

CHAPTER TWO

1934 - 1940

Manchester Wheelers' 1934-1939.

The years which immediately followed the Golden Jubilee found the Manchester Wheelers' Club in an extremely strong position. Finances were sound with a substantial active membership, albeit that many members confined their activities to supporting the Race Meet and the Club's Open promotions on the road, the 100 Miles and the 12 Hours. The annual Opening and Closing runs also attracted numerous members who were not seen at other times of the year. All these occasions were somewhat of a special gathering, when old acquaintances were renewed, and were part of the general 'bonhomie' which characterised many of the all male sporting occasions of the era.

In 1934 ninety members were affiliated to the National Cyclists Union, at a membership fee of 2s.0d. each and it was noticeable that 25 years was the upper age limit for Junior Members.

Some indication of support is given by the fact that in 1933/34 the average Summer attendance was 29.6. in Winter 18.4 and 78 members attended one or more Club runs. The membership stood at 123.

Throughout the decade (and indeed as it had done during the earlier part of the Century) one outstanding, event set the Manchester Wheelers' Club apart from the average cycling club - the Annual Race Meet at Fallowfield.

The name of the Club was brought before the general sporting public in South East Lancashire in large measure and many column inches were devoted to the Race Meet in the local Manchester newspapers in the week before the long established date of the second Saturday in July. The National newspapers also devoted a great deal of space to reports and photographs of the Race Meet in their Sunday and Monday morning editions, even though on many occasions it clashed with a Test Match at Old Trafford and other sporting events of the time.

The red-shale track at Fallowfield which enabled the Race Meet to advertise "Racing Wet or Fine" meant a virtually guaranteed annual profit which enabled the Club to help its top riders with travelling expenses and support and generally subsidise Open and Club Road and Track events.

'This financial background made the Club extremely independent, although, in effect, commercial assistance (the word sponsorship had not come into general use) had been of very great help in establishing the Race Meet, especially the Vi-Tonica Cup for the One Lap Scratch and Muratti Cup for the 10 Miles, each Gold Cup having a value of 120 Guineas. The donors also contributed to the Prize List.

An indication of this independent attitude was shown when, in 1935, the Road Racing Council (which had been formed to co-ordinate dates and courses for time trials) asked the Club to submit its proposed dates for their Open events. Club Racing Secretary, Tommy Barlow, stated that it was for the Manchester Wheelers to fix their own dates not for the R.R.C. In due course, however, the Club gave very great support to the R.R.C. and its successor the R.T.T.C., not only in providing local officials but at National level also. Tommy Barlow was on the National Council from 1945 to 1978 as Competitions Secretary responsible for the B.B.A.R. tables Final Competition Records, and forty years later Peter Walthall became Chairman of the R.T.T.C.

The Manchester Wheelers' Club was one of a comparatively small number of Clubs of an all-male character whose beginnings went back to the late 19th Century, and to a large extent its foundations had been laid by professional and white-collar types drawn from the lower middle classes, many of whom became successful business-men in their own right.

Club runs were held on Saturday afternoons with a standard meal being ordered beforehand, in the majority of cases at a licensed hostelry. The attendance would be divided between motorists and cyclists, although of course the former had been active cyclists originally.

It was however an ageing Club and typified many of the old established male clubs. Its officials were outstanding, both at local and national level and it encouraged and participated in the sport and pastime of cycling and promoted first class open events on road and track which attracted competitors at Championship level from all parts of the country. In the mid-thirties the Manchester area generally was not producing as many top quality track riders and hence there was a decline in the Club's track racing strength whilst a rapidly rising increase in time-trialing on the road (road racing as it was then called) was largely by-passing the Club.

Times were changing - the Manchester Wheelers' pattern of plus-four suits, collars and ties, and bought meals held no attraction for the new generation of Club cyclists, nor for the alpaca/corduroy shorted "butty" carrying hard rider of the 30's. In addition, the absence of all day Sunday riding on an organised basis was proving a serious drawback and indeed had been so for many years, as witness the number of Sunday riding and racing clubs which had been formed in the late twenties and early thirties to cater for Sunday riding and racing.

