

EXILES GAZETTE

No. 15

JANUARY

1945

We begin yet another year. While wishing all you chaps the best of the Seasons Greetings—from all the membership at home, and from the editorial staff (!)—we sincerely hope that this is the last time we shall have to convey our good wishes via the august Columns of this Dignified Journal. (Thanks, Mr. Printer for the Capitals). Next year, we hope to be able to do it in poisson. I know we said that last year, but I think we are all agreed that there really is some ground for such optimism this year. Anyway, the old D.A. is doing mighty fine these days, so you are assured of a warm and comradely welcome back into the ranks of the Club. Alright, we apologise for the bad taste in using that horrible word "ranks"!).

In spite of the usual exigencies, we have received a goodly collection of letters from our world-wide membership during the past weeks. It is impossible to quote them all in full, of course, but we will endeavour to give you the gist of them all. On top of the pile is one from our old friend Eric Atkin.

Eric sends five closely written pages describing, as far as the censor allows, his progress from England, via Normandy and France to Belgium, where he now "rests." He describes the great welcome the villagers of the liberated districts gave his unit as they chased Jerry across the map,

of the genuine relief and happiness their arrival caused, and of the terrible living conditions the mass of the people were living in under the occupation of the enemy. He also tells of the great joy with which one village benefited from the destruction of a Jerry horse-drawn convoy by his outfit—Eric's words—"The village had a high old time cutting up the horses. Imagine it, no meat for a few years and a gift like that meat for nothing!"

Still maintaining his cycling interest, Eric describes the Belgian roads as terrible, mostly cobblestones, with a railway along one side and a so-called cycle-track along the other. He describes these tracks as third rate roughstuff, almost impossible to actually ride along, particularly after their tanks have parked on them. Eric wishes us to pass his thanks along to the present riding members for keeping the club alive and active and extends his greetings to all his old friends and those he has yet to meet. Thanks Eric, for a most interesting letter. May your journey to Germany and back be hastened this spring so that before this year is out we shall all be meeting again up the Road renewing old acquaintances and making new ones within the best game of all. Good luck!

Next on the list is a note

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from Arthur Doxey, with the heading—92 F.S.P., R.A.F., B.L.A. Arthur is also in France and doing his best to cope with life as he finds it out there. Judging by the tone of his letter he doesn't view it with a great deal of enthusiasm! Among other things he describes the local drink as a mixture of bad cider and vinegar. Arthur misses his bike very much indeed, and wonders whether he will have forgotten how to ride on his return to the Club. Thanks for your good wishes, we reciprocate with interest. When you have time to write us again let us know how you are coping with the 'wind tunnel.'

Our Social Secretary has forwarded two air-letters from George Milnes now stationed in Italy. George is probably unknown to our older members, but he is evidently of the stuff of which 'real' cyclists are made. He writes with genuine appreciation of the receipt of several copies of the "Derbyshire Countryside," and regularly receives copies of "Cycling." He writes that fortunately there are several other enthusiasts in his 'mob' and remarks that some pretty tall yarns are sometimes told in the mess, but he hasn't ridden up the Winnats in top yet! Neither has anyone else yet, George! He writes enthusiastically of a short leave spent in Rome, and says that the older part of the city was right up his street, the sights being really magnificent, particularly the Colliseum.

In another letter we learn that George has also visited the Pyramids during his sojourn in the Middle East, and also 'did' the sights of

Cairo—he describes this with a discreet vagueness (sorry, George!). It is interesting to know that during our members' foreign tours (compulsory) they are making the most of the good things which come their way, with the insight and imagination of true cyclists.

Another member who seems to be making the most of his opportunities is Ray Cross, one of our most indefatigable of correspondents. Among other places he has visited recently is the Taj Mahal—"a truly wonderful building," and one which every jerry-builder in England should see, and then go home a humbler and wiser man! Owing to the weather, and things military and otherwise, Ray hasn't been doing much cycling lately but is keeping fit by taking regular doses of tennis. He modestly claims the honour of being near the champion of the squadron.

Thanks, Ray, for your special good wishes for the Club's welfare in 1945. We are sure that the membership, particularly those who knew you in the old days, wish you personally all the best of luck in the forthcoming year. We are hoping that next New Year will show us exactly how much you have altered.

After losing contact with brother David for a while we have again resumed communication. We suspect that in the Cross family there is brotherly competition for promotion, 'cos both have not been L.A.C.'s for long when David reports he is now wearing a couple tapes—congratulations David—but we beg you not to be too hard on the

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Plonks. We fully expect Ray to be joining the select company of tape bearers before long. David writes even more cheerfully than usual this time, the reason being, as he points out, that his tour of 3 years foreign service will soon be completed. There is hardly need for me to remark that we shall be more than delighted to see you on your next leave. You will find quite a number of new faces smiling a greeting, but the welcome will be quite as sincere as the reception awaiting you from the few old-timers still riding in the Club, and we know personally how sincere they will be. We all wish you the very best of luck, David, and hope to see you soon.

Jim Cole continues to write from Italy as often as he can. Jim, too, is looking forward to returning home in the near future. As one of the Old Brigade you need have no doubts about your welcome back home, Jim, me lad. Jim is enjoying the change from desert scenery to the mountain variety very much indeed, although he finds the wealth of historic and ancient buildings rather overwhelming. After a short leave recently spent in Rome he suggests he is suffering from a mild attack of architectural indigestion, after seeing so many wonderful and beautiful buildings. Whilst on this leave he, with a few pals, paid 10s. to go in a posh theatre, and then couldn't understand a word of it, every word and note of music being in violent Italian. When you come home, Jim, you will find the old Derbyshire dialect hasn't altered—Mr. . . . ? of Roystone Grange is still talk-

ing in the same robust language as he always did. Write again, Jim, when you can, and keep us informed of your doing. Best of luck.

