

THE HISTORY OF HOUGHTON CYCLING CLUB 1932-2022. 90 YEARS AND STILL PEDALLING.



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EARLY CYCLING IN THE HOUGHTON LE SPRING AREA

The cover photographs are (top) a group of Houghton cyclists enjoying a trip into the countryside around 1890. The group are pictured resting at the top of Cocken Bank outside the gates of Cocken Hall (demolished in 1928) and situated on Cocken Lane not far from the car park and steps leading down to Finchale Abbey. The second photograph is of a Mr Shripton and his son Master Shripton of The Pickwick Cycle Club. Nothing to do with Houghton Cycling Club but a cracking photo of cycling enthusiasts of a bygone age.

A selection of photographs found in the archives of Houghton le Spring



Heritage Society. Looks like a new bike day for the pipe smoking chap left wearing a jaunty cap. The frame and handlebar setup suggests he is a cycle racing enthusiast.

This smiling little man also looks to be showing off a new purchase. He is pictured at the end of Edwin Street,



before the 1960's extensive slum clearance & demolition programme. Houghton Cut in the background.



Two plus-four clad and waistcoated men held in the starting position on penny farthings at the bottom of Houghton's Grey Street at the rear of the Grand Theatre. The theatre didn't open till 1930 so this must have been a 1930/40's vintage cycle rally event.



This cheerful looking quintet are pictured about to set off on a jaunt from their home in the Houghton Colliery estate of Sunnyside near Grasswell, in 1906. The portraiture is book ended by Nellie and George Elliot. The central figure is Elizabeth Smith. Her husband Michael wears a sporting trilby and enjoys a pre-ride draw on his pipe. The other enthusiast is Alf Spear. You would think twice before considering overtaking Nellie Elliot on the road.



The photo above is no vintage rally, this is bike racing in the raw, 1880's style. The location is Bournmoor between Houghton and Chester le Street. Perhaps the two boys are going for a Houghton Cycling Club place-to-place record or maybe it's just a straight head-to-head contest, starting in Bournmoor and finishing in Houghton's Broadway. It looks a most perilous venture!

THE SETTING FOR HOUGHTON CYCLING CLUB'S HISTORY

Houghton le Spring lies some 10 miles north of the distinguished cathedral city of Durham in the north-east region of England. Although the population of Houghton is relatively small there are numerous other settlements dotted around the vicinity in the manner peculiar to this semi-rural, semi urban part of Britain. The majority of the settlements of the area were originally clustered around coal mines and limestone quarries. The larger conurbations of Tyneside and Wearside, home to shipbuilding and heavy engineering, and the pleasant open tracts of Northumberland, County Durham and North Yorkshire, lie within easy reach.

Nobody could claim that Houghton is a particularly remarkable place. The story of the Houghton Cycling Club, founded in 1932 and now celebrating its 50th anniversary is, however, worthy of more than a second glance. 1982 sees the club in its best health for many years and with the Golden Jubilee imminent, it has been taking a closer look at its past.

Appeals for information have appeared in the local press and "Cycling" and it has been most surprising and gratifying to discover just how many of the local people know not just of the club's existence, but also of its activities and achievements. The Club really is part of the community and now is the time to record its history for all to read; new facts have come to light and other 'accepted' stories have been questioned.



Past members of Houghton Clarion Cycling Club pictured in the late 1940's/early 1950's at the club meeting point opposite Houghton St Michael's Church in The Broadway, Houghton le Spring, immediately opposite the point where current club runs meet.

THE BEGINNINGS FOUNDING OF HOUGHTON CLARION?

There is, for instance, a quaint although not altogether appropriate story concerning the club's distinctive red, gold, white and black colours. Local legend has it that these are derived from the four 'Lion' pubs in Houghton; The Red Lion, The White Lion, The Golden Lion and the Black Lion, two of which remain. Unfortunately, none of the founder members who have been traced and interviewed can verify the story with any conviction, especially when the original colours consisted of an amber coloured jersey with a black star radiating from the neck, along the shoulders and down both the chest and the back. The founding of the club took place in the heyday of social, sporting and utility cycling. Vast amounts of time and energy were being spent in the organisation and pursuit of cycling activities and in such buoyant times the disappearance of a club or two, although always noticed, was never mourned as it would signal the birth of another club of greater vitality. This is sadly not the case today.



MEMBERS OF THE HOUGHTON CYCLE CLUB enjoying the countryside near Finchale Abbey around 1895

In this way the Houghton Clarion arose from the disbandment of the Houghton Wheelers, pictured above, wearing natty club caps and the one bowler hat, and notated to be in the year 1895; and the Hetton and District Cycling Club who are pictured next, but at a guess, around fifteen to twenty years later, judging by the more modern bicycle models on display.



The Hetton and District Cycling Club, above, at their meeting place outside an unidentified Hetton le Hole public house. No name of the hostelry on the image unfortunately but the sign above the door invites wines, hay, corn and stabling. Former members of both cycling clubs, finding that their paths often crossed and that they enjoyed each other's company, decide to formalise their companionship by founding a Branch of the National Clarion in 1932.



The above photograph is copied from an album owned by the late Tommy Thompson and has '1932?' handwritten on the back. An answer to the question mark would be that in order to verify this, one would expect a photograph of the inaugural dinner to feature some of the founder members.

And so, it does. It is most definitely possible to identify Billy Leithes and Albert Wheeler seated at the bottom right side of the table. Billy is eighth in line and Albert two seats further on but only distinguishable by his distinctive glasses. Charlie Demer is without doubt the third seated figure on the left side of the table, and the gentlemen to his right, occupying the first and second seats could easily be Fred Stitt and Jack Stoker. A young Ralph Rodgerson is the standing figure, third from the left of the assembly. On the basis that these same men are known to be the original founders of our Houghton Cycling Club, there would be a strong argument that the person who wrote '1932?' on the back of the photo was correct. There is a photograph later in this journal of the founder members meeting in 1982 to celebrate the visit of Billy Leithes along with the club's Golden Jubilee, and Billy is holding a memorial photo album which the group are looking at. Most of the photos are indistinct, but it is possible to pick out this very same photograph which we suspect may have been of the inaugural dinner. There is also a good chance that the building in which they are celebrating the occasion is in fact the very first clubrooms of the Clarion which in a later article were described as meeting rooms in Houghton RAOB Club.

THE HOUGHTON CLARION

For those who do not know, the 'Clarion' was a socialist newspaper founded in 1891. Cycling clubs were by that time an accepted



cornerstone of many people's lives and so represented useful organisations for effectively disseminating the doctrines of socialism. In 1894 the first Clarion Cycling Club was founded and as the number of such clubs grew to 200, so the movement became known as the National Clarion Cycling Club. Local sections were affiliated to the National Club. A rule of all sections of the Clarion Association was 'that its objects shall be mutual aid, physical development, good fellowship and the promotion of the principles of socialism'. Before the reader concludes that Houghton Clarion was essentially a political organisation, it must be pointed out that the founder members are unanimous in the belief that one of the reasons for joining the Clarion Association was the attractive insurance benefits.



The 1935 Clarion Cycling Club handbook shows Houghton as one of 17 sections in the North-East Union of the Clarion, including places which have sadly ceased to exist due to the contraction of the north-east staple industries. Sadly too, only one section of the Clarion still clings on in the North- East, the Houghton having withdrawn from membership in the 1960's and reverted to plain 'Cycling Club'. This appears to have been because allegiance, and membership of the Clarion Association was no deemed to be no longer necessary or relevant.



The above photograph is dated c1948, or approximately 1948 and is noted as a meeting of Houghton Clarion C & AC, or more simply, Houghton Clarion Cycling and Athletic Club. The President, Charles B Demer is captured centre figure, and above him and left are Billy Leithes, Les Grice and Albert Wheeler. Danny Holyoak is second from the right in the back row. The figure extreme left in the picture is Ralph Rodgerson, of whom you will read shortly as formerly a leading figure in a cycling group known as Houghton Itonians. Other notable figures include early 1950's TT and BAR champion Jack Vitty in the back row, Lenny Knowles, the illustrious Joe Anderson in the third row, and a very youthful Ian Murray third from the right in the front row.



Bill Hugill, a great friend of Houghton Clarion, and later, Houghton Cycling Club, is pictured in the 1940's, wearing plus-fours, leading a Wearside Wheelers charge through the town.

EARLY DAYS

To return to the 1930's. The formation of the Houghton obviously catered for a need amongst local cyclists and as is so often the case in the fortunes of cycling clubs, success depended on there being capable and hardworking members willing to lead and organise. Such members there were. In 1938 for example, four clubs formed the Houghton and District Cycling Association. Houghton Clarion was one of these clubs and over the years as the association grew (24 clubs in 1939) the Houghton furnished it with numerous officials. The Association began to promote and ratify place to place records including the Houghton-York-Houghton Tandem Record set in 1937 by Albert Wheeler and Bob Galley; seven and a half hours for 144 miles. This record stood until 1962 when Dave 'Trike' Turner and John Webb covered the distance in six hours and fifty minutes despite appalling weather and mechanical trouble. Another development in these years was the formation of the Houghton Itonia Club by Ralph Rodgeron, who wrote for many years in the Durham Chronicle under the penname 'Cyclo'. This club was a self-confessed social cycling club and was initially set up by ex- Clarion members who had no interest in racing. The clubs meeting rooms were behind the Nags Head in Houghton. Houghton Itonia existed happily side by side with the Clarion for many years before its eventual demise, enriching cycling club life in Houghton le Spring and ensuring that local cyclists were able to participate in a wealth of activities. And so, a handful of people like Bill Taylor, Jack Stoker, Albert Wheeler, Ralph Rodgeron, the Leithes brothers, Doug Harrison, and Bob Galley had really started something.



FIRM FOUNDATIONS

SOLID FOUNDATIONS?

The Houghton really began to develop after the 1939-1945 war. By 1939 the size of the club's membership and the scope of its activities meant that its original meeting rooms in the old ROAB club (demolished in 1968 for the A690 road improvements) were becoming less and less satisfactory. A wooden hut was bought and erected on land at the entrance to the limestone quarry to the northwest of the town centre. Both hut and Club survived the war years, thanks partly to the lady members who stepped into the shoes of men called to arms to ensure that things kept moving. In 1946 however, Mr Graham the quarry owner, gave the club notice to quit the site to enable him to construct a new quarry entrance, but at the same time offering a new but unattractive sloping site for another building.

With typical enthusiasm and resourcefulness, the club set about levelling the site with pick and shovel, working in the evening and on Saturdays so as not to interfere with Sunday runs and racing. Things accelerated when the quarry owner sent a bulldozer to level the remainder of the site.

The local council assisted with the design of the new building and with the details of the planning permission. Jack Rowntree, founder member and bricklayer by trade, assumed the mantle of 'foreman builder' ably assisted by the rest of the club. Bricks from demolished air raid shelters were cleaned and re-used, and a timber floor was constructed from the deck of the SS 'Port Clarence' then being broken up at Blyth. Two years of hard work, sacrifices and disappointment went into the building. Many and varied were the methods of raising funds; on one occasion when funds ran out the racing

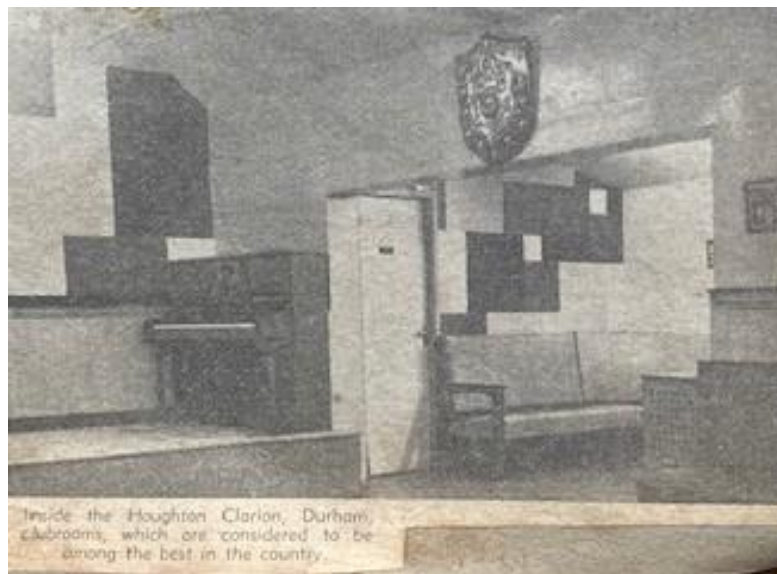


section refused to accept awards and donated the money to the building fund instead. It is little wonder that the 'North-Eastern Cyclist' of September 18th 1948 called the Houghton 'one of the most enterprising clubs in the North East'. The finished building contained a spacious main hall, ladies and gentlemen's cloakrooms, a committee room, canteen, and cycle storage space for over one hundred machines.



This 1964 photograph captures Dave Farrar and his egg delivery van which is being loaded with the racing machines of teammates Tony Brown and John Skinner.

This next photograph accompanied an article in the January 1959 edition of the magazine 'Cycling' in which the feature writer compliments the club on completion of a £1500 extension to the clubrooms with a second hall comprising canteen



and cloakroom, a tiled wooden floor to replace the original ship decking floorboards, three new windows to the main hall, and a new sixteen-foot



stage. The photograph above, which accompanied the article, shows the new stage, the secretary's office and the waiting room style bench seats that were a feature of the building. The photograph left is from the archive collection of Tommy Thompson and pictures club member Doug Harrison, one of the founders of Houghton Clarion, a cabinet maker of whom you will read a little more shortly, and who was greatly responsible for much of the joinery and internal fittings of the new Clarion Clubrooms in Quarry Row.



The driving force behind the organisation at this time was the Secretary and founder member Billy Leithes, pictured centrally in the above photograph at a reunion with some of the other founder members.

Ralph Rodgerson is on Billy's left. Billy was later to become Club President until emigrating to Australia in 1980. Albert Wheeler succeeded Billy. In 1982 Billy and his wife Alice returned to the North East on a visit to coincide with the club's Golden Jubilee. Old Clarion clubmates arranged a reunion whereupon Billy was guest of honour. A local newspaper featured an article on the reunion. The attendees included many of the founder members

from 1932 and who we can only guess were still taking part in club activities up until the outbreak of World War Two in 1939. The article named some of the attendees pictured right with Billy and Albert Wheeler in the front row, leafing through some old photographs. Behind them, and left to right are Fred Stitt, Ralph Rodgerson, Jack Stoker, Tom Rennoldson and Bob Galley. The back row figures are named as Charles Gouge, Dan Lewins, Bill Smith, Jimmy Short and



Reavely Judd. The article revealed that the club founded with only 17 members in 1932 but quickly grew in number to over 200, with over 100 members taking part in weekend club rides. The photograph display includes that of the contentious 1932? photo referred to earlier. One would imagine that if it's good enough for Billy and his old pals, it would be most authentic, a genuine photograph of that historic occasion of the club's founding.

What impact the war had on membership or indeed club activities in the post war period we can only guess. However, press coverage of a later reunion celebrates the return to Houghton of Johnny Box of Hetton. Johnny was born in 1920, emigrated to Canada in 1951 and later settled in America. During his years with the Houghton Clarion he won several championships, set place to place records and was racing secretary of both the Clarion club and an organisation known as Houghton Cycling Association. He continued to ride and compete in both cycling and athletics in his home state of Michigan until well into his sixties. The press photograph features Johnny third from the left



in middle row, Johnny's daughter Connie, centre, and interestingly names many of his old Houghton Clarion friends in that period, including Harry Harland, Tommy Wrightson, George Rose, Alan Gibson, Melvyn Hughes, Bill Taylor, Jack Short, Danny Holyoak, George Thompson and Jack Rowntree.

The following years, from the post war years of the late 1940's, through the fifties and up to the early 60's are much better chronicled and we can pick up some of the club's history from photographs and newspaper cuttings in albums and scrapbooks belonging to the late Tommy Thompson. Prominent names from that era include Joe Anderson, Billy Quinn, Jack Vitty, Harry Johnson, George Smith, Doreen and Fred Smith, Doreen McCormack, Jack Wilson, Doug Harrison and the club chairman, Les Grice. We have included a selection of some of those photographs to give a feel of club life during that period.





Joe Anderson and Billy Quinn pictured. Joe was the very first post war club champion, winning the 25 mile TT trophy in 1947. The previous winner, before WW2, in 1939, had been Jack Stoker, one of the Club's founders and featured on the earlier group photos. Joe was overall Club Champion, winning the BAR in both 1951 and 1952 but clubmate Jack Vitty won the next two championships in 1953 and 1954.

Right, a group photo of Houghton Clarion riders including Joe Anderson and George Smith standing 3rd and 4th from the left, and Harold Johnston and Fred Smith below and 2nd and 3rd from the left. The three front riders all appear to be wearing the same top. Could it be an early club jersey?



Left, George Smith in racing mode. Pre WW2, TT competitors were required to wear black clothing from head to toe, but the obligation was relaxed in the late 1940's to allow riders to wear shorts. By the early fifties the rule was relaxed completely, but it nicely dates this

photograph. George was both 25 miles, and 50 miles TT champion in 1952. The period 1947 through to 1954 appear to have been the cycle-racing war years between Anderson, Vitty and Smith, all fellow club members and close friends but fierce combatants in the Clarion racing championships. After 1954 the racing prizes were fought out by a new generation, Joe Pickles, Peter Chisman, and John Welsh soaked up the 25, 50 and 100 mile TT awards but Joe Anderson did make a comeback in 1958 to take the 25 and 50 mile championships in the same year that Noel Knox took the BAR honours.

From 1960 onwards, yet another young generation of racing cyclists accompanied Noel, Chis and John Welsh on the club championship records. New names of young riders like Chris Watson, Bob Smith and Eddie McGourley joined the illustrious list of winners, triggering yet another successful racing epoch.

Racing did not totally dominate club life in that post war period however, as we can see here in this photograph of a touring stop for a group of Houghton men, including racing men Joe Anderson



and George Smith along with a large group of fellow members. Harold Johnston and Fred Smith are named on the photograph original.



Houghton Clarion members attending the National Clarion Meet in Mablethorpe in 1956. From the left, club chairman Les Grice, Doreen McCormack, Jack Wilson, Doreen and Fred Smith and far right, George Smith. The young boy is not named but perhaps could be the son of Doreen and Fred.

George Smith pictured yet again in a creased and somewhat faded and poor-quality photograph of a five up group ride, six if you include the photographer. We wondered whether it was taken outside the blacksmith's shop in Bog Row, Hetton, looking up North Road, but it is not definitely recognizable.



The Club's president at the time of the building of the clubrooms, and indeed ever since 1932, was a well-known and respected local character Charles B Demer. Charlie retired from his presidency when he was 87, and only because he was moving to London, and had cycled to club functions from his home in Darlington, 26 miles away, until he was well into his seventies.



Charles B Demer, club president, is pictured at the **196???** awards night presenting trophies to (L to R) Cliff Davison, Eddie McGourley, John Cummins, Peter Reed, Peter Tuckwell and Dave Cummins.

A slightly earlier photograph of the **196???** Houghton Clarion annual awards evening but which also captures the Club President, Charlie Demer, presenting the cups and trophies.



Amongst the award winners pictured are Bob Smith, **?**, Norman Adamson sometimes known as 'Trodd', Chris Watson, a very young Eddie McGourley, **?**, Tom Rennoldson, Les Grice, Bob Smith, Tommy Thompson, Charles B Demer, Dave Donnelly, and even younger (than his brother) looking Alan McGourley, **?**, Bill Lawrence, Agnes Grice, and John Abbott.

