't keep a sharp-enough lookout for other aircraft. He eventually became an observer in Bomber Command, and was soon on his first operational flight - a night raid:

"I was severely shaken when I heard that my first trip was to be a target so far away as Berlin, for it is usual to give 'rookies' a short trip to begin with. I was shaken still more, however,

when we were over Heligoland and one of our engines cut! The pilot continued the trip, however, after deciding to fly on one engine and whatever he could out of the other.

"After a while he decided that it would be too great a risk to go to Berlin, so we stooed along to Hamburg and loosed our load. We saw the flashes of our bombs exploding and about a dozen fires, merrily blazing - the result of incendiaries. The ack-ack didn't help to make life too easy in the district and we weren't inclined to hang around anyway, so off we came. The faulty engine gave little or no help at all on the homeward journey and it was a fine piece of work on the part of the pilot in getting home at all."

A couple of months later, in November 1941, Bernard Palastanga was reported missing from a raid on Germany, although the 'plane from which he disappeared landed safely in England:

"We gather that the aircraft was returning from its objective and was over the Zuider Zee when the pilot saw another 'plane flying in the opposite direction, which he told his crew was a Hampden. The rear-gunner called through 'Are you sure?' and then reported, three minutes later, that an M.E. was closing in at 50 yards. The enemy sent tracers over the top of the pilot's head, shooting away the wireless mast, so the pilot turned away. Then the rear-gunner told him to dive, which he did at 400 m.p.h.

"It is thought that this sudden, fierce dive threw Bernard forward, pulling out his inter-com., and receiving no reply to a question, seeing tracers all around the pilot and with the 'plane diving at such speed, thought they were out of control and got out. He went out complete with parachute and 'Mae West', so presuming he baled-out successfully we should hear in the fullness of time that he is safe and well."

Bernard's family had to wait for nearly a year before they had confirmation of his death: his body had been recovered from the sea, and was buried in Holland.

News that Bernard Palastanga was missing coincided with the death of another De Laune airman - the card-playing jokester Ron Neale. His bomber crashed on the Yorkshire moors on its return from Germany. A few weeks later, young Alex McGregor's Coastal Command aircraft failed to come back from patrol.

Alex was one of the De Laune's road-racing pioneers who took part in pre-war massed-start events on the old motor-cycle circuit at Brooklands. Les Pyne remembered him as a prince on a bike: "He always looked so cool and trim. He never appeared hot, tired or saggy. His bike was spotless and he was one of the few who rode gears."

Frank Holland had no doubts about what should be done: "We must honour them," he said. And in August, 1942, he initiated the memorial fund which, 31 years later, gave the De Laune its permanent home.

Frank's proposal that the money should be used to buy a clubroom had the immediate support of Chip, who thought it was an ideal way of remembering those "old mates" who would never return:

"Let us feel, when we have finished, we can say to them - 'Is it not well done and is it not what you would have done?' And if we feel that an affirmative answer would be given, then we shall know that we have raised a memorial suitable indeed.

"How many times in the past have we discussed the possibilities of bringing into being a permanent home for the club - a project which struck an answering chord in the heart of every member? Always it seemed that the difficulties were insurmountable - never was it dropped through lack of desire.

"The difficulties are still there, the desire is still there - it is possible? Could it be done? If so, almost any sacrifice would be worthwhile, for their sake."

George Le Grys came up with a grandiose plan for the club to buy a large country house south of London. He suggested that some of its 20 acres could be used to grow vegetables and that the rest

could accommodate a football pitch, a cricket field, tennis courts and a grass cycle track. Everyone else was more realistic and a minority wondered if a permanent clubroom might prove too much of a burden. Ron Hoare pointed to the difficulties other cycling clubs had experienced over running costs and lack of dedicated officials: "I do not think it necessary to erect any monument to the members we lose," he said. "They will best be remembered by their friends."

But the money came in right from the start. The first cash contribution to the fund was ten shillings from a serving soldier, Roland Brisley, who was himself killed in action in Italy in November, 1943.

Roland had been a regular supporter of clubruns and weekend tours. He contributed to the enjoyment of them by making constant use of the very latest thing in cameras his mother had given him for his birthday. It had an auto-time shutter, which enabled him to set-up the camera and then dash round to take his place in the line-up of fellow-members, all laughing at his antics. Roland wrote regularly from Italy to the DLN, giving colourful accounts of the countryside and the people. He wasn't in the front-line, and in his last letter was looking forward to being back with the club "before long." Two weeks later his Army lorry was blown up by a land-mine.

The following year, Geoff Hinde died when his bomber was brought down over Duisberg, and Stan Edmonds - who had survived several battles in North Africa - was killed on the beaches of Normandy. Then with the war in Europe drawing to a close, Paratrooper Robert "Curly" Barnes lost his life as British forces crossed the Rhine. When he joined the club after an invitation run early in 1940 he was only 14 years old, and was the youngest active member. He was 19 when he was killed.

The ninth name on the extension to the memorial plaque at Newnham is that of Norman (Bert) Farrow. He wasn't killed in action, but died soon after the war - his health ruined by Army service in the Middle East.

Some of the De Laune's Servicemen kept their racing legs in trim in the most unlikely parts of the world. Percy Shrimpton rode time trials in Norway, as did Stan Edmonds in Malta, and Roy Banham helped to found a cycling club in Egypt. Others were in faraway places as prisoners-of-war - like Chip's brother, Frank, and "Binda" Evans, whose parents first heard of his capture from a German radio broadcast.

George Perschsky's wife had to wait much longer for news of him after he'd been captured by the Japanese in Singapore in 1942. She had a postcard from him in August the following year, then nothing until his release a further two years after that. During that time, the Perschsky family home was destroyed by a flying bomb, and Mrs. Perschsky and their young child had to be dug out of the rubble.

George later wrote an account of what he described as his three-and-a-half years of misery in the hands of the Japanese. After several months of hard labour in Singapore, he and his fellow-prisoners were sent to work on the infamous Thailand - Burma railway. They were first crammed into railway wagons for five days, sitting and sleeping knees to chin, with no sanitation and day-time temperatures of 140 degrees. Then a 200-mile walk to an area of dense bamboo jungle near Bangkok known as "The Valley of Death".

"Ten days' rest and then to work, and what a time - making good dirt road which the rain was making a quagmire. The more we did the worse it became and the Japs were slave-drivers with bamboo canes. The railway had to cross a river at this point and some of us were put to work constructing this, fifty feet above the water.

"Everything was done by hand and hours were anything up to twenty a day in teeming rain. Conditions were appalling: no medical stores, no sanitation, scanty food and no way of drying our sodden clothes and bedding. Then disaster came upon us. Cholera broke out. Men dropped like flies as they worked and the death-toll began to mount, the highest being thirty in twenty-four hours.

"Malaria and dysentery were rife and the bamboo was deadly - one scratch from it resulted in a tropical ulcer which grew rapidly and with the very little treatment available soon rotted

whole limbs away. Half the camp was down in a few weeks. And so life went on - each wondering who was the next to die."

George himself caught pretty well every disease there was to catch, before ending up once again in Singapore in 1945, and hearing rumours that the war was over:

"The Nips began to send in Red Cross stuff, clothes, food and cigarettes. We all received our first individual parcels, the first for three-and-a-half years, and it began to dawn on us that it was all over. And to confirm this, British 'planes came over, scattering leaflets over the camps. The place was in pandemonium, chaps cheering and crying at the same time. I cried for hours with happiness, as only those who went through those terrible years will ever realise the feeling of being free men."

The De Laune's reunion dinner was held at the Pavour Arms, Westminster, in December 1945 - and George Perschky was promised there'd be no rice on the menu. The following May, a reunion social and dance gave a second opportunity for returning heroes and war workers to renew acquaintanceships and begin planning an even stronger and better De Laune.

## **BOOM TIME - ON A DIFFERENT TRACK**

The 1946 De Laune wasn't much different from the 1920 version; but by 1950 the club had changed more radically than in any other equivalent period. Membership had soared to more than 200, and with that increase came the development of sectional interests. There were roadmen, trackmen and tourists, but rarely - as in the past - a combination of all three. The De Laune's high reputation had always been based on the consistent standard of its general cycling and social activities but by the 'fifties, its name was mainly associated with the promotion of time trials and track events, and the performances of its racing men. As an example of the separation of interests, the old-established rule that no one could take a racing prize unless he had been on a certain number of clubruns was fiercely challenged - and was eventually scrapped.

But to start at the beginning. There was no repetition of the slow recovery from wartime conditions that was seen in the 'twenties. Enthusiasm was the keynote. The De Laune benefited from the post-war boom in cycling as much as any club. The Sunday runs became so popular that it was difficult to find teaplace able to reconcile food rationing with the appetites of between thirty and fifty ravenous cyclists. There were howls of anguish when Mrs. Curd of Godstone announced she could provide only one cake per person; and accommodation for the 1947. Newnham weekend was found only after Harold Edmonds had written more than fifty letters.

The corresponding upsurge in the popularity of time-trials also brought its bed-and-breakfast problems. When the club returned to its "private" courses near Guildford (instead of combining with other clubs elsewhere) there was room for 15 to stay overnight with Charlie and Eileen Dain - successors to Mrs. Mac. Any additions to that figure had to find their own digs, and not rely on the racing secretary as was the case in pre-war years.

Time-trialling wasn't the only peacetime enthusiasm. Some members lost no time in having a go at bicycle polo, which had begun to establish itself just before the war; but it was track racing which inspired many of the new recruits. Ken Hill saw to it that they went about things the right way, and Will Le Grys gave advice at the trackside. Ken's message to De Laune newcomers was designed to lure them away from thoughts of time-trialling: "We'll fit you out to be a trackman. No getting up before dawn - just stay in bed until the sun is hot and amble down to the track."

The outcome was an increasing De Laune presence at Herne Hill, and a series of club promotions there after the first one on July 2nd, 1947. Les Pyne won both club championships held on that day - the five-mile and 1000 metres. The De Laune was then still smarting over the defection earlier in the year of its most promising young track rider, Richard Haydon. He had been the NCU London Centre junior sprint champion in 1946.

Bicycle polo, of course, shouldn't be dismissed as a trivial pursuit. The De Laune had a very active team captained by Ted Pinchen, with (among others) Ken Hill, Bill Miles and Ken Fletcher. They rode special polo bikes with a low fixed gear which they also used for winter rough-stuff races around Pratts Bottom. And the De Laune Bicycle Polo team of Les Tooke, Ken Hill, Ken Fletcher and Fred Peachey took part in the Lord Mayor's Show.

On the road, Fred Leckie continued his winning ways and had his name engraved on six trophies in 1946. That was the year he clipped two seconds from Fred Hooper's 50 record (down to 2-10-49) and with Roy Banham achieved the De Laune's first win in an open event: they were fastest by three minutes in the Upton Manor tandem 50 in 1-58-25 - and it was their first outing together! The 1946 season ended with Fred, Roy and Eddie Sharp winning the SCCU team BAR over 25, 50 and 100 miles.

Fred Leckie didn't have things all his own way after that. In 1947 he won the De Laune Challenge Bowl for a second year, and with Roy Banham set new tandem records at 50 and 100 miles; but Johnny Zarfis (Jack's son) was coming to the fore, and the evergreen Frank Wynne was showing his paces once again. Frank broke Ken Hill's 24-hour record in 1947 with 403 miles and added another four miles in the following year. In the 1947 inter-club 12 hour with the Southern Elite, Fred and Frank battled each other all day - and then finished at the same telegraph pole, each with 225 3/4 miles to his credit.

Johnny Zarfis fulfilled his earlier promise by winning the De Laune Challenge Bowl in 1948 from a field of 35 riders. And later that year a lanky bespectacled youth called Cyril Arthur lowered Fred Hooper's 15-year-old 25 record to 1-03-19. He also improved on two of Fred Leckie's records: he rode a 50 in 2-10-06 and at Herne Hill covered 23 miles 1077 yards in one hour. But Fred Leckie added more lines to the club record books with 1-17-16 for 30 miles and 4-32-02 in the Bath Road 100.

It was Fred Leckie who spoke up for the younger racing men who felt restricted by the "clubruns-or-no-racing-prizes" rule:

"The cycling game today has changed. No longer are our riders satisfied with just pottering around on a clubrun each week and riding in an occasional club time trial. If a chap wants to ride in an Open of any sort he has to have times to his credit which ten years ago would have been good enough to win many an Open, but now may only just get him in the event. Many chaps join a club for its racing programme only. If he wants just clubruns and purely social functions he is better served by the CTC.

"On the track side it is even more so. How can anyone expect to put up a show in a track Open if he is forced to spend half his time on clubruns? ..... All this because of a rule that says 16 clubruns must be attended before one can take a prize in a club event..... Either we must be a social club and nothing else or a cycling club catering for all branches of cycling, and no restrictions or dictatorship."

Opposition to this point of view was summarised by Rob Fletcher's comment: "The club is not a benevolent society for racing men." But Jef Butcher pointed out that the original rule was made when clubruns were poorly supported - so the reason for it no longer applied.

The racing men got their way at the 1949 AGM - by 29 votes from a record attendance of 55 members. Within a few years, however, what had been the backbone of the De Laune - the clubrun - was in a very poor way.

There was another significant change in the racing rules in 1949. The club best all-rounder competition was to be based on average speed over 25, 50 and 100 miles instead of aggregate time over the three distances. Frank Wynne - by now an official veteran - was the first champion under this modernised system, if only by 0.047 miles an hour. The man he so narrowly beat was another of the De Laune's up-and-coming young riders, Peter Gunnell, who broke two club records in consecutive weeks in 1949 - reducing the 25 figures to 1-02-25 and the 30 to 1-16-21. And there was a (literally) rising star in young Ken Fuller, who won the 1949 hill-climb at Brasted to everyone's surprise but his own, and who dominated the event in the following three years.

In 1950, Ken was away from home as a National Serviceman, and had given up hope of getting to the club's annual dinner and prize presentation as hill-climb champion. But his C.O. told him he'd had a letter from a Very Important Person, by name of Chippendale, saying that Ken was required for an important dinner to receive a trophy. So Ken went - and Chip even paid for his dinner ticket.

By the late 'forties, massed-start racing (the NCU closed-circuit type) was attracting the enthusiastic attention of half-a-dozen members - and they had their reward in 1948 when they won the team award in the London Centre junior championship at Matching Green. A foretaste of things to come!

The club's promotion of open time trials at 100 and 25 miles was resumed as soon as possible after the war. The De Laune 25 remains on the RTTC calendar; the De Laune 100 had a few years of glory before succumbing to the decline in cycling in the 'sixties. From 1947 to 1951 the 100 was over-subscribed each year - and the winners were top men like Peter Beardsmore, Vic Gibbons and the Kentish Wheelers' pedalling postman, Alf Hill. Then entries gradually declined, until in the final two years (1963 and 1964) they fell below 40 - about half the number of helpers. The De Laune had the consolation of providing one of the winners - Roy Chittleborough - in 1963, or two, if the 1956 victory of Alan Jackson, riding for the Army C.U., is taken into account.

The Bath road was used for the De Laune 100 up to and including 1956 then there was a blank year before a switch to the Brighton road in 1958. Most riders in these and similar events rode to the start, or to a bed-and-breakfast place on the Saturday night, with a pair of sprint wheels attached on either

side of their h.p. 27 x 1 1/4 steels. And of course they had to ride home afterwards, no matter how far they had raced; hikes on car roof racks were a thing of the future. For many it was a weekend outing - the equivalent of the old four-poster days at Colnbrook being four-to-a-room in council estates within easy reach of Pangbourne Lane or the Thatcher's Arms at Theale. Ken Fletcher provided quantities of delicious fruit for the riders. Marshals had to get the miles in, too. In 1949 a group of young De Launeites overcame the problem of early-morning coverage by sleeping the night before the 100 in a haystack near Theale.

Such youthful eagerness had caused problems in the club a year or so earlier, something like the ones experienced after the first world war: the generations didn't mix. George Wood complained in December, 1947:

"The present state of the club's cycling fraternity is deplorable and one or two pre-war members refuse to ride with the run and only to meet the main body for elevenses, or at the tea venue. I was on the run last Sunday and at Wandsworth, when passing another club, we were greeted with the cry of 'Tuggoes', which several of us resented very much.

"I don't think there is any need to ride in comic hats from Blackpool, as ordinary caps are only three shillings each and free of coupons. Also the number of members without mudguards is increasing, and on a wet day it is bad enough to ride behind someone with 'guards.

"Before any new member is elected I think it is the responsibility of the committee to see that he is instructed in the standards which the club expects the members to keep. The standard before the war was pretty good and I see no reason for a difference now. I know gears, freewheels and comic hats were then unheard of for club riding."

The cry of "Tuggo!" was the ultimate insult for any self-respecting club cyclist to receive. It was usually hurled at young innocents riding flat-footed on shiny new mass-produced machines, their saddles and gears far too high. As for comic clothing, Frank Holland pointed out that before the war: both he and Jef Butcher wore funny hats and loud-striped stockings.

Some of the club's racing men - Fred Leckie, Wally Fraser, Roy Banham and Eddie Sharp - provided an outlet for the energy of youth with the formation of the "Fast Section," for longer and faster clubruns. Writing at the end of 1954, Chip described the section as a famous compromise, reached at a time when the club was threatened with a split from top to bottom:

"Undoubtedly, had its leading lights been prepared to do the necessary work to really establish this new group, the general set-up in the club today might have been vastly different. Unfortunately this was not so. Gradually it deteriorated into a small clique who became the only ones to know where the meeting place might be for any particular run. Soon all pretence of organisation was abandoned, and even its strongest supporters began to lose enthusiasm. Finally, after a short year of existence, the life of the section was abruptly terminated at the next AGM - mainly by the disillusioned votes of those who had previously voted it into existence.

"Nevertheless, that year gave the club a valuable respite in which a gradual 'getting to know' between the younger and older members brought about a new spirit of tolerance and comradeship, which apart from a few diehards soon led to the resumption of the happy clubrun spirit of pre-war years."

## TOURING CONTINENTAL STYLE

The late 'forties saw the revival of the continental tours which had begun to gain favour before the war and were to become commonplace in the 'fifties. Europe had almost recovered from the worst effects of war, and the age of relative affluence was at hand. The De Laune, of course, had seen it all before. The club first explored the delights of the continent in about 1900, when a party which included Albert ("Bung") Bannell and Joe Stapley cycled round Belgium. They visited the battlefield of Waterloo, where Joe made quite a hit with the lady guide. Such trips were the exception rather than the rule, and the 1914 war wiped them out altogether.

It was another 20 years before the De Laune turned its wheels towards the continent once again. In the meantime, the most adventurous of the regular club tours seems to have been one to the Lake District and Scotland in 1933, when a train was used as far as Yorkshire. Two years later, Len Beretta organised a trip to Belgium to see the world cycling championships, and in 1937 Ron Hoare, Ken Hill, Bill Miles and Rob Fletcher (Ken's brother) went farther afield to Germany.

They were impressed by the courteous welcome extended to foreigners in a country firmly in the grip of the Nazi regime: "We stayed in a very comfortable hotel in Koblenz" (wrote Bill Miles) "where we were the sole occupants. A hearty evening meal was served by a rather charming maid who called us 'Englanders.' She was rather enamoured of Ken Hill and it was deliciously funny to see her trying her limited English on him. Her main accomplishment seemed to be the acquiring of names of various film stars such as Shirley Temple, Greta Garbo etc."

The following year, while Chip led a party to Austria, Messrs. Hoare, Hill and Miles explored the Munich area. This intrepid trio were back on the continent in 1939 - pass-storming in the South of France. They lived it up on 7s.6d. a day, except for the time they had champagne for dinner in a "really posh" hotel. On that occasion they naturally felt on top of the world - until they were sobered-up by the bill in the morning. Undeterred, they set out to conquer the awesome Galibier Pass. Local people said they'd never get through: the snow was far too deep; but our heroes climbed up and up to the Col de Lauteret:

"The gradient now was really stiff" (wrote Ron Hoare) "and we had covered about half a mile when our way was barred by a huge snowdrift. The road could be seen continuing beyond it, so hoisting our bikes on our shoulders we crossed the drift and continued riding - but not for far, for the drifts came at closer intervals, while huge boulders and falls of rock brought down by the snow formed further hazards. Finally we had to admit defeat and leaving the bikes we continued on foot.

"The snow was generally quite hard but there were innumerable soft places where we went in up to our knees and it was banked like a six-day racing track so that we had to use extreme caution as one slip would have sent us sliding thousands of feet into the valley below. Near the summit all traces of the road disappeared, so selecting a slope of a reasonable angle, Ken and I started straight up whilst Bill elected to stay below - perhaps the sight of me disappearing up to my waist in a hole influenced him.

"After many anxious moments we reached the tunnel which crosses the summit (now almost buried in snow and boarded up) and we were well-rewarded by a wonderful panorama: snow-capped peaks could be stretching for miles away beyond the Italian border, and hardly a cloud in sight."

Snow was available nearer to home on occasions, of course. Christmas, 1938, found Ron Hoare, Bill Miles, Harold Edmonds and Chip ploughing their way through several inches of the stuff, as they enjoyed a spot of festive yo-ho-ing. (De Laune parlance of the time for Youth Hostelling.) They left London on Christmas Eve heading for Ivinghoe Youth Hostel, in rural Buckinghamshire, after several days of heavy snow had brought reports of blocked roads and warnings to travellers not to venture beyond the confines of London:

"Everything was plain sailing until we left the main road and then the fun commenced. Our machines seemed to be alive - slithering and skidding in all directions, and we performed antics which would have done credit to a quartet of trick cyclists. After several contacts with

the churned-up surface we soon adapted ourselves to this new style of riding - but was the going hard! .....

"If you haven't seen England in snow time, you haven't seen England. The going at times is often rough, but if you happen to fall, very little harm will come to you. But for the occasional motor car we had the roads to ourselves, for which we were truly thankful. Our lamps threw gigantic shadows, made more realistic by the stark white background. How fairy-like the villages looked in this world of snow!"

After Christmas pud and parties at the hostel, a sing-song at the local, and a ride through snow that came up to the wing-nuts, Bill Miles summed-up that last pre-war Christmas:

"Well! It had been a great holiday and a unique experience which I for one would not hesitate to do again. But the greatest triumph of all went to the bicycle, which proved, if any proof were needed, how easy it is to travel on it under any conditions when most other methods have failed. Hats off to the bicycle!"

Throughout the winter of 1939, the De Laune went yo-ho-ing on successive weekends to get away from the depressing war atmosphere of London. Kemsing, Ewhurst, Stalisfield, Capel and Henley were among the hostels visited.

The De Laune's first post-war continental tour was to Switzerland in 1947 - the natural choice, because it was the only European country not to have been battered to near-destruction. In 1948 there was the most ambitious tour so far: 14 days in the Pyrenees, with a stop in Paris at either end. Arthur Burcham, Jack Young, Chip, Bill Miles, Tom Williamson, and Ken Fletcher set out, each with the maximum £35 foreign travel allowance which currency controls permitted.

They had a nasty shock early on, when their bill at a cafe in Paris came to not far short of £1 each. At this rate, their allowance would last about a week - but fears of having to curtail their holiday were dispelled when they'd reached (by train) the cheaper country areas. In fact, at the pretty little town of Tarascon, Chip could afford to accept and win a challenge to drink twelve glass of Cointreau, his favourite liqueur:

"The glasses were lined up by a bewildered waiter who before the wager was over had contacted all and sundry in the cafe to come and see what happens to a man who drinks in dozens. He was, however, even more bewildered when, an hour or so later, Chip got up and walked calmly away without as much as turning a hair. Rumour has it that he spent the night in the bathroom."