We have heard indirectly of an old D.A. member, Bert Brown. He is now a P.O.W. in Stalag 8B near Teschen in Czechoslovakia. Bert is apparently fit and well and judging by his letter very much mentally alive and kicking, but is working in a coal mine, which is not so good for one who loved freedom and fresh air. That is practically the sum total of information we have concerning Bert, but we hope to be a little more enlightening the next time we go to press.

Several other scraps of news concerning our older members have drifted in during the past few weeks. Harry Fern is or has been in Burma and unfortunately has suffered a wound in the face, and is still undergoing treatment in hospital.

It is some considerable time since we had any news of Dallas Ride, our one time gadget expert! Lance/Sgt. D. Ride was at Singapore when it was captured. That much we knew soon after the catastrophe. We know a little more of the sequel as it affected Dallas. He escaped with some others in a leaky old boat and rowed to Sumatra. They found the Japs already there, so they had to clear out in rather a hurry and start rowing again. Eventually they were picked up by a British battleship and taken to Ceylon. From Ceylon Dallas drifted to India (not literally!), from there to Mauritius and then on to

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Africa. He is now in Tanganyika. After all that adventuring Dallas is still in good health and wishes to be remembered to all his fellow members.

Perhaps in the quiet intervals—if any—of your globe trotting you would send us a few lines for publication in the 'E.G.', Dallas? We are sure all your old friends of 1938-9 would be more than pleased to read your personal angle on your travels and wartime experiences. Meanwhile we wish you the best of luck on your route home.

We have received a note, third hand, concerning Herbert Arnold—Exile No. 1—which says that he has left the mountainous district of Italy, which he liked, and has gone further north and is now living in dug-outs and holes in the ground. As a result of this rodent-like existence Bert contracted dysentery and has just spent six weeks in hospital. We hope that by the time you read this Bert, that you will have fully recovered and are convalescing in one of the sunny spots of Italy. If there are any left!

The following few words were handed to us a little while ago:—"Frank Potter gone overseas—destination unknown—fortnights embarkation leave." And that's all we know of Frank.

That constitutes, so far as time and space allow, all the news we can give about our members serving overseas.

And now for a little home news.

Well, the Printer Bloke is scowling at us again, so apart from saying that the "D.A." is very much alive and kicking lustily, and is in as fine a condition as ever it was (please read slowly!) you will have to be content with the promise of a special edition of the "E.G." in a week or two when we shall give you reports of the Sections and D.A. A.G.M.s and a running commentary of the Annual Xmas Party, together with a fuller account of the Club's activities than is possible in an ordinary issue.

Sorry to leave you so abruptly, but we will be seeing you again in a couple of weeks.

Until then—the best of luck to us all.

G. S. F.



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No. 16

MARCH

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We hope that this number will be as interesting as our previous efforts (and you have been kind enough to tell us in the past that some at least have been worth reading), but before gettin' on wi' job, we have quite a bit of explaining to do. You will remember that in our last issue we promised to publish the next one fairly quickly and give you all the Home news we could. Well, at the A.G.M., of which more anon, we discussed the "E.G." pretty thoroughly, and it was eventually decided:—(a) to enlarge the Editorial Staff (sic); (b) increase the size of the paper, through the good offices of our Social Secretary, Bert Martin; (c) widen its scope to appeal to the varied tastes and sections of the rather cosmopolitan membership of these rather cosmopolitan times (d) provide space for more lengthy contributions from individual members, essays, descriptions of tours, etc.; (e) give more room to chronicling the current activities of the three sections of the D.A., while still maintaining the original object of the "E.G."—to keep Exiles in touch with each other; and finally (f) to encourage the membership generally to promote the health of the "E.G." (and the Club) so that it will continue to grow in size and usefulness from a single duplicated sheet to a real pukka Club Magazine, to be continued as such into the piping days of peace, not now so very far away—we hope!

We venture to think that

you will find all this most laudable—and "ruddy pompous too!" We mean well anyway.

As with everything else in this unsatisfactory world (how's that unsatisfactory" as a spot of understatement, you literary military genii?) there's a snag, to wit—that in order to bring all this with'n bounds of possibility we agreed to go to press quarterly in future; so this one should be dated March and the next ones June, September and December. Of course, if we can produce oftener than that we will do so. We may even be de-mobbed by the end of the year. Uncle Joe and Monty are doing their best at the moment, anyway!

The most important event in the official winter programme is, of course, the D.A. A.G.M., held this year at the Saracen's Head at Shirley, on Sunday, the 21st of January. This winter has been the hardest for nearly 50 years. The 13 members who attended the A.G.M. had to contend with ice-covered roads and deep snow along the lanes, but the effort was well worth while, for in spite of the cold, it was a perfect winter morning, with bright sunshine and clear blue skies. The road from Derby to Shirley was a continuous Patterson sketch in lovely black and white.

The meeting began half an hour late, thus honourably maintaining the traditions of the Club, i.e., that no meeting shall start to time, and that every A.G.M. shall be pre-

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ceded with a battle with the weather!

The business of the meeting flowed smoothly and non-controversially under the able chairmanship of Geoff. Rogerson. We can do no better than quote from a report of the meeting kindly sent to us by Mrs. Ingledew, the hon. secretary.

Minutes.—Being passed at the first committee meeting was therefore taken as read.

D.A. Report.—Clearly and concisely presented by Mrs. Ingledew, showing a year of steady progress and gathering strength in membership, run-attendance, and general enthusiasm.

Treasurer's Report, by Don Pogson, given in sufficient detail to satisfy the most critical. The D.A. is stronger, financially, now than at any time during the war years.

