The Long Road

Newsletter for members of Randonneurs Ontario

The Long Road

Volume 23 Issue 1

January/February 2007

This is the last newsletter with your 2005 membership
A 2006 membership application is enclosed.

Message from the President

As I sit and read through the Audax Club Parisien Resultats des organisations 2005 booklet, I have to marvel at what an amazing year Randonneurs Ontario had in 2005, and what a great year we have to look forward to.

Out of the 207 Club Organisateurs listed, Randonneur Ontario can hold itself very proud, with the following results (based on a 1 point for every 100kms ridden on a brevet):
Niagara finished the year with 44 points, placing it 13th in the class of clubs that organized brevets of 3 different lengths, and 99th overall.
Huron finished the year with 120 points, placing it 71st overall
Simcoe finished the year with 151 points, placing it 60th overall
Ottawa finished the year with 277 points, placing it 39th overall
Toronto finished the year with 643 points, placing it 7th overall.
Wow.

Other Randonneur Ontario note-worthy happenings listed in the booklet are the Randonneur 5000 award recipients. Congratulations are in order for Scott Chisholm, Robert Choquette, Martie Du Plessis, David McCaw and Oliver Moore, who all obtained their Randonner 5000 awards in 2005.

Beyond the club, but still in the country, Canada finished 3rd overall in the World, with a total of 3368 points. What is really amazing is that Canada is so heavily weighted on the longer brevets. The United States, who came in first with almost 3 times the total points, only barely beat Canada in the 1000km brevet category (32 to our 28). France, who beat us for 2nd overall, has its points heavily weighting on 200km brevets, with a rapid fall off of points for longer brevets.

Looking through the booklet beyond our club, I am amazed at what some others have achieved, such as U. S. Metro Transport Parisien Club, whose members Michel Bailleul, Michel Ollivo and Jean-Pierre Ropert put together the fleche team CHALLENGE ACP, and covered 678km in the 24 hour time limit. A truly awe-inspiring distance. If any of you wish to challenge that, it must soon be time to start planning for the Randonneur Ontario fleche, which is taking place on the weekend of May 20-21st of this year.

Continuing with French rides, the dates for the 2007 Paris Brest Paris

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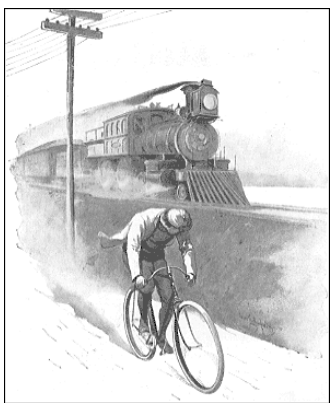

An Alternative Form Of Long Distance Cycling by Ken Dobbs

I. Introduction: A Divergence Of Styles

In 1891, the Velo-Club Bordelaise - at that time the largest cycling club in France - organized a long distance cycling event on the roads between Bordeaux and Paris. Conscious that a road cycling event of the contemplated distance was unprecedented in France, the event organizers invited the participation of cyclists from Britain, where a long distance road sport had already developed.

What the organizers of Bordeaux-Paris had in mind was a randonnee - a kind of tour, but one conducted at a rapid pace. The organizers had arranged sleeping accommodations and lavish meals for the riders along the route. However, the lead riders - largely the contingent of riders from Britain - ignored the meals and rode through the night. In doing so, the British riders were subscribing to the conventions of their own sport.

In its event structure, its competitive ethic and, above all, its attitude to cycling in company, the British sport has come to be markedly different from the long distance cycling sport that has evolved in France. Accounting for these differences requires an understanding of the development of cycling in Britain and, in particular, an understanding of the legal status of the British road network and of the evolution of the organizations of British cyclists.

Though there is no more hotly contested question in cycling history, it is probably fair to say that the first enduring application of a mechanical means of propulsion to a two-wheeled vehicle probably took place in France in the early 1860's. The resulting invention, named the "velocipede", became the basis of a flourishing French industry that, by the end of the decade, had promoted the first inter-city road race (Paris - Rouen) and sponsored the beginnings of a fledgling cycle-sport press. This industry was converted to support the war effort against the Prussians in 1870 with the result that, in the aftermath of the French debacle, these manufacturing firms were completely wiped out. Leadership in cycling passed to the British who came to the forefront in manufacturing and technical innovation. Consequently, by the time of Bordeaux - Paris, cycling was more developed in Britain than in any other nation in the world.

In no other country were the raw numbers of cyclists on the road larger than in Britain. The cycling population of 60,000 in 1878 had grown to 400,000 by 1885. While the price of bicycles still made ownership largely a prerogative of the middle classes, the mass manufacture of bicycles towards the last decade of the nineteenth century was beginning to open cycling to a wider swathe of the British populace.

This was the era of the dominance of the "Ordinary" or "high-wheeled" bicycle. The Ordinary was the machine of choice of most cycling purists and club racers. However, there were sizable market segments devoted to the tricycle and, increasingly after 1878, to the "safety" bicycle. The tricycle drew substantial interest from the relatively affluent, those able to afford the hefty price that these machines commanded. Though racing and touring on tricycles was not unknown, the bulk of tricyclists were largely interested in the social opportunities that cycling provided. Tricyclists organized themselves into clubs, a structure parallel to the club system being developed by their colleagues on two wheels.

