



The Icen

C
Cyclomotor

A
Autocycle

M
& Moped

Magazine

Free
with Issue
14

What's this then?

It's a special supplement to your Icen CAM Magazine in glorious black and white. There was just too much material to fit in the main magazine and, although the on-line format should mean we don't have to worry about how many pages there are, it doesn't work out that way in practice. We could have held this article over until the next issue, but the chances are that we'd still have the same problem then. Then inspiration struck: a supplement! With no colour, it won't blow the budget on the printed copies and it can be finished in advance of the main magazine, so won't make us miss our deadlines – cunning, eh?

Year of the Cat

by Mark Daniels

*Sponsored by Lindsay Neill,
EACC North Herts Non-conformists*

The alarm clock clattered away on the dresser.

Another cold and grey Tuesday morning, like every other. Simon slipped on his mac, which still seemed damp from yesterday, and snapped the cycle clips over his leggings. As if timed just to annoy him, the drizzle started as he dragged his Claud Butler 'International Club' racing cycle from the gloom of the damp shed, tied up his hood, and kicked away from the kerb to start the daily drudge to the office. The number 18 pulled up alongside at the usual junction, billowing coughing clouds of diesel fumes while waiting for the lights to change. The taxis splashed and the cars cut him up, as millions of people were swarming like flies round Waterloo underground...

Tomorrow, however, would be different.

The alarm clock clattered away on the dresser. Another cold and grey Wednesday morning, like every other. Simon slipped on his mac, which still seemed damp from yesterday, picked up his suitcase and stood at the front gate to await collection by the Mystery Tour coach.

The rest of the day was taken up with the coach picking up the rest of the tourists, then driving on down to some windy coast, to check-in for the evening at a run-down seafront hotel. Driving onshore gales battered the shutters all night, so he didn't get much sleep, but awoke late next morning to find the aftermath of the storm had settled down to a steady rain. It was one of those typical tacky resorts: promenade entertainments that failed to entertain, chips, candyfloss, popcorn, flashy gaming machines that gobbled coins with the false promise of riches, and a fun fair that wasn't much fun as the rain persisted all day.

Their guide mustered the passengers in the late afternoon, and the coach headed inland to a small market town, and a soulless chain hotel. Simon didn't hurry to get up the next morning, only to be rebuked by the grumpy steward, "What time do you call this? Breakfast closes at 9:30!" So he trudged up the High Street to a 'greasy spoon' café, watching the steady drizzle through the window to egg and beans with cold toast. The rest of Friday dragged by in the musty local museum, until the guide came again to rally the bedraggled troops back to the coach in the late afternoon.

“There’s quite a way to travel to our next stop, so we expect to be arriving after dark. You’ll all be boarding at different B&Bs, and have the whole weekend in the same place. The resort is quite spread out, so I’ll be handing out vouchers that you can redeem for electric bicycles at a cycle shop in the town. Your coach isn’t back until Monday morning, and it’ll be a different driver and another guide, so I’ll be giving out tickets that you’ll need to get back on the tour next week. If you miss the bus on Monday, then you’ll be having to make your own way home, so don’t be late for your early departure since it won’t wait for anyone.”

The rattling and vibrating coach travelled beyond sundown, not that you’d know, as the rain gave way to a thickening fog, and it was well into the evening before they finally arrived at the destination, where the bus wound its way about the roads, dropping off various passengers at different spots. Simon thought, “I bet I’m going to be last again” – and, sure enough, he was! Crunching up the gravel drive with his case, a house loomed out of the mist, and a rap on the knocker was rewarded by an elderly landlady opening the door to welcome him inside. “I’ve been expecting you all night young man, I imagine it was the fog delayed your journey, dreadful stuff, you’re terribly late. Have you eaten? I can do you supper and cocoa?” Simon nodded thankfully. Feeling much better for a warm meal inside him, he retired for a well needed rest...

Awakened by the warm morning sun shining through a gap in the curtains, Simon got up and looked out through the window to clear skies over a blue sea and white breakers foaming up the sandy beach of a long, curving bay! He ambled down to the dining room, as the grandfather clock greeted him by chiming 11 times.

Gladys appeared through the kitchen door, “Good morning, tea or coffee?”

“Coffee please, but I’m probably too late for breakfast, I must have overslept.”

“No, that’s fine, anytime – full English?”

“Yes, thanks, that’d be great.” He took a seat beside the veranda windows, to listen to the distant waves wash upon the shore as the unmistakable aroma of freshly brewing beans drifted from the next room. Outside, the garden reached toward a barrier of dunes, trailing creepers stealthily grew up the walls and around the panes, while dainty and delicate flowering plants huddled together around the established borders. A ginger puss trotted across the lawn, squeezed in through the patio doors that had been left slightly ajar, then jumped up on the low windowsill beside him, to settle, purring, on a cushion strategically located in the sunlight. Simon stroked the cat, which purred loudly in response.