Social Secretary's Report, by Bert Martin. He briefly mentioned the various social activities indulged in by the Club in the past year—Rabbit pie suppers, treasure and scavenging hunts, beetle drives, etc., and inter-section runs, and of course, the "E.G." On this Bert gave quite a detailed financial statement: showing that at least financially, the "E.G." is most strongly established. So if we fade out it won't be through lack of funds!

Election of Officers.—The following were finally elected to office: President, Mr. Jeffries; vice-presidents, G. S. Fletcher and E. C. Benton; hon. secretary, Mrs. Ingledew; hon. treasurer, D. Pogson; hon. auditor, I. Pipes; hon. social secretary, Bert Martin; committee, Miss E. Berry, Messrs. G. Rogerson, C. Beard, T. Brown, P. James, R. Hudson and C. A. Locker. The

officers elected at the Sec. A.G.M.'s were duly ratified.

Any Other Business.—The first business discussed under this heading was the "E.G." but we have given you an outline of this above. The next matter was the fact of the D.A. coming of age in this year of Grace, 1945, and the best way in which this auspicious event could be marked. After a most pleasant discussion, in which "the whole scene was surveyed" and every avenue explored, parliamentary procedure was faithfully pursued when a sub-committee was elected to assist the social secretary in making the necessary arrangements. It was agreed that a dinner should be held somewhere sometime this year to which old and new members could foregather to mark this event in club history in the manner it deserves. We are not able to give you any details at this moment of going to press, but we will endeavour to keep you informed as and when arrangements near completion.

The next item was "D.A. News." Those of you who have been so fortunate as to receive regular copies of the C.T.C. Gazette may have sometimes wondered why the "D.A. News" page is so infrequently graced by items from Derby D.A. We earnestly assure you, comrades, that the fault lies not with 'us; news is invariably sent in but through wartime rationing of space and paper it isn't always printed. At the same time it has been noticed that some D.A.s are particularly lucky in having their news printed practically every month, so in future it has been arranged for Sec. secretaries to send in to the D.A. Sec. their news and information in time for her to

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send it to Craven Hill for publication, and if we are still overlooked by headquarters a complaint will be lodged with Mr. B. C. Young, the Divisional Councillor. So, watch the Club Gazette for results!

The final matter dealt with was a suggestion from the Soc. Sec. that the D.A. should sponsor a lecture by Mr. Hudson, of Coventry, in the near future. It was agreed that the present position of the club was strong enough to warrant the venture, so Bert was told to carry on with the necessary arrangements. If convenient we shall give you more particulars in our next issue—just in case any of you Exiles are home by then—we hope! This concluded the business of the meeting.

Having dealt with the most important business of the year, we will now tell you something of the annual dinner, the high spot in the Club's social programme. Speaking for ourselves, at the time of the Christmas Party, we were busy counting the Herronvolk as they marched against England (via the cages!) quite a few miles from Whatstandwell, so at this point we respectfully hand the typewriter over to the other and 'better half' of the Editorial staff.

The party was held at Whatstandwell on December 30th. Around 8 p.m. members began to arrive from all parts of the County and from the Burton district, too, until by the time we sat down to the fine supper provided by the ever-hospitable Mrs. Kirk, we were 40 strong. The room was very tastefully decorated with garlands, holly, and mistletoe, this latter providing much amusement as Don insisted on pretending to be dead scared of it (as if he was!). After the supper of

cold meat, beetroot, cheese, cakes, tarts, and mince-pies, and of course the inevitable flood of tea. Nora Ingledew produced port and sherry, and everyone stood to the toast of "Absent Friends" proposed by Bert Martin. (Thanks, Bert, and everyone at the party. It's good to know that you remembered us amid your jollifications).

After a suitable rest period to allow the digestive organs to function, the more energetic ones cleared away the crockery, folded the tables and generally made themselves useful. To start the fun we began with musical chairs, but this game came to an abrupt conclusion owing to the untimely and unfortunate collapse of two of these articles of furniture. Other games followed briskly and included "Passing the Candle" "Unwrapping the Parcel," in which Don won the prize—a cigarette lighter. Being a non-smoker and a good treasurer he raffled it for the Club funds and raised 11s. Between the more boisterous games we enjoyed musical interludes rendered by our talented members "Margaret" of Burton, Ron Hudson and Don. This we continued happily though somewhat noisily until 2 a.m. when by general consent we decided to call it a day (or night) and let the neighbourhood resume its normal Sunday morning peace. It was a glorious night for the ride home, crisp and clear, and with a full moon overhead. The ice-covered roads were glassily smooth, but to the best of our knowledge no one came off, which just goes to prove how steady we all were! And so ended another annual party. Next year we hope there will be no need for a toast to absent friends and that all Club friends will be together again

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at Whatstandwell to enjoy a "Re-union Party."

"Thanks, Mrs. Ed.", said he, taking back the typewriter. "On behalf of all our Exiles, I promise you that we shall make a great effort to be present at next year's party. It won't be our fault if we are not there."

We now have pleasure in presenting a few notes concerning the Burton-on-Trent Sec. sent to us by Mrs. Ingle-dew:—

"The Sec. Party at Hoar Cross attracted 24 members. Mrs. Bennett gave us an excellent supper but, unfortunately, just as the fun and games were warming up we had to close down, at the (for Burton Section) early hour of 11.30 p.m.

Les. Bakewell has been home on embarkation leave, and will probably be joining Ernest Brauner, who is now in India managing to exist on a diet consisting chiefly of oranges and bananas; Ernest writes enthusiastically of the grand scenery in his part of India, and suggests it as a touring ground for those post-war years. Unfortunately, though, the post-war plans hold many promises, they do not yet include six months' holiday a year, so India will still remain outside the average touring area!