British cyclists began to organize themselves nationally in 1878. The organizations of touring cyclists and racing cyclists were in Britain, from the outset, separate. Touring cyclists founded the Bicycle Touring Club (soon to be the more encompassing Cyclists' Touring Club), drawing subscriptions from individual members. In 1878 as well, the Bicycle Union, an umbrella grouping of local clubs devoted to social activities and to club racing, was created. The Tricycle Association, grouping clubs of tricyclists, came into being a short time later, merging with the Bicycle Union to form the National Cyclists' Union in 1882. The N. C.U. remained the predominant organization of sport cycling in Great Britain

Message from the President

Continued

have been released, it will begin August 20th 2007, and last for a bit over 1200 kms, or until the 24th whichever comes first. In the vein of longer rides, there is only one Randonneurs Mondiaux ride of longer than 1200km being held in the entire world in 2006, and that is the 2000KM Coureur des Bois/Hill Quest ride being run by Randonneur Ontario's Ottawa Chapter. Running from July 8th to July 15th, this is a ride I am very much looking forward to.

Returning to Canada, the Clubs Awards Banquet have both been held, with Ottawa holding their banquet on the evening of February 25th with 20 people attending, and Toronto holding theirs on the evening of February 4th, with a great turnout of members from the Simcoe, Huron and Toronto chapters with over 40 people in attendance.

As the name might suggest the center piece of the evenings were the presentation of the clubs awards.

In Toronto, a belated 2004 Special Recognition Award was presented to Carey Chappelle, for his unceasing efforts to start the Huron Chapter, and make it as successful as it continues to be.

The 2005 awards started with Jim Griffin receiving a Special Recognition Award, to commemorate his many years of service as the treasurer of Randonneurs Ontario, and his longevity as a member. Jim has belonged to the club since its inception year, 1983. Henk Bouhuyzen was awarded both the Coronation Cup (most improved rider) and the High Mileage award, having pedaled over 7241 km in 2005 on ACP affiliated rides, including 2 1200km rides.

Isabelle Sheardown and Keith McKewen were awarded the Organizer of the year award for there never ending efforts to organize every Simcoe Chapter ride, to happily put up people in their house, and to go searching for riders when the weather turns inclement. Due to a mistake that was entirely my own, Bob Kassel, was not awarded the Rookie of the Year award, even though he should have. By the time you read this, Bob will have the trophy in his possession. My sincere apologies Bob. Bob not only rode a full Super Randonneur series, but also the Boston-Montreal-Boston (BMB), for a grand total of 3100km. Fantastic performance for a first year member.

John Maccio was awarded the Best Performance on a Brevet award, for his overcoming the odds and finishing the Creemore Classic 400km brevet, despite the blistering heat, mechanical and personal hardships.

Carey Chappelle was awarded the Dan Herbert Memorial award for his mentoring and nurturing of the Huron Chapter, and his contagious enthusiasm for Randonneuring, which has resulted in the rapid growth of the Huron Chapter.

In Ottawa, Vytas Janusaukas was awarded the Jock Wadley Outstanding Rider award for being such a driving force behind the start up and the continual success of the Ottawa Chapter while still remaining a hardworking rider always ready to help and support other riders.

David McCaw was awarded the Half wheel award for his ability to set the pace on the brevets. As one of his nominee's said, "He is always pushing the pace. Even when he is the only rider." Obviously a very worthy recipient of the award.

Patti Van Niessen was awarded the Beryl Burton Award for Best Female Rider, having ridden a successful BMB on her way to year total of 5284 km.

Bill Pye was awarded the Mike Ritch award for his perseverance in promoting the Ottawa mid-week brevet series.

And last, but definitely not least, the team of Patti Von Niessen, David McCaw and Vytas Janusaukas, dubbed the "Harem of One" received the fleche award for their 484km ride during the 2005 fleche.

A hearty congratulations to all of you.

With such impressive results, I can't imagine the club would be able to surpass itself in 2006.

I am sure you will prove me wrong.

Randonneurs Ontario

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Up Coming Rides

2006 Toronto Chapter

Sunday March 19, 2006Distance: 60K
Start Time: 10:00 AM
Start Point: Maple
Route: Maple-Schomberg (Populaire)
Organizer: TBD

Sunday March 26, 2006Distance: 105K
Start Time: 10:00 AM
Start Point: Erin Mills
Route: Erin Mills-Campbellville (Populaire)
Organizer: Steve Rheault

06 Ottawa Chapter

Saturday March 18, 2006
Distance: 60K
Start Time: 10:00 AM
Start Point: Cheshire Cat
Route: Almonte 60K (Populaire)
Organizer: Jim Morris

Saturday March 25, 2006
Distance: 90K
Start Time: 10:00 AM
Start Point: Cheshire Cat
Route: Burritt's Rapid's 90k (Populaire)
Organizer: Patricia Von Niessen

2006 Huron Chapter

April 22 - Harson's Island (115 km)

Ontario Randonneur Bud Jorgensen, who operators the annual Tour du Canada, is organizing a new cross-Canada ride that is aimed at Randonneur calibre riders. Details on The Crossing are available at: www.CycleCanada.com/TheCrossing/
Or Tel: 800-214-7798

until the late 1950's.