The days were spent ascending many passes and zooming down the other side, marvelling at the views all the while. In the town of Luchon they were barred from the casino because they weren't wearing ties - but that night they celebrated Harold's birthday with champagne and shocked the other hotel guests by having the meal served in the style they preferred - "all on the table at one go." At Lourdes they were shooed away from the Church of the Rosary because, once again, they were improperly dressed (well, they looked like cyclists); and back in Paris there was just one disappointment at the end of a highly-successful tour: they couldn't find the Folies Bergeres.

## **GOLD AND DIAMOND**

No matter what happened to the shape of club activities, its administration remained as strong as ever. Soon after the war ended, Allan Furze was awarded a gold badge - mainly for his organisation of the Comforts Fund. Chip was similarly honoured in 1949 for his work as secretary, treasurer, timekeeper, handicapper, adviser, Memorial Fund trustee and general driving force. He was famous (or infamous) for his tenacious methods of collecting subs, as Frank Holland and Arthur Williams had been before him. At any club gathering, the sound of perforated paper being torn was reckoned to be a sure sign that Chip was near by, receipt book in hand. In 1949 he was succeeded as secretary by a comparatively new member, Donald White, who had joined the club only a year or so earlier - as had two others who were soon to make a name for themselves: 16-year-old Kenneth Frederick Fuller and Henry Ernest Carlton, known thereafter as "Charlie".

One of the club's major concerns in the immediate post-war years was finding a new clubroom. With the increase in membership, the Red Cow was becoming less and less convenient, even though the landlord (being a club member) wouldn't take any rent, and he and his wife laid on excellent food for special occasions. There was nowhere to park bikes (in the war they were put in the public bar), and a pub was no longer considered suitable as a headquarters now that there were so many youngsters in the club. It was through the detective work of two of those very young members that an ideal place was found in 1947 - the Nelson LCC Institute in Trafalgar Street, Walworth.

It was almost like going back to 1889. Only a stone's throw from the site of the Old De Laune Institute in Kennington the club now had a headquarters with plenty of space for its weekly social activities; the use of a gymnasium; free enrolment of junior members in any of the Institute's many classes; and even room for two sets of training rollers. It was such a marvellous find that some queried the need to go ahead with the Memorial Clubroom Fund, which by then had accumulated more than £300. There was frustration at the knowledge that a permanent clubroom was unlikely to become a reality for several more years - but it was decided to keep the fund going on a long-term basis. To fill the gap before memories began to fade members subscribed to the cost of a Memorial Shield, to be competed for in the annual Novices 25.

The main fund-raising efforts in the late 'forties went towards ensuring that the Diamond Jubilee celebrations in 1949 made up for the curtailment of the Jubilee events ten years earlier. The programme began with a rally which brought together the active members and those whose legs had almost forgotten how to turn the pedals round. The club's newest acquisition - a cine camera - was used to record the event. Tom Bewsey was among the 65 who turned up for lunch at The Three Horseshoes, in Knockholt:

"The old familiar faces of clubruns of a decade and more ago were there. From Oxford, Derby, Bournemouth and other places far afield, old companions of the road had come to meet for this first outdoor function of the club's Diamond Jubilee year. It was more than a reunion - past times were recalled in the normal surroundings of a clubrun and the calendar was truly turned back. Only a few creaking bones and cycling gear a little tight in places reminded us of the present.

"The lunch was typical and there appeared no shortage of food and certainly no lack of appetites. The late arrival of Beefy Russell and Bill Sansom struggling manfully up the hill was greeted with wild whoops from the upper floor dining room. Yes, this was the De Laune.

"The active members soon disappeared over the horizon when the club formed up to return to Herne Hill track for tea. A dignified and portly residue made their way resolutely and steadily over familiar roads. There were many ghosts on that ride back, several generations of riders were present. Percy Hunt was riding well, and I chatted to a lad still at school.

"It was quite a gathering at the track. George Wall arrived on a bicycle and several of the lads who had been racing turned up to the usual cries and leg-pulls..... When I tell you that one young member ate 12 buns you will realise we had sufficient to eat. Heavily-laden tables were cleared as only cyclists know how and once again old times were recalled, flavoured by the ubiquitous bread and jam..... It was a function worthy of the De Laune and appropriate to the sixtieth year of this grand club."

Extra prizes boosted entries for the Jubilee year open time trials - the 25 (won by Ken Joy in 59-46) and the 100 (Pete Beardsmore, 4-22-18), both of which were organised by one of the De Laune's unsung heroes, George Wood. There were three Jubilee track promotions at Herne Hill - two on Wednesday evenings and one ambitious Saturday meeting in July which established the De Laune as a genuine track club. About 6,000 spectators (including the Mayors of Camberwell and Southwark) enjoyed an afternoon of top-class competition from some of the leading riders of the day, thanks in no small part to the hard work of Ken Hill.

The only shadow on this Jubilee Year was the death in April of Capt. Alured Faunce De Laune, who had been club President for nearly 40 years. In that time he had maintained an active interest in the club's progress, always taking part in the Newnham memorial services and usually being present at the annual dinners.

The club retained its direct links with the De Laune family by inviting Capt. De Laune's widow, Margaret, to succeed him as President; and she was at the Holborn Restaurant (since demolished) on December 10th 1949, to welcome members and guests to the Diamond Jubilee dinner:

"It was rather an awe-inspiring occasion for the majority of us who had the good fortune to attend," (wrote Ken Hill) "so perhaps we can be excused being a little subdued during the dinner itself, but within us it was a great night and one I feel all members should be proud of....."

"The toastmaster, looking majestic in his red jacket, thundered out the command 'Ladies and gentleman, receive your Chairman,' and all was set for celebrating our sixty years. With cross-toasting being allowed, the Toastmaster was kept pretty busy. Club captains and De Laune Bowl holders were called to be upstanding - then the 'old brigade.' How proudly they raised their glasses to Wal Chitty, while the orchestra played 'Boys of the Old Brigade.'....."

"The prize presentation was done under a blaze of light and to the accompaniment of the buzz of our cine-camera..... How shy the recipients looked as they made their way hurriedly to receive their awards from Mrs. De Laune, a faint smile as they took their standards and their cups - and so polite; what different lads from those that speed along on their way to earning those awards. As the juniors filed up to the prize table I heard one lady say 'What little angels.'"

"So ended a grand occasion, an occasion which will linger in our minds for many days - for some may be until our century."

**DLN: June, 1949**

*Marshalling on his own at a distant spot in the club's "30"; Ken Fletcher had an unwelcome spectator who insisted on butting in. It was a billy-goat, and at times Ken could be seen hanging on to its horns with one hand whilst waving the riders round with the other.*

**DLN: September, 1949**

*Jack Zarfes finished last but not least in the championship "100" and reported having teething troubles en route. Apparently he had a spot of bother when biting a sandwich - half his teeth fell out and not caring to leave them to fend for themselves, Jack spent valuable minutes searching for them. He found them in a hole at the side of the road, conveniently covered with a goodly portion of gravel and grit, a substance Jack certainly isn't failing in.*

**DLN: September, 1951**

*For some unknown reason "Chalky" White borrowed a bike for his heat in the 1000 metres. Needless to say, it was far too small for him. At any rate, he got up with the others, strapped his feet in, made certain that his knees would not cut off his ears, and was ready for the gun. Bang went the gun, and out of the saddle went Chalky for his initial sprint. The trouble was that when he went to get on his saddle again he missed it and actually sat on the rear wheel. Not for long, though.*

**DLN: September, 1953**

*It has been suggested that the speeches at the annual dinner should be limited to seven minutes per speaker. Hoorah! How often has this been suggested! For those of you who are making a speech, remember please - seven minutes only.*

**..... and DLN January, 1960**

*Geoff Deane spoke really well with obvious conviction and enthusiasm, but went on too long, his speech being timed in at 28 min. 35 sec.*

## THE HEADLINE YEARS

De Laune veterans go misty-eyed when they recall the 'fifties. It was the decade in which the club was rarely out of the cycling headlines, thanks to the talents of its young riders and the superb organisational skills of its older members and officials. On the road, the track and muddy woodland paths the De Laune name triumphed in regional and national championships; it was a De Laune man who brought home Olympic medals from Melbourne; it was the De Laune which brought the crowds to Herne Hill and Crystal Palace; and it was the De Laune which acted as midwife to the birth of cyclo-cross as a national winter sport.

The seeds of success were sown in 1948, when a lantern-jawed 15-yearold with a Manchester accent and a bubbling sense of fun - Alan Jackson - was persuaded by his school-friend Mike Stafford to join the club. Before he had even ridden a race, the percipient Ken Hill described him as a "very young rider who without doubt will be in the headlines within a short time". It's not clear whether Ken was thinking of racing potential or the practical jokes for which young Alan quickly established a reputation. Whichever it was, Alan's first venture into time trialling in 1949 gave little indication of what was to come: he was sixth in a junior 10 with a time of 28-16.

But before triumphant youth had its day, Frank Wynne was showing everyone that there was plenty of life in the old dog yet. He not only won the club B.A.R. in 1949, but did it again in 1951 and 1952. (Fred Leckie interrupted his success in 1950). He broke the club 24-hour record three more times, and in an epic ride in 1952 set new S.R.R.A. and club figures of 442 3/4 miles. In that same year he became the first in the De Laune to beat "evens" over 12 hours, and just to show he had speed as well as stamina, he brought the 50 record down by more than three minutes to 2-05-45.

At the annual dinner in December, 1952 - on a day of such thick fog that 40 wouldbe guests didn't get there - Frank was presented with a portrait of himself on his racing bike, the work of a young fellow-member, Johnny Barber. It was the club's tribute to a popular eccentric end great mile-eater.

The affection Frank Wynne inspired guaranteed him wholehearted support in his long-distance efforts. Wally Fraser organised his successful attempt on the S.R.R.A. 24-hour record in 1952, and had the help not only of De Laune colleagues but of no fewer than 13 other clubs as well.

Bill Tanner was in charge of heating Frank's beef tea on a contraption boasting the apt name of "Volcano".

"It was very effective, but the smoke and flame also had unexpected results. First a coach on the Chichester by-pass had to slow right down in order that the driver could feel his way through the smoke screen, and later I was asked by a passer-by, thinking I looked like a night-watchman, if he could have a warm by the brazier."

Frank was the De Laune's lone representative in more than one North Road 24 - but club members followed him round by car and motor-bike, or cycled into Bedfordshire to cheer him on, as one group did with faces blackened by diesel oil acquired from the heavy lorry behind which they had tucked-in all the way from Holloway Road to Sandy.

At the shorter distances, the time-trial record-breakers of the early 'fifties were Cyril Arthur, Peter Gunnell, Doug Stafford and the fastest of them all, Eddie Sharp, who cut the 25 figures to 1-00-37 in 1952. (Peter Gunnell made a comeback more than 25 years later - and went even quicker than in his youthful heyday.)

This was the period when long-distance time-trialling began gradually to lose favour. The De Laune's 12-hour trophy couldn't be awarded in the four years from 1957, because there weren't enough qualifiers. Many newcomers to the sport in the early 'fifties found greater inspiration in the glamour of track racing and "massed start" - especially the idea of racing on open roads, as initiated by the upstart British League of Racing Cyclists (B.L.R.C.). The prolonged arguments about this style of racing involved not only the cycling bodies - the N.C.U., R.T.T.C. and B.L.R.C. - but the Ministry of Transport as well. Two De Laune officials played a leading part in the negotiations because of their positions in the N.C.U. hierarchy: Chip was chairman of the Finance and Management Committee and R.P. (Pete) Itter chairman of the Racing and Records Committee. They retained these jobs when

the N.C.U. and B.L.R.C. merged to form the British Cycling Federation in 1959, and Chip became B.C.F. President.

*Alan Jackson, 8 September 1956*



The De Laune's young circuit-racers ignored the politics and in 1950 and 1951 began putting their club's name to the forefront of the local massed-start game. Individual wins by Alan Jackson and Ken (Napper) Knapman were supplemented by team victories involving Derek Boon, Derek Morse, Ken Fuller and Len Danby. They didn't believe in being spoonfed. Alan Jackson and Derek Boon each took his turn as massed-start secretary, and Derek Boon ran the club's first open massed-start promotion in July, 1952, when senior and junior races were held on the disused airfield at Dunmow, in Essex. In the senior race, the team award went to the De Laune trio of Napper, Alan, and Alf Lancaster.

Alan Jackson hadn't then bothered too much about time-trials or track-racing, although he caused some comment by winning the Novices 25 of 1950 (1-11-01). But in 1953 he revealed his potential as a great all-rounder: 1st in the club championship 25; 1st in the Isle of Wight Grand Prix; 2nd in the De Laune Open 25 with the club's first under-the-hour ride (59-28); 1st in another Open 25 in a club record of 58-16 which stood unbroken for six years; 4th in the Isle of Man Mannin Veg; winner of the London Centre 4,000 metres pursuit championship; and winner of the club hill-climb in record time.

A pause, here, in the telling of the Jackson saga, because another event of some significance was taking place in 1953. The first Crystal Palace Cycling Festival was held on August Bank Holiday Monday, so confirming the accuracy of this history's opening statement that the De Laune is no ordinary cycling club.

There were no long-term, carefully-considered preparations for it. In the spring of 1953 the newly-elected massed-start secretary, Ken Fuller, was apprehensively making plans for an open promotion on the Crystal Palace circuit when Chip suggested the club should be more ambitious: why not turn the day into a festival of cycling, combining the finish of a road race with an N.C.U. rally and other attractions with a cycling flavour? Not just any old race, mind you: an international event on the open road from Folkestone to London, with the country's top amateur riders competing against some of the best on the Continent. Britain had never seen anything like it.

Less than three months after the idea of a festival was mooted, about 10,000 people poured into the grounds of Crystal Palace on a gloriously runny day to see the finish of the international race; to cheer the riders in a separate circuit event; to watch bicycle polo and a parade of historical bicycles and to be entertained and informed at the many stalls and exhibitions. There was even a beauty contest - for the most attractive outdoor girl.

The festival cost nearly £1,400 to put on, and at the end of the day there was 1'f06 left over, to be shared between the British Red Cross and St. Mm Ambulance Brigade. The treasurer, Ken Fletcher, later recalled the considerable task of counting the takings and getting all of it to the bank at the top of Anerley Hill: "It was all packed into night-safe bags, which in turn went into bulging saddle-bags and satchels across our shoulders. There was a sigh of relief when it had all been safely deposited."

Ken Fletcher was one of those named by Chip as being responsible for the festival's success. The others included the chief of the backroom boys, Don White; the duplicator of endless paper, Mark Ballamy, and the race organisers Ken Fuller, Alan Jackson, Derek Boon and George Wood. But of course the main credit belonged to Chip himself - the supreme co-ordinator. In the two weeks before this and succeeding festivals, he took time off from his job as an import/export manager to concentrate on the final arrangements. He thought of everything: in 1953 he took the local police chief

and his wife out to dinner and convinced him that the Folkestone-to-London race should go straight through and finish at Crystal Palace, instead of on the outskirts of London.

Chip's festival work even came close to disrupting his wedding at St. Mary's Parish Church in Lewisham in 1955. The guests were there, the vicar was there, and so was the bride - Daphne Southcott, daughter of a former N.C.U. President; but where was the bridegroom? As the organist ran through his repertoire of time-fillers, Daphne was driven round and round the church..... until Chip arrived, explaining that he'd been too busy typing Press releases about the tremendous success of that year's festival to worry about getting to the church on time.

Chip's excuse was quite a good one, because the 1955 festival was even bigger and better than the previous two. It had (said "Cycling") grown from a courageous club venture into an area rally with extensive national, local and individual backing:

"But perhaps the most notable thing of all during the non-stop programme, which began at 10.30 a.m. - and the best omen for the future - was the composition of the crowd. Among the 15,000 who watched racing and polo, looked at photographic exhibitions, crowded the well-run sideshows, staked a claim in the treasure-hunt, watched films, released gas-filled balloons, competed against one another slowly, blindfold, or in novelty style, cheered their children in the kiddies' events, tugged on a rope, ran with an egg and spoon, learned about the various clubs and organisations, danced on the green, craned their necks at fireworks, ate ice-cream and drank 'pop' or just sat on the grass in the sun - - among them there were many, many-.non-cyclists and their families who had a jolly good day out and will come again, perhaps-even on a bicycle."

In the awful summer of 1956, bad weather reduced the crowd to about 5,000, but "Cycling" remained impressed:

"One thing at least was confirmed. The festival, born out of the imagination and energy of the De Laune C.C. in 1953, has become one of the most valuable advertisements for cycling in the country..... There ought to be more festivals like this - family fun, not just cyclist fun - all over the country."

But the national trend ruled otherwise. Open-air family fun was out; television and motoring were in. The festivals barely broke even in 1957 and 1958, after which a general meeting of De Laune members decided they were no longer worthwhile.

An attempt was made to fill the gap in 1959 with a special De Laune international track meeting at Herne Hill which had the Grand Prix of London as its highlight. The organisation - under Harry Thomas - was, of course, first class; so was the racing, with an Italian ace, Sante Giairdoni, winning the Grand Prix sprint. But a gate of 2,000 was needed to cover the costs, and it fell far short. The following year, one of the mainstays of De Laune track racing, John Darroch, ran another "special" on a smaller scale which incorporated the national sprint championship. It was the same sad story: only 700 spectators turned up.

Special track promotions and the Crystal Palace Festival of Cycling weren't the only De Laune innovations. The establishment of cyclo-cross as a national winter sport was another one. The idea of testing man and machine over precipitous slopes thick with mud wasn't new, of course. The groundwork had been laid in the early 'thirties when the De Laune began to run "cross-country cycle races."

Over the following 20 years, rough-stuff was routine on the De Laune's winter club-runs; there were inter-club rough-stuff events, victories in the Belle Vue cross-country runs over Epsom Downs, aching muscles in the Bagshot Scrambles, and fun and frolic in the club's own run-walk-cycle races. But no one in Britain attempted to follow the Continental lead and run the sport in an organised way until the De Laune initiated the Southern Counties Cyclo-Cross Association at the end of 1953.

As the country's foremost exponent of rough-stuff racing - now officially re named "cyclo-cross" - Alan Jackson was elected the new associations events secretary, and proceeded to win almost every race in which he rode. The first official cyclo-cross event was a time-trial over seven miles on Fairmile

Common, near Esher, on November 29th, 1953. Of the 63 riders, 11 were from the De Laune. Needless to say, Alan Jackson won it, as he did the first national cyclo-cross championship run through snow and mud near Welwyn Garden City in 1955. That title took him to the world championships in Saarbrücken; but the British riders discovered - like their successors - that Continental standards were far higher than theirs. Alan was the best Briton - 30th from a field of 36 amateurs and professionals.

The De Laune's first open cyclo-cross promotion was in January, 1956 - Alan Jackson again; then a double triumph in the 1956 national championship - Alan retained his title and with Ken Fuller and Geoff Sinnott took the team medals, too. Ken was the driving force behind the De Laune's continuing involvement in cyclo-cross and after Alan Jackson's retirement became the club's most successful rider. He was short-listed for the 1961 world championships and was fancied to clinch selection by winning the national championships at Chobham Common, which he organised for the De Laune. But he fell victim to a mix-up at the starting-line, when most of the 102 riders set off before the signal had been given. Ken surged past dozens of men but finished a disappointed eleventh.

## **JACKSON - THE THINKING-MAN'S CHAMPION**

What made the 'fifties such a marvellous decade for the De Laune was the coincidence of inspirations like the Crystal Palace festivals and the emergence of such top-class riders as Alan Jackson and - later - Dennis Tarr. Alan wasn't a born champion; he became one by stages through his own efforts. The first stage involved learning to be a good clubman and proving himself against local competition; for the second stage he widened his experience in places like the Isle of Wight, where - with Ken Fuller - he rode without success in 1951 and 1952. His victory in the island's Easter Grand Prix in 1953 made him headline news for the first time and as soon as he'd finished the race he showed how well he'd learned the clubman lessons of Stage One by running back along the road to shout encouragement to Ken Fuller, tailed off the back in 28th place.

In an interview a few years later, he told "Cycling" that he saw the invitation to ride in the classic Solihull 25 of 1953 as a milestone in his career. Not in the fact that he gained a club record with 1-00-06 but in the impression he got from this first weekend away with "the big boys."

"They sat up all night," he said, "and talked about riders - everyone on the card, what he could and couldn't do, his peculiarities and merits, gears, times, tyres - everything. They were like encyclopaedias!"

This was another lesson well-learned, as Alan's interviewer recognised: "He had the clearest, most acute race-analysing mind I have come across in a British amateur roadman. And he has a liberal reserve of North-country common sense under a cloak of often exuberant high spirits..... "He estimates and weighs-up before a race: he judges with precision and accuracy based on every bit of experience and theoretical knowledge he has previously gained; immediately after an event he has invariably arrived at a detailed assessment, both of his own performance and that of his rivals. It all gets pigeon holed in an excellent memory; he never stops learning."

Stage Two of "Jackson's Progress" continued in 1954 and 1955 with a gradual increase in longer-distance racing and a greater involvement in time trials. In May, 1954, he won his club's 25 and 50 championships - the 50 in a new record of 2-03-19. But in typical fashion he wrote in the DLN that the outstanding ride of the month was Geoff Sinnett's 2-15-53 in an open 50 held in a hailstorm. What Alan couldn't appreciate then was the significance of the ride by a small youth who came 28th out of the 30 finishers in the championship 25. He was Dennis Tarr, just scraping inside "evens" and giving no indication of great things to come.

In August, 1954, Alan completed a club hat-trick by winning the 100-mile championship in an event he organised as that year's road secretary. And he took the club's B.A.R. title with a record average of 23.692 mph.

Most young men of this time had their normal lives disrupted for up to two years by National Service. Many of the De Laune's 18-to-20-year-olds used up their 36-hour passes to ride in club events; but talented sportsmen were given every encouragement to represent their Service - so Nursing Orderly Jackson did far more Army cycling than nursing.

He was a consistent winner for the Army Cycling Union in 1955 and 1956, in time-trials and road races. And it was while he was a soldier that the third and final stage of his career began: he had his first experience of Continental racing in the seven-day Tour of Nine Provinces, in Belgium, as part of an S.C.C.U. team. The following year - 1956 - he rode in the same event as captain of the British team, and was generally acclaimed as the man of the race. At the end of the first day he was 34th; at the finish of the seventh and last day he was a close second overall.

In June, Alan won the De Laune Open 100; and then, in July, came the big news: selection for both the world championship and Olympic road races. An inspired series of rides followed: the national massed-start championship, club record in the Bath Road 100 (4-12-06), and victory in the Folkestone-to-London.

In the world championships in Denmark, he was the best-placed British rider - 13th of the 40 or so who survived the strong wind, bitter cold and rain. The "Cycling" reporter was impressed: "Amongst

such quality, which included the new challenge from the East European countries, it was as good an English amateur title effort as we have seen, and perhaps the best ever."

After a training trip to Yorks Hill for the Catford-hill-climb, where he was first to get under two minutes, it was off to Melbourne for the Olympics. While he was there, members and guests at the club dinner heard a tape-recorded message from him which included a special word of thanks to Ken Hill for his help and encouragement.