The heavy snow this winter certainly sorted out the fair-weather cyclists, but half-a-dozen or so still turned out every week. The others returned with the thaw and eighteen went to Hartington Hostel on February 3rd.

Burton's "Jonah" returned that week-end and Pat Mansfield had a bad smash, from which, luckily, she recovered much more quickly than her brother's bike!

Since receiving the above,

we have had another letter from Mrs. Ingle-dew containing news of a graver kind. We are sure that everybody will be extremely sorry to learn that (at the time of writing) Nora lies in Macclesfield Hospital with a broken jaw-bone, the result of an accident she suffered when the front forks of her bicycle collapsed while riding in Wild-boardclough. In spite of everything Nora wrote quite cheerfully, saying that she was resting in preparation for a further operation which would give her a new face! Well Nora, whether you are eventually equipped with a new face or the pleasant smiling one we know so well, we shall be most pleased to see you mothering your Section again at Sunday tea-time.

We have no direct news from our "B" Runs section (this corresponds with the old Alfreton Section) but we understand that interest, enthusiasm and attendance will have been maintained in the circumstances which have prevailed during the winter. This newer Alfreton section suffers the same disabilities as the older one did, namely—a very scattered membership ranging from Chesterfield to Belper, and from Eastwood to Rowsley, but in spite of that the Section is progressing favourably, and a good time is had by all—when all can meet together!

The Social Secretary has sent us an outline of a letter he received from George Milnes, which may be of interest to later Exiles who role with him in the Alfreton crowd. The letter is dated 30 January:—"I have left the land of blue skies, and am now in Greece. The mountains and scenery here are absolutely breathtaking and put Italy in the shade completely. The gradients of the

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mountain passes are very severe and the surfaces, too, are very bad. Longstone Edge is a tarmac road compared with these passes. The people of Greece are cleaner than the Italians and the villages are not so crowded together. I'm not so very keen on the national drink which is made of pine needles and in my estimation tastes something like disinfectant. It 's also a good k.o. after a few glasses.

The monetary situation is absolute chaos—a tin of "bully" is worth 9s., a pair of boots average £9 and a loaf of bread £1. Three shillings and sixpence for a tablet of soap is another instance of inflation." Those are the main points of a very interesting letter. Thanks, George, don't be long before writing to us again.

Since our last number we have had singularly few letters from Derby Section Exiles. We have learned indirectly that Jack Hinds has now been promoted to the eminence of the sergeant's mess, but the mess, Jack points out, is still in the Azores!

We have their usual letters from the Cross brothers (noun, not adjective!). David writes of an enjoyable 7 days leave in Rome. "Firstly I went to the Vatican and had a good look round the museum where dozens of some of the most famous paintings and sculptures in the world can be seen—very beautiful and interesting. The mosaics, too, are wonderful. The climax of the visit was when we had an audience with the Pope, and I had a few words with him and also shook hands. Quite an event to remember! As you are probably aware the guards are Swiss and they looked colour

ful in their red, blue and yellow striped uniforms.

I also went to St. Peter's Church and felt immediately dwarfed by its immensity on approaching its doors, which, by the way, are 30ft. high and made of solid bronze, exquisitely carved. There, myself and a friend picked up a guide, who showed us all the main points of interest, and they are numerous! Then we climbed up to the gallery, the better to inspect the colourful mosaics, and so on up to the ball on the top of the dome, 450ft. up! The view of Rome seen from this point is truly magnificent.

I naturally went to see the Forum and the Colosseum, etc., and my mind harked back to the runs I led under the title of "Ancient Monuments." I tried to picture the Club arriving at the Colosseum as its object for the day!"

Thanks for the potted Cook's tour, David, interesting as it was. We hope that it completes your foreign tour of duty and that you will be touring Strath-Moor pretty soon.

Raymond starts off with an apology for not writing for some time, but explains that he received no mail for nearly three months. Part of that time was spent in hospital the rest on sick leave. When he rejoined his squadron there were about fifty letters awaiting him. Lucky man. We are glad to hear that you have now recovered, Ray, and hope, with you, that you will be home for the next Christmas Party. (Ray has almost completed his three years of foreign service—so has brother David, too).

Matt Martin has also dropped us a line "after many moons." As you know he is in the National Fire Service;

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his address has recently changed to B.L.A. He says they had a rough crossing (most of the boys were sick!) and they were on the water for nearly three days. Perhaps the navigator was at one time a cyclist of the type who says, "Let's go this way, it's a short cut"! Matt has visited Brussels and Ostend and is now attached to a Yank H.Q. for supplies. "Supplies" includes food and and he nonchalantly lists chicken, beef, turkey, ice-cream and "all kinds of fruit—tinned and fresh" as his usual diet! Nice work lad, we hope that the return to Blighty and spam sandwiches won't hurt too much!

There isn't much to report about Derby Section's activities. All recent runs have been carried out in spite of January's bad weather. On February 13th six members rode down to Coventry to hear a lecture given by Bernard Newman called "Balkan Journey." Don P o g g s o n played lone wolf and rode back alone the same night.

He says he has never before felt so much like going to sleep on the bike! He made it though, tough man! Of the rest two stayed with friends in Coventry and the other three in Warwick. We understand that Charlie Beard found Ron Hudson and Don Haynes (his two charges) quite a handful on the Sunday, but they all thoroughly enjoyed pottering around Shakespeare's country. Ron, at least, will long remember the "splash" at Kenilworth. He took it too fast and got a soaking!

An excursion was made to another lecture on March 3rd, this time at Nottingham. Twelve members including Bernard Bloor, who was over on a "short pass," were able

to enjoy Cliff Pratt's really interesting and very amusing lecture on "Cycling in Europe's Orient." Some of his joke's will inevitably pass into Don's collection, at least one has already been declared "worn out." That one, if we dare repeat it, was that the temperature in Yugo-Slavia is so great that when the natives die and go to hell they have to take blankets with them!

