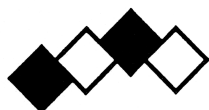
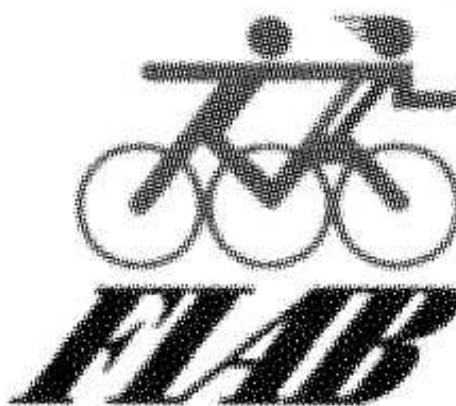


Cycle History 12
Proceedings of the 12th International Cycling History Conference

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degli Aregai



FONDAZIONE

CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI GENOVA E IMPERIA

Cycle History

12

Proceedings of the 12th International Cycling History Conference

San Remo / Pigna, Italy, 25–28 September 2001

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In Memoriam John Pinkerton

JOHN Pinkerton (“Pinky” to most people who knew him well) died on 3rd February 2002, aged 67, from lung cancer. Although tobacco is the main cause of this illness, he was strongly anti-smoking during the 20 or so years I knew him. The funeral, near his home at Birmingham, England, was attended by some 300 mourners from countries as far away as Indonesia, mostly veteran-cycle enthusiasts.

Most readers of these lines will have known John. In case anyone knew him only from his attendance at recent International Cycling History Conferences, let it be said straightaway that conferences were not really his forte. His paper entitled “Who Put the Working Man on a Bicycle,” read in condensed form due to lack of time at the 8th Conference in Glasgow was especially well received. His other papers, at the 6th and 11th Conferences, failed to appear in the Proceedings. He also read a paper at the 12th Conference, which may appear in this volume. Although he delivered that paper with vigour, he had by then recently undergone both chemo- and radio-therapy. It may have been the strain of that which led to a relapse into a pre-existing alcohol disorder the following afternoon.

After he joined the then Southern Veteran-Cycle Club of the UK in 1968, Pinky immersed himself ever more in the details of old cycles and cycling history. His restless energy and sharp brain led to an encyclopedic knowledge, most of which was on instant recall, and if he was unable to identify a machine or some detail immediately, he had only to consult his uniquely comprehensive archive of cycle catalogues. He made a vast amount of previously difficult-to-access cycle history available to the public with a series of reprints of early catalogues and of *Bartleet’s Bicycle Book* (1931). Jointly with others, he also published books on Sunbeam and Rover cycles and on folding bicycles. Recently he had begun jointly producing video tapes of in-depth interviews with leading UK cycling personalities.

John, more than anyone else, shaped the modern (Southern) Veteran-Cycle Club. Among other things, he was largely responsible for the formation of local sections, longer (often commemorative) rides, the annual camp, the annual AGM weekend at Kidderminster, which included cycle jumble, auction, often evening entertainment, and the memorial ride the following day. He is the only person to have been elected President for more than three years. The fact that he served a total of six years (in two separate terms) shows the esteem in which he was held.

The disciplined, academic format of the conference hall was not what suited John. His hyper-activity meant that he was at his best, for instance, when helping people around the world to set up cycle museums or to identify and describe on the spot machines in collections. At the 6th Conference, in South Africa, participants were invited to produce accurate descriptions of the cycle collection in the Transport Museum outside Johannesburg. Most of the machines were from the UK and the captions were appallingly inaccurate. To watch Pinky taking the lead part in probably the best panel of experts it was possible to assemble was impressive indeed.

Losing Pinky so early is a sad moment to people interested in cycle history everywhere, but especially of course to his family, Dot, Doug, Pam, and Sam. Everyone will sympathise with them

Les Bowerman

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* The discrepancy in spelling, Lefebvre v. Lefèbvre is due to the two different authors’ stated opinion of the correct spelling of that name as discussed in their respective contributions.

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