Coffee arrived. “I see you’ve met my Max then, he’s my handsome puss.” She tickled his ears and Max stretched contentedly out on the cushion for a hard day’s relaxation. “Breakfast will only be a minute”, and she disappeared back into the kitchen.

It was early afternoon before Simon had sorted himself to get out and look around the town. Strolling down the road, he was passed by a couple of the other bus tourists cruising up the hill on electric bicycles. They waved to him as they passed by, as Simon thought, “Well that looks easy”, and fumbled his pockets to find the cycles voucher, printed with a golden crown.

It was pleasantly warm as he walked on and took off his jacket to hang it jauntily over his arm, while a gentle breeze drifted the scent of honeysuckle between the leafy lanes. Into the town, occasional views from the narrow streets gave tantalising glimpses of the glistening waters beyond the weathered stone walls of the buildings, and he stopped to look with fascination in old shop windows that displayed all manner of items that he thought had disappeared in his old Auntie’s *Aspidistra* decade.

Eventually, the streets emerged to a riverside front with *The Rising Sun Hotel* to his right, its bar beckoning him through the hallowed portals to sample the ale. Relaxing out front with a beer in the sunshine, Simon watched a small boat enter the harbour and the fishermen landing their catch, yachts bobbing at their moorings, and studied a building over the stone harbour bridge. He squinted, and shaded his eyes with his palm, to just make out across the river, a sign with a golden crown. Ah-ha, the cycle shop maybe?

Downing the rest of his pint, he set off across the bridge, which opened into a small square on the other side and, sure enough, the open workshop door of King Cycles. Voucher in hand, Mr King greeted him with “You’ll be a bit late laddie, the electric bikes have already gone”.

“I know, story of my life”, said Simon, resignedly.

Mr King rubbed his whiskery chin, “But you might like to try this instead”, pointing to an old bicycle with a tiny motor fixed beneath the bottom bracket. The engine casing wore a triangular emblem, rising sunrays, with the word ‘Lohmann’.

Fascinated, he leant over to study the machine, “Where’s the spark plug?”

“No lad, it doesn’t have one. Compression ignition you see, bit like a diesel. Old it is, and only 18cc, but she’ll still do everything those new fangled electric bikes will do”.

“OK, I’ll give it a try; so how does it work?”

Turning on the fuel tap, Mr King wheeled the bike outside. “Now getting her to go is a bit of a black art that’s hard to explain. There’s a twistgrip on each handlegrip, one works the fuel supply and the other varies the compression. This lever engages the engine to drive the wheel, and you just pedal it up the road, turning the grips until they find the right position, then maybe she’ll start.”

Simon pedalled, and twisted the grips, and the motor burbled into life.

“Well done lad, she seems to like you. Away you go, and just drop her back when you’re done.”

Simon circled, “What fuel does it use?”

“Nay. You’ll not be needing any more of that. I’ve filled her up and she barely uses a sip, now off with you”, and he waved him away with a sweeping gesture.

Riding round the town, Simon quickly learnt the art of balancing the controls to feel the motor pull best, and assisted with the pedals when the tiny engine laboured on hills – it soon felt as if they were working as a team, just going around the lanes.

Suddenly Simon became aware of another cycle over his right shoulder, and turned to see a young lady on an old black cycle catching him up. She throttled back a handlebar lever as she pulled up alongside, and he realised that her bicycle was motorised too but, unlike his mount, her engine was in the middle of the back wheel! Distracted by the surprise, Simon absently lost his control settings, and the Lohmann engine rattled to a halt beside the verge.

The other cycle overshot, and pulled in just up the road, when the rider turned and scooted enthusiastically back. “Hello, I’m Catherine, but everybody calls me Cat! I’m glad I caught you up, I like your bike, it has a funny little engine a bit like mine. Mine’s a 25cc Cyclenator that belongs to my Aunt, but she lets me use it to whiz about. Let’s ride together, it’s really great fun!”

The rest of the afternoon merged into the evening, just riding about, with Cat showing Simon around the resort and telling him about everywhere. Returning to *The Rising Sun* for an evening meal together, she chatted merrily about how the little cyclemotor engines worked, and told of finding her Aunt’s bike disused, from laying many years in a derelict shed, then fixing it up and getting it running herself.

After dinner, they rode along to a hillside overlooking the bay, watching breakers crashing on the shore, while battalions of oystercatchers patrolled the shoreline,

scurrying along the sand ahead of the waves as they washed up and down the beach.

As the light faded, the blue bay water sparkled with a myriad of twinkling diamonds in the moonlight...