One of the most interesting Sunday runs was called "Snowdrops" and, strange as it may seem, we actually found some scores of them, big, double ones. And the place (though it's really a secret) was Throwley Ha'll. Most of us risked detection by the two great farm dogs and gathered a small bunch, earning thereby the name of "Vandals."

At Easter fourteen members hope to pay a flying visit to North Wales under the fatherly guidance of Mr. Beard. You will be hearing all about that in the next "E.G."

There's only one other point of interest which we have omitted to mention: At the Derby and Alfreton Section's A.G.M. in December, Ted Benton resigned from the position of Hon. Sec., an office which he has held for over four years.

The reason was pressure of work. He felt that he could no longer keep in sufficiently close touch with the Club. Ted has been a very good and efficient secretary and we are sorry to lose him. Of course he is still on the committee and joins us whenever he can. The new secretary is Mrs. Fletcher.

Cheerio, pals, we wish you all a speedy return. Meanwhile, all the very best.

G. S. F.

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No. 17

JULY

1945

So! Victory in Europe at last! We have extremely great pleasure in offering this particular number of the old E.G. No doubt most of us will continue to wear the yoke of military discipline for some time to come, but with V.E. Day behind us that yoke sits more easily. It won't be long now before we cast the thing off completely—Hooray!!

It will be rather interesting when that re-union dinner takes place to compare notes as to how we all celebrated VE Day (personally, the ubiquitous "exigencies" prevented us celebrating until VE plus 3) but we are sure that with-in the general relief and rejoicing which came with the end of the war in Europe, was the joyful anticipation of soon being able to return to civilised cycling and all its attendant joys. We are delighted and proud that the present healthy condition of the Club warrants us telling you that everything is all set for your return to the D.A. The present membership is experienced, intelligent (a-hem!) and enthusiastic, and we confidently assure you that on your return you will meet with a very sincere welcome and will "fit in" again easily and smoothly within the charmed circle of your D.A. So don't be too long in returning!

We have quite a budget of news and gossip this month, so we will get on with it . . .

We'll give you the personal "gen" first.

Signs of the times.—David Cross has returned to England after three years' service abroad, and at the time of writing is stationed at Melton

Mowbray. He describes in vivid terms his first long cycle ride—to Melton from home—after being divorced from his machine for so long! David is looking remarkably fit and well after his sojourn under Italian skies. His cheery smile is broader than ever. In our next number we hope to include a few lines from David giving his impressions on his return to the Old Country. He has always been one of our most regular correspondents and now that he is more easily accessible we hope to prevail on him to join our panel of sub editors!

Brother Ray has written twice since our last number. He jubilantly remarks in his opening paragraph that he now has only eight months to go before he too returns home—great will be the joy when the Cross Clan finally gathers home. Ray has moved yet again, to a real hot spot this time—110f, being normal temperature. His second letter written on a 28 days' leave in the "big city" (your guess is as good as ours) is much more cheerful. He and a pal installed themselves in a super hotel complete with all civilised amenities, so sadly lacking in most military barracks, and they both proceeded enthusiastically to "go to town"! We gather that Ray and friend had quite an orgy, with cocktail parties, theatres, posh dinners, and so on. (That "so on" sounds particularly intriguing!). As usual Ray ends his letter by wishing success to the Club and happy cycling to all his fellow members.

At the D.A.'s Coming of

Age Dinner—of which more anon, Ted Benton read out a very interesting letter from Frank Potter. Frank has evidently been getting around somewhat recently. He has spent a little time in Cairo, and while there saw a first-class cycle race. He was rather amazed at this event; at the enormous crowd and at the super class bikes and skill of the riders. Frank evidently enjoyed himself on this occasion. From Cairo he moved over to Kenya into a district very much like the old Derbyshire hill country. He continues: "In fact, apart from the usual parades I would be very much tempted to call this an Overseas Y.H.A. tour!" He remarks on being surrounded by hills 7,000 feet high, of enjoying weather one would desire for a tour in the Lakes, and of dashing around in shorts—the only snag being that he is unable to 'tote' around a bike on which to explore the very beautiful country in which the R.A.F. has so kindly dumped him. Frank is now in Madagascar.

News of Jim Cole is that he is fit and well and that he has joined the Star Road Club, one of a dozen or so affiliated to the Central Med. C.C. Unfortunately he has not done any riding yet, owing to being moved around and the fact that decent bikes are non-existent in the area. Jim is asking for news of George Clapton, last heard of in Alexandria nearly a year ago. George is one of our first exiles. Can anyone give any information concerning him? If anything comes in we will pass it on to you, Jim.

We are pleased to receive another interesting letter from Harry Forman. Harry is still in Yorks, but has recently moved to Snaith Goole, just a little nearer home. While at his last Station Harry was able to get around a little on an old station croc

to such interesting places as Byland and Reivaulx Abbeys and explore that delectable part of the Broad Acres.

The next letter on the pile is from Matt Martin. Matt is with the N.F.S. operating with the B.L.A. and sends us an interesting account of an incident which befell him on a recent short pass. His own words:—"Some weeks ago while out on leave some of the boys and I called in a beerhouse to quench our thirst (we had walked about seven miles to view the surrounding villages). This house happened to be the club-room of a famous cycling club—"Juilleppe C.C." All around the walls were cases of silver cups, medals, snaps, news items, etc., dating from 1902, belonging to road and track experts, some of them still members. They had entered into most of the Grande Prix's over there including the "Tour de France," for which they took second prize one year. I had a very enjoyable time and ample beer because I was a cyclist and could inform them of British records. Two of the riders had been to England and were well known there—"Rossius" and "Vanderfelt."

