

CHAPTER FIVE

The End of an Era

The Autumn of 1955 saw the Club faced with a unique situation. The "Harris Era" was coming gradually to an end, in that the racing men and officials who had been attracted to the Club since 1945 had now been replaced by new faces. Apart from his personal friendships, Reg Harris, by virtue of his Continental commitments, was now largely divorced from the Club and its day-to-day activities.

The era of glory and prosperity which had begun by four enthusiastic members defying their elders in the Club and making a motor car journey to Bury in 1938 was effectively ended when in November 1955 a letter was received from Reg Harris indicating that Harris Stadium would not be available to the Manchester Wheelers' Club for the 1956 Race Meet.

The former Manchester Athletic Club and Grounds Company Limited who owned the lease and assets of the Fallowfield ground had effectively passed into the hands of our Life Member Reg Harris who envisaged a professional operation and expansion of its facilities which left little room for amateur organisations with their inevitable domestic problems and wrangles.

The letter was a bomb-shell and despite the previous divisions of opinion in the Club as to the holding of a Race Meet virtually all combined to join in protest. Hope springs eternal and despite the tribulations and uncertainties of the Race Meet when we ourselves were organising and putting up the risk capital the finite ending of something which had been as great as the Manchester Wheelers' Club itself was something which numbed the senses of all members.

Correspondence and personal approaches began immediately, with the result that Harris Stadium agreed to make a payment of £150 for the right to promote the Manchester Wheelers' Race Meet, the programme to be promoted with the co-operation of the Manchester Wheelers' Club. These terms would be offered for one year, and in the event of cancellation no contribution would be paid.

The Committee had little option but to agree that the Race Meet for 1956 should be in accordance with these terms. In the event this 64th Annual Race Meet was "washed out" on the Saturday by very heavy rain and postponed until the following Monday evening with a reduced programme. The gate was estimated at between 3,000 and 4,000.

A departure from social tradition was the decision that the Prize Presentation would take the form of a Dinner Dance and Prize Presentation, this being the first time that ladies had been present at this function.

An active contribution was made to the local time trialing scene and track racing competition with many wins and placings, especially by track riders, being achieved. However, most of our successes were at local level, the principal exception being Alan Danson's selection for the 1956 Olympic Games.

During the latter half of 1956, petrol rationing following the Suez crisis had its effect on the number of people attending Saturday Club runs, but the year ended on a successful note with the Prize Presentation and Dinner Dance at the Unicorn Hotel, Altrincham, which was supported by more than one hundred members and friends.

Under the Presidency of J. Fletcher the year 1957 was bound to be one where the emphasis was on reviving Club traditions and aiming for success on Road and Track. The A.G.M. in February decided that the Race Meet would be a 50/50 promotion between the Club and Harris Stadium and also that the official Easter Tour be moved for the first time from North Wales to York, the Easter weekend being associated with the Yorkshire R.C. '50' in which we would have between 6 and 10 members competing. Those older members who had gone to North Wales for many years arranged an unofficial Easter Tour to Knighton, North Wales, which did little to detract from the weekend in York which was still supported by the President and over 20 members all on bicycles.

The President also persuaded the A.G.M. to hold Opening and Closing runs in the old tradition at the Rose & Crown, Knutsford, with Artists, Gerry Shields, Colin Crompton and Bert Jackson.

Following a discussion on the Race Meet the possibility of obtaining financial support by televising the Meeting was to be investigated.

Two Government decisions in 1957 were to be a boost to activities and the finances of all sporting organisations and were fully reported in the Journal of June, 1957.

EDITORIAL. June, 1957.

Within recent weeks two events have taken place in widely separated spheres which may have far-reaching effects on cycling sport.

Firstly has been the Government's decision to terminate conscription by 1960. Ever since September 1939 one of the greatest handicaps encountered by many amateur organisations has been the lack of continuity of membership. The natural sequence of incoming members absorbing established traditions, of adding to them progressive ideas and eventually taking their place as amateur officials has been rudely shattered for two decades, with sad results, and we may be forgiven for hoping that by the middle of the 1960's we shall be reaping the benefits in our own sphere from this decision.

Another Government decision which will prove of tangible benefit is the removal of entertainments tax. This will be heartily welcomed in track-racing circles and some idea of the amount of relief allowed will be gained from the fact that on an average race meet the tax saving would be in the region of £100.

At this rate we shall be sending out Journals printed in red, blue and white!

"Cycling" (and Mo-peds)! How will this modification of the cyclists' principal periodical be accepted by the purists or indeed by the average clubman? First impressions are that it will not be well received, but there is little in the way of an alternative and for this reason alone the new edition will have to be accommodated even if discreetly ignored.

The writer, with his usual pessimism (which is not always unrelated to hard facts and harsh economics) discussed some time ago the possibility that 'Cycling' would one day be absorbed in a motor-cycling periodical, but quite frankly, the hybrid addition to the contents came as something of a shock. Hybrid? Surely to all except the exponents of the mo-ped it is a hybrid - structurally it has little similarity to the modern motor-cycle and it is basically opposed to the simple propulsion of the bicycle. Hybrids are rarely accepted by either of the groups from which they emanate, which is perhaps the reason we have yet to see evidence of one on a Club run, although the possibility gives rise to some amusing, if not alarming, thoughts.

J. Fletcher. Editor.

It had proved impossible to obtain any backing for the Race Meet and neither the B.B.C. nor I.T.V. would promise to televise any of the Meeting this year.

Heavy rain greeted the 65th Race Meet and racing failed to start. A postponed Meet

was held the following Tuesday evening in glorious sunshine before a crowd of about 3.000.

A new Club - the Fallowfield Club - had been formed in association with and based upon Harris Stadium. With the facilities at the Stadium and the promise of great things in the future it inevitably attracted new members from existing Clubs (including our own) within a 30 odd mile radius of Manchester.

Track Sport generally was passing through a very lean phase with an uncertain future and we ourselves had difficulty in raising a Pursuit Team this year during which we had lost some established riders to other Clubs with no corresponding influx of new Path Riders. These problems were encountered over the country as a whole and it was reported that a Meeting at The Butts, Coventry which included the N.C.U. Pursuit Championships, attracted an attendance of only two to three hundred.

EDITORIAL. September 1957.

The first paragraph of this column must be to express the regret felt throughout the Club that Reg Harris has not ended his wonderful career as Professional Sprint Champion of the World.

Since his first Professional Championship in 1949 Reg has undoubtedly been the outstanding figure in track sport and although he has won the championship on four occasions we have no doubt that a majority would vote him to have been the world's best during the last eight years.

Only a biography could do justice to his achievements, which cannot be listed in this Journal. Suffice it to say that R. H. Harris, Manchester Wheelers, Manchester, England, will pass into history as one of the truly great champions.

* * * *

With the end of the Harris era, and frankly the Autumn of the era was passed through some years ago, one may take stock of today's situation.

How does the Manchester Wheelers' Club compare pre-Harris and post-Harris? Numerically there is not a lot of difference, but the spirit of the Club? Ah, there is the evidence of decline. (Vide Cynical Comments in later pages).

Obviously, Reg Harris and his achievements had a terrific impact on the Club, which was the centre of an abnormal glare of publicity. Existing members were inculcated with additional enthusiasm for all facets of cycling sport; new members fluttered in and out of the club to be near the champ., like moths round a flame.

In the post war boom new members reached a record level but were mostly of ephemeral duration.

The Clubhouse became cycling minded and augmented the Journal until 1949, since when Clubhouse membership by Wheelers has reached a record low.

The Race Meet brought in record profits which were dissipated so rapidly that it is now hardly possible to finance a Race Meet.

In some years more National Track Championships were won by our members than by the rest of the country put together, but in 1957 it was hardly possible to raise a team for the Team Pursuit Championship.

The success and the fame of the years which followed 1945 have rarely been equalled by any Club but inevitably the sequence has ended, at least temporarily, and left in the Club a great anti-climax.

Racing successes have been manifold but these years do not appear to have produced Manchester Wheelers of the calibre of Fred Currie, Jimmy Taylor, Harold Crye, Johnny

Berry, to mention only a few of those upon whom the Club could always rely.

Circumstances will undoubtedly compel Reg to transfer his affections to the new Fallowfield Club, which is now beginning to claim the allegiance of other of our members of short duration and the Manchester Wheelers moves toward its Seventy-Fifth Anniversary with the need for a better show of enthusiasm from the majority of its 154 members and with probably a new outlook and new blood.

J. Fletcher, Editor.

It was becoming increasingly difficult to find members prepared to accept Office for a number of positions and the Massed Start Event was abandoned due to lack of an Organiser.

The proposed publication of a 75th Anniversary Album to be compiled by H. Crye and J. Fletcher at a price of £64 per 400 also failed to materialise.

The Committee Meetings of September and October 1957 were notable for the amount of discussion (intended to be constructive but a great deal of it acrimonious). The following extracts from the Minute Book are indicative of the situation.

1. September, 1957.
A discussion on Taylor House regarding its lack of use. Many racing men now preferred to drive out from home whilst others preferred accommodation overnight where meals were available. This led to a situation where demand for Taylor House and its accommodation was at a very low level.
2. October, 1957.
Alan Bannister condemned the attitude of older members towards the younger end which had in the past resulted in the loss of some promising members.
3. Criticism by H. Whitehouse and A. Hughes over the general tone of the last Journal produced by J. Fletcher.
4. Notification from Reg Harris that he would not again promote the Race Meet on a 50/50 basis. Either he would promote himself or he would arrange for the Manchester Wheelers' to promote on the basis of their paying a fee for ground hire.

The Dinner Dance and Prize Distribution was again very successful, the function having been well received by visitors from other Clubs.

The Sports Company had made a loss on the year for 1957 of £192.00.

1958

Difficulty in finding suitable places for a Saturday evening function became increasingly evident in 1958 when, after the brief return to the traditional Opening and Closing Runs in 1957, it was found impossible to find a suitable establishment in Cheshire. It was decided to change the Opening Run to a purely social fixture at the Club House, South King Street.

The racing season began with individual and team wins in two Massed Start Events and also places and a team win in the Cheshire Roads '50'.

In view of Reg Harris's decision that he was not in favour of another joint promotion of the Race Meet it was decided that the Club would itself

promote the Race Meet. Some guarantors had been found from within the Club membership to guarantee any possible loss. An agreed charge would be paid to Harris Stadium Ltd., for the hire of the ground.

In June 1958 one of the highest honours ever bestowed on a sportsman was the award of the O.B.E. in the Queen's Birthday Honours List to Reg Harris.

The 67th Race Meet was again delayed by rain after preceding weeks of sun-drenched days. This was the third year of rain in succession for Norman Grattage as Race Meet Secretary, and his disappointment was even greater than that of Bill Hodgitts, who had suffered four rain-soaked Race Meets in succession - 1936 to 1939, but who at least had had the satisfaction of having the Starter's gun fired at 2.30 p.m. and of showing a profit on the Meeting. Racing commenced shortly after 4.00 p.m. and ended at around 7.20 p.m. and it was surprising that a high proportion of the small crowd stayed until the end.

A modernised version of the streamlined bicycle, first experimented with many years ago, was presented for the sake of publicity under the contemporary modern name of "Sputnik" and despite derisive remarks from the commentator and the crowd amazed everyone by soundly beating a first class Pursuit Team of Norman Shiels, John Geddes, Mike Gambrill and John Plumbley.

The "sputnik" streamlined bicycle was ridden by Francois Lahaye of France. It was disappointing that the Club had no single prize winner whatsoever in connection with this Race Meet.

3,000 programmes had been printed, the cost being covered by approximately £90 worth of advertising, but at the end of the day the loss on the Race Meet totalled £255. Guarantors provided £227 leaving a net loss of £28.

Although we were unable to muster a team for the National Team Pursuit Championship our Road Riders had the satisfaction of winning the Team Prize in both our Open '100' and the Open 12 hours.

Harry Whitehouse and Peter Walthall both had fastest time wins in Open events and had been backed-up for team wins by Alan Davey and Bill Silkstone,

Harry Hardcastle had enjoyed a good run of successes on the track.

The following extract from the September Journal of 1958 reflected upon both racing and social items of interest.

SEPT. 1958 EDITORIAL

We are rarely able to commence our editorial on a cheerful note these days, but as the summer has progressed it has been extremely pleasing to note that the quality of our road riders has been compensating for their lack of quantity. Harry Whitehouse and Pete Walthall have both obtained fastest time awards and have been backed up for team victories by Alan Davey and Bill Silkstone. Only a little behind have been some excellent rides by Don Murray, Pete Hayhurst and Jeff Thomas. Harry Hardcastle has enjoyed a good run of successes on the track also, and our need is now for some younger members to back up the more experienced riders.

* * * *

The purpose of this journal is primarily to record Club history and to provide Club notices generally, but at intervals we are prompted to add our paean of praise or express our opposition to events of a national character. Under the former heading we were motivated to express our admiration of the breaking of the R.R.A. Land's End-John O'Groats record by Dave Keeler of the Vegetarian C. & A.C.

Two days, 3 hours, 9 minutes. Surely this was the outstanding athletic performance of the year, and yet it passed almost unnoticed in the lay press. We at least would show our appreciation, yet ere we had gone to press this record had itself been beaten by the almost unknown Reg Randall of the Harlequin CC., in 2 days, 1 hour, 58 minutes. We salute two magnificent performances.

Those readers who continue through the following pages will probably agree with us in concluding that the Easter tour (as this Club knew it) has followed in the footsteps of the Anfield week-end and other social fixtures, and, being outmoded (and therefore lacking in support), should be discontinued.

With these thoughts in mind we wrote to Sid Bowkett to see if he would contribute an article on the history of the tour. He has, of course, in common with the Editor, a rather mournful approach to matters of this nature not out of keeping with what might be termed an obituary. However, we were pleased to receive a telephone call the following day saying that he would be pleased to collaborate with Fred Currie in compiling a short article which we hope to publish in a subsequent issue. There was no doubt about it being Sid. on the 'phone. After running through his list of complaints which sounded like the A to Z of the family doctor, he concluded by saying that he was pleased to hear from a Wheeler, wondered if his old pals still had cars, and hoped to be with us on the closing run.