Several models of the "safety" bicycle - notably the lever-driven Facile - preceded the Rover design of 1884, the now familiar diamond frame design of the modern bicycle. The overwhelming success of the "safety", however, had to wait until the introduction of the pneumatic tire in 1888, an innovation that put a decisive end to the three-part division of the bicycle market. By the time of the advent of the "safety", the developments in British cycling that were to influence the shape of the long distance road sport in that country, had already occurred.

II. The Development Of An Event Structure

French long distance cycling is the product of conscious design. The intent of its originators was to create a new sport, one that would be distinct from touring on the one hand, and from racing on the other. French long distance cycling sport largely emerged from innovators concerned with the state of cycletourism and with co-operative cycling. British long distance sport, by contrast, is the result of a series of incremental events that took place over the period of several decades, in which many people - cyclists and bicycle sport administrators - played a part. From very early on in its history, the British long distance sport has been explicitly competitive.

The event structure of British cycling, though different than the French structure of the brevet series, owes its origins to a similar type of occurrence. The foundation of the brevet series, the brevet of 200 kilometers, replicates the approximate distance between Rome and Naples, the distance that the Italian cyclists of Audax Italiano attempted to complete in the daylight hours of a summer's day at the turn of the nineteenth century. Similarly, the event structure of British long distance cycling resulted from a number of point-to-point rides that served as templates for later road cycling events.

Probably the first such ride occurred in 1869. In February of that year, John Mayall set out from London with two companions to see whether he could complete the 40 mile (about 65 kilometer) distance to Brighton on the English south coast, in a day. Though his two cycling partners turned back after 20 miles, Mayall persisted to finish in about 16 hours. What followed was a series of what might be termed "purposeful tours" as individual cyclists and cyclists in small groups attempted to push the limits of what might be achieved on a bicycle - first in terms of distance, and then in terms of speed.

In April 1869, two members of the Liverpool Velocipede Club cycled from Liverpool to London, a distance of just under 200 miles, in three days. This was the longest known bicycle ride on record at that time. It was a record that was not to stand for long as, in August of that year, a Mr. Klamrath completed the journey between London and Edinburgh, close to 500 miles, in five days.

This distance stood as an unofficial mark until June of 1873, when four members of the Middlesex Bicycle Club rode between London and the northernmost tip of the British Isles - John O'Groats - covering the distance of 689 miles in 14 days and 12 and one-half hours. Six years later, choosing the same London to John O'Groats route, H. Blackwell of the Canonbury Cycling Club lowered the time for this distance to 11 days and 4 hours. The following year, cycling with a companion, Blackwell pedaled from Land's End (the southernmost tip of Britain) to John O'Groats, taking 12 days and 12 hours to cover the distance of 876 miles (about 1420 kilometers).

Blackwell's rides were significant in two respects. First, his Land's End to John O'Groats ride established the end-to-end route that became the premier event of British long distance cycling, much as Paris - Brest - Paris has become the premier event of French long distance cycling. Additionally, Blackwell, in choosing to cycle over an established route against a well-known informal record, introduced an element of competi-

tiveness into what had been a series of cycle tours motivated by curiosity about cycling limits.

Blackwell, himself, was keen to downplay any notion that his rides were inspired by a competitive impulse. He recalled in a memoir of his London to John O'Groats ride that he had originally planned a cycling tour of Normandy. It was only when those plans fell through that he decided to point his bicycle north from London. Further, according to his account, it was only after arriving in Inverness that, feeling strong, he decided to push on to John O'Groats. Blackwell went on to spin a similar tale of inadvertence concerning his end-to-end ride of the following year.

Whatever Blackwell's true intentions, his rides established a benchmark that subsequent riders were explicit in their intent to better. It helped that the first few attempts on Blackwell's end-to-end mark were failures. It was only in 1883 that James Lennox, already a veteran at the end-to-end distance, established a new mark of 9 days, 4 hours and 40 minutes. He was to undertake a further end-to-end ride in 1885, completing the distance in 6 days, 16 hours and 7 minutes. This time was to become significant as among the first formalized as an official record by an official sanctioning organization.

Blackwell and Lennox established their records on Ordinaries. The end-to-end distance, however, came to be recognized as the ultimate challenge facing the sporting cyclist by riders of tricycles and "safety" bicycles as well. In 1882, Alfred Nixon became the first tricyclist to complete the route. His vehicle weighed 110 pounds, exclusive of baggage. In 1885, a tricyclist - Tom R. Marriott - challenged and beat Lennox's then current record time on an Ordinary, cycling end-to-end in 6 days, 15 hours and 22 minutes.

Similarly, riders of "safety" bicycles attempted to establish records on the course. The first such successful attempt was made in 1884 by James H. Adams riding a Facile. His time of 6 days, 23 hours and 45 minutes beat the then existing record time set by an Ordinary by over two days.

At the same time that cyclists were beginning to establish informal records on the Land's End to John O'Groats route, others were beginning to pioneer other point-to-point courses. Members of the Anfield Bicycle Club, centred in Liverpool, were active in attempts to lower the time on the Liverpool to London route, first ridden in 1869. A landmark ride on this route occurred in 1885, when an Anfield club member, David R. Fell, established an unofficial time of 20 hours and 10 minutes - the first ride in under twenty-four hours. Similar activity was recorded on routes between London and York, and London and Edinburgh.