We have a short letter from Eric Aitken; short owing to the conditions in which it was written—a primitive bivouac somewhere in Germany. In spite of this Eric writes as cheerfully as usual. Sorry we weren't able to see you on your leave, Eric, but we know how seductive a civvy bed can be after a cross channel trip and two sleepless nights. We too are looking forward to having you back with us again. We'll harden you to the saddle very gently!

Harry Ingledew sends a report on the much vaunted Continental cycle paths. These are very narrow and have to hold the double stream of traffic, and constantly cross

from one side to the other of the motor road! Their chief use seems to be an extra margin of safety for the motorist who does not hesitate to use them and is upheld by the law.

British builders have much to learn from the Continentals about frame design, but Sturmev-Archer gears, Brookes saddles and British tyres (where there are any tyres) seems to be standard. A really super cycle can be bought for about £10, but if tyres are required (even war-grade tyres) the price is increased to £40!

Right, Harry, you scrounge a cupla those super irons at £10 apiece and we'll provide the tyres for them. For information in particular and her many friends in general, Harry, we had a few words with your wife at the 21st 'do', and without being too poisonous we are happy to tell you that Mrs. I. is looking remarkably well indeed. We are sure that everyone at the dinner was delighted to see her in the Club circle again after recovering so quickly from her accident.

We venture to think you Exiles will maybe raise a chuckle at the masterly description of the principles of navigation as used by the Raff, according to Jack Jay, which he sends us in a recent letter:

"Happen you wonder how us Lords of the Air get back again. Here's how:

On the Station they breed a flock of "woppitty-coos." When we go out we have a boid each. That's what they mean when they say "Oh! that's the navigator's pigeon!" How we get where we are going is done by Providence, but once we want to come home again the skipper says "Stand by to release the pigeon!"

The bomb-aimer then says

"Aye, Aye, Skipper, standing by!" and he stands by the pigeon box with a piece of string in his hand.

The skipper then says "Pigeon away!" and the B/A says "Aye, Aye," opens the door of the box and out comes old woppitty.

The next commnad is "Chase pigeon" and the whole crew chase it all round the kite. Once caught it is then stuffed out of a window. It flies around for a minute or two and then suddenly buzzes off home hotly pursued by the old bus.

Now maybe you'd think this idea impracticable at night time, but it an still be seen if you take the precaution of attaching a small cellophane phial of glow-worms to its leg. Then you sit back and pray your particular pigeon does not suddenly find out he has worked up an appetite.

Of course, this is all frightfully secret and confidential, so whatever you do don't mention it to anyone, only in a whisper!"

George Milnes has sent us a long and interesting letter from somewhere in Greece. Lack of space prevents us from printing the whole of it—a pity really. He has, very evidently, fully developed powers of observation and if he talks as well as he writes (and being a cyclist that is almost inevitable!) George will be exceedingly good company on this cūin-wags round the fire we are all going to enjoy together on Sunday evenings at the tea-places next winter, we hope. This particular letter of his contains points of interest for both sexes—to wit—he describes the amazingly intricate and beautiful needlework of the women of Greece, especially on their National costumes, and the 'he men' (if any) amongst us will be greatly interested in the mealtime custom of all the men of the community feeding

first, while the women have to stand by and look on until their lords and masters have finished. (Say, fellas, we must introduce that old Greek custom to some of the too-popular tea places we know of!). Thanks for your kind remarks concerning the E.G., George. We do our best to please, in the circumstances, tha' knows; we admit that our S.D. cap is fitting a little tighter now. In spite of the eloquently expressed opinion of our sergeant major, we are still human.

At long last we have a letter from Harry Fern, who will be remembered by those of us who were riding before 1939. Harry vounteered in the early days of the war, and during his exile has been wandering around in such out of the way corners that it has been most difficult to maintain contact with him. He spent 1942-3 in Persia and describes most vividly its "bare, spiked, moon-like mountain country, its perpendicular heights running up to thousands of feet."

At the time of writing Harry was in India and points out that as in Persia, the so-called roads of India remote from the big cities, are roads in name only and are in such a state as to render cycling impossible even if one had a machine available. He is apparently fit and well, and quite ready for the trip home!

Well, Harry, since writing to us the situation has vastly improved, and that trip cannot be so far away, so keep smiling, all the old haunts and lanes are waiting for you and all of us, waiting to welcome us back to their immemorial peace and quiet.

We have received a first letter from Pte. A. G. Goodinson (he was called up on April 19) which, remembering our own first days in the Army, almost brings tears to our eyes! Alan is already anticipating his first 36 after

only three weeks of square bashing. He also bemoans the fact that the sea is only three hours steady ride away and he aint got no bike. Still, you can always borrow the sergeant major's, Alan!

You have our deepest sympathy, Alan, but you will find that there are some compensations (we will reveal them under secret cover) in life in the Army, so keep smiling as much as you can and continue to let us know how you progress. Good luck!

And now for more general dope.

In our last number we mentioned that an Easter Week-end was being arranged; below we print the organiser's description of it (Mrs. G.S.F.), in our domestic circle that week-end is always referred to as 'the battle'! Read on and know why

The long awaited Easter Saturday, a Red Letter day for nearly all Derby section, had arrived at last. It was warm and sunny but the wind was westerly and, if we could judge by the previous day, would be very strong ere noon. When Reg and I arrived at the Market Place we found eleven other equally enthusiastic members awaiting us with the light of adventure in their eyes, and shining clean bikes!