J. Fletcher, Editor.

In February 1959 the assets of the Club had fallen to about £400, and following the pattern of the previous year the Meeting voted in favour of the promotion of a Race Meet providing that suitable guarantors or sponsors could be found. Behind the scenes activities produced a number of guarantors from within the Club to enable the Race Meet to go ahead although once again no sponsor could be found.

The Membership situation had gone full circle from that which applied in 1948 when the Committee voted in favour of reducing the intake of Junior Members. The need to attract and cater for very junior members had become increasingly important and a joint effort by Arthur Cross and Jack Fletcher led to the latter successfully submitting a proposition that we should accept members of fourteen years and upwards, the subscription rate being 5s.0d. at age fourteen and fifteen years, and 10s.0d. at sixteen and seventeen years. For his part Arthur Cross rendered yeoman service and under his leadership the Sunday Junior Runs would, until further notice, start from the Forum at Northenden to destinations such as Hatchmere, Moreton Old Hall, Langley and Chester, with the return home for tea. (This proposition was passed at a Special General Meeting in March 1959 called to consider the declining membership and to formulate a programme for encouraging Junior Members to join the Club).

A tangible sign of success of these Junior Club Runs was the fact that in July, 1959 a request was made for a Club 10 mile event for Juniors. Strangely enough this repeated the situation of ten or twelve years earlier when a similar drive for junior members was being made. 1959 was the second period as President for Harold Crye.

THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

This year ought to be a good one for the Club. It's past history and traditions are of the highest quality and were made by the zealous efforts of its members. Every member is a potential history maker, even as he joins, and let no one deride the Club's traditions for they are being formed currently and continuously.

These are difficult times for the game in general and few Clubs are unaffected by the trend. All members therefore must help, and although the chief responsibility lies with the younger members, by whom the Club's destiny must be shaped, the older members must do their share, for in them lies the essential solidarity of the team.

Consider for instance, the backbone of the Club life, the Club Run. The present hardcore is roughly ten on either Saturday or Sunday. Taking all other members collectively, if each came out only three times per year the average would rise to nearly twenty for either day or fifteen for both days.

Once again we shall hold a Race Meet, and again this year we have a guarantee against loss by the Club. We are very grateful for the generous offer, and on behalf of the Club I wish to say "thank you" to those concerned.

We have also the promotion of the R.T.T.C. National Championship "12" to carry through, and the Road Time Trials Secretary will need all the help that can be mustered for a success worthy of the Club.

With our present dearth of track riders, I personally am expecting our road men to carry the Club's name to the foremost this season, and I am confident that they can and will do it.

Finally, it would seem that with the virtual ending of National Service we can hope that young members will have the opportunity of continuing their careers without a break, and we are also faced with the fact that very young boys may wish to join a Club of our standing.

This is an innovation, and all those who come into contact with these very young members must remember that they are schoolboys; they are not only joining the maturity of our club life but are still only joining the maturity of life in general. We must be careful to greet them in a way suited to their general assimilation of adult ways and thought and help to guide them in the meaning of the Club and the game of cycling. In every way we must try to make them Wheelers like you and I, if the Club is to survive and thrive.

H. CRYE.

At the Opening Run in March 1959 40 members were present. ranging from a fifteen year old prospective member Ray Llewellyn to eighty year old Fred Currie.

Harold Crye showed a 1920 Race Meet film in black and white showing an attendance of 12,000 under umbrellas in heavy rain and leaden skies. Oh for the days of yesteryear!!

Almost unbelievably the second Saturday in July 1959 brought the bitter disappointment of damp and cloudy weather after several weeks of fine conditions.

At 2.00 p.m. the track was dry and suitable for racing but a heavy shower between 1.00 p.m. and 1.45 p.m. had ruined the gate and only 2,000 spectators saw an excellent Meeting, despite a bold attempt to publicise the Race Meet beforehand to the citizens of Manchester.

A model of the "Sputnik" was produced by our Design/Finance/Fabricate Team of Harold Crye, Jack Fletcher and Johnny Berry and was paraded through the City on one of our

member's lorries ridden by a scantily clad bathing beauty. The publicity on a sunny Friday was excellent but the results were lost in the wet Saturday weather.

This "Sputnik" was ridden by Harry Hardcastle and once again made short work of the opposition.

The loss on the Race Meet amounted to £50 approximately which was an outstanding financial balancing act in the difficult circumstances.

Our open '12' of August 1959 incorporated the National 12 hours R.T.T.C. Championship which surprisingly received only 82 entries. The Committee complimented Alf Hughes on his outstanding Promotion of this event which saw the award for the first time of a new silver 12 hour trophy which had been purchased by the Club at a cost of £97.10s.0d. out of a subscription list of £118.

During the year one of our members - Harold Eckersall - who had joined us via Clubhouse membership and who had become very active in our social calendar, was elected Mayor of Stretford 1959-1960. Harold was also awarded the British Empire Medal in recognition of his services to the Borough of Stretford as Chief Air-Raid Warden 1939 to 1945 and other public services.

The influx of new members continued and the June 1959 issue of the Journal listed 15 new members who helped to produce an entry of 11 for a Junior '10' promoted at very short notice.

Arthur Cross made one of his rare contributions to the Journal when he had the satisfaction of reporting on the success of the Junior Section in June, 1959.

JUNE 1959 JUNIOR SECTION

Arthur Cross reports as follows:

Well, gentlemen, the Junior Sunday runs are a success and I mean success. We have now about fourteen regular riders and believe me they are keen. We have had such runs as Chester for lunch via Winsford (Middlewich for Coffee) then eight of them went over to Langley for tea. They have also been a help to Junior Racing Section, going out to the start of the events, helping to change bikes and looking after clothing. Other runs include Delamere and Warrington (Transport Cafe) - where we hold a push penny game of which Danny (Lombardelli) is champion.

We have also used Taylor House as headquarters for events in Cheshire. Two "tens" have been held on Sunday mornings before Club runs, rides like 27, 28 and 29 minutes being quite common with the youngsters.

There is more I could say but for lack of space in the 'Journal', but whatever happens we must keep these juniors with us; some day they will be the backbone of the Club.

A. Cross.

Harry Whitehouse was chosen to ride for the Manchester District Team in the Tour of Britain, a fitting reward for his winning efforts in both Time Trials and Road Races.

Thanks to the untiring efforts of the Captain a suitable venue had been found at which to hold the Opening and Closing Runs. This was the Moss Rose Inn, Alderley, a friendly and somewhat down-to-earth hostelry with a good bowling green which was to be our venue for a number of years, both for these functions and for the Nickold Cup Bowling Competition and Saturday Club Runs.

1959 had proved to be reasonably successful for the Club with wins and team placings in local events, in local time trials and road races. Track activity and successes had unfortunately been on a much lower level than in previous years.

Solid support for social functions continued with a sell-out of 45 tickets for the Christmas Dinner and 120 for the Dinner Dance and Prize Presentation.

ANNUAL DINNER DANCE & PRIZE PRESENTATION 12th DECEMBER, 1959

108 members and friends listened to George Pearson. Editor of "Cycling" as he recalled the last occasion he had attended our Prize Presentation. This was just at the end of the glamorous Harris era when support for the 'Smoker' was so great that the gathering overflowed from the Clubhouse into New Brown Street. We ourselves had overflowed in somewhat full-blooded manner so that the more pious amongst us advocated a Dinner Dance, and having brought it into being promptly withdrew their support. leaving those who preferred the Smoker to support their Dinner Dance.

Approximately 31 new members had joined the Club in 1959.

Despite a loss by the Sports Company of £143 in 1959 the A.G.M. of 4th February, 1960 again resolved to promote a Race Meet providing that Guarantors or sponsors were forthcoming.

The Race Meet was to be an all amateur Meeting and would include the B.C.F. Individual Pursuit Championship and the further appearance of the Sputnik.

Norman Grattage engaged a full field of Continental amateur riders and the complete Great Britain Olympic Team.

A useful beginning was made to the racing season with Harry Whitehouse making fastest time in the Cheshire Roads '50' Harry Hardcastle winning two 2 day road races, Syd Merron winning the Gainsborough Road Race (with Harry Hardcastle and Don Murray supporting him for the Team Prize).

T. S. (Syd) Merron followed up this success by winning the 10 miles B.C.F. National Championship at the Manchester City Police Sports, this being our first National Championship win since Alan Bannister's Tandem Sprint Championship in 1952.

The Editor reported in his first Editorial that only four members out of 154 had made a contribution to the Journal. This complaint is the hardy annual for all Editors, whatever the era.

The Opening Run had again run into difficulties as to venue and this year it was held at the Polygon Hotel. Longsight. due to the fact that no suitable venue could be found in Cheshire. Over 50 members and visitors attended.

13 riders supported the first Club '25' and 10 the first Club '50'. Nine riders took part in the Junior '10' and the result sheet showed that Dave Aston was fastest in 24.26 with the slowest rider recording 27.47. It is always heartening to find useful performances coming through from the junior ranks, and in the inter-club with the Cheshire Roads the two fastest riders were Dave Aston in 24.26 and Bob Barlow heating the fastest Cheshire R.C. senior

riders who recorded 25 minute rides.

The Club has always been fortunate in having so many long serving Officials. Life Members and Past-Presidents who retained an active interest until the end of their days. There was more than lip-service to the philosophy that 'once a Wheeler - always a Wheeler'.

It was undoubtedly this philosophy which led to an interesting situation which began in June 1960 and completed its full circle almost twenty years later.

All organisations experience day to day differences of opinion which lead to resignations from Committee and club and these are often of only passing interest and become history.

Editor Peter Walthall reported in the Journal of June 1960:

JUNE 1960

At the June meeting, your Committee accepted with regret Jack Fletcher's resignation from the Committee and post of Financial Secretary. Jack disagreed with an earlier decision (if the Committee concerning the action taken by a Committee member over a person who had entered an Open Time Trial in the name of the Club before his application for membership had come to the knowledge of the Committee. The person later withdrew his application and a majority of the Committee elected to take no further action in the matter. The nomination of a successor was left over to the July meeting, and Jack is unofficially carrying on in the meantime. Is it too much to hope that he will one day relent and accept office again?

P. Walthall, Editor.

The position was that Jack Fletcher took the view that the Committee had condoned unfair treatment of an Applicant for Membership which had as its basis a personal bias on the part of some of the Club's top riders who were on Committee. It was a question of principle and led to the member concerned being in the wilderness as an Official of the club for nearly two decades until he returned as Sponsor and architect of the Club's racing revival in 1980.

There was irony in the fact that within six months of the commencement of Sponsorship, the Editor of 1960, Peter Walthall, who had now become Chairman of the R.T.T.C. resigned from the Manchester Wheelers' Club due to his disagreement with its policy and activities. The Manchester Wheelers' Road Race was promoted for the first time since 1955.

Race Meet, July 9th 1960

For the first time since 1955 a warm sun shone down on Harris Stadium, Fallowfield, on the second Saturday in July, and obviously for the first time in five years we could get an idea of the amount of support which could be expected from the general public on a fine day. The outcome was not encouraging.

The 'Sputnik' appeared for the third (and the last) time and ridden by John Carlisle of the Saxon Road Club demoralised a strong six-man Italian Pursuit Team and later rode a flying start mile at a speed of 37½ miles per hour. It was notable that no prizes at all were won by Manchester area riders, the racing being dominated by riders from Yorkshire, the Midlands and London. Despite an excellent programme and favourable weather there was again a loss on the Race Meet of £50 which was met by anonymous donors.

The decline in interest in the longer distance time trials was becoming increasingly evident when our Open 12 hours did not attract a full card, most of the entrants being local

riders.

In 1981 a certain John Woodburn was to bring the club honour by winning the 12 hours and 24 hours R.T.T.C. Championships but in the summer of 1960 the Journal recorded the fact that Syd Merron won the Gloucester City '25' in 59.26, beating the much fancied John Woodburn!

21 riders supported the Club '25' held on the 24th September, the largest entry for a Club event for several years. 110 people attended the Dinner Dance and Prize Distribution at the Sharston Hotel, Wythenshawe, at a price of 19s.0d. per head. Unfortunately the Journal reported that the menu was not a success!

An uncertain future for track-racing in Manchester arose from the sale of the Harris Stadium (formerly the Manchester Athletic Club and Fallowfield Track) to the Manchester University. There were fears that the track might be demolished for re-development of the site.

There was considerable nostalgic interest among our Life Members and prompted a letter from one of our Past Presidents and Race Meet Officials.

SEPT. 1960

News of the sale of Harris Stadium prompted Freddie Harrison to write from Canada. I cannot do better than reprint his letter for the benefit of all members, and here it is:

2525 York Avenue, Vancouver,
Canada B.C.
August 13th/60.

P. Walthall,
The Editor,
M/c. Wheelers Club.

Dear Sir,

This week I received a letter from my old Wheeler friend Monty Brierley with all news. He tells me Reg Harris has sold Fallowfield Track. To me personally I am very sorry, but I suppose it's the inevitable. The Cycle Track here has been at a standstill the past two years or seasons. I look back 55 years ago before I took up actual racing. What a wonderful day that was for the Manchester public. I suppose that a good many old Race Meet enthusiasts of the Wheelers will feel the same as I. Many years of my life have been connected with the track, both active and officially. If you have any report or editorial on this matter in the journal I would appreciate same. Please note my new address. I conclude with all best wishes to Wheelers particularly my old friends of 40 years' standing.

I remain, yours
FREDDIE HARRISON.

The life blood of the Club continued to flow fairly strongly and the A.G.M. of February 1961 was attended by 55 members.

Membership had now fallen to 172 of whom 74 were Life Members and there was a loss on 1960 of £100 by the Sports Company.

In February an application for membership was received from a thirteen year old and

the Committee deferred a decision because the applicant was younger than any previous member. The principle was considered to be important enough to call a special General Meeting which was held in March, 1961 and a proposition was carried that the minimum age of membership should be thirteen years. This has remained the minimum age for membership to the present day.

The changing character of the Club's membership was illustrated when, at the Opening run in March, at the Axe & Cleaver, Dunham Massey, there were 44 present but in the yard there were only nine bicycles and ten motor cars. At the other end of the scale, sixteen year old Dave Aston recorded a 61 minute 25 seconds '25'.

