

The Withington Wheelers 'Novices' 25

Chapter One – The 1930s



The Withington Wheelers was formed in 1931 from a group of local lads with a common interest. The cost of joining an existing club was prohibitive in those pre-war days, the YMCA, the MAC and the Manchester Wheelers were expensive to the young lads concerned, pennies were hard to come by and it was decided that the only way was to form a Club on a weekly subscription basis. However after, trying this method it was found to have difficulties in collecting and eventually the club went ahead with a nominal subscription of 3/6d per annum (17½p). This was deemed to be within the pockets of members and by the summer of that year the club was attracting many new members.

A winged wheel was chosen as the new clubs badge but was almost immediately disregarded in favour of the Lancashire Red Rose. This too was thrown out in favour of the "White Lion", the name of the hotel in the centre of Withington where the Sunday club run started.

During that year the club was sufficiently established to promote a number of reliability rides, the most popular of these being to cover 100 miles in 8 hours, the course taking the riders down to Shropshire and back. These events were well supported and as a result the club received numerous applications for membership.

The club gathered strength throughout 1931 but it wasn't until the following year, 1932 that the club got involved in the Manchester racing scene. Under the guidance of the two experienced enthusiasts, Harry Wilson and Tommy Barlow, the club launched an Open Novices 25 miles time trial in April of that year, which attracted a field of 48 entries. During the remainder of 1932 the club promoted club events at 25 and 50 miles and further Reliability Rides.

Early in 1932 the club was introduced to a prominent Manchester business man, Harry Wilson. He was invited to be our President, he accepted, and his great generosity in every way was of tremendous benefit to our young club in those early critical days. Mr Wilson allowed the Club to use his factory premises at 18 London Road for Committee meetings. For good measure he brought along a close friend who at that time served on the National Committee of the Road Records Association. The one and only Tommy Barlow.

Under the guidance of these two experienced enthusiasts we launched in April of that year an Open Novices 25 miles time trial. Many youths were not attached to any Club and as such were pure Novices. We saw an opportunity to enlarge our membership by promoting an Open Novices 25. On hearing this Tommy Barlow remarked; "Angels step in where fools fear to tread." We were to learn over the years that such maxims were part of Tommy's make up.

Before we commence the history of the Novices 25 let's just look at the world the fledgling Withington Wheelers 'angels' were stepping into. In 1986 one of our older members, Roy Rosborough, wrote a fascinating history of time trialling and it is worth a brief look at what he said.

"When bike racing as an organised sport first appeared on our country roads about 100 years ago (so, about 1886) it took the form of paced racing. Competitors would be provided with other racing men who each paced his selected competitor, dropping out after a time to be replaced by another waiting pacer. Competitors were handicapped, men considered of equal standard would be despatched at intervals in groups.

Naturally such activities on hitherto quiet roads roused keen hostility among the general public and the police became very active in trying to suppress the sport. To alleviate the situation and preserve the sport a prominent racing man of the time, FT Bidlake of the North Road Club devised a new format for road racing. In the North Road 50 in October 189, as an experiment, he had riders despatched at intervals singly without pacers. This was the first time trial as we know it and the basic principle remains unchanged since that historic day and the compromise must have been satisfactory in the eyes of the police.

This change from company riding had one very important effect on the future of racing. As Tommy Barlow observed in his book on the first 50 years of the RRA (Road Racing Association) it took cycling in this country out of the

mainstream of European bike racing. The new format soon gained general acceptance in the UK however, the RRA recognised unpaced attempts in 1897 and the Anfield 100 was run as a paced event for the last time in 1899. At Club level however, changes in legislation and the rules of competition have had a profound influence on the development of the time trial since 1896. The first significant change took place in 1923, prior to then Sunday racing was not generally recognised, the RRA refused to give approval to any record where time ran out, even by a few seconds, after midnight on a Saturday. Neither was there a 5 day working week back then so the number that could compete was seriously limited – racing was something of an elitist sport. Older established clubs preferred to keep it that way but a movement begun in 1921 by the Cheshire Roads Club eventually led to the RRA recognising Sunday attempts at records. This immediately led to an increase in new clubs being formed, more time trials and the consequent improvement in performance. The trend received further impetus in 1930 when 'Cycling' (now Cycling Weekly) instituted the BAR (Best All Rounder) and the foundation of the RTTC (now Cycling Time Trials) in 1936."