In the early thirties, Johnny Berry, who had joined the Club in 1928, found that business commitments with his new cycle shop prevented him from attending the official Saturday Club runs, and got together a group of younger members, some of whom were similarly placed, and along with other enthusiasts began unofficial Sunday Club runs (unofficial in so far as they were not recorded in the Journal or in the Fixture List) on an informal basis, generally starting out from the Kingsway Tram Terminal.

Although the Club was one of the top track racing clubs, its individual and team successes in road time trials was somewhat limited and it was noteworthy therefore that in April, 1933 in the Preston Wheelers' 25, Parkes, Lamb and Spreckley won the Team Race, and later in the year Harold Crye recorded fastest time in our Open 50 and we won the Team Race, Harold Crye being supported by Jim Parkes and Cliff Lamb.

At the Prize Distribution in December 1933, Tommy Barlow, toasting the Prize Winners declared "the lean years are over".

In May 1934 the Club noted with pleasure that Syd Cozens (in partnership with Piet Van Kempen) won the London Six Day Race.

We continued to dominate in Fallowfield promotions and at the Manchester City Police Sports in 1934 our riders took ten of the thirteen prizes.

One other asset which greatly distinguished the M. W. Club from other cycling clubs was the fact that it had in Manchester its official Headquarters at 4A South King Street.

From Mondays to Fridays the Club House was of course used by marry men who had club house membership only and were not necessarily members of the Cycling Club. Two full-size first class billiard tables were available, together with a licensed bar and light lunches were served. In the 30's especially this was highly prestigious and as the telephone number (Blackfriars 6919) was listed in the telephone directory, it meant that officials of the M.W. Club could easily be contacted by the newspapers or radio.

Whilst this gave the Club additional standing it did, in 1934, lead to extremely heated controversy.

One of the topics of the day was whether cyclists should be taxed and also whether they should be compelled to have rear lights and use cycle paths. All these proposals were fiercely contested by the official cycling fraternity, but unfortunately when a local newspaper reporter rang up and spoke to Freddy Harrison, who was at that time the President, he quoted some of his own personal views, particularly that he thought compulsory rear lights were a necessary safety measure. As events have proved this was a very wise decision, but in the light of opinion at that time it was a most unwise comment to make and unfortunately the newspaper concerned quoted Freddy's remarks as being official Manchester Wheelers' policy. One can imagine the uproar which followed, even boiling in oil was not considered sufficient punishment in some quarters. Fortunately, Freddy survived all this controversy and continued as a member and as an official of the Club for many more years.

A profitable Race Meet was the spring board and support of virtually the whole of the Club's activities - its support of top track riders, generous prize lists, a printed journal etc., and in 1935 the swing of the pendulum reached its peak and the crowd estimated at 15,000 basked in summer sunshine to welcome the usual first class programme, of which the outstanding feature was the attendance of the three Australian professional riders, Opperman, Milliken and Stewart. Opperman was of course internationally known and had in fact competed with honour in the Tour de France. They had been brought over by the Hercules Cycle Company, primarily to head an advertising campaign based on the breaking of the major R.R.A. Records. Opperman had broken two of the most prestigious single records including the End-to-End, whilst Milliken and Stewart on the tandem made hay of R.R.A. Tandem Records. They were a very great attraction to the Cycle Clubman of the day and there were many clubs who rode from far afield to see them at Fallowfield.

It was the last of several years of good weather and yielded a profit of £304.

The Captain reported on the possibility of holding a Dinner Dance and Prize Distribution in the City during the winter months and reported on the difficulty of booking for Saturday nights at the better class hotels in the City area of Manchester.

The President for 1935 was an outstanding Manchester Wheeler, a man of outstanding character, resolute and firm but one of nature's gentlemen. His Presidential Message and Appeal for that year reflected both the principles of the Manchester Wheelers' Club and an historical insight into the manner in which many of its foundations were laid.