APRIL 1961

LAST MINUTE LYRIC

I am a junior member,
My age is ten plus three;
I may not speak,
I cannot vote,
But that won't worry me.
I've sold my cowboy's outfit,
I've closed my pirates' den;
I've paid my sub
To a damn good club;
From NOW I mix with MEN.

T.M. BARLOW Editor

The new owners of Harris Stadium, cycle track and grounds, the Manchester University, offered the use of same for the Race Meet at a fee of £60 inclusive of sound equipment.

Misfortune again greeted the 69th Race Meet with rain in the morning which reduced the gate to a mere 2,000. The highlight of the Meeting was the winning by Lloyd Binch of the Grand Prix of the City of Manchester for the 6th time.

The Race Meet Dinner was held at the Nags Head Hotel, Manchester, and again provided a very pleasant evening for the Race Meet Officials and prize winners.

Although Club events for Juniors at 10 miles and 25 miles were reasonably well supported, a declining interest for longer distances had become evident and there were only eight entries for the Club '50' in September, 1961.

The Open '12' was well supported with an entry of 95.

The Closing run was again held at the Axe & Cleaver and the organiser Jim (Knocker) Hartley, mourned the fact that it was now becoming increasingly difficult to arrange this type of Club fixture with an age group ranging between 17 and 82 years. "What sort of programme possibly appealed to all ages in this range" he asked.

1962 began on a rather subdued note, the A.G.M. having little of a contentious nature and the Secretary reporting that the membership had fallen to 149 of whom 70 were Life Members. There was a loss on the Race Meet of £43 which was again covered by donations.

There was considerable activity in Road Racing' and Time Trialling, with Pete

Gordon and Ken Nuttall being selected for the England 'A' Team in the Isle of Man International Road Race, these two being the principal contributors to twelve individual wins and sixteen Team wins in the early part of the season.

Although the reasons have never been quite clear (unless it was by virtue of their personal friendship with Harry Whitehouse and Syd Merron) we had added to our membership one or two riders from the Acme Wheelers, a club situated in the Cardiff area, and following the winning in 1961 by one of these riders, D. J. Hughes, of the Welsh National '100' and 12 hour Championships it was agreed in June 1962 that the Club should affiliate to the Cardiff Track Racing League!

In connection with the Race Meet, Advertising Secretary Len Myatt reported that in other parts of the country commercially sponsored meetings were now becoming much more prevalent. This type of sponsorship meant that promoters of these meetings were able to award higher prize values with the result that the Wheelers' Race Meet was no longer the premier event of the English track racing season. He also reported that advertising for the Race Meet Programme was becoming much more difficult to obtain now that crowds had fallen to lower levels.

The Manchester Wheelers' was now well represented in Massed Start Events in all parts of the country with Alf Gordon a most efficient team manager.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF JUNE 1962

LAST MINUTE LYRIC

We've so many men doing so many things
And so many projects are brewing;
That we've got to the stage when one half of the Club
Doesn't know what the other half's doing.

T. M. BARLOW Editor

It was ironical that a profit of £67 resulted from the Race Meet. This was due solely to the fact that out of a total prize list of £80 only £12 worth of prizes were won. Rain which commenced after the start of racing led to the Meeting being abandoned after only two events had been completed.

After the abandonment of the Race Meet the traditional Race Meet Dinner was again held at the Nags Head in Manchester. Disappointment with the weather was now becoming an accepted feature, but despite the fact that there were no major prize winners to toast and to acclaim, the traditional bonhomie prevailed.

The increased interest in Massed Start Racing as against time trialling was contributing to a decline of interest in longer distance events with the result that the Open 100 attracted only 68 entries. The Club, however, had the satisfaction of winning the team race.

A notable social event during the summer was the celebration of Jimmy Taylor's 80th birthday, held at Mrs. Bates, West End Cafe, Goostrey. Mrs. Bates' establishment was known to racing men and cyclists from many parts of the country as the centre of most time trial events in Cheshire at that time, and had accommodated hundreds of cyclists for tea only, bed and breakfast, dinners and teas. Jimmy had helped Mrs. Bates to expand both her catering facilities and develop a caravan park and it was a very warm and friendly function supported by friends from Manchester area cycling clubs.

In a four day international road race in West Berlin, a Manchester Wheelers' Team of Peter Gordon, Ken Nuttall and Jeff Thomas won the team race in each of the three stages, and on general classification Gordon finished second, Nuttall fourth and Thomas twelfth.

In the 1962 Tour of Britain, Ken Nuttall, riding for the Britannia Team, won the first and final stages and finished eighth on general classification as well as taking the award for most meritorious U.K. rider.

Ken Nuttall and Peter Gordon were selected for the Great Britain Road Team for the World Championships.

The Annual General Meeting had been brought forward to September due to the fact that it was now necessary to submit by October dates of Open events for the following year's calendar to the R.T.T.C. and B.C.F.

An ambitious programme was agreed upon to mark the Club's 80th Anniversary Year in 1963, and at National level this included:

- (1) The 4,000 metres Team Pursuit Championship at Fallowfield.
- (2) The National 12 hours R.T.T.C. Championship.
- (3) The National Road Race Championship in conjunction with the Tour of the Peak.

Editor Tommy Barlow looked back on our Eightieth Birthday and as the Club's historian contributed an outstanding Editorial.

EDITORIAL

Before our next issue - on July 7th, to be exact - we, the Club, will have reached our 80th birthday.

We find ourselves, together with our friends the Anfield, the Speedwell, and a few others, the still very active survivors of the Golden Age of Cycling; an age when Society made it fashionable to bicycle (or tricycle) in Hyde Park, and enthusiasts in their hundreds paraded on wheels in semi-military uniform at Meets held in Manchester and other provincial cities.

Since then, almost everything that could happen to a club has happened to us. We have outlived our Founders, we have changed our name. We were, at one time so rich as to be taunted as a "capitalist club"; and on at least two occasions we have been nearly bankrupt. During the years, through our delegates to the controlling bodies, we have given valuable service to the sport of cycling. On the other hand there have been times when we have rebelled against authority. We even took part in the losing battle against compulsory rear lights - how absurd it all seems now.

We promoted cycle races on the road until the turn of the century, when the police stopped us. We were, they said, a danger to other road users (such as the local gentry in their phaetons and the farmer driving his sheep on what is now A50).

When the mathematically-minded Bidlake invented the time trial we were among the first to foster this new kind of sport; and now that the wheel has turned full circle we are again among the leading promoters of mass start events.

We have always been a promoting club. Our earliest venture was a meeting held on a path round a pond in Sale Gardens (long since demolished); and from this grew the Race Meet with its fabulous succession of English Championships and "Muratti" contests. We brought motorpaced exhibitions to the North, with huge Anzani motor cycles trailing famous continental professionals. Spectators were encouraged to think that terrific speeds were attained, comparable with the 60, 70 m.p.h. records set up in France. (In actual fact, on the old shale track at Fallowfield, anything going faster than 45 m.p.h. would have shot clean over the banking).

Unlike many other clubs, we have never been blindly dedicated to cycling. In our early days we ran with the harriers in winter; and we even organised the Manchester to Blackpool Walk.

We accepted the motor car from the first. Motor cars had wheels, so there was no anomaly in Wheelers using them. We solemnly added the suffix "Cycle and Motor" to our title.

True, we never had any promotions exclusive to motor vehicles, but for several years we ran a procession of members' cars through the streets of Manchester to advertise the Race Meet. Nowadays, we can always rely on a score or more petrol burning members when we run, for instance, our Open '12'.

Our earlier cars would be museum pieces by now - Harry Wilson's Darracq, Sid Bowkett's Jowett, Jimmy Taylor's Arrol-Johnston, and Billy Munro's wonderful Ford which successfully climbed out of Dolgelly one Easter with red hot radiator and steam hissing out of every joint.

A review of our domestic life would reveal an unbroken series of enjoyable sporting and social events - Easter Tours, official and otherwise, inter-club affairs with the M.C & A.C., the East Liverpool Wheelers and the (original) Warrington Road Club. Literally hundreds of episodes must be in the minds of our older members. Not all of them will be pleasant, and some are, frankly disgraceful. There are probably only three of our veterans who know what really happened when the prancing horse was led into the Shropshire hotel; but the writer himself photographed a Captain who rode naked on the concrete Goat which gives its name to the famous Welsh hotel. (Sorry, but years later we burnt the negative). The discomfiture of the rather pompous gourmet who found himself chewing pieces of pink sponge rubber with custard may still be within living memory.

The Saturday Club Run has gone through many vicissitudes since the days when we rode along the "Pelican Mile", forty strong, headed by a bugler.

Many times have we been told that the Club Run was finished - that it had expired through lack of support. In 1899 a full page article appeared in the "Journal" on "The Decadence of the Club Run"! But, somehow or other, it has lasted. The truth is, of course, that we are not a one-purpose Club. Our members have many and varied interests, not all of which are compatible with attending club runs. But, we have always had a hard core of Wheelers who get a lot of fun out of having tea together in Cheshire on a Saturday.

We have produced a remarkable succession of path cyclists - centre champions, national champions, Empire champions, and 2 world champions - literally too numerous to name; but for some reason our outstanding time trial riders have been few. Since the days of Schafer, Waddington, Lowcock and Taylor, and Charlie Smith we have rarely hit the headlines. Under the now well-established mass-start code, however, we have several youngsters scoring successes in national and international events at home and in Europe. Some day they will be as much a part of our history as Owen, Sibbit, Cozens and Harris.

Few clubs have contributed more to the time trial calendar. Our two "Opens", the "100" (formerly the "50") and the "Twelve", are classics, which have stood the test of time. Each has a list of "Past Winners of this Event" so long as to embarrass the space-hungry programme printers.

The whole climate of cycling has changed since we drank to "The Queen" (Victoria) at our first Annual Dinner. Huge chunks of Rule Books have been revised and rewritten, as realistic pioneers persuaded annual general meetings that the sport of cycling must come into line with modern conditions; and the process is still going on. Even as we print this article, there are ethical differences between the two bodies which control the sport; but, in the light of history, it is plain that, sooner or later, unity of thought will be

restored, and another will be added to those famous controversies of the past which are now almost forgotten and exist only in mildewed books of press cuttings.

We have gone through the fire. We have adapted ourselves, eagerly or grudgingly, to new conditions as they came along. And on this, our 80th birthday we can say, with proper pride, that we have survived - and we have pulled our weight.

T. M. BARLOW *Editor*

1963 was a year of contrast and reflected the fact that the Club was now entering a transitional period. In all walks of life transitional periods lead to one of two things. They can pave the way to new successes but equally new ways, unless they are successfully carried through to maturity, can lead to a decline, and although it was probably not seen at the time a transitional period of a few years was to turn into a steady decline which was only to be arrested when the life of the Club had become almost extinct.

With each passing year more and more country inns were being modernised to suit the eating and drinking habits of an increasingly prosperous carriage trade with the result that hotels with a room for hire and a simple meal were very difficult to find. Following the modernisation of the Axe & Cleaver a further change had to be made and in 1963 the Opening and Closing runs were transferred to the Greyhound Hotel at Handforth.

Our successes and reputation in road racing circles brought us the good fortune of a new addition to our ranks, an outstanding track and road racing rider in the person of Derek Harrison, who was at that time studying at Manchester University. With Derek winning eight and Peter Gordon two, we had ten first class road race wins in the Spring of 1963.

A short sharp shower of rain before the 71st Race Meet inevitably reduced the gate, but the afternoon was fine and the attendance built up to an estimated 3,500.

For no apparent reason there was little interest in track-racing by any of the Manchester area clubs, but in road racing the Club was probably the leading amateur team in the country, with 40 place wins, including 26 in the first three and 16 individual wins, with Derek Harrison winning the B.C.F. Star Trophy, a fitting reward for his consistency throughout the year.

The question of sponsored clubs was discussed by the Committee in August 1962.

T. M. Barlow gave details of the background to these proposals. Although Tommy gave an impartial explanation of the thinking which lay behind sponsorship he was, like many stalwarts from the old black tights and alpaca days of no publicity, opposed to any introduction of commercialism. He reflected the attitude of the majority of old established clubs. It was an attitude which was to lead to the decline of many of them and to the formation of racing clubs whose membership was recruited from a wide geographical range.

There was a wide divergence of opinion, but on a proposition by J. Fletcher, seconded by Alan Bannister, the Committee somewhat surprisingly decided in favour of sponsored clubs.

A year of contrasting fortunes was experienced in 1963. Whilst on the one hand we had reached the Finals of the National Team Pursuit Championship, membership had

declined to 134, including 79 Life Members. The Closing run had been supported by only 34 members and friends, a post-war low, and yet the Club had been able to promote three National Championships in its 80th year in three different aspects of the sport, a very considerable achievement.

The 80th Anniversary Dinner was held at the Cafe Royal, Peter Street, Manchester, and was a notable occasion in the Club's social history.

EIGHTIETH YEAR ANNIVERSARY DINNER **Cafe Royal, Manchester, 5th October, 1963**

"The finest 'do' we've ever had" – Jimmy Taylor, 1904 Roadman. "Fabulous" – Ron Spencer of the Warrington, 1964 Road Champion. And in between these extremes "A night to remember" - Frank Slemen. "Never been to anything like it" - Stan Livingston. "Marvellous". Many were the expressions of satisfaction and certainly for the ninety-six members and friends who were gathered to celebrate our Eightieth Year. It was an outstanding and memorable occasion, rich in sentiment and tradition and memories.

It was amazing to reflect that only a few months ago support for an all-male celebration dinner might be lacking. A little effort by a few and enthusiasm snowballed. The Cafe Royal was a fortunate choice - its Windsor Suite with a capacity of around 100 provided an ideal table layout with first-class decor and mellow warmth and illumination to provide an environment worthy of the occasion.

From the arrival of the first visitors (and who better than Albert White, Charlie Holland and Jack Middleton) until the last minute entry as we were taking our seats of Tommy Godwin and Hugh Porter, the evening began on the right note, the tempo was maintained and thereafter flowed pleasurably and smoothly until nearly midnight.