Interest also developed around establishing records around particular distances and particular time spans. The London Bicycle Club instituted a members-only 100 mile race between London and Bath in 1877. The winner of this same event in 1878, completed the distance in seven hours, eighteen minutes and fifty-five seconds, an unofficial 100 mile record that stood until 1884.

In September, 1878, Walter Britten rode from London to Bath and back (establishing still another point-to-point route) in 23 hours and 55 minutes, laying claim to the record for the greatest distance covered by a bicycle on the road in a day. Twenty-four hour and twelve hour road races were established to attempt new record distances. One such, on the London to Bath return route, was held for riders of Faciles in 1882. The winner, one W. Snook, covered 214 ½ miles in a 24 hour period. The London Tricycle Club promoted a similar event for tricycles on the London to Brighton return route in 1883, the winner cycling 218 ¾ miles.

Early attempts to establish records on the road depended to a very great extent on the honesty of the self-reporting of the cyclist making the attempt. It was a system open to abuse. A pair of claimants for a 24 hour distance record, for instance, were found to have been assisted in their attempt by a convenient train schedule. With an increasing commercialization of bicycle manufacture in the mid-1880s, there was a growing concern

that there would be a market interest in falsifying record claims by cycle manufacturing companies in order to secure a market advantage. Consequently, interest grew in the road cycling community in a system for overseeing and regularizing record claims.

In 1885, the National Cyclists' Union commenced authenticating record claims and keeping a record book. The man largely responsible for establishing the conventions by which records were established was Finlay A. Macrae, an early Secretary of the N.C.U. Record times were, from the outset, recognized regardless of whether they were established by solo effort or in the context of a road race.

During this period, road racing in Britain was controversial, a subject that is pursued in more detail below. In 1886, the N.C.U. voted to actively discourage racing on public roads. After further deliberations, the N.C.U. decided in the following year to no longer recognize road record claims, concentrating its efforts instead on organizing track racing and social and touring cycling.

In response, those bicycle clubs actively involved in the British long distance road sport formed the Road Records Association to carry on the work of authenticating records begun by the N.C.U. The minority status of long distance road cycling is indicated by the depth of the reply to the N.C.U.'s position. Of the well over 150 bicycle clubs affiliated with the N.C.U., only fourteen sent delegates to the founding meeting of the R.R.A. in April 1888. A poll of N.C.U. affiliates conducted by one of the R.R.A. founding clubs found widespread concern with racing on the road, particularly with short distance races of under fifty miles. An attempt by the newly-formed R.R.A. to organize British road racing under its auspices, met with indifference and the initiative was dropped.

Instrumental in bringing the R.R.A. into being was A.J. Wilson, self-named as "Faed" as a result of a childhood onset hearing affliction. Wilson had two years earlier, in 1885, founded the North Road Cycling Club to foster amateur road racing on the main road north from London. The N.R.C.C., together with the Anfield Bicycle Club (founded in 1879) and the Bath Road Club (founded in 1886), were the clubs devoted to long distance road cycling that became the most influential in the thinking of the new Association.

The R.R.A. moved to recognize and carry on N.C.U. authenticated records at 50 and 100 miles, at 24 hours, and over the Land's End to John O'Groats route. Separate record categories were established for Ordinary and safety bicycles. Records established by Ordinaries, however, were effectively frozen in 1892 as high wheeled ridership melted away. Tandem, tricycle, and tandem tricycle records were accorded equal status with records established by bicycles. Record attempts were opened to professional and amateur cyclists without distinction. Women, however, were denied eligibility as record makers. Women were to later (in 1934) form a parallel organization. The Women's Road Record Association merged with the R.R.A. only in 1989.

The initial event structure adopted by the R.R.A. was augmented almost immediately by the addition of further record categories. At the inaugural 1888 meeting, a new record, at 12 hours, was authorized. In December of that year, the R.R.A. added London to York, London to Bath return, London to Edinburgh, and Liverpool to London as additional point-to-point routes on which record attempts were to be authenticated. London to Brighton and back, and Liverpool to Edinburgh were added in 1890, with Edinburgh to York following in 1893. London to Portsmouth and back, and Land's End to London were added in 1899. This brought the number of point-to-point routes to ten. The longest event in the R.R.A. event structure was instituted in 1897 with the addition of a 1000 mile record.
The event structure put in place by the prime movers of the R.R.A. at the end of the nineteenth century has remained essentially unchanged to the present day. Three new point-to-point routes and a twenty-five mile record event were added in the post World War II period. The diligence with which attempts are monitored and recorded, and record claims adjudicated, however, has changed little since the earliest days of the sport.

The major change in the conduct of the sport has come about largely as a response to out-

side pressures on the practice of road cycling. This change has to do with attitudes towards pacing.

III. The Decline of Paced Cycling

Opposition to road racing in Britain was brought to a head by a twenty-five mile handicap road race promoted by the West Road Club in October of 1887. The furore caused by this race led to the withdrawal of the N.C.U. from the authentication of road records, and marked the beginning of the formal opposition of British cycling authorities to the practice of racing on the road.

The race was, by all accounts, an ordinary enough event that passed without adverse incident. It was an "open" race: that is, open to participation by club members and non-members alike. In consequence, it attracted a large field of about seventy entrants. As was frequently the case in this era, the race was handicapped. Racers were assigned a handicap based in large part on the equipment being employed - the class of cycle ridden, the type of tire, and so on. It was a rider's handicap that determined his position in the start order. Riders were typically bunched in groups, with slower classes starting first chased by faster groups with the objective of being first over a common finish line.