Mr. Fred Leeming
A PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE AND AN APPEAL
FOR 1935

To all members, greetings, and the hope of a patient hearing and your fullest support during the coming year of my Club Presidency.

First of all, may I ask, what is a President, and what are his duties? To which I reply, that in my estimation he is selected or elected, to preside over all the meetings or important functions of the club. Further, that he initiates or leads if necessary, and helps or advises officials in the carrying out of their duties, though he should never interfere unless he is requested. He is there to promote harmony and the good working and the best interest of the club. I am aware that some regard a President as a mere figure-head, or as an independent chairman who keeps order but never votes. But I disagree with that entirely. A President should be and is, in our Club at least, one of the most interested in the success of the club and of every function connected with it.

We decided in the year 1896, the year after I joined the club, to elect an active member as our President. Our choice was 'Pa' Grime, one of the best ever, and the father of Alderman J. C. Grime, who is still one of our members. 'Pa' Grime served us well for three

years, but in 1899 we decided to make a further change, largely on my instigation, to permit of every member having a chance to rise to the Presidential position. We made it that our President should only be elected for one year, like the Lord Mayor of our City. A change, and a bit of democracy, which we have never regretted. Long may it continue, and serve to give us many more good and true Presidents like those who have gone before. And now, forgive me please if I give you a little brief biography.

I learned to cycle on a 48in. tall Ordinary over 50 years ago. I was always interested in Sport, and saw most of the cycling champions of the day, before I joined the Wheelers in 1895. I saw all the Wheelers Sports at Fallowfield and helped as a lap scorer in the great 12 hours path race, in my first year of membership, on which we lost money, so seriously, it was difficult to get officials to carry on, and I was elected as Financial Secretary, along with two other untried enthusiasts, Will Wright and Hubert Hill as general secretary and assistant secretary. There were little or no club funds in hand, and we had to form a guarantee fund of £100 in order to get credit for our Race Meet. That was the year 1896, when we coined the word "Race Meet" for our Sports, and decided to confine them to bicycle racing, with special attractions. George Howarth was our mentor and leader, and undertook the advertising side of our Meet - a position he held with untold benefit to the Club for teens of years. Since then, I have occupied almost every official position in the club excepting that of Captain and Vice-Captain, and I can truthfully say that I have always been asked to continue in office (excepting of course that of President in 1907). And believe me I have not sought the office of President again, just 28 years since I occupied the post of honour before, I only want to be of service and to help in the

FUTURE SUCCESS OF THE CLUB

As I have already said, I have always been keenly interested in Sport, whether on road or path, though I was never a racing man. I only rode in a 10 miles 'novice' handicap in 1895, and was placed third. I rode my roadster bike in that, weighing some 34 lbs. And on the road I rode in two '50' handicaps. In the first Alien Phillips beat me easily, but I had the pleasure of just beating good old Jock Barlow, who pulled up at a pub for a refresher, whilst I passed him and went ahead to beat him. In the next '50' I entered only for the purpose of beating Phillips, who was always known as a fast pedaller. I bought Harry Monk's racing bike for £3. It was geared to 80 and weighed only 20 lbs. I trained assiduously and by the help of massage I won the handicap and beat Phillips by over 5 minutes. It rained the whole time, so you can judge what the roads were like in those days in 1907, the year I was President. I never took a prize for it, because I was getting my President's medal, and did not want two medals. I imagine that it is a record in the Wheelers. But I am proud of that medal, although it is so worn that I hardly dare to wear it any more.

However, to return to my first year of office, we started the year on practically nothing but the good name of the Wheelers, and ended the year, thanks to the Race Meet, with a profit of £265. And we made the club pay on its own club subscriptions, without any help from the Race Meet. Further, we continued for years to make the club's social and racing activities pay on the club subscription. Which fact brings me to the main reason for this message and to

MY APPEAL

For the past two years the club has decided to only run the Open '50' by the aid of voluntary subscriptions, owing to the necessity for economy. And this fund has kindly been collected by our own Jimmy Taylor.

