

HERE & THERE

My brother loomed large again in my longest audax so far, the Windmill Ride over 200km from Chelmsford. It began with a tear-up and a 17 mph average to elevenses at Belchamp St. Paul before I wisely got left behind. In the afternoon at Great Chishill windmill, near Barley, I sat in front of the great mill sweeps with a small crowd, drinking and being told Doug was now over an hour in front, and I then enjoyed a very leisurely end to a wonderful day - a slow ride through charming quiet lanes with a second tea stop at the Shaftsbury's club hut near the "32nd" time trial starts near Ugley, and from a dreamy, idyllic float back to the finish, nearly two hours behind my namesake, but still well within the time to qualify for my 200km Audax badge.

There was an opportunity to do entirely my own thing at Chester on the second of the CTC challenges, and I took on the 100 miles ride. This was no meander - first a gallop across the plains and then a slow climb up the winding Ceiriog valley to elevenses at a bungalow hospital. Resisting the temptation to be admitted as a patient I headed for the hills. The first one rose up out

of Llanarmon Dyffryn Ceiriog like a ski slope and I found myself having a race with a Londoner, who could walk uphill almost as fast as I could ride, while I was trying to solve the problem of 'honking' and at the same time getting the flies off my face. There were dramas on the next descent when I met a tractor in a 'bottleneck' halfway down. I got through all right but one man just behind locked both wheels and burst both tyres, and another less fortunate, hit the hawthorn hedge at high speed and left portions of himself and a lot of his clothing behind. At the bottom there was the strange sight of riders standing in the river allegedly cooling their rims.

This was in Llanrhaeadrym-Mochant at the foot of another strenuous hill farm road, but the biggest climb was over the top of the Berwyns at Mil tir Cerrig, a road I had travelled as a young schoolboy on tour. Not rugged by continental standards it still meant a climb of 900 feet in altitude, and a four mile haul. At the tree line where the road emerges to cross the bare rock and heather of Craig Wen I stopped for a swig of the bitter lemon, and looked at the way ahead - a couple of miles up to the skyline