Alan started in the Olympic road race as the rider most feared by the favourite and eventual winner, Ercole Baldini of Italy - an opinion based on experience in the Isle of Man. He was said to be one of the few men in Britain who could out-think the Continentals at their own game. On the day, with 50 miles to go, Alan had a bad attack of cramp. "I felt like packing-up," he said, "but decided I couldn't do that after travelling 12,000 miles for the race. I just kept going until I got there."

"There" turned out to be third place - for an individual bronze medal. And with Stan Brittain (sixth) and Billy Holmes (fourteenth) he also won a silver medal as a member of the second-placed team. In an Olympic event traditionally dominated by Continental cracks from France, Belgium and Italy, said sports commentator Harry Carpenter, it was one of the most stirring, spirited achievements by Britain in the entire Games.

The De Laune wholeheartedly agreed. Even before the Games, a "Welcome Home" supper had been arranged at the Chatham Room Restaurant, Victoria, and Alan's success made it an even happier affair. As 130 people clapped and cheered, his close friends Derek Boon and Geoff Sinnett carried him shoulder-high to the centre table, where Ken Fletcher presented him with a portable radiogram and an album of photographs depicting his past year's success.

The Olympic Games marked the high-point of Alan Jackson's career. He was still riding well in 1957, however. On yet another visit to the Isle of Wight at Easter he was third in the Grand Prix - the fourth year out of five that he'd been in the first three.

Two months later he was on the other side of the Iron Curtain, riding for Britain in what was then the toughest amateur road race in the world the 12-day Prague-Berlin-Warsaw.

The British team were well to the fore through much of the race - and Stan Brittain finished second overall. But Alan's hopes were dashed by the onset of something every cyclist dreads - boils on his bottom. They began to affect his riding as the race crossed from Germany into Poland, but despite the pain, the sharp contrast between the two countries made a deep impression on him:

"It was like going from spring into winter. The people we had left, in Germany, were just like the people here - well-clothed and smiling; but Poland seemed drab to begin with - and we had gone only 100 yards! So it was throughout Poland. Everybody seemed dejected and slightly scruffy, with no personal pride. Even the countryside changed from the wooded land of Germany to rolling open country, with cobbles appearing on the roads - and being felt more and more!

"The buses from the Stadium were replaced by Army lorries, and the hotels were bare. In many places the war damage had not been repaired and many buildings carried shell and bullet scars.

"On our second day in Poland - Wroclaw to Katowice - the cobbles were forecast as bad for the last 30km. It felt as if there was no road at all. I found the comfort of a cycle-path, only to plunge down a pot-hole! It was a pleasure to cross a level-crossing, to rest my seat for 20 yards!

"Starting the next day was as bad, and the art of sitting down gently was gone - so was the bunch! It was a big bash for the first 20km. and I'd just got on when my front tyre went flat. I grabbed a wheel and fought my way through all the cars back to the bunch, but it was my swan-song. I just could not bear to sit down and my legs refused to do any further work. I got slower and slower, but the crowds were still there shouting 'Tempo, tempo!'. I was miles down and finally the ambulance caught me and I was out of the race - just 200km. from Warsaw."

Alan saw this as the biggest disappointment of his racing career. But it didn't seem to affect his riding in the rest of the year. He made a return trip to the Isle of Man, where he was fourth in the International; he won a road race at Harrogate in the England colours; he was second in the European road-race championship in Germany; and he finished sixth in the Tour of Sweden.

But at the beginning of 1958 he asked the N.C.U. to remove his name from its international short-lists because he couldn't afford to take time off from the building business he had started-up in partnership with Dave Tweddell. And so the Jackson era ended. In 1959 there was talk of a comeback, but he rode in only a couple of time trials.

Over the next 15 years, Alan immersed himself in his business, and occasionally took up other sports, such as sailing and motor-rallying. But he retained his associations with the club which had seen him develop from novice to champion; and his sudden, untimely, death in 1974 at the age of 41 came as a deep shock not only to his wife Maureen and their two small daughters, but to everyone in the De Laune.

Ken Fuller described him as a champion of all champions: top-class on the road, at cyclo-cross, and as a pursuit and madison rider. But he was also a great clubman: "For those of us who enjoyed his company throughout the year he will always be remembered for his sincerity, his genuine concern for others and his ability to make other people laugh."

The De Laune opened an Alan Jackson Memorial Fund, which is used each year to benefit some of the club's younger members.

***DLN: March, 1957***

*Word has come that some of you are "feeling your feet" a little bit when you are in a cafe. It may seem very nice to make a lot of noise, and it is sometimes harmless..... But when the butt of your joke or attention is someone other than a club member, and in particular one of the fair sex, then it is time it stopped.*

## MANX PRANKS

It's time for an interlude: a chapter which doesn't have much relevance to cycling, but which should evoke sighs of remembered pleasure from many a De Laune veteran. In the early 'fifties, bands of marauding De Launeites would head for the Isle of Man once a year for the Manx cycling week - some to race, some to tour the island, some to find the girls; but everyone went for the laughs. There have been trips to the Isle of Man in subsequent years, of course, but surely none like those led by Alan Jackson, who had such followers as Ken Knapman, Derek Boon, Len Danby, Harry Thomas, Geoff Sinnett, Terry Owen, Tom O'Connor, Dennis Tarr, Dave Watts, Chris Downs, Tony Purser - and Ken Fuller, who remembers it all in vivid detail:

"The fun started on the midnight train out of Euston, arriving at Liverpool Lime Street at 4.a.m., then down to the Fish Market for breakfast at the cafe there. With cases on handlebars we all tackled the tram-lines, trams and cars on the short ride to the pier to catch the 'Kipper Boat', as it was then known. Then the four-hour lumpy crossing over the Irish Sea! Alan used to make sure everyone but himself felt sick, by saying 'Anyone for some nice fatty bacon?' and 'Oh, the waves!' - prompting all of us to head for the rails.

"On arrival at Douglas we rode to the Howstrake Holiday Camp on Onchan Head, where we all shared chalets - three in each Fuller, Danby and Thomas were in one which was next door to the one shared by Jackson, Knapman and Boon, and in the wall between a hole began to appear - just enough for a water pistol to be fired through. As the week progressed, the hole got bigger - large enough for a 'gazunder' of water to be thrown through, almost drowning whoever was in there.

"Then there was the 'kazoo' craze. Many a good jazz tune was ruined by the gang in the band, who used to board the horse-drawn bus along the prom and play - drawing plenty of abuse from cyclists riding alongside. Once Knapper found an empty police box on the prom and stood in for the traffic cop, directing the traffic, until the "bobby" arrived back. Knapper said he didn't want any payment for helping out, and departed quicker than he'd arrived.

"We had great fun at the camp: tear-ups round the chalets when the 'guards' were not on duty - and to make up for frightening the older generation, we gave them rides in the luggage trolleys. Len Danby managed to acquire a Manx flag from the flagpole in Ramsey and this took pride of place over the Danby chalet until the Camp Commandant noticed it and came to retrieve it amid much cheering and jeering from the gang.

"Rock-climbing was another favourite pastime. On one expedition we came upon a disused 'hill-billy' railway track, complete with old carriage, which we all managed to push to the top of the hillside, which was a one-in-ten slope. Then we all piled in (about 20 of us then) with girls on the inside seats and the lads on the outsides, overlooking a 200ft. drop into the sea. Then down the hair-raising gradient, swaying from side to side and the brake-man at the rear trying to stop us before we hit the buffers at the bottom. Fear? The De Laune knew no such word!

"There was always a camp concert on the night before 'Race Day' so all good racers went to bed early, while the rest enjoyed the show. But in the middle of an act the sound of singing was heard and through the audience came a long line of pyjama-clad cyclists, carrying candles and singing 'Nymphs and Shepherds.' The place was in an uproar, so the manager escorted them out. Alan, as usual was the ringleader."

What happened in the races doesn't seem to matter, somehow. But at least something sweet and gentle came out of all the mayhem. Ken Fuller met his beloved on the boat going over to the island in 1952 and discovered she was staying at the same camp. So they spent the next week playing hide and seek with Dot's mother - and managed to get lost quite a lot.

## **PUTTING THE FRIGHTENERS ON**

It shouldn't be thought that the De Laune was a one-man band in the 'fifties. Alan Jackson was certainly the best; but others were making the headlines, too. Some, like Alan, began their racing careers with the De Laune and found their inspiration in his successes: men like John Darroch, Dennis Tarr, Brian Dacey and Tony Purser. Others, like Dave Tweddell and Johnny Pound, had already established their reputations with other clubs.

John Darroch was the grass-track king of Southern England - in the days when most village and town sports meetings included cycle-racing as one of the main attractions. He and Eddie Starsmeare took prizes at their every appearance.

Dennis Tarr, Brian Dacey and Tony Purser were the club's junior massed-start stars of 1955. Dennis won the junior national championship that year, and Brian took the Southern Counties title. In 1956, described by the path secretary Dick Ansell as "the finest season in the history of the De Laune track teams", the quartet of Dacey, Jackson, Purser and Tarr were third in the national 4,000 metres team pursuit championship in a club record time of 5-05.

Brian Dacey concentrated on track racing - and to good effect. After beating the Poly star, Dave Handley, to gain the London Centre sprint championship in 1957, he was hailed as "the sprint discovery of the year." From then until the mid-sixties he was a consistent winner at Herne Hill, and was several times on the brink of international selection.

Tony Purser was club sprint champion in 1957, but had most of his successes on the road - until he left the De Laune a few years later. Dennis Tarr came nearest to emulating Alan Jackson; in fact he was said to have "all the qualities of Jacko, plus the killer instinct".

Like Alan, he was an all-rounder. In 1957 he took nearly a minute off the Jackson 50 record (down to 2-02-46) and won that year's club hill-climb, also in record time. But his main interest was in road-racing, where his small size (5ft 5in.) earned him the headline nickname of "The Pocket Rocket". His many wins included the 1959 Brighton-to-London; he was prominent in the 1960 Tour of Britain, finishing 18th; and in 1961 he won the London-to-Folkestone-and-back two-day road race, organised by the De Laune. The following year he joined the paid ranks as an "Independent" - a kind of halfway house between amateur and professional - and within a few months won the gruelling London-to-Holyhead race.

Some of the De Laune prominence in the amateur road-racing scene in the late 'fifties was due to the recruitment of Dave Tweddell - an Army friend of Alan Jackson - and Johnny Pound. Dave Tweddell was already an international rider, and Johnny Pound soon became one - riding in the Prague-Berlin-Warsaw in 1958.

The 1957 combination of Jackson, Tarr, Tweddell and Pound must have frightened the lives out of the opposition. On the Isle of Wight, where the De Laune name had been resounding since 1953, the club's triumphs in 1957 earned the description of "a new De Laune Dynasty": two individual wins, two team wins, and other placings of second, third, fifth and sixth. These successes were achieved in three of the Easter races by the star foursome, plus John Carr - another of the De Laune's fast young men.

In 1958, yet more De Laune talent achieved a club "first" by taking 1 - 2 - 3 placings in a road race - John Lawrence, Roy Chittleborough and Brian "Stack" Saxton. And Mike Dongworth had begun riding in the chocolate-and-blue.

The club's time-triallists, meanwhile, were breaking records by the score. More than 40 new times were set up in the ten years from 1950 - at all distances. So by the end of 1959 the record list had changed beyond recognition: at 24 hours, there was Frank Wynne's 442 miles; at 12 hours, Frank's rival Charles Yearsley had pushed the mileage up to 244; and the 100 time had been cut to a fast 4-10-17 by Alan Rowe, a teenager who had finished with a 4-26 in his first attempt at the distance.

The rest belonged to John Kavanagh, who began to make things hum as soon as he joined the club in 1955. In his first year of membership he teamed up with Arthur How to set new tandem 50 figures of 1-56-00; and in his second year he won the 25 championship - and the De Laune Bowl - and

proceeded to do the same in all but one of the succeeding eight years. By 1959 he held three solo records: 25 miles in 56-56; 30 in 1-11-30; and 50 in 2-00-21.

Kav won the club B.A.R. in 1957 - although the competition was then at a particularly low ebb. Only two others had ridden all the qualifying club events at 25, 50 and 100 miles: Frank Wynne (as usual) and Tony Peachey, who was making a modest start to a long record-breaking career. Arthur How said such lack of interest was a shameful reflection on a Club of the De Laune's standing. There were a few more qualifiers in 1958 and 1959 - when Alan Rowe was champion - but the DLN editor, George Starsmeare, complained that, with the possible exception of twenty fives, only a few "old regulars" were turning out for club events; the rest of the time triallists were supporting other clubs' races.

Talk of "old regulars" must include a mention of Reg Dawkins, a veteran of the 'thirties who made a comeback to time-trialling at the age of 51. Nothing remarkable about that nowadays, perhaps, but in 1958 comeback vets were a rare breed. Reg rode 207 miles in a 12-hour, despite a fall in which he broke his glasses; and he was getting on for 60 when he finished a hundred in 5-15.

Ken Fuller made a comeback of a different kind when he won the 1958 hill-climb - six years after his previous win; and he did it in a time equal to Dennis Tarr's record. In the following year's climb - the last up Brasted - Mike Dongworth won from a record entry of 17 riders.

But the racing event which stands out most in many people's minds is not one of the many which produced record-breaking performances. It's the Blow-lamp 25 of October 1952 - so-called because Alan Jackson brought his plumber's blow-lamp to the starting-line and lit a bonfire with it.

This was no prank. The warmth of the fire was a real life-saver for the riders, marshals and timekeepers shivering in the freezing fog which swirled across the Portsmouth road. Special dispensation was granted to one man who was late to the line: "He can't start yet," the timekeeper was told, "he's gathering firewood."

## PLUSSES AND MINUSES

So the 'fifties saw the De Laune put far greater emphasis on its racing activities. But this was a time of transition in the cycling world as a whole. Equipment began to change as Continental manufacturers ousted most of the British ones. Alloy replaced steel. Gears replaced fixed wheels. "Double-clanger" was on every lip, and the short-lived days of close-ratio Sturmey-Archers were numbered.

De Laune veterans who rode their first club-runs in the 'thirties and 'forties were fond of recalling the deep impression made on them by the sight of twenty or thirty pairs of plus-foured legs twiddling 60-to-66-inch fixed-wheel gears at full speed down steep hills, in close formation and with hardly a movement between bottoms and saddles. But by the late 'fifties, the multiple-gear man, once relegated to the back of the run, had taken his place firmly at the front.

In a few cases the changeover to "modern" ways was fast. At the end of 1956, Ken Fuller was able to tell potential cyclo-cross riders that all they needed was an old-frame-not too heavy - with a pair of 26-inch Endricks, a 60-inch free-wheel and two good brakes. Only 12 months later, it was alloy chainsets, sprints and tubs and gears down to 40 inches.

It must be said that the De Laune was not in the vanguard of those who wanted change. The proposal by a fairly new member in 1950 that women should be allowed to join the club was dismissively described as an example of "precipitate youth." When moves were made to amend R.T.TC. regulations and allow time-triallists to ride in club colours, a majority of De Laune members twice voted in favour of "inconspicuous clothing" - a description which had succeeded the original requirement that riders should be clothed in black from neck to ankles.

Colour had arrived on the time-trial scene by the 'sixties, and man-made fibres had begun to revolutionise the cycle-clothing industry. But before that, in the early 'fifties, controversy raged in the DLN over the way some members were departing from the traditional club-run outfit of plus-fours or shorts and they were accused of failing to keep themselves clean and tidy:

"Before the war, 'tuggoes' rode cycles in long trousers and trouser clips. Today, we sometimes have as many as half-a-dozen members or clubmen so attired. This garment is obviously unsuitable for cycling, as in case of rain the whole lower half of the trouser-leg becomes soaked in wet and mud. Most of the trousers so worn are old and untidy, have no creases in them whatsoever and bear the evidence of repeated muddy wetting. On the cycle the wearers look horrible; off the cycle the wearer looks like a dirty tramp."

The writer didn't like the increasing use of "loose zip-jackets" either. They were serviceable, but all too often were worn when dirty. And there was another thing:

"Finally there is the new fashion of wearing a coloured handkerchief round the neck - presumably to keep the cold air from the chest or sweat running down from the head and neck. This may or may not be a good idea, but most of those who follow this fashion need reminding that a clean-coloured handkerchief looks gay and bright, but a filthy one makes the wearer look like a dirty and untidy stoker wearing a sweat-rag"

There seem to have been more stresses and strains on sectional relationships in the early 'fifties than in any other period of the club's history. The various racing interests didn't always get on; older members were irritated by the brashness of youth; and the older men themselves were accused of forming cliques. The atmosphere thus created had its effect on recruitment.

In the first half of 1951 only eight new members joined, compared with 23 in the equivalent period a year earlier; and more than 50 of those who were on the books in 1950 failed to rejoin. One disenchanted wouldbe recruit explained why he hadn't signed his membership application form:

"The main reason I have decided not to join the De Laune is that on club-nights nobody does anything except play darts, table-tennis, or alternatively drink tea. There is never much said about future arrangements, hardly anybody supports clubruns, and in general the club is surviving on what the old members have done in the past few years. Quite honestly my opinion of the De Laune is not so high as when I read about the club in 'Cycling'."

Committee men were particularly perturbed by the virtual disappearance of clubruns, as one of them pointed out:

"Since the club decided a few years ago (in 1949) to abolish the members' responsibility to attend at least eight clubruns before being eligible to race and at least sixteen clubruns before being eligible to take a prize, the situation has been causing many responsible members some disquiet.

"This was already reflected 12 months ago when upon the committee's recommendation it was decided to rule that a new member must in future attend at least six runs within three months of his membership application, so that the committee would at least know something about the applicant before accepting the application.

"The past season, however, has seen the absurd position of a complete breakdown in the clubrun programme on account of the general lack of support - and prospective members enjoined to come along to 'The Windmill' have obviously been somewhat taken aback to find no run to join or perhaps just the odd body."

The committee man said that as a result, membership had fallen; there was an acute lack of helpers for club events, a serious drop in income from all sources and the complete failure of the club's Derby sweep from lack of support.

There were exceptions to the low turnouts on clubruns. More than 30 members accepted Wally Fraser's invitation to a "surprise" run in December, 1950. Wally's surprise for them was that the destination turned out to be far-off Brighton. Their surprise for the general public was to ride there and back wearing wax moustaches, false noses and fancy hats.

And the De Laune was usually well-represented in the Bath-and-back runs of the 'fifties organised each March by the Castlenau C.C. These early reliability trials required the entrants to complete the 210 or so miles in 14 or 16 hours - starting at the unearthly hours of three or five in the morning.

The De Laune sent 30 of its young men off to Bath one wet and windy day in 1954. Fewer than half of them got there, and two - Charlie Carlton and Mark Ballamy - did so only with difficulty. Charlie was piloting their tandem through the blackness of the Colnbrook by-pass when they ran full pelt into what felt like a warm, semi-solid sponge. In fact they had buckled their front wheel on the belly of a horse, which had been grazing quietly at the roadside and was now galloping away into the night, frightened out of its wits. When the rest of the club arrived on the scene they ran into trouble themselves, because the gypsies who owned the horse thought they had set it free on purpose, and threatened all kinds of reprisals before peace was restored.

Arthur How was the man who made it his business to talk his fellow-members into riding the Bath-and-backs; and it was Arthur who organised much of the club's winter social activities of the 'fifties. Harry Thomas was involved in the social scene, too. He did his best to keep the traditional De Laune dances going - at such places as the Lambeth Town Hall, Clapham Baths and the Dulwich Baths Hall. But the spirit of the Edwardian twinkle-toes wasn't there. By contrast, there was plenty of support for the annual theatre outings: 70 members went to the Palladium in 1954, for instance, and enjoyed a slap-up meal at the Aldwych Brasserie afterwards.

It was fun the young ones wanted - and it was fun that they got, especially on the river at Guildford. The tradition of sinking any craft crewed by members of the De Laune was enthusiastically upheld. Or there was an alternative sport involving innocent new boys and the river locks. George Starsmeare was just such a naive victim on his first clubrun in 1953. He and his brother Eddie (who should have known better) volunteered to get out of the club's hired motor-launch and open the first of the lock gates. No sooner had the gates been opened than away chugged the launch, leaving the Starsmeares to run along the river bank through mud and stinging nettles.

They were allowed to rejoin the voyage at the next lock, where a foolish youth called Bob Prosser opened the gates - and was given the same treatment:

"But Bob was not taking it lying down, and there followed a shore-to-boat and boat-to-shore mud-slinging attack. We in the boat were in a most uncomfortable position. Whereas Bob was able to dodge our bombs, we could do nothing except take cover in the bottom of the boat.....

"There was, of course, fighting at close quarters and here, I think, it was Chip who took the honours. Have you ever seen Chip fencing with an oar? The way that he pushed Bob away from the boat with the pointed end of that weapon was an education to see!

"In spite of repeated efforts to keep Bob out of the boat, he finally managed to get back, and work was then started to clear the boat of wreckage. So it was that we sailed round the home bend with great dignity, and a full crew. We paid our fee - and it was quite a bit - and disappeared before the owner could find out about the mud that was left in the launch."

Alan Jackson was in the forefront of many a prank, usually on the river. He once competed with Napper Knapman to see who could throw the other's bike furthest into the water. And on dry land he led a mounted charge on a section of the C.T.C., his warriors armed with "lances" in the fashion of the "Ivanhoe" film which was filling the country's cinemas at that time.

Ken Hill's bike once mysteriously disappeared into the branches of a tree at Ide Hill, and he had started to walk home when a soft-hearted telltale told him where to look. This form of mental cruelty was sometimes perpetrated at the annual walk-run-cycle events: competitors would return from the walking or running sections to find (or not to find) the wheels of their bikes up a tree and the frames somewhere in the bushes.

There is nothing new in this tree business, as veterans of the 1939 Newnham weekend well know; and when Alan Jackson and his friends filled their bonk-bags with bangers, they were only following an example set twenty years earlier.

But the De Laune youth of the 'fifties were certainly an enterprising lot. Take note of what happened when one group went to Newnham for the 1953 memorial weekend, and stayed overnight at an inn near Charing which boasted a large clock right in the middle of the building. The innkeeper seemed oddly apologetic as he allotted them their bedrooms two or three to a room - and the reason became apparent when they went to bed:

"Now it so happened that one of the bedrooms backed right on to the clock - not that anyone noticed it at first. It wasn't until we had been in bed for a few minutes that we heard a terrific crunching and grinding sound coming from the next room. This went on for a little while, then there was silence. A quarter-of-an-hour later we were shaken out of a deep sleep by yet more crunchings and grindings. Another 15 minutes and the performance was repeated.

"As the noise of this latest din had died away we could hear other noises. Urgent voices and hurried movements came from the next room. There was much bumping and banging. Springs began to squeak, there was a protesting crunch and a little grinding - then more voices, this time with a hint of satisfaction in them. You know the sort of thing - a 'job well done' sound.

"We lay for another 15 minutes waiting for the crunching and grinding - it ran into half-an-hour..... one hour..... but not a sound. It never came, and in the morning we found out why."

The bumps and bangs in the next room had come from the De Launeites who occupied it. The crunching and grinding had come from a wall-to-ceiling cupboard in their room. And in the cupboard were the cogwheels, springs, spindles and chains which kept the big clock going. The chains disappeared through holes in the floor, and at the end of them - far below - were the weights.

Something had to be done if the men of the De Laune were to get their beauty sleep, and Tony Peachey made the decisive move. He hauled up the weights and detached them from the chains. This left them with a problem in the morning, as their mystified friends in the next room discovered.