Already animated by cocktails and other pre-prandial appetisers, Dinner was a very satisfying affair, being highlighted by successful cross-toasting initiated by Peter Walthall, who took wine with those who had "packed" in a Wheelers '12'. A master stroke, Peter, to maintain the cross-toasting as a self-appointed Toast-master. Rarely experienced in our Northern pattern of functions the habit can add lustre as it did on this occasion. At suitable intervals the President took wine with winners of the Muratti - Albert White, George Owen, Tommy Godwin and Alan Bannister. Then with those who had ridden for Great Britain in the World's Championships. Jimmy Taylor took wine with those who had taken one of his Ginger ale and peppermints - nearly 75% of those present. This was quickly followed by Alan Bannister who took wine with those who had spit it out! Again nearly 75%. The good-humour and conviviality went on until, liqueurs and coffee consumed, cigars alight and the tape recorder in position, came the speechmaking. Jack Fletcher toasted the Visitors and the Press. After a warm welcome to "Cycling", represented by Ashley Taylor, and our old stalwart in the National Press, Jimmy MacDermott, Jack welcomed in detail the many famous names present.

Famous All-rounder Champion and winner of our 'Open 12' in 1933, 1935 and 1936, **Charlie Holland** of the M. C. & A. C. accompanied by **Jack Middleton**. **Freddie Turner**, **Alf Hammond** and **Bill Kinghorn** of the Chesh. **Ron Spencer** of the Warrington, winner of the National 12-hour Championship in conjunction with our '12' this year. **Vic Marcroft** of the Mercury, winner of our 'Open 100'. **Bevis Chapman**, a member of our 25-mile record-breaking team of a few years ago. **Larry Ross** of the East Liverpool Wheelers, former 50-mile record holder. **Stan Livingston** of the Dukinfield, **Les Heald** of the South Lancs., **Eric Lane** of the Flixton, **Tommy Godwin** of the Rover C.C., a Muratti Cup winner outright, together with his protege **Hugh Porter** of Wolverhampton, one of this year's finalists in the World's Pursuit Championship. **Arthur**

Wood of the Chesh. and **Jimmy Patterson** of the Abbotsford. **Rex Austin**, President of the Anfield. **Vic Jenner** of the Charlotteville and B.A.R. Concert Organiser. Our very good friend **Lloyd Binch**, six times winner of the Grand Prix of Manchester. **Albert "Lal" White** of Scunthorpe, the most prolific prizewinner who ever rode on English tracks. A sincere welcome to the V.L.P. among the Visitors, an outstanding character in so many aspects of the cycling game, **Frank Slemen** of the East Liverpool Wheelers.

Ashley Taylor, replying on behalf of the Visitors and the Press told us how his first experience of the Wheelers was at the Race Meets in the early 1920s. He spoke of the Wheelers' hospitality and ability to provide news through the medium of their promotions and emphasised the assistance which was always forthcoming from the Club's senior officials.

The Toast to the Club could be given by only one man. A man who had known us intimately for over thirty years. Who had seen inter-club matches with the E.L.W., the Open 50's in Shropshire, the Open 12's, the Race Meets. Who knew our shortcomings as well as our strongpoints. **Frank Slemen**. And what a job he made of it. Anecdote and emotion, thrilling reminiscences albeit touched fleetingly with nostalgia, his audience followed every mood until he called upon everyone present to stand, stand and drink to the Manchester Wheelers' Club.

Only a speaker of Tommy Barlow's ability could have followed Slemen and avoided an anticlimax in replying on behalf of the Club. In his usual witty manner, spiced on this occasion by subtle innuendo and inflexion, Tommy sketched a pattern of the Club's activities. "Its members", he said, "set out to enjoy themselves and I submit that, for eighty years, they have done just that".

The official speeches concluded, Albert White asked to be allowed to say a few words. He said how great it was to know that after all these years he was not forgotten. That the Wheelers' Meets were the highlights of his career. A gleam of the old ferocity showed through when he spoke of his races against Jack Sibbit and George Owen and of how he "wasna' afraid of no-one" when he rode at Manchester. Of interest was the information that the first chara-banc trip to be organised out of Scunthorpe was to Manchester Wheelers' Race Meet.

A few heartfelt words from "Knocker" Hartley to say what a grand evening it had been and how worthwhile the effort, and the evening was at an end - a fitting testimonial to eighty years of successful history.

J. Fletcher

Only 40 members were present at the A.G.M. of October 1963 at which the principal item for discussion concerned Sponsored Clubs.

Eventually the meeting voted in favour of the principle of Sponsored Clubs by 22 votes to 7 and instructed its B.C.F. and R.T.T.C. delegates accordingly.

There were only 6 entries for the Club '25' of October, 1963.

A successful Dinner Dance and Prize Distribution was held at the Cornishman Hotel, Wythenshawe, at which 120 members and friends were present.

One fact which had become increasingly apparent during the late 1950's and 1960's was the lack of continuity of membership in cycling clubs generally. More sophisticated life styles and entertainment, of which the principal was television, made it difficult to find honorary officials. Obviously success can only be achieved by the efforts of the racing men, but there must be support from the Club for its riders as evidenced in the North West by Frank Slemen and East Liverpool Wheelers, Eddie Soens and Ken

Matthews with the Kirkby etc., and a Racing Club of the top rank in one year can so easily be forgotten and a name of the past in only a year or two. Despite the success of our 1963 season in terms of both racing and promotion, Club membership had seriously declined and in April 1964 the feeling in Committee was that the facilities we offered compared poorly with those provided by other Clubs in the area. One of the areas open for improvement was that of contact between members generally, and Norman Grattage suggested that use might be made of the Harris Stadium for holding a weekly Club night.

The idea of a Club night was transformed into fact under the fatherly eye of Norman Grattage, who at this same time was a full time employee of Manchester University, the owners of Harris Stadium, now re-named "The Stadium". This proved particularly attractive to the younger members, but received little support from the older generation, thereby only partly fulfilling expectations.

Over the years the Wheelers' had been news, had provided the news and had been associated with people who made the news, and 1964 was no exception.

On the cycling scene there was the appearance as the star attraction at our 1964 Race Meet of Patrick Sercu, the World Amateur Sprint Champion, who went on to become World Professional Sprint Champion and achieve a record aggregate of Six Day wins. At that meeting he was a slim, serious looking 19 year old, who has changed remarkably little in appearance over a long and strenuous racing career.

In the Open 100 an interesting entry was that of Reg Randall, current holder of the Lands End-John O'Groats Bicycle Record, on this occasion riding a small wheeled machine.

Finally, at the Race Meet, proceedings were momentarily interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Jimmy Savile, a one time Tour of Britain competitor of whom the Editor went on to say ". . . who is now, we are informed a disc jockey. He seems to be doing pretty well out of it with his efforts to give away a £5 note but frustrated by Norman Grattage who foresaw horrible consequences if an amateur rider got hold of it".

The "disc jockey" quip of our Editor was of course somewhat in error when Jimmy Savile went on to become a world famous T.V. personality, and was awarded the O.B.E. for his monumental fund raising activities for charity.

The 72nd Race Meet 1964, was a brilliant success. The afternoon was fine and sunny and International stars competed in a colourful series of events, culminating in a Muratti which was full of suspense and excitement, being won by Aad De Graaf of Holland.

The Grand Prix of the City of Manchester was won by World Amateur Champion, Patrick Sercu, and at the Race Meet Dinner held at the Cafrs Royal, Manchester, we were able to complete our full programme by toasting the Prize Winners and the Press. It was one of the few occasions in recent years when our Race Meet officials and other voluntary workers were able to sit back and enjoy the fruits of their labours. Unfortunately, bearing in mind the excellent programme and weather, the attendance estimated at under 3,000 was pathetically poor, but nevertheless resulted in a break-even situation.

Highlights of the 1964 season were reported by Team Manager, Alf Gordon.

ON THE ROAD

When compiling a road report for one's own Club on one's own Club members and when the only two really active roadmen are named Pete and Derek it is very difficult

indeed not to be biased and prejudiced in their favour, especially when they are two of the best young amateur roadmen in the country.

Week in and week out their exploits are delighting the "bunched-game" enthusiasts as far apart as Durham to Kent and Yorkshire to Wales and their supporters are not only confined to Manchester Wheelers. In great demand by organisers of all Divisions the inclusion of the "Wheelers Pair" on the programme more or less guarantees an all-action race and, win or lose, it is known that they will provide some good bike-riding and excitement.

All in the garden, however, has not been rosy, Derek is still only now recovering from his crash in the Vaux International three weeks ago after sustaining a fractured rib and broken bone in the spine. He has now been discharged, is back on the bike and though still suffering some pain is gradually getting back into harness.

Derek had been in great form and just to prove his versatility he tackled the National Pursuit Title and managed to be second only to Hughie Porter, the title holder, with a best time of 5 min. 12 secs. much to the discomfiture of the other pursuit specialists. He immediately followed this by winning the Hull Corporation Road Race for the second year running.

It was therefore a bitter blow to the Club that because of his crash Derek, as favourite for the National Road Race Title was unable to start and the sighs of relief from the "gallopers" down south could be heard in Manchester. They had though not reckoned on the fighting spirit of young Pete who, on a course not entirely suited to his style of riding lifted the Title for the Wheelers with one of the rides of his life, bringing forth the following comment from a well known veteran international rider: "well, we might have known if it wasn't one of the blighters it would be the other." Already a certainty for the World's, Pete had his sights firmly set on Tokio and he tried, and he tried, and he tried (our juniors please note).

In the 1400 mile Tour of Britain, Pete finally finished 8th overall riding for the Britannia Team and but for a fantastic number of punctures, broken wheels and crashes would no doubt have finished in an even higher position - for his first T.O.B. a grand performance.

Leading rider in the Manchester Cycle Track Racing League and heading the Star Trophy Roadman's Competition (with Derek in second place) Pete is in fine form and intends to maintain that form in the weeks ahead.

Alf Gordon

Our "Tour of the Peak" road race received only 33 entries and was won on a very hard day by Bill Bradley, the Southport rider. The poor entry was attributed to the fact that three Star Trophy Events were promoted on the same weekend, an outstanding example of poor date-fixing.

Somewhat surprisingly, bearing in mind the successful racing results of the 1964 Race Meet, a letter was received from J. Fletcher expressing a desire of himself and other sponsors to withdraw from further financial assistance to the Race Meet because they felt that there was not sufficient enthusiasm in the Manchester area to make its promotion worthwhile. In effect, we were promoting a Race Meet for the riders, and virtually subsidising spectators to attend. This was possibly the wrong way in which to have approached the problem, or it may have been to initiate a new line of thought regarding financial support. Certainly at other tracks, advertisers had been found who would sponsor the event as an Advertisement for their own products which was in line with the thinking of the 1960's. On purely sentimental grounds the probability was that inherently the Manchester Wheelers' wished to continue their own promotion independently.

The attendance at the 1964 Race meet was only around 1,000 and the average annual loss on the Race Meet over the last seven or eight years had been £100 per year. This figure had been exceeded in 1964.

The Country Headquarters in New Platt Lane, Goostrey, known as Taylor House was returned by the Club to its donor, Jimmy Taylor. This decision was arrived at following considerable discussion which unfortunately was tinged with a good deal of bitterness and disappointment.

OBITUARY

We regret to record the death of Fred Currie, which occurred at his home in Old Trafford on November 21st, after a very short illness. He was 86.

Fred Currie was born in February 1878 and became a Manchester Wheeler in 1904. At the time of his death he was our oldest member, leading Jimmy Taylor and Arthur Guildford by a few months.

He could well be described as the perfect Wheeler. During his sixty years' membership he enjoyed taking part in everything the Club did. As a young man he competed in road and path events, and it is on record that he won a prize in our two-miles-up-the-Snake hillclimb of 1905. Almost as soon as he joined the Club he was picked for the team to compete against the Midland C. & A.C. in the famous series of matches.

He was Captain in 1910 and President in 1920.

Few, if any members can have a longer record of committee service, and it is unlikely that any surviving members can remember a Race Meet at which he did not officiate.

In the First World War Fred served in what was then the Machine Gun Corps (Heavy Branch) and was one of the first men to drive a tank into action.

Fred was a charming companion in any company. He was a live wire on our Easter tours, and some of us will still remember how he joyfully opened a whole barrel of oysters at Tal-y-Llym.

From its earliest years until 1939 it was customary to hold concerts (with home-grown talents) on every possible occasion and Fred was always a star turn. He sang "The Trumpeter" and other songs beloved by the Edwardians, and there were duets with Arthur Guildford. "The Moon hath raised her lamp above" and "Come into the Garden, Maud". His interest in the Club remained to the very end. He came regularly to the Club House to meet his friends, and less than a month before his death he took part in a debate at the annual general meeting.

The Club was represented at the crematorium by the President, supported by H. S. Anderson, T. M. Barlow, J. Berry, A. R. Bomford, G. R. M. Brierley, R. Consterdine, H. Eckersall, A. Guildford, F. H. Harrison, J. S. Hartley, J. P. Taylor, P. J. Taylor and L. Whittaker. In addition to the Club's wreath there was another from "a young Wheeler".

The Club mourned the loss of two of the notable trio who had been members of the Club since 1904. J. W. (Jack) Bell and Fred Currie, the latter having been a notable pillar of the Club both as an administrator and Clubman.

T. M. BARLOW Editor

The Club had been extremely fortunate in the loyalty of many of its outstanding track champions, and it was pleasing to have a surprise visit from our former Professional World Sprint Championship Finalist, Syd Cozens, during the year.

The Annual General Meeting in October, 1964 was attended by only 32 members.

Derek Harrison was one of the 4-man road team which represented G.B. in the 120 miles Olympic Road Race in Japan.

In contrast with the entry for the Tour of the Peak the Open '12' received 91 entries.

The success of the Club Nights at the Fallowfield Stadium Club House on Monday evenings had provided useful opportunities to introduce new members to older members of the Club but this innovation led to a further development which represented a radical break from tradition, and which history was to prove, led to a decline in all aspects of the Club's activities.

The idea was imported by a number of comparatively new members who were of mature years, and had they continued in active membership may well have brought long term benefits to the Club. Unfortunately their active membership was of short duration. At the Annual General Meeting in 1964 the following proposition was carried.

"A General meeting of the Club shall be held on the first Monday in each month, except November, for the purpose of considering the reports of and giving directives to the officers".