So under the guidance of Tommy Barlow and Harry Wilson the Open Novices 25 was launched in April 1932 and the Open Hill Climb in October. It is a tribute to the event that both events are still on the racing calendar today. The Novices being the longest running event of its kind in the country. Many famous athletes have made their entrance into the sport through its promotion, perhaps the best known of all - Reg Harris - 5 times sprint champion of the world who in 1937 finished in second place 8 seconds behind the winner. The move paid off, the first Club Handbook was printed in 1933 showing 45 members (all male). It wasn't until 1936 that females were admitted. At the club's Annual General Meeting held in January 1936 the most important item on the agenda was a proposition that "lady friends of members be admitted to the club". This was carried by a large majority, there being three votes against. After the meeting, and on collecting their cycles to ride home, three machines were found to have flat tyres. We are one of the original nine clubs who in 1937 formed the Manchester and District Time Trials Association.

Each year a report of the Novices 25 was printed in the Withington Wheelers Journal and we can now look back and read what happened all those years ago. The winner of the first Novices 25 in 1932 was H Pass of the Congleton CC in a time of 1:08:28 and the Journal reports that "the Novices Open 25 attracted a field of 48 and thanks to the untiring energy of our President and Vice-President was carried through successfully".

In **1933** the Journal reported "The weather clerk was particularly indulgent on the morning of our Novices 25 for the event was run under what were later described as 'almost ideal conditions'.

Fastest time was returned by WG Oakes of the Northwich & District CC with an excellent ride of 1:08:48. Only 9 seconds separated him from AE Barnett, Congleton CC who did 1:08:57 whilst an Altrincham Raven, S Wainwright with a clear lead over the next man of more than a minute annexed third prize with 1:09:16.

Considering the nature of the event, the standard of riding of both clubmen and unattached was quite high for 16 riders beat evens. More than one rider lost valuable time through starting late and a noticeable feature was the number who were delayed by pulling their wheels over at the beginning.

The team prize decided on the aggregate system went to the NCU Manchester Centre with a total time of 3:42:55. PA Jones (1:14:03), FW Moehle (1:15:09) and H Jones (1:16:25) who constituted the Withington Wheelers team with an aggregate time of 3:45:38 just snatched second team awards from the Manchester Athletic Club who were four seconds slower. Of the 70 entrants 64 faced the timekeeper, Mr R McQueen, and 55 finished.

Principle times were;

WG Oakes	Northwich & District CC	1:08:48
AE Barnett	Congleton CC	1:08:57
S Wainwright	Altrincham Ravens	1:09:16
H Buxton	Hyde CC	1:10:35
H Batty	NCU	1:11:08
L Checkley	Unattached	1:11:34"

April 8th **1934** and a record entry of 80 was received for the third Novices 25, twenty one of these riders were unattached. Weather conditions on the morning were far from ideal, "a cold wind blew over the course, and

intermittent showers made the going a trifle unpleasant – at least half a dozen riders slipped through bad braking at the turn but luckily none were hurt”.

Withington Wheelers' Journal.

Hon. Secretary: J. E. FORBES, 12, Moorfield Street, WITTINGTON.
 Official Organ of the WITTINGTON WHEELERS.
 Hon. Editor: C. HAINES, 35, Waide Street, HULME, M.C. 15.

Vol. 2. No. 2. April 1934.

FIXTURES.
 April. 22. ALLGREAVE - Rose and Crown, BURBAGE - Miss Wilmot, Under Grin.
 29. RUDYARD - Mrs Salt. HOLMES CHAPEL - Ogden, The Square.
 May 6. FRODSHAM - Selby, Stockton House. KNUTSFORD - Mrs Byswater.
 13. BASLOW - Beswick, The Cupold. TADDINGTON - Ivy Bank.
 20 & 21. SHREWSBURY and PREESS Week end.
 27. MONSALL DALE - Hollingworth. BAKEWELL - Beswicks, Church Street.
 June 3. Lunch and Tea at WINCLE - Mrs Brocklehurst.
 Runs now commence at 9.30 from the "White Lion".