"We were awake pretty early, and no wonder. From outside of the window came the sound of scraping and shouting. On investigation we found two of the lads trying to move the hands of the clock round to the right time by means of a long stick.

"We eventually recovered and called 'What do you think you are doing?' and back came the answer 'Putting the clock right. It made so much noise last night that we stopped it - now we can't reach the perishing hands!' But they did in the end."

The Newnham runs were a constant source of incidents. The Carlton/Ballamy tandem was on its way home along a narrow lane when a car driven by George Wood toot-tooted from behind them. Mark Ballamy, inspired by the rum he'd drunk at Newnham, leapt from the back of the tandem on to the car bonnet and spread-eagled himself across the windscreen. George suffered from shock and his car from a dented bonnet.

Vehicle-denting was also involved during a Newnham weekend a few years later. Mike Peel was taking part in a freewheeling contest so successfully that he ran off the road into a van, bounced into Bob Wileman and collapsed with him to the ground. The van was damaged, Bob's bike written-off, and Mike's foot cut so badly he had to go to hospital to have stitches put in it.

And talk of youthful enterprise (well, perhaps not so youthful) provides a reminder of how Mark Ballamy and Jack Young coped with the problem of not being able to find any bed-and-breakfast accommodation on the Isle of Wight. They didn't give up: they dosed down in a doctor's surgery. In this they were following some kind of De Laune tradition, because the pre-1914 champion Sammy Garbett was similarly placed in his heyday. When he found himself locked out of the Berkeley Arms on the Bath road at Cranford, where the club's racing men stayed, he went to the police for help. They let him sleep in their horse stalls.

## THE WILLING WORKERS

Some of youthful antics were too much even for those committee men who often recalled with wistful smiles their own contributions to the boisterous fun of days gone by. Two young members were expelled "for unruly conduct" and Alan Jackson was given a written warning. Needless to say, most of the tearaways who stayed with the club matured into respectable, grey-haired, rounded men whom no one would suspect of ever having hidden bikes in trees.

The De Laune had had a sizeable proportion of veterans in its membership for some time past, and an initiative by Wally Fraser at the 1952 A.G.M. encouraged them to get together to reminisce over their good old days and to see how they could help the club prosper. Wally proposed the formation of the Old Members' Association, which held its inaugural meeting at the Red Cow a couple of months later, with Bill Tanner at its head.

When Bill emigrated to Northern Rhodesia, the O.M.A. fell into the doldrums for a while until Ken Fletcher inspired its revival in 1957 and George Le Grys took over as its secretary - at the age of 79. George was then thoroughly enjoying his Indian summer with the club, even though he lived some miles away in Guildford. When Mrs. De Laune gave up the club presidency at her own request in 1958, George was elected in her place. The following year he was delighted to be elected as one of the new trustees of the Memorial Clubroom Fund, which was still growing only slowly. There had been occasional murmurs of "Is the fund worth it?" but the 1959 trustees put it on a sound footing.

The club honoured three of its hard-working officials with Gold Badges in the 'fifties: Harold Edmonds and Ken Fletcher in 1951 and George Starsmeare in 1959.

**Harold Edmonds** had just given up the job of club captain, after eleven highly-successful years. Those who rode with him said there was none better: his vast knowledge of the lanes of Kent and Surrey and the back streets of South London ensured that the clubruns never got lost. He was a tough-guy - wearing shorts summer and winter, and scorning the use of gloves even when snow was thick on the ground. No back-wheel shelter for him; and he would ignore young Alan Jackson's plaintive cry from the rear: "Ow far, 'Arold?". More recently - in 1984 - Harold was made an honorary life member of the club.

**Ken Fletcher** was honoured for being the classic all-rounder. He'd been a successful racing man before the war, and when it ended devoted his energies to getting the club going again. He organised social events, regularly marshalled in club and open time trials, helped at the track meetings, and for four years from 1948 was editor of the DLN. He was made a life member in 1974.

**George Starsmeare** joined the club late in 1953 and within a few months took on the DLN editorship. He stayed in the job for nearly five years, using it in the Frank Holland style as a means of cajoling the membership into greater activity as well as entertaining them. He and his younger brother Eddie were the foundation members of the Starsmeare-De Laune clan. By the late 'seventies they could almost make up a football team: at Edenbridge there were George, May, Alan, John, Fiona and Linda; at Mitcham there were Eddie, Maureen, Yvonne and Suzanne. Every one a member.

It's appropriate here to emphasise the role played by the Old Squire himself, **Ken Hill** - a Gold Badge holder since 1938. He was awarded honorary life membership in 1962 to mark a particularly active phase of his long service to the club. By then - as in later years - he had been a father-figure to many an aspiring champion. He travelled with them to events outside the De Laune area - to Gloucestershire, for instance, when Dennis Tarr rode in the national hill-climb of 1956. At the trackside he metaphorically boxed the ears of Brian Dacey and - later - Reg Barnett; and when Alan Jackson brought home his Olympic medals, Ken made a presentation case for them.

At the time of his election as club President in 1980 he said that all members had their "success day" from time to time, but to him: "A De Laune victory is like a year in my life..... I remember saying a little prayer for Alan only an hour or so before the Olympic event. His success prompted me to utter a prayer ever since for 'my' rider."

But despite his record-breaking efforts as a racing man, and the fact that since joining the De Laune from the Fountain C.C. in 1932 he had held virtually every official position in the club, Ken regarded

as his greatest triumph something he achieved at the age of eight. That was when he won a place in the St. Paul's Cathedral School Choir in the face of intense competition.

All the same, Ken was justifiably proud of his reputation as a first-class bike-handler. He could fall from his machine and remount in one smooth balletic movement; he delighted in getting his back wheel in the tramlines and riding broadside; and on club-runs he reckoned to be able to tap another rider's back wheel with his front one five times in quick succession without fear of coming off.

The new generation of officials in the 'fifties included Don White, club secretary for six years from 1949 and a De Laune stalwart ever since; Peter Staff, who held the secretary's job from 1958 to 1961 "with unfailing good humour and quiet efficiency"; \*John Darroch and Dick Ansell, the track organisers; and Tony Peachey, time-trials secretary for three years. To the list of new names, an old, familiar one was added: in 1959, Frank Holland began his third lengthy stint as DLN editor - this time from Gloucestershire.

*\*Footnote: John Darroch was one of several prominent De Launeites who emigrated but tried to keep in touch. John went to the United States and Harry Thomas to Australia - home of Monty Watkins, a De Laune veteran who'd gone there after the war. Wally Fraser was in New Zealand and Doug Stafford in Canada.*

The problem position was club captain. From the time Harold Edmonds "retired" in 1951 to when Harry Thomas took over for three years in 1957, the job changed hands on no fewer than six occasions. Small wonder there was a constant feeling of club-run crisis. Harry led a revival of interest, and by the winter of 1958/9 the numbers on club-runs were , averaging a respectable nineteen or twenty, partly because more of the racing men were taking part. Recruitment revived too: there was said to be a "never-ending stream" of new members in 1958. And at the Newnham weekend of 1959, no fewer than 65 sat down to a meal at The George, provided by the new landlord - Mrs. Foreman's grandson Billy.

So the decade ended on a rising note. The club was even featured in a radio programme about outdoor pursuits, with Chip summarising its past and current achievements. In May, 1959, the 70th anniversary was celebrated with a special club-run to Whipsnade, much of which was filmed with the club's brand-new cine-camera. But it was the "elevenses" stop which brought home to Len Danby the fact that times had changed in more ways than one: "No longer is it a pot of tea for 40 with two cakes each," he said. "Elevenses is now a big 'do' with coffee, tea, toast, sherbet, cola, pie and eels!"

***DLN: March 1960***

*Six members of the club had miraculous escapes when a hired car, driven by Mike Jenner, skidded and overturned on the ice on the M.1 when they were on their way to Birmingham for the National Cyclo-cross Championship. The passengers were Alan Rowe, John and Max Dods, John Double and John Geoghegan. Fortunately they were unhurt, the only casualty being John's bicycle, which was on the roof of the car. A policeman gazed horrified at the twisted metal and said.- " Who the hell was on the bike?"*

***DLN: March 1960***

*All eight members of the De Laune who entered for the Castlenau 25, which has been won by Kav and Alan Rowe in past years, failed to start this year. Due to icy conditions only 11 riders finished out of the first 70 riders on the card.*

***DLN: February 1962***

*An amusing incident took place on our way to the Inter-Counties Cyclo-cross in Birmingham when we met at the Busy Bee Cafe, just before the M 1. Supporters Alan Rowe and John Double, with rider John Dods, were sitting in the Mini-Minor when a huge St. Bernard dog ambled up to the car. Paul Eldridge, the driver, just for a joke opened the door and beckoned him and to everyone's astonishment he got in and sat in the driver's seat. It was some minutes before he was coaxed out - leaving a doggy smell behind him.*

***DLN: April 1962***

*The club Novices 25 proved a shameful failure because, due to some misunderstanding, no watch arrived for the timekeeper, Chip, and to make matters worse, through lack of marshals no rider completed the course..... We learned later that Roy Chittleborough had arranged to*

*bring the watches out with Alan Rowe, but the latter's car broke down and they did not get there.*

***DLN: January, 1963***

*What is the highest compliment a cyclist can pay to a cigar? On the way home from the bunfight, George Plonka was still smoking a cigar, kindly donated by Chip. Suddenly and for no apparent reason he mounted the pavement and hit a telegraph pole. The first thing he did was not to pick up his bike and inspect it for damage but instead to reach for the shattered cigar butt and put it back in his mouth.*

***DLN: April, 1963***

*The "Reading Standard" reports that following the merger between two firms at Caversham the manager of one, Mr. Frank Wynne, will end 14 years of continuous cycling between his home at Basingstoke and work at Caversham – 18 1/2 miles each way. He was well-known to people waiting for buses on the Basingstoke road, because he was always strictly to time.*

***DLN: May, 1966***

*On the morning of the Open 25 Mark Ballamy was travelling along in his van, carrying in it the urn full of hot tea. This fell over as he was rounding a roundabout, the result being that his windows steamed up and he was generally in a mess. When he had sorted himself out he found that he had little tea left in the urn, but plenty washing around his feet. However, he was able to buy some orange juice, so that most riders did get some refreshment.*

## THE MARKING -TIME DECADE

Compared with the 'fifties, the De Laune was merely marking time for much of the 'sixties. But even that was something of an achievement in a decade when cycling in Britain suffered a substantial slump in popularity. De Laune membership certainly declined for a while, and clubruns were poorly supported. Of those who did turn up at The Windmill on Sunday mornings most now preferred to go home for tea, signalling the beginning of the end of the all-day clubrun. In any case, teaplaces were becoming increasingly hard to find, as the old familiar cafes closed down one by one, or decided not to open on Sundays any more. Marshals and riders in time-trials were in short supply; the crowds at Herne Hill were worryingly thin; and there were complaints that too many club officials were "on the wrong side of fifty." In April, 1960, came the sad news that Percy Barnard, who had probably made more bikes for De Laune members than anyone else, had had to close his shop in Station Road, Brixton.

The club's track riders provided most of the racing highlights. Brian Dacey continued the sparkling form he had shown in the 'fifties, and Reg Barnett emerged as a world-class sprinter. Reg joined the De Laune as a schoolboy in 1961 and at 15 was already showing distinct promise in the Monday Competitions at Herne Hill. At 17 he was dominating junior races on the track as well as being successful on the road and was selected for a "Tour of Youth" in Germany. He left the club for three years and rejoined in 1967, soon after he had won the national amateur sprint championship. Later that year he reached the quarter-final of the World Championship and produced the fastest last 200 metres of the series - 10.8 sec. He retained his national title in 1968 and represented his country in the Mexico Olympics.

Reg always went to the starting line full of confidence that he would win. He would say "Watch me explode!" In 1969 he turned professional for Holdsworth and as a true "pro" gave talks in the De Laune clubroom to help youngsters who had ambitions for similar stardom. He went on to win the national professional sprint title three times before retiring to open a lightweight-cycle shop on Anerley Hill in 1975.

In road-racing, Dennis Tarr was still the man to be reckoned with when the 'sixties opened, but De Laune riders like Bob Wileman and Roy Chittleborough were setting a hot pace in local events. In 1962 they were joined by Terry Deeley, whose main role in club life until then had been as a member of the darts team. Few people in the club thought much of his chances as a racing man but he surprised them all by coming second in his first race and winning his next one. By the end of the year he found himself club road-racing champion. Bull's-eye!

Others who were carrying the De Laune colours to the front of the bunch included George Plonka, who was an umbrella-maker in Poland when he saw Alan Jackson riding in the Prague-Berlin-Warsaw in 1957. When George came to Britain in 1958, one of the first things he did was to go to the N.C.U. headquarters in London and say he wanted to join Alan Jackson's club.

The De Laune racing nursery, meanwhile, continued to nurture its talent. On the Crystal Palace circuit in 1965 it produced its latest find - Tim Hookins, who only the previous year had apprehensively entered the clubroom as "a very frightened nervous and shy young boy" and asked Ken Hill about joining the club. Tim was runner-up in the National Schoolboys' Championship and was an unlucky second in the Junior two years later. He remained well to the fore in circuit and road races into the 'seventies, and in time-trials became one of the club's fastest 10 and 25 milers. He won the De Laune Challenge Bowl in 1968.

By the end of the decade it was Richard Portanier's turn to earn the description of "promising junior." In 1970 he turned promise into reality by pushing Tim Hookins into second place in the senior road-racing championship.

John Lawrence was another example of those who could combine road racing and time-trialling with some success. In 1965 he achieved the unique double of both club championships.

The time-trialling trend towards the shorter distances continued through the 'sixties, when under-the-hour "twenty-fives" became commonplace. The De Laune's fastest was 56-28 by Mick Valentine in 1969 - a 28-second reduction of the Kavanagh record which had stood for ten years. That belated

improvement showed how the record-breaking fever had abated. But in 1963 the De Laune made its mark in that oddity among time-trial distances - 30 miles. Ray Runham, John Kavanagh and Mike Dongworth broke the National Competition team record with 3-32-51 in the Leo R.C. event. Their moment of glory lasted for only three minutes - when the Edgware R.C.'s third man came in. But Ray Runham's 1-09-30 established a long-lasting club individual record.

The only other solo record to go in a decade when time-trials took something of a back-seat was, surprisingly, at 12 hours. John Geoghegan rode 246 miles for third place in the Southern Counties' event of 1961 - a two-mile beating of Charlie Yearsley's distance. In 1968, John Geoghegan combined with "Kav" to push the club's tandem 50 figures down to 1-48-26.

Qualifiers for the title of best-all-rounder continued to be scarce, although the standard at the top was high. In the 11 years 1960-70 Alan Rowe won the championship three times (making a total of five wins in his career) and John Kavanagh and Dave Rudd twice each. The other successes were by Max Dods, Mike Dongworth, Roy Savery and John Lawrence.

Alan Rowe's triumphs won him the B.A.R. trophy outright; and the club had to find another replacement cup when Dave Rudd won the 50 championship in three successive years from 1963. Other bright spots included Roy Chittleborough's victory in the Open 100 of 1968 and Roy Savery's win in the Open 25 two years later. Roy Savery went on to win the De Laune Challenge Bowl in 1965 and 1967. There were some team successes, too. The De Laune trio of Geoghegan, Chittleborough and Fuller were top team in the opening event of the 1962 season - the Croydon Hard-riders' 25 - and Geoghegan, Chittleborough and comeback-man Brian Saxton did the same in 1964. There was a further boost to morale in one of the final events of 1962. Ken Fuller won the Bec C.C. hill-climb up \*Titsey Lane in 1-59.2 - the first time anyone in the country had beaten two minutes. Ken held that record for 18 years.

*\*Footnote: Titsey was used for the club hill-climb from 1961, because the police had banned the use of Brasted. Titsey was longer, better-surfaced and less busy.*

By 1968, the racing secretary was able to report "a higher standard all round" - and could prove it by pointing out that the De Laune had four riders in the National Championship 50.

But one peculiarity of the 'sixties time-trialing scene was the number of men riding then who were to make just as much of an impact - or even greater - twenty years later. Just take four examples: Tony Peachey, Peter Gunnell, Mick Valentine - and Mick Peel, who won the club 30, 50 and 100 in 1966. All came back, and none more so than Tony Peachey, whose potential as a late developer seems to have escaped notice. The signs were there to see as early as 1958, when he began his two years' National Service in the R.A.F. after holding a number of offices in the club.

He rode successfully for the R.A.F.C.A. in a number of road races, was picked for the R.A.F.'s 4,000 metre pursuit team, and was the R.A.F. hill-climb champion in 1959. By 1960 he had improved his time-trial times to 1-00-21, 2-01-51 and 4-24-16. When he was demobbed he had to concentrate on his engineering studies: "When I've finished them," he said, "I hope that I may still be able to get fit enough to bring my 25 time within an hour and my 50 time within two hours."

More than twenty years later he was still regularly achieving those targets and putting much younger men to shame. He was doing so under the managership of his wife, Val - daughter of a De Laune member, Sam Lawrence - who first came to the notice of the general De Laune membership in September, 1961 when she rode for the 34th Nomads in the Rosslyn Ladies 12-hour. She'd not even ridden a hundred before, and her best 25 time was outside evens; add to that the fact that she was only 19, and her eventual total of 201 miles well-merited the DLN description of "astonishing." Her manager on the day was her fiancée - Tony Peachey.

By contrast with the varying amount of support given to the pure time-trials, cyclo-cross remained a consistently-popular feature of the De Laune's winter programme. The 1964 Open was reckoned to be the best ever staged by Ken Fuller. It attracted 104 entries from schoolboys upwards, and so many marshals turned out that the four-mile course didn't need any arrows. The fact that the showers and changing facilities at R.A.F. Biggin Hill were made available added the usual touch of class.

## SHAMBLES AT SHOREHAM

Lest it be thought that racing swamped every other aspect of De Laune club life at this period, it should be emphasised that the social side was very much alive and kicking. The annual bunfight was a good example. As each Christmas approached, the De Laune's bright sparks celebrated in traditional and spectacular fashion. The 1959 version at The Spinney Tearooms in Shoreham was made memorable by the \*extraordinary eating habits of the guests, as the organiser, Harry Thomas, explained:

*\*Footnote: Extraordinary is hardly the word. Take the example of Charlie Carlton, whose appetite for food and drink was a constant talking point. When his tandem partner Mark Ballamy secretly covered his apple and custard with swede, Charlie downed it all and said: ' Those pears were nice.'*

"At a quarter-to-two (after some time spent in a pub in the village) 47 members sat down in The Spinney to eat an excellent meal prepared by Mrs. Hare and her staff. Did I say eat? I should have said that a few of us ate our dinner. The rest finished up on the floor, except one, which Reg Dawkins carried home on his head. Most of the beer went the same way. Kav and Brian Saxton acted wisely and stripped to the waist before they started.

"The whole place looked a shambles when we decided we had had enough - and I think Mrs Hare had as well; but after some of us had cleaned up and cleared the tables everybody was happy again and we left in good spirits.

"I shall never know how the club got away so quickly, but I found myself with only Len Danby and Barry Barber, who were both as bad as I was, so we had to walk right from Shoreham to The Mount, wishing all the motorists a Merry Christmas as we went. So we got to the Pavilion in time to see Reg standing on a table making yet another speech, much to the amusement of many puzzled outsiders. He got no further than 'Ladies and Gentlemen' when Peter took him by the legs and carried him through the door, belting his head as he went - and Reg still has the scar to prove it!

"The last of the party left about six o'clock and I reached home at 6.45 feeling quite exhausted, but most happy and satisfied at the demonstration of the club spirit which exists among the lads of the De Laune."

In advance of the following year's bunfight - also at The Spinney - Harry Thomas appealed for a better standard of behaviour. "As the organiser for the past six years," he said, "I know how embarrassing it can be to try to square things with the proprietress, with greens and potatoes running down your face."

Subsequent bunfights were slightly more restrained. In fact the one held at The Crown, Knockholt, in 1962, was elevated to the title of "Christmas luncheon."

It was at one of the original bunfights at The Spinney that Reg Dawkins was robbed of an iced cake by his clubmates. The cake had been made specially by Mrs. Hare as the prize in a raffle, and Reg's ticket was drawn just after he'd left the room to go to the lavatory. By the time he came back, the cake had been cut into little pieces and eaten.

Harry Thomas, whose bunfights were only a small part of his work for the De Laune, emigrated to Australia in 1961 but kept in regular touch with the club by letter. His father, also called Harry, retained the family connection - partly by continuing to let the front room of his house in Nunhead Lane be used for committee meetings. Members had to arrive early to get a seat, each one announcing his arrival by knocking on the window.

Harry senior became a well-known figure at the new clubroom in St. Faith's Church Hall, Red Post Hill, to which the club moved in May, 1961. The change was made because the committee was "tired of having to move to a pub in Trafalgar Street (the Lord Nelson) when school holidays closed the Institute, particularly as we have many young members who should not be asked to pass through licensed premises to get to the clubroom."

But the club now had to run its own canteen. Reg Dawkins - and later Harry Thomas senior - was appointed canteen manager, but when it was proposed that "wives etcetera" should be allowed to help, the committee said "No" by eight votes to seven. A couple of months later the vote was reversed, but such was the nervousness at letting women play any kind of role that confirmation of the decision was passed on to a general meeting of the club. In the end, Amy Thomas, Di Peachey, and Min Dawkins were graciously allowed to make the tea and cakes - and sell them. Mixed membership had moved a shade nearer.

St. Faith's was to be the club's home for nearly 12 years. There were occasional complaints about mice in the kitchen, the drabness of the hall, De Laune card-schools which went on well after midnight and the difficulty in getting St. Faith's Girl Guides to leave the hall on time; but Reg Dawkins and Bill Miles organised a number of social events to make clubnights attractive - like the "Any Questions" session in January 1962, with a panel which included Alan Jackson, the cyclists' masseur Bill Shillibeer, Stan Butler, and an international rider, Jim Hinds.

When asked about mixed racing - not yet allowed - the panel was unanimous in saying that it would have a demoralising effect on male riders: " It does not need any large stretch of the imagination to visualise the effect of a nicely-turned-out young female, wearing perhaps the scantiest of clothing, coming past you when you are doing well."

Mixed racing is now with us, but there's been little evidence of men being demoralised by scantily-clad women. Not in time-trials at any rate.

There were other hints of changing times that "Any Questions" night. A trainer and coach on the panel, Bill Dods, introduced to the De Laune what was described in the DLN as "a remarkable idea". It was interval training, which was to become an established part of most racing cyclists' preparation-programme. And there was a lot of interest in the new moves being made nationally to allow sponsorship of cycling clubs. A year later, the De Laune held a special meeting on the issue and agreed "that the club should be prepared to accept a worthwhile offer of sponsorship." It was a decision which never came to fruition.

In December, 1963, the clubroom was used for a mock auction to raise funds for the 75th anniversary celebrations in 1964. The final lot consisted of the remnants of the sale - bent bottle-cages, bells, brake levers, stems, pedals, and an obsolete touring gear with numerous rollers and two blocks with sprockets like saucers..... all tangled up in yards of fraying cables. Barry Barber, who had already bought a pile of doubtful bargains, became carried away by the excitement of the bidding when it reached eight pence and recklessly shouted "And a halfpenny!" The auctioneer, Derek Boon cried "Gone!" and Barry Barber's troubles began:

"Clutching an enormous cardboard box with its bottom sagging under the weight of my hard-won purchases I set off into the night. Feeling thankful for the emptiness of the dark streets, I trudged homeward, accompanied only by an occasional tinkle from a large bell in the depths of my box.