Our Houghton Cycling Club history chronicle now moves on from the post war years and into the late nineteen fifties and the early nineteen sixties. Bill Hugill, chairman of Wearside Wheelers and a good friend for many years of rival club Houghton CC, wrote cycling articles in the Sunderland Echo under the pen name of Wheeler, leading him to be frequently and rather mischievously referred to as 'Hugill of the Bugle'. In 1958, Wheeler wrote two separate articles noting highlights from the Houghton Clarion annual awards evening. The first article was entitled Houghton Youngsters Showing the Way and featured what Wheeler called the Houghton Rough Stuff Event, the club Cyclocross Championship in which Bob Smith had narrowly won a fierce battle with Chris Watson. Other competitors including Reavely Leithes, Dennis Lyons, Dave Donnelly, Alan McGourley and John Coulson received merit awards for their performances in the same event. The second article penned by Wheeler celebrated the rest of that same evening's awards starting with a second 25mile championship for the prolific post war era champion Joe Anderson, his first having been back in the year of 1947. Joe also won the 50mile championship with a winning time of 2.12.09. Dave Dickson had won the 1958 Junior Championship with an average speed of 24.19mph over 10, 25, and 50mile TT distances. Bob Smith had set a new place to place record time for Houghton-York-Houghton of 7hours and 31minutes, knocking 30minutes off the previous record time. The most prolific winner in that year of 1958 however was a racing member who Wheeler referred to as 'young Noel Knox', taking the club championship over 25, 50 and 100mile disciplines with an average speed of 23.009mph which included a new 25mile TT record time of 1.0.25. In that same year of 1958 Noel had clocked 214 miles for a 12hour time trial on a trike, took the Houghton Clarion 100mile TT championship, won the club Medium Gear 25 trophy, was second in the 50mile championship and was Club Hill Climb Champion. An impressive haul of awards for that young Noel Knox.

1958 was also the year that former (1980's) Houghton CC chairman Harry Brown joined Houghton Clarion Cycling and Athletic Club with some friends and workmates, and we can get a wonderful insight into what club racing, touring and social life was like in those years by including, in this Houghton Cycling Club history journal, Harry's stories and anecdotes from a most enjoyable and nostalgic memoir he has recently penned.

“Clarions were formed from the labour movement and The Clarion was the worker’s newspaper. The Houghton club had over 120 members and no one owned a car. If you wanted to go to an event, or anywhere at all, you had to ride to it. There was no other way. I was living in Pennywell (most of us lived on one of the big estates) and the bike was our escape to places we would never otherwise have had the opportunity to see. The moors, the posh houses, the quaint villages, the little tea rooms, staying in bed and breakfast and youth hostels, the cold, the wind, the rain, were all experiences we gained something from. It bonded us together in a friendship which has lasted over 58 years, but I fear those times will never come back again. Too many things have changed.

We had very little money, we were all apprentices. Eddie McGourley, Alan McGourley, John Cottrell and myself were at Sunderland Forge, Dave Donneky and Chris Watson were at Steels (later Coles Cranes), John Coulson was at Davies Refrigeration and Peter Tuckwell was a painter and decorator. We all started on the same money which was about 36 shillings a week. I paid 10 shillings board, and the rest was mine. Our clubrooms had been built by the members on a site at Houghton Quarry, we had a main hall, a canteen and a bike shed. Friday night we would ride up on the bike but Sunday nights we would put on our suits and went on the bus to discuss the day’s racing and plan for the week ahead, fill in entry forms etc. The canteen was run by the girls and sold tea, coffee, soft drinks and crisps. The older guys would later go over to the Colliery Tavern. In the winter months we would have roller racing competitions, social nights, films of continental races, dances, and every week a tote double was held to raise funds for the club. Billy Leithes had a bike shop in Newbottle Street and would let us buy bikes and equipment with weekly payments. He would open later on Friday nights, so we could money off our card and buy any bits and pieces we could afford or may need. There was no Lycra or specialist clothing. We bought our clothes from the Army and Navy Stores, a good thick waterproof jacket and winter gloves. We rode in woollen jerseys and jeans, no crash hats and just a peaked cap in Summer or a woollen ski hat in Winter. We used toe straps to tie the bottom of our jeans. The memories are still vivid.

We had no mobile phones or even home telephones. When we met at a specific place and someone didn’t turn up, a chalk message would be left on

the pavement to let them know where we were going so, we could meet up. At first, we mostly rode fixed wheel, my favourite was 64inch for touring and 84inch for racing. The bike had one brake on the front and when riding to races, we carried our racing wheels which were spoke sprints with tubular tyres, fastened to brackets on each side of the front wheel spindle and strapped to the handlebar drops to stop them spinning. It made people stop and look, as it appeared as if we had three wheels on the front of the bike.

In the winter months we toured, staying at youth hostels almost every weekend. 'Getting the miles in' was key to having a good racing season and we did plenty of that. October to March was the social season and we rode to many club dinners, the favourite being the Border City Wheelers dinner in Carlisle. The roads were very different of course, no western by-pass for instance, and we would ride through Team Valley, Blaydon, Prudhoe, Corbridge, Hexham and Haydon Bridge to Carlisle. At the top of Greenhead Bank, you could see the base where they tested the Blue Streak Rocket, our nuclear deterrent and we could sometimes see the smoke and the steam across the moors. There could be as many as twelve to fifteen of us Houghton members on those trips and sometimes things got a little wild, after riding a long distance and having a few drinks. The Border City Wheelers dinner was held in a function room above the Co-op Store on Main Street. When the dinner finished one of our lot fell down the stairs and smashed a glass display cabinet in the shop. We left in a hurry.

After one dinner there, Peter Chisman asked if anyone wanted to join him on a longer training ride home and Eddie and I went with him. Instead of going straight home on the A69, we went south to Penrith and then over Hartside, Killhope, Crawleyside and finally Maiden Law out of Lanchester. I hung on all day. It was a ride I will always remember, brutal but great for getting fit. I won the club 25 the same year. My first Christmas ride was to Edmundbyers Youth Hostel, there were around 18 of us including 6 to 8 girls. We had a great time as the pub was next door to the hostel. We rode back home over Burnhope in snow and ice. The next Christmas we went to Aysgarth but for some reason I left a day later with Harry Carr. Harry likes a drink, and we made several stops at pubs and by the time I reached the hostel I was a little

drunk. John Coulson had snapped a crank which had pierced right through his jeans but fortunately missed his leg. It was a boisterous weekend.

The social season took us to a lot of dances but at other times we had all-night parties. I remember Harry Bagley's at Felling and Billy Fisher's at Seaham. Billy was a butcher and we all had sausages for breakfast.

In the racing season we trained twice a week, going out in a bunch and attacking all the time on the climbs and sprinting for sign posts. We would do 50 miles in a night and think nothing of it. A favourite ride was to meet after work at Grindon Mill, then head over the Silver Hills to Leadgate, back up Black Hill to Consett and then home. Other times it would be to Lanchester and back at racing speed. Chris Watson's favourite trick was to stop at the fish shop in Pity Me and then catch up with a fish lot stuffed down his jersey while wolfing down chips. We would ride the Wearside Wheelers 10 starting just past Fulwell Mill to White Mare Pool and back. If you were unlucky, you could be stopped by a train at the level crossing. For races at Ponteland we would meet at 4am on a Sunday morning at the Gas Office in Fawcett Street to ride through to the 25, we'd finish the race and ride back later in the day, sometimes stopping to laze by the river. Funny how we always seem to remember the sunny days. I once worked night shift and rode straight to a 25 in Blaydon. On the line, Sid Blakey, a timekeeper renowned for his strict adherence to the rules noticed I didn't have a bell on my bike and wouldn't let me ride. Occasionally we would ride to events in Carlisle and would stay in Mrs Watson's for bed and breakfast. After the race we would ride back home, stopping in Corbridge for a hot drink and usually get home completely knackered. Racing at Boroughbridge we would take bed and breakfast at Knaresborough, riding early morning to Flaxby Road Ends on the old A1 where the race started and finished. For events on Teesside, we would ride down the A19 to Stokesley and across an RAF airfield in Thornaby, having sometimes to stop at traffic lights to let a plane land or take off. We'd often stay in Mrs Barr's dilapidated farmhouse in Seamer, which was surrounded by old farm buildings and an open barn where we'd leave our bikes but which was also home to chickens and our bikes would get covered in bird droppings causing a frantic clean-up before the race. Three or four to her huge feather beds was common, with two at the top and two at the bottom.

I remember once going to bed early and waking up next to Bill Lawrence who was a vet. Rain was lashing off the windowsill and he gave me a nudge.

'Go on lad, stick in, there's no bloody way I'm going out in that'.

I did a personal best in torrential rain. After the race she would do a Sunday dinner with her famous giant Yorkshire puddings, served alone before the meat and veg but covered in a fantastic gravy. The farm is now a grand mansion with a pond in front of it.

One Bank Holiday, Easter or Whitsun, we rode to Barton on Humber to ride the Barton Road Race, leaving Friday night to bed and breakfast in York then a ride to Hull on Saturday and across the Humber by ferry to Barton. Sunday, we rode the 45mile road race and then to set off on a 130mile journey home. I arrived home at 1 o'clock in the morning, having been stopped at the top of Houghton Cut by a policeman who suspected I was a burglar (I had a bonk bag with my clothes and things strapped to my back). He sternly asked me what I was doing out at that time of night and when I told him he looked at me in disbelief and then sent me on my way.

On another occasion I rode our club road race at Wolsingham, an 84 mile Cat 1/2/3 cat race over 3 laps of the Vaux Circuit taking in Hill End, Bollihope Common and Bedburn. I rode the 28 miles there with club members and home again after the race. 50 riders started the race and only 8 finished, I was eighth, behind Mike Milen of the Northern velo who beat me in a sprint. Yet another time, Eddie McGourley and I rode down to London to stay at my Aunt's house in Harefield, Middlesex. We rode down the A19 through York to Selby where we stayed the night. Next day we joined the A1 and rode on to Grantham for a second night's b&b and then down to Harefield. We spent a couple of days riding down to Heathrow to see the planes and touring the local countryside. We were carrying our racing wheels and stopped at Ely on the way back to ride a 25. We couldn't find digs, so we asked directions at a local fire station but who kindly put us up on stretchers between the engines. Breakfast in the mess next morning was fantastic. In the time trial, I was off two minutes behind the, then, 25 mile national champion Alf Engers and was fascinated to see him turn up in carpet slippers and with a helper alongside. His shoes were screwed to his bike pedals and the helper held him while he fastened his feet into his shoes. That was the last I saw of him as he won the

event in 54 minutes. After the TT we rode on to Wetherby, raced another 25, stayed the night in bed and breakfast, then rode back home the next day.

One year, early sixties, we had the great idea of touring the Continent, pre-booking hostels in Holland, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium and France.

We only had two weeks off work so Eddie, George Pickering and I met Friday after work with a plan to ride 320 miles through the night and into the next day to Harwich to catch the ferry to Holland. We stopped at a transport café somewhere on the A1 for a cup of tea and a sandwich but when dawn rose, we were still 30 miles from Harwich. We were absolutely knackered. George fell asleep on the steps of a fountain, so we took a train for the last few miles. We caught the ferry, disembarked and rode 10 miles from Rotterdam docks to the hostel and crashed out in the dormitory until next morning. Our plan was to ride 100 miles each day with a couple of rest days. In a little hilltop village called Prum in Germany, we were the only ones in the hostel and that evening the warden locked us in and went home. It was a bit scary until he let us out next morning. Overall, it was a great holiday with little money, living mainly off chips and bread and jam. We watched the barges on the Rhine in Cologne, rode through heavy industry in Dusseldorf, enjoyed lovely countryside in Luxembourg and France, had some great laughs but also some very tiring days. I got stung in the mouth by a wasp and buckled my front wheel in a pothole. In Brussels we were caught by a man riding a scooter who offered to lead us through the city centre and out the other side. He went just too fast, and we had to hang on for grim death with our saddle bags swinging behind us and almost had to sprint to keep up with him. Once through the city and then out the other side he waved farewell, so we stopped for some more chips. We arrived back in England after two weeks with nothing but a loaf of bread and a tin of ambrosia rice between us having ridden 1200 miles and with just enough money to get the train home.

The Isle of Man cycling week was a great event with all of the Tour of France riders in the professional race. I was entered for the 2nd and 3rd licence categorised Onchan Cup Road Race. It started with an all-night ride to Liverpool in pouring rain, stopping at a pub somewhere just before closing time to dry our clothes out next to the fire, then continuing to the ferry. We had a great week and then rode home after docking back in Liverpool. The

next year we went to the Isle of Man Cycling Week by plane from Newcastle Airport. The airport buildings were only Nissen huts. It was an old twin propellor plane and walking up the isle was like walking up a steep hill. On the back of the seat facing me was a sign that read 'Do not be alarmed if you see flames coming from the engine on take-off, it is normal'.

That year I took Bob Smith's place in the Viking Trophy when he took ill suddenly. Bob had to sign me on, as it was 1st cat race as I was only a 3rd cat. The race covered three laps of the Mountain TT Circuit and the racing was hard and fast. I hung on for the first lap but on the second lap I had a secret weapon up my sleeve. I was to empty a miniature bottle of whisky into my bottle as I was told it would help with the pain. At the start of the second ascent of the mountain climb I took a swig from my bottle and promptly went out the back. Never believe what a cyclist tells you!

I rode a Spring 2-day race in a Houghton team comprising Bob Smith, the McGourley brothers, and myself, with the first stage starting in Team Valley then up onto the Military Road, across to Hayden Bridge, over to Allenheads and Alston, then over Hartside to the stage one finish in Penrith. I finished the first stage in the bunch while Bob and Eddie finished in the break. Next day we raced back over Hartside, but Eddie punctured early in Melmerby. He was our team leader, so we waited with him and chased back on. The stage then went over Killhope and Crawleyside to Tow Law to eventually finish back on Team Valley. I finished in the bunch and Eddie was 4th overall. Sixty years later I would ride those same hills again with my mate Noel Knox. It beggar's belief. I could never have imagined it back in those early sixties. Now, sixty years later, the changes in cycling are remarkable, but for me, not necessarily for the better. There is improved technology. There are much better and lighter bikes, and purpose designed clothing and equipment. The cyclists of today may very well form the same friendships that we did sixty years ago and hopefully they will also pass the test of time, but in that day and age, more than sixty years ago, our pleasures were simple and inexpensive. Our cycling grew out of necessity. We were grateful for the opportunities it gave us to see places we would never otherwise have seen. And we cannot remember too many incidents of aggravation by motorists. Wagons were so slow you could tuck in behind them for miles.

Cycling as an activity and my membership of Houghton Clarion resulted in meeting and later marrying my wife Ruth and so, if for no other reason, I am most grateful that it was the sport of cycling that brought us together. Many other fellow members met their life partners in this way or at least brought along their boy or girlfriends to start cycling or join in the social life of the club. It was a way of life more than a hobby or a pastime.

Recently, I spent time writing up Wearside Wheeler (Hugill of the Bugle) Bill Hugill's diary from the late forties and early fifties but surprisingly there were not too many differences from my early cycling, ten or so years later, except, and obviously, for not having to endure those post war shortages, ration books and what not. Life in those post war days, and later, ours in the late fifties and early sixties, was slower and much different to that of our 21st century. In reflection, I do really believe that we were very lucky, albeit with little or no money, no cars, no phones, and with only basic equipment, working in mines and factories as apprentices, 45 hours each week but then being able to escape to the countryside under our own steam every weekend. Life was not idyllic during those post war years, but work was plentiful, we needed for little, but our escape from it was the bike''.





TEXT



TEXT



TEXT

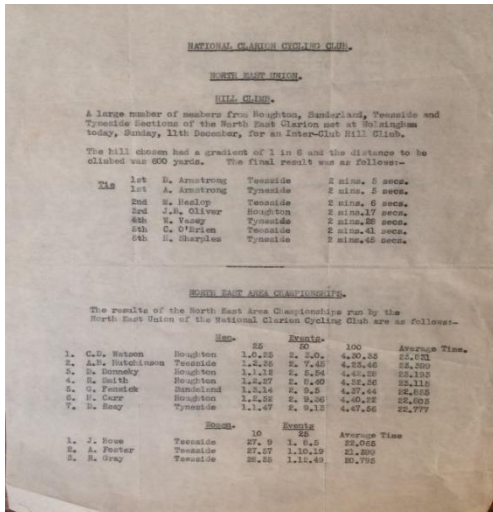




There is star quality in this group photograph of award winners in 1967, well, one star at least. We can identify a number of the members in the assembly; the bottom row starts from the left with John Coulson and Les Grice then Billy Leithes and Albert Wheeler holding a rather grand globe style trophy. The back row includes John Abbot, Danny Holyoak, Brian Ferry, Tommy Rennoldson, Bob Smith, Dave Donnelly and Dennis Lyons. The star quality is of course, Brian Ferry, sixth in line from the left in the back row and next to the bespectacled Tom Rennoldson, the same Brian Ferry of Roxy Music who in the Golden Jubilee year presented the club with the very attractive Golden Disc Award for the member who, in any single year, made the most outstanding contribution to the club. The photo is edited from a cycling magazine article which also focuses on the merits of two wheel drive racing tricycles, the impact on trike racing affected by Noel Knox, a humorous reference to fellow Houghton trike man Tommy Thompson, several references to the 'Flying Pickets' of Houghton Clarion and the author of the piece, perhaps a little tongue in cheek, finally adds that our own Tommy Thompson had a skiffle band in the late fifties and that Brian Ferry had been a member of that group. In yet another reference to Harry Brown's memoirs, he recalls, on one occasion, taking a young 14 year old Brian Ferry out on one of his first club runs.

TEXT.....

ANY MORE MEMORIES OF BRIAN FERRY?

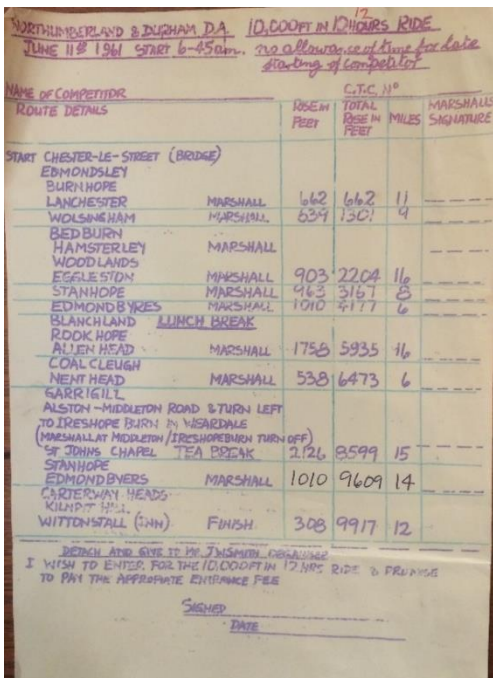
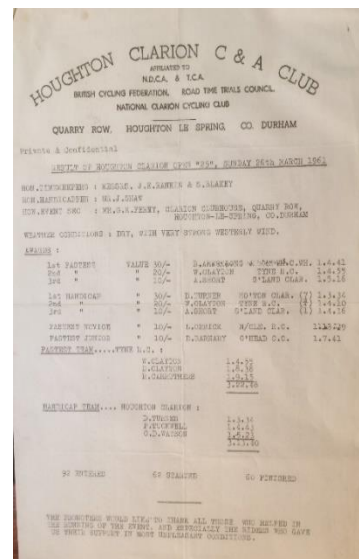


Results of the 1960 Clarion Union Hill Climb Championships, held in Wolsingham, and which was dominated by Teesside riders but JB Oliver of Houghton Clarion finished in a very creditable fourth place. That same year, the North-East Clarion Union TT Championships were won by Chris Watson of Houghton Clarion with an average speed of 23.8mph over 25, 50 and 100 mile TT disciplines. Houghton riders Dave Donnelly

finished 3rd, Bob Smith 4th, and Harry Carr 6th. Derek Reay of the Tyneside Union, later to be multi holder of Houghton CC's TT records, finished 7th.

The 1961 National Clarion 25 Mile TT Championship was hosted by Houghton Clarion on 23rd March.

Dave Turner of the host club picked up the fastest handicap award, collecting 30 shillings for his effort of 1.03.34. Dave was part of the handicap winning team, with Peter Tuckwell and Chris Watson. Only 62 of the 92 entries started, and only 60 finished, in conditions described by Houghton's event secretary Ken Ferry as 'very strong westerly winds' resulting in what he described as 'most unpleasant conditions'.