Change of address:- A. Smith, 43, Panfield Road, Brownley Green, Wythenshawe. H. Bricknell, 1, Skelton Road, Stretford.

EDITORIAL.
 On the wet and rather unpleasant morning of the Novices' "25" we saw again with pleasure the "old familiar faces" of members and friends whose assistance last season had been so unstintingly offered, ready again when the call for helpers was raised; men who, for no hope of monetary gain, have been ever willing to check at this point or feed at that - always at unearthly hours and often under trying conditions, and who have by their spendid efforts, help to keep "The Game" going. But what of the others? Where were the men whom we so rarely see, save perhaps at the A.G.M., and whose only sign of existence may be an insertion in the "Mag" - "change of address". We wonder.

Financial Notes.
 Eager Subscription-payers have been rather conspicuous this month - by their absence, and as yet only a dozen members have consented to part with their hard-earned(?) shekels. True, one member there was who actually paid up a few days after the New Year without being bullied into it, but we have learned since from good authority that he always has been rather a queer fellow. In the interests of the Club however it should be remembered that prompt payment of subscriptions will not only facilitate the work of the particular official concerned but also that of the committee who are to carry us through the coming season. Thank you!

OPEN NOVICES' "25", April 8th.
 A record entry of 80 was received for our third annual Novices' "25" and of these 21 were unattached. Weather conditions on the morning were far from ideal; a cold wind blew over the course, and intermittent showers made the going a trifle unpleasant - at least half a dozen riders slipped through bad braking at the turn, but luckily none were hurt.
 The Middlewich Ramblers C.C. took the lion's share of the prizes, F. Barnett providing the fastest time of 1.9.43. His clubmate R. Hambley was second with 1.10.15, and with a third string of 1.15.45 to their bow they emerged winners of the team honours, their aggregate bring 3.35.43 against the Congleton C.C.'s 3.58.12.
 Of our men, Charlie Shattock gave a very good account of himself, by returning a time of 1.11.30. He was among the leaders at the turn and maintained his speed to finish fifth. Unfortunately our other three men gave little support for team efforts, though both G. Watson (1.15.20) and A.L.Jones (1.18.13) did improved times.
 72 were started by Mr. R. McQueen who was holding the watch, and 58 completed the course, 23 doing "inside evens" rides.
 Leading times were:-

1. F. Barnett	Middlewich Ramblers. C.C.	1	9.	43
2. R. Hambley	Middlewich Ramblers. C.C.	1	10	15
3. J. Davies	Wanderers C.C.	1.	10	34
4. D. Birchenall	Biddulph C.C.	1	10	59
5. C. Shattock	Withington Wheelers.	1	11	30
6. J. F. Robins	Dukinfield Cyclists' Club	1	12	27

C. Haines, Hon. Editor.

The Middlewich Ramblers CC took the lion's share of the prizes, F Barnett providing fastest time of 1:09:43. His clubmate R Hambley was second with 1:10:15 and with a third string of 1:15:45 to their bow they emerged winners of the team honours, their aggregate being 3:35:43 to the Congleton CCs 3:38:12. Of the Withington riders, Charlie Shattock gave a very good account of himself by returning a time of 1:11:30. He was among the leaders at the turn and maintained his speed to finish fifth.... "unfortunately our other three men gave little support for the team efforts though both G Watson (1:16:20) and AL Jones (1:18:13) did improved times. 72 were started by Mr R McQueen who was holding the watch and 58 completed the course, 23 doing 'inside evens' rides. Leading times were;

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R Hambley	Middlewich Ramblers	1:10:15
J Davies	Wanderers CC	1:10:34
D Birchenall	Biddulph CC	1:10:59
C Shattock	Withington Wheelers	1:11:30
JF Robins	Dukinfield CC	1:12:27"

Problems with courses were not a new thing as the 1935 Journal complains.... " "after much debating and a great deal of work, it was found to be impracticable to use the new course specifically designed for the Novices Open 25 and we were forced with regret to revert to the course which had served us since the event was promoted. Any cause for concern however was obviated by a very early start and an alteration in the finishing point – two factors which contributed towards the making of a very successful and trouble free event.