It was the usual practice that each race entrant was supported by one or two pacers, riders accompanying the race entrant who themselves were not competitors in the event. It was this - the practice of pacing - that gave visibility to road racing and attracted the attention of local authorities opposed to the sport. Groups of cyclists, traveling at high speed and jostling for position on the road were thought to create a menace to local road traffic: "furious riding" was condemned. Bunched sprints at finish lines, particularly if the race finish came anywhere close to a town, were thought to pose a danger to townsfolk and animals alike.

Pacing had been, from the outset, an integral part of the British road sport. This had to do with the origins of the sport in touring. The initial attempts to push the limits of what might be done on a bicycle were undertaken, frequently, by cyclists traveling in pairs or in small groups. Solo riders were often accompanied by friends who rode some part of the route, sometimes carrying the solo rider's baggage, sometimes simply providing companionship. It was often the case that, as local riders got wind of a record attempt in progress, club riders would cycle out to greet the would-be record breaker to offer whatever assistance they could. Eventually, more ambitious riders came to post friends and fellow club members at stages along the record route, to provide fresh pacing legs at regular intervals.

As distance races on point-to-point routes began to be introduced, an attempt was made to replicate the conditions of the record attempts on these routes. The road pacing that was an essential part of record attempts thus became an essential part of the way that British road races were conducted.

Through time, as the sport developed and formalized, the conduct of pacing became still more sophisticated. Wealthy riders began the practice of hiring riders that could assist them in riding at a rapid pace. Some riders, too, sought trade sponsorship, using sponsorship funds to hire a burgeoning class of cycling professionals.

The British success at Bordeaux-Paris in 1891, arguably the height of British paced road racing, was founded on the teams of pacers organized for the event. While some of these were British club men who traveled to the continent to support their club colleagues, some were local French professionals hired specifically for the event. Among these latter was Charles Terront who, later in 1891, was to be the first winner of Paris - Brest - Paris. In that race, Terront himself relied on a team of pacers organized and paid for by his sponsor, Michelin Tires. It was the reliance on sponsored pacers that prompted the N.C.U., as part of its war on road racing, to question the amateur status of the winner of

Bordeaux-Paris, George Pilkington Mills, inquiring into the nature of the relationship with his employer, the bicycle manufacturer, Humber-Beeston.

In the year that the N.C.U. stopped authenticating road records, they took the further step of outlawing a road event that was to be held later in 1887 by the Catford Cycling Club. In response, the N.C.U. clubs deeply interested in road racing organized the Road Records Association, and carried on with their events outside the vale of N.C.U. approval. If anything, in the immediate aftermath of the N.C.U. ban, interest in British road racing began to increase.

What was decisive in changing the character of the sport, was the position of the local authorities with respect to speeding on the road. Local authorities were interested in protecting what they perceived to be the well being of local road traffic, that is, horse-drawn traffic. Speed limits had been instituted on the roads as early as the 1830's, initially as low as 4 m.p.h. in the countryside and 2 m.p.h. in towns. A 12 m.ph. speed limit was instituted for cyclists. These limits were still in effect as motorcars began to be introduced to the roads of Britain in the mid-1890's. The first motorcars were required to be preceded on the road by a walking man carrying a red flag. The speed limit was raised to 14 m.p.h. in 1896 and to 20 m.p.h. only in 1903. These were limits that a racing cycling in full flight would easily exceed.

The speed limits were enforced by local police forces under the control of local authorities. The police would often lie in wait for racing cyclists at points along a race route, frequently spreading tacks or twisted nails across the roadway to puncture tires. Often, too, the police would be alerted to the existence of a race event by the officers of the N.C.U. In several counties, particularly those close to London, bicycle racing was expressly prohibited by local councils.

The promoters of road events, principally the cycling clubs associated with the R.R.A., adopted a series of measures to counter this persecution. One countermeasure was to surround a race event with secrecy. Race events were not publicized by race organizers who relied instead on issuing invitations to potential riders. Race route information was closely guarded, with route sheets distributed to event participants only on the day of the race. Secrecy became deeply engrained in the British road sport. Until as late as 1966, prior publicity of a record attempt was expressly forbidden by the R.R.A.

Efforts were made, as well, to make race participants inconspicuous. Riders were required to wear dark clothing - customarily a black jacket and tights. Bells were required to be affixed to handlebars to disguise a racing cyclist as an everyday cyclist out for a stroll. Events were usually held early in the morning to avoid traffic.

Measures, too, were taken to alter the way in which road events were conducted. During the early part of the 1890's, clubs experimented with various limitations on pacing, prohibiting pacing in towns in some instances, and permitting pacing only on some part of the race route in others. Race organizers experimented, as well, with requiring pacers to drop out before the final bunch sprint.

At the same time, some road cyclists were taking pacing to an extreme. Following the use of tandems, triples and quads as permitted vehicles for pacing, motorcycles, and then motorcars began to be employed. These developments hardened attitudes among those who opposed racing on British roads. An attempt on the 12 hour record paced by a motor car (and several motorbikes) in 1899 succeeded in raising the paced record to 245 miles. Following the ride, the cyclist and his pacing crew were summonsed and fined by eight local magistrates. In the subsequent year, the R.R.A. banned the use of motor vehicle pacing.