This is a jewel, an absolute gem, the sign-on and completion return sheet for an early reliability trial of the Northumberland and Durham CTC in 1961, encompassing 10,000 feet of ascent over 133 miles in 12 hours, starting at Chester le Street, including both a lunch and tea stop, and finishing in Whittonstall, after the final ascent, that of nearby Kiln Pit Hill. This was a testing ride in 1961, and by any standards, even in modern times. And not a bad club ride should today's members wish to plan a challenging Sunday club run?

GREAT CHARACTERS

Danny Holyoake pictured at the campsite at a National Clarion Meet in York with Fred and Doreen Smith. Danny was the regular marshal at the turn of the 25-mile TT in Lanchester and was most famous for his encouraging shout of 'keep it gannin' young'n, yer deein' a good'n'.



Bill Lawrence, or simply 'Larrence' as Danny referred to him, was born in 1912 and in 1932 was a member of Sunderland Clarion. He later joined Hawthorn Clarion which became defunct whereupon he joined Houghton Clarion. In 1958, at the age of 46, he was Houghton's oldest veteran racing member, and that same year recorded a distance of 240.2 miles in a Teesside 12-hour race, beating his previous PB set in 1932 by 8 miles. That same year he won a vets 25 despite crashing and losing 5 minutes to a head wound that required four stitches.

Gateshead born Albert Ellison was the other member of that great triumvirate of Houghton veteran racing men. Albert told the tale that he bought his first bike for a half a crown and a swapped box of paints. He is pictured in 1984, aged 70, in a newspaper article celebrating completion of the Land's End to John O'Groats ride, whereupon finishing he turned round and rode another 100 miles back to Inverness to get the train. All three veterans were prominent in Houghton CC club life well into the 1960's.





An early fifties group including Jack Anderson, Jack Wilson, Tommy Rennoldson, Joe Pickles (centre figure), George Smith and Les Grice. The photograph below captures, left to right, Les Grice, Tommy Rennoldson, Billy Leithes, Albert Wheeler and the inimitable Danny Holyoake.



Billy owned the bike shop in not far from the Clarion Clubrooms as they were universally known.

Stories of Billy's shop

May contact Reavley Leithes for some input



Would swear that is a young Roger Lauderdale and his dad collecting the new bike from Leithes Cycles.



Billy attending a Jack Taylor Cycles photo shoot. No idea who is the central character wearing the cycling jersey and the miner's helmet, or the lady behind Billy, but definitely Jack and Norman Taylor on each side of the cyclist, and possibly Albert Wheeler extreme left on the photograph?

Jack Webb and Dave Turner were two pals who worked at the pit. Dave was an underground locomotive driver. Their exploits together are legend, their cycling successes mainly confined to trike racing but Dave especially was an all-rounder, clocking up both 50 and 100 mile club



championships on his bicycle in 1973 and 1993 respectively and also won the Club Hill Climb championship in 1982.



On the subject of all-rounders, Bob Smith takes the crown as king of all disciplines, in an amateur career that spanned the late 1950's right up until 2013 when he joined a club

trip to Flanders, riding the 134K Ronde van Vlaanderen, over some of the steepest and most iconic climbs in Spring Classic racing at the age of 75, and pictured above on the Paterberg.

Bob was, for a time, a member of Ferryhill Wheelers, pictured on Col du Galibier in 1958 with Ferryhill's Bobby Douglas and Brian Kay.

Bob joined Houghton Clarion in 1958 and won the very first 10 mile TT championship in 1959.



In a long career, Bob also won Houghton's 25, 50, and 100 mile honours as well as the overall club championship and BAR in 1962, 1975 and 1976.

Bob also held a 1st Cat road race license which was the top amateur category until the more recent introduction of 'elite'. The photo below captures Bob leading a break wearing the Clarion jersey, and therefore dated early 60's. A boyish



Eddie McG is 3rd wheel.



Bob enjoyed Cyclo-Cross and is also pictured later in this journal, riding a trike in the snow. A true all-rounder.

Away from racing across most if not all disciplines, Bob served as both chairman and president of Houghton Cycling Club in a cycling lifespan of over sixty five years.

TOMMY THOMPSON



RACING SUCCESSES

With such good facilities and organisation, it is little wonder that the club flourished through the late forties and fifties. In 1950 the Houghton membership was well over 200 and growing. The racing side of the club especially was enjoying a very successful period under the guidance of racing secretary Jack Box. It was amidst the activity and attainments of the fifties that two young men in particular began their associations with the Houghton; associations that were to be of national significance.

In 1954 a 14-year-old pupil from Houghton Grammar School joined the club, learning of its activities from a friend. Joe Applegarth recalls the occasion with clarity, "Some 20 years or more ago I met Chis at a social do. We had attended the same school, I was a year or so older than Peter, but had contact with Houghton Clarion through my brother Bob who was five years older. Chis recalled that I had taken him along to his very first club night, and in due course, we entered our first club event, a 'roughstuff' (cross country cum cyclo-cross race) starting from the clubrooms in Quarry Row and venturing across Murton Moor. All I can remember of the race was chucking my bike over a fence, because the snow seemed less deep over there, and coming in a clear and undisputed last place. Chis, only 13 or 14 at the time, had been dropped by the older lads (he mentioned Joe Pickles) but they went off course and Chis wound up as the clear winner. It was headline news on the back page of the Sunderland Echo. Oddly enough, my brother Bob had won the same event in 1951, when he was only 16, he reckons the weather was so bad that no-one else turned up to ride it".

The young man that had joined Houghton Clarion the same night as Joe Applegarth went on to work in the Borough Engineer's Office at Houghton Council and later at Sunderland when Houghton was incorporated into the Borough Council, finishing his career with Northumberland Water Company. By 1958 Peter had won six races and in the same year was North-East Junior Road Race Champion. In 1960 he won thirteen races including his first stage race, a four-day event. 1961 saw his selection for the North Regional team in the Tour of Britain with victories on the first and seventh stages, finishing fourth overall to winner Billy Holmes. That year also saw his first selection for overseas duty, representing Great Britain in a one-day event in Switzerland.



In 1963 at the age of 23, Peter Chisman won the Tour of Britain, the Milk Race, taking the yellow jersey on the opening 172k stage from Blackpool to Nottingham with a solo win giving him a huge margin of 9 minutes, followed by a successive win the very next day in the 183k stage 2 from Nottingham to Cheltenham, winning by one second from the Swiss rider Albert Herger in a two-up sprint. Local rider Norman Baty took two stage wins of that 1963 Tour, stage 11 finishing in Newcastle and the final 13th stage, from Morecambe to

Blackpool. This maintained his overall lead to win the General Classification by 5 minutes and 30 seconds from the Romanian Constantin Dumitrescu with Jose Ramon Bilbao of Spain in 3rd place. Great Britain teammate, good friend and Hartlepool born Arthur Metcalfe, pictured just behind Peter on this mid race



photograph finished in 7th place overall on General Classification but would better this result by far the following year by winning the GC of the 1964 edition of the Milk Race, once again and for the second year in succession, starting and finishing in Blackpool. Photo left, Peter Chisman of the GB team presented with the General Classification winner's jersey and bouquet at the podium presentation in Blackpool following the 13th and final stage of the 1963 Tour of Britain, the 1963 Milk Race. The photograph is an extract from a newspaper feature on the race.



*Pete Chisman Wins Into Newcastle.
TOUR OF BRITAIN 1964.*

Chis also rode the 1964 edition of the race, and this photograph captures his Stage 11 win from Scarborough to Newcastle. He also finished 2nd on Stage 12, eventually finishing 7th on General Classification. Tyne Velo's Norman Baty repeated his 1963 win by taking stage 13 from Morecambe

to Blackpool, and Winlaton born Tucker McElvogue, NE Divisional Road Race Champion in 1961 and 1968, took 2nd place on Stage 6. With Arthur's overall win, it was a most successful tour for North East riders.

Right, Chis takes yet another win, this time in a Houghton CC road race, possibly the 1963 Tour of Killhope Moor which he won three times in as many years. Chief judge looks to be Houghton trike rider Peter Winship.



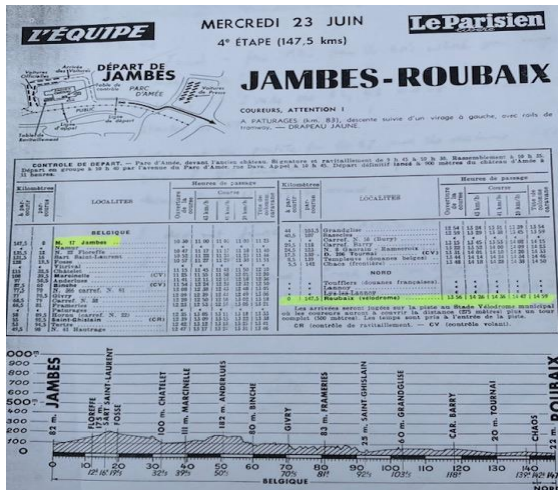
meute qui le poursuit, Chisman termine seul à Roubaix.

Peter Chisman was the North East's leading cyclist. In 1965 he became only the second Englishman to win a stage of the Tour de L'Avenir, regarded as the amateur Tour de France, winning Stage 4 which started in Jambes and finished in the iconic Roubaix velodrome, where the doyenne of the spring classics, Paris-Roubaix

currently finishes. Chis rode four editions of Tour L'Avenir, in successive years between 1962 and 1965. In the 1963 race, he had very bad luck, he had his shoes stolen, punctures, mechanical trouble, and a bad crash on the penultimate stage where he lost twenty minutes.



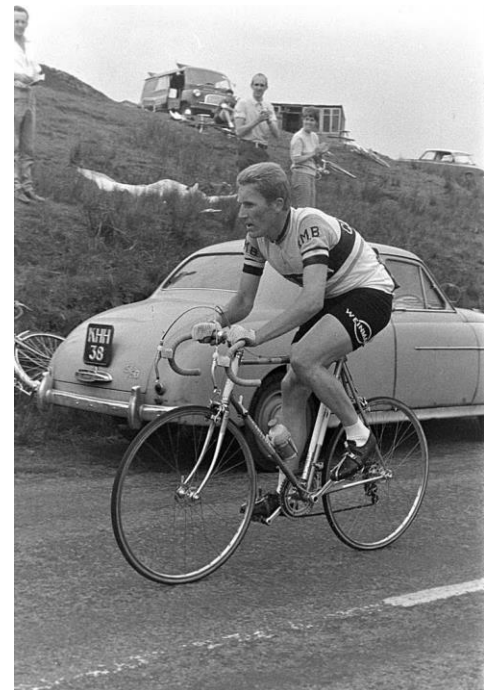
This photograph captures Peter mid – stage in that 1965 Tour L’Avenir. An eagle-eyed reader might pick out his Houghton Vaux shorts worn along with his GB team jersey.



There is a curious statistic relative to Peter’s crash on stage 13 of the 1963 Tour L’Avenir, which happened on 13th

July 1963. Chis’s 1967 Tour de France team-mate Tom Simpson tragically died on stage 13 of that 1967 Tour, and the date, coincidentally, was also 13th July, but four years later, in 1967. Thirteen was clearly not their lucky number, Peter Chisman and Tom Simpson.

Peter went on to turn professional for Raleigh-BMB, Carlton Cycles-BMB, and Sun Huret-Truwee, and is pictured here mid-race then finishing fifth in the 1967 Vaux Grand Prix, an event won that year by continental based professional Michael Wright.



His last win came in Stage 1, finishing in Penzance, of the 1968 Tour of The

South West, and his last competitive outing was the home (Sunderland) based Whitbread Trophy in 1972, ironically the same year his erstwhile Houghton team mate Eddie McGourley, also retired from top level racing.



Above, an extract from a French sports magazine, presenting the Great Britain team selected to ride in the 1967 Tour de France. The team members are each named right to left in the caption. Peter Chisman is far right in the picture. Tom Simpson is the third figure from the left. This should have been a highlight in the career of Chisman but overall that Tour turned out to be the most disappointing and tragic in the history of British cycle racing.

Disappointing for Chis in that he left the race on stage 3 between St Malo and Caen, after a series of mechanical problems that resulted in him finishing outside the time limit. In those days, team support was limited and focused solely on those riders in front of the convoy. A rider who had crashed or in trouble with punctures or mechanical problems, unless the team leader, was left to his own devices to get to the race finish. Chis later reflected that had he not left the 4780k race at that point, it may have been the undoing of him. Michael Wright won his second of three career-long stage wins on stage 6 from Metz to Strasbourg that year, but the 1967 Tour is sadly remembered for the tragic death of Tom Simpson on Mont Ventoux. The collapse and death of Simpson on stage thirteen resulted in the peloton agreeing that as a tribute to Tom, a GB rider should win the next day's stage between Carpentras and Sete. Barry Hoban, great friend of Simpson who would later marry Simpson's widow, Helen, assumed he would be the rider chosen to take the win, but Vin Denson took the stage, a move which resulted in much angst between the two men. The distinguished and greatly respected Peter Chisman, former Houghton CC member, continued to race professionally until 1972 when he retired but died in 2003 aged 63 after a short illness.

ORGANISER OF THE YEAR

Doug Harrison is one of the Houghton Cycling Club's founder members and as a cabinet maker by trade, he was responsible for much of the joinery at the



new clubrooms. Doug recalls that in the fifties he helped a young lad who had just joined the club to build a bike. The young lad was Tommy Rennoldson, pictured, who was to take over presidency of the club from Billy Leithes in 1980, after having been vice-president and racing secretary. In 1968 Tommy received national acclaim after being voted 'Organiser of the Year' by the British Professional Cycle Racing Association. The illuminated address from the Association's secretary, Millie Bielby stated "for the winner

there is applause, the prize, and the adoration achieved after so much effort. All too often the organiser, whose memories are of different burdens, needs vision, inspiration, and a kind of dedication and personal discipline to overcome mounting difficulties. Qualities of both the impresario and the public servant are inherent in the organiser..... over the enterprising race calendar of 67 events, the riders themselves named as their choice Mr Thomas J Rennoldson as the Organiser of the Year in this twenty sixth year of modern cycle road racing". The race chosen was the Vaux Grand Prix of 1968, the 8th edition of the event sponsored by the Sunderland brewery and the second in which professionals took part.

Tommy Rennoldson, pictured centre, was one of the youngest officials to be elected in the Houghton club. Tommy competed in time trials, was a keen hosteller and with mid-week runs and training spins, he clocked up an average of 10,000 miles each year.



Tom Rennoldson introduced the club's first newsletter and under his guidance the club twice won the Tom Groom Memorial for clubs showing the greatest all-round improvement; and the George Raeside Memorial Trophy for the club in the North-East and Scotland showing the greatest percentage gain in membership. Tommy's administrative ability did much to enhance the sport in the North-East. While the club remained part of the Clarion Association, he was elected to the National Clarion Council and became one of five members who met five times each year to conduct the affairs of thousands of cyclists in Great Britain.

Tommy pictured right with club members Dot Metcalfe, Ruth Todd, and George Pickering, and below with Harry Brown outside Mrs Corden's guest house in Douglas on the Isle of Man. Dozens of members would enjoy a weeklong holiday taking part in the time



trials, road races and kermesse (criterium) style circuit races during the Manx



International Cycling Week and everyone would be crammed into that small boarding house.

The highlight of the week was the Manx Trophy, a professional road race which, from year to year, attracted the world's top professionals including the great names of Fausto Coppi, Jacques Anquetil, Eddie Merckx, Tom Simpson, Barry Hoban, Rudi Altig,

and Shay Elliot. At the finish of the Manx International Trophy race, the team soigneurs would sell off their rider's jerseys and shorts, soaked in sweat and other more dubious stains, to eager collectors. Many Houghton club members proudly wore ill-fitting jerseys and shorts that had been purchased in the pit lane below the TT grandstand on the outskirts of Douglas.

THE VAUX YEARS. 1961 TO 1970

To many people the name Houghton CC is synonymous with the Vaux Grand Prix, the first edition of which signalled an ambitious, enterprising and successful move into new territory for the club. The 116-mile event contained 10,000ft of climbing, and between 1961 and 1970 held the reputation of being the toughest and richest one day event in the British Isles. **The announcement of the event was made by Houghton Clarion club chairman Les Grice at the 1960 annual dinner and awards presentation held in the Continental Hotel in Sunderland. The race was to be sponsored by Mr Douglas Nicholson, the chairman of Vaux and Associated Breweries and was to be called the Vaux Pint Tankard Championship. Following the success of the 1961 race, Mr Nicholson subsequently announced that the race would run again the following year, on July 22nd, 1962, and would be upgraded from Silver Tankard to Gold Tankard status for the 1962 championship. Bill Bradley, twice winner of the Tour of Britain, and the 1961 winner of the Vaux race, won the Vaux Tankard and a winner's first prize of £110, the biggest ever cash prize for a one-day stage race in Britain.**



The race, held **each year** in July around a 29-mile circuit in the beautiful countryside of Weardale and Teesdale, always succeeded in producing aggressive racing, a worthy winner and large crowds. Over 20,000 spectators watched the event in 1962 **with over 3000 at the race finish between Wolsingham and Frosterley. A local newspaper interviewed Houghton's racing secretary**

Brian Hogarth who observed that after only 29 riders had completed the four lap race, that in view of the toughness of the circuit "no records would be broken, and that it had been a good day's sport".

The race succeeded in attracting a lot of publicity for both the Sunderland based brewery and for cycling. Inaugural lunches were held at the Savoy Hotel for sports editors of London newspapers, journalists were flown north by special plane and then entertained to dinner and overnight accommodation in Vaux hotels in Durham city. On the morning of the event, they were taken to the market town of Wolsingham by radio equipped car to follow the racing. The race was obviously a very attractive product to riders, press and public and 'sold well'. Even in 1961 the first prize was £120, with a total prize list of £500, so attracting the best riders and encouraging competitive riding.

The Houghton ran the race with the efficiency of a military operation. Forty-seven officials were required to ensure the smooth running of the event on the day, all of them assembling at the Houghton club rooms for a final army style briefing on the Friday evening before the race. At the time of his BPCRA award, Tommy Rennoldson acknowledged that "while I appreciate the great honour which has been bestowed on me by the BPCRA, it would be impossible to organise an event of such magnitude without the support of so many people....."

Police co-operation was excellent, marshalling could not have been bettered and the Houghton even went to the trouble of having warning signs printed in Russian for the 1965 event when the organisers pulled off their biggest coup by enticing over the first ever Russian team to visit this country.

SPACE LEFT FOR MORE TEXT

FAMOUS NAMES

From 1961 to 1965 the event was for amateur and independent riders; in 1966 for amateurs only, and from 1967 to 1970 for professionals. The first event had only one non-British rider, Warwick Dalton of New Zealand who had finished third in that year's Milk Race. Dalton finished second to Bill Bradley after being dropped on the final climb. In 1962 Bradley did the same to Peter Crinnion, the Irishman who had won the Route de France and was 7th in the Tour de L'Avenir. That year Peter Chisman was defending local interests well until he touched wheels with Crinnion and finished a blood spattered seventh. The Vaux succeeded in attracting more and more continentals. The 1963 winner, Jupp Ripfel, King of the Mountains and stage winner in the Tour of Austria rode, and in returned to the event with the successful Petterson Brothers, Gosta, Sture and Erik; there were also teams from Portugal and Hungary. Gosta Petterson was one of the unluckiest riders in the race, his tyre rolling off within sight of the finish line; later that year he was to finish 3rd to Eddy Merckx in the World Amateur Road Championships at Sallanches. 1965 saw the first Russian team, and predictably the first Russian winner, but only after a fierce battle with the tenacious Jimmy Leitch of Scotland. The sixth edition of the now Vaux International saw several changes in its formula. All independants had been declared professionals by the BCF and so the Houghton decided to confine the race to amateurs. The event was also moved forward to mid-June between the Milk Race and Manx week; the finish was also moved to the moors above Wolsingham. Poland, Sweden and USSR sent teams to the 1966 event, but the England team headed by Les West and Arthur Metcalfe managed to hold their own, winning all the major prizes; third was Josef Gawliczek of Poland, winner of that year's Milk Race. The 1967 event was for professionals and was tinged with a little disappointment when Tom Simpson had to return to France to honour a contract thereby missing the Vaux race and a final opportunity to race in Britain before his tragic death in the Tour de France that same year. Michael Wright won the event with Peter Chisman seventh; Vin Denson and Bob Addy, both respected names, took the Gold Tankards for 1968 and 1969 respectively. Sadly 1970 was the last of the Houghton CC promotion of the Vaux Grand Prix. It was won by Barry Hoban after breaking away on the first prime with Wales rider Colin Lewis and staying in front all through the race.