Whilst the proposers had the idea that it would give a more democratic appeal to the membership at large, and particularly to younger members, the longer serving members of Committee concluded that it was impracticable and virtually retired from active administration of Club affairs, leaving it in the hands of newer members who continued for a time with enthusiasm to direct and manage the Club's activities.

EDITORIAL

This year's annual general meeting made a bold step towards grappling with the problems which our Club, in common with many others, has to face in the changing pattern of the cycling world.

With a view to increasing interest among members, it was decided that although day-to-day matters will be handled by the officials, every member will have the opportunity, once a month, to discuss policy and to criticise if he feels like it.

Manchester Wheelers' headquarters have, in effect, been moved from the Clubhouse in South King Street - once our pride, and the envy of others - to a room in a building adjacent to Fallowfield track which we hire for one evening a week. General meetings will be held there once a month, the dates for meetings in the near future being January 4th, February 1st, March 1st, and April 5th.

The consequences of this will be far-reaching, and in the view of many members, will be for the ultimate good of the Club.

We have almost certainly succeeded in delegating responsibility for the conduct of the Club affairs to the younger group of members. Sooner or later this had to come.

It may be that if the young members accept this responsibility they will refuse to be influenced by the tradition built up over the last eighty years, and we shall be presented with a New Look. We fervently hope that it will be as good as the old one.

T. M. BARLOW Editor

The vague misgivings expressed by Tommy Barlow in his Editorial of December 1964 were shared by many Life Members who were saddened and frustrated by the decline in standards and racing performances. The majority accepted the situation with an air of resignation but for a small minority there was a sense of defeatism also expressed in a letter which was published in the same Journal.

It may have been an attempt to arouse interest and action but brought forth only one reply and no new enthusiasm.

CORRESPONDENCE **Why Not Wind It Up?**

Dear Sir,

Wind what up? Obviously, the Manchester Wheelers' Club whilst it still possesses a little of its old glory and traditions.

Our former champions are as remote from the Club as the North Pole from the South and those who had a bellyful, or should it be eyeful, of their reflected glory are equally remote.

Even if we have a Race Meet it appears unlikely that we shall have an entry from the Club and our representation in our famous 'Opens' is pitifully poor. We depend apparently upon a septuagenarian Editor who is nevertheless able to outshine any alternative we have to offer.

In the absence of another candidate we have chosen a future President who has only two years of Membership and, admirable though the choice may be, it is diametrically against Club traditions. Our post war activities have more or less failed to produce a single long serving Official and we have an image which is obviously unacceptable to the up and coming riders of today. Whether this failure is due to the wrangles, jealousies and the manner in which we have gone about trying to drum our way of life into the new members I cannot say.

Before this proposition is submitted on the Agenda of an A.G.M. I hope some Members will be roused to make a defence but even if they do not they must remember that words alone will not save the day nor make the Club's future any brighter.

Yours etc.
J. Fletcher

CORRESPONDENCE

Dear Sir,

In reply to the letter from Mr. J. Fletcher in the last Club journal, I would like to suggest a few ways of improving the Club. They are:

1. A smaller and cheaper Club journal, thus enabling Club subscriptions to be reduced in the hope of attracting more members.
2. Junior members should be encouraged more to attend Monday Club nights and Sunday Club runs.
3. There should be more short-distance Club events, particularly evening events.

Finally I suggest that the Club stops living on past glories and starts thinking and acting in a modern way; otherwise it will soon degenerate into a purely social club for retired gentlemen cyclists. If something is not done to improve the Club and to attract younger, active members, the Club will soon die.

Yours in sport,
Harold Dodd

Attendances at the initial monthly general meetings at Fallowfield had only been small but representative. Nevertheless the policy of the Club was aggressively progressive and the programme for 1965 would include an Open '12', Open '100', 8 Club Time Trials and a Race Meet. There would also be the promotion of the Tour of the Peak. A massive

silver cup which had been presented by Reg Harris to Norman Grattage as an appreciation of services rendered was in turn awarded to the Club by Norman to be awarded each year to the winner of the Club Handicap Time Trial Championship. It would be known as the "Reg Harris Trophy". This Cup had been won by Reg at the Brussels indoor stadium on October 29th, 1949 at a World Championship Revenge Meeting following his first World Professional Sprint Championship.

Memories of our Race Meet successes following World War One were aroused with the following report from the April, 1965 Journal.

PAUL GUIGNARD

The death is reported from Paris of Paul Guignard, the first cyclist to cover more than 100 kilometres in an hour. He was 88.

Guignard appeared at our 1921 Race Meet, and was involved in the most spectacular "crash" ever seen at Fallowfield. Half way through an attempt on the ten miles paced record his motor ran a trifle wide, and he followed it into the loose surface. He lost balance, and came off at over 40 miles an hour, sliding about thirty yards amid a shower of sparks. The crowd of 20,000 cheered with relief when news came through that he was not seriously hurt.

T. M. BARLOW Editor

One of the outstanding speakers at our 80th Anniversary had been Albert White, the famous track rider from Scunthorpe and his recollections of the Race Meets of the 1920's had been of great interest.

News of his death in 1965 was received with sadness and it was a tribute to his outstanding qualities that the following report appeared in the Journal.

ALBERT WHITE

Just as we go to press we hear, with regret of the death of Albert White. He was 75. Most of us saw "Lal" for the last time when he spoke at our Jubilee Dinner in 1963, but there are still a fair number of us who will remember how he burst upon us at our 1919 Race Meet when he was placed in two N.C.U. championships and won his first share in the third Muratti Cup. During a remarkable career over the next 14 years he won the Muratti Cup outright and held many national championships. He was a great favourite with our crowd, who regularly gave him a cheer when, years after his retirement, they spotted him among the spectators.

T. M. BARLOW
Editor

At this time a number of the leading amateur road and track riders were joining a new Independent class, which was regarded as a step forward from the amateur ranks to determine whether a rider had the ability to bridge the gap from amateur to full professional status. Our National Road Champion Peter Gordon formed a 4 man team with Wes Mason from Sheffield and George Halls and Dick Goodman from Buckinghamshire. The team was sponsored by Viking Cycles and Trumanns Steel, a company controlled by our life member, J. Fletcher. The team raced under the name Viking Cycles/Trumanns Steel and it was possibly surprising, in view of many members' hostility to commercialism, that their first team win was recorded in the April 1965 Journal.

Modernisation of the Greyhound Hotel at Handforth necessitated a further change of venue for the Opening and Closing runs, and once again we were nearer to Manchester, the venue being Langley House in Urmston.

There were 57 in attendance, notable guests being John Arnold, the famous holder of many tricycle records and former B.B.A.R. Brian Wiltshire.

New ideas in connection with the 73rd Race Meet which was again promoted in 1965 resulted in a profit of £120 although the meeting was abandoned due to torrential rain after completion of only two events. The money-spinner had been Draw Tickets for a road racing cycle and was the brain-child of Alf Gordon.

General interest in the longer distance time trials was again at a low level with our own Open '100' receiving a disappointingly poor entry - again possibly due to clashes with the Isle of Man week - and the Manchester & District T.T.A. also abandoning their 12 hour promotion for 1965.

It transpired that the total profit on the Race Meet had amounted to £244. This was made up by £112 from the raffle and £132 profit on the Race Meet itself. The profit on the Race Meet was due to a great extent to a come-back appearance by Reg Harris, and was a tribute to the name which Reg had made for himself as an outstanding World Champion.

The Tour of the Peak attracted only 30 entries (25 starters), the event being won by Dick Goodman of the Viking/Trumanns Steel Team. Organiser Alf Gordon gave his opinion that the low entry was due to the severity of the course and a clash with another Golden Wheel event.

Entries in the Open '12' amounted to a satisfactory 79.

Peter Gordon had collected six professional Motor-Paced Records and in his first year as an Independent had an impressive number of individual and team wins, but our only winner on the road had been Dave Aston.

Rumblings of uncertainty as to the Club's future were expressed at the A.G.M. in October, 1965 when only 30 attended.

Older members thought that if the monthly general meetings were to be continued they should be held at South King Street, but the vote was in favour of continuing at Fallowfield. The average attendance at the monthly general meeting at Fallowfield had been 18, only three more than the average attendance at the 1963/64 committee meetings at South King Street. The membership was now 135, including 67 Life Members.

Notable visitors at the Dinner Dance & Prize Presentation held at the Cornishman Hotel, Wythenshawe in November included Will Townsend, Chairman of the R.T.T.C. and Alan Gayfer, Editor of 'Cycling'.

The occasion provided a suitable opportunity for Tommy Barlow to sign the Golden Book of Cycling in the presence of many members of the Club who were able to express their vocal appreciation of Tommy's services to the Sport.

A new venue for the Christmas Dinner - Rivington Hall, near Horwich was supported by 38 members.

1966 opened on a quiet note and it was decided to cease promoting the Tour of the Peak, opinion being that it no longer reflected the needs of the riders who preferred fast go-all-the-way racing which could attract substantial spectator support and provide a basis for advertisers to give sponsorship support. Instead the Club decided to promote a series of circuit races at Platt Fields, Manchester for professionals and amateurs.

An entry of 60 for the Open '100' was lower than our previous average, but not out of line with the general level for this type of event, other local 100's having been cancelled due to lack of entries.

After ten successive years when it had rained on at least some part of the second Saturday in July, the 74th Race Meet enjoyed a dry and sunny afternoon and an attractive programme was presented. The attendance was disappointingly low, however, the final Editorial comment being, "An excellent afternoon's sport but where have all the spectators gone? At this rate it looks as though we are promoting just for the riders, not the public." This repeated the comments of the Race Meet guarantors in 1964.

The pattern of life in the City was now beginning to have an effect on the finances of the Clubhouse in South King Street. The problems of parking and the emergence of fast food outlets combined with the general movement of many members from the City to the suburbs had led to financial losses with the result that the Board of Directors of Manchester Wheelers' Clubhouse Ltd., decided upon Closure and Liquidation, while funds remained to meet all obligations.

50 YEARS AT 4a SOUTH KING STREET

The "return" of the Club to South King Street for Clubnight and monthly meetings, prompts a brief note on the history of the Clubhouse.

The Manchester Wheelers' Clubhouse Ltd. was incorporated in 1897 with a nominal capital of £1,000 divided into 10/- shares. The shareholding was so arranged and the Articles framed to ensure that the Manchester Wheelers' (Cycling) Club should at all time have a controlling interest.

The first Clubhouse premises were at 4 Albert Square and comprised a large billiards room, two (later three) smaller rooms, bar and kitchen. By the outbreak of the First World War it was realised that the expense of maintaining these premises was too great and ultimately the "House-warming" at 4a South King Street was held on Friday, 17th December, 1915, the "Tea" costing 2/-.

Since then the premises have served as Headquarters and permanent home of the Cycling Club as well as a Gentlemen's Club, for nonmembers of the Cycling Club have always been admitted to membership of the Clubhouse. Indeed, without the support of those non-cycling members the Clubhouse could not continue-but equally the Clubhouse members would be the first to pay tribute to the work of Cycling Club members such as the late Fred Currie, Harold Eckersall (currently Secretary), Bert Anderson and Monty Brierley.

The support recently given to the Monday evening gatherings at the Clubhouse leads one to anticipate a revival of interest in the Clubhouse on the part of Cycling Club members. No other cycling club in England can boast Clubhouse facilities such as we have in the heart of the City. An excellent moderately priced luncheon can be obtained there in comfort each weekday, whilst Walter is always prepared to make sandwiches etc. at other times of the day.

The members of the Clubhouse, whether members of the Cycling Club or not, can look forward together to several more years at South King Street. The facilities are there, let us all use them to the full.

The Club now mourned the loss of two outstanding Life Members, Syd Bowkett a Past President, outstanding Administrator and after-dinner speaker, and George Owen, a contemporary of Jack Sibbit, both of whom had joined the Club after competing in a local novices meeting.

George Owen became National Sprint Champion in 1921 and led the way to our Path domination of the 1928/1934 era.

The idea of the general management of the Club by open meeting had coincided with the appointment of an Editor who, it was claimed, brought a new image and with-it style for the Journal. The new form of Journal and its Editor lasted for only twelve months, however, after which there was a reversion to the style of yesteryear with Peter Walthall as Editor. The new formula of general management in open meeting was soon to see the departure of its sponsors, leaving a gap which could be filled only by the recall of a few long serving officials who had retained their interest in the Club despite the introduction of the new ideas.

At the A.G.M. of October 1966-R. H. Harris proposed and was seconded by Norman Grattage, "That the Club reverts to general management by a Committee consisting of a certain number of officers and elected members." This was carried 25 for 10 against.

One noticeable aspect of the meeting was that once again there were very few members able or willing to accept official positions.

There was a strong expression of opinion from Reg Harris that the changes of two years ago had led to a decline in the fortunes of the Club.

Support for different types of events continued to fluctuate and during the year there had been twelve members contesting the Club Track Championships, including the Sprint Championship, Pursuit and Point-to-Point Events. There had also been healthy support for the Open '12' which received an entry of 90.

The year concluded with an Annual Dinner and Prize Presentation which was again held at the Cornishman Hotel, Wythenshawe with 100 members and friends in attendance.

The difficulty in finding suitable officials was underlined by the fact that the Editor for 1967 was Alan Bannister our former World's and Olympic rider who assumed the position he had last held when National Tandem Champion in 1953.

Alan had been national Tandem Champion in 1947-48-49-50-51-52-53.

The scarcity of volunteers for official positions was further emphasised when the Open '12' was rescued from abandonment by the offer of Tommy Barlow to promote same, assisted by Reg Consterdine. These two members had been in the Club for a total of 82 years!!

THE OPEN 'TWELVE'

by 'Peppermint'

The initial move towards running our Open '12' began early in 1929. The annual general meeting of that year rejected the idea; but the enthusiasts called a special general meeting which reversed the decision, and the first event of the series, still unbroken except for war years, was run over a Cheshire-Shropshire course on September 7th, 1929. Freddy Turner won, he finished on the centre of Chelford railway bridge with 217 miles.

Some day someone will write a history of the event - there will be plenty to write about. Since the beginning of the Best All-rounder Competition our event has always been one of the most important in the calendar, and three times it has incorporated the National Championship.