"While I was still wondering how I was going to explain this conglomeration to my wife, a big black car swept past with an ominous whisper and glided silently to the kerb. 'May I ask what you have in that box?' boomed a suspicious voice as two huge policemen blocked my path. 'Well, er.....' I mumbled, suddenly realising that I didn't know. 'Sort of cycle parts,' I managed, as I set the jangling box down on the mirror-like surface of the car bonnet, only to snatch it up again as the look of suspicion on the policemen's faces changed to something else.

"As I related the evening's transactions, the now incredulous looks made even me wonder if it had really happened. 'So you bought them, eh?' the larger officer asked. 'Yes'. 'But you don't want them?' 'No, they're no good'. 'So you'll throw them away?' 'I expect so'. 'And you haven't just come from Herne Hill, because we get a lot of break-ins there you know?'

"It took a deep breath and a lot of answers to a lot of loaded questions to convince them that I really did belong to the club and that I was just another normal idiot cyclist going home from an evening's fun. More bemused than satisfied, they finally drove off, leaving me with my now much heavier box, still wondering if I would ever manage to explain it to my wife."

## **ANNIVERSARY AND ACCOLADES**

The 75th anniversary year of 1964 gave the De Laune the incentive it needed to counter the effects of falling membership and declining interest. A special anniversary trophy was bought for the B.A.R. championship to replace the one won outright by Alan Rowe, and prize-values were boosted in the annual De Laune promotions - the Easter road race, and time-trials at 25 and 100 miles. The De Laune's Roy Savery won the Open 25 but an entry of only 38 in the Open 100 was a great disappointment, and a crowd of under 4,000 at the anniversary track meeting at Herne Hill was less than had been hoped for.

The Herne Hill programme which Ken Hill put together was well up to De Laune standards. Sponsorship by the Daily Telegraph and the Milk Marketing Board enabled the five-mile motor-paced race to include not only Britain's Tour de France hero, Tommy Simpson, but the greatest racing cyclist of his day, Jacques Anquetil, who was paced by Bob Wileman of the De Laune, wearing a snow-white boiler-suit for the occasion. The meeting also included the B.C.F. National ten-mile championship and the finish of a stage of the Tour of Britain.

To round off the celebrations, a 75th anniversary dinner was held in the Grand Hall of the Connaught Rooms in Kingsway, where the 200 or so guests included five who were at the club's 21st anniversary dinner in 1909: Will Westlake, Percy Williams, John Giles, George Wall and Charlie Butler. A sign of the times at the 1964 dinner was the brevity of the prize-presentation: six trophies had not been awarded because there had been no competition for them, and a number of prize-winners were not at the dinner.

But there were loud cheers for the presentation of Gold Badges to Charlie Carlton and Don White.

**Charlie Carlton** seems to have tried his hand at most jobs in the club. He joined in the late 'forties, about the same time as Don White, Ken Fuller and Jack Young, and like them played a full part in keeping things going - in Charlie's case, as press secretary, social secretary, handicapper, timekeeper, track secretary, Open 100 organiser, leader of clubruns and Memorial Fund trustee. In the 'seventies he extended his experience still further by doing a couple of years as editor of the DLN.

**Don White** took a prominent role in De Laune affairs only two years after joining the club in 1947. He was general secretary for a total of six years, Open 100 event secretary, handicapper, sprint champion (1949), and secretary/treasurer of the Memorial Clubroom Fund. His financial experience as a bank manager was a great asset in the negotiations involved in buying and rebuilding the present clubroom.

A De Laune veteran of the 'thirties, **Bill Miles**, had been awarded a Gold Badge in 1961 - and was further honoured in 1977 with life membership. His varied contribution to the club's success included spells as racing secretary, press secretary, handicapper, O.M.A. secretary and - from 1974 - club president. But it was as an organiser of social events that earned him most praise. In the summer of 1961 he and Arthur How ran a cruise on the Grand Union Canal from Southall to near Rickmansworth and back. As the rain poured down, 49 De Laune sailors rocked the boat with a sing-song, and thoroughly annoyed a large number of anglers.

After a successful Christmas dance he organised in 1965, Bill Miles unknowingly echoed the words of Arthur Williams, more than 50 years earlier:

"There are still a lot of club members who fight shy of attending a dance. I can assure them that it will not affect cycling muscles in the least. On the contrary, a recent article in 'Cycling' extolled the benefits of ballroom dancing for the racing cyclist in the off-season. What more congenial occupation could you have: the company of your own friends, music and pleasant exercise? Coupled with these is the fact that you are doing your bit to support a club function put on solely for your benefit."

In 1969 two other Gold Badges were awarded - to Brian Waller and Arthur How.

**Brian Waller** equalled Frank Holland's record stint as general secretary - though his total of ten years was made up of three terms between 1962 and 1977. He played a crucial role in guiding the De Laune through a particularly difficult stage of its history.

**Arthur How** joined the club in 1949 after discovering that cycling had cured his asthma. His job as public relations officer stood him in good stead in his De Laune work as advertisement manager for the DLN and the Crystal Palace festivals. Apart from his official duties, he acquired a reputation as a good after-dinner speaker, and as a forthright contributor to the DLN.

## **JACK YOUNG - REVIVALIST**

The organisation and support of clubruns deteriorated so badly in the early 'sixties that by 1963 no one could be found to take on the job of club captain. It was even seriously suggested that the offices of captain and vice-captain should be scrapped and that a "winter runs captain" should be appointed in their place. The inevitable compromise made the club captain responsible for organising - if possible - at least one run each month and for choosing a leader for it. This faced up to the sad fact that few if any were interested in weekly clubruns any more and certainly not in the racing season.

Bob Wileman took on the captain's job in 1964 and tried to add variety by leading a run into Town, instead of out of it, "to take a good look at the London we rarely see." He and his only companions, George Plonka and Terry Deeley, inspected the Albert Memorial, rowed on the boating lake and joined the audience at Speaker's Corner. A few weeks later, Bob and George went on a "Sunday outing" to an exhibition of contemporary art at the Whitechapel Art Gallery, where a typical exhibit consisted of a large stuffed chicken standing on a box which contained nothing but air and an electric light bulb.

Then something happened on Sunday, September 27th 1964, which warranted the DLN capital-lettered headline "SENSATION! MOST EXCITING NEWS THIS YEAR!" Yes, sensationally enough, nine members had met together to join in an organised clubrun. Jack Young led that run, as well as others in succeeding weeks. But he didn't get confirmation that a clubrun revival had begun until he arrived at The Windmill one January Sunday morning in 1965 "in lashing, pouring, belting rain and half a gale" to find a group of clubmates eager, come what may, to follow him through mud and potholes.

Jack's appointment as captain, and the reintroduction of attendance prizes, boosted the regular weekly clubrun turnout to between twelve and twenty.

Jack was recognised as one of the club's most experienced tourists, with rough-stuff as his speciality. In this he was following true De Laune tradition. What happened when he took a dozen young men over Hackhurst Downs in February, 1965, would have been all too familiar to their predecessors of the 'twenties and 'thirties:

"Turning on to the track that leads to Hackhurst Downs and Netley Heath soon found us in two inches of snow. A well-aimed snowball sent Malcolm Adams' beret flying at first shot, and Alf Clinch (who we should rename 'Happy' - he's always laughing and enjoying himself) was first to have trouble, when a tree caught up his back mudguard and concertinaed it. Dick Gates, Mick Jones and Barry Rorison belted up front until Barry decided on a four-point landing into the snow and Mick at the same time hooked another tree in his rear wheel.

"Mile after mile sliding, walking and riding along the ridge of the downs until Barry picked up a puncture and while waiting for him I found a slow in my rear tyre. Descending a steep, leafy muddy lane into Shere, Mac Cole lost his front mudflap. Dick also lost his and I cracked my rear guard with yet another tree. Geoff Margetts hit a boulder and parted company with his bike, bending his front wheel in the process, but not himself, and Mick had his carrier-clip sheer off. In the middle of this fun we met Jack Zarfes, who had missed us at our eleventh stop at Leatherhead.

"Lunch at Shere and the repairs got under way. Barry's puncture and mine were soon done and meantime, to relieve the uneventful day, Geoff had decided to straighten his buckled wheel. He slackened off all spokes and obtained a beautiful figure-of-eight wheel such as no skilled bicycle-builder could produce.

"Now the lads had discovered that the Tillingbourne flowing alongside was only six to eight inches deep and were cycling up and down in the stream to wash their bikes; meanwhile George was straightening his wheel.

"Being unsporting types, Dick, Mick, Dennis Sweeney and Terry Clifford refused to fall off into the stream, but seeing the fun Happy Alf must join in, so Malcolm Adams got his camera. Happy Alf now rode to the far side of the stream and - still sitting in his saddle - leaned

against a tree trunk. Up came the other film stars: Mick leaned on Alf, Dennis leaned on Mick and then Dick leaned on Dennis, when suddenly the first three decided to go paddling.

"Alf's rear wheel had buckled under the strain! And if you want a good camera shot just get two or three of the lads standing in shoes and stockings with ice-cold water lapping their shins in January while they examine and discuss the damage to a bent wheel. Meanwhile Geoff was straightening his wheel.

"We jumped on Alf's wheel, slackened off spokes here and tightened there and so got him mobile. Now Malcolm is straightening Geoff's wheel. Now Mac..... Now Jack..... but it would not, with all our lack of skill, get any more unbent, and we had to get Geoff on to a train.

"Mick carried the frame, Malcolm the back wheel, Mac the front. Geoff rode Alf's bike and Terry took Alf on his saddle, while he, Terry, trod the pedals - a really noble effort, 6 1/2 miles into Dorking. Malcolm and Terry went training on the 5.40 with Geoff to Peckham Rye and the rest to Mickleham for a well-earned tea; then home after one of the most enjoyable clubruns I have been on for a very long time."

Jack Young was later able to report that the 1965 season of weekly clubruns - which ended in May - had been "the most successful for many a long year." (The timing of the De Laune clubrun season had now turned a complete circle since Victorian days, when it was confined to the summer.) Jack went on bringing variety and adventure to the Sunday runs until he decided to give up the captaincy at the end of 1968. He then felt he was getting too slow for the impatient young bloods, even though he was still climbing hills he used to walk thirty years earlier. In 1970 he was added to the club's Gold Badge roll of honour, not only for his four years as captain but also for his work as treasurer, timekeeper, handicapper and track promoter. In 1979 he was made a Life Member.

## SCHOOLBOYS' YEAR

As cycling rapidly lost ground to the motor-car, the urgent need to bring new - and young - blood into the sport in general and the De Laune in particular inspired the declaration of 1965 as Schoolboys' Year, "with the object of encouraging the sport among schoolboys and juniors." Eighty-six-year-old George Le Grys gave the year a presidential send-off with a gift of £50. A comprehensive programme of events was sent to all headmasters in South-East London: there were invitation clubruns, track meetings, circuit races and the National Schoolboys' Cyclo-cross Championship (organised by Ken Fuller at Shirley Fields). Special attention was paid to young newcomers at the clubroom, and discussions and lectures were arranged for them. A challenge cup, paid for by De Laune members, was put up for competition on a points basis for the school whose riders did best in the three track meetings - and it was won by Harrow County School.

The year was rounded-off with a social in the Herne Hill grandstand at the end of the final track meeting. Jack Young led a clubrun there, to join about a hundred members and friends who were entertained by a three-piece band - double-bass, drums, and an instrument which had yet to burst upon the music scene: an electronic organ. Only one thing marred the evening: the bar ran out of beer.

All in all, the year was a great success. It achieved its main objective of bringing competitive cycling to schoolboys who had little or no opportunity to race against others of similar age. Its secondary objective of recruiting new members for the De Laune was only partially successful. To quote Bill Miles:

"Most of those taking part in the track meeting already belong to clubs, but we have provided a worthwhile publicity campaign for cycling in general and for the club, so that the De Laune can be proud of the fact that it is the first London club to recognise the wealth of potential material to be drawn to the sport of cycling from the schools."

The problem was that, almost as soon as schooldays were over, young men could now afford to be seduced into buying one form or other of motorised transport. Of course, some who'd already caught the cycling bug successfully combined the two; and by the end of 1963 very few members of the De Laune did not have either a car or a scooter. Arthur How suggested - perhaps tongue-in-cheek - that the club should face the facts of life and change its name to "the De Laune Cycling and Motoring Club", and Jack Young noted his first sighting of a club member arriving for a *freewheel* contest with his bike strapped to the roof of a car.

A little piece of De Laune history was created in 1964, when John Kavanagh organised a car rally to follow the club "30". Bob Wileman welcomed the innovation: for a whole day - and despite appalling weather - a large group of members and friends were enthusiastically involved in the same activity. And that - said Bob - was something the club had been desperately trying to achieve virtually without success for a number of years. He pointed out that the combination of the two events had brought more marshals and spectators to the "30" than would normally have been the case on such a morning.

A good example of how cars were put to use by cyclists is provided by Reg Dawkins' account of the Open 100 he organised in 1963. That was the year Roy Chittleborough won. It was also the year that entries slumped to 37 - eleven of them from the De Laune. But the number of helpers needed remained the same as if there had been a hundred riders; and the names of those helpers encompassed more than fifty years of De Laune history:

"Having arranged everything at the start for our worthy timekeeper, Tom Bray, and his assistant, Chip, with young John Giles and Big John Giles giving out the numbers and food, with some help from Charlie Butler, Min and yours truly got cracking around the course.

"At Lowfield Heath there was no sign of D. Jones but Beefy Russell had just made it. At Longbridge roundabout, no sign of John Linley but young Davies and Wood were there. On to Hookwood y roundabout, but no sign of Major or Johnson, so drop Min and dash to Woodhatch turn, where Jack Zarfes and Ken and Mrs. Fletcher are at the ready. Back to Hookwood and Johnson is there, so pick up Min and make for Tinsley Lane where Don White is o.k.

"On to railway bridge where Bert Collins helps the situation but Barry Barber is a bit late. At Burstow fork Mike Peel and his friends are well and truly there. Now for Ridley's Corner and low and behold Del Boon is ready, despite being up all night making tea and bringing it down for Harry and Amy Thomas for the canteen at the finish. At Three Bridges station I found Bob Wiltshire, all the way from Norfolk, and there on time, while at the roundabout Geoff Sinnott and his wife are busy, but at Southgate roundabout there was no sign of Charlie Yearsley, so drop Min and on to Handcross where I found Ted McDonald with his lady and asked them to drop back to Southgate.

"Bill Miles, with a good supply of hot tea which he had been up early to make with the assistance of Doreen was ready, with Peter Dawkins and John Moss to help, with Kay and Jean busy knitting. 'Picking up Min again I made for the Red Lion where Roy Banham is lonely but o.k., and at the Plough Inn Ken Fuller, with Dot and Ross have the situation in hand, as they did last year. On to Cowfold and in my driving mirror I can see Chip and Daphne, with Sam Lawrence in the car to help if need be, and Charlie Butler. At Cowfold there was Fred Peachey with Charlie Carlton and Len Danby, with Di and Val in attendance.

"At Henfield Mike Jenner arrived with Arthur How not far behind and at Middlewood Corner I found Dave Hughes and Joan, busy eating. At Dale Hill there was George Wood, having got his bike off the top shelf, and on his Tod Sloan.

"At Bolney cross-roads Frank Holland had not arrived, but the lads John Geoghegan, Tich Shambrook, Derick Munday and Dave Burfoot, were there. Panic sets in, but Frank arrives just on time, despite his long drive from Gloucestershire, with his usual supply of orange and lemon drinks - but I had forgotten the bottles! However, makeshifts were found and all is well, especially when my son Peter came along with some proper feeding bottles

"Look in at Cowfold to check on the Worthing road checkpoint and Alan Jackson and Maureen are there with Dave Tweddell and family and they are busy cooking breakfast. Percy Shrimpton was there too, but went off afterwards to join Frank at Bolney.

"At Horsham the roundabout is well and truly covered with Ted McDonald, young Paul Davies and Wood, Malcolm Adams and my nephew Peter Nabbett. At Horsham station, Geoff Sinnott and Vi are waiting, so we made our way back. We did not see Charlie Yearsley at Woodyard, but he must have made it just afterwards. At Ifield roundabout John Giles helps, pending the arrival of Del Boon and Bert Collins, and so on to Bonnetts Lane where Barry Barber is at the ready.

"On to the finish, where everything is in order, so Min and I can relax - or so we thought, but no such luck, because canteen manager Harry Thomas, not having come out so early, was very fresh and soon had the ladies working on the tea wagon. Beefy Russell was set to work writing the results on the board, John Giles collected the numbers and Tom Bray, with Chip, was very busy with the timekeeping. Daphne did her good turn, too, by supplying cologne to an exhausted rider, and Fred Peachey, as a member of the R.T.T.C. London South Committee, was watching points.

"I was pleased to see how well our own riders had done; of course, Roy Chittleborough was the hero, being the winner, but I thought the ride of the day was by young Adrian Littlebury (in winkle-pickers) in his first '100' (4-47-48).

"So we pack up and make for lunch, already organised by Bill Miles, with a drink or two at The Chequers beforehand..... If I have missed mention of anybody, please forgive me. Many thanks to you all - and to Frank Wynne for his donation towards the expenses."

The ebullient Reg Dawkins - someone dubbed him "the Sergeant-Major" - was involved in many aspects of De Laune life, until he retired to East Anglia, took up bowls, and naturally enough named his house "De Laune". One of his peripheral activities was to organise the club darts team - three times runners up in the South London League and twice winners of a knockout cup. In 1967 he was

the first winner of the Jef Butcher \*Trophy, put up for competition in the O.M.A. 10. He won it in the following two years, as well; his time in 1969 - when he was 62 - was 28-48.

*\*Footnote: When Jef died in 1966, the money raised for a memorial to him was shared between a new duplicator for the D.L.N. (because of his association with the early issues) and the O.M.A. trophy - his De Laune Gold Badge, mounted on a plaque.*

But who won the O.M.A. tens wasn't all that important. Les Pyne, for instance, borrowed a bike and made himself a special pair of shoes for the first of them - and finished a very happy last. He and fifty other riders and supporters then adjourned for breakfast at the Journey's End Cafe at Hookwood, Horley - a gathering that remained a feature of the event in succeeding years.

O.M.A. members indulged themselves in nostalgia every now and then - such as riding to Godstone in the summer of 1967 and discovering that Mrs Curd still reigned supreme, even though bikes were no longer stacked seven deep in the yard.

A few years earlier - in 1962 - an O.M.A. run to Ripley was joined by a figure from the past: Joe "Tiddler" Robinson, whose small size and youthful high spirits had created such an upset in the club in 1921. In the intervening years, Joe had broken all kinds of Southern place-to-place records on bikes, tandems, trikes and tandem-trikes. He enjoyed the Ripley run so much that he rejoined the De Laune as an honorary member; and he presented the club with an 80-year-old solid silver trophy which was allocated to the Midsummer 25 (and was won outright by Alan Rowe in 1964).

## **NEWNHAM AND THE COTSWOLDS**

The spread of car ownership had its effect on the annual gatherings at Newnham. Only two members went there by bike in 1968, and none at all the following year. But the memorial services continued to be well supported, because availability of cars made it easier for old-timers to get to Newnham and renew acquaintanceships: men like Maurice Lecointe, living in Witney, whose membership went back to the 'thirties. He was the only De Laune member to have served in the French Army in the second world war.

In 1961, a call was made on the new owners of Sharsted Court, a Mr. and Mrs. Ratzer, who showed a party of members around the house and grounds. It was on this tour that a portrait of the club's late president, Capt. Alured Faunce De Laune, was spotted - along with other family paintings - hanging in a garage. The Ratzers were asked about it - and some years later the portrait was put in the Choumert Road clubroom.

Sharsted Court was later bought by Canon Wade, whose daughter Virginia achieved fame as a tennis player. At his invitation, about 50 members of the De Laune Old Members' Association went there in May, 1975.

Frank Holland regularly travelled to the Newnham service from his home in Gloucestershire, picking up various out-of-town members on the way - Stan Endean, Laurie Tanner and Maurice Lecointe among them. He lived for a while in a village near Cheltenham and then in 1960, moved a few miles away to Chipping Campden, where he soon established himself as a prominent citizen. He loved the Cotswolds and persuaded Bill Miles to join him in organising a De Laune cycle-rail excursion so that the club could sample its delights.

In September, 1960, seventeen members put themselves and their bikes on the 9.25 from Paddington to Kemble (26s.7d. return, including bicycle), where Frank was waiting to escort them to lovely thatched-roofed villages by way of rolling roads lined with grey-stone walls. Lunch at Bibury was supplemented by tins of Beach's orange juice - a product of the canning company Frank worked for. Then tea at Northleach, back to Kemble and the 8.15 train home.

The excursion was not repeated, despite its success. But in 1967 Frank Holland arranged a "De Laune Reunion" at Chipping Campden, which he described as "a gathering for members, their families and friends - rather like a springtime Newnham Weekend, but without the serious purpose." Some rode the 100 or so miles to get there; most of the 60 or so others went by car. The climax of the weekend was a teatime reception in the Town Hall, arranged by Frank with the help of a few local friends, relatives and neighbours. It was so enjoyable, it became an annual event, though for Frank the reunion aspect was the most important: he delighted in spending a short time with some of the friends of his youth, like Fred Hooper, Beefy Russell, George Stubbs, "Oscar" Hoare and John Giles. For others, it was a family occasion, too. George and May Starsmeare took their four children - aged from three to twelve - in 1969:

"After lunch we had a walk around the village. We went up the main street taking in the lovely old buildings. Then, 'tap, tap' and again 'tap, tap' and yet again 'tap, tap!' The place must be haunted, I thought, and I looked behind to gather up the children - we fathers get very protective, you know.

"As I looked behind I saw a little hand, which had Fiona attached to the other end, reaching up to the handle of a door (they open on to the street) and then 'tap, tap' and another resident had been knocked up! We beat a hasty retreat to the safety of the church.....

"Tea at the Town Hall was next on the list, and as far as I was concerned it passed off without any incident from my family although Fiona did wander into the gents' toilet. But she soon was ushered out, probably far less concerned than any of the inmates at that time!"

Frank Holland then had two great interests: the De Laune, of course, but also public affairs in Chipping Campden. He became Town Clerk in 1965, organised exhibitions in aid of renovating the Old Town Hall, compiled and printed a local magazine, taught calligraphy and illuminated lettering, and successfully campaigned for the granting of a coat of arms for the town. But he still found time to maintain his contacts with the De Laune. He hardly missed an annual dinner, and was proud to be

elected President in 1968, in succession to George Le Grys. At the 1965 dinner he was presented with an illuminated address - appropriately enough - to mark his 40 years of membership, including ten years as general secretary and 25 as editor of the De Laune News. He ended his third and final stint in charge of the magazine in May, 1968, when he was succeeded first by Ray Bayles and then by George Starsmeare.

Frank Holland was at a council committee meeting in Campden Town Hall when he died in June 1977. He had completed nearly 52 years with the De Laune. Chip described him as a man of integrity and strong principles..... firm in conviction and at times blunt in comment.

At a crowded memorial service, the Mayor of Chipping Campden said Frank had achieved more for the town by individual effort in barely 17 years than many others would have done in a lifetime.

