

## **CYCLING TO----- HEALTH and HAPPINESS**

BY...SAMUEL BLACK Cycling Correspondent to the Northampton "Chronicle and Echo".

One of the most striking features of recent years has been the rapidly increasing popularity of cycling as a sport and pastime. In the past five years the number of cyclists has increased a hundred per cent., and it is estimated that there are now well over ten million cycles in use on the roads of Great Britain.



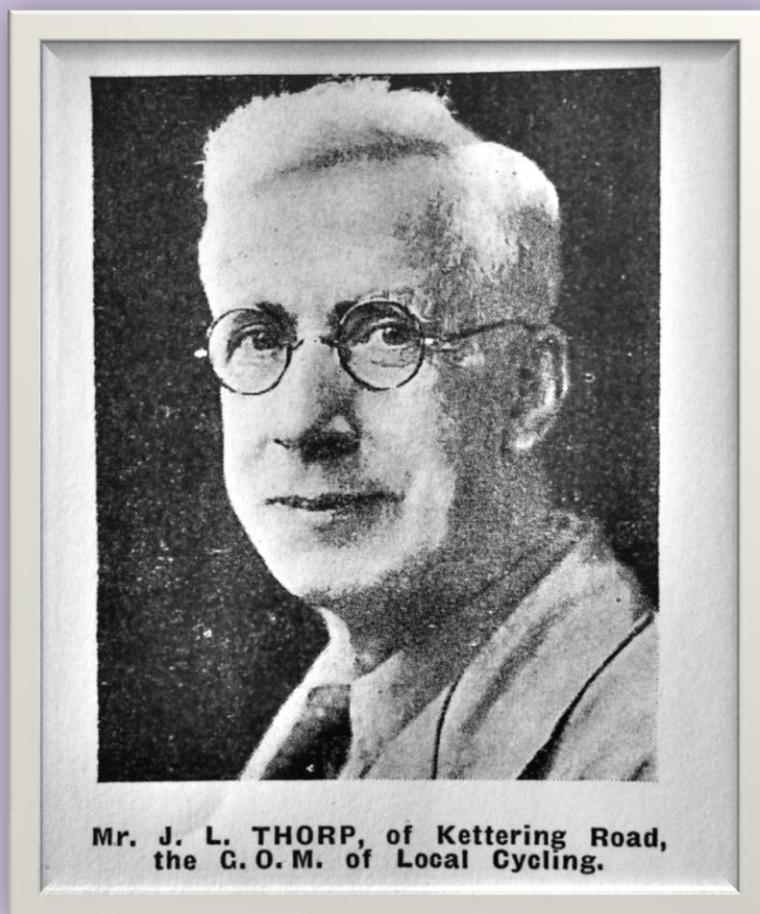
**Phil Wykes a.k.a Samuel Black at the start of the first 25m, N & D.C.A time trial, Brafield Lane, which he was instrumental in founding in 1935. Assistant TimeKeeper is Jim Scott, Northampton C.T.C.**

The reason for this phenomenon is quite obvious. The roads of this country are very good, cycle construction has attained hitherto undreamt of heights of mechanical efficiency, and a rapidly increasing portion of the population are discovering for themselves that no other pastime can rival cycling for all round pleasure, health, mobility, etc at such low cost.

With the sport a vast new industry has sprung up to cater for the needs of the cycling fraternity. A new lease of prosperity has been brought to country inns and restaurants, while millions of pounds sterling are expended yearly on steel, leather, rubber and all the other materials necessary for the construction of cycles and accessories. The cycle trade has not shared in the recent depression, but has soared to record heights of prosperity, and is now one of the country's most flourishing industries. In addition trade is carried on with the Colonies and other countries.

The pastime of cycling is by no means a new one. Since the latter half of last century cycling has been carried on enthusiastically by its partisans. About 1900 it became a "society craze" which persisted for many years until the advent of the motor car diverted the attention of the "bright young things" of that period.

In the earliest days the hobby-horse was followed by various types of "ordinary" cycles, or "penny-farthing" cycles as they are commonly known. These in their turn were superseded about 1904 by the "safety" bicycle, which was very similar in design to the present day cycle. Since that day the design has remained practically unaltered, but great improvements have been effected by using steel alloys, and by means of more efficient methods of manufacture. Of very recent years the tandem has sprung into great popularity and now almost rivals solo machines in number. There are now many ultra-modern cycles in use, in which the rider assumes a semi-recumbent position. This type is still in the experimental stage, and time will show whether it is just a passing fancy.



There are many cyclists alive who have been keen riders since the earliest days of the pastime. *The Fellowship of Old Time Cyclists* is an association confined strictly to those who rode a high bicycle or tricycle before 1890. Northampton can boast of a member of the **F.O.T.C.** in *Mr J.L. Thorp*, the “grand old man” of local cycling circles.

He commenced his cycling career at Leeds in 1883, and has ridden consistently ever since. He was a founder member of the Leeds Albion Cycling Club which soon became the most popular club in that district.

Being the youngest member at that time, he acted as bugler, and he assures me that it was a difficult job to manage an “ordinary” cycle and blow the bugle at the same time. He raced on the track with considerable success in the “90s” and has numerous trophies to show for his prowess in those days.

Since the war Mr. Thorp has been a very familiar figure in Northampton, and he is a very popular member of the C.T.C., *Northampton District Association* and also of the Invicta Road Club. He is still a keen tourist, and with his wife is often to be seen exploring the pleasant lanes and byways of Northamptonshire. Northampton cyclists owe much to Mr Thorpe for his invaluable advice, and his unstinted assistance, whenever his help is sought.

Situated as it is, in the centre of England, Northampton makes an excellent centre for cycling, with easy access to all the favourite touring grounds. The surrounding countryside possesses an almost unrivalled abundance of historical associations. Fotheringay Castle, Ashby St. Ledgers, Edgehill, Holdenby Hall, Compton Wynyates and Rockingham Castle are all names that conjure up stirring memories of bygone days, and all these places are within easy reach of Northampton.

The picturesque countryside, with its verdant pastures and its bewooded undulations are sufficient to tempt even the most indolent of cyclists out into the pleasant highways and byways of Northamptonshire as soon as they are freed from the shackles of daily toil.

Northampton

September, 1936