Many famous riders have had their names in the finishing list. Charles Holland broke competition record in it, and, believe it or not, we once nearly won it ourselves. This was in 1934, when the allday fight between Stanley Butler and our own Cliff Lamb finished with the two men pushed to the uttermost limits of physical and mental endurance. The end came disastrously-Cliff fell off his bicycle, completely exhausted, and had the cruel experience of seeing his rival go past with only a few minutes unexpired.

We had a thrill the year the great Southall rode. There was a mild panic even before the event. Southall had been in Los Angeles and had returned in time to ride in the Polytechnic '12' the week before ours. He had trouble and retired and found himself with no qualifying ride for the Best All-rounder Competition. He sent a frantic telegram, which arrived just in time for his name to be included in our starting list. He had a fairly easy ride, but Freddie Brown of the Potteries C. C. was always in the picture and after Southall punctured (with less than an hour to go) it looked as if Brown would win, and he nearly did.

We have had our organising problems. In 1936 we had to re-arrange half of the course because of a fatal accident at Allostock a fortnight before the event. And at another time we had to do some hurried shuffling on being told, less than a week before the event, that the Whitchurch by-pass was being closed for a festival procession just at the time we wanted to use it.

The 1938 event was remarkable for two reasons. It was run through the night with a 9p.m. start and it saw the introduction, for the first time in the country, of the stationary-timekeeper system of identifying finishing points, a system which was criticised at the time but is now used exclusively.

Comic relief there is in plenty. How Charlie Holland ran on to Chelford railway station in a fog; how Fred Leeming fell in a pond at Christleton, and the sad fate of the cockerel which pecked the racing secretary's leg at Stamford Bridge, and so on, and so on . . .

This, then, is the classic '12' which came very near to being abandoned for the shameful reason that nobody could be found to run it. Fortunately for the Club and for the sport generally, there was a hard core of traditionalists who said: "This is impossible" - and a systematic comb-out of former organisers (there were no new ones) was undertaken.

Circumstances had made it impossible for Martin Thompson (1963-6) to carry on. Alf Hughes (1956-62) was dead. Mark Cooper (1953-5) had left the Club, Harold Crye (1948-52) now lived too far away, and Jack Fletcher (1946-7) had transferred his interest to another branch of the sport. So there was only one left - Tommy Barlow (1929-38, 1945). Tommy said: "Good God, do you know how old I am?" - and a lot of other things as well. Finally, he conceded: "Well, rather than see the things go down the drain . . ."

Interviewed recently T.M.B. said he felt that he could still count on the co-operation of quite a lot of people, both inside and outside the Club. He was already in touch with the District Council regarding a revised course which would not include the unpopular Alraham Green detour. He was not worried about getting marshals and feeding teams. "I realise," he said, "that nowadays quite a few of our members are more interested in mass-start racing than in 12-hour timetrials, but I am hoping to persuade at least some of these members to turn out on the day."

Despite the gloom of the preceding autumn the 1967 season began on a bright note with an entry of 16 for the first Club '25' and 6 riders in the Withington Wheelers Novices '25'.

In an effort to recapture some of the National success which had been lacking in recent years, one of our Life Members, Jack Fletcher, offered to sponsor a top class professional road team of Peter Gordon, Dick Goodman, George Halls and Wes Mason, a condition of his sponsorship of these riders being that they would join the Manchester Wheelers' Club and ride under the name Trumanns Steel/Manchester Wheelers'.

A number of successful events were promoted throughout the year comprising a Junior Road Race which attracted a field of 40, an Open '100' with an excellent entry of 93, the 75th Annual Race Meet, the Schoolboys National Road Championship in Heaton Park, Manchester, the Rochdale Professional Criterium and the 33rd Open 12 hours in which there were 58 competitors, 10 of whom had beaten 250 miles.

For the second year in succession the Race Meet programme was completed without interruption from the weather, but once again most of the prize winners were from the Midlands and the South. A disappointingly low attendance resulted in a loss of £73 on the Race Meet, but fortunately a surplus of £83 from the Muratti Draw gave an overall surplus of £10.

HISTORY OF THE "MURATTI"

The history of the "Muratti" Race, "The race of the Champions", began in 1899 when the Vice-President of the Manchester Wheelers' Club, Mr. D. B. Muratti, on behalf of Messrs. B. Muratti, Sons & Co. Ltd., Cigarette Makers of Manchester, presented to the Wheelers' a massive silver cup valued at 100 guineas. So began a long series of epic

struggles between the champions of their day for this Amateur 10 miles Race at Fallowfield, Manchester, which was to become famed the world over.

July 8th, the "second Saturday in July", 1899, was the date of the 16th Manchester Wheelers' Race Meet, and, the first race for the "Muratti" Cup with a field of 23 of the most prominent riders of the time. After some fine riding, Tom Childs from Blackhill, Durham, was the winner, two lengths ahead of Tom Davies of Manchester, with Rowland Janson of London Poly. C.C. third. Significantly, the second and third in this inaugural race proved the winners in the next two years, Tom Davies in 1900, with Roland Janson in 1901 winning by the Judge's verdict of inches from Davies, although many of the 18,000 spectators present claimed a dead-heat. In front of 20,000 spectators and behind closed doors, the winner in 1902 was W. H. Webb, by two lengths from Childs, with Janson a further length back in third place.

When first instituted the "Muratti" Cup was to become the property of any rider who won it three times, but after the fourth edition the conditions were altered so that only two wins were necessary for the trophy to be won outright. This change naturally gave added interest to the 1903 race as the entry included three previous winners, Childs, Janson and Webb; missing was Tom Davies, now riding as a professional. Twenty thousands spectators saw a repeat of the 1902 result and fittingly a Manchester Wheeler, Billy Webb, was the first outright winner of a "Muratti" Cup.

The second "Muratti" Trophy was in the shape of a Gold Vase valued at 110 guineas and the conditions for outright winning reverted back to three wins. Ernest Payne, of Worcester, was the first winner of the new trophy in 1904, after Tom Sherratt and Jim Benyon split up the field so successfully that only four riders survived to the finish.

The following year Manchester Wheeler Jim Benyon gained his revenge when Payne was eliminated by a puncture, but not before the 1905 World Amateur Sprint Champion had survived a strong protest from Ben Jones. In 1906 Payne, who at that time was $\frac{1}{4}$ and 1 mile English and 1 mile Empire Champion, secured his second share in the "Muratti", but Benyon was missing this time as he was riding at the Race Meet as a Professional.

Heavy rain on the morning of July 13th, 1907, kept the Race Meet crowd down to 15,000, but nothing could keep down the Wigan Flyer, Ben Jones, in the "Muratti". In a storming finish he beat the English Five Miles Champion, C. B. Kingsbury, of Portsmouth North End C.C. by half-a-wheel, with Payne in third place. Nine days later Jones won the 1 mile and 10 miles Empire Championships.

Interest was more keen than ever for the 1908 race with Payne having two shares in the Trophy and Jones one. Torrential rain fell during the race and most of the riders were practically washed off the track. Tom Sherratt made an early break from the bunch but he was quickly joined by C. W. White and Ben Jones. Payne made an effort to catch the leaders but without success, leaving the three fugitives to plod on through the rain and mud of the red shale track. Jones changed machines and lost half-a-lap - and also the "Muratti". Sherratt and White were level going into the last lap and battled neck and neck to the line where Sherratt got home by inches.

With a superhuman finishing effort Ben Jones notched up his second share of the Trophy in 1909, snatching the Vase from the anticipating grasp of Payne by the narrowest of margins.

The final race for the second "Muratti" trophy attracted over 20,000 spectators with many turned away, and with Payne and Jones both having two shares each in the golden trophy no rider was allowed any freedom and the race developed into a procession. At a lap and a half to go, however, the scene quickly changed. C. W. White shot away with Jones on his wheel. Payne dashed after them and the last lap developed

into a neck and neck struggle between Payne and Jones. The power and speed of Payne began to show and the crowd went wild with excitement when he began to pull away from Jones. With a great finishing effort Payne crossed the line a couple of lengths in front of Vic Johnson, who caught and passed the struggling Jones in the finishing straight. So the "Muratti" Gold Vase went with Ernest Payne to his Worcester home for keeps.

Mr. Muratti had already offered to replace the Trophy if won outright, so in 1911, the third in the line of "Muratti" Cups, the "Muratti" Gold Trophy, valued at 110 guineas, made its appearance.

Showing early initiative, R. L. Player dashed away in the third lap and gained a lead of 50 yards. He was later joined by the 50 miles English Champion, C. A. Denny, and working well together, they increased their lead to the end where Player won by a wheel's margin.

In 1912 Player was third, being beaten by the 1908 World Amateur Champion, Vic Johnson of the Rover R.C.C., Birmingham, and D. Hodgetts also of the Rover. The London champion, H. T. Johnson won in 1913 but was in America when the 1914 race took place, and it was D. Hodgetts who held the Trophy during the five years of sporting inactivity brought about by World War I.

The first "Muratti" after the War in 1919 was won by Albert White of Scunthorpe, and the following year H. T. Johnson, the 1922 World Amateur Sprint Champion, gained his second share in the Trophy. Albert White was again the winner in 1921, and also 1922, and so became the owner of the third "Muratti" Trophy.

The fourth "Muratti" was the "Muratti" Gold Cup, value 120 guineas, and like the first was won outright after only five contests. The Lincoln Champion, Albert Theaker, was the hero of this short series, winning in 1923 and 1924, but then had to be content to finish among the prizewinners the following two years behind the Manchester Wheelers' pair, Jack Sibbit in 1925 and George Owen in 1926. But he made no mistakes in winning the 1927 race, and the "Muratti" Gold Cup outright in 23 mins. 3.6 secs., beating the previous record time for the event by 32 seconds.

The fifth "Muratti" Trophy also had a short and gay life. The year 1928 saw the first foreign victor of the "Muratti" in the 22-year-old Danish and 1928 World Amateur Sprint Champion, Willy Falck Hanson, who beat a field of really top-class cyclists. Dominion and foreign champions including: Albert Theaker (outright winner in 1927), Albert White (outright winner in 1922), Jack Sibbit (winner 1925), George Owen (winner 1926), Jack Standen ($\frac{1}{2}$, 5 and 10 miles Australian Champion), Bob Jensen (Scandinavian Champion), Sid Gates (South Africa), Duncan Gray (1 mile Champion of Australia and later Olympic Kilometre Champion), Harry Wild ($\frac{1}{4}$, 1, 5 and 25 miles English Champion), Horace Pryor, Bill Burl, Ernie Chambers and Frank Southall.

The winner in 1929 was the great Derby all-rounder, Harry Wyld, who was chased home by the Dutch Olympic Tandem Champion, Van Dijk, with the Irish Champion Bertie Donnelly third. The great roadman Frank Southall proved the animator of the race winning in all 31 laps.

The foreign competition was again strong in 1930 but it was the Manchester Wheelers' champion, Jack Sibbit, with a repeat win, almost a length ahead of the young English 25 miles Champion, Dennis Horn, who then set up a record by winning the "Murrati" Gold Cup outright with three consecutive wins in 1931, 32 and 33.

The sixth "Muratti" was a Gold Cup value 120 guineas and the first running in 1934 provided the second foreign victor, the brilliant German rider Toni Merkins crowning his day after winning the English Sprint Championship earlier in the Meeting. He made a determined bid for a second consecutive win but he was beaten into second place by the tall Fenlander, Dennis Horn, 1935.

It looked as though the "Muratti" was on its way to Belgium towards the end of the 1936 race when Maurice Cools was streaking along the finishing straight ahead of all the other riders, but a devastating finish by Dennis Horn saved the Cup for England by the narrowest of margins and also gave Dennis Horn his second share of the Trophy. This was Horn's sixth ride in the "Muratti" and his fifth victory, his only failure was in his first attempt when he was second to Jack Sibbit.

Favourite for the 1937 race was without doubt Dennis Horn, who was expected to win outright his second "Muratti" Gold Cup, but, with the traditional "owt can happen int' 'Muratti'" popping up again, he was surprisingly found lacking in finishing power and the "Muratti" went abroad for the third time. in the hands of the power-house Dutchman, Henk Ooms. Eddie Gorton, the Manchester Wheelers' Champion, was second and Horn was fifth.

Eddie Gorton went one better by winning the 1938 "Muratti", but a great deal of the credit must also go to the Leamington road ace Ralph Dougherty, who won 31 of the 35 laps carrying Gorton along in an armchair ride in a two-up breakaway with Gorton appearing in front at the one lap that mattered.

The 1939 "Muratti" had everything - rain, in the best Manchester tradition; great riders; British Sprint Champion Dennis Horn, twice a winner in this series and keen for a third to win outright his second "Muratti" Gold Cup and the 1938 hero, 25 miles record holder Ralph Dougherty. This was a day when only the hardest could survive and Dougherty, ably abetted by national 25 miles Champion George Fleming, set to work to prove it. One by one the stars disappeared, shattered by the cracking pace of Dougherty and Fleming, until only seven remained. Dennis Horn was still there but the persistent hammering by Dougherty and Fleming was sapping away his ebbing energy. At the bell it was still Dougherty forcing the pace. As they swept round the last banking, the Midland champion, Morgan shot through to lead-to win? -No! Here comes the fighting Fenlander, Dennis Horn, bursting through on the outside - Morgan is beaten - another "Muratti" is won outright! But, no, another sensation! The mud-plastered, unyielding Dougherty is coming again. Horn looks across at the head-down Dougherty realising the "Muratti" is slipping from his muddy grasp. Desperately they battle to the line and with a last super-human kick Dougherty flings his bike across the line first and the "Muratti" stays alive for further battles, but not before the greatest battle of all time, World War II put an end to the "Muratti" until 1946.

Falling in line with the trend of the time, the distance of the 1946 "Muratti" was reduced to Five Miles, this being claimed would make the race more lively and spectacular - but an obvious advantage to the sprinters. The six Continental riders proved no real threat to the home riders and Tommy Godwin of the Rover R.C.C. proved a popular winner by inches from the fast finishing Reg Harris, with Frenchman Jackie Lanners in third place.