Frank's last gift to the club before his death was a President's chain of office, which he had designed himself. And in his will he left £500 for the Memorial Clubroom Fund, which he initiated in 1942. To keep his name fresh in the minds of De Laune members, a plaque was put on the wall of the club's lounge/committee room - now called the Holland Room - and to comply with his wish to improve clubroom amenities, two sets of training rollers were bought. The club also gave Chipping Campden £25 to help pay for the running of the annual art exhibitions in the Town Hall - one of the last major projects Frank undertook for the town. Stan Endean led a De Laune party to Chipping Campden to buy one of the paintings on show; in the end, they commissioned a local artist, Harry Weller, to paint a water-colour of the Market Hall. The people of Chipping Campden put up their own memorial: a stained glass window in the Town Hall, depicting the coat of arms which Frank acquired for them.

The 'sixties and 'seventies brought the saddening news of other deaths among the De Laune's long-serving members. Two were life members and Gold-Badge holders - George Le Grys, who died in 1969 at the age of 90, and the club's Grand Old Man, Bill (or Will) Westlake, who was 92 when he died in 1978, after 69 years' membership. He was the one remaining survivor of the "Four Just Men" of the 'twenties - Percy Williams having gone nine years earlier.

Other losses included John Giles senior (61 years in the club), Alf Marshall (57 years), Laurie and Bill Tanner, Percy Shrimpton - and George Wall, the entertainer from Bridgwater whose after-dinner turns in the 'thirties had included his appearance in a ballet dress to sing "No-one Loves a Fairy When She's Forty."

There was another break with the past when Mrs. Faunce De Laune died at her home in Sidmouth in 1968. She had given up the club presidency when advancing years made it difficult for her to make the journey from Devon to London for the annual dinners. The club sent her flowers each year, to make up for her absence, and she always replied with a telegram of good wishes. She was survived by her son, Hubert, who at the time of her death was living in Mexico. His son, Alured Bonham Faunce-de Laune, is carrying on the family name as a lawyer in Australia - where, early in the nineteenth century, another of the Faunces had arrived to form one of the country's pioneering families.

In February, 1969, De Laune members stood in silence at their annual meeting to honour the memory of Fred Peachey, father of Tony and one of the club's hardest-working officials, who had died only eight days earlier. He had been an outstanding time-trial secretary but could turn his hand to anything which benefited the club. The staircase of his home was known affectionately as the "Hall of Fame" because it contained photographs of every racing man in the De Laune. Jack Young thought it would be a long time before the club was blessed with another like him: "Anything and everything he did for the club and for cycling was aimed at what he considered right. With a man like that there were no half-measures and it was our good fortune that of all the clubs he could have chosen to join, he joined the De Laune."

As a permanent tribute to Fred, the club membership provided a trophy for competition in an open time-trial which became known as the Fred Peachey Memorial 25.

The club lost another old-timer - though not permanently - when Frank Wynne resigned at the end of 1964, without explaining why. His decision was accepted "with very deep regret" and Chip paid for the cost of continuing to send the DLN to him.

It later emerged that Frank had been annoyed at having his entry for a club event rejected on the grounds that it had been received too late. To everyone's relief he came back into the fold, though as he lived in Basingstoke his direct contacts with the De Laune were few and far between; there was just the occasional word that "old Frank is still on his bike."

## **WINDS OF CHANGE**

When concern over the lack of new members was expressed at a committee meeting in 1964, it was suggested once again that women should be allowed to join the club. But opposition was still strong, and a proposal that the issue should be put before a general meeting was lost by seven votes to two.

It was another five years before the membership as a whole had an opportunity to make its views known. A vote on mixed membership was taken among the 55 present at the 1969 annual meeting - and only five raised their hands in favour. But there was no debate: the meeting decided to take the vote without discussion. At the end of that year, the R.T.T.C. agreed that women could now compete with men - but the conservative De Laune decided to restrict its open events to men only.

Change was in the air in other directions, however. The De Laune club colours were changed in 1968, when white was added to the traditional chocolate and light blue. A veterans' B.A.R. was instituted in 1970 over 10, 25 and 30 miles (Reg Dawkins won it, of course); and in 1969 a "Metrication Sub-Committee" was formed, to work out the equivalent in metres of all the standard time-trial distances. It evidently came to no firm conclusion.

By the time the 80th anniversary clubrun was held to The Crown at Knockholt in October, 1969 (61 were there, and all but a few went by bike) the biggest change of all was well under way: the De Laune was building its own clubroom.

## **TWO YEARS' HARD**

The Memorial Clubroom Fund was more of an irritant than a benefit to the De Laune in the 'fifties and 'sixties. At the beginning of 1964 it stood at nearly £1750, but the buying or building of a clubroom seemed as far away as ever and donations had slowed to a trickle. So rather than let the money lie idle it was decided to spend half each year's interest on "improving the club's amenities." This enabled prizes to be given for such things as clubrun-attendance, speed-judging and photography competitions; and a field-telephone was bought, to speed the time-trial results service.

If Charlie Carlton hadn't been walking along Grove Vale, in East Dulwich, one day in January, 1968, the fund may well have withered away - destroyed by inflation and inertia. As it was, a notice in an estate agent's window caught Charlie's eye: "FOR SALE: The Institute, Choumert Road, London S.E.15, a former Scout hall situated in a quiet residential road. Brick construction with a high gabled slate roof, in which there are glass skylights, the only window being high up at the rear..... There is a small stage, kitchen and toilets. PRICE FREEHOLD: £2650."

Charlie's tip-off brought De Laune committee-men on an immediate tour of inspection. They discovered a dilapidated building which hadn't been used for ten or more years. There were signs of dampness and rot and it was full of all kinds of rubbish. It was hemmed-in on one side by a private house and on the other by the entrance to a yard, which was guarded by a dog. In other words, it was ideal for conversion to the De Laune C.C.'s Memorial Clubroom.

The hall belonged to St. Saviour's Church, near Choumert Road, and the vicar was anxious for a quick sale so that money borrowed for church repairs could be repaid. So he straightaway accepted the club's offer of £2300.

The initial negotiations were in the hands of the Memorial Fund trustees - Mark Ballamy, Chip, Arthur How, Peter Itter and Don White. George Stubbs gave them some inside information from his position on the local council, and Ron Hoare provided a comprehensive surveyor's report. Finding the money to buy the hall was comparatively easy because there was £2000 in the fund. Finding anywhere near enough to pay for renovation, rebuilding and legal costs was another matter. First estimates were that around £2450 would be needed on top of the purchase price - and the eventual total was a few hundreds more than that.

On February 15th, 1968, a special general meeting of the club enthusiastically approved the buying of No.93 Choumert Road. Frank Holland was seeing his dream of 1942 begin to come true:

"The meeting in St. Faith's Hall demonstrated to me once again what a truly remarkable organisation is the De Laune Cycling Club. Here we had gathered together nearly sixty members, many of them middle-aged men who had not ridden a bicycle for many years, giving great thought and wise counsel on a project which cannot bring much benefit to any of them and which may cost many of them quite a lot of money. And why were they doing this? Mainly because they remembered that membership of the club had meant much to each one of them in the days of their youth!"

Fund-raising schemes were started to complement the donations which began to come in. One example was the collection of waste paper, successfully organised by Charlie Carlton; another was the "100 Club", which involved 100 members paying a few shillings a week to take part in a draw for prizes. There was also a big drive to collect Green Shield stamps, which were then an established part of supermarket shopping and could be exchanged for kitchen items.

Meanwhile Don White was conducting the lengthy and complicated negotiations necessary to get a Government grant (final approval for £2500 took three years); and he became involved in legalistic tangles over who was entitled to sell the hall. What with one thing and another the sale didn't go through until March 31st, 1969 - more than a year after the acceptance of the club's offer.

Charlie Carlton immediately issued his orders for an Easter Blitz on the hall: "Clearing-up operations will commence at 0930 on Saturday, April 5th, and will go on until 1330 or thereabouts." Peter Itter was one of the Carlton Cleaners:

"The air was thick, mostly with dust but sometimes with language, as panelling was ripped out, timber was loaded for transport to the Southwark refuse dump, and gradually the far end of the hall became clear of rubbish and dirt. Tea boy Ballamy ordered a short respite by bringing in the tea urn, but Charlie kept the whip moving - and over thirty members! Noteworthy workers were the juniors of the club, led by Len Double, who turned-to in the first clear-out the hall has had since the war.

"It is now well on the way towards being ready for the first steps of renovation to be taken. A small contribution to the cost of this was achieved by the foreman, who lost no time in sending lead and cast iron around to a local scrap merchant, making a profit of over a pound on the morning's work."

The planning of repairs, renovation and rebuilding was the responsibility of a sub-committee of Jack Young, Mark Ballamy, Charlie Carlton, Ken Fuller, George Starsmeare and Peter Itter. Their first meeting was at "the new clubroom" in June 1969, when the main decision was that as much of the work as possible should be done by club members - including the removal of the old roof. But structural changes couldn't be made until planning permission had been granted - which wasn't until the following April. In the meantime, the hall was used to store waste paper and was stripped of everything which could be sold:

"On March 7th we had another strenuous morning at the new clubroom where another stage of Charlie Carlton's Scrap Spectacular took place. Ken Hill, Mick Peel, Brian Shambrook, Brian Waller, Jeff Valentine, Jack Young and the Carlton family loaded something like nine tons (we hope) into a huge lorry, which was sagging on its springs by the time we had finished."

Efforts like this were certainly worthwhile: by the end of the year £29 had been raised by the sale of lead and £35 by the sale of slates.

A real start on demolition wasn't made until August, 1970. Some preliminary dismantling had been done by Jack Young and a few others but - as Jack reported - the big day was Saturday, August 8th.

"Bright and early, Ken Hill, Ken Fuller, Geoff Sinnett, Bill Miles, Mick Peel, Geoff Valentine, Fran and Edward Carlton, Chris Chalet, Len Double and A.J.Y. really set to work on the necessary demolition. Only eleven of us, but you would have thought there were scores. Timber, muck and rubble - slates - bricks - mortar - old hardboard - clouds of dust - flying all over Choumert Road.

"Bodies were clambering over the roof in every direction. Mick and Ken Hill were taking fantastic evasive action as the debris showered down thick and fast. Ken Fuller was trying to ensure that the foundations were not dug up underneath us by some of the exuberant younger members. That roof trembled and swayed as if hit by an earthquake. In fact Ken was only just in time to stop some of the fast workers demolishing the house next door.

"A quick elevenses, during which a great jet of water shot up from under the floor and the working 'shower' nearly had one! A brief clean-up - we looked like miners coming off the night-shift - and on we pressed.

"How we survived with only a few cuts and abrasions I shall never know. The place was more and more resembling a building hit by a near-miss bomb during the war. A pile of slates - worth money to us, said Working-Foreman Fuller - was being stacked. Meanwhile the Carlton lads, on the ball as always, whipped the small quantity of lead down to the dealers and earned a few more pounds for the fund.

"A break for lunch and a quick pint at the local to wash down the dust - paid for out of the kitty to celebrate just this once..... "Sleeping-partner Charlie Carlton called in - dressed to kill, to make sure he couldn't be roped in for work - then we were at it again..... About 2p.m., just as it was getting hot on the roof, a cloudburst hit us and you have yet to see anything funnier than eight men trying to get down a single ladder together. We finished for the day when the rain really settled in, and eleven weary and filthy members paused to survey the wreckage

they had wrought: IT LOOKED TERRIBLE. But when we started to crystal-gaze into the future, happy smiles lit up those ugly dirty mugs and plans were made for the next session."

Mark Ballamy was put in charge of ordering materials and dealing with such people as surveyors; Ken Fuller was the site foreman. Ken's problem of trying to fit the work in with his full-time job as a builder a long way from Choumert Road was compounded by the lack of experience among his willing club helpers. He found he was having to spend so much time telling people what to do that it was difficult to get on with the skilled work, such as carpentry. The fact that he surmounted all the obstacles by devoting many months of efforts to them was recognised in 1971. He and Mark Ballamy were each awarded a Gold Badge "for their many services to the club and in particular for all their efforts in connection with the new clubroom." Ken was later made an honorary life member. His account of the early work which followed the August 8th demolition shows something of what was involved:

"We continued demolishing - three chimney stacks, two gable ends, main roof, front lean-to roof and cupboard walls, rear extension roof - this work all carried out on Wednesday evenings and Saturdays. This stage was completed on September 12th, with yours truly greatly relieved that no one had been injured. My admiration goes to the lads who turned out to help: not one of them, apart from myself, had any building knowledge.

"The next jobs were erection of fences, to protect the public from De Laune members; trench for cross-wall footings and concrete to same; trench for electric and other services; trenches to check drainage; clear away five skips of rubbish - much amusement here to see Graham Crocombe in the skip with out-of-control wheelbarrow. Several others ended up the same way, but by skip number five the lads were filling it like professionals.

"**November 7th** saw the start of levelling hardcore for the concrete floor. An acquaintance of Jack Young's turned up with a lorry-load of shingle - that saved us a bit. We had two apprentice bricklayers start - Jack Young and Bill Miles, with Brian Dacey labouring for them.

"**Saturday, November 21st.** We have concreted one third of the main hall - the turnout of members to concrete was fantastic, with only two wheelbarrows and a distance of 80ft. to run or walk, it had to be seen to be believed. Brian Saxton turned up with two fire buckets and proceeded to run up with them full of concrete (he's a runner, y'know).

"Well, that's where we were on November 21st. We have had a full-time bricklayer working and Alan Jackson has been doing the drain-laying (he's a qualified plumber). My hopes at the moment are for moving into the new clubroom by late 1971."

January, 1971, saw the fixing of new roof timbers - in pouring rain; by February electricity cables and gas pipes were in place; April saw the roof completed and by May some windows were being glazed. There was just one spot of bother when a roll of roofing felt fell onto a parked car and brought a claim for damages against the club.

But the possibility of completion by the end of the year receded as holidays arrived and the level of support from the membership dropped.

Most of the work was in the hands of a few "regulars" who at this stage included Ken Fuller, Ken Hill, Jack Young, Brian Shambrook, Graham Crocombe, Brian Saxton and Bill Miles. Brian Saxton was particularly useful because of his skill as a plasterer - and two years later he was still working hard at No. 93, creating the garden and forecourt. One plastering session involving Brian and Tich Shambrook was reckoned to be the most concentrated spell of work during the whole project: they kept going from mid-morning to 11.30 at night with hardly a break.

Derek Boon also made his mark with two year's hard labour which Ken Fuller said had slashed completion time. In 1972 he was awarded the Club's Gold Badge, not only for his work in Choumert Road but also for what he had done for the club in general over 25 years.

By March 1972 the kitchen area was ready for fitting-out, the main hall had been panelled and plastered, the staircase was in position and Ken Hill's muscle-power had dug a manhole-trench 6ft. deep and 6ft long. But Foreman Fuller was desperate for more skilled help: "I've had many a

sleepless Friday night wondering which job to give to whoever might turn up on a Saturday morning without tools or knowledge to carry out the work. It's the lads in the club who have some idea what building is all about that I'm now after. Surely with a club membership our size there must be someone?"

The skills Ken sought were provided by a professional plumber and a few club members, like Geoff Sinnott, Ted Jackson and Dave Tomlinson. Geoff provided and fixed many of the electrical fittings, and Ted - one of the club's oldest members - did the same with ceramic tiles in club colours. The blue tiles Ted fixed at the base of the shower cubicle had been bought by his grandfather before the first world war; the chocolate-brown ones belonged to his father and were almost as old.

Fixtures and fittings arrived through the generosity of other members, too: fifty stacking chairs from Dave Hughes and Bert Collins, a clock from Terry Deeley, cookers from Kav and Chip, a refrigerator from Roy Chittleborough, electrical equipment from Mark Ballamy and a huge photo-montage of members in action from John Barber.

Only the upstairs room remained to be finished-off when on the afternoon of Sunday, January 7th, 1973, Frank Holland joined a crowd of members, their families and friends, outside No. 93 to see Ken Fuller ceremoniously turn the key and open the door. It was five years almost to the day since Charlie Carlton first saw that notice in the window.

Nine months later - on Saturday, October 6th - the Mayor of Southwark (complete with mace-bearer) arrived for the official opening ceremony. He planted a tree in the forecourt, before joining the 130 members and other guests in a champagne toast to the De Laune Cycling Club. Frank Holland then formally proclaimed the memorial clubroom well and truly open. The day was rounded-off with the showing of Jack Young's film record of the building work-more than two years of sweated dedication. And a postscript to the clubroom story: on a Saturday morning towards the end of that October, Ken Hill and Jack Young looked through the partially-open venetian blinds in the upstairs lounge and saw a man acting suspiciously outside. Suddenly, he darted through the gate and made off with a large carton labelled "Oil heater for 93 Choumert Road." Ken Hill was off, too:

"Of course, silly like, I also moved a bit sharpish and shadowed him up Choumert Road into Rye Lane. He walked and walked until he reached the end of Rye Lane, where at last he came to a halt at a bus stop. On he hopped and into the space under the stairs reserved for loot, etc., he gently placed his precious carton. Looking all contented and cocky he seated himself near to the exit.

"What happened after that is anybody's guess. Was his wife surprised, or maybe his girlfriend? Or will he wait until Christmas and surprise everybody? If he does, it will pong, for the carton contained not an oil heater but a load of rubbish from the kitchen. Unhappy Christmas to you, Sir!"



*Tony Peachey*

### **TONY PEACHEY - THE COMPLETE ALL-ROUNDER**

There can be no argument about who has been the De Laune's most outstanding all-round time-triallist. It must be Tony Peachey. Some have gone faster at the shorter distances and others have been almost as good at the longer ones. But no one in the De Laune has matched his standard of consistent performance at all distances over a period of more than 30 years.

The editor of the DLN wrote of Tony as a newcomer in early 1952 as "Anthony Francis Peachey, who hails from Battersea. He's just 15 1/2 years of age, but nevertheless is keen on massed-start racing. We also look forward to seeing this enthusiastic young lad on many clubruns."

Second place in the Novices 25 of 1953 (1-11-48) made young Tony change his racing priorities, perhaps; but his enthusiasm for club life in general led to his being made vice-captain within a year of joining the club. It was the first of many jobs he was to take on - such as race organiser, four years as general secretary, and ten years as editor of the DLN (the last seven of them in partnership with his wife Val). Even when he took first-claim membership of the Southborough Wheelers for four years from 1978 he continued to bring out the DLN - as an honorary member of the De Laune.

The Peachey era didn't really start until Tony was in his thirties. He had earmarked 1970 for a comeback, but fell downstairs and broke a leg. Then he entered 1971 with a bang. In that year he

achieved a personal best "25" time of 58-07 and a record club BAR average of 24.288 - later improved to 25.623. He broke records with awesome regularity.

In 1973, he set new \*figures for ten, 25 and 50 miles, as well as 12 hours - and finished 20th in the BBAR competition. But he must have considered the highlight of that year was his victory in the Fred Peachey Memorial 25. The De Laune had five in the first ten in that event, and so took the team prize. In the Open 25 of 1974, it was Peachey first, Mick Hartley second - and the team again. And that was the year Tony organised the SCCU 100, lowered his own 50 record to 1-52-27 and finished 13th in the BBAR table - still the highest placing ever achieved by a member of the De Laune. The following year he bagged the record he most wanted: 4-07-19 in the Yorkshire Cycling Federation 100. Alan Rowe's great ride on a fixed wheel 15 years earlier had at last been eclipsed - by three minutes.

*\*Footnote: The records were 21-53, 55-36, 1-53-32 and 259 1/4 miles. The 25 time was lowered to 54-54 by Tim Hookins later in 1973. The 12 hr. distance was still unbeaten in the mid-eighties.*

From then on, Tony Peachey's name appeared regularly in the top 20 of the BBAR, and in his first year as a veteran (1976) he was the second-fastest vet. all-rounder in Britain.

"All rounder" is an apt description, because he was consistently turning out 22-minute "tens" and also figured prominently in a number of road races. His decision to make Southborough Wheelers his first-claim club in 1978 was a hard one. But he pointed out that his coaching and RTTC work was concentrated in the Wheelers' area and he'd been second-claim for them for 13 years. The switch also enabled him to team-up with Peter Croft in a record-breaking tandem partnership which brought the national competition 25 time down to 50-24. In the Southborough colours he also rode 449.818 miles in the National Championship 24 of 1979, after a year dogged by injury and illness.

From 1982 Tony was racing first-claim for the De Laune again - and both he and Val ("the Peach") were made life members. Tony celebrated by winning the club championship 25 in an event record of 57-41 and stayed as fast as ever at the other distances (1-51-53, 4-09-00, 253.29). In 1983 he made another successful foray into Yorkshire for a record 1-50-57 in the Otley CC 50 and a month later pushed his 100-mile time down to 4-06-00.

Tony also found time that year to complete a sponsored cycle ride..... from Lands End to Maidstone, all at one go. The trip came about when the Peacheys were asked by a group of policemen to help them on their four-day ride from Lands End to police headquarters in Maidstone in aid of the British Heart Foundation. Val gave them some coaching and training advice, and Tony volunteered to make the journey himself - but in one day, not four.

So Tony Val and young Claire Peachey drove down to Cornwall and Tony set off to ride over 350 miles against the wind. He was sustained during the night-time hours through Devon and Somerset by Val's special honey-treacle-and-sultana cake, while Claire slept soundly in the back of the car, clutching various teddies. A pity, really, because she missed seeing A vivid display of shooting stars - a meteorite breaking up as it entered the earth's atmosphere. But towards dawn, even heavenly atmospheric couldn't raise flagging morale:

"Our spirits were low around Winchester - plenty of time left, holding our 17 mph schedule well, but tiredness was creeping in and still over 100 miles to go, some hilly towards the end. We bolstered each other up by thinking 250 miles were in fact behind us and dawn shouldn't be too far away. After more coffee and cake Tony pushed away, reaching Farnham at dawn. Another stop for breakfast, a wash and change into the third skin-suit in De Laune colours, saved for the run-in. This made life more bearable as the end was in sight.

"We were coming into home ground. At the start of the Shere by-pass - is that a familiar face? Yes, George and May with sponges and cheers of encouragement just where the lift was needed. Through Dorking and another face - Beefy Russell, although not able to give a sponge, was cheering his heart out and clapping Tony on.

"Reigate encountered and Redhill negotiated and another sponge at the top of the hill from Allan Furze and Janis Rogers, his daughter. This was marvellous: just when spirits were ebbing, support came. Allan and Janis appeared again at Godstone; George and May stayed with us until the end. What a grand club spirit we have! Just to cap it all one of our friends,

Peter Baker, who rides for the San Fairy Ann, came out on his bike to ride with Tony over the closing miles from Wrotham.

"We completed the journey marginally up on schedule very very tired but acclaimed and welcomed by a crowd of approximately 20 to 25 thousand people at the police headquarters - the whole venture being part of the Open Day celebrations. Everything seemed worthwhile when a young couple came up to us and thanked us for our efforts. 'These are the kind of people you have helped,' they said, bringing in their five-year-old son - still in a push chair having had two major heart operations already in his short life.

"For the record, Tony's time was 19 hours 28 minutes 34 seconds. The fastest pair of 'coppers' recorded 23 hours 24 seconds spread over 4 1/2 days - but all of them made it safely albeit a little sore in places unmentionable."