FOR THE RECORD: Vaux Grand Prix Podium Places

1961

1. W. Bradley (Southport) 5-22-11
2. W. Dalton (New Zealand)
3. A. Metcalfe (Leeds)

1962

1. W. Bradley (Merseyside)
5-33-43
2. P. Crinnion (Ireland)
at 2-21
3. D. Bedwell (Fred Dean
Cycles at 5-30



Bill Bradley pictured above right, fourth in the group as shown, with Peter Chisman second right but leading the group.

1963

1. J. Ripfel (Sweden) 5-30-20
2. A. Hitchen (Viking)
3. P. Gordon (Manchester)

Jupp Ripfel, four-time Swedish Road Race Champion, pictured right immediately after crossing the finish line in first place, and below taking the 1963 win, along with the first prize of £110, the 9 carat gold tankard and a pewter tankard for being part of the victorious team win for Sweden.

VIKINGS AND THE "VAUX"



The finish line in those early editions of the event was about half-a-mile outside Wolsingham on the A689 between the market town and Frosterley, but later, due to traffic issues, relocated to Howlea Lane just east of the top of Wear Bank.

More images from cycling magazine articles and extracts from the 1964 race brochure of the Jupp Ripfel winning year of the 1963 edition of the race.



1964

1. T. West (London) 5-30-18
2. A. Metcalfe (England)
3. W. Bradley (Quinn Everyman)

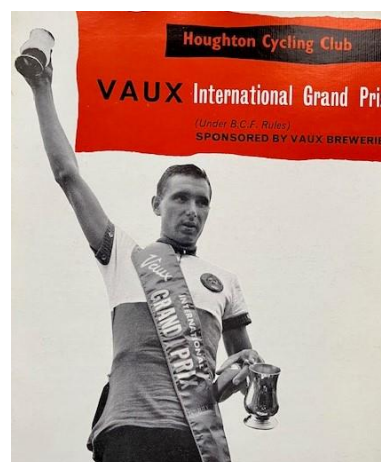
Terry West was a surprise winner in 1964, beating pre-race favourites Arthur Metcalfe and previous winner Bill Bradley in the sprint finish. West was chosen to represent GB in that same year's Olympic Road Race in Tokyo.



1965

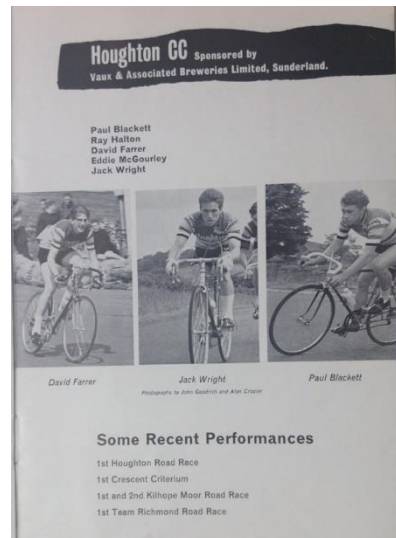
1. L. Sabko (USSR) 5-26-8
2. J. Leitch (Scotland)
3. R. Goodman (Viking)

The Eastern Bloc countries virtually dominated amateur cycling during the 1960's and 70's at World Championship and Olympic level, and in cycling's classic amateur stage races, Tour le Avenir, the Peace Race and Britain's Milk Race.



The 1965 edition of the Vaux Gold Tankard race brochure featured some of the Houghton Vaux Team riders taking part in the race, left to right, Dave Farrar, Jack Wright, and Paul Blackett. The photograph below pictures Paul Blackett leading the bunch across Bollihope Common on the descent into Eggleston. Eddie McGourley recalls the misery of having to

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1966

1. L. West (England) 5-26-3
2. A. Metcalfe (England)
3. J. Gawliczek (Poland)

Photograph right, West crossing the finish line. Les West turned professional in 1968 for Willems 11 Gazelle then 10 years with the Holdsworth Campagnolo squad.



Les West was one of the most dominant figures in amateur and professional cycle racing in the 1960's and 1970's. He is accorded with over 150 career victories including two Overall Tour of Britain Milk Race wins in 1965 and 1967, second in the 1966 World Amateur Championships and 4th in the 1970 Professional World Road Racing Championships. He was reported to be joining Jacques Anquetil's BIC team at the end of 1966 but the contract never materialised and he remained in Britain with Holdsworth. 'West is Best' was the battle cry of his supporters.

1967

1. M. Wright (Central – Tibetan)
2. A. Metcalfe (Carlton Cycles)
3. C. Lewis (Mackeson-Condor)

Michael Wright, pictured here leading fellow breakaway members Arthur Metcalfe and Colin Lewis into the finishing straight. Disappointingly it was yet another heart breaking Vaux Race



finish for Arthur Metcalfe, a local lad, from Hartlepool, the most consistent Vaux finisher, but sadly, never to win the biggest one-day race in his home region, despite a great career in which he was both National Road Race Champion and the Cycling Time Trials BAR Champion in 1966, as well as Milk race winner in 1964 and several Tours de France.



Above, Michael Wright winning the 1967 race and right, fronting the 1968 Vaux Grand Prix race brochure. Tom Simpson had been scheduled to ride in the 1967 race but was pulled out at the eleventh hour to appear in a lucrative race arranged by his team sponsor, Peugeot BP. History sadly records what fate had in store for Tom Simpson later in 1967. Michael Wright was a French speaking British rider due to his mother's move to Liege in Belgium after his father had died during WW2. During his long professional career he won 3 stages in the Tour de France and four in the Vuelta a Espana, and after his 1967 Vaux win, moved from Central-Tibetan to the French team BIC, followed by another French team, Sonolor-Gitane before he finally retired in 1974.

1968

- 1. V. Denson (Kelvinator) 5-30-0**
- 2. B. Hoban (Mercier Hutchinson BP)**
- 3. A. Hitchen (Falcon Cycles-Clement)**

Vin Denson won the 1968 edition of the Vaux Gold Trophy race, Barry Hoban to Denson's right on the podium, and Albert Hitchen on the left.



Denson rode as super-domestique for the great French rider Jacques Anquetil during the Ford France and Bic sponsored years. Vin often recalled a story in the Giro d'Italia when Anquetil

sent him to chase down the Italian Gianni Motta through the streets of Naples. The entirely partisan crowds threw spaghetti and tomatoes at him and tipped garbage bins over his head as he passed under their windows. In that Vaux winning year of 1968, Denson rode for the Kelvinator team in what turned out to be a hard fought battle with Barry Hoban and the Falcon Cycles rider, and former 1965 British Road Race Champion, Albert Hitchen.

1969

- 1. R. Addy (Holdsworth - Campagnolo)**
- 2. W. Mason (Carlton Cycles)**
- 3. E. Janssens (Mercier BP)**

Bob Addy, with arms aloft at the 1969 Vaux race finish on Knitsley Fell. Addy had an outstanding amateur career then rode as a professional for several teams in a period that spanned the years of 1965 through to 1973. He was chosen to ride for GB in the 1968 Tour de France, but abandoned on Stage 10, after two back-to-back stages in the Pyrenees, suffering two major mechanical issues and a bout of illness.

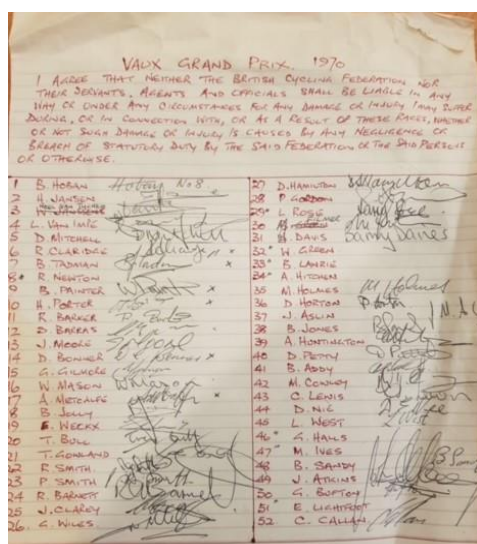
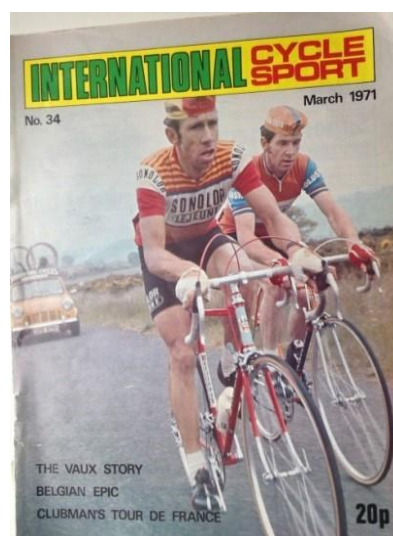
Bob Addy winning the 1969 Vaux Grand Prix, 115 miles, 10,000ft of climbing and 5hrs-38m winning time.



1970

1. B. Hoban (Sonolor–Le Jeune)
2. C. Lewis (Holdsworth-Campagnolo)
3. L. West (Holdsworth-Campagnolo)

Wakefield born Barry Hoban rode for most of his career with the Mercier BP team, frequently in support of the great French rider Raymond Poulidor, but yet still managed to rack up an impressive list of wins, including the spring classic Ghent Wevelghem, two stages of the Giro, eight stages of the Tour de France, and was most unlucky to only finish third in the 1972 edition of Paris - Roubaix. The 1970 Vaux Gold Tankard saw Hoban win from an all-day two man break sprint finish with Colin Lewis. Hoban, then riding for Sonolor Le Jeune, featured on the front pages of the March 1971 International Cycle Sport magazine, along with Lewis as they crested Bollihope Common in the 1970, and sadly, the last Vaux Grand Prix.



Autograph collectors could be forgiven for grabbing a photograph of the 1970 sign-on sheet at the race headquarters located at Wolsingham Steelworks. There are some impressive names listed, non-more so than that of a 24-year-old unknown Belgian rider, Lucien Van Impe of Kelvinator who rode in support of Hoban that day. Van Impe would go on to become one of the most respected climbers in the pro peloton, winning the

polka dot 'Mountains Jersey' in the 1971, 72, 75, 77, 81 and 83 Tours de France. The Vaux Grand Prix, later the Gold Tankard race was the high point of Houghton CC's calendar. Members were expected to do their duty and support the club in hosting this most prestigious of events. Every July, members would assemble at the clubrooms on the Friday evening prior to the event for a race briefing. Transport was arranged to take marshals and race officials to the race HQ for a final briefing before the start of the race. It was an exciting time to be a member of Houghton CC.

CLUB RUNS AND HOSTEL WEEKENDS

Road and time trial racing did not however entirely dominate club life at the Houghton club. Club Runs, Hostel weekends and cycling holidays were most popular throughout the year, although the number of participants were often significantly bolstered at the end of the racing season.

Sunday club runs met at 10 o'clock on the steps of the White Lion in Houghton le Spring's Broadway and often didn't end until 5 or 6 o'clock that same evening. This fact must be tempered with the fact that the age profile of the membership was the complete opposite of what it



is today, the average age of the membership being somewhere in the range of 18 to 30 years, members with, at that time, no responsibilities to careers, marriage or children with whom to share their weekend leisure time.

Interestingly, in the mid sixties, there were very few active members over the age of 25 or 26, except of course for Danny Holyoak and his old friend Bill Lawrence, affectionately referred to simply as 'Larrence' by Danny. The photograph above is dated around 1972 as the original frontage and steps had been demolished and replaced by the brick façade that still exists today.



This group photograph pictures a Sunday club run in the Ponteland area. The young Houghton riders are aged around 16 years so the image can be dated around 1962 or 1963. Can you imagine a large group of 16-year-old

cyclists being able to safely enjoy that freedom and safety on today's roads?

Another group of youngsters visiting a Clarion tea-stop. This photograph is dated even earlier than the previous one, circa 1958, with George Pickering, Harry Brown, Eddie McG, Chris Drew, Peter Marshall and Colin Williamson.



With rain capes, full mudguards, but not much else, there was no excuse at all for not venturing out in any sort of weather, adverse or otherwise, as depicted in these old images.

There were some interesting rules applicable to club runs and group rides in those early days, one in particular in that it specified that no rider should overtake the club captain without his permission with the exception of tandems on descents. The club captain was elected on an annual basis at the annual general meeting. It was the captain's responsibility to organise club runs but otherwise it was an entirely honorary appointment.

The club members of yesterday held little regard for the weather, whether wind, torrential rain, blizzard, or snow-covered roads. Bob Smith and Harry Carr pictured. How wonderful to be so young and carefree again?



ANY MORE EXAMPLES OF OLD FASHIONED CLUB RUN RULES???????



Hostel weekends were very popular both in the summer and winter time. Weekend hostel rides would often set off on Saturday afternoons and return on Sunday. Longer weekends set off after work on the Friday evening. Occasionally, a longer weekend, such as Easter, would start on Thursday evening, not

returning home until Monday afternoon.

There were no restrictions as to distance or difficulty of terrain, but shorter weekends would typically head to the Yorkshire Dales, Kielder, North York Moors, the Borders.



There were also, and occasionally, Christmas weekends at Kielder or Edmundbyers.



**POSSIBLY A LITTLE MORE
TEXT ON HOSTEL
WEEKENDS**





Left, a hostel weekend to Grinton Lodge in the winter of 1963. Not even deep snow blunted the enthusiasm of the intrepid hosteller, here Dave Turner enjoys watching Dave Cummins,

..... from the saddle of his trike. Northumberland, North Yorkshire, the Lake District and further afield attracted the club hosteller, especially on longer bank holiday weekends.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS ON CLUB RUNS AND HOSTELLING DURING THOSE YEARS



Left, a grim looking group on the steps of Melrose Youth Hostel on their way home from an Easter weekend touring southern Scotland and The Borders. Woollen hats, waterproof army combat jackets, jeans and leather gloves were 'de rigueur' in the late sixties and early seventies.

Bill Scott, Denis Lyons, Bill Ferry, Harry Brown and John Abbott **WHERE?**



Another group photo taken outside the Helmsely Youth Hostel, after breakfast and completion of appointed morning tasks such as washing up, mopping the floors, scrubbing kitchen tables, raking the gravel in the drive etc, and the return journey home over the North York Moors to Osmotherley and home from Tees-side up the A19 no less. If you didn't satisfactorily complete your morning task, you had to re-do it before you got

your membership card back from the hostel warden. Rules were rules.

Some winters revived the annual football match with Wearside Wheelers. Pictured, L to R, John Cummins, Eric Chaffe, Bill Ferry, John Abbott (wearing his Clarion jersey), Bill Scott, John Peterson, Ted Bowden, John Reed, Peter Reed, Terry Conlon and team captain Alan Whitwam.



TEAM SPONSORSHIP

The Houghton CC association with Vaux took on a new, and at that time, novel form, when in the mid-sixties the brewery began to sponsor a team. Obviously impressed by their venture into cycle race sponsorship and encouraged by the high standard of organisational and athletic ability in the Houghton club, Vaux Breweries undertook to sponsor a team of leading riders. This support lasted for five seasons and differed from that found in the modern sponsored club, in that only a named group of riders received sponsorship benefits. Unlike many sponsored clubs the Houghton CC – Vaux riders were all local lads, and they achieved a great deal of success in the North of England at a time when people were less able or willing to regularly travel long distances to events. Peter Chisman was one of the riders who benefited from sponsorship along with Paul Blackett, Ray Halton, Terry McSkimmings, Jackie Wright, Dave Farrar, Dave Cummins, and Eddie McGourley. The success of the venture is debatable and there is still a great deal of discussion in cycling circles on the general subject of sponsorship of amateurs. This is not the place to continue the arguments; suffice to say that although individual riders benefitted from the sponsored team approach and although the sponsor was obviously amply rewarded, we must remember that the sponsorship encouraged success which must have strengthened the club; and so, it goes on.



Peter Chisman wearing the iconic St Raphael styled jersey leads Hartlepool born Arthur Metcalfe of Leeds St Nicholas CC and a youthful Houghton Vaux teammate Eddie McGourley.

Paul Blackett and Jack Wright pictured in the 1965 amateur version of the Vaux Trophy Race.





Another race day, another large Houghton Vaux presence in the breakaway. Left to right, Ray Holton and Paul Blackett of Houghton, Arthur Metcalfe who was a regular traveller up from Leeds for many Houghton races, and far right, leading the group, our own Eddie McGourley.

MORE TEXT ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE HOUGHTON VAUX SQUAD.

RIDING NATIONAL EVENTS

STAR TROPHY RACES

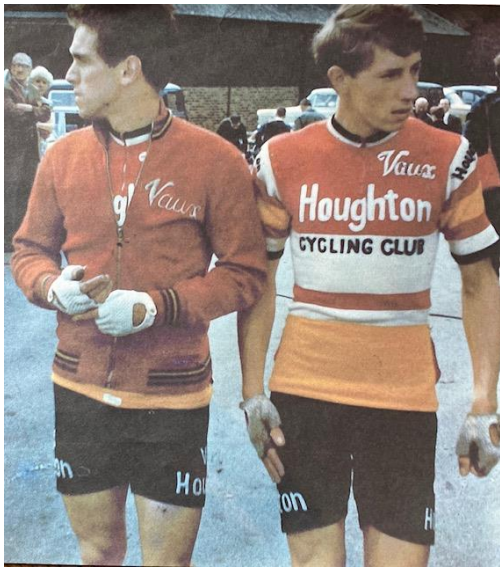
MAYBE SOME INPUT FROM EDDIE



When Peter Chisman left the Houghton Vaux squad to turn professional, his place in the team was taken by Dave Farrar, an 18 year-old rider just out of the junior ranks but who had gained his first cat license rapidly with some fine wins in his first senior racing season. Dave is pictured below, just left of McGourley, who leads the group. On Eddie's right is Dave Clark of the Teesside Cyclone, then Norman Baty in the white cap. Further back in the bunch is Dave Hill of Northern Velo and Clark's Cyclone team-mate Sid Barrass, who would go on to enjoy a successful professional racing career.



The Vaux-Houghton CC sponsorship arrangement ended in **196??**



SIXTIES SUCCESSES

There were indeed many successes in the sixties. The Houghton club provided competitors for countless events of all sorts. One aspect of club racing was participation in trike events. For some unknown reason there was



a great deal of interest in the 'barrow' as the trike was known; tricycle teams accompanied the club on its annual visit to the Isle Of man Cycling Week and regularly they competed in time trials on the mainland.

MORE TEXT ON TRIKE ACTIVITIES



The flying pickets

The club's other achievements in the sixties are many and varied but mention must be made of a rider who has recently returned to the club, Chris Watson. In the 1960 season Chris had an unbroken run of 20 wins in local events before going on to win the National Clarion 25 at York. In a field of 189 riders, Chris recorded a 'long 0' to beat Barry Hoban into second place by a minute. His personal best for a 25 stood at 59-37 in 1960 before his comeback. As seems to be the trend these days, he has recently succeeded in lowering this to 57-12. Chris was also an accomplished road rider, finishing third in the National Clarion Road Race Championships at Great Malvern in 1961, beaten by two international riders, Armstrong and Chadwick.



Dave Donnelly pictured at the 196?? Isle of Man

MORE TEXT TO BE ADDED??



