

Walter Browne's century

Possibly the oldest CTC member, former Fife DA Secretary Walter Browne's 100th birthday falls on 14 August.

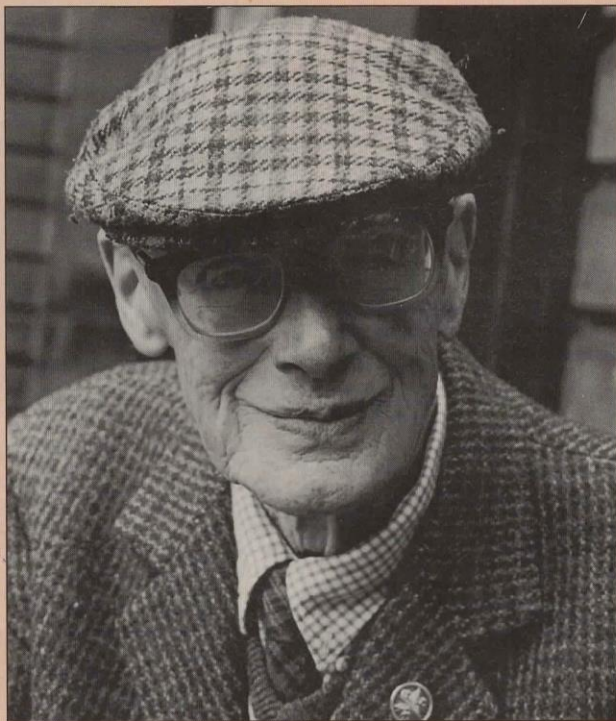
At the time of Walter's birth in 1893, his father was the curate of Barkston, Lincolnshire. At the age of six, following the death of his mother, he went to Grimsby for schooling where an aunt taught him to ride a bicycle. A year later he achieved a ride of eight miles on an ancient tricycle; by the time he was 13 he was cycling 11 miles each way to school.

In 1911 he started at Leeds University and bought his own bicycle – through *Exchange and Mart*. It was rather decrepit but he got it working and cycled about 2000 miles a year, including the 70-mile trip home and on forays collecting minerals with his father in Weardale. In 1914, just finished University, he joined the 2nd/5th Lincolnshire Regiment. However, once the authorities learned that he had a chemistry degree he was demobbed to industry – where a third of his pay was set aside towards a new bicycle.

In 1916 Walter joined the Cyclists' Touring Club. Since he was now working in Walsall, he rode with the Birmingham DA, and his annual mileage climbed to about 7000. He soon found himself appointed to the committee, acting as Secretary for a short while.

In March 1919 he changed jobs, joining the British Aluminium Company in Burntisland, Fife, a firm he was to remain with for the rest of his working life. Finding no Fife DA, he contacted and rode with the then Lothians and Peebles DA. That DA was almost moribund but Walter and another young enthusiast, Edward Zoller, got it going. Now Walter and Edward reminisce over the days when such jaunts as a weekend ride to Newcastle – to vet the suitability of nationally-renowned guru 'Wayfarer' to deliver the DA's annual lecture – were commonplace. The members wanted Walter to be DA Secretary but since a secretary had to live in the DA area, the boundaries of the Lothians and Peebles DA were extended to include Fife!

Walter got a list of the 25 Fife members and in May 1920 he started a Fife Section of the DA. The Section organised the first 24-hour run in Scotland (covering



156 miles) and on 31 December held a Hogmanay Run to Perth. Walter rode alternately in the Lothians and in Fife. His Lothians runs entailed a five-mile ferry between Burntisland and Edinburgh, but if he missed the last ferry home he had to ride the 60 miles by way of Stirling: there were no lower Forth road bridges then.

Under his influence both groups grew and in 1922 Fife became a DA in its own right, the remainder reverting to the Lothians DA. Walter and Edward became the inspiring leaders of the respective DAs. Both DAs grew and are still very active (Fife having become Fife and Kinross DA over the years), Walter and Edward – who recently celebrated his own 90th birthday – continuing as revered elder statesmen.