A foot operation at the beginning of 1984 had little effect on the Peachey Progress. He bought a low-profile bike (not that his hair or body provided much wind-resistance) and ended the season 42nd in the BBAR table with 1-54-28, 4-04-31 (yet another club record) and 244.258.

## THE PHENOMENAL VETS

The national preference for shorter-distance time-trials - strengthened by the introduction of ten-mile events in the 'sixties - continued to be reflected among the De Laune membership. In the 1974 season the club's 50, 100 and 12-hour trophies were not competed for a fact that made the time-trial secretary, John Double, wonder if it was worth running any club events at all. In 1977, Tony Peachey pointed out that for three seasons he and John Geoghegan had been the only club riders who had finished a time-trial at any distance of more than 60 miles. But in the 'eighties he had the support of fellow-veterans like Peter Gunnell and Alec Bedford - and with them missed the 1983 national vets' team title by a mere half -a-mile-an-hour. These three also rode the North Midlands 12-hour in that year determined to update the Club's 30-year-old team record - and missed it by an agonisingly short half a-mile. (Tony made his sponsored ride from Lands End the following weekend.)

They were typical products of a modern cycling phenomenon. Men in their thirties and forties whose family responsibilities had lessened returned to the sport instead of vegetating. Roy Savery made a second comeback in 1971 and was soon "flying around" fast enough to win the club 30. A few months later John Kavanagh was back in action, and took the De Laune Challenge Bowl for a ninth time in 1972 - eight years after his previous win. In 1974 he brought his 25 time down to 55-01. That same year, Ken Fuller reminded himself of what it was like to suffer; and in 1978 Peter Gunnell got into the saddle for the first time in 25 years. Pete discovered there'd been a lot of changes since he last rode a time-trial. Nearly everyone now travelled to and from events by car, and lightweight equipment of all kinds was readily available - if you had the money:

"On re-equipping my machine, which had been carefully stored in the loft, I quickly decided after seeing various price-lists to settle for a re-spray of my 30-year-old frame and forks - stripped-down frame-weight 4 1/2 lbs., forks 1lb.12oz.

"Gears were a problem since I had never ridden a freewheel, being a confirmed time-trial rider. However, my wife Pat had bought me for Christmas 1953 a Sturmey-Archer 3-speed fixed hub gear which had been built into an H.P rim and fitted to the bike but never ridden. This marvellous hub gear is now in my racing wheel and has been used throughout the last season (1978). Sprints, a nice light pair of tubs, cotterless alloy chainset and a new B17 completed the re-equipping. With people like me around it must be hell in the cycle trade for people like Reg. Barnett!"

In his first year back, at the age of 49, Pete won the OMA ten and the vets' trophy which had just been presented by Ken Fuller. He went on to improve at all distances, was club time-trial champion in 1979 and was still "training like stink" in the mid-eighties, determined not to let hip trouble get the better of him.

Some of the De Laune's fast-peddalling vets have shown that cycling and running can mix successfully. John Geoghegan, John Kavanagh, Roy Savery, Brian Saxton and Mike Peel discovered the right combination of muscle-power - in fact John Geoghegan was a member of the winning team in the World Veteran Marathon Championships in Coventry in 1976 and won his section of the national championships in 1981 in 2hr.30min., which was second fastest overall. On a more mundane level he consistently led the De Laune to team victories in the annual Belle Vue Cyclists Run from 1959 into the 'eighties. Of the 200 runners in the 1979 event, 13 were from the De Laune. George Starsmeare was one of those cheering them on over the five-mile course:

"Fiona came by at one lap holding her side. 'Stitch' she gasped. Just keep on running and it will go' - advice, as always, was readily at hand from the onlookers. Fiona went on and I suppose the pain must have gone. Then we had Nicky Pyne with just under a lap to go easing to a stop and suggesting that enough was enough! Bad luck for him that he stopped in front of Dad: 'Get back there, lad,' or words to that effect. So he did.

"Along came Richard Lee at the same spot, not looking particularly as if he was enjoying himself. He broke gently from a mild gallop to a dead slow walk - again it was rather unfortunate that a gaggle of De Laune spectators were about..... He went on!

"Meanwhile our strong lads were making strides towards the front of the field and they did look strong: no faltering of step, just determined running in the right direction, passing runner

after runner. What a glorious sight it was. What a wonderful day for the club. In the changing room afterwards I heard a chap from another club saying with utter disbelief in his voice: 'The De Laune have got five in the first fourteen!'

"We were elated. Ken Hill was dancing about like a two-year-old. And the Top Five (Geoghegan, Savery, Peel, Alan Starsmeare, Kavanagh) vowed that next year they would do even better!"

All the De Laune's veteran runners have taken part in the London marathons of recent years and Mike Peel has guided a blind man over the course.

## THE YOUNG PRETENDERS

At the shorter time-trial distances, Tony Peachey certainly didn't have things all his own way. Competition among De Laune members was intense, and speeds consequently higher. Len Double won the club's Open 25 in 1975 with a personal best of 58-13 and beat competition record-holder Alf Engers in the process. That event was held on the newly-completed Tonbridge/Sevenoaks by-pass - the ski-slope course which was to produce exceptional ten-mile times in subsequent years. Len's elder brother John also turned a nifty pedal and Mick Valentine followed the Peachey example and got inside two hours for a "50."

Tim Hookins, essentially a roadman, dabbled in time-trials to good effect and held the club's 25 record for a while - piping Tony Peachey with 54-54. But the short-distance master of them all was Mick Hartley, who joined the club in 1973 and was soon piling up successes in club and open events. He won six "25" championships between 1973 and 1981 and put his name in the club record books with 21-24 (1981) and 54-49 (1978).

The 'seventies also saw the emergence of yet another De Laune racing prodigy. A junior called Anthony James was said to be "doing well" at the start of the 1971 season and four years later - better known as Tony James - was riding in the world pursuit championships.

Tony had soon established himself as easily the best of the De Laune's juniors on road and track, and was a short-marker in his first time-trial season. He was described as "the Prince of Criteriums" - Reg. Barnett being the King; and he was well regarded at cyclo-cross, using skills acquired along the traditional De Laune route of many muddy clubruns.

In 1972, Tony came a good second in the national junior pursuit championship, many miles from home at the Kirkby Stadium in Liverpool and the following year finished seventh in the European junior 3000-metre pursuit championships on the Olympic track at Munich - in a record British junior time of 3-46.17.

In the succeeding years he was dominant in most of his road and track races at home: London 4000-metres pursuit champion, 1974-5..... on the Olympics short-list (with Tim Hookins)..... international selection in 1975..... off to a "whirlwind start" in 1977 road races..... then resignation from the De Laune in the spring for what he called purely personal reasons. As he put it: "I feel it would be in my best interests to join another club."

Tony eventually turned professional, but retained his associations with the De Laune and in 1983 became an honorary member.

Tony James was only one of a number of De Laune riders on road and track who were pleasing the crowds in the 'seventies. Richard Portanier, for instance, was a force to be reckoned with in all local events and was the club's senior road racing champion six years in a row. And Len Double developed as a rider, who was "a joy to watch" in all aspects of the sport: he won the club's 25-mile championship three times and played a prominent part in the De Laune's track successes.

The Portanier-Hookins-James-Double combination which took the silver team-pursuit medals in the All-London track championships of 1974 impressed one elderly spectator so much that he pressed a £5 note into Ken Hill's hand and said: "Please share this little gift with the four lads of your club who put up such a tremendous show."

Later in 1974 the De Laune's young team of Hookins, James, Double and Steve White travelled to Leicester for the national track championships and did their trainer Roy Savery proud by coming fourth in the pursuit. Rick Portanier had had to drop out at the last moment because his bike had been stolen - but the up-and-coming Steve White was an able substitute. Ken Hill labelled Steve "the White Tornado" after a series of outstanding rides in road races - such as three consecutive first-places in 1977.

As a junior he represented Britain in international cyclo-cross - and won a reputation as a rider who always finished in immaculate style no matter how deep the mud. It was a reputation he carried over to track racing. After he had ridden with Steve Valentine, Peter Must and Frank Vella in the 1975

national championships at Leicester, Harry James (Tony's father) commented: "Our pursuit team were a credit to the club. Even though they did not win a medal with their riding, their personal turnout was the talk of the spectators. They even had club colours on their crash-hats."

Frank Vella had made a late burst onto the track scene in 1975 and was the club's five-mile champion in 1978-79-80. What he lacked in elegance he made up for in effort, and in later years it was noted that he was "flogging it out to the last gasp" on the road-racing circuits at Crystal Palace and Eastway.

It was on these two sweat-soaked London circuits in the late 'seventies that two De Laune schoolboy brothers, Simon and Richard Lee, first showed their racing potential. They were Herne Hill favourites, too; and in 1979 Richard won the Under-15 English Schools sprint championship at Coventry. Another of the Lee family - Nigel - became the youngest De Laune member to win a national title when he was fastest of the under-13s in the English Schools C.A. hill-climb championship of 1979. Richard was second in the under-15s.

As interest in road and track racing increased in the 'sixties and 'seventies the title "Club Best All-Rounder" became more of an anachronism, because it applied only to time-trials. So from 1975 - partly for this reason and partly to encourage support for club events - the competition was decided by performances in a combination of club time-trials, the open road race, the five-mile track championship and the open cyclo-cross event. The man who threatened to make the new title his own was Mick Valentine, who took it for four years in succession from 1978. Time-trial consistency and what someone described as an ability to "flog it out" (like Frank Vella on the tracks and circuits) kept him on top. In 1971 he had regained the one-mile standing-start track record taken from him by Richard Portanier - with a time of 2-12-4.

***DLN: June 1978***

*A person went into Les Pyne's shop in Waterloo Road with a padlocked bike over his shoulder, asking Les to cut the chain as he had lost the key. The bike was a smart-looking Peugeot racing machine and the "rider" said he had bought it somewhere in the West End. Les became suspicious, knowing there were no bike shops in the West End and sent him packing - telling him to go to the nearest police station to get the chain cut. When he left the shop Les telephoned the police, who were on to him before he had time to walk more than half-a-mile from his shop.*

## **VOTES FOR WOMEN!**

Thursday, February 26th, 1976, is probably not a date marked indelibly on the minds of De Laune members - but it ought to be. It was on that day, by 27 votes to 7, that club membership was declared open to women. "And why on earth not?" is the question which might well be asked, now that women have been naturally and easily assimilated into the De Laune fold. But it was only by persistent pressure that the pro-feminists won the day over those who thought "Gentlemen Only" gave the De Laune an edge over other clubs.

After the 1969 vote against women's membership, the issue next came up at the 1973 AGM, when a single terse sentence was written in the minutes: "Items 9 and 10 - propositions lost with only nine votes in favour." Still, that was four more than in 1969. In 1974 the voting was 13-34. The diehards were in retreat.

Tony Peachey wondered why some were adopting a Victorian attitude when mums, wives and girl-friends did such valuable work for the club. But Derek Boon didn't see why they should be made to pay subs for the help they offered; and Ken Hill suggested women should be allowed in free - as social or guest members.

At the 1975 AGM the writing was on the wall: 25 voted for women's membership and 23 against - but the two-thirds majority rule prevented its going through. Twelve months later, on that Thursday, February 26th, 1976, history was made by the 38 members gathered at No.93 Choumert Road. They may have represented less than a third of club membership, but 27 said "Yes" and only seven said "No". So after 87 years women were allowed to enter into all the club's activities, and not confine themselves to the kitchen and marshalling-points. Derek Boon was the successful proposer of the motion, and explained his apparent change of heart by saying that some of the women had told him they not only wanted to help the club but wanted to have a say in how that help should be used.

Within a month, Val Peachey had become the De Laune's first woman member - though only as an honorary one, because she was still first-claim for the Southborough Wheelers. It was appropriate that she should be No.1 because she was already playing an active part in the De Laune scene. It wasn't long before she was co-editing the DLN with her husband, partnering him in tandem time-trials (58-21 won them the "fastest mixed" prize in the Lea Valley tandem 25 of 1977), and taking the ladies award in the De Laune Open 25 of 1976. The fact that she was the only female rider is irrelevant. As someone said of her a couple of years later: "She has given me a fright in a few 'tens' I can tell you, and by her times has put a few of the lads to shame. How she finds time I don't know, what with her daughter Claire, the home, studies, and editing the Southborough magazine as well as our own."

Dot Fuller (the Canteen Queen) and Maureen Jackson followed Val Peachey in November, 1976 - as ordinary members; and by 1979 the De Laune's female membership was in double figures.

What some of the men may not have foreseen was the enthusiasm for racing which some of them showed. Linda Starsmeare was the first girl to ride competitively in De Laune colours - in 1978 - and with her schoolgirl sister Fiona was showing steady improvement on the closed racing circuits in 1979. (Fiona also took up road racing as soon as she was old enough in 1982.)

They were later joined by their cousin Suzanne, Suzanne Fuller and Janet Smith, who all proved that men had nothing on them when it came to upholding the De Laune's reputation, whether on road or track. In time-trials, Janet was leading the way in the 'eighties with a 24-minute "ten", a 1-02 "25" and a 2-26 "50". But the two Suzannes were never far behind. With Janet they formed the first De Laune team to ride in an RTTC Women's Championship: all three did a "26" in the National "ten" of 1984.

As if to rub salt into male wounds, in 1984 Janet Smith became the first woman to win a club trophy which was open for competition by both sexes - the Novices Memorial Shield.

By the late 'eighties there were further female reinforcements - enough to ensure a regular De Laune presence in championship time-trials and a strong team in four-up events. And the track boys were joined by the girls in their "nationals." It was the same on the organisational side - with Yvonne Starsmeare running the club's Herne Hill promotions.

By 1985 it seemed quite natural that Claire Peachey should take up time-trialling with the club as soon as she reached her 12th birthday. In 1986, she stoked her father to a 22-19 in a tandem "ten" and was fast enough to qualify for the RTTC schoolgirls' championship.

It was then being said in the DLN that "of all the riders in our club at the moment, it is ladies who seem to be nearest to gaining national honours of making the national squad."

Remember what was said by the panel of experts in 1962 about the "demoralising effect on male riders of nicely-turned-out young females"?

## **CLUBRUN CAPERS**

The De Laune broke with tradition at the end of 1969 by deciding that The Windmill, on Clapham Common, was no longer suitable as a clubrun starting-point. It has been the club's meeting place for nearly 50 years, but most members now lived some way from it. So club captains were told to start their runs from wherever was most convenient on the day. Richard McFarlane, leader of the De Laune mudlarks in the mid-'seventies had some advice for new members:

"To go on a clubrun you need several things: firstly a hack iron, that consists of one of those racing frames that has survived just about every possible torture during its ten or more years of life; a pair of buckled wheels, less a spoke or two; and any other bits and pieces one cares to bolt to it. The second item is fitness to ride up any obstacle en route, and the ability to take a mud-bath when necessary. To be able to track-stand is a great help, for when riding into a head-wind we go so slow that even the youngest club member should keep up with us."

One new member tempted by Richard's offer of good dirty fun was a keen cyclist called Dave Jones. He must have been keen because he was riding 20 miles each way to work on most days; but his wife obviously didn't understand him:

"The first Sunday Dave ventured out with us was the freewheel contest and he had promised his wife he would be home in time for lunch. After a few pints in 'The Bell' Dave arrived home for lunch about four o'clock. His wife produced his meal from the oven and in one swift move deposited the lot in the pedal bin. Hard luck, Dave! "

There were other, more serious dangers, of course. Jack Young was one of four members to go crashing to the ground when descending an icy hill in the winter of 1973. Three got away with bruises - Jack was out of action for many weeks with a fractured hip-bone.

Sometimes things didn't go well in the good weather, either. An invitation run to Cudham in the spring of 1979 as part of the 90th anniversary celebrations was enjoyable in itself - warm sunshine, beautiful countryside, woods full of bluebells - but there were no fresh faces and only five members turned up for the lunch in the clubroom organised for 50 or 60.

Normal clubruns remained mainly winter affairs, because so many of the racing men (and women!) were otherwise occupied in the spring and summer, Clubrun atmosphere had changed over the years - and not for the better, according to some. One man complained that there were too many sprint primes, not only for village signs but for telegraph poles, drain-covers and squashed beer-cans. In the autumn of 1979, road-race Champion Alan Starsmeare tried to separate the fit from the flabby by urging his young fellow-enthusiasts to dig out their long-johns and woolly halt end join him in a regular series of long-distance hardriders' clubruns - anything from 80 miles upwards. Fred Leckie would have been proud of him.

Alan and Terry Deeley successfully revived the tradition of riding to the Newnham service in 1978 - and in 1979 a small party of hardriders followed in their tyre tracks. It was at that 1979 wreath-laying ceremony that the club (through Chip) made a presentation to the retiring Vicar of Newnham, the Rev. Veazey, who had conducted the remembrance service for more than 20 years.

The men who kept the clubruns going in the late 'seventies was Jim Gregory, who took on the captain's job as a relatively new member. He, too was involved in the renewal of a tradition in 1979: he was the first to be presented with a replica of the outsize club badge which belonged to the De Laune's first captain, Charlie Southon. Charlie had bequeathed the original badge to the club when he died in 1947 and it was worn by each succeeding club captain until 1964, when it disappeared. In 1970 someone noticed an oversized De Laune badge on the trophy of the South London Cyclists' Darts League, and there were cries of "Give us our badge back!" Sad to say, it wasn't the Southon badge - just a copy given to the league way back in 1951 to accompany badges from other clubs. So the De Laune had to wait until 1979 for the traditional presentation of the captain's badge to be renewed - with Jim Gregory on the receiving end.

## **BULLSEYES, BOILERS AND BALLERINAS**

Darts had for long formed an important part of the De Laune's winter activities, though some of the players were not often seen on bikes. The club's team met varying success in the South London

League, first under the direction of Reg Dawkins, and then Malcolm Adams. At times they had to press into service members whose reputations were based on the power of their legs rather than co-ordination of eye and wrist. One such was the hundred-mile wonder, Alan Rowe, generally acknowledged to be a hopeless dart-thrower. He was told "161 to win" and in an inspired ten seconds scored triple 17, triple 20 and (needing a bull's-eye) 25. Such a magnificent failure deserves a place in a history book.

The 'seventies seem to have been a vintage De Laune darts decade. The club won the Belle Vue Knockout Cup in 1972 after a semi-final against the Norwood Paragon which inspired such tension that one man complained he couldn't lift his pint in case he spilt some of it. Victory in the final at the Hope and Anchor in Acre Lane, Brixton, was just as nail-biting because the De Laune (as usual) had to come from being 3-1 down.

This success inspired the formation of a second club team. Unkind suggestions that it should be called De Laundrette were dismissed in favour of The Choumert. It finished its first season at the bottom of the league; but the captain of the real De Laune team, Malcolm Adams, redeemed the club's good name in 1975 by winning the league's individual championship for the second time in six years.

The club's other non-cycling activities continued apace. Annual dinners not only grew in popularity (a record 295 sat down at the Surrey Tavern in 1973) but changed, too, as Bill Miles noted in 1972:

"The Ron Gibson Quartette had a different style of playing. Gone were the traditional waltzes and foxtrots; they were replaced with a Top of the Pops style. For this, you interpret the music in your own particular way on the spot. Strange thing is, it appears to appeal to both young and old."

The De Laune appealed to the very young in good measure in January, 1977, by holding a children's Christmas party in the clubroom. It was a highly popular event, registering high marks on the shrieks-and-eats scale. Roy Savery and Kav disguised themselves as clowns, and after the jelly trifles Father Christmas appeared with a sack of goodies.

Disguises were also the thing at the New Year's Eve fancy-dress party which got the 90th anniversary celebrations off to a good start in 1979. President Chip was a magician and Derek Boon the spitting image of Max Wall, but the vote for sheer originality went to Terry Deeley, as a Potterton boiler. For a trencherman like Terry the costume had grave disadvantages: the pipes and valves got in the way of eating and drinking.

Later that year Les Pyne and his team organised the De Laune's first appearance at the Brockwell Country Fair in Lambeth - Les called it "taking the De Laune to the public." Terry Deeley and Alan Starsmeare went to Paris to bring back a message for the Mayor of Lambeth from Vincennes, Lambeth's twin suburb, while others prepared for the Big Day in the park. Roller-racing was the De Laune's main attraction, with Fiona Starsmeare billed as "the Ballerina of the Rollers". It all brought in £160 for the British Home and Hospital for Incurables.

Les Pyne's consistent work on the De Laune's social side - and for the OMA - was recognised in 1985 by the award of the club's Gold Badge.

## **INTO THE 'EIGHTIES - MINUS CHIP**

Although club membership flagged in the 'seventies - it was down to 110 at the end of 1976 - the signs for the 'eighties were good. Enthusiasm and potential talent in all forms of racing were there, and the De Laune expanded its involvement in the promotional side despite constant worries that too many jobs were dependent on too few people. A Saturday afternoon "ten" was added to the Open time-trial programme; an Open road race became an annual event; and from 1981 the De Laune name became associated with the promotion of circuit races at Eastway as well as Crystal Palace.

In 1977 Ken Fuller inspired the first of a series of inter-club events with the 34th Nomads, Sydenham Wheelers and the Catford C.C. ("De 34 Sydcats" ) and Ken Hill organised an inter-club track meeting at Herne Hill. There was even an inter-club social - a Riverboat Shuffle up and down the Thames under the direction of Cap'n Dave Tomlinson. And poverty-stricken schoolboys who joined clubruns in 1977 were offered a free cup of tea and a bun. No wonder membership began to revive.

Ken Fuller was then in the middle of his four-year stint as general secretary - four years which earned him a unique club double. In 1979 he was awarded for a second time the Silverdale Shield - the trophy presented each year to a member who has worked for the benefit of the club. He first won it in 1963. There was recognition, too, for others who had served the club well. Stan Endean was made a life member in 1976 and George Stubbs and Ted Jackson were similarly honoured (with Bill Miles) the following year. George and Ted were veterans of the 'twenties. George the enthusiastic tourist joined in 1920 and Ted the racing man was introduced to the club by his father ("Old Man Jackson") in 1923.

Ted was general secretary for two years and in 1929 was " 25" champion and best all-rounder - in addition to his trackwork. On the death of George Stubbs in 1983, Ted became the club's oldest member - so it was fitting that when he and Hilda Jackson celebrated their golden wedding in June, 1984, the club should mark the occasion with a surprise party in the clubroom.

At the annual dinner later in 1984, three more joined the list of life-members: Mark Ballamy (then serving his term as President), George Wood the backroom boy and John Giles - who had followed in his father's footsteps, as Ted Jackson had done.

But the 'eighties delivered a bitter blow. Chip died from a heart attack in January, 1981, as he was returning home from one of his many activities. He was 64. Only three months earlier his many friends had helped him and Daphne celebrate their silver wedding anniversary. The tributes poured in: "Ever jovial, friendly and generous..... Always full of the joy of living, and a ready sense of humour..... A very good friend..... A great man, impossible to replace." Ken Hill wrote of the "great empty space" Chip's death had left, not only in the club but in the business and cycling worlds:

"On hearing of Chip's passing it seemed as if a huge boulder had crossed my and our club's path, so much was I and many long-serving club members counting on his guidance and help during the next eight short years, leading to our club's centenary year in 1989. Only the day before Chip's sad end, he and I had a long chat on the problems and obstacles we are bound to stumble on as the years come and go.