But this year, owing to the need for still further economy, the Annual General Meeting decided to inaugurate a Prize Fund which should be devoted to financing, if possible, both our 'open' events, the '50' and the '12 hours' and provide prizes for the Path events.

A splendid start was given to the fund in the meeting, by the offer of £10 and £5 by two of our members whom I will not name, as they do not seek publicity, but they are wholehearted supporters of the club.

May I appeal to other club members, especially life-members, for the utmost support they can give to the fund. All amounts will be acknowledged by the Financial Secretary, and cheques or postal orders can be sent either to me at the club house, or to the Financial Secretary, Mr. T. A. Macdonald. We are not appealing to anyone outside the club. This is a matter for ourselves. Some of us I know will double the amount they gave to Jimmy's fund in the past two years. And I want those who can, to support the fund because it is needed if we are to stop the process of relying on our Race Meet and drawing on our capital. In a sentence, I ask you to help *me* to revert to the year 1896 and make the club pay on its subscriptions - plus the interest on our capital.

Our club subscription is very low, considering the benefits received and I ask everyone again, to give, all he can afford, and more by a little self-denial. No sum will be too small to acknowledge, nor too high.

This is my message and my appeal. Please do not fail me, and remember there is no compulsion, but I hope to see the good old club, the greatest cycling sports organisation ever known in Great Britain, placed this year of my Presidency on the road once again to greater success and prosperity than it has ever known before.

F. LEEMING

Fred Leeming's successor as President in 1936 was a Manchester Wheeler of equal calibre. Tommy Barlow ("T.M.B." as he was known) was a man to become nationally famous in post-war years for his annual compilation of the British Best All Rounder Competition and Competition Records on behalf of the R.T.T.C. The standards which he set as Editor of the Journal, organiser of the Open 12 hours and for his enthusiasm and devotion as a Manchester Wheeler were standards which many of his successors strove to equal and thereby maintain the highest traditions of the Club in so many branches of the sport and pastime of cycling. Tommy's contributions to the Journal were notable and legion and not the least important was his Presidential message of 1936.

NINETEEN-THIRTY-SIX
BY THE PRESIDENT - T. M. Barlow

Two very important decisions were made at this year's Annual General Meeting. Firstly, in adopting the revised form of attendance - a "Saturday club": and secondly, in deciding upon an entry-fee for an open road-event they made a notable departure from precedent, and at the same time settled the differences which had attended the various forms of prize fund current in recent years. In each case a clear-cut decision was overdue, and although an occasional case of individual hardship may possibly occur, we do, at least, enter upon the year 1936 knowing just how we stand.

The reluctance among the racing men to fight for seats on the committee called for some comment, but I do not share the anxiety one sometimes hears expressed about it. Our future legislators will be none the worse for keeping; and in the meantime the state of affairs, of classic origin, in which the young men play while the veterans sit in council has much to recommend it, even in modern times.

Most of us joined the Club so that we might enjoy good sport, entertainment, and fun, and all these will have their place in our 1936 season, but it is not a bad idea to remember, occasionally, that a background of efficiency is necessary in order that everyone may enjoy himself. The success and prestige of the Club depend, to a very large extent, on the ability and enthusiasm of the executive, but others have their obligations, and in making this conventional appeal for support I want our officials to feel that they may call on any member for personal service at any time. Personal service may mean anything from giving a turn at a concert to advising the Club on an intricate financial issue, from checking in a '50' to displaying a Race Meet poster, from addressing a few envelopes in a hurry to acting as M.C. at a dance, but each of us has his own peculiar qualifications, and can, at the appropriate time and place give valuable assistance in carrying out the Club's programme.

T. M. BARLOW

After several years of good weather optimism was again the key-note of the Race Meet for 1936, the 49th in the series.