Walter met his future wife, Daisy, in the Fife DA and they had six daughters and one son. All were brought up on bicycles and today the CTC and cycling still play a large part in their family lives. The eldest of 16 grandchildren, Enid Brown was a keen racing cyclist and still holds a Scottish 30-mile record. Daisy Browne was for many years a CTC Councillor. In 1952, Certificates of Merit were awarded to the couple for 30 years

of outstanding service to the CTC. In 1972, Walter was awarded a Gold Badge and Honorary Life Membership of the CTC.

On his 90th birthday he enjoyed a run of about 20 miles with some of his family and on his 91st managed ten, but soon after this a detached retina ended his cycling on the open road. However in 1984 a Christmas present of an exercise bicycle allowed him to continue his beloved pastime – he did 596 miles on it in the first year whereupon the recorder broke but he continues to use the machine.

In addition to his enthusiasm for cycling, his interest in minerals and polishing gem and other stones led to his being a founder member of both the Edinburgh and Dunfermline Lapidary Clubs and he also found time for gardening. It seems probable that his 77 years of CTC membership is the longest on record, and he also points proudly to his over 70 years as a member of the Society for Chemical Industry.

Understandably a little frail but with his mind and memories as sharp as ever, Walter made the trip from Burntisland for a brief appearance at the CTC AGM in Edinburgh in May where our photograph was taken.

the December 1973 meeting it was a pleasure to be able to sit back and listen to a real expert. Not only did Eric Claxton know all the answers, he knew all the questions as well! Such breadth can only come from a wealth of experience. The cycling scene has indeed lost a great friend and advocate.

Alan Walker,
Stockton-on-Tees

No easy way in

On arriving at York Rally I was amazed to see that the entrance had no provision for pedestrians – it was in fact quite dangerous and unpleasant. I always thought CTC was a pro-cyclist and pro-pedestrian organisation yet the entrance was specifically designed for the needs of motorists with no thought for pedestrians or even

cyclists.

I was also surprised at the number of people travelling by car. The CTC should be encouraging people to travel in more environmentally-friendly ways and this includes making adequate provision for walkers and cyclists at the Rally entrance! Next year, I hope?

Helen Kembery, Blackburn

Form of address

I find certain types of adverts and information infuriating. We aren't all employed in offices by employers who allow unlimited personal phone calls! Some of us have 8- manual jobs and can't telephone advertisers in office hours. We can write, however, and we can write at any time of day – and they can answer when they have the opportunity. Let's hear it for the post – and give addresses!

William J Houlder, Pontefract, Yorkshire

In brief

● Ken Rands, of 37 Rainsford Road, Stansted, Essex CM24 8DX is trying to compile a list of cycle-friendly hotels, auberges and B&Bs along the French coastline from Calais to Cherbourg, and up to 20 miles inland. Anybody who can contribute will receive a copy of the completed list.

● Brendan Walsh of Dublin, author of the *Fish Cycling Guide*, points out that to describe island visitors to Irish markets ('Bikes, bars and Beans', June/July issue) as 'tinkers' is incorrect, while the other term ('knackers') used in the article is considered locally to be highly derogatory.

● Referring to the same article, Aileen Murphy, also of Dublin, recommends two 'great hostels', the Bonny Braes in Allihies which she says provides 'brilliant vegetarian food', and Lettercollin House near Timoleague on the coast about 40km south-west of Cork. Its phone number is (023) 46211 and it, too, she says has 'great food'.

● M A Prideaux of Plymouth, wishes to acknowledge the help of the CTC's Legal Department in helping him to obtain compensation after an accident when he was hit by a car. He adds: 'I have therefore no hesitation in recommending the CTC to any potential cyclist'.

● Mr and Mrs Denny of Carey, Hereford, write to recommend the new European Bike Express service noted in the June/July issue. They praise the 'genuine warmth of the bus staff', the pick-up arrangements and the ease of loading and off-loading the bikes.

● **Letters intended for consideration for publication should be clearly marked, and for the October/November issue should reach Godalming by 27 August. The right is reserved to shorten letters (as, indeed, have been many in this issue).**