"The fun and friendship acquired by myself and others from great continental cycling tours and countless clubruns with 'spring-heeled' Chip are now in the past. Countless meetings have I attended with and without the 'wise man' but whenever he did attend I felt instantly at ease, for in Chip we had a past-master at conducting gatherings. He knew when to speak and vice versa - a great speaker, sincere, honest, never ruffled, not even excited; just a cook thinking head which has been of immense value to the De Laune over many years.

"He was a super ambassador for our sport and pastime of cycling - without doubt a truly great English gentleman, the loss of whom has cast its shadow. Let us who remain work in harmony and friendship as did our beloved Chip and in so doing perpetuate his name."

While Chip was club President in 1977 he had outlined his philosophy in a DLN article which was also intended to stir young members of the club into action.

"I believe we all have a duty to contribute to life to the limit of our ability and talents. I also believe we should not hesitate to grasp every opportunity to play an active rather than a

passive part, and thus help develop those talents wherewith we are blessed. Only so can we fit ourselves to take greater opportunities which may later arise, and avoid the eventual disappointments and frustrations of 'what might have been.'

"An important function of clubs such as ours is to give young members opportunities to gain experience in organising and working with and for others. That I have been successful in business, granted the King's Commission in the last war, elected President of the British Cycling Federation and had the privilege of acting as host to Prince Philip, the Prime Minister etc., is largely thanks to the opportunities and experience gained in my 'teens and early twenties as General Secretary in the De Laune and in organising long-distance events, record attempts etc. It's no use waiting until your forties to gain such experience - just have a go now!"

Daphne Chippendale was too immersed in the cycling world to drift away from the De Laune after Chip died. She retained her active interest in the club and so kept his memory fresh in the minds of his contemporaries.

## **SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW.....**

The 'eighties brought changes in style, emphasis and atmosphere. Frank Holland would hardly have allowed Terry Deeley's typically tongue-in-cheek account of a 1982 clubrun to appear in *his* DLN:

"First clubrun of the season, starting as usual from Crystal Palace, had a turn-out of 14 riders plus a few hangers-on. Andrew Castle doing the honours this year, selecting a short ride to Edenbrige. We were about to start when Glen Heath spotted what he termed a young floozie standing by her bike. It was decided that Andrew, being club captain should do the chatting up.

"Now all you have to do," he said, "is to swagger up and give her some polished chat." Off he went with what looked like more of a stagger than a swagger, balancing on his shoe-plates. Looking her straight in the eye he said: "Ere, you look like a tasty tart, fancy a giggle down the by-pass?"

"Wouldn't mind," she said, walking over to our party. Glen Heath, obviously taking a fancy to her, said: "What's your tag then doll?" "Suzanne Fuller," she replied, settling in beside Richard Lee. I asked Andrew where he got that polished bit of chat from: "Oh, I got that from Bill Miles - that's how he picked up Doreen."

But some things hardly changed - like the annual run to Newnham. Pile-ups and punctures were as common as they were 50 years earlier. "Bring lights, sandwiches, train fare and beer money" was the captain's percipient advice to those planning to ride to Newnham and back in 1983. He obviously still bore the scars of 1982:

"My first Newnham run as skipper and I was also a bit worried about the distance, but thought that with 11 of us we can't go wrong. However, we had only reached the top of Polhill when Terry decided it was too far so Ken Fuller took him to the train, station. (Then there were nine.)

"Sue and Richard were next to turn back, just past Wrotham. (Then there were seven.) I was just thinking seven out of eleven was not bad when, at Maidstone, Gary thought he saw one of his long-lost training shoes in the roadside. In the excitement he jumped off without stopping; luckily the pavement broke his fall but he wrote off his front wheel and his knees and elbows were as red as his bank balance.

"It was the age of the train for Gary and we managed to prise open Glen's wallet to lend him the fare - the alarm waking half of Maidstone. (Then there were six.)

"The journey continued with the skipper leading the way up Hollingbourne as expected, but the gradient proved too much for Kevin on his heavy old iron and he had to dismount. By this time it was 12 o'clock and Glen got the shakes as the pubs were open and he didn't have a drink in his hand. We arrived at Newnham at 12.30 with the Skipper taking the sign on his way through.

"A few beers and a chat, a few beers and some food, a few beers and a look at the map and finally a few beers for the road. We staggered out of The George at two o'clock leaving Nick Pyne to come home by car. (Then there were five.) Alan's luck ran out when he punctured near Offham - and then there were four. The rest of us rode back into the wind and rain to arrive home soaking wet and tired around six o'clock. The Newnham run was over for another year."

Of course, the beer wasn't the main reason why the gallant 11 (or nine, or seven.....) defied wind and rain in an effort to reach Newnham: it was to join other club members in the traditional service to honour their dead and see President Ken Hill lay a wreath at the memorial plaque. In the words of one veteran: "As on every such occasion as this, there is very little that is tangible to offer. We go to show respect and acknowledge the great debt. After all, it is seldom that acknowledging a debt stirs us, but somehow this occasion really does. Each of us who knew those whose names were read out knows that but for the grace of God his name could have been included."

Two years later, in 1984, the club was lucky to be able to place a poppy wreath at the foot of the plaque. None of the florists asked to provide one could do so; but Stan Endean responded to the cry for help by calling-in at the British Legion poppy factory near his home in Richmond. They made-up a wreath in 15 minutes, and Stan took it with him to Newnham.

Stan Endean is yet another example of the many veterans whose steadfast loyalty to the De Laune has been maintained long after their clubrun and racing days have ended. He was presented with the club's Gold Badge of Honour in 1986, after his long stint as auditor had been extended for yet another year.

At that same A.G.M., Jack Young was re-elected treasurer - a job he'd had for more than 20 years, even though he lives outside the London area.

Then there's Derek Boon, who doesn't even own a bike but would be greatly missed if he gave up being "property steward and keeper of the club silver", Eddie Starsmeare, who took over the general secretary's job from Ken Fuller in 1980; Dave Hughes, long-serving event-organiser, handicapper and timekeeper; and, of course, Ken Hill - member since 1932 and an ever-present in the clubroom.

One of Ken's preoccupations in the pre-centenary years has been the "Mile of coins" which he started in 1980 as a way of raising money for the 1989 celebrations. The mile was reached at the end of 1985: it was made up of 77,821 coins of varied denominations worth £1,001.68p - all contributed as a result of Ken's persuasive powers.

The Old Members' Association has been a key factor in keeping the De Laune's golden oldies together. It's almost a club within a club. By holding its own social events it has been able to create the right kind of atmosphere for the swapping of yarns. A flavour of that atmosphere is contained in an account of an O.M.A. supper in January, 1982, by Ken and Dot Fuller's daughter Suzanne - one of the young members who gave a helping hand. The clubroom was beautifully decorated; each table was bright with candlelight and flowers; and there was food, food, food:

"At 7pm the members began to arrive, greeted by our ever-present President Ken, with a massive grin on his face (he'd been into the food already!). There was a glass of sherry for everyone as they arrived..... The room started to fill up, and it was nice to see everyone talking, laughing and meeting old friends.

"During the meal cross-toasts took place - it was, I imagine, like a club dinner of years gone by, with most of the old members present, including the oldest, George Stubbs, whom it was lovely to see, along with his wife. It is hard to believe that the club has kept together for so long, but there are members of all ages to prove it. There were at this supper those who have been in the De Laune from ten years (which qualifies them as old members) to over 50 years.

"The youngest present - would you believe - was Terry Deeley, who was really enjoying himself. I seem to remember that he had two bowls of soup, double helpings of dinner and - as far as I could count - five puddings!

"Later in the evening we had some presentations by Jack Young and Ken Hill of the Life Membership certificates to Bill Miles, Stan Endean, Ted Jackson and George Stubbs..... and George recalled his first run with the club.

"I had time afterwards to talk to various people and they all said how much they had enjoyed the evening - especially Ken the President, who was by then on his twelfth glass of something or other and trying to get everyone to contribute to his mile of money for the club centenary. I thought it was a wonderful evening to see all those old members together. It made me realise what a marvellous club I belong to, being with some of the members who have helped to make our club such a success for so long."

At the 1986 O.M.A. supper, Les Pyne went from table to table with a microphone to record snatches of conversation and comment - and sent the recordings to members living abroad, like Wally Fraser in New Zealand, John Darroch in the United States, and Monty Watkins in Australia. Wally Fraser, in particular, took great pleasure in hearing the voices of so many people he remembered from his

racing days. A stroke some years earlier left him without the power to read or write, or to speak or walk properly; but his memories of his days with the De Laune remained as bright as ever.

The De Laune's younger vets were at the forefront of the club's long-distance time-trial efforts throughout the 'eighties. And Kevin Winstain was enjoying an Indian summer, getting under the hour at 25 miles and earning himself and the club a glimpse of glory by winning the GLC veterans' championship on the Crystal Palace circuit in 1984. (All right, he was second across the line, but the other rider was disqualified.)

Younger legs were thrashing around to good effect, even though there was no firm evidence that a new Jackson, Barnett or James was about to emerge. Richard Lee was the leading sprinter on road and track until he left the club in 1986; Andy Castle and Alan Dent (the junior half of yet another De Laune father-and-son combination) were rivalling each other in the shorter distance time-trials; and in 1986 one of several enthusiastic schoolboy recruits - Paul Davies - did his club proud at Crystal Palace when he won the divisional juvenile circuit championship. Paul's elder brother John was the club's best all-rounder in 1985 in succession to Roger Hargreaves, outright winner of the original trophy donated by Chip with three consecutive championships. (That trophy, and the Alf Baldwin "50" Cup, were stolen in 1985.)

In the winter months there was a new-found enthusiasm for roller-racing, which had been all the rage in the cycling world of the 'fifties. The De Laune combination of youth and experience brought an inter-club championship in 1985/6.

### **1889 - 1989: MUCH THE SAME, ONLY DIFFERENT**

As the De Laune approached its centenary it was making an even greater contribution to every aspect of cycle-sport. Time-trials, road and circuit races and track meetings were all part of its open promotions; and there was an annual De Laune road race for women, initiated by George Starsmeare in 1983. The De Laune News - revamped by its latest editor, Peter Harris - continued to forge the link between juniors and veterans which has given the club its strength.

Those founder-members who trundled round Clapham Common in 1889 might well have mixed-feelings about the way their infant has grown and developed. They would wonder at the lightweight bikes and wince at the multi-coloured clothing; they would envy the smoothness of the roads and be appalled by the motor traffic on them; they'd be surprised by the presence of women but pleased by the changes it brought about; they would gasp at the speed of the racing men and regret the decline of the clubrun; they would ask what had happened to their garden parties and be dismayed by the discos.

But the present-day pleasure of a spring-morning ride through the lanes was theirs, too; they felt the same satisfaction in mastering wind and rain; they felt the same warmth of companionship and the keen edge of competition; and there's nothing new about the pain of the racing masochist.

So as today's De Launeites turn the pedals round, they can be pretty sure that Charlie Southon, Charlie Errington and Harry Hart (not to mention Arthur Williams and Will Westlake) are up there somewhere, smiling their approval. But it would be quite appropriate - when they are next in the City of London if they were to pay a visit to the Apothecaries Hall, in Blackfriars, and give the bust of Gideon Delaune a pat on the head. After all, if it hadn't been for him there would never have been a De Laune Cycling Club.



*Alan Jackson, Dave Tweddell Dennis Tarr. Isle of Man 1957. 10 mile Mountain Trial*



*John Darroch, A. Wasson, Alan Jackson, Herne Hill 1953*



*Ken Fuller, National Cyclo-cross 1961*



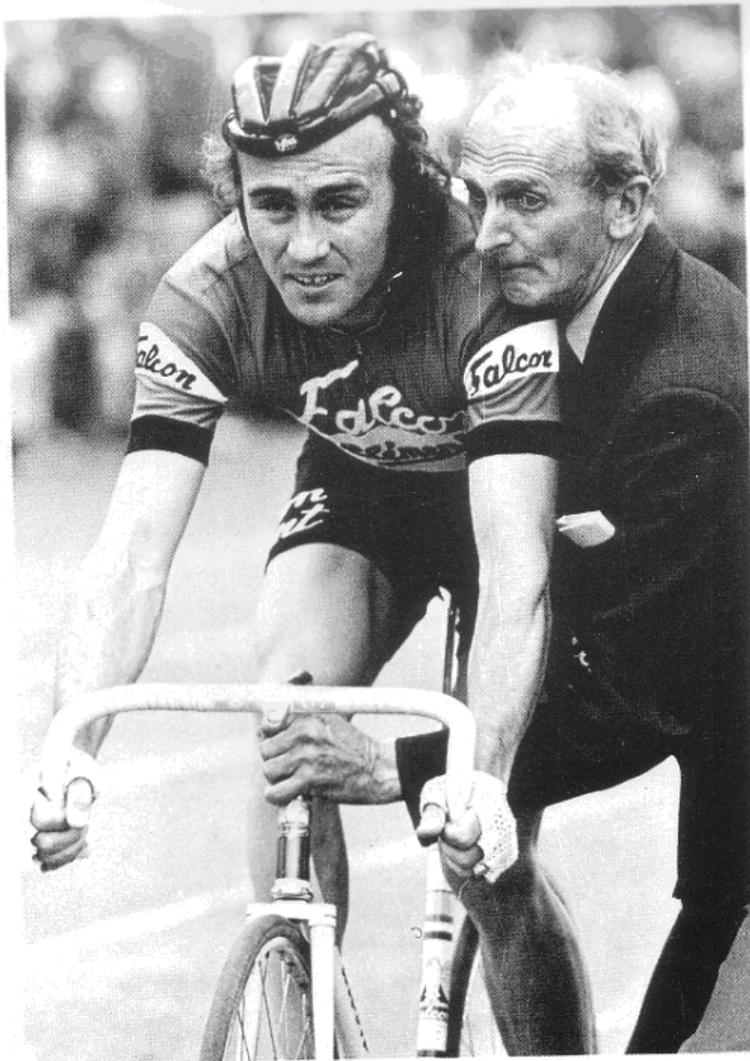
*Dennis Tarr, Folkestone-London 1961*



*Alan Jackson, Stan Brittain, G. Taylor, Brighton to London Presentation at Herne Hill*



*Dennis Tarr and Johnny Pound 1961*



*Reg Barnett and Ken Hill*



*Dennis Tarr and John Pound*



*Dave Tweddell Isle of Wight 1957*



*Brian Dacey, Grand Prix of London. Herne Hill 1959*

## De Laune Racing Appendix

### **SOME RACING "FIRSTS"**

FIRST	unpaced 25	Albert Bannell, 1899 (1-18-30)
FIRST	inside evens 25	Will Le Grys, 1905 (1-14-15)
FIRST	inside evens 50	John Giles, 1914 (2-29-06)
FIRST	inside evens 100	Jef Butcher, 1930 (4-59-54)
FIRST	inside evens 12hr	Frank Wynne, 1952 (240m. 563 yds.)
FIRST	to ride a 12hr	Jef Butcher, 1924 (177 miles)
FIRST	to ride a 24hr	Fred Bakker, 1934 (377 miles)
FIRST	to beat 200 miles in 12hrs	Ted Jackson, 1928 (204 miles)
FIRST	to beat 400 miles in 24hrs	Frank Wynne, 1947 (403 miles)
FIRST	under-the-hour 25	Alan Jackson, 1953 (59-28)
FIRST	under-two-hours 50	Tony Peachey, 1972 (1-57-40)
FIRST	girl to race in De Laune colours	Linda Starsmeare, 1978
FIRST	track race	Hyde Farm, Balham, 1893
FIRST	cyclo-cross	Fairmile Common, Esher, 1953

## THE DE LAUNE C.C. HONOURS LIST

### Presidents

F Clay (1898 - 1909)  
A Faunce De Laune (1909 - 1949)  
Margaret Faunce De Laune (1949 - 1956)  
G Le Grys (1957 - 1967)  
F A Holland (1968 - 1970)  
K E Fletcher (1971 - 1973)  
W H Miles (1974 - 1976)  
E N Chippendale (1977 - 1979)  
K J Hill (1980 - 1982)  
M J Ballamy (1983 - 1985)  
D Boon (1986 - )

### Hon Secretaries

H Hart (1889 - 1893)  
W E Elwell (1894 - 1896)  
H G Benwell (1897 - 1899)  
G Eves (1900 - 1901)  
J Stapley (1902 - 1904)  
A J Whitby (1905)  
W Niblett (1906 - 1907)  
A Williams (1908 - 1916)  
E A Boothby (1916 - 1920)  
W Morrison (1921)  
H Bicker (1922)  
W Morrison (1922)  
J E F Butcher (1923 - 1924)  
E G J Jackson (1925 - 1926)  
J E F Butcher (1927)  
F A Holland (1928 - 1937)  
E N Chippendale (1938 - 1940)  
J E F Butcher (1940 - 1942)  
K J Hill (1942 - 1946)  
E N Chippendale (1947 - 1948)  
D H White (1949 - 1954)  
P Staff (1955)  
J Lawrence (1956)  
D H White (1957)  
P Staff (1958 - 1961)  
B Waller (1962 - 1968)  
R P Itter (1969)  
B Waller (1970)  
A F Peachey (1971 - 1974)  
B Waller (1975 - 1976)  
K F Fuller (1977 -1979)  
E Starsmeare (1980 - )

### Captains

G C Southon (1889 - 1893)  
C Errington (1893 - 1897)  
G Howard (1897)  
H Hayter (1898 - 1900)  
H Harding (1901 - 1902)  
A Wilson (1902 - 1905)  
H R Wales (1906 - 1908)  
W F Condy (1909 - 1911)  
A Boothby (1912 - 1917)  
P Williams (1918)  
F Giles (1919 - 1922)  
P Reeve (1923)  
E Filmer (1924 - 1926)  
A Collison (1927 - 1928)  
J E F Butcher (1929 - 1931)  
F T Hooper (1932 - 1933)  
R Hoare (1934 - 1935)  
K J Hill (1936 - 1939)  
H Edmonds (1940 - 1950)  
H Thomas (1951)  
D Griffiths (1952)  
H E B Carlton (1953)  
D G Watts (1954)  
C J A Morris (1955)  
C E Yearsley (1956)  
H Thomas (1957 - 1959)  
M J Double (1960 - 1961)  
J A Linley (1962)  
R A Wileman (1964)  
A J Young (1965 - 1968)  
G E Crocombe (1969)  
C Oxley (1970)  
D A King (1971 - 1973)  
R McFarlane (1974 - 1976)  
J Gregory (1977 - 1980)  
S Ransley (1981)  
A Castle (1982 - )

**Honorary Life Members**

J L Russell, K J Hill, K F Fuller, A J Young, K E Fletcher, S T Endean, W H Miles, E G Jackson, D F Boon, M J Ballamy, J Giles, G Wood.

**Gold Badge of Honour holders**

Mrs M Faunce De Laune, A Faunce De Laune, 1909 G W Howard, 1910 G D Hume, 1910 W E Condy, 1913 W Niblett, 1919 A H Baldwin, 1921 E A Boothby, 1922 S W Garbett, 1924 F W Giles, 1925 W V Westlake, 1928 P Williams, 1931 J E F Butcher, 1931 F A Holland, 1934 P H Shrimpton, 1935 W Le Grys, 1938 K J Hill, 1938 R Hoare, 1946 H A Furze, 1949 E N Chippendale, 1951 H Edmonds, 1951 K E Fletcher, 1959 G H Starsmeare, 1960 G Le Grys, 1961 W H Miles, 1964 H E B Carlton, 1964 D H White, 1968 A R How, 1969 B A Waller, 1970 A J Young, 1971 M J Ballamy, 1971 K F Fuller, 1972 D F Boon, 1984 A F Peachey, 1985 L G Pyne, 1986 S Endean.

## THE CHAMPIONS

From 1894 to 1899 the club's senior championship was decided on the track, over ten miles. In 1899 a 25-mile road event was added - the first to be unpaced - and that became the championship race from then on. The De Laune Challenge Bowl has been the 25-mile championship trophy since 1904.

1894 G Wakefield (30 50)	1939 W H Miles (1 08 56)
1895 W Hamp (28 04)	1946 F Leckie (1 06 39)
1896 G Le Gryns	1947 F Leckie (1 07 07)
1897 G Le Gryns (27 00)	1948 J Zarfes (1 05 54)
1898 G Le Gryns (22 40)	1949 P Gunnell (1 05 45)
1899 W Le Gryns (track)	1950 P Gunnell (1 05 33)
1899 A Bannell (1 18 30)	1951 M Stafford (1 07 24)
1900 C Wilson (1 18 07)	1952 P Gunnell (1 03 23)
1901 W E Condy (1 19 30)	1953 A W Jackson (1 01 35)
1902 C H Hardy (1 18 27)	1954 A W Jackson (1 00 22)
1903 W E Condy (1 18 25)	1955 G Sinnett (1 02 18)
1904 H Thomas (1 18 20)	1956 J Kavanagh (1 04 28)
1905 W Le Gryns (1 14 15)	1957 J Kavanagh (1 02 24)
1906 W Le Gryns (1 13 12)	1958 J Kavanagh (1 01 50)
1907 W F Condy (1 14 00)	1959 J Kavanagh (1 00 15)
1908 W F Condy (1 13 43)	1960 R Chittleborough (1 01 19)
1909 J Mayo (1 13 17)	1961 J Kavanagh (1 00 15)
1910 P T Tedd 1111 30)	1962 J Kavanagh (1 03 39)
1911 F Giles (1 11 07)	1963 J Kavanagh (59 15)
1912 S W Garbett (1 09 31)	1964 J Kavanagh (1 00 38)
1913 J Giles (1 12 05)	1965 R A Savery (1 02 03)
1914 J Giles (1 08 51)	1966 D Sweeney (1 02 02)
1919 W J Reynolds (1 16 17)	1967 R A Savery (1 00 55)
1920 A Clifton (1 10 58)	1968 T Hookins (1 00 54)
1921 A Marshall (1 09 35)	1969 J W Geoghegan (1 01 37)
1922 A Marshall (1 13 38)	1970 M Valentine (1 00 45)
1923 C H Walker (1 10 36)	1971 L Double (1 03 06)
1924 G A Wakefield (1 10 00)	1972 J Kavanagh (1 02 03)
1925 R Smith (1.08 00)	1973 M Hartley (59 53)
1926 T Smith (1 11 07)	1974 L Double (59 19)
1927 A A Dance (1 10 07)	1975 L Double (1 01 09)
1928 A A Dance (1 11 35)	1976 M Hartley (59 57)
1929 F G Jackson (1 11 16)	1977 M Hartley (1 00 25)
1930 G P Deane (1 04 00)	1978 M Hartley (59 16)
1931 J L Russell (1 07 33)	1979 M Hartley (59 50)
1932 J L Russell (1 07 27)	1980 G Birch (1 02 29)
1933 F T Hooper (1 08 20)	1981 M Hartley (1 00 50)
1934 F T Hooper (1 05 13)	1982 A F Peachey (57 41)
1935 F T Hooper (1 05 40)	1983 A F Peachey (58 32)
1936 F T Hooper (1 05 28)	1984 R Hargreaves (1 02 24)
1937 F T Hooper (1 07 41)	1985 A Dent (1 02 01)
1938 K E Fletcher (1 08 06)	1986 A Castle (59 30)

....."Well, my dear sir, I think I have told you all there is to tell, and if you are new to us I hope my poor efforts as an historian may be of interest to you, and if an old member I hope to have been able to stir up memories of those old times..... and last, but not least, that you may feel that your happiest days were realised and your best friends found when you became a member of the De Laune Cycling Club."

*Walter Niblett, December 4th 1909.*