Prompt at 8.30 we set off for Uttoxeter at a good pace and soon "lost" two, Pete Wharton who was over on ten days' leave was not feeling fit as we "regulars" and Eric Hodgkinson had stayed behind to keep him company. There was a head-wind but it didn't trouble us much, until after lunch. We reached Woore and our first halt at 12.30, 36 miles from home.

Leaving about an hour later much refreshed, we took the hilly but pretty road through Audlem to Whitchurch and Overton. Hereabouts was plum and damson blossom in

profusion and very beautiful it looked. We caught our first glimpses of the distant Wrekin standing lonely in its surrounding plain. It was an uneventful afternoon apart from one incident—the almost inevitable puncture. This involved a wait while Charlie, feeling heroic, dashed down to the nearest village (Raubon) and bought a new tyre. After fitting and a remark from some wise guy about the likeness of this particular puncture to a town in North Wales (Bangor) we proceeded, and arrived at Llangollen—our destination—at 7 o'clock.

Here we were soon demolishing a much belated tea and were joined by Don, heralded by the familiar whistle, and Vic, who had been hostelling the previous night. Pete and Eric also turned up, making the party 15.

We who finished tea first decided to take a stroll round the town—just to give the residents a shock! We tried to get in the Plas Newydd, an old "black and white" house, once the home of the "Ladies of Llangollen" but now a museum. We were too late so instead we contented ourselves with a visit to "The Grotto," a pretty dell in summer sunshine perhaps, but not so good in twilight and drizzle. We stealthily escaped without paying! We next admired the Dee from the famous bridge, then being at a loss for some other place to go, we (it was now drizzling heavily and was quite dark) we ended up, as you might guess, in a pub! We secured a little room to ourselves, but our peace was soon disturbed by the cheery landlord who entered with "Is everybody happy?" Enthusiastic reply in the affirmative! He wanted to know all about us and set us a poser: "Are a cow's ears behind or in front of its horns?" We had to admit that we weren't sure and promised to take particular

notice the next day!

After collecting the others from the cafe, we parted for our various billets—and bed.

Sunday.—April Fools' Day, and what a day!

After an early breakfast we set off 12 strong, Eric, Pete and Joyce staying behind to do sundry repairs, along the lovely Dee Valley to Corwen, thence following Telford's "masterpiece"—A5 to Pentrefoelas for lunch. There was a veritable gale of a headwind along here. I had visions of our dropping the leaders in turn, leaving them gasping for breath by the wayside. But we all made it. During lunch the rains came—and stayed all day!

As tea was booked at Bala we decided to carry out the run and cross the mountains by the old highway to the Bala-Ffestiniog road. We were soon squelching along in rain-filled shoes and after some foot-slogging reached Yspitty Ifan, a tiny hamlet whose peculiar name is derived from "Spittle" or "hospice" which was founded there by the Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, and which later became notorious as a place of refuge from the King's Law for robbers and murderers! From the village the road was hard with gradient, wind and rain against us. The air was filled with sound of rushing water, hundreds of streamlets poured down the hillsides to swell the muddy, swift-flowing infant Conway below us on our left. Near the top we were enveloped in a driving mist, making it quite impossible to see anything. It was a grand relief to reach a better road, to turn slightly out of the wind and to be told that the worst was over. Soon we were flying downhill towards Bala, those whose brakes wouldn't work, using their feet on the corners. We were all soaked through by this time but were able to

dry our nether garments in front of the huge fire at the "Bull Bach." We can laugh now, thinking back to it, remembering Don paddling about with gauntlets on his feet, and Vic blithely holding up his shorts to dry in front of the fire. I suggested during tea that we went to look at the waves on Lake Bala, but no one seemed interested! Don informed us that they were breaking over the promenade on Sunday. We left it at that!

The ride back to Llangollen was a romp. Helped by the wind we sped along, spashing through the puddles, sending up a spray on the unfortunate person riding behind, and getting wet through all over again. It was quite late when we arrived back at the "Ivanhoe" and after a quick supper we were quite ready for bed. We had taken a packet, as they say.

Monday dawned fine and clear and no one except myself appeared any the worse for yesterday's "hiding." After breakfast we said "Au revoir" to Llangollen and to Castel Dinas Bran looking down at us from the opposite side and turned for home. We took A5 again through Chirk, then went through Ellesmere with its many lakes and memories of Mary Webb, the novelist; Wem, a modern market town, and Hodnet, where several members queued for ice-cream. After a really good hot lunch at Cotton we bade farewell to Vic and Harry who wanted to be home early and took to the lanes. These needed some sorting out, but with Charlie as pilot and Ron as navigator, we managed fairly well. Some of the villages were very charming with their half-timbered cottages. There was more blossom and many a lovely view from those undulating byways. We skirted Eccleshall

and reached Stafford Castle for tea in reasonable time.

Here we sat down at a long table in one of the old halls and we were entertained by the caretaker, an interesting old chap full of stories, reminiscences and historical details. He told us of the 'planes which sometimes only just miss the ancient towers, and of one which caught part of the castle walls with its wing, thereby making it unsafe for visitors. Strange noises emanating from the room above made us think in terms of rats and ghosts, but we later found that it was nothing more than fowls! We had a quick look round the castle before Charlie called "Time up!" Then we started the last lap home. We kept to the lanes again through Weston-on-Trent, Abbot's Bromley to Burton, then took the main road. The mileage on this last day was around 110 and we reached home somewhat tired, but happy nevertheless. It was a most happy week-end, thanks to Charlie Beard, who planned the route and booked the meals. We hope it will be the first of many.

Aftermath: ("Daily Express" of Friday, April 6).--Merionethshire (N. Wales): "Farmers on horseback had to lasso their sheep to save them from the floods which followed last Saturday's gale and rainstorm. The rivers Dee and Alwen overflowed their banks for several miles in the Corwen area; some roads were flooded to a depth of 3ft. The main London to Holyhead trunk road (A5) was impassable and motorists had to make a detour. Hundreds of lambs and sheep were drowned in the Bala, Corwen and Llangollen areas."