TEXT TO BE ADDED

Time trialling had always been a staple of the club racing calendar. The Houghton's own 25 Mile TT's started on the bridge at the bottom of Chester Bank????????? With the turn point on the approach into Lanchester. Despite the rolling nature of the course, a most commendable course record of //////////////// was set by Dave Cummins in 196?. The photograph right captures Brian Hodgson at the start being pushed off by Bill Ferry. Tommy Thompson is waiting his call-up onto the start line.



In terms of road racing, and following the end of the Vaux team sponsorship, a number of team members moved on to new clubs, new teams and pastures new, leaving a core of Eddie McGourley, Dave Cummins, Jack Wright, Cliff Davison and others continued to race together in National Star Trophy events, a sample of which were the Tour of Essex, Archer GP, Tour of Furness,



Deeside Grand Prix, Tour of the Peaks, Lakes 2 day and the Manx International to name but a few.

Picture, Dave Cummins leads Paul Blackett, riding for VC Electric after leaving Houghton CC, Phil Marrows and Eddie McGourley.

Tom Corps Jnr, extreme right in the bunch sprint, picking up a win in the Hartlepool Trading Estate Crits organised by Ken Bainbridge of Hartlepool CC.



**BRIAN HODGSON WINNING NE
REGION JUNIOR
DIVISIONAL CHAMPS
ROB RENDALL IN SECOND PLACE**



**WEARISIDE WHEELER LADS,
TOM CORPS, ROB RENDALL,
DAVE MAUGHAN, WHO ALL
WOULD LATER JOIN
HOUGHTON.**

Morecambe promenade criteriums were very popular with racing members in the late 60's and early 70's.



One unfortunate recollection was of the year Eric Maxwell crashed into one of the concrete filled oil drums marking the race turn point. Eric was knocked out cold, racing suspended, and an ambulance called to cart him off to hospital, where he remained for a whole week but fortunately made a full recovery. His broken bike, kit bag and an explanation were dropped off at his mother's house in Two Ball Lonnen on the way home.



BE GOOD TO HAVE SOME TEXT ON VIN BURNS AND HIS TRACK RACING EXPLOITS MAYBE EDDIE MCG CAN EXPAND THIS PART OF THE STORYLINE

SOME TEXT ON GRASS TRACK RACING (EDDIE AND PETER)



TEXT ON CYCLOCROSS



BIT MORE TEXT ON CX





**MORE TEXT with
PHOTOS ON CLUB
RACING.....PETER?**

MORE MILK RACE SUCCESS

Throughout the sixties the Houghton's name became synonymous with road racing, both competing and road racing. Eddie McGourley, one of the club's



outstanding riders, had in his early career competed in the amateur Vaux GP without a great deal of success. In 1970 however, following the last-minute withdrawal of the French Team, Eddie found himself and five other riders in a hastily formed Regions Team for the Milk Race. His performance was surprisingly, the revelation of the race and it was perhaps fitting that Eddie staked his claim to his eventual King of the Mountains title by an excellent

ride in the Vaux country of his home ground.

The race started in Blackpool with a prologue time trial; the first yellow jersey going to Matt De Koning of the Dutch team. The early stages from Blackpool to Penrith and from Penrith to Carlisle saw McGourley active on the early climbs; he was fourth up the first category Hartside behind Gary Crewe (GB), Mikolajczyk (Poland), and Peter Doyle (Ireland). Crewe was at that time leading the KOM competition.

The 108 miles fourth stage from Carlisle to South Shields covered territory familiar to the Houghton rider and finished virtually on the club's back doorstep; an obvious incentive for a local lad.

McGourley, pictured, easing up much to the relief of the riders behind him, after picking up yet more 'KoM' points on an early climb, was one of a chasing group of four riders in pursuit of



Standing out in his white jersey, Eddie McGourley sits up at the head of the bunch at a hill summit. Eddie won the "King of the Mountain" award by consistently excellent climbing. 105 is Jiri Zelenka (Czech).

an early break up the Hartside Pass between Alston and Penrith on the race's second visit to the climb in two days.

The two breaks became one on the climb out of Alston to Killhope Moor and two riders drifted back to the bunch. McGourley, with Daley and Crewe (both GB), Sutcliffe (Regions) and Ruston (England) worked well together and by Stanhope the bunch was at 5-15.

Eddie McGourley, John Watson, Sid Barrass, Danny Horton, Dave Cummins and Dave Hill pictured in a national Star Trophy race.



The climbs of

Crawleyside, Castleside and Maidenlaw followed; McGourley took the latter, applauded and encouraged by a crowd containing local heroes of the past, Bill and Norman Baty. The bunch was now at 6-40 when at Stanley on the 80 mile mark the Polish rider Stanchura rode away from the break, downhill, gaining 1-55 by East Boldon, 12 miles from the finish. Then the much-discussed level crossing incident happened. Stanchura was well clear of the break as it approached the level crossing for a small industrial siding; the gates closed, and the race official present did not have the presence of mind to delay the simple, unhurried shunting operation. The break had lost 3-25 by the time they re-started; Brian Rushton had run through the pedestrian gates only to be penalised five minutes at the race finish; two chasers, Mikolajczyk and Konecny (Czec) joined the break, and Phil Edwards and John Varley (England) with Troche and Wich of West Germany, who had previously been six minutes down on the breakaway, suddenly found themselves also joining it with ten miles to go. Stachura won the stage by 1-58 from Ruston and by 3-30 from Edwards and the rest of the break. McGourley and Sutcliffe finished in 9th and 10th place respectively. Without the level crossing incident the overnight positions on General Classification would have been:

1. Stachura (Poland)
2. Ruston (England) at 2-0
3. Crewe (GB) at 3-15
4. Sutcliffe (Regions) at 3.25
5. McGourley (Regions) at 4-15

Obviously at such an early stage in the race, a great deal could have happened, but such a high GC position after a home stage could only have encouraged the local riders further. After the 6th stage to Bridlington the early hilly stages were over and McGourley was placed 19th on General Classification, 5-35 down on the leader Mikolajczyk of Poland. It was on the 118-mile 12th stage from Weston to Weymouth that McGourley overtook Crewe's KOM lead, eventually finishing the race 34th out of the 52 riders completing the race: and wearing the white jersey of Mountains Leader. Eddie had been an outstanding and much respected local rider for many years both in road races and time trials, achieving a 53 minute '25'. HCC club wins included a 10 mile championship in 1961, several 25, 50 and 100 mile championships, 5 Hill Climb wins, and the BAR Championship in 1967. His milk race performance earned him selection for the 1971 event, a race which was unable to finish; but the memory of his stirring ride in 1970 lingers on and provides an incentive for many aspiring riders in the North-East.



PHOTOS FROM EDDIE WINS IN SUNDERLAND ECHO, ZERNY TWO-DAY AND HOUGHTON FEAST



CLASSIC



A LITTLE MORE TEXT

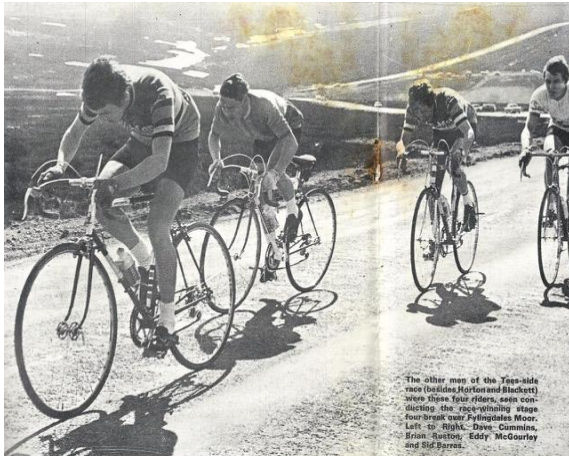
- 68 career victories**
- 1970 Sunderland Echo GP**
- 1971 Tour of the Border four day**
- 1971 Cleveland two day**

1972 NE Divisional Road Race Champion.

THE SEVENTIES, A DECADE OF CHANGE

The original transcript of Houghton CC's history, written in the golden anniversary year of 1982, entitled this chapter 'HARD TIMES' and read "The seventies proved to be a testing time for the Houghton club. Changing social, sporting and financial attitudes to cycling, accentuated in the north by economic depression made it progressively more and more difficult to maintain the club's membership and activities at their previous level Some of the guiding and inspiring personalities in the club, including Tommy Rennoldson, were forced to take up less active roles, and regrettably the club rooms, built on so much effort and dedication, were sold back to the quarry company in the mid- seventies".

Whereas this sentiment is partly factual, and despite a significant drop in membership towards the middle of the decade, it does not tell the full story of this period, isolated between the 1960's and the 1980's, the two most successful periods in the club's existence. In reality, the renaissance of the 1980's actually began in the mid 1970's, due to the enthusiasm and inspiration of members who kept the flag flying high between 1969 and 1976.



The other men of the Teesside race (besides Horton and Blackett) were five four riders, seen concluding the race-winning stage four days later Fylingdales Moor. Left to Right: Dave Cummins, Brian Ruston, Eddy McGourley and Sid Barras.

This image captures Dave Cummins and Eddie McGourley leading Brian Ruston and Sid Barras over Fylingdales Moor in the 1971 Teesside Easter 4-Day.

The bottom image features the start of the 1973 Sunderland Echo Grand Prix with Houghton riders Peter Reed, Dave Maughan and Cliff Davison in

the front rows of the start line in Mowbray Road, Sunderland.



Dave Cummins writes: 'After the Vaux years there was a lasting legacy of road racing in the club, and there was always a full programme of racing in both the North East and Teesside Divisions. The club had a top tier of first category riders in Eddie McGourley, Dave Cummins, Cliff Davison, Jack Wright, and briefly, Dave Hill with a strong second tier comprising Tom Corps, Deacon Hopps, Peter Reed, Rob Rendall, Barry Harkness, and a string of up-and-coming talent later in the decade. The picture features Barry Harkness, Alan Peterson, Deacon Hopps and Peter Reed at the start of 1970 Richmond 3rd cat & Junior Race. There was always a scramble to enter



events as usually races were oversubscribed, so if riders couldn't get into a NE event, they would try Teesside or North Yorkshire. The top tier also took part in National Star Trophy races such as the Tour of Essex, the Archer GP, Deeside GP, Tour of Furness, Manchester-Rhyl, the Manx International and many more, with varied success of wins and top placings'.

Eddie's career is highlighted elsewhere in this journal, particularly his impressive forty wins between 1969 and 1972, the year he retired from top level racing, only to return as a veteran ten years later. Most if not all of the other lads enjoyed success at the different levels and disciplines, they raced.

Dave Cummins had a long and distinguished racing career with many podium places in races throughout Britain and clocked up an impressive win portfolio, including both stages and an overall classification win in the 1968 Newcastle Cheviot Two-Day; a win in the 1968 Waskerley Road Race; a stage 2 win in the



1971 Tour Of The Border Four Day Classic; several wins in road races

on the Quarrington Hill circuit; a GC win in the 1977 Velo Club Electric 2-day and a fine win in the 1973 Houghton Feast Road Race.



The vibrant racing scene at Houghton attracted talented riders from other local clubs. Paul Blackett joined in the mid sixties from Wearside Wheelers and was a key rider in the sponsored Houghton Vaux team, going on to represent Great Britain in the Milk Race and other national and international races. Peter Chapman and Phil Maughan also left Wearside for Houghton and later in the sixties, they were joined by Tom Corps Junior, Rob Rendall and Dave Maughan. Dave recorded a number of impressive wins, two in particular in successive years of the Ferryhill Wheelers 2-Day in 1968 and 1969. Whether this slow drift of riders leaving Wearside Wheelers for Houghton CC partly contributed to their decline is uncertain, but by the mid seventies, when Houghton were also suffering from a decline in membership, and several Tyneside and Teesside clubs had also shut their doors, the Wheelers ceased to exist and the Houghton ranks were bolstered by the remaining Wheelers, including John Watmore, Dave Penny and Dave Clark.

Tom Corps senior, fondly known as Big T joined Houghton in 1967 and soon became the de-facto director sportif, team manager, soigneur, team driver, team service and general unsung hero of Houghton's racing teams for a number of years in the seventies. A well-known and much loved character, Tom was an ever present on the domestic and continental tours that featured Houghton racing members, four of whom, Dave Cummins, Eddie McGourley, Tom Corps Jr and Cliff Davison made two trips to race in Nancy, SE France, which was twinned with Newcastle. The party was given a civic send off by the mayor and mayoress of Newcastle, the occasion captured in the local press and featured the civic pair flanked by Cliff and Dave to their right, Tom and Eddie to their left, and the legend that was 'Big T' next to the mayoress.



?

Cycle racing, and especially when reporting local success, was well covered in the local press, and reports in the Sunderland Echo, Newcastle Journal and Evening Chronicle often featured Houghton riders. These extracts feature Dave Cummins' 1973 Houghton Feast win, celebrating Dave's final lap break on the climb of Moorsley, winning solo from a quality field which included top local riders Colin Davidson, Paul Blackett and John Sutcliffe, along with the 1971 Sunderland Echo winner Jim Baker of Leeds RRC. Next is a feature saluting Eddie McGourley's first of two wins in the 1970 Sunderland Echo GP, wearing race number 13,



narrowly beating former teammate Paul Blackett of VC Electric, winner of the very first Echo Grand Prix in 1965 wearing Houghton Vaux colours.

This article pictures the legendary Ray Wetherell, Houghton's Dave Cummins, Jim Baker of Leeds RRC and Dave McCready of Newcastle engaged in an unsuccessful chase to catch the breakaway in the 1975 Sunderland Echo GP which was won by Roy Taylor of Harrogate, from Paul Blackett of VC Electric and Arthur Caygill of Richmond CC.



Finally, a much earlier piece in an Evening Chronicle series featuring local sporting heroes, this edition focusing on Houghton's Peter Chisman, cheerfully advising aspiring young readers, that if they want success at the top level, they have to hurt themselves in doing so. The article states that in his Tour of Britain winning year of 1963, Chis raced a massive 5500 miles in just 5 months, and that after a bad crash in the Tour l'Avenir, he promptly won his next six races in succession. It's got to hurt!

Dave Cummins continued his reminiscences, 'there were also several trips abroad to Kamp-Lintfort in Germany organised by Peter Reed. In the 1974 trip, nine club members took part in races ranging from elite to junior and schoolboy. The Houghton contingent stayed as guests of the Kamp-Lintfort officials and members, and returned the compliment when they came over to England to race.



Time trials were also an important part of the local racing scene, both open and closed events. Particular stand-outs were Houghton specialists Cliff Davison and Derek Reay, the latter





In 1978 Houghton CC promoted the first ever races to be held on the promenade at Seaburn, mirroring the more well known Morecambe promenade events that were popular at that time.



The 1982 edition of Houghton CC's history made reference to the sale of the clubrooms in Quarry Row. Situated just on the left of the works entrance from Quarry Row, they are no longer standing, but were used for many years by the quarry as a weigh ticket office. The drop in membership and the lack of use of the facility did go some way to trigger the sale but the story is a little more interesting when told by the club secretary at the time, Peter Reed.

In 1973, the very year in which the club membership had dropped to an all time low of just 35, a young and enthusiastic cyclist from Seaham joined the club. Dave Ranson was one of four brothers who were mad on cycling.

Dave's older brother George also joined in 1973, and year later, his two younger brothers, Richie and Chris joined as schoolboys and started racing immediately. Other young riders joined them, Martin Nuttall, Arthur Hodgen, and soon the club had an enthusiastic junior and schoolboy racing section. Dave and George pictured.



Chris and Richie Ranson line up at the start of a schoolboy race held in Houghton Rectory Park,



The young Ranson brothers raced from the moment they joined Houghton CC and are pictured above on Roker Promenade, and left in a schoolboy race in Dusseldorf, part of the Houghton-Kamp Lintfort exchanges which also brought young German riders across to race in North East events. Three of the brothers, Dave, Chris and Richie line up



.....

Dave Ranson recalls the brothers, the youngest aged just 11 and 12, along with mate Hodgy, riding up to Edmundbyers Youth Hostel around 1972/3, only to be turned away because it was full and they hadn't pre-booked, resulting in a long ride home and a scolding from mum. The brothers raced, trained, toured, lived and breathed cycling. A true breath of fresh air into what was considered retrospectively as a club in decline.

This seventies decade not only found new and younger members to fill the huge drop in membership earlier in the decade, but it also saw a return to racing by members who had retired in the mid and late sixties, in particular Dave Donnelly, Denny Lyons, and several more.

And there's even more to this decade to record in our club's history!

In 1974, Deacon Hopps and Rob Rendall packed their bags and their bikes and headed to Brittany for the summer, returning home at the end of the season. Deacon recalls that they were inspired, or rather encouraged by the Cavanets, a Breton family of racing cyclists, some of whom came over to race in England and encouraged the home based riders they met to travel to France to race. Brittany and Belgium were the beating heart of continental cycle racing, but the Houghton pair chose Brittany, which Deacon describes as 'bike racing mad', with

Afin que leurs huit enfants survolent les courses cyclistes, Andrée et Marcel Canevet leur ont offert le matériel nécessaire. Pour avoir grandi entre les vélos du magasin où tous ont tenu sur deux roues aussi vite que debout. On n'échappe pas à son destin. Hormis leurs frères cyclistes. Bon nombre de leurs héritiers aussi.



La famille au complet avec (de g à dr) Marcel (frère), Muriel, Michel, Noël, Gilles Le Moen, Danièle, Henry, Boris, Lionel et Marcel (père).

Richard Hoffs et Robert Rendall les deux Anglais de l'U.C.C.

L'U.C.C. carhaisienne possède la particularité de posséder en son sein deux coureurs de nationalité anglaise, que tous les amateurs de la « petite reine » de la région connaissent.

Cela fait en effet maintenant quatre ans que nos deux Anglais, Richard Hoffs et Robert Rendall, font partie de l'effectif de l'U.C.C. et séjournent chaque année dans la région, du mois de mai jusqu'au mois d'octobre, c'est-à-dire le temps d'une saison cycliste.

Richard Hoffs est né à Durham et Robert Rendall à Sunderland, deux villes distantes de 20 kilomètres et ont licenciés en Angleterre au même club - Houghton.

Ils possèdent, en effet, la particularité d'avoir trois licences, une anglaise, une française et une internationale.

Ils ont fait la connaissance, en Angleterre, d'un professeur gourou, qui n'est autre que le frère de Lionel Canevet, bien connu des férus du cyclisme. Il n'en fallait pas plus pour que celui-ci les engage à venir tenter leur chance en Bretagne où, comme on le sait, le cyclisme est florissant et où les courses sont fort nombreuses chaque week-end.

De là à prendre une licence à l'U.C.C., il n'y avait qu'un pas, ils l'ont franchi bien vite.

Ils ont trouvé, au sein du club carhaisien, une ambiance chaleureuse et ont bien vite sympathisé avec les coureurs locaux et les dirigeants.

« Nous avons été bien accueillis, et tout le monde a été sympathique avec nous. Nous connaissons maintenant beaucoup de monde à Carhaix et dans la région... », ont-ils déclaré, alors qu'ils partaient pour



CARHAIX. — Richards Hoffs et Robert Rendall, les deux coureurs d'outre-Manche de l'U.C.C. carhaisienne, au cours d'une sortie d'entraînement.

four to five races every week, featuring anything from three to three hundred participants. Racing was fast and furious, on mainly hilly circuits and the public were charged for admission to watch the races at the vantage points, on the climbs and in the finish line area. The boys raced for a local club, Union Cycliste Carhaisienne based in the town of Carhaix, and lived anywhere they could get cheap accommodation, in

spare rooms, caravans and even a converted garage at one point. They returned home at the end of summer but went back the following spring, and stayed there permanently, living, working and racing. Living the dream, they called it. Deacon still lives there today. Rob tragically died in a collision with a car while out training, at the age of 38. Deacon's memories would fill book on their own, sharing their adventures with a small community of young British racing cyclists, as well as the local Breton racing fraternity, eventually becoming well known members of Brittany's racing scene. In winter they would find work in the sugar beet factories, saving for a summer of training and racing, but later would, with the help of local friends, get permanent jobs in line with their trade, Rob as a car panel beater, Deacon as a lab technician at the local hospital.