The desire to participate in this game called 'racing' was again manifested by the large entry received and our last year's record of 138 was easily surpassed with a splendid total of 138. Of the 100 accepted, eight decided that discretion was the better part of valour and of those who braved the cold and drizzle only six failed to finish.

Fastest time was supplied by F Hallworth of the South Manchester RC who clocked 1:09:32 on steels and paved the way to first team award for his club. I Whieldon, Smallthorne Wheelers was only 22 seconds slower after falling near the finish and H Thomas an unattached rider filled third place with 1:10:19. 28 riders beat evens"

Three Withington Wheelers rode; Alan Grant 1:12:12, William Hall 1:19:35, and Geoff Watson 1:23:10.

Mr MacQueen officiated and gave us the following;

F Hallworth	South Manchester CC	1:09:32
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I Whieldon	Smallthorne Wheelers	1:09:54
H Thomas	Unattached	1:10:19
K Hunt	Saddleworth Wheelers	1:10:36
J Rogers	Grove Wheelers	1:10:52
F Martin	Dukinfield CC	1:10:59
FC Bailey	Grove Wheelers	1:11:50
A Crye	Manchester Wheelers	1:11:52

The details of the 1936 Novices in Journals are a bit vague but suffice to say that the event was won in a time of 1:08:35 by G Miller of the Grove Wheelers.

The Editor of the April 1937 Journal, Charlie Haines, writes a piece that reflects the time trialling spirit of the day.... "At twenty to five one Sunday morning I rode into Cheadle to find two dim shapes asprawl on the seat at The Green. A few minutes later we were joined by another shadowy figure – then another - then two more made their appearance and by ten minutes to the hour nine trusty men and true had started on what must surely be our earliest club run.

Riding out, I thought what a splendid morning we were to have for the event but later, as I took up my post, I began to revise my former ideas. A cold mist arose and for the greater part of the race visibility was exceedingly poor. Otherwise the morning appeared good for we saw three men inside single figures and no less than forty five realising the first stage of their ambition – that of beating evens for the distance.

Wood of the Apollo returned to the timekeeper in the shortest time but Harris, Lancashire RC was only eight seconds slower, and also led his team to victory – the trio averaging :1:10:46 per man. Of our riders, Ken Perrins comes in for praise with his 1:10:29 ride, an effort for which he receives 6th Fastest Medal.

Standing watching 100 riders pass twice is bound to present general as well as outstanding impressions, and each year I have packed away my 'bird board' thinking of the splendid quality of the equipment used by Novices. This year I failed to gather the same impression – rather, I thought, was there a slight favouring of the lighter type of 'steels', combined now with that other expensive form of speed-tackle, the chain-gear.

Mr MacQueen and Mr Barlow again officiated"

Many famous athletes have made their entrance into the sport through the promotion of the Withington Wheelers Novices 25 and the certain 'Harris' who finished second, 8 seconds behind the winner, was of course none other than Reg Harris - 5 times sprint champion of the world.



Vol. III. No. 2. April/May, 1937.

April 25.	BETLEY HEATH. MORBERLEY - "Bird in Hand."
May 2.	BRADFELD GREEN - "Coach and Horses." GAINSWORTH - Mrs. Nuttall
9.	SUTTON - "Ryles Arms" OT. HUDWORTH - "Providence House."
16.	SHROPSHIRE WEEK-END.
23.	CLUB "50".
	WYBUNBURY. GAINSWORTH - Mrs. Nuttall's.
30.	TARPORLEY - Four Lane Ends. SOMERFORD - Mrs. Cliffe's.

Novices' Open "25" - April 4th.

At twenty-to-five one Sunday morning I rode into Cheadle to find two dim shapes asprawl on the seat at The Green. A few minutes later we were joined by another shadowy figure - then another - then two more made their appearance, and by ten minutes to the hour nine trusty men and true had started on what must surely be our earliest Club-run.

Riding out, I thought what a splendid morning we were to have for the event, but later, as I took up my post, I began to revise my former ideas. A cold mist arose, and for the greater part of the race visibility was exceedingly poor. Otherwise the morning appeared good for we saw three men inside single figures and no less than forty-five realising the first stage of their ambition - that of beating "evens" - for the distance.

