

Transcript of an interview conducted 27 January 2018

Interviewees: DEREK GRIFFITHS (DG) and TIM LAWN (TL)

Interviewer: ALEX BEARD (AB)

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[00:04] OK this is Alex Beard from the Wheels of Time project on Saturday the 27th of January. We're in Staunton Road, Kingston. And I'm joined by -

DG: I'm Derek Griffiths. I'm the present president of Kingston Wheelers.

TL: Hi I'm Tim Lawn. Current Chair of Kingston Wheelers.

[00:24] Great. So - I wonder if we can start with a really general question. Maybe you could just tell us about Kingston Wheelers. What is it?

DG: Tim?

TL: Er - well currently Kingston Wheelers is erm - it is a cycling club. [Pause]. My involvement with the club and Derek's goes back to the sort of mid-80s. And we'd been involved at that time - club currently has about 550 members thereabouts and as we've touched on a minute ago that's about 80/20 male female at the moment. And a small portion of under 18s in the club. Spectrum of the club currently covers multitude of cycling disciplines and uses sort of a - a growing sort of disparity - there's touring, there's what you call [Audatch] riding which is kind of long distance semi but mostly non competitive distance riding. There's a bulk of people in the club who erm are entirely there for the socials aspects, want to go out with like minded people at the weekend just to explore in the countryside, nothing competitive about that. Then we've got a growing cycle across scene, got road races naturally. Got time trial - they're the sort of two core competitive elements of British um pro cycling. What have I forgotten?

DG: I don't think you've forgotten anything -

TL: Yeah.

DG: - I think that's it. Maybe it might be worth saying that when Tim and I joined - I joined in '83 I think, I think you were a little bit -

TL: '85.

DG: - '85 yeah. Well we were both very close. It was really suffering - the club had turned - i-i-when I joined there was no