Their races were predominantly 2nd and 3rd cat races where they would compete for the cash prizes, but they would also ride 1st and 2nd cat races, the fields of which would often include ex pro's and on occasions, current grand tour riders looking to fill their season with temptingly lucrative criteriums. These were the races that prepared Bernard Hinault for his later rise to prominence and his place in Tour history. Locals would often recall that a young Anglais called Tom Simpson also cut his teeth in the hard and fast criterium races in Brittany in the early part of his career.

Deacon recalls that this area of Brittany was addicted to the excitement of fast and furious bike racing, and the riders were treated like gods. They would call at the butchers for their weekly meat order and the proprietor would occasionally waive payment if they promised to patronise his shop and for the goodwill of being associated with these sporting gods.

They were almost celebrities, these young English boys on a huge adventure,

racing against home based French riders, providing entertainment to the public and representing their Breton home town of Carhaix in the big races. This press cutting celebrates a brilliant win in a Trebrivan race for the Englishman Rendall riding for UC Carhaix.



Prize money was shared out at the end of the season when the club received their allocation from the French Cycling Federation, but prime money was paid in cash on the day and became a valuable lifeline in topping up their savings from working the winter in the sugar beet factory.

Dave Ranson joined the Bretons of Houghton CC in 1977 along with Martin Nuttall, again the following year in 1978, and again between 1980 and 1982, brothers Richie and Chris joining him during school holidays and later when they could get time off from their job apprenticeships.

RANSON		1978	
18-6-78	LANKIVAN	7 ^h	50 ^h
25-6-78	DUALT	15 ^h	10 ^h
2-7-78	PLOUNEVIZEL	8 ^h	45 ^h
5-7-78	PLOUARSTEL DOUHAS	9 ^h	80 ^h
6-7-78	SPREZET	1 ^h	170 ^h (m)
7-7-78	POULLAQUIN A/B	12 ^h	80 ^h
13-7-78	KERGLOFF	11 ^h	30 ^h
18-7-78	LOUARGAT	10 ^h	30 ^h
2-8-78	PLEYBEN A/B	6 ^h 8	20 ^h
8-8-78	KERMEUR	7 ^h	80 ^h
10-8-78	PAUKE	15 ^h	10 ^h
		605 ^h	

Dave recalls the annual prize money payout and keeps some of his receipts as memorabilia. This is his 1978 payout, totalling 605 francs.



Just like Rob and Deacon, Dave also recalls the need for prime wins to boost weekly income. Rob was a good sprinter and a canny operator in sprints and primes, tucking in behind the race favourites, switching from side to side so they weren't aware of his presence on their wheel, then jumping out of their slipstream for the cash prime. The newspaper cutting above pictures Deacon and Rob being interviewed after a race, the headline describing them as 'Two English chasers of primes'.

Rob and Dave pictured at the end of the 1977 season when Dave had spent part of the summer living in someone's summer house at the bottom of their garden, and the rest in some empty farm buildings in Carhaix. Like Rob and Deacon, Dave spent his early winters in the sugar factories, potato picking, and working on building sites but later found work at his trade of bricklaying.



Dave's recollections of journeys home are most entertaining, on one occasion sleeping in their 1949 Ford Popular on the hard shoulder after a wheel fell off, then exchanging the car for the price of a train fare home, and on another occasion trying to get home in Deacon's Mark 1 Cortina with no starter motor, no dynamo, and half of the exhaust tied to the roof rack. Dave's Continental racing experiences are worth recalling, firstly riding for local Club Chateaufort Du Faou, and then following some good results in local events, gaining selection into bigger stage races, for his club's sponsored team Giro Bianchi AO. Dave rode the Tour de Mauges in the Loire Valley for the AO Team, and the top level regional race, the Tour of Brittany, when after an early mechanical stop due to a loose front mech caused him to lose contact with the race, he then got lost, was redirected back onto the route, but then unfortunately finished outside the time limit.



Despite not speaking any French, Dave had managed to cover the whole route, the entire 157 kilometers of the stage from Chateaulin to Larmor Plage and after reconsideration, the race judges allowed him to start the following day. A cutting from the local press describes The Misadventures of Ranson.

Dave also rode the 1977 Essor Breton, a classic stage race that still ranks amongst the top French elite stage races today.

Dave's best win came in the 1978 GP de Spezet, a win he modestly accredits to the



help he got from his Club Carhaix mates, Rob Rendall and Deacon Hopps. The photograph pictures Dave with two AO sponsors after the Spezet win, along with the winner's bouquet. Dave has a huge collection of memories from those days, living on a farm with brother Richie, having to use a thunderbox as a toilet, helping the farmer with calving, Richie crashing out in 1982 at the age of 19, sneaking younger brother

Chris into races in their names, and much more. These great stories of this era, from Dave Cummins, Peter Reed, Deacon Hopps, and Dave Ranson are a wonderful insight into Houghton's club life in the 1970's.

The question is whether the seventies were in fact, the hard times as they were considered from one perspective, or, from the stories we have just read, should they not be considered the good times? Most certainly, the late seventies and early eighties saw a great national revival in interest in cycling, and the Houghton club, to the credit of the solid core of stalwart members and a regular Friday club night in a community centre a few hundred yards away from the old club rooms, was able to harness some of this interest. 1982 saw the club's largest membership for many years; and at that time possibly the biggest membership in the North East. An announcement in the 'Cycling' magazine declared that the BCF North-East Division had shown a record increase in membership of 24% which to a considerable extent was reflected in the re-growth of the Houghton club's fortunes.

THE EIGHTIES, A MOVE TO NEWBOTTLE.....A NEW BEGINNING, NEW FACES AND A NEW ERA.

Aware that interest in cycling was increasing both nationally and locally, the club set about harnessing this new energy; keen to promote cycling at all levels and in all directions, particularly amongst younger members, the living foundation of cycling's future. Club officials were alarmed to hear the



opinion expressed from the floor at the 1979 North East Division date fixing meeting that a divisional schoolboy championship was not needed as there

were no schoolboys in the region, and that additionally there was no suitable circuit for them. With the kind cooperation of Durham County Council, a hilly half mile circuit was secured for 1980 in the grounds of County Hall, Durham City. Road cones were borrowed from the County Engineers Department and sponsorship obtained from Sunderland Machine Installations Ltd. Bean Bag Clothing, another local firm, provided an attractive winner's jersey. The results were encouraging. Mark Barry of the Leeds St Christopher CC won the event from a field of 23 entries. Simon Reynolds of the Tyneside Vagabonds won the NE and Cleveland divisional title, with the Houghton pair Alastair Dick and Mark Cottrell finishing 3rd and 5th respectively. The 1981 event attracted a field of 31 and was won by Mike Gilby of Hambleton CC, one of the region's stars of the future, from Houghton's Mark Cottrell. David Pike was fourth, Paul Graham sixth and Simon Campbell thirteenth. Later that year Mark Cottrell rode to a fine second place in the National Schoolboy Cyclo-Cross championships at the age of fourteen; thirteen-year-old Simon Campbell also made his mark in that event, taking second place in the under fourteen category. In 1982, from a previous situation of no schoolboys and no circuit, Houghton CC promoted five schoolboy events on four different circuits. A special 'easy' club run was introduced to supplement the regular Sunday run to cater for youngsters just beginning in cycling and for anyone wishing to enjoy a leisurely paced bike ride.

The accent on youth had started 10 years earlier and combined with the return of older members to club life, provided the springboard for the phenomenal success of the eighties to happen. Club runs continued to be the



staple of club weekends, but other activities were introduced to channel the interest of young and old alike.

Roller racing sessions were introduced to midweek club nights at the Newbottle Community Centre Clubrooms, or rather re-introduced as the activity had been popular in the early and mid-sixties. This photograph pictures Rob Cooper, the author of the original Houghton CC 1932-1982 History being held in position before taking part in a competitive roller session.



The bottom image features a mass club charity ride to raise funds for Copt Hill School, a primary school on the Racecourse Estate in Houghton le Spring. The ride, to York and back, was led by Joe Murphy. Prominent senior club members included John Coulson, Peter Tuckwell, Dave Cummins, Dave Turner and the much loved, remarkable bike, trike and penny farthing rider, Tommy Thompson.



The surge in club membership and club activities naturally impacted on the racing scene. Young bike riders love to compete and the appetite for racing in all disciplines triggered an era of Houghton CC hosted events masterminded by the club racing secretary, John Neal.

The Pitman's Derby became a major feature of the Houghton CC calendar in the late 70's and early 1980's, run in the old mining area of Annfield Plain and Stanley. Resurrected in 1979, the event proved to be something of a milestone along the club's road to recovery and in some ways mirrored the increasing confidence and strength of the Houghton club. Tees-sider Sid Barras was the winner of the new event's predecessor, but the new look

1979 event, sponsored by Morrison Road Garages was won by Robin Walmesley (Lakes RC) in the Cat 1, 2, 3 race, and by David Stevens (Leeds St Christopher CC) in the 3rd Cat/Junior race. (Race start pictured right).



TEXT

TEXT

Two posters highlighting the 1983 and 1984 editions of the races, a 3rd cat and junior race over 39 miles, and the Pitman's Derby itself, a 1st, 2nd and 3rd cat race covering 65 miles.



For the 1980 edition, a new course and a new sponsor had to found. Volvo dealers Masters & Milburn of Craghead provided the financial support, backed by local advertisers in the Race Programme; and the dreaded Quaking Houses Bank provided the basis of the new circuit. Both the senior and junior races



were held in thick fog, as you can see from the image of Houghton's Dave Penny mid race. Kevin Byers (Thornaby CRT) won the 3/Junior race, with Houghton's John Mawson placed 6th, while local superstar Joe Waugh's performance in winning the senior 1/2/3 Cat race brought mixed looks of admiration and fear from the visiting EV Dusseldorf team. Masters & Milburn continued their sponsorship in 1981 and 1982 supported by King of Mountains sponsor Colway Tyres who extended the scope of their involvement in cycle racing by sponsoring the 1982 National Road Race Championships, organised by Houghton CC and held in Durham City.



Another race in the Houghton calendar was the Waldridge fell Classic. Houghton's Ian Maitland pictured

.....



Houghton's race officials, Dave Clark, George Erskine, Brian Coffey, Tommy Thompson and event organiser John Neal compare notes.


The Houghton CC Golden jubilee year of 1982 featured an ambitious programme of events including the National Junior Road Race Championships and a town centre criterium series in the home town of Houghton le Spring. With financial support from Sunderland Borough Council and a predominance of youth amongst the membership, the club focused this Golden Jubilee year on laying the foundations for many years to come.

**HOUGHTON C C
GOLDEN JUBILEE
TOWN CENTRE CRITERIUMS**

1.00 SCHOOLBOY EVENT (25 MINS PLUS LAP)	2.40 FIRST, SECOND, THIRD CATEGORY EVENT (45 MINS PLUS LAP)
1.45 JUNIOR LADIES THIRD CATEGORY EVENT (35 MINS PLUS LAP)	3.40 PROFESSIONAL EVENT (1 HOUR PLUS LAP)

Sunday 20th June 1982

Houghton Cycling Club Promotions, under British Cycling Federation Rules



The Broadway will be closed to traffic from 11.30 a.m.
All other roads in the town close 12.30 a.m. to 5.30 a.m.

June 20th 1982, same day as England played Czechoslovakia in the opening match of the world cup. Still a good crowd. Phil Bayton won the professional race and England won 2-0.



Ditto storyline on Golden Jubilee



MORE STORYLINE ON GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY RACES

Vaux Grand Prix races

Houghton Cycling Club



VAUX
Cycling Grand Prix
1/2/3 70miles, 12-45-3-50pm approx




SWALLOW HOTELS
Cycling Grand Prix
3/J 42miles 9-45-11-40am approx

Sunday 2nd June 1985



Houghton Cycling Club in association with
BOROUGH OF SUNDERLAND
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND LIBRARIES



VAUX
Cycling Grand Prix
120 miles, Category 1,
10.00am until 2.50pm approx.
A National Star Trophy Event
Sunday 6th July 1986

HOUGHTON CYCLING CLUB
IN ASSOCIATION WITH
VAUX BREWERIES AND BOROUGH OF SUNDERLAND
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND LIBRARIES
PRESENT THE

VAUX CYCLING GRAND PRIX
A National Star Trophy Event in the Main

SUNDAY 23RD JULY 1989
10.00 A.M. UNTIL 2.30 P.M.

**STARTING AND FINISHING AT
SILKSWORTH LEISURE CENTRE**






promoted under British Cycling Federation Rules

Houghton Cycling Club present
A National Star Trophy Event

Vaux Cycling Grand Prix
10.00am until 2.50pm approx. 112 miles
Starts and Finishes outside Masons Arms, South Stanley
Sunderland Machine Design King of the Mountains
Jvan Fairless (Electrical Contractor) Hot Spot Sprints
Sunday 5th July 1987



Storyline on re-emergence of Vaux sponsored racing

Story line on Houghton Feast RR



The first version of Houghton C C's history, entitled 1932-1982, written by Rob Cooper, covered the first 50 years up until the Golden Anniversary of 1982, but the document was thoughtfully extended by chairman Harry Brown to include the years between 1982 and 2007, the club's 75th anniversary, and continued to bring alive the phenomenal success of the eighties.

In the 1980's Houghton CC had more trike riders than any other club in the country and in 1985 a team

of Noel Knox, Dave Turner and Tommy Thompson won the team prize in the national 24-hour time trial.

Noel also gained the Higgins Trophy for the fastest 25 in 1983 and 1984 with record times of 1-0-04 and 59-50 respectively and gaining the

vets national record of 24-10 for 10 miles and 4-26-30 for 100 miles.



1992 National Hillclimb, Chapelfell

The late eighties and most of the nineties were dominated, racing wise, by the prolific Houghton winner Martin Gibson who became one of the North East's top riders and scooped the majority of club awards each year.

In a Houghton career that spanned 20 years, Martin won an incredible nine 10 Mile TT Championships, thirteen 25 Mile, nineteen 50 Mile and seventeen 100 Mile Championships, leading to sixteen Overall Club Championship and BAR Awards in a period of 18 years.

Right, Martin winning the 2004 edition of the Sloan Trophy, an esteemed and historic road race held around the Stamfordham circuit.



Martin first joined Houghton CC in late 1982. In 1983 he took part in two club 10's on a bike that was far too small for him and wearing a yellow T shirt, tracksuit bottoms and trainers. By the end of 1985, on a correctly sized bike, he took part in Houghton and Sunderland Clarion hill climbs, and the following year he started his first full year of racing. 1987 brought him a handful of podium finishes and two wins, but 1988 was a watershed year, both on the road and in TT's with 2 wins and 21 2nd place finishes.



Hartside Hillclimb 1992

M Gibson



2001 National 50

Martin's first Open win was the Ridley CC 3-uptime trial, along with teammates Chris Brown and Ken Rutherford. As well as being Martin's first win, it was also Ken's first win in HCC colours and Chris's first Open TT.

During the late 1980's a new discipline in cycling emerged from the USA, that of Mountain Biking. Chunky, go anywhere bikes and tyres, a wide range of gears with flat handlebars. At the same time, in the UK, the sustainable transport charity Sustrans were opening disused railway routes as off-road cycle paths. By the early to mid 90's, mountain biking was the most popular aspect of cycling and cycle sport. With the establishment of the Coast to Coast cycle route and many others like it, mountain biking was a great alternative to road riding, and still is today of course. Many Houghton CC members have made the C2C crossing over the years, most popularly over two days, but Jon Mawson became the first cyclist to make the crossing this century, starting his formidable ride at 12.01am on 1st January 2000, finishing late in the afternoon of the same day.

With mountain biking came MTB racing and other forms of competition, including National Trailquest one-day events. Paul Cottrell of Houghton CC finished in the Top 10 of the National MTB Championships in the early 90's. Jon Mawson and Martin Gibson pictured in MTB mode at the Polaris two-day Challenge event on the Brecon Beacons in 2005. Chuck Taylor and Alistair McGregor often joined Jon and Martin as Polaris regulars, occasionally making the Top 10 out of 600 strong two-man teams. Jon and Martin also rode National Series events in Kielder Forest, either together as a two-man team or as solo entrants. 1994 saw Martin finishing on the podium after racing through pounding rain and sleet in Mid-November.



Jon Mawson and Martin Gibson at the Polaris Challenge MTB Event 2005, Brecon Beacons

Over the years, Martin picked up many wins and top 10 placings in both road racing and time trials, as well as Top-20 placings in National 50- and 100-mile TT's and Hill Climb Championships.



Martin was the first HCC rider to beat 4 hours for 100 miles with a 3.57 which still stands as a club record. As a competitive Houghton racing member, race organiser, and even marshal (when required), Martin has a wealth of experience and stakes his place with the many other HCC icons featured in this club history journal.

Harry Brown's excellent contribution to our club's history focused on the youth successes of that golden eighties period.



In the early 80's, Houghton were well represented on the road by younger members, including Gary Firth who won the Quaking Houses GP in 1983, Jon Mawson who had a top 10 finish in the same race, Simon Campbell, Mark Cottrell and Dave Pike (pictured), but by

1985, only Jon remained, the others moving on to other clubs. Their places were filled by other young riders; Chris Brown, John Jamieson, Michael Huston, Paul Cottrell, Russell Watmore, Paul Maven, Trevor Sirmond and Martin Gibson, and several more.

John Watmore re-joined HCC, making a comeback to racing as a veteran after a few years away from the sport. Ken Rutherford also joined the club from the Royal Navy around this time. Bob Smith joined those two veterans to mentor the young group of newcomers, and Paul, Chris and Michael went on to dominate juvenile road and cyclo-cross racing in the north-east throughout the mid 80's. Paul Maven won the silver medal in the 1986 National CX Championships. John Jamieson and Trevor Sirmond became very good short distance time trialists, and Russell Watmore raced successfully in Houghton colours as a juvenile and as a junior, retiring from racing in 1991.

In the year 1980, the Houghton CC promoted a late evening series of cyclo-cross racing at the Beamish Open Air Museum, with roller racing to keep the public entertained between races.

Tommy Thompson?





This club member group photo was taken in 1987 at Houghton Welfare and Sports Centre. The club were looking for a new venue but after careful consideration a decision was made to remain at Newbottle Community Centre. The front row includes a number of younger riders including Trevor Sirmond, a winner of the club 10 Series and a 25 mile TT title in the late 80's, Russell Watmore who went on to win both the Schoolboy and Junior Road Race titles, along with John Jamieson, Michael Huston who was Schoolboy and Junior RR Champion in the mid to late 90's, and Steve Swift .



Early 1980's group of keen mid-week TT enthusiasts waiting at the East Rainton slip road to sign on for the Midweek 10 Mile TT Series. L-R Jon Mawson, Chris Ranson, Mark Cotterill, and Richie Ranson.

Right, another early 1980's group meeting, this one at the White Lion for an Autumn YH trip to Dent; Richie Ranson, Wayne Foster, Steve Hughes, Simon Graham, unknown rider, Martin Nuttall, John Neal, Dave Penny, Davy Ranson and Alistair Dick.



Dave Ranson's memory of YHA trips recalls that they would deliberately wait as long as possible in the mornings in the hope that there would be no chores left to do, but on this occasion, Martin got the job of cleaning the breakfast pots, so in a hurry he hid the scrambled egg pan at the back of the cupboard. It is little wonder that Youth Hostel wardens treat cyclists with suspicion.

In subsequent years and in common with most other cycling clubs in the country at that time there was a slow decline in the number of young people joining the club. Inevitably there was also a drift away from the racing scene as some of the older members hung up their racing shoes; but there were some notable exceptions. Peter Tuckwell beat the hour on a number of occasions after turning sixty and regularly won the fastest vet award in the club 10's and other events.