While paced racing had been under pressure for some time, the end of pacing was played out through a series of events that transpired between 1894 and 1897. In July of 1894, the North Road Cycling Club held its third annual 50 mile open race. The race saw the setting of a new record time at the distance. What was significant, however, was a colli-

sion between a horse-drawn trap and a member of a paced group of tricyclists. The accident, by club accounts the fault of the driver of the carriage, led to a complaint to the Chief Constable of the Huntingdonshire County police force. This county lay at the heart of the North Road Club "territory". The resulting suppression of racing was a severe blow to the club's racing calendar, leading to the abandonment of some races, and the radical re-routing of others.

The club proposed a further 50 mile race in October of 1895. To avoid police scrutiny, the race format was substantially modified. Rather than a bunched start, riders were started individually at intervals of a few minutes. Fastest riders were started first so that, theoretically, there would be no overtaking on the road. The race winner was determined not by being first across a finish line, but by the fastest recorded time on the day. This was the first unpaced road race. Perhaps in response, the N.C.U. in 1897 banned all riders holding an N.C.U. license from all paced record attempts and all road races - whether paced or not.

By 1901, the North Road Cycling Club promoted unpaced events only. Strict race regulations were added prohibiting cyclists from riding together in company, establishing protocols for cyclists passing one another. Pacing persisted in the events of a few clubs in the North of Britain, but the model adopted by the N.R.C.C. became the standard form of road racing in Britain.

In 1897, taking the North Road C.C. experience into account, the R.R.A. created a new class of "unpaced" records. The effect of the rule change can be gauged by an examination of the R.R.A. record book. Although paced records (other than those assisted by motor vehicle) were permitted until 1933, in the period subsequent to 1897 only one new paced record was established (in 1913). Within a decade of the British triumph at Bordeaux-Paris, the unpaced format, or road time trial, had completely replaced paced racing and had become the standard manner in which British road racing was conducted.

III Causes And Consequences

French and British road cycling came together at Bordeaux - Paris in 1891. In the space of a decade, the two sports were on markedly different courses with the result that Britain was separated from the cycling sport of continental Europe. Why did long distance cycling take different paths in Britain and France, and what have been the consequences for the sport of long distance cycling in Britain of the path that was taken?

Evolutionary biologists look at the problem of the distribution of differing plant and animal species as an adaptation to the characteristics of the environment in which each species finds itself. In this adaptation, contingent elements of chance and timing can be important. Biologists frequently find that, once this adaptation has taken place, a species becomes dominant in an ecological niche, preventing the development of other competing species.

As has been outlined previously, British long distance road cycling evolved as it did because local authorities chose to prosecute racing cyclists. Why did this happen in Britain, however, and not on the continent? Were not French racing cyclists equally a menace on French roads and a problem for local French authorities? By all accounts, they were. In making his case for instituting a system of brevet rides in the journal of the Union Velocipedique Francaise, Maurice Martin complained about the behaviour of racing cyclists and deplored the ill repute that he thought that these riders were causing the sport of cycling. What differed was the administration of the national road system between the two countries: this difference was the most important factor in determining the shape of the sport in the two countries, the "environment" in which each sport developed.

In France, the national road system was centrally administered. A system of "routes royales" (after 1830, "routes nationales") was already in place in the early nineteenth century. It was a system that radiated from a central Parisian hub, linking the nation's

capital to the major cities and ports of France. A survey in 1824 measured a distance of 28,000 kilometers of national road of which approximately half was in good repair. Work on the maintenance of these roads, and on the extension of the road network, was carried out by a national Public Works Department consisting of a team of civil engineers and a road building task force of several thousand workers.

This work progressed until the middle of the century when competition from the canal system and, particularly, from a newly developed railway network, began to siphon traffic away from stagecoaches on the road. A system of stage posts, used to distribute the mails, fell into disuse. The French failure in the war of 1870, however, led to a renewed interest by the state in the national road network.

The way in which the French national road system was administered had two implications for French cycling sport. In the first place, at the time when French cycling sport was beginning to develop, French interurban roads were already in passably good shape. When Pierre Giffard came to organize the first edition of Paris - Brest - Paris, he had a reasonable expectation that the national road to the west, what came to be known as the N12, was in ridable condition and well signposted. Additionally, gaining the authorization for holding an event on this road was, for Giffard, largely a matter of seeking the approval of a central authority. This was something that, as a prominent journalist engaged by a newspaper with a national circulation, was not unduly difficult for him to obtain.

In Britain, by contrast, the road network had been placed in private hands. Parliamentary patents were issued to private companies - turnpike trusts - enabling them to levy tolls in exchange for building and maintaining the roads. By 1830, there were around one thousand turnpike companies administering about 30,000 kilometers of road. It was, however, a system open to abuse. The great British road builder, John Macadam, appointed as Surveyor-General of the metropolitan roads in the mid-nineteenth century, was pilloried by many in the private sector for exposing the patchwork condition of the road system. He decried the variable quality of road maintenance caused by the propensity of many turnpike companies to provide little road upkeep in return for the tolls extracted.

