

## Traffic Congestion, Fitness and Mrs Brown

Mr R. B. Foster's wonderful ode to the tandem in Bartonian N<sup>o</sup> 30 reminded me that I had acquired a copy of a cycling log from Bill Cox of the China Shop a few months ago. Bill had found this one page log of Mrs Brown's outings in a box of cycling maps that had been in the possession of Freddie Hopper, but more of that later. As a keen cyclist, I have noticed the increasing number of bicycles in Barton with interest. More adults every year seem to be finding the bike more convenient for popping to the shops than the car, assuming they have one, with all the attendant parking problems. But, what about younger Bartonians?

In my childhood in the 1950's, the acquisition of a bicycle (second hand, of course) was the key to newfound freedom, with summer evenings spent exploring the countryside with friends and weekend excursions to places like Woodhall Spa and Skegness. (As I grew up in Boston this is not as far as it would be from Barton!) Today, all I see is lads on MTB and BMX bikes, with saddles so low that their knees almost hit their chins. These machines are great for stunts and what impressive stunts some of our local kids can pull! I never got around to wheelies and the thought of hopping a bike on to the Fire Station wall brings me out in a cold sweat. All great stuff, but isn't a bike still about expanding physical horizons, just like it was 100 years ago, when they were just becoming affordable to ordinary people?

My parents didn't get a car until I was 16 and had left home and perhaps this meant I had no other option than to get on my bike. With all the current talk about fitness and fatness, especially concerning children, perhaps more parents should roll back the clock and try some weekend family bike rides to see the local sights. Thornton Abbey would be a good start, not too far and a fairly flat road. The back roads of Goxhill also offer relatively traffic free riding. Cycling gets easier after the first few hundred miles and increased fitness really does give you more energy. Every car journey you don't make reduces traffic congestion a little bit, so you are also doing your bit for the environment.

Now to the history bit that got me thinking about our modern attitudes. Mrs Brown decided to keep a log of her outings in the year 1909 and she made some impressive trips, even by today's standards. The following is exactly as she wrote it:

Date	Route	Mileage
April 3	Barton to Caistor 18. Brigg 9. Scunthorpe 9. Barton 14.	50
April 10	Barton to Lincoln 33. E Markham 17. Gainsboro' 17. Barton 28.	95
April 14	Barton to Brocklesby Racecourse 12. Return 12.	24
May 4	Barton to Brigg 10. Brocklesby Station 12. Barton 9.	31
May 15	Barton to Harry Parry's (via Brigg) 16. Return 16.	32
May 16	Barton to Riby (via Brocklesby) 15. Return 15.	30
May 22	Barton to Caistor (via Limber) 16. Horncastle 23. Woodall (sic) Spa 6. Lincoln 19. Barton 33.	97
June 14	Barton to Brigg (via Ferriby) 13. Scawby, Ashby, Scunthorpe, Winterton, Barton.	37
July 4	Barton to Gainsborough 28. Retford 11. Worksop 8. Mansfield 13. Hardwick 9.	69
July 5	Return: Hardwick via Glapwell and Pleasley, to Mansfield 8. Warsop, Cuckney and Carburton Lakes, to Retford 18. Retford, Gainsboro', Barton 39.	65
Sept. 18	Barton to Ulceby 8. Immingham Docks 7. Back to Ulceby 7. Ulceby to Caistor 9. Brigg 9. Barton 10.	50
Sept. 26	Barton to Retford, via Brigg, Gainsboro' and Clarbro' 39 and return same route	78

Sep. 30	Barton to Lincoln 33 and return same route	66
October 7	Ditto	66
October 15	Barton to Nottingham via Lincoln, Newark, Saxondale and Radcliffe on Trent 70 and return same route.	140
October 18	Aviation Meeting at Doncaster. Gainsboro' 28, Bawtry 12, Doncaster 9. Return same route.	98
	Total	1028

Given that the roads in 1909 were not as good as they are today this is a high mileage, especially as she must have made additional shorter training runs to be able to cycle 95 miles in early April. However, since the invention of the safety bicycle in 1885, women had taken to bicycle riding in great numbers, finding the same freedoms that had previously been the reserve of men on their high wheeled penny-farthings.

But who was Mrs Brown? We know that a family of that name was living at Priestgate House at that time and that Robert Brown Jr., a solicitor, was the head of the family. He published volume 1 of his 'Notes on the Earlier History of Barton on Humber' in 1906 and volume 2 in 1908. Was Mrs Brown a daughter in law? Kelly's 1905 Directory additionally lists Brown & Clapson, the boat builders; Mrs W Brown, who ran a 'fancy repository' in High St. and William Brown, carpenter, also of High St. Can anyone identify this fit and adventurous lady?

PS Barton Wheelers is always keen to welcome younger members on their Sunday runs and time trials – parents too!

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