On the subject of leisure cycling, and particularly in respect of the older members whose activities during this golden period have so far sadly been neglected, Harry, in his 1982-2007 chapters, recalls that from the mid-



eighties and into the nineties there was an increase in social cycling in the club with Noel Knox organising an annual trip to coincide with the Tour de France to various destinations including Ireland, Dieppe (for the Dieppe Raid), Holland and over the last few years, Brugge. A close bond was forged with the Solway Social Cycling Club who joined Houghton in sharing many of the club's social activities including Bruges and the spring weekend in the Lake District, while Houghton CC join them for their annual dinner at the Hundreth Hall hotel near

Cockermouth and competed in their 10's and 25's in late summer.

Throughout the eighties, the nineties, and into the early years of the 21st century, Newbottle Community Centre was at the centre of club life, where members met, socialised, started organised rides, and held important meetings. After the departure from their former Quarry Row residence, thirty years earlier, the centre became the new club rooms, to most members, the only clubrooms they had ever known, facilitating Friday evening meetings from 8.00pm onwards, right up until the closure of the building in 2008. Dave Cummins recalls that, following the move to Newbottle, the club were first housed in an austere prefabricated old classroom in the car park, but as it was falling apart and about to be demolished, the club were moved into the more civilised accommodation



within the main building. The community centre became a popular venue for club members to meet, and on occasions members of other clubs would call in for a cuppa and a chat. There was a tuck shop run for many years by

Fred Stobbart, Peter Mahan and Arthur Harrison, with other members helping out when required.

Two photos capturing members outside of the Newbottle clubrooms, including Joe Applegarth, Dave Cummins, Chuck Taylor and Ken Rutherford, assembled prior to the start of the club Reliability



Trial to Middleton in Teesdale and back, early in the 2000's.

From 1986 until the early 90's, Ken Rutherford organised circuit training classes for the club, and friends from Sunderland Clarion and Tyne Electric, initially in the gym at Silksworth Ski Slope, and later in larger premises Houghton Sports Centre.....

From the mid 80's period and right up until the millennium, the club still had its club run on Sunday mornings starting 10am from Houghton, alas however, for the most senior members, the days of long competitive rides were in the dim and distant past and were replaced by a leisurely ride to Durham by a multitude of routes but always ending in Venables for coffee and then onto the Three Horseshoes at Leamside for a couple of pints. Some members would meet on Friday nights at Seaham Hall to ride to the Dun Cow at Seaton and then onto the Three Horseshoes for similar liquid refreshment.

Younger members continued the tradition of

Harry's memoirs recall a return to the club of some members who due to family or work left the club many years ago (he himself returning after a break of 17 years) which he so rightly attributes to the bonds of friendship forged in the 50's and 60's. He goes on to reflect that the fact that there was a club to come back to was entirely due to the group of dedicated Houghton members who had remained steadfast with the club through thick and thin doing the essential work of administration and organisation without which the club would have ceased to exist, and made special reference to the contribution made by John Coulson, Dave Cummins, Bob Smith, and the late Tommy Thompson in this respect.



The stalwarts of Houghton Cycling Club, from the 60's to the new millennium

With many club members at that time in the late eighties and nineties in their fifties and sixties, some took to Audax and Reliability events to stay



connected with competitive cycling. Photo left, Jon Mawson and Gary Milner lead a group on the HCC Reliability Trial. The route took in

Left to right, the stalwarts of the Newbottle clubroom's Friday evening canteen, Peter Mahan and Arthur Harrison, out on the Audax fells with fellow members Barry Richards and Gary Milner.



The Reliability Trial developed into an Audax when in 2006, club member Joe Applegarth registered as an Audax organiser, and the Reliability Trial thus became the 100K Killhope Grimpeur Audax, the forerunner of our most

recent 2022 and 2023 Grimpeur editions run by Dave Cummins starting from Lanchester. Joe's enthusiasm for organising long distance events also gave birth to the Durham and Northumberland 200 with 3750 metres of climbing, taking in Parkhead Station, Hexham, Bellingham, Elsdon and Stocksfield. In 2007, the PBP year, Joe introduced The Gilpin Gallop, a 200k ride starting from Newbottle clubrooms, turning for the return leg at Boroughbridge, with a shorter 100k option for the sick and the weak turning at Neasham.

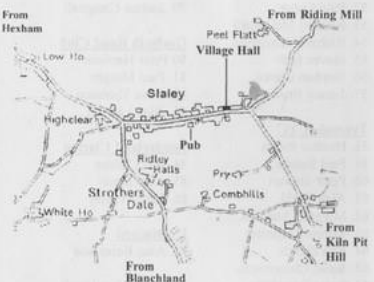


In recalling his long-distance cycling adventures, Joe Applegarth explains what Audax essentially is, and that in 1921, after earlier versions of epic distance riding, the Audax Club de Paris created the 'Brevet de Randonneurs', a series of 200 kilometre single or group excursions, or 'randonees' with minimum and maximum time limits. The ACP flagship event is Paris-Brest-Paris, in which participants are allocated 90 hours in which they must cover 1200K, and runs once every four years, which is roughly how long it takes to recover between each effort. It sounds like a lot of fun. Qualification for Paris-Brest-Paris, the brevet, requires

hopeful participants to complete qualifying rides of 200, 300, 400, and 600K within predetermined time limits. In 2007, a PBP year, Joe, then aged 67, along with daughter Jane, successfully completed 200, 300 and 400K rides, but abandoned the 600K event when Jane suffered serious knee pain. Joe later completed another 600K challenge which successfully gained him entry to that year's event, the 2007 PBP (Paris-Brest-Paris) but was forced to abandon after 52 hours and 700K having spent an uncomfortable night in a survival bag in a ditch near the top of the Roc du Trezeval. What a wimp? If our club history readers think that this is insane, some training rides in preparation for this epic self-flogging just beggar belief. Joe recalls one ride that required leaving home at midnight to ride to Cairnryan on the Galloway coast, take the morning ferry across to Larne in Northern Ireland, ride around the north and west of Antrim's Lough Neagh to the town of Schell, about 10 miles short of Mizzen Head, Ireland's equivalent of Land's End, have a quick snack and then remount for the ride home. Joe's preparation for PBP also included an entry into the Mersey Road Club 24 Hour TT in which he recorded a total of 317 miles. With no other Houghton members having completed a 24 hour TT, solo, by bicycle, Joe's effort subsequently stands as a club record. Two legends pictured: Joe Applegarth on Paris Roubaix's Arenberg Trench, part of the 2013 HCC trip to Flanders.



In the year 2000, the club ventured to create an event to celebrate the new Millennium. The 'Millenium Meet' invited all NE Regional clubs to meet at Slaley village hall for a get-together and buffet lunch. Dave Cummins organised the event along with Tommy Thompson and Gary Milner. The invitation was warmly received and 99 members and fellow regional club cyclists attended, including Houghton's Club President, Albert Wheeler, one of the founder members of the Houghton Clarion back in 1932.



SUNDAY JULY 9TH 2000

Clubs Millennium Meet & Riders

Slaley

Promoted by Houghton Cycling Club

Welcome to the Millennium Meet, an event for North East club cyclists.

The event brings together club cyclists from Northumberland and Durham, it's not a reliability trial, just a chance for a get together, a spot of lunch and a good 'crack'. There's also a free prize draw of cycle 'Goodies'.

Riders and Clubs should organise their own route to Slaley either direct or otherwise. The idea is that we all meet up at the lunch venue.

The location for the Millennium Meet is the Village Hall, Slaley, 6 miles south of Hexham. The hall is located at the east end of the village.

The Buffet Lunch is from 12.30pm, so please try to arrive between 12.30 and 1.00pm if you want to be fed. You can then linger as long as you want.

The Prize Draw will take place at approximately 1.15pm

Please hand in your ticket at the door, this will entitle you to lunch and entry into the prize draw.

Thanks for entering and enjoy the day.

Note, there is a road race taking place during the morning which passes through Slaley four times, if you want to watch some action.

Riders & Clubs →

Acknowledgements :
 Ladies of Slaley W.I. for Hall and Buffet Lunch
 Peter Harrison (Shimano) Prizes
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 Helpers from Houghton Cycling Club.

Organiser :
 Dave Cummins

www.houghtoncc.btinternet.co.uk



During the nineties and early 'noughties', some club members still attended the CTC York Rally, some camping and others with caravans. The club also organised the Trike 25 which coincided with the rally; while in 2006 and 2007 Chuck Taylor, Joe Applegarth and Harry Brown took part in the Ron Kitching 150k Audax challenge on the North York Moors.



Also during this period, Bob Smith and Ken Rutherford organised a regular Christmas Lunch at the King's Arms in Great Stainton on the Sunday before Christmas, the club riding en-groupe from Houghton, meeting members of Sunderland Clarion and other local cyclists before struggling back home full of Christmas pudding and ale. 2008 saw the club reliability trial become a 100k Audax organised by Dave Cummins on a course starting at Lanchester.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND A LITTLE MORE TEXT/EDIT FROM DAVE CUMMINS?????

In the year of 2007, the club had a total of 45 members but there was a major concern that, as the current membership were growing older, and unless there was an influx of younger members, the future of the club would be uncertain. On the bright side however, it was noted that the fact that there were as many club cyclists actively still cycling into their sixties, seventies and eighties was, and still is to this day, a testament to the benefits of cycling. The 2007 edit and extension by Harry Brown to 2007 of Rob Cooper's 1932-1982 club history ended with a note from Harry that, "finally, I know that most of you reading this will have been to the 75th Annual Dinner (2007) and have been associated with the club for many years. On behalf of Houghton Cycling Club, I would like to thank you for your support".

AND SO, FROM THAT HARRY BROWN 2007 UPDATE OF THE ORIGINAL ROB COOPER DOCUMENT, TO THE PRESENT.....

I'M HAPPY TO WRITE, IN DRAFT FORM, WITH PHOTOGRAPHS ETC, A FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE HOUGHTON CC HISTORY, TAKING US UP TO THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF 2022.

IT WOULD FOCUS ON THE INFLUX OF MEMBERSHIP DUE TO THE WIDELY DEBATABLE 'BRADLEY WIGGINS FACTOR' FROM 2008 ONWARDS, THE PROMOTION OF HCC RACING AT NISSAN AND HETTON, HOUGHTON FEAST CXNE EVENTS, THE CONTINUING CHANGE IN THE OVERALL AGE PROFILE OF THE CLUB, THE SUBSTANTIAL GROWTH IN MEMBERSHIP, THE FACTORS BEHIND THE WIDE RANGE OF CLUB RUNS THAT CURRENTLY OPERATE, THE CLUB TRIPS TO THE TOUR OF FLANDERS, PARIS ROUBAIX, THE SPAIN CICLO CLASSICS, AND WHATEVER ELSE ENTERS MY HEAD, TAKING US UP THE 90TH ANNIVERSARY.

I'M HAPPY TO SHARE A DRAFT COPY WITH EVERYONE, HARRY, EDDIE, DAVE CUMMINS, PETER, JOHN COULSON, BRIAN HOGARTH MAYBE, AND BETWEEN US WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO PUT TOGETHER A 90TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION OF THE DOCUMENT.

2007 – 2022

In the next three or four post 75th anniversary years, life within the Houghton Cycling Club went on much as it had done previously, regular club activities continued with Sunday club runs and the popular midweek Time Trial Series organised and managed by the dedicated members who had seen the club through thick and thin, through the lows and the highs, John Coulson, Harry Brown, Noel Knox, Dave Cummins, Dave Clark and many more, lifelong members who had more than ‘done their bit’ for the benefit and the very continuing existence of the cycling club. Membership had stabilised around the 45 mark, but there was a worrying undercurrent regarding fewer members participating in open time trials and road racing, and indeed, club activities in general. This racing trend would reverse, albeit briefly in the next decade but then take a significant backward step as you will read shortly. However, in that late period of the ‘noughties’, from 2008 onwards, a new category of semi-competitive cycling appeared and steadily increased in popularity across the world, although the new activity only really paid lip service to actual cycle racing. Nevertheless, it was a significant factor in the rising uptake in leisure cycling, which was to have a major impact on the fortunes of local cycling clubs, while also providing a platform for riders who would take the next step of engaging in competitive cycling in its many and varied forms. It was, this popular new category of semi-competitive cycling, collectively known as the ‘Sportive’ and although it was initially scorned by the hard-core racing fraternity, it was, in large part, along with the uptake of new cycling enthusiasts, responsible for encouraging a significant number of former members, some from way back in the sixties and seventies, having reached retirement age and with time on their hands, to return to the enjoyment of bike riding through this new and exciting challenge. Around 2010, and for no apparent reason at the time, membership numbers, along with increased participation in Sunday club rides, increased steadily but from 2012, significantly. Friday club night had moved from Newbottle Community Centre to Kepier Hall in Houghton le Spring because of structural and health and safety reasons at the Newbottle venue, Bob Smith had been elected club president following the passing of much loved and respected Albert Wheeler, the previous holder of the post, and Eddie McGourley had filled the vacant chairman’s seat on the club’s managing committee.

Coincidental with these quite seismic changes in the club's routine, happened the successes of Bradley Wiggins in the 2012 Tour de France and the London Olympic Time Trial, the supremacy in bunch sprinting by Mark Cavendish and his ruthless lead-out team, and World and Olympic track domination by Chris Hoy and Victoria Pendleton. The photograph of Wiggins, in the yellow jersey, leading out Cavendish from the Rue de Rivoli and on to the Champs Elysée finishing circuit was one of the most iconic images of the time. Another Wiggins memory was that of the 2011 Tour of Britain when a large number of Houghton members recall the peleton cresting Maiden Law on route to the stage finish on Gateshead Quayside. To encouraging shouts of 'Go Wiggo', the great man sat up in the saddle, grinned and gave a thumbs up to the supporting Houghton CC contingent at the side of the road. To say that Bradley Wiggins had an aura about him would be an understatement.

These successes changed public consciousness towards cycle racing and stirred the imagination of tens of thousands of men and women, inspiring them to take to the bicycle and the open road. The renaissance in road cycling boosted bike sales in 2012 alone by 35% and the waves of new enthusiasts rippled through the membership lists of clubs and cycling organisations throughout the UK. The enigmatic Bradley Wiggins, with his pork chop sideburns, Paul Weller haircut and eccentric personality, was held to be personally responsible for this great shift in cycling's fortunes.

Brian Cookson, then the president of British Cycling, called him the apotheosis of a generation. It was as if Wiggins had lit a match. People got into cycling in huge numbers, realising how healthy it was for them and how enjoyable it could be. Many observers were able to absolutely pinpoint that era as hugely transforming the fortunes of the cycling industry. The new enthusiasts bolstered club riding and triggered a surge in participation in both road and time trial racing.

What was most unusual however, was that the typical age profile of cycling club members in the sixties and seventies, between the ages of 16 and 35, was completely turned on its head. The new road warriors were in the 40 to 60 age range. 'Mamil' or 'Middle Aged man In Lycra' was a term afforded to them, not entirely complimentary, and not terribly inclusive either, as it omitted any reference to the tens of thousands of women attracted to cycling. This new community, some new to cycling, some re-engaging with

the sport after retirement or taking it up after having been unable to continue in other sports, were a godsend to a sport struggling to come to terms with a dramatic reduction in the youth and junior ranks, although specialist clubs for the young were on the increase, Hetton Hawks for example, along with Tyneside Vagabonds, Stockton Wheelers and the Barnesbury CC. Nevertheless, the new cyclists were welcomed into cycling club life and were almost singularly responsible for cycling's resurgence.

There is no doubt that Bradley Wiggins was most certainly influential in cycling's new popularity and perhaps we all did see a bit of our younger selves in the heroic exploits of the great man, and there is no doubt that Wiggo had indeed become a cult figure, but whether the Modfather himself was solely responsible for the upsurge in Houghton CC's fortunes is doubtful. What was not in doubt, however, was the significant uptake in membership and weekend ride participation. Club membership numbers leapt from 65 in 2012 to 100 in 2013 and then 134 the year after, peaking at 140 in 2015 but levelling out between 130 and 138 until the 90th anniversary in 2022.

The subject of membership numbers is interesting, not the least because the actual statistics dismiss several myths regarding the strength of the club between the 1960's and the present. We know that club membership numbers were in the 200 regions before World War 2 and returned to around 120 in the post war years and early sixties but the trend after that is quite surprising. The mid-sixties saw a fall in numbers despite that period being considered as the golden years of racing, from 76 members in 1964, to 40 and 42 in 1967 and 1968. Despite the large number of actual racing members, this would be almost the lowest tally in the club's entire lifespan. The 1970's saw a further fall in numbers, gradually, from 57 in 1972 to an all time low of 35 in 1976 and 1977. Between 1978 and 1983 numbers grew year on year to 124 then fell, almost as steadily as the earlier increase, to bottom out at 42 in 1990. The next decade saw little change, balancing out in the low 40's until the 75th anniversary in 2007 when the number dropped to 39. The 75th anniversary dinner in November 2007 attracted, by invitation, many former members from the 1960's and 1970's who had returned to cycling, albeit in pleasure and leisure mode, after pursuing careers and family lives totalling distanced from the sport and, for that matter, Houghton Cycling Club.

Whether that, or indeed the much acclaimed ‘Wiggo Factor’, had any bearing on the subsequent renaissance and trebling of membership numbers that followed in the next decade is, as we noted in an earlier paragraph, questionable, but cycling as an enjoyable and active later life pursuit, has undoubtedly contributed to Houghton Cycling Club’s continued existence and popularity into its 90th year, just as it did in those 1932 beginnings.



On the back of the resurgence in club membership and in both leisure and competitive cycling across the region, HCC promoted 3 rounds of criterium racing to be held at Hetton Country Park. The Sunderland Echo, on March 8th 2012, posted an article ‘Houghton CC set up new events at Hetton’, and included this photograph of the club’s organising team. The following year, the event team had secured the use of Nissan UK’s test

track facility at Washington, courtesy of an agreement with Gateshead College who had leased the facility for their engineering faculty.



The racing series at Nissan was a huge success. Each event comprised a morning of youth racing in the newly formed North East Youth League with 4th cat, 3rd and 4th cat, and Elite 1/2/3 racing in the afternoon. The years 2016 and 2017 also included a round of the National Para Series Championships. A strong Houghton contingent either cut their teeth or returned to racing after a break, as a result of the series. Unfortunately, Gateshead College withdrew from their Test Track leasing arrangement in 2018, Nissan UK themselves were unwilling to support a continuation of cycle racing without new security arrangements which were impractical to adopt, and as a result, the series moved back to Hetton Country Park. Sadly, and regretfully, after just two more seasons, Houghton CC's racing series discontinued following the imposition of British Cycling's Circuit Racing Risk Assessment which proved both logistically and economically challenging to implement.



Nevertheless, and in contrast, participation in club and leisure rides continued to increase during this period, especially with more lady members engaging in active cycling, in club promotions such as Joe Applegarth's Audax events,

club reliability runs, and the Bob Smith President's Ride pictured above.

These mixed group rides brought club veterans and new members, both male and female, together in a connected cycling community that had been sadly missed since the club's golden era of the 1980's and early 1990's.

The photo right, recalls a mixed group ride organised by Dave Cummins and Peter Reed.

Participants comprise an equal 7 ladies and 7 male members, quite unique in itself, but with the gender of the photographer unknown, it subsequently



creates a mystery gender imbalance which will surely incur conjecture.

Houghton Cycling Club

There are lots of jokers in the pack but, as *Chris Marshall-Bell* finds out, they take their racing seriously

Houghton Cycling Club is shortened to HCC. When deciphered, it should, in fact, read Houghton Comedy Club. Stepping out with the County Durham outfit is no normal Sunday ride; not just a morning's enjoyment in the stunning Durham Dales and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. No, it's a ticket to the cheesiest but can't-help-but-laugh comedy show, all the while riding around — mostly up (see 'top of the world' joke) — their countryside playground. The wannabee comedians start to audition when we are forced to stop at a temporary set of traffic lights. "I once

had a pet racing snail," Andy Hardy begins. "I wanted it to go quicker so I took its shell off: aerodynamics and all that. It only got more sluggish."

We keep going up, opening up a picture-postcard view of Derwent Reservoir and the local landscape.