Competition from canals and railways had an even greater impact on the state of roads in Britain than was the case in France. The turnpike trust system collapsed with the last private company closing in 1895. By the 1870's the greatest part of the British road system was in the hands of local authorities, whose principal interest lay in minimizing the burden on the local tax rolls consistent with fostering local commercial traffic. Such was the state of the roads at the end of the nineteenth century that British road cycling clubs organized themselves around usable stretches of road on which they could practice their sport.

Roughly at the time that British road racing was coming under pressure, local responsibility for the the road system was being formalized. The Local Government Act of 1888 established Councils in each county in Britain. Each County Council was given responsibility for the maintenance of the main roads. The task of organizing a local constabulary, that embraced the task of policing local roads, was also a matter of Council responsibility.

Timing is a crucial element in this story. By the mid-1890's, the introduction of the pneumatic tire had put an end to the era of the Ordinary bicycle and increased interest in road cycling. Prior to this time, given the hazards of riding an Ordinary bicycle on the open road, road racing was a distinctly minority sport: long distance road racing decidedly so.

A more mainstream preoccupation of British cyclists was seeking improvements in the roads. 1886 marks the beginning of the withdrawal of N.C.U. support for road racing. Not coincidentally, in that year the N.C.U. and the Cyclists' Touring Club had joined together to form the Road Improvements Association to work for the making and maintenance of better road surfaces. That year saw only five "open" road events in Britain - North

Road Cycling Club promotions at 50 miles, 100 miles and 24 hours, a 25 mile handicap race organized by the Catford Cycling Club, and a 45 mile handicap in the Manchester area organized by a local sports periodical.

The N.C.U. was thus in the position of seeking road building concessions from local authorities on the one hand while having to defend the actions of a small part of its membership from local authority concern on the other. In the circumstance, it was easier to sacrifice the road racers. The bulk of bicycle racing in the era of the Ordinary was located on the track: most cycling clubs were happy enough to adjourn their activities to the velodrome.

The mid-1890's, as well, saw the introduction of the motorcar, an innovation that was to change radically both the road safety concerns of local authorities and the condition of British road surfaces. British road cycling sport came to maturity too early: it suffered the consequence of being the pioneer.

For a few years following the inaugural Bordeaux-Paris in 1891, British and French road sport ran in parallel. Indeed, British cyclists continued to compete at Bordeaux-Paris, taking positions on the podium in 1892, 1894 and 1896. Pacing was an integral part of subsequent editions of Bordeaux-Paris and remained so almost until the cessation of that classic race in the late-1980's. Pacing was a prominent part of the inaugural Paris-Brest-Paris and of the subsequent edition in 1901. Marseille-Paris, held in 1902, also permitted pacing for the "vitesse" class of race entrants. Pacing remained a part of the other classic marathon race of the era - Paris-Roubaix - until 1909.

Two things changed the French sport, the introduction of professional cycling teams and the innovation of stage racing. French road race cycling was, almost from the outset, a professional sport. Sponsors began to ask why they should foot the bill for pacers who themselves were excluded from the competition and, consequently, had no opportunity to place in an event. Eventually, the team of paid pacers were replaced by members of professional teams each entered into the race: any team member, in theory, might be a race winner.

A second French innovation was the stage race, introduced in order to extend the commercial opportunities afforded by a bicycle race over a period of weeks. While, at first, race stages were relatively few and of marathon length, through time they have become shorter and more numerous.

These developments decisively changed the character of the continental sport from the model of British paced cycling from which it derives. The ultramarathon distances favoured by the British sport are no longer a characteristic of the continental sport: the premier ultramarathon races - Paris-Brest-Paris and Bordeaux-Paris - have long since been dropped from the race calendar. Marathon distances do survive in the continental race calendar in the form of the one-day classics. However, it is team tactics and tactical insight into the race as it unfolds, that is more a determinant of success than the raw endurance and speed that were the principal determinants of success in the British sport.

The French sport came to be captured by commercial interests - a three-way alliance between sporting press, bicycle manufacturers, and commercial sponsors. The foundations for this commercialization were laid by Pierre Giffard at the first running of Paris - Brest - Paris in 1891, and extended by him during his tenure as the leading sports promoter of the last decade of the nineteenth century.

By contrast, the sport that evolved in Britain became recondite - hidden from public view. The organization of road racing continued to lay in the hands of the clubs of amateur road racers. In the aftermath of the First World War, these clubs banded together in 1922 to form the Road Racing Council with 24 hour, 12 hour, 25 mile, 50 mile and 100 mile events at the core of its activities. Instrumental in organizing the R.R.C. was F.T. Bidlake, the North Road tricyclist who had collided with the trap in 1894. Subsequent to

that accident, Bidlake had been instrumental in devising the unpaced race format for the North Road Cycle Club. Through the R.R.C. he was able to extend a common set of race protocols to a wider set of clubs.

The attitude of the N.C.U. towards time trialling, as this form of racing had come to be known, began to change. One consequence of this softening of attitude was that the R.R.C. reorganized itself as the Road Time Trials Council in 1937. Where the R.R.C. had permitted membership of only a select group of clubs devoted to unpaced road racing, the constitution of the R.T.T.C. allowed affiliation by all British cycling clubs. Many of the clubs that had severed affiliation with the N.C.U. over the issue of road racing, re-affiliated with that body during this period. Time trials at 25 miles and under became a more prominent part of the race calendar.