An enthusiastic article again flowed from the pen of Fred Leeming who was the Advertising Secretary, but unfortunately the pendulum swung in the opposite direction and 1936 was to be the first of four years of extremely wet and depressing weather conditions which was to bring the Club almost to its knees financially and leave it in very straightened circumstances.

THE RACE MEET 1936

Saturday, July 11th, will be another red-letter day in the history of 'The Wheelers', when we shall present our 49th Annual Race Meet at Fallowfield.

This year is 'Olympic' year, and we shall stage star' events at 1,000 and 4,000 metres, besides the two chief scratch invitation races of the year, in which Continental champions will meet their English rivals for the Vi-Tonica Cup and for the famous Muratti Gold Cup, each of which are valued at 120 guineas.

In the beginning our Race Meet was built up by the enthusiasm of every member, who did yeoman service by selling tickets, distributing window bills, or in offering their services for any job, or for working for any of the officials, night after night at headquarters.

Many of those that gave of their best for the benefit and fame of the club have passed to the great beyond, but the spirit that animated their efforts still lives in those that came after, or who are still with us, but a few of the newcomers or recent new members do not realise how much they can do to help.

If any member is in doubt, and is anxious and ready to do his bit, as I am sure all are, let him get in touch with me or Bill Hodgins, the Race Meet Secretary, or with T. A. Macdonald for tickets on sale before the day at reduced prices. In former years our members sold plenty of tickets, but in later years, ticket selling has been left largely to the depots. I should like to see the keen interest of every member revived. There is sufficient to do for everyone who is willing. So stand not on how, when or where. Get in touch with me and I will tell you.

FRED LEEMING
Advertising Secretary

The first Club Road Event of 1936, looked upon as something of a needle match between the pathmen and the road riders attracted an entry of 20 (all of whom started) and was the best supported Club event since 1930,

The report of the 1936 Race Meet indicated that the weather was bad enough to keep all but the hardiest away. The result was a very much reduced attendance reported in some quarters as 9,000 and in others as 14,000, the latter seeming to have been a very optimistic figure as we made a profit of only £15.0s.0d. on the day, leading to a loss on the year of £150.0s.0d. overall.

Looking back, it does appear that very little effort was made to get a firm estimate of attendances at Race Meets.

In 1936 rather surprisingly, the number affiliated to the N.C.U. declined to 57, 89 members attending one or more Club runs. The average attendance on the Summer runs was 24.8 and in the Winter 20.5. Membership had risen to 133.

In 1937 our evergreen track star, Jack Sibbitt won the National Tandem Championship for the eighth time but the newly formed youthful Pursuit Team failed to win even the Manchester Division Championship, being beaten by the South Manchester H. & C.C.

The financial losses of 1936 resulted in a most retrograde step being taken at the beginning of 1937. The prime necessity for any Club, be it cycling or otherwise, must be as much personal contact as possible between members and second only to this a news-letter or journal to maintain a continuing relationship with those less active. The Club had been blessed in having a succession of first class editors, with the authority and means to produce a printed Journal of excellent standard which maintained continuity of the history of the Club's activities for its less active members.

At the Annual General Meeting held in January 1937 a decision was taken to reduce the standard of the Journal to a single duplicated sheet until the end of 1937. Looking back, and with a personal knowledge of all the members of Committee at that time it is difficult to understand this attitude of near panic. In 1936 the Journal had cost in round figures £20 against a cost of £30 for the Open '50' and Open 12 hours and £45 for Club Road and Path Races.

It was a public advertisement of distress which could have been avoided by making economics elsewhere or by opening a subscription list.

Fortunately there was an outcry among the membership at large and a sense of offended dignity with the result that at the A.G.M. of 1938 it was agreed that a subscription list be opened and that the Journal revert to its former style.