Wood of the Apollo returned to the Timekeeper in the shortest time, but Harris, Lancashire R.C., was only eight seconds slower, and also led his team to victory - the trio averaging 1.10.46 per man. Of our riders, Ken comes in for praise with his 1.10.29 ride, an effort for which he receives 6th fastest medal.

Standing watching a hundred riders pass twice is bound to present general as well as outstanding impressions, and each year I have packed away my "bird-board" thinking of the splendid quality of the equipment used by novices. This year I failed to gather the same impression - rather, I thought, was there a slight favouring of the lighter type of "steels", combined now with that other expensive form of speed-tackle - the chain-gear.

Mr. MacQueen and Mr. Barlow again officiated, and give us the following:-

1.	A. J. Wood,	Apollo	1 9 9
2.	R. H. Harris,	Lancashire R.C.	1 9 17
3.	W. S. Lunt,	Clarion	1 9 53
4.	L.T. Williams,	S. Manchester	1 10 12
5.	F. Green,	Lancashire R.C.	1 10 15
6.	K. Perrins,	Withington	1 10 29
23.	Harry Burton,	"	1 14 10
29.	Herbert Burton,	"	1 14 32
72.	T. Frith,	"	1 20 30

115 Entries received. 100 Accepted. 93 Started. 84 Finished.
45 Beat Evens.

Club Easter Tour.

After various suggestions had been put forward for the Club's Easter Tour, the venue was finally fixed at a little village named Mappleton, approximately 1½ miles from Ashbourne, in Derbyshire.

As was the case last year, most of the boys could not stay out for the whole of the four days owing to business, and, of course - racing, so that once again it was left to the "Big Four" (Miss B.

In 1938 the event attracted well over 100 entries. The Withy had "high hopes of pulling off one of our own prizes and the proverbial shirt placed on new member Frank Stanfield came back with 2 laps and a new collar. Frank had purposely not entered in the Club 25 in order to ride in the Open..... his time was 1:12:48, excellent in view of the hard conditions and gaining him second place"

The 1939 event was run a week earlier than usual but still attracted well over the required 100. According to the Journal, on the 26th March 1939 "on a bright but windy morning 91 of the aforesaid 100 kept their early morning appointment with Mac and Tommy Barlow. Of these 82 returned but the last six miles into that North Wind putting 'paid' to many cherished hopes. Some idea of the conditions can be gathered from the fact that only eight managed to beat evens.

Open Novices "25" - March 26th.

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On a bright but windy morning 91 of the aforementioned 100 kept their early morning appointment with Mac and Tommy Barlow. Of these, 82 returned, the last 6 miles into that North Wind putting "paid" to many cherished hopes. Some idea of the conditions can be gathered from the fact that only 8 managed to beat "evens".

One of our new members, W. G. Jones, rode splendidly, to finish 2nd., only 19 seconds behind the winner, H. E. Brimelow of the Stretford Whlrs., who clocked 1.11.43.

The unluckiest rider was undoubtedly A. Drayton, Cheshire R.C. who (from various unofficial checks round the course) appeared to have the race "in his pocket". His lead at the last check (18½ miles) was approximately 1½ mins. but shortly after, in attempting to take a drink from a helper, he crashed heavily and had to be removed to a near-by surgery, where he was attended, and later allowed to go home.

Led by Geof. Jones, our boys managed to pull off the team prize, beating the Altrincham Ravens by exactly 1 min., the other two being A. J. Pennill 1.15.32 and J. B. Smith 1.15.53.

Messrs. MacQueen and Barlow returned the following:-

		h.	m.	s.
1.	H.E. Brimelow Stretford Whlrs.	1	11	43
2.	W. G. Jones Withington "	1	12	2
3.	C. Hodgkinson Potteries C.C.	1	12	31
4.	W. Garside Altrincham R.	1	13	21
5.	H. Williams Whaley Bridge C.C.	1	13	31
6.	H. Crowley M/cr. Whlrs.	1	13	48
7.	E. Robinson Hyde Paragon	1	13	52
8.	W. Bond M/cr. Whlrs.	1	14	27

One of our new members, WG Jones rode splendidly to finish second only 19 seconds behind the winner, HE Brimelow of the Stretford Wheelers who clocked 1:11:43.