In 1933, some devotees of road racing had begun mass start road racing on the closed circuit of the Brooklands motor race course. During the Second World War, the British military took over this - and other closed road circuits - for their own purposes. Out of frustration, Percy Stallard organized a 59 mile mass start road race on quiet roads between Llangollen and Wolverhampton. This was the first mass start road race on British roads in about fifty years. The N.C.U. promptly banned Stallard and all those who participated in the race with him. In response, those interested in this form of road racing formed the British League of Racing Cyclists. The B.L.R.C. promoted the first British National Road Race Championship and, subsequently, a stage race between Brighton and Glasgow. It also sponsored national teams to enter races abroad, notably the Peace Race, and in 1955 supported the first British team to enter the Tour De France.

The N.C.U. maintained its opposition to the B.L.R.C., continuing to ban those who had entered an event organized under B.L.R.C. auspices from participating in N.C.U. sanctioned events. Clubs that chose to affiliate with the B.L.R.C. were expelled from the N.C.U. In this atmosphere of polarization, the Road Time Trials Council sided with the N.C.U., preventing B.L.R.C.-affiliated riders from participating in R.T.T.C. sanctioned time trials. Further, the achievements of B.L.R.C. riders were not recognized by the administrators of the F.T. Bidlake Memorial Prize - the most prestigious award in British cycling. The legatees of British unpaced road racing thus worked to prevent the diffusion of the continental road sport into Britain. While this opposition relaxed after the merger of the B.L.R.C. with the N.C.U. in 1959, time trialling has remained the dominant sport of racing cyclists in Great Britain.

A further consequence of the evolution of road racing in Britain has been that the British road sport, unlike it continental counterpart, has had limited diffusion. The British sport came to be established in Ireland and Australia, both nations adopting the sport in the late nineteenth century before racing came to be suppressed in Britain.

A 100 mile open race organized by the Dublin Wanderers Cycling Club in 1889 resulted in the creation of the Irish Road Club the following year. Cyclists prominent in the establishment of the British R.R.A. took a leading role in encouraging the founding of this organization. The I.R.C. initially promoted races at 100 miles and 50 miles. Since the 1950's, 12 hour and 25 mile events have been added to the calendar. There is also a Belfast to Dublin point-to-point record.

In Australia, a 165 mile event between Warrnambool and Melbourne, recognized as the first road race in the Southern Hemisphere, was first organized in 1895 as a handicap event. The race is still in existence, now considered the longest one day race in the U.C.I. race calendar. As is the case in Britain, several point-to-point routes were established and are recognized as eligible for establishing road records. Six of these link capitals of the Australian States, while a seventh, Adelaide - Melbourne - Sydney, links three state capitals. There is also a 3000 mile Australian end-to-end route between Sydney and Fremantle. 12 hour, 24 hour, 100 mile and 1000 mile records are also recognized.

Australian riders came to participate in the British sport in the 1930's, prominent among

them Hubert Opperman. Opperman was himself a holder of most of the Australian road races as well as a multiple winner of Waarambool-Melbourne. He used this experience to set a new records at 24 hours, Lands End to London, John O'Groats to Lands End, 1000 miles, and London to Bath return over two seasons of cycling. As a professional rider, Opperman was able to compete in continental racing without any consequence for his status. He won Paris-Brest-Paris in 1931, establishing a course record. This was perhaps the last triumph of a cyclist trained in the British race tradition in a continental event.

Diffusion of the British sport took place within Great Britain itself. Regional associations began to be established in the 1920's, each with a separate record book for time and long distance records, as well as records on regional point-to-point routes. Currently, there are six regional associations within England as well as Scottish and Welsh associations.

The most startling development has been the diffusion of the model of the British long distance sport to the United States. In the early 1980's, a small group of American riders sought to establish an end-to-end race across America. This race, now known as RAAM, spawned a calendar of events designed to serve as qualifying events for participation in RAAM, and a new body - the Ultramarathon Cycling Association to oversee their organization. Many of these events, and the rules that govern the participation of riders within them, are based on the British model. While a full discussion of this development is beyond the goals of this article, it is interesting to note that this American adaptation of the British sport is now beginning to be diffused internationally, with events taking place in Europe and in South America.

There has been a limited penetration of the sport into Canada. In Ontario, the RSD 24 hour race held in the Midland area had a two-year life at the beginning of this decade. Records recognized by the Ultra Marathon Cycling Association have been set on several point-to-point routes including Vancouver Island end-to-end, and between Calgary and Vancouver. A little-known record was established on a route between Windsor and Ottawa in the late 1980's. There has apparently been no attempt to better the record established by this ride.

IV. Conclusion

British long distance racing is an alternative model to randonneur cycling. As is the case with randonneur cycling, the British sport is organized around events of ultramarathon distances. As is the case in the French sport, success in the British model depends on physical endurancce, mental toughness and self-reliance. Like the French sport as well, the British sport is deeply rooted in the history of cycling.

The British sport, however, unlike French long distance cycling, is expressly competitive. Despite the similarity of the events in which they participate, the culture of those who participate in French randonnees and that of those who participate in British-style time trials remains as far apart as when the two sports first touched at Bordeaux-Paris in 1891.

Pictures from The Ottawa Banquet & Awards






Pictures from The Toronto Banquet & Awards