So . . . we only escaped in time!

Thank you, Doris.

We had hoped to give you a resume of the Club's activi-

ties during the past three months, but time and space, or lack of it, forbids, but you may take it that the D.A. is most healthy indeed, with a good regular attendance on runs, a varied and interesting runs' programme each month, and a happy atmosphere throughout the whole D.A. created by the "real" cycling outlook of all the present membership. Believe me, Comrades, Derby D.A. won't be the least of the joys you will be returning to when you finally don that civvy suit.

We will endeavour as the last chapter of this number, to tell you something about the D.A. Coming of Age Dinner held at the Coronation Hotel, Baker Street, Derby, on Wednesday evening, the 23rd of May, at 7.30 pip emma.

Before we begin we may as well put your minds at rest—you are quite right, gentlemen, the dinner did NOT start promptly at the time stated. We have pointed out before that in an old established club like ours it is imperative that the old tradition be fully maintained, and as everybody knows, Derby D.A. never, never begins anything on time, so the dinner actually started at 7.55 p.m. We rode up to the pub (sorry, Hotel), at 7.25 to find about a dozen people conversing cosily on the steps (standing, ofcourse). S'matter of fact it wasn't until we had dismounted that we recognised the assembled company as being members of the D.A. I mean to say, lounge suits and summer frocks and silk stockings are such an effective camouflage on cyclists. Must allow for the element of surprise an' all that. Anyway, after successfully evading the bar we gathered together in the assembly room. By now the number of those present had risen to around a score and by the time we actually sat down it had risen to the

total of 28, not bad really; overtime, late shift work, and that ever-present bug-bear of all Derby D.A. social events—distance from home to rendezvous, undoubtedly kept away many who would have liked to have been there.

Our President, Mr. Jeffreys, headed the table and began the proceedings by offering a small Grace. After seating ourselves the waiters whisked around and the dinner really began. The menu consisted of soup, chicken and two veg, etc, and gooseberires and cream. At the beginning of the evening everyone was very dignified and cool, but it wasn't long before we were all relaxing and introducing ourselves to our neighbours. Looking down the table it was most pleasing to see such old friends as Mrs. Brown and Mabel Frost, Mr. Winrow, Bernard Bloor, Andy Kelly and Mrs. Kelly, and David Cross and Nora—both looking very happy now that David is home. Near the end of the table we saw (and heard) Don Pogson, merrily maintaining his punning reputation. Don and Tennyson's brook have still a lot in common. Another stalwart of the old brigade was Ted Benton, doing the honours with Gladys Cole and her sister. (Don't worry, Jim, we keep a fatherly eye on him!). Opposite us was Geoff. Rogerson, organising his dinner as efficiently as he organises his chairmanship of committee meetings. A little further along was Reg. Whiteley, Chief Consul for the County, and Mr. and Mrs. Weston from Alfreton Section. To mention the rest of the company . . . there was Ron Hudson, a comparatively new member but already a power in the land and a lad with the right ideas. Joyce Kent, a very charming addition to the quorum of riding lady members; Miss Lucy Spriggs, Joyce's friend; Mr. Knibb, another new mem-

ber: Arthur Rosier, still as verbose as ever, and of course, Doris, Derby Section Hon. Sec., and her inferior half, your humble scribe. If we have forgotten anyone else who was there we sincerely apologise. We fear our memory is developing fungoid growths or sump'n due to battling with the fantastic nomenclature of the Herron-volk.

During the course of the meal Mr. Jeffreye read out a card addressed to the Chairman of the Dinner, from George Brown, bearing a P.O.W. address from somewhere in Germany. Thanks, George, that was a very happy gesture—at the next annual dinner we fully expect you to be there in person, so see to it wilt?

The tables being cleared Mr. Jeffreys proposed a toast to the King, and then it became the privilege of this semi-exile to propose the toast of "Absent Friends," the theme of the few words said being "We will remember them . . ."

Next Mr. George Winrow proposed "The Club," with a short effective speech in the quietly frank style older members will remember so well. Then Mr. Jeffreys gave us an interesting account of the early history of the D.A., and the manner in which it was founded. Incidentally it is a perpetual source of regret that at some point in the life of the Club the original D.A. records were lost. May we suggest that the veterans amongst us get together some time in the near future and from their collective memory put on record the outline of the Club's early history?

After the business of the toasts, conversation and short

speech making became general during which Don paid tribute to the work and enthusiasm of past Secretaries of the D.A., particularly the two lady secretaries of recent years—Doris Rhead (nee Craig), and Doris Fletcher (nee Whiteley). We are sure you will agree this was very decent and chivalrous of Don, because D.A. secretaries usually receive more kicks than half-pence!

For an hour or two the evening passed in anecdote and pleasant conversation—an art natural to all true cyclists.

We must mention that the sherry drunk in the toast making was kindly provided by Mrs. Ingledew—we wouldn't be so indiscreet as to ask her where she discovered this rarity in these days of near prohibition.

Anyway, thanks very much, Nora.

Eventually we heard the cry "Time Please" go up in the bar, so taking the hint the party gradually broke up and Derby D.A. Coming of Age Dinner was over.

Speaking for ourselves we considered that although it was conducted quietly and un-spectacularly, the dinner was a success, and we hope that the next event of its kind will be the Grand Reunion Dinner, when there will be no toast of "Absent Friends," and no restrictions on attendance (or drinks!), when all the membership is reunited again and looking forward enthusiastically to more years of happy cycling up the road and over the hills of this grand country.

Until then . . . Best of luck,
everybody. G. S. F.