The unluckiest rider was undoubtable A Drayton, Cheshire RC, who (from various unofficial checks around the course) appeared to have the race 'in his pocket'. His lead at the last check (18½ miles) was approximately 1½ minutes but shortly after, in attempting to take a drink from a helper, he crashed heavily and had to be removed to a nearby surgery where he was attended, and later allowed to go home.

Led by Geoff Jones our boys managed to pull off the team prize, beating the Altrincham Ravens by exactly 1 minute, the other two being AJ Pennill 1:15:32 and JB Smith 1:15:53."

In 1940 the event was, for the first time, run as 'middle markers' with entries being restricted to riders who had not previously beaten 1:10:00.

The Journal tells us "For the first time since its inception the 'Novices' was run, not as a true Novice event but as a confined event. It was limited to men who had not beaten 1:10 with a special prize for the fastest Novice who had not previously beaten 1:15.

This was considered politic after a great deal of consideration, because of War's encroachment upon our potential entries. As it turned out we could quite easily have run it as a pure Novices event – with an entry of about 70 – for over 140 forms were showered upon poor old Alan (Bates).

Despite a fairly late start, conditions were cold and hard and a nasty wind made finishing a slow and painful business. Some indication of this can be seen from the times of the leading men in the prize list most of whom had probably

done something in the region of '10' before. (But the winner deserves our best applause – he was actually riding his first race – and so takes both Fastest Prize and Fastest Novice Prize.

Speaking from my own checking point, and indeed from all reports, the race seems to have gone off without undue incident. I think we can feel satisfied that the Game has been served by such an event in these times.

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One only little smut on the morning's fun. Several well known riders elected to ride "privates" on the same course. By all means, let them do so. But I feel that they might have shown a little more consideration for the sport and good manners to others if they had finished at a more reasonable distance from our event.

Last year we managed to bag a place in the event through Geoff, and this time Ken kept the flag flying in the 1.10 section with a stout effort of 1.10.57 for fourth place - a ride which we now expect to see followed up properly, Ken!

We are again indebted to Tom White of the Clarion for his timing, along with Mac of ours.

Here are the leading times:-

1. W. Kinghorn	M/cr. Clarion	1. 9.27
2. A. G. Grocott	" "	1.10. 3
3. W. Burgess	" "	1.10.40
4. K. Perrins	Withington Whlrs.	1.10.57
5. A.L. Johnson	Pyramid R.C.	1.11.16
6. C. Richards	Warrington R.G.	1.11.18
7. K. Davies	M/cr. Clarion	1.11.37
8. A. Egerton	Oldham Cent.	1.12. 0
9. T. B. Snape	Bury A.C.	1.12.11
10. J. Konderdine	M/cr. Clarion	1.12.11

1st Team: M/cr. Clarion 3. 30. 10

2nd Team: Ace C.C. 3. 39. 20

Our riders fared as follows:-

K. Perrins	1. 10. 57
A. Pennill	1. 15. 20
G. Watson	1. 18. 43
H. Bragg	1. 18. 43
E. A. Webber	1. 21. 17
D. Potter	1. 23. 9
S. Heeley	1. 32. 5

94 started; 89 finished; 27 beat "evens".

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Here are the leading times;

W Kinghorn	Manchester Clarion	1:09:27	First Team;
AG Grocott	Manchester Clarion	1:10:03	Manchester Clarion 3:30:10
W Burgess	Manchester Clarion	1:10:40	Second Team;
K Perrins	Withington Wheelers	1:10:57	Ace CC 3:39:20
AL Johnson	Pyramid RC	1:11:16	
C Richards	Warrington RC	1:11:18	
K Davies	Manchester Clarion	1:11:37	
A Egerton	Oldham Century	1:12:00	
TB Snape	Bury AC	1:12:11	
J Konderdine	Manchester Clarion	1:12:11	

Withington Wheelers fared as follows;

K Perrins 1:10:57; A Pennill 1:15:20; C Watson 1:18:43; H Bragg 1:18:43; EA Webber 1:21:17; D Potter 1:23:09; S Heeley 1:32:05

From 1941 to 1946 the 'Black Hand of War' and the event was not held again until 1947.