Awakened by the warm morning sun shining through a gap in the curtains, Simon got up much earlier on Sunday morning. He enjoyed a refreshing shower, and galloped downstairs to the dining room as the grandfather clock greeted him by chiming 8 o’clock. Gladys appeared through the kitchen door. “Good morning, tea or coffee?”

“Coffee please, and full-English again would be smashing, thanks.”

Selecting the same seat beside the veranda windows, he listened to the distant waves wash upon the shore as the unmistakable aroma of freshly brewing beans drifted in from the next room.

Ginger Max trotted across the lawn, squeezed in through the patio doors that had been left slightly ajar, and jumped up on the low windowsill beside him, to settle, purring, on the cushion strategically located in the sunny spot. Simon tickled Max’s ears, to which he purred loudly in response.

Gladys appeared with coffee. “Breakfast in a minute”, and vanished back into the kitchen, to emerge moments later with the much-awaited ‘works’. Simon tucked-in, while Gladys lured her handsome puss into the kitchen with a loving cuddle and whispered promises of breakfast delights.

While mopping up the last of the egg with a piece of toast, Simon heard the strumming of a small two-stroke engine ticking over around the side of the house and, moments later, Cat bounced into the room, bright and breezy, just like yesterday. “Hello Auntie!” she called toward the kitchen door and, as Max appeared from around the corner, she scooped him up with a cuddle. “Who’s a handsome puss?” and placed him back on the cushion for a hard days relaxation.

Cat called again “I’m taking Simon up the Cliff Lift today, see you later”, and grabbed his hand to tug him smartly away as Gladys called back “OK dear, have a nice time.”

They pedalled the cyclemotors away to a flying start, down the hill, through the town, over the river bridge, waved to Mr King as he was coming out of the front door of his house next to the cycle workshop, then away along the road to the far side of the bay.

Since the Cyclemaster seemed to go a little quicker than the Lohmann, Cat had got ahead, and pulled up beside a large, green painted shed that appeared rather like an old railway building. She dismounted to wheel her bicycle through the entrance and purchase tickets at the kiosk. Following her through the gates, it emerged onto the platform of a Victorian cable lift railway running, between the trees, up the side of the cliff!

They wheeled their cycles into the cable car, operated by a driver, who pulled on a series of levers for the car to quietly ease into motion. Simon was surprised, since he expected to hear the whine of some electric motor or labouring engine, but there was little more than the gentle rolling of wheels on rails!

He looked quizzically at Cat, "How does it work?" "By water and gravity", she explained, as they glided onwards up the 862ft track, to pass another car halfway, on its own journey coming down.

Wheeling the cyclemotors out of the cablecar at the upper station afforded striking views from the top of the cliff, across the bay and the Celtic Sea beyond. Simon stood, surveying the setting, drawing deep breaths of fresh and clean coastal air – savouring the moment of being a whole world away from his life in the city.

Leaving the upper station, Simon was further amazed to find another twin village at the top of the cliffs, never realising that there was more to the place 500ft above! Spending the rest of the morning looking round the upper town, they rode out to a secluded hamlet for lunch at *The Rockford Inn*, then journeying the long overland route, back round towards the lower town. As the afternoon drew on, they stopped by the roadside to watch great flocks of starlings wheeling together in the evening sky, swimming the air like a living cloud, before suddenly falling to the reed beds in a chattering chorus.

In fading light, the little cyclemotors pattered back into the town, and leaned together against the wall outside *Shelley's Restaurant*, as their riders dined and drank to a wonderful day...

Awakened by the warm morning sun shining through a gap in the curtains, Simon got up and looked fuzzily out on Monday morning.

He enjoyed a refreshing shower, but still with a thick head from too much wine, he stumbled downstairs to the dining room, and a greeting of the grandfather clock chiming 11 times. Gladys appeared through the kitchen door, "Good morning, tea or coffee?"

"Black coffee today please, and just some toast, thanks."

Selecting the same seat beside the veranda windows, he listened to the distant waves wash upon the shore as the unmistakable aroma of freshly brewing beans drifted in from the next room.

Ginger Max trotted across the lawn, squeezed in through the patio doors that had been left slightly ajar, jumped up on the low windowsill beside him, sat purring, and looked quizzically with his head tipped to one side.

Simon was late again. The bus and the tourists had gone. He'd thrown away his chance to leave, and lost his ticket, so he'd have to stay on.

He tickled Max's ears, to which the cat purred loudly in response... and heard the strumming of a small two-stroke engine ticking over around the side of the house.

The following week, when Simon was supposed to be back at work, a postcard arrived at the office instead.

Have decided to stay on here for a year or so to see how things work out.

Don't bother keeping the job open for me.

Hopefully, I'll never be back. Simon.

The secretary turned over the card,



but had no idea where Mopedland-on-Sea might be.