Our Prize Distribution on the 3rd December, 1937 was honoured by the presence of Alderman J. C. Grime, Lord Mayor of Manchester, a Life Member of the Club who joined in 1908 and whose father J. (Pa) Grime was President of the Club 1896 to 1898.

Alderman Grime regretted the fact that although he had become Lord Mayor of Manchester he had never been President of the Manchester Wheelers' Club.

The Club had taken the decision in 1892 that they would no longer have a figure-head President, but that the President should be an active member of the Club who would act as Chairman at Meetings and play a full part in all aspects of Club life. Nevertheless it did seem unfortunate that during a year when one of its Life Members had been honoured by high office as the first citizen of the City an exception could not have been made with the Vice President acting as Chairman at Committee Meetings. The Committee's decision was in fact challenged by two young rebels who proposed one of their number as President for 1938 but their minority of two was obviously insufficient to change the accepted order.

Unfortunately, the charisma which surrounded the Manchester Wheelers' Club, with its Race Meet, Track Champions, City Headquarters and its access to newspaper publicity created among some of its members a sense of independence and self importance which alienated numerous workaday cyclists, and indeed many riders with championship ability

who wanted a more down to earth and democratic outlook than that which existed in the Manchester Wheelers' Club.

Historians, looking through the pages of history, would refer to 1937 and read that 85 members attended one or more Club runs with an average of 24.6 in the Summer and 20.7 in the Winter with a further increase in membership to 138 and yet in fact the Club was going into a slow decline. Fundamental changes were required and indeed were to come about.

1937 with its membership of 138, with 85 members attending one or more Club runs, and yet with an outlook which accepted a single duplicated sheet as its Club Journal was the end of an era. 1938 became a year of change. At the Annual General Meeting J. Fletcher proposed and W. J. Collins seconded that Sunday-runs became official Club fixtures.

Even the proposer and seconder were surprised that they succeeded with their proposition. Throughout the second half of 1937, particularly during the later months, the members known as the 'younger members' had done a great deal of campaigning and by toning down their usual aggression had gained a somewhat paternal blessing for their proposals.

J. Fletcher was appointed Captain for the Sunday runs and was also appointed Press Secretary, again a new appointment which was looked upon as somewhat unnecessary by the establishment.

The Wheelers' were on the march again, or in words appropriate to a track Club, toe straps had been tightened and it was "ready riders".

Ideologies were beginning to clash, and surprisingly for the second year in succession, there was opposition from the Committee to the entry of a team for the National Team Pursuit Championship. In fact, in 1938 T. M. Barlow proposed "that no entry be made for the National Team Pursuit Championship."

This proposal was defeated, and the team went on to become Manchester Division Champions, going out in the quarter finals of the National Championship to the Monkton C.C.

Always to the fore with new ideas, the Club again made history, through the person of road racing secretary Tommy Barlow, of a new timekeeping system for 12 hours and 24 hours events. Whereas previously it had been the practice for riders to be followed out by a follower with a watch synchronised with the Chief Time-keeper's, Tommy arranged a finishing circuit with timekeepers at suitable intervals of one mile. Only the fastest half dozen riders were followed out by a time-keeper but those lower in the finishing order continued to a time-keeper placed beyond their 12 hour finishing point. This time-keeper would advise them that their time had expired, and subsequently a calculation would be made based on the average speed between the final and penultimate time-keepers to ascertain the finishing point. This technique soon became standard practice and was universally adopted and remains as a testimony to Tommy's foresight and powers of organisation. It was introduced with our Open '121 of 1938 which also had a starting time of 9.31 p.m. on the Saturday, finishing at the same time on the following Sunday Morning. The innovation of a 9.31 p.m. start was an attempt to solve the problems arising from the sudden increase in motor traffic in the late 1930's.

The idea was never generally adopted and apart from our Open '12' of 1939, which was abandoned due to the Second World War, was not experimented with elsewhere.

