

THE WHEELING WORLD.

Source: Worthing Gazette Archive
at Worthing Local Studies Library
Turpin: 20.5.1908 P2C5

THE WHEELING WORLD.

A WEEKLY SURVEY.

Dick Turpin's Cycling Gossip.

In Smuggling Days.

"THE hidden well is down beneath the floor, as you see; overhead was a secret room." And the hostess of the Market Cross House at Alfriston held a lighted candle, that the Irrepressible and I might first peer through a hole in the floor, down into a dark open shaft which reached from the top of the old inn right away into its foundations. Then we looked through the low ceiling, up into an almost equally dark room in the roof, a room with no window, door, or staircase.

Our guide had taken us over the old smugglers' house. Up and down many little staircases we had gone, looking in at old, low-ceilinged rooms, dodging around corners, along passages, and ever coming upon—more staircases!

Truly the Preventive men who searched for Stanton Collins, who lived here and was chief of the Alfriston Gang of smugglers, were well set to work!

Collins did not confine his exploits to the illicit importation of kegs of brandy. South Lucas, in his *Highways and Byways of Sussex*: "When Mr. Betts, the Minister of the Lady Huntingdon Chapel at Alfriston, was high-handedly suspended by the Chief Trustee of the Chapel, on account of his opposition to that gentleman's proposed union with his deceased wife's sister, it was Collins' gang who invaded the Chapel, replaced Mr. Betts in the pulpit, and mounted guard round it while he continued the service."

Mr. Betts was equal to the occasion: he gave out the hymn: "God moves in a mysterious way."

Old and Interesting.

Old and Interesting.

Alfriston is an interesting place. It is old; it has a weather-worn Market Cross, and really ancient inns; its Church is venerable, and its rambling old cottages are mostly in keeping with the general air. The Star Inn, with its odd carvings and grotesque red lion—the figure-head from a Dutch wreck—was in Bluff King Hal's time a sanctuary for fugitives from justice.

Just at the moment neither the Irrepressible nor I was flying from justice—as it happened!—so we spent most of our time in the low, watery meadows by the Church.

For the "Cathedral of the South Downs," as it has been called, looks well with a marshy foreground, and we were intent on a photograph.

By the way, legend hath it that when the Church was building, foundations were laid in an adjoining meadow. And day by day, as the builders went to resume the work, they discovered the stones had been removed and relaid in a different spot! At last the builders bowed to the miracle and continued the work on the new site, where the Church now stands.

Having devoted all the time we could spare to Alfriston, we piped all hands aboard, and a minute or two put us on the main Lewes-Eastbourne road, where we headed for Lewes, a dozen miles away.

Roads were grand, a southerly breeze was rolling some mighty mists up from the Channel, and Firlie Beacon on our left looked grandly impressive with its head buried in the clouds. As we pedalled past Glynde and looked up at Mount Caburn, however, we voted it one better; crowned with a cloud which hovered now higher, now lower, whilst King Sol overhead strove to pierce the veil which only just held against his attack, it was a fine effect.

Then through Lewes, where a Cycling Club was

Then through Lewes, where a Cycling Club was vigorously bugling itself out of town; some mighty pushing up one side of Falmer Hill against wind, a swoop down the other, and Brighton was reached, whence the run home served as a leisure moment in which to resolve upon revisiting Alfriston.

In Biding Form.

Methinks the speedmen are preening their wings in readiness for some big flights. A few days ago Victor Cowan, trying a change-gear which he has reduced to eighty and sixty, winged his way home from Portsmouth and on up to Washington in two hours and twenty minutes. Twenty hours and two minutes would suit me better!

Again, documentary evidence, to wit a postcard, I shows that the said Victor Cowan, in company with one Ernest Sawkins, and sundry other Excelstorites, was recently at Crawley, assisting certain London speedmen in the rapid grinding out of large numbers of miles on the King's highway. Good boys!

The Angels C.C. are in riding form too! I was mightily taken aback when some dozen or so of them chorused, "Hulloa, Dick!" down at Selmeston, on the Eastbourne road, a day or two back.