Knowledge Exasperated by the endless climbing, a voice from the back quips, "Are we at the top of the world yet?" "Nah, just base camp," comes the reply. Shortly after the halfway mark of the ride, the group of 12 — there were another two groups of differing speeds — begin a short but steep climb. Few have ever ridden it.

The route was organised by Dave Cummins, who knows his way around the entirety of the North-East more than he does his own house. But he once lapped. "One of the new members last year found a road that Dave didn't know about," Paul Robson says.

"Aye, we went home immediately and drank wine to console himself," another one replies.

Who needs *Live at the Apollo* when you can have *Live on the Bike with Houghton*?

You can't repress their humour, even if the word is loosely used. It's not just the guaranteed laughs that keep the members riding while sporting a Houghton jersey. They are equally adept — and prolific — when the cycling becomes serious.

Every rider appears to race, with the vast majority racing the local cyclo-cross leagues (TLI and CCNE) during the winter, before swapping the

Club facts

Based: Houghton
Members: 140
Formed: 1932
Meets: Sunday club runs at 9.30am from Cocken Lodge; midweek rides organised on ad hoc basis; club nights every Friday at 7.30pm at Cocken Lodge

mud for time trial courses in the summer.

The club's active pursuits should come as no surprise, when you consider their alumni (see boxout). The wisdom and experience that the older generation have is readily shared.

I am told repeatedly that the older members are forever helping out newer and even the more experienced racers with tips and advice.

Some of the riders' cyclo-cross exploits are among the best in the region, while for others, racing success is just getting around the course. Placings don't matter; they just want to race.

Houghton can also lay claim to being the first British amateur team to

History

The club's first guise was under the name Houghton Clarion, following an amalgamation in 1932 of Houghton Wheelers and Hetton and District CC. After the Second World War, the club's membership expanded but its premises were too small to accommodate new riders. So the members got together and built their own clubrooms using air raid shelter brooks and timber from the deck of a ship in a breaker's yard. They were sold in the 1970s and have since been demolished. Between 1961 and 1970, the club promoted the well-regarded Vaux Silver and Gold Tankard races, which morphed into the

Vaux International Grand Prix, attracting international teams, including a Soviet team that visited these shores in 1965. The linealities and the Houghtonites saw a decline in membership, dropping to as low as 40 at one point. But British Olympic and Tour de France successes saw a rapid increase in membership with the club once again having a thriving time trialing and cyclo-cross scene. Alongside club runs, social functions and annual trips to the Tour of Flanders and Paris-Roubaix, the club promotes three closed-circuit races, three open time trials, a club 10 series, an open cyclo-cross race and a reliability trial.

Achievements

■ Peter Chisman was the club's most successful rider. He won the 1963 Tour of Britain and a stage in the Tour de l'Avenir. He turned professional for Carlton-BMB and rode for Great Britain in the Tour de France alongside Tom Simpson.
■ Eddie McGourley, the current club chairman, won the King of the Mountains in the 1970 Milk Race. A regular member of the GB team, he was also victorious in numerous road races and time trials.
■ The club has long had a successful trike team and in 1985, Noel Knox, Dave Turner and Tommy Thompson won the team award in the National 24-hour TT.

■ Current rider Mark Harrison recently took the club's long-standing 10-mile record to under 20 minutes.
■ Craig McCann won the 2015 para cycling national time trial and road race in C4 division and is aiming to get selection for the Paralympic Games in Rio this summer.

Ride with

Houghton Cycling Club Ride highlights

47.5 MILES

1 Down Path Bank

Trailered in Simon Warren's 100 Greatest Climbs book, the ascent is tough, the descent exhilarating, as you hurtle towards the bottom, making the most of the wide roads.

2 Approach to Muggleswick

The sign says as you begin a rollercoaster five minutes. The descent is notable for drop-offs and turns down to the Derwent before a high climb up the moor.

3 Rochester Climb

It isn't gentle but kicks up bravely. Even at the levelled-out summit, containing rather the T junction results in another mile-long drag.

Favourite cafe

The club's favourite cafe base, Cocken Lodge Farm, is ideal for a post-ride get-together around cake, coffee and — if you've earned it — a pint and a bacon sandwich. Part of a golf complex, local sports pictures adorn the interior walls, and the open fire adds to homely feel. Cocken Lodge Farm, Houghton le Spring, DH4 6QP. 0203 384 3553. www.cockenlodge.co.uk



Meet the club

Bob Smith, 77: "I joined aged 17 in 1955 and have been a member ever since but I don't go out with the fast club race anymore!"

Matt Webb, 23: "I like the hilly time trials and the 10. It's a nice club with a lot of knowledge."

Angela Humphrey, 38: "I love going out on the runs. I'm hoping to race the cross league next winter."

Harry Venables, 52: "New members learn a lot from the older guys. The club needs women and juniors."

sponsored, when in the early 1960s Vaux Breweries backed them. They just pipped Wolverhampton Wheelers to the honour by a week. Today, the racing remains the integral heartbeat of the club but, like all clubs up and down the country, it has had to adapt to the sport's increasing popularity. It has done this willingly and resolutely: there is a drive this year to increase the number of younger riders affiliated to the club. **Impetus** Eddie McGourley, however, has his own take on the sport's now mainstream status. "It's gone pretty much full-circle," he says. "In the Fifties and Sixties we had 70-odd riders and loads of us were kids who were racing." The North-East is far from being a cycling backwater, he says, but McGourley agrees there is a need to produce more top riders, something that hasn't been done since Paul Curran in the 1980s. Add the youth impetus to the club's ingredients of knowledge, humour and racing and Houghton could well create an era of North-East born-and-bred cycling success. No joking.

Contact: www.houghtoncc.com | Twitter: @HoughtonCC | Facebook.com/groups/HoughtonCyclingClub/



Group riding diversified even further when veteran and retired members met Tuesdays and Friday

mornings at St Robert's School in Washington. There was, of course, an already established midweek ride with the older member's group of John Coulson, Noel Knox, Peter Tuckwell, Harry Brown and others. This new road group offered yet another option for members to engage in their sport with new friends and once again in age and ability sub-groups.

The traditional Sunday club meet at Houghton's Broadway at 10am also diversified, with a new group meeting at 9.30am for longer and more challenging rides. The Sunday 9.30 meeting also, and subsequently split into age and ability groups, so that



younger riders, those wishing for hillier, longer, or faster rides could get out of cycling, and their Houghton membership, what they specifically wanted from their interest and their focus on active cycling, resulting in a choice of rides related to ability, fitness, and age for our collective groups of members.



The 9am and 9.30am groups meeting at Houghton Broadway one Sunday morning in 2020 before splitting up into their respective ride groups.

This period in club history also renewed an interest in weekend and multi-day group rides,



DESCRIPTIVE TEXT



DESCRIPTIVE TEXT



Another club tradition of visiting France and Belgium, still part of the older Noel Knox/John Coulson group's annual calendar was re-introduced through the returning retirees grupette, and initially targeted the Tour of Flanders, or Ronde van

Vlaanderen classic which would include two days of leisure rides on the familiar cobbled climbs and farm roads of East Flanders, entry into the 134K Saturday Sportive, and an epic Sunday watching and cheering the top professionals in 'Vlaanderens Moiste', one of the most prestigious monuments of cycle racing, the Spring Classic of the Tour of Flanders.



In 2013, a senior HCC group took on the 'We Ride Flanders' sportive, 134K and 17 cobbled climbs that feature in the Spring Classic. It was a long day, but a memorable ride for all the veteran riders concerned.

Later visits to the event included mixed groups, centred on the town of Oudenaarde with hoist Rik but later, after the enigmatic Rik gave up



on being pleasant with his guests, on the historic city of Brugge, the very same location favoured by the annual trip of the Knox/Coulson group, aka 'the Shoes Lads'.



Subsequent ventures took on the Queen of the Classics, Paris-Roubaix, with the Houghton contingent bringing home the cobble.....



A great photograph of the HCC, and then, club president Bob Smith on the most famous of the Paris Roubaix cobbled sectors, the 'Arenberg Trench'. Essential preparation for the Roubaix Cobbles is to remove anything, bottles, pumps, computer units, and saddle packs, anything in fact that may detach itself from the bike resulting from the continuous vibration jolting through bike

and rider. Bob, an old warrior of all terrains, took this to include his dentures.

TEXT ON THIS 2017 RONDE VAN VLAANDEREN AND RICHIES STORY ABOUT MAGNUS BACKSTEDT



Other continental holiday groups.

PHOTOS AND TEXT



SPANISH EXCURSIONS ETC ETC

TEXT



ANY MORE HCC foreign holiday images



FEW BRIEF NOTES ON RACING DURING THIS PERIOD



However, the principal club activity that bonded everyone together was the club run, in its many and diversified forms.

TEXT



And so, and in reflection, Houghton Cycling Club enter their 91st year, after a long and active life span from those early and formative years of the 1930's, but continuing to provide a platform for cycling enthusiasts to meet like-minded friends, enjoy group riding and to forge lasting relationships. Whether cycling will ever again encompass family groups, young boys and girls, riding together with parents, older members and friends remains to be seen, but it will only happen, and, when our road using, car owning society accepts and respects the space of other road users, and specifically, bicycle riders. Or when current shared road space is segregated as it is in Belgium, in Holland, Denmark, and other cycling conscious and respecting countries. It will happen, but it may be some years before it becomes reality.



**THE GREAT ToB DAY AND THE WIDE MEDIA INTEREST ON THE CLUB, EDDIE,
THE INVITATION TO THE CORPORATE RIDE WITH DAN MARTIN**



PHOTO OF 90TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

CLUB RECORDS

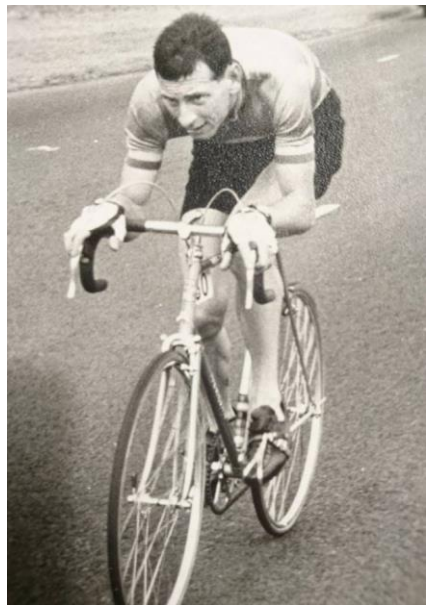
Individual:

10 Mile TT 19mins 27secs Mark Harrison 2015

10 Mile TT Trike 24mins 10secs Noel Knox 1984

25 Mile TT 52min 07secs Derek Reay 1969

Pos.	Name	Club	Time	Pos.	Name	Club	Time
1.	A.Engers	Polytechnic C.C.	51-00	54.	F.Robson	East Liverpool Wh.	57-53
2.	J.Burrows	Polytechnic C.C.	51-40	55.	D.Daugh	Nunbrook Wh.	57-54
3.	P.D.Smith	Clifton C.C.	51-55	56.	P.Stevenson	Lancaster C.C.	58-00
4.	D.Reay	Houghton C.C.	52-07	57.	B.Beston	Utley C.C.	58-01
5.	M.Dodd	Cleveland R.C.	52-21	58.	D.Oliver	Ferryhill Wh.C.C.	58-02
6.	T.Hocky	Coventry C.C.	52-35	59.	P.Parker	R.A.P. C.A.	58-04
7.	C.Davison	Houghton C.C.	52-36	60.	A.H.Lodge	Ferryhill Wh.C.C.	58-05
8.	D.Pickard	Clifton C.C.	52-38	61.	D.Pipe	Sunderland Clar.	58-10
9.	J.Orrville	Polytechnic C.C.	52-54	62.	H.Algerson	Southsop Poly	58-13
10.	D.Armstrong	Typs R.C.	54-25	63.	J.Pugh	Halfordfield Star.	58-14
11.	P.Watson	Clifton C.C.	54-20	64.	A.Bridge	Open Valley	58-20
12.	D.Wattinson	Hill Thurs. R.C.	54-28	65.	R.Gordon	Hill Course	58-26
13.	L.Caygill	Richmond/Dona.	54-40	66.	J.West	Typs R.C.	58-27
14.	L.Orrick	Coventry C.C.	54-56	67.	T.Smith	Green Clar.	58-28
15.	R.McGourley	Houghton C.C.	54-56	68.	S.Govins	Open Valley	58-28
16.	G.Mathias	Nova C.C.	55-04	69.	G.Hall	Spartan Wh.C.C.	58-29
17.	A.Cresser	Hill Thurs. R.C.	55-14	70.	S.Gee	Hill Thurs. R.C.	58-34
18.	B.Searisbrick	Cleavelys R.C.	55-25	71.	G.Wright	Hill Course	58-34
19.	C.Farrinson	Akers C.C.	55-28	72.	J.Hewington	Cleavelys R.C.	58-41
20.	L.Murray	Raise Valley	55-37	73.	D.Seymour	Halfordfield Star.	58-42
21.	B.Horne	Polytechnic C.C.	55-38	74.	P.Holder	Yaxshire R.C.	59-07
22.	H.Standring	West Pennine R.C.	55-57	75.	G.Bryen	Hill Course	59-28
23.	S.Whalley	Southsop Poly	56-00	76.	G.Barker	Bull Vne C.C.	59-29
24.	R.Alderson	Richmond/Dari.	56-03	77.	P.Parker	Leeds St. C.C.	59-29
25.	D.Hoe	Hill Course	56-20	78.	M.Curtall	Cleveland Wh.	59-29
26.	D.P.Honey	Broadworth C.C.	56-26	79.	S.Pressman	Braxley Wh.	59-29
27.	R.Mellor	C.C.Marley	56-23	80.	H.D.Clayton	Spartan Wh.C.C.	59-30
28.	T.Finney	Nth. Staffs.CCC	56-24	81.	C.Hewson	Cleveland Wh.	59-37
29.	R.Seymour	Houghton C.C.	56-25	82.	D.Gordana	Houghton C.C.	59-40
30.	A.Caygill	Richmond/Dona	56-26	83.	R.Willinson	Utley C.C.	59-43
31.	A.B.Hutchinson	T-side Clar.	56-27	84.	M.Bell	Cleavelys R.C.	59-49
32.	M.Ventura	De Leane C.C.	56-29	85.	P.Bartan	Sub. Lane Clar.	59-54
33.	B.Toll	R.A.F. C.A.	56-41	86.	H.Layton	Ferryhill Wh.C.C.	59-54
34.	L.Sherrack	Freston Wh.	56-37	87.	G.Barnett	Radnor Wh.	59-56
35.	D.Gorton	Leeds St. C.C.	56-48	88.	M.Green	Hill Thurs. R.C.	59-59
36.	S.Hoody	Morley C.C.	57-02	89.	K.Parker	Cleveland Wh.	59-59
37.	G.McGann	Bury Clar.	57-06	90.	Hoolay	Nova C.C.	59-59
38.	R.Miller	Freston Wh.	57-08	91.	J.Ashby	Nth. Leane R.C.	59-59
39.	R.Harte	Crescent R.C.	57-11	92.	M.Thurball	Spartan Wh.C.C.	59-59
40.	J.Merley	Tooting S.C.	57-13	93.	G.Yates	Leane R.C.	59-59
41.	M.Abraham	De Leane	57-14	94.	A.Liverley	Bradford Wh.	59-59
42.	M.Hosall	Cleavelys R.C.	57-17	95.	C.Brook	Dunby Mercury R.C.	59-59
43.	D.Hedd	De Leane	57-17	96.	J.Martin	Broadworth C.C.	59-59
44.	F.Jackson	Phoenix C.C.	57-22	97.	K.Franklin	Braxley Wh.	59-59
45.	A.Robson	Akers C.C.	57-23	98.	G.Barker	Drighlington R.C.	59-59
46.	D.Maughan	Houghton C.C.	57-25	99.	A.Armstrong	Sunderland Clar.	59-59
47.	J.Hedley	Nth.Staffs.CCC	57-26	100.	H.Hankin	Leeds Wellington	59-59
48.	R.Longaire	Cleveland Wh.	57-30	101.	J.Lindsay	Cleavelys R.C.	59-59
49.	J.Lesch	Lancashire R.C.	57-30	102.	J.Hendson	Middleton R.C.	59-59
50.	P.Aspith	Lancashire R.C.	57-31	103.	F.Jenkins	Cleavelys R.C.	59-59
51.	B.Bucknell	Nova C.C.	57-33	104.	D.Bradshaw	Sunderland Clar.	59-59
52.	D.Brown	Nth. Leane R.C.	57-41	105.	M.Hirst	Ferryhill Wh.C.C.	59-59
53.	G.Henneke	Gleadow	57-43	106.	P.H.Hill	Ferryhill Wh.C.C.	59-59



Pictured, Derek Reay and the result sheet recording his 52.07 in the Ferryhill Wheelers Open 25 on the T254 Course in 1969. Alf Engers won the event with a new National Record time of 51.00, winning 30/- (£i.50) into the bargain. Cliff Davison of Houghton CC took 1st handicap prize with a 53.30. Other Houghton

riders included Eddie McGourley 54.56, Ronnie Seymour 56.25, Dave Maughan 57.25 and Dave Cummins 59.40. 88 riders were under the hour.

25 Mile TT Trike 59min 50secs Noel Knox 1986

30 Mile TT 1hr 12mins 44secs Dave Clark 1979

50 Mile TT 1hr 48mins 47secs Derek Reay 1970

50 Mile TT Trike 2hr 13mins 48secs Noel Knox 1986

100 Mile TT 3hr 57mins 43secs Martin Gibson 1997



2001 National 50

100 Mile TT Trike 4hr 30mins 26secs Noel Knox 1984

12hr TT 249.371miles John Welsh 1961

12hr TT Trike 213.056 miles Noel Knox 1986

24hr TT 367.17miles Ian Brown 2016

24hr TT Trike 378.57miles Noel Knox 1985



Club Hill Climb (Quarrington Hill) 1min 43secs Eddie McGourley 1967

Team Records

**25 Miles 1965 2hr 40mins 35secs Derek Reay (52.07) Cliff Davison (53.30)
Eddie McGourley (54.48)**

30 Miles 1961 3hr 48mins 00secs Eddie McGourley, Harry Carr, Chris Watson

**50 Miles 1968 5hr 51mins 12secs Eddie McGourley, Cliff Davison, Dave
Cummins**

100 Miles 12hr 44mins 39secs Derek Reay, Eddie McGourley, Dave Maughan

**100 Miles Trike 1963 14hr 44mins 12secs Peter Winship, Dennis Lyons, Dave
Turner**

**12hr TT Trike 1069.38
miles 1985 Noel Knox,
Dave Turner, Tommy
Thompson**

**WHO'S THE RIDER
BETWEEN NOEL AND DAVE?**



Place to Place Records (Main Post Office to Main Post Office)

Houghton-Darlington-Houghton (52 miles)

Solo: Bob Smith 2hr 9min 1962

Tandem: Dave Cummins, Peter Reed 2hr 15min 1967

Tricycle: Tommy Thompson 2hr 42min 1971

Houghton-York-Houghton (150 miles)

Solo: Bob Smith 7hr 11min 1958

Tandem: Dave Cummins, Peter Reed 6hr 35min 1968

Tricycle: Tommy Thompson 9hr 2min 1965



**AS OTHER
SECTIONS, MORE TEXT TO BE ADDED
TO EXPLAIN WHO IS WHO, ETC**



Dave Turner and Jack Webb featured here in a 1962 Durham Chronicle article outside the Quarry Row clubrooms. In what was described as severe conditions with floods and fallen trees, and despite four stoppages due to chain trouble, the two friends completed a successful bid to complete the Houghton-York-Houghton place to place tandem record, covering the 144 miles in 6hrs 59mins, beating the previous record set by Albert Wheeler and Bob Galley in 1937, by 45 minutes. In true sporting fashion, Albert and Bob were present to give them encouragement and congratulate them on their ride.



THERE'S ANOTHER PHOTO SOMEWHERE OF THE START OF A RECORD ATTEMPT OUTSIDE CLUB ROOMS, PETER, DAVE, WHITWAM, TOMMY??