In November 1938 an event took place which attracted little publicity outside the Club. It led to a great deal of argument among members old and young, but was a tangible declaration of intent by the new generation that the Manchester Wheelers' Club was going to be a force again in the cycle racing world. It was unlikely that even one person foresaw that what was intended to be a corner-stone in this campaign would lead to a Manchester Wheeler

winning World Championships and to fame and publicity for rider and Club which totally surpassed anything in the Club's history.

The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on the 30th November 1938 included a brief minute which is recorded as – “NEW MEMBER” - Proposed by J. Fletcher, seconded by J. E. Mossey. Mr. R.H. Harris was unanimously elected to junior membership.”

It followed an historical journey to Bury on a summer evening by four enthusiastic young Manchester Wheelers to the home of Mr. & Mrs. Harris. Harry Crowley, Len and Jack Fletcher and Jim Mallins took full advantage of the situation by using a status symbol in the form of Mr. Crowley Senior's new Standard 10 motor car and succeeded in convincing the formidable Mrs. Harris that the best Club for her son Reg to join would be the Manchester Wheelers'. She was certainly Reg's greatest supporter and the power behind his potential, and it was no mean feat for them to come away that evening with a form of Application for Membership duly completed and needing only the Committee's approval for Reg to become a Manchester Wheeler.

The Racing Season drew to a close in August 1939 after a successful year of track racing with successes by a number of our younger riders. The principal feature of the track season had of course been the outstanding promise of Reg Harris who had, however, failed to reach the final of the Sprint Championship, although he had been favourite for a place. Reg himself was very disappointed, particularly so as he felt he had let the Club down.

The fact that we had so many young new track riders probably accounted for their lack of enthusiasm for the somewhat out-dated black and white jerseys and there was adverse comment about their riding in a multicoloured variety of track jerseys. This situation made itself more evident in the Team Pursuit Championship as we reached the semi-finals which were however abandoned due to the outbreak of war. The Committee gave consideration to the possibility of a change of Club colours but remained in favour of the existing black and white jersey.

Eight years were to pass before the question was again raised when Reg Harris successfully proposed a new style and new colours in 1947.

Although we had not been particularly active or successful on the road the Club was entering a new era of success in track racing and combined with the increasingly active Sunday Club runs and touring activities the Club's future was bright.

During 1939 membership had risen to 145 with 65 members attending one or more Club runs.

The declaration of a State of War with Germany on Sunday the 3rd September, 1939 brought immediate cancellation of three major events which might have been highlights of our 1939 Racing Season.

Firstly, cancellation of the World Championships in Italy in which Reg Harris was to make his International debut in the World Amateur Sprint Championship.

Secondly, the N.C.U. Meeting of Champions at Herne Hill, London, at which our pursuit team had high hopes of winning the Team Pursuit Championship for the first time in the Club's history.

Thirdly, the second of our Midnight Open 12 hours, scheduled to start at 9.31 p.m. on Saturday the 9th September, 1939.

Within days of the outbreak of war over a dozen members had been called up for active service as they were members of one of the various Armed Forces reserves.

The first impact of Government restrictions was to be seen by the virtual absence of motor traffic in the rural areas due to petrol rationing, another result of which was that we

found a number of members who had not been seen for years returning to their bicycles as a means of getting out on Club runs and other fixtures.

The Committee discussed fully the probable effect of the national emergency and decided that they would carry on, as far as possible, with the usual fixtures during the Winter of 1939/1940 and in fact managed to hold the traditional Closing Run in Knutsford.

The Prize Distribution went ahead as originally planned in December 1939 but worthy of note was the fact that due to the conversion of the Club House into an emergency air-raid shelter and the impediment of structural steel reinforcement to the basement premises the venue was changed to the Falstaff Hotel in Manchester. It was reported that a sprinkling of khaki and other uniforms was in evidence but many prize winners were inevitably absent.

Accounts which were submitted to the A.G.M. on the 26th January 1940 showed that there had been a loss on the 1939 Race Meet of over £160 leading to a much larger loss on the Manchester Wheelers' Sports Company of almost £340.