They were in strong force, and evidently out for a long spin by the happy look upon their faces.

THE WHEELING WORLD.

A WEEKLY SURVEY.

Dick Turpin's Cycling Gossip.

In Smuggling Days.

"THE hidden well is down beneath the floor, as you see; overhead was a secret room."

And the hostess of the Market Cross House at Alfriston held a lighted candle, that the Irrepressible and I might first peer through a hole in the floor, down into a dark open shaft which reached from the top of the old inn right away into its foundations. Then we looked through the low ceiling, up into an almost equally dark room in the roof, a room with no window, door, or staircase.

Our guide had taken us over the old smugglers'

house. Up and down many little staircases we had gone, looking in at old, low-ceilinged rooms, dodging around corners, along passages, and ever coming upon - more staircases!

Truly the Preventive men who searched for Stanton Collins, who lived here and was chief of the Alfriston Gang of smugglers, were well set to work!

Collins did not confine his exploits to the illicit importation of kegs of brandy. Saith Lucas, in his *Highways and Byways of Sussex*: "When Mr. Betts, the Minister of the Lady Huntingdon Chapel at Alfriston, was high-handedly suspended by the Chief Trustee of the Chapel, on account of his opposition to that gentleman's proposed union with his deceased wife's sister, it was Collins' gang who invaded the Chapel, replaced Mr. Betts in the pulpit, and mounted guard round it while he continued the service."

Mr. Betts was equal to the occasion, he gave out the hymn; "God moves in a mysterious way."

Old and Interesting.

Alfriston is an interesting place. It is old; it has a weather-worn Market Cross, and really ancient inns; its Church is venerable, and its rambling old cottages are mostly in keeping with the general air. The Star Inn, with its odd carvings and grotesque red lion - the figure-head from a Dutch wreck - was in Bluff King Hal's time a sanctuary for fugitives from justice.

Just at the moment neither the Irrepressible nor I was flying from justice - as it happened! - so we spent most of our time in the low, watery meadows by the Church.

For the "Cathedral of the South Downs," as it has been called, looks well with a marshy foreground, and we were intent on a photograph.

By the way, legend hath it that when the Church was building, foundations were laid in an adjoining meadow. And day by day, as the builders went to resume the work, they discovered the stones had been removed and relaid in a different spot! At last the builders bowed to the miracle and continued the work on the new site, where the Church now stands.

Having devoted all the time we could spare to Alfriston, we piped all hands aboard, and a minute or two put us on the main Lewes-Eastbourne road, where we headed for Lewes, a dozen miles away.

Roads were grand, a southerly breeze was rolling some mighty mists up from the Channel, and Firle Beacon on our left looked grandly impressive with its head buried in the clouds. As we pedalled past Glynde and looked up at Mount Caburn,

however, we voted it one better; crowned with a cloud which hovered now higher, now lower, whilst King Sol overhead strove to pierce the veil which only just held against his attack, it was a fine effect.

Then through Lewes, where a Cycling Club was vigorously bugling itself out of town; some mighty pushing up one side of Falmer Hill 'gainst wind, a swoop down the other, and Brighton was reached, whence the run home served as a leisure moment in which to resolve upon revisiting Alfriston.

In Biding Form.

Methinks the speed men are preening their wings in readiness for some big flights. A few days ago Victor Cowan, trying a change-gear which he has reduced to eighty and sixty, winged his way home from Portsmouth and on up to Washington in two hours and twenty minutes. Twenty hours and two minutes would suit me better!

Again, documentary evidence, to wit a postcard, shows that the said Victor Cowan, in company with one Ernest Sawkins, and sundry other Excelsiorites, was recently at Crawley, assisting certain London speedmen in the rapid grinding out of large numbers of miles on the King's highway. Good boys!

The Angels C.C. are in riding form too! I was mightily taken aback when some dozen or so of them chorused, "Hulloa, Dick!" down at Selmeston, on the Eastbourne road, a day or two back.

They were in strong force, and evidently out for a long spin by the happy look upon their faces.

Dick Turpin