The "Muratti" still continued to draw the crowds and in 1947, 15,000 spectators saw Tommy Godwin take his second share of the Trophy by a bare half-wheel margin from diminutive Manchester Wheeler, Alan Bannister. The following year 18,000 spectators saw the now British Sprint Champion Alan Bannister reverse the previous year's results when he won by two lengths from Godwin.

The gates were again closed for the 1949 "Muratti" and Fallowfield had received a new look with a 510 yards, 30 degrees banked, concrete track in place of the 502 yards shallow red shale bowl. There was a terrific finish to the "Muratti" this year when four riders flashed across the line together. Jackie Heid of America, Tommy Godwin, Engen Kamber of Switzerland and the National 25 miles Champion, Alan Geldard, after having fought out a breath-taking duel down the finishing straight. The result is still argued about

to this day and many claim that the young Manchester Wheeler; Alan Geldard -just got up to win on the line, but the only result that counts, the one supplied by the Judges, gave Tommy Godwin as the winner, with Kamber second and Geldard third. So ended the reign of the sixth "Muratti" Trophy, now valued at 250 guineas, for with his third win the popular Godwin became the last outright winner of the "Muratti Gold Cup.

The Manchester Wheelers' provided a new trophy for the 1950 "Muratti", a magnificent Gold Trophy valued at 450 guineas and as gold was becoming rather scarce, the trophy was made perpetual, with the condition that any rider winning three times, not necessarily in succession, would receive a silver-gilt replica of the trophy.

The new "Muratti" began its life sensationally. Sid Patterson of Australia, the World Sprint Champion, crossed the line first almost a length in front of the British Sprint Champion, Alan Bannister, who had his arm raised in protest against alleged holding by Patterson during the final sprint for the line. After investigations the protest was upheld, Patterson was disqualified and the race awarded to Bannister. Never before in the history of the "Muratti" has the race been won on a disqualification.

After five years as a "Five" the "Muratti" returned to its own distance of ten miles in 1951 and what a glorious "Muratti" it was. The pace was fast from the start with riders continually trying to breakaway. The winning break came after 14 laps when the Belgian Pursuit Champion, Raphael Glorieux, shot away into the lead. This was the signal for even greater action and two laps later he was joined by the local speed ace Don Smith. Sustained efforts by the South African, Billy Stewart, and Australian, Keith Reynolds, took them up to the leading pair, making an unbeatable quartet in the lead after 21 laps. The pursuing powers of Glorieux, with great support from Don Smith, defied all attempts of the chasing group to close the gap. The pace was beginning to tell on all but the strong. Reynolds had had enough after 27 laps and two laps later Stewart dropped back. With one mile to go Glorieux piled on the pressure and Don Smith could hold his wheel no longer leaving the Belgian to fly along to a majestic and glorious victory in the record time of 21 mins. 30.6 secs.

The year 1952 was the Diamond Jubilee of the Wheelers' Race Meet, the 60th in a long line of successful Meets and the "Muratti" was dominated by the incredible Australian, Russell Mockridge, fresh from his sensational win in the Open Grand Prix in Paris, when in the final he beat Reg Harris and Jan Derksen, the best professional sprinters in the world. His victory in the "Muratti" appeared very close when the fast finishing Alan Bannister got within a wheel of him, but at no time in the whole of the 10 miles did Mockridge appear in danger of losing this golden crown.

There were scenes of intense excitement during the 1953 "Muratti" when Keith Bentley, the British Pursuit Champion, along with Manchester Wheelers' semi-finalist in the World Pursuit Championship Alan Newton and the Australian roadman Jim Nevin got away to an early lead. Working smoothly together, they proceeded to annihilate the field of good-class sprinters and stayers. From six miles onward the clock-work precision like trio were lapping riders regularly until they had swept the track clear of all opposition! In the general excitement and enthusiastic confusion the bell was sounded a lap too soon and in the sprint for the line Nevin got home first just ahead of Newton with Bentley the only other finisher in third place. The time of 20 mins. 10.5 secs. for the 33½ laps was also sensational, for, adding the average lap time of 36 secs. on for the lap short, the resulting time would have shattered the record set up by the Belgian Glorieux in 1951.

After being in an early breakaway which was caught with only five laps to go in the 1954 "Muratti", Harry Hardcastle, of the Manchester Wheelers', went again and grimly held on to his solo lead which gave him a well deserved ten length win from Alan Geldard, with Jim Nevin, Australian holder of the "Muratti" in third place.

Another Australian, Clive Middleton was the victor in 1955 from Brian Sandy and Peter Brotherton, making the third Australian win in the last four years. The ever-popular Eric Thompson, British 10 miles and Empire Games Road Champion, after four previous unsuccessful attempts, realised his ambition with a devastating sprint in 1956 and took the "Muratti" home with him to Derby.

The 1957 "Muratti", brilliantly won by the tall Liverpoolian John Geddes, who made Liverpool famous long before the Beatles were ever heard of, was reputed to be the best ever in this long line of glorious races. Be that as it may, what cannot be argued about is the fact that 1957 was the fastest ever "Muratti" 10 miles and his time of 20 mins. 58.4 secs. shattered the existing record of Raphael Glorieux by over half a minute.

In 1958 Mike Gambrill took the "Muratti" Gold Cup to London, when at the end of a successful breakaway he outsprinted the Liverpool Sprint Champion Fred Nicklin and the British Pursuit Champion, Tom Simpson.

Another foreign onslaught resulted in the Dutchman, Jan Buis, third in the 1956 World Road Championship, winning the 1959 "Muratti" from the 1957 holder, John Geddes, and this signalled the start of the Dutch near monopoly of the "Muratti" with four wins in the next six runnings.

The 1960 "Muratti" was dominated by a fourman breakaway of world-class pursuit riders, comprising Mike Gambrill, the 1958 "Muratti" winner, Barry Hoban and Alf Engers, who earlier in the afternoon had finished a brilliant first and second in the British Pursuit Championship, and the Dutch Pursuit Champion, Piet Van der Lans, who had been specially trained and sent over for this event by the previous years' "Muratti" winner, Jan Buis. Working in super team pursuit style these four riders lapped the other 26 riders with the exception of Charlie McCoy. In the sprint for the line an electrifying finish by the Dutchman Van der Lans got him home first in front of Hoban and Gambrill in the fast time of 21 mins. 7 secs., but the glory belongs to all four.

The 1961 "Muratti" provided another great battle between the Dutchman, Piet Van der Lans, and the British Pursuit Champion, Barry Hoban, first and second of the previous years' race. A week before the Race Meet, Hoban had proved his fitness by adding the 50 miles Road Championship to his growing list of Championship wins and he came to the Race Meet full of confidence and a firm favourite to take the "Muratti" back to Wakefield with him. This he did, after a race similar in pattern to the previous year, again dominated by a breakaway group of super fast pursuing type of riders, with Hoban and Van der Lans again the main characters, but with a slight variation of supporting cast. In the desperate closing sprint for major honours, Hoban made no mistake and he had Van der Lans beaten well before the line. The Liverpool Sprint and Pursuit Champion, Joe McLean, also got past the Dutchman to deprive him of second place.

The Record Books show a blank against the date of 1962 in the list of "Muratti" winners. The persistent rain, aligned with the steeply banked concrete track, defied all efforts to hold the race. But in 1963 the "Muratti" was back in all its glory with another quartet of super champions completely annihilating all opposition. The young London rider, Dave Bonner, British 25 miles Champion and record holder, winning the sprint by 1½ lengths from Australian Kevin Baensch, with Derek Wooding, Derby's 100 mile British Road Champion, and Blackpool's 50 miles British Road Champion, Randy Allsopp close behind, after these four riders had eliminated the rest of the field.

There were 32 starters for the 1964 action-packed "Muratti" and the killing pace set by road champions Les West and Derek Harrison prompted a wag amongst the spectators to sound the "Last Post" on his bugle as rider after rider dropped by the wayside. With three miles to go, the race was between Dave Bonner (the holder), Aad De Graaf (Holland), Les West, Harry Jackson, Paul Rutherford, Brian Sandy and Derek

Harrison, all riders with a Championship tag behind their names. With one lap to go Bonner shot to the front and looked like retaining the Trophy, but De Graaf also had his eyes on the gleaming Golden Cup and with a terrific burst of finishing speed flew over the finishing line a happy winner, from Harry Jackson and Brian Sandy.

Again in 1965 the weather and the steep bankings at Fallowfield combined to show another blank in the list of "Muratti" winners, to be followed once again by another Dutch name as the winner the following year.

With only one lap left in the 1966 "Muratti", a fast-moving bunch of riders was over a hundred yards down on the two speedy Lancashire roadmen, Randy Allsopp and Gerry Mawson, who had been away for about eight laps in a brave attempt to snatch the Trophy from the sprinters. The crowd was on its feet, roaring them on to almost certain victory and a page in history. Suddenly, the Dutch Sprint Champion, Jan Jansen, launched an explosive attack as the nosecone of a Dutch Flying Rocket, with Wim Koopman as the wheel-hugging closely-attached demolishing second stage. Following in their wake, the Wyndham R.C.C. launched its own rocket with Keith Harrison and Dave Watkins aboard. But the Dutchmen were first off the ground. Having spent his initial launching power Jansen peeled off and Koopman swooped down destroying everything before and behind him.

It was a happy, grinning Koopman who rode the final lap of glory in 1966 with the most famous and coveted of all Gold Trophies held aloft, waving it to the excited crowd like fifty-five champions before him had done as victors in the history-making and lung-tearing battles for the "MURATTI".

NORMAN GRATTAGE

Wes Mason had provided the Pro Team with their first victory on the 12th March, and a successful season followed with the Club's name once again in the winning headlines. Unfortunately, at the end of the racing season the team's equipment sponsor withdrew his support with the result that termination of the individual contracts ended after only one year.

Despite the loss on the Race Meet it was estimated that there were almost 2,000 spectators.

Membership was reported at 138, of whom 67 were Life Members and 22 under eighteen years of age.

One new member who was present suggested that the present Journal was merely a collectors item and could be replaced by a duplicated newsheet, issued monthly. It was an idea which was unacceptable to those who respected the achievements and traditions of 85 years of Manchester Wheelers' history faithfully recorded in the Journals. Unfortunately the abrupt resignation of the Editor later in 1968 curtailed the chronicling of the Club's activities and information until March, 1969.

In May 1968 the Committee was advised by Norman Grattage that no Stand accommodation would be available for the Race Meet as it was due for demolition. After more than 68 years of use the old fashioned timber structure had been condemned as unsafe by the Manchester University Authority.

The M.A.C. Ground was opened in 1892 and photographs dated 1900 show the Stand as being in use at that time.

After two years of good weather, rain again interrupted the Race Meet, but with the help of the Muratti Draw a total profit of £54 resulted.

It was generally agreed that 1968 was not one of our best years, although many younger members were taking an active interest in track racing.

On the road, Alan Mellor won the Manchester Division Road Championship, and Dave Aston, Harry Dodd, D. Middleton all scored wins, with other members gaining places in road events.

One of our members, John Davies was selected to represent Great Britain in the Athletic events (800 metres) at the 1968 Mexico Olympics. This was a rather unique situation after we had, in previous years, provided so many competitors in the cycling events.

The A.G.M. was one of pessimism characterised by the difficulty of finding people to undertake the numerous official duties and a decision was made to abandon the Journal in favour of a bi-monthly news sheet to be sent to all members. An important decision was also made to move the Monthly General Meeting from the South King Street Clubhouse to Fallowfield Stadium due to a steadily decreasing attendance. The small profit on the year of £26 was due only to the nonproduction of the Journal with a consequential reduction in expense from £57 to £11. There had also been a marked decline in donations from £32 to £5.

The opinion held in Manchester cycling circles that the Manchester Wheelers' was an old fashioned club was also accompanied by a sense of independence among members which was not always in the Club's best interests. For example, although the Club had voted in favour of sponsorship some years previously, many members still lived in the past when a substantial income had been derived from the Race Meet. Hence when an offer was made by a member to underwrite the cost of the Journal on the basis of six issues per year it was only after considerable discussion that the offer was accepted and the news sheet discontinued.

Some lack of enthusiasm on the social side was becoming evident and the Dinner Dance & Prize Distribution was attended by only 73 members and friends, the former being in the minority.

The revival of the Journal has always seemed to give greater stability to the Club, - and the new Editor - Harry Dodd - noted that the Club nights at Fallowfield Stadium had been quite successful.

He also noted that Club records at 25 and 50 miles had stood since 1959 and at the 12 and 24 hours since 1961 which indicated some lack of success in Time Trials.

Although there were only five starters for the Club '25' in April 1969, over a dozen members competed at the Tuesday evening meetings at Fallowfield, albeit with only limited success.

July 1969 marked the end of a fifty-four year era when the Clubhouse in 4a South King Street, finally closed its doors.

Two successful Open events on the road were promoted, the Open '100' being won in Cheshire record time by Mick Potts, Derby in 4.5.26 and the 12 hours by Tom Finney, North Staffs., with 260.75 miles.

The A.G.M. held in November 1969 at Mrs. Bates, Goostrey highlighted the difficulty in finding officials, illustrated by the appointment of 77 year old Tommy Barlow as Acting General Secretary. Tommy first held office in 1915.

The small attendance of 28 members voted to delete the word 'males' in Rule 2(a) and replace it by the word 'persons' which effectively extended membership of the Club to both sexes. This decision would at one time have been headline news, but in 1969 it aroused little comment, and the fact that the Club had at last opened its doors to the fair sex was to make very little impact on the Club's activities in the years which lay immediately ahead.

No member could be found to promote the Open '100' and in these circumstances it was decided not to promote the event in 1970.

In November 1969 the newly elected Committee decided that efforts should be made to find another venue which would provide a Club Room suitable for members of all age groups.

It was also decided to issue a four-page copy of a Journal and a new Editor in J. M. Thompson was appointed. Every effort would be made to publish this Journal at regular intervals.

The Closing Run was held at Mrs. Bates, West End Cafe, Goostrey. 28 Members attended the A.G.M. held in the afternoon with 25 staying for the Closing Run fixture.

The Prize Presentation & Dinner Dance was held at the Bridge Restaurant, Stockport, with an attendance of approximately 100 members and friends.

The Christmas Dinner held at Rivington Hall was well supported by an attendance of 31.

March 1970 saw the first Club Night to be held at the Wilbraham Community Association's Club Room in Fallowfield.

The Opening Run to Rivington Hall was supported by only 14 and a decision was reached that the traditional Opening and Closing Run on Saturdays were obsolete and would in future be deleted from the Club's Calendar.

During the Summer of 1970 the Committee complimented Norman Grattage on promoting yet another first class Race Meet of which "Cycling" reported, "A memorable Manchester Wheelers' Meet."

Ian Hallam was the winner of the National Pursuit Championship and the Muratti, but despite excellent weather the attendance remained at only around 1,000.

In a competitive sense the Club kept its name to the fore locally. Duncan Mitchell won the Manchester Division Junior Road Race Championship and Joe Hanley the Division Sprint and 10 mile.

Some indication of the malaise which was starting to make itself felt - scarcity of good organisers - was seen in the complaint made by the B.C.F. about the inept promotion of our Junior Road Race which incidentally received 90 entries.

60 entries were received for the Open 12 hours but there was a poor response from members for support as checkers and Marshals.

30 members attended the A.G.M. in October 1970, membership being reported at 135, including 64 Life Members and 1 lady member.

The portrait in oils painted by Bernard Hailstone R.A., after Reg had been voted Sportsman of the Year in 1951 had formerly been hung in the South King Street Club House, but with the closing of those premises it was decided to present the portrait to Reg.

Sentiment prevailed, and despite earlier pessimism a further effort was made to hold a successful Opening Run by again changing the venue to Mrs. Bates at Goostrey, but once again the fixture received little support and for this reason, along with the absence of a suitable venue, the Closing Run was finally abandoned.

The 79th Annual Race Meet in July 1971 was held in good weather conditions and somewhat surprisingly yielded a profit of £292.

A very successful Open 12 hours, incorporating the R.T.T.C. National Championship, was promoted by Peter Walthall and was won with a Cheshire Record 272.92 miles by Martin Roach, of the Hounslow & District Wheelers who also led his Club to a new competition Team Record of 804.86 miles.

A steady decline in membership and support for Club activities began in the very early 70's and continued until the trend was reversed in 1977.

The decline became evident with an attendance of only 29 at the 89th A.G.M. in 1971 and at the Dinner Dance and Prize Presentation in December of that year when only 82 members and friends were in attendance.

Some enthusiasm for cyclo-cross as a means of publicising the Club's name and making a profit with little outlay led to a decision to promote an Open Cyclo-Cross during season 1972/1973.

One of the most notable and successful competitors at recent Race Meets had been Ian Hallam. His performances were marked by the production of a replica of the Muratti Cup for presentation to Ian following his third victory in the Muratti.

The Summer of 1972 saw the discontinuance of organised Sunday runs which could only be arranged on an impromptu basis.

Nevertheless, the Club had the good fortune to win the Team Race in our Open 100 with Trevor Williams, Phil Lawton and John Dawson. There were only 58 entries including 14 University riders competing for the University Championship.

Over the space of a few months the Club mourned the passing of four outstanding Wheelers. These four were Jimmy Taylor, who joined the Club in 1904 and became a notable competitor in events up to 100 miles, his outstanding performance being the winning of the Anfield '100' (Handicap). In the years before the first World War the Handicap was considered to be the premier award in the Anfield '100'. Jimmy Taylor's association with Fred Lowcock on the Tandem was equally outstanding. He will go down into history as a man who joined in 1904 and until his death in 1972 attended an average of fifty Saturday Club Runs a year throughout his membership. His local title as the "Prince of Feeders" was rightly earned because he continued to hand up drinks until only a few years before his death. He was most adept at the job and was usually able to place the drink in the rider's hands without taking more than one or two steps. His life-long 'hand-up' was a combination of lemonade and peppermint which was often gulped down with mixed feelings.

Secondly, H. S. (Bert) Anderson, a past President of the N.C.U. and an outstanding administrator at National level as well as being a past President and Race Meet Secretary of our Club in which he remained active among its ranks until his death.

Harold Crye, a past President and Club Champion whose record as an official in many aspects of the Club was a model of perfection, and Monty Brierley, again a past President and Financial Secretary who never allowed anyone to deviate one iota from the

Club's traditions. Following Harold Crye's death his widow Freda presented to the Club a splendid new Trophy, the "Harold Crye Memorial Trophy" which since 1973 has been awarded to the winner of the Club Road Race Championship.

Club fixtures continued to be held at the Wilbraham C.A. Rooms, the A.G.M. of November, 1972 being attended by 30 members.

In contrast to the financial optimism expressed regarding cyclo-cross events there was a deficit of £5 on the cyclo-cross promotion which was, however, successful from the sporting point of view.

The Christmas Dinner was again held at Rivington Hall and the fame of its Christmas Fare attracted the support of 33 members and friends.

Malcolm Fraser was the Club's most successful rider during 1973, winning the B.C.F. Manchester Division Pursuit Championship and also the Manchester Track Racing League Championship.

Friday, 19th October, 1973 was the occasion of a special Dinner, held at Manchester University, to celebrate a further milestone in the Club's history - the 90th Anniversary. A guest list headed by the Lord Mayor of Manchester and notable speeches from Brian Jones (Editor of the Guardian), Harry Aspden and the Club's own T. M. Barlow marked a successful occasion. The prevailing emotion however was one of nostalgia rather than anticipation for there were signs that the final decade to the Centenary was not going to be easy. Membership was still falling, recruitment fluctuated and more important many new young members seemed to find little appeal in the Club and were drifting away, either to other clubs or out of the sport altogether. In common with many traditional sports cycling was still steadily losing support. The '100th' seemed a long way off.

Nonetheless, the Club had the good fortune to retain a workmanlike Committee, who were able to marshal the reduced forces and keep the heart of the Club beating. After three successful promotions the Open '100' disappeared temporarily, then the '12' permanently it seemed, but each year a full programme of Club Time Trials was held and the mid 70's saw several excellent Open Road Race promotions. The Race Meet went ahead seemingly immortal until the lack of a track caused its demise. The Opening and Closing runs were discontinued although the Christmas Dinner Run and Annual Dinner Dance and Prize Presentation carried on without interruption.

Finally an unexpected turn of events on a world scale provided the first cornerstone of a revival. The international fuel crisis of the mid 70's diverted attention dramatically back to outdoor pursuits. Cycling as a pastime was hit by a new wave of popularity. Whilst much of the new young talent emerging in the Manchester area was attracted to clubs which had managed to maintain a higher level of all-round activity - or to the sponsored clubs which had appeared on the scene - the decline in the Club's fortunes was at least halted.

Recovery was to be definite yet faltering and was to come to full fruition at the end of the decade when another dramatic development was destined to bring the Club out of the shadows in which it had been loitering into the full limelight of success - the signing of the Sponsorship contract with Trumanns Steel.

The 91st A.G.M. again held at Wilbraham C.A. Rooms, experienced a sharp fall in attendance, only 23 members being present.

This A.G.M. marked the end of the official Saturday Club runs, it being left to the discretion of the Captain to arrange informal runs as and when any demand became evident.

The Saturday Club Run had been the mainstream of the Club since the earliest years of the 1880's, but support had declined in numbers to only half a dozen octogenarian members with the intermittent support of some of the young Club officials. Particularly with the passing of Jimmy Taylor there was a lack of continuity, and while the situation was inevitable the days of the vigorous Saturday Club run were looked back upon with happy memories, albeit tinged with sadness at their ending, by many remaining Life Members.

It was also with reluctance that the Meeting took the decision not to promote the Open 12 in 1974, the principal reason being that no organiser could be found within the Club's ranks to undertake the very extensive duties required for an Event of this nature.

1974

In the Spring of 1974 Alan Bannister was awarded the M.B.E. for Services to Industry. This award was applauded in Manchester cycling circles as it recognised the enthusiasm with which Alan approached any task in hand, especially as he had for many years experienced very considerable hardship from short-sightedness following an eye infection which first became evident shortly after he competed in South Africa for an N.C.U. International Team over 20 years previously. Alan, (a past President, National & Club Champion) was most enthusiastic about bike racing and cycling and there was irony in the fact that his award was not in recognition of his Service to the Sport of Cycling.

A resignation was received from Dave Aston but fortunately Dave's enthusiasm for the Manchester Wheelers' was such that he eventually resumed membership and was in fact one of the first members to initiate the question of sponsorship in 1979.

The four years from 1974 to 1978 were years during which the Club's fortunes and activities continued to decline to an abysmally low level.

One sadly noticeable feature was the gap left by the passing of each active Life Member which was not filled from among the post-war ranks. The passing of Johnny Berry in December 1974 removed yet another outstanding Life Member, one who had been President, Race Meet Secretary and Captain and who had been for over 40 years the mainstay and bridge between the older and younger generations and a central figure with his cycle business in the track racing scene which revolved around Fallowfield.

During 1975 Club room attendances had fallen to a very low level. The Club Track Championships were not promoted due to insufficient entries.

The 93rd A.G.M. in November 1975 again at the Wilbraham Community Rooms, was attended by only 14 members, a new low, but nevertheless a Club Racing Programme was arranged and a date fixed for the 1976 Race Meet. For the first time ever the date of the Race Meet was moved from the second Saturday in July to the 26th June due to a clash with the Olympic Games.

Life Member, Tommy Barlow, now over 80 years of age, was one of the few to express concern about the falling membership and to question what the Club was doing to attract new members.

His promptings fell upon deaf ears and little action was taken so that by the 94th A.G.M. of November 1976 membership had declined to 99 of whom 54 were Life Members.

In April 1976 a letter had been received from Norman Grattage, the Stadium Manager, advising that the Fallowfield Track was out of commission due to large area defects in the track surface and it would not be possible therefore to hold a Race Meet until further notice.

This situation was extremely disappointing because the track had been resurfaced only three years previously from the proceeds of a Sports Council Grant and by various fund raising activities by cycling fans in the North West. Unfortunately the skimming applied to the old concrete track proved defective due to faulty workmanship but no redress could be obtained since the building contractor had gone into bankruptcy.

Along with cancellation of the Race Meet, the Open Senior and Junior Road Race were also not held, making 1976 an extremely disappointing year for promotions. Although John Purdy promoted a successful series of evening criteriums early in the season, the Open 12 hour received a very poor entry. This was to lead to its disappearance from the calendar in 1977 - a fact which then led paradoxically to the successful revival of the M.D.T.A. 12 as interest in long distance time-trialling was rekindled towards the end of the 70's.

The most promising rider seen in the Club for some years, Ian Donohue (later to switch to a Sponsored Club in the area) won both the Junior B.A.R. and Road Race Championships. Malcolm Fraser regained the Senior Road Race Championship but the lack of qualifiers for the Senior B.A.R. prompted a decision at the A.G.M. to drop the '12' as a qualifying event, a decision which was reversed two years later.

On the Handicap Trophy there appeared the name of a man who three years later, having taken over as General Secretary, was to shoulder manfully the increased administrative work which sponsorship and the boom in Club activities brought about - Matt Bradshaw.

Again the A.G.M. was very poorly supported, only 15 members being present.

The officials of the Club were naturally reluctant to accept the demise of the Race Meet and in February 1977 it was proposed that the Race Meet should be held at Newcastle-under-Lyme track, a proposition which was carried 5 for and 1 against by the Committee. However, our long serving Race Meet Secretary, Norman Grattage, indicated that he would not be prepared to organise the Race Meet at the Newcastle-under-Lyme track and in these circumstances the idea was abandoned.

Throughout the Club's history there have always been resignations which were received with genuine regret but in early 1977 the resignation which was received from Reg Harris, together with a request that his name be removed from Life Membership was one which astounded and surprised not only members of the Club but the cycling public generally. Harris and the Manchester Wheelers' was a combination which had its parallels in all sporting circles. Freddie Trueman and Yorkshire, Bobby Charlton and Manchester United and so on. Any combination of names other than those which had claimed so many sporting headlines were strange and unreal. The Committee accepted Reg's resignation with regret aware that approaches from several members to Reg had not resulted in a change of mind.

There is little doubt that Reg, despite his somewhat strange relationship with the Club which appeared to date from his early professional days, had affection for the Club and admiration for its past years of glory. Reg had brought from time to time enthusiasm and effort to inject into the Club new life, but found a great deal of inertia and suffered a sense of frustration which led to his forming new associations and indeed, finding sponsorship for an enthusiastic and admirable cycling club based in North Staffordshire and within easy cycling distance of his home. It was an attitude which the author of this history also encountered in the mid 1960's, although in the latter case ties of friendship within the Club led to only a temporary withdrawal and not resignation.

A mini revival had taken place during 1977, an increase in membership to 117, of whom 51 were Life Members. However, only one Journal had been sent out during the

year, together with one newsletter, due largely to failure on the part of elected individuals to carry out their editorial duties.

The number of riders supporting the active programme of Club Time Trials throughout 1977 had been the best for many years, whilst Ian Donohue had won the Silver Medal in the National Junior Sprint Championship and figured prominently in the Junior Pursuit Championship and Kilometre and Junior Road Race Championship. Ian had also broken the N.R.R.A. Records at 25 and 50 miles and 100 Kms. Terrie Riley had been selected to ride in the National Womens Road Team in the Worlds Championships, our first female international.

The 95th A.G.M. was attended by 25 members, a welcome increase over the previous two or three years. This A.G.M. was notable for our first lady member of Committee who was also our first lady official of the Club (Press Secretary - Miss Terrie Riley).

The mini revival of 1977 did not carry through to 1978 which experienced a slight fall in the number of members supporting Club events and the issue of only one Journal throughout the year.

The year had begun on a sad note with the deaths of two outstanding Life Members. The first was Arthur J. Bradbury, a Past President, owner of a number of cycle businesses, an enthusiastic Wheeler and pillar of the Club, especially during the Harris era. Secondly, Arthur Guildford, the Club's oldest member who had joined in 1904 and formed with Jimmy Taylor and Jack Bell that great triumvirate of long serving members.

There was a loss of £10 on the year despite the fact that subscriptions had increased from £93 to £149. Unfortunately donations had declined from £51 to £12, evidently due to a lack of effort on the part of officials concerned with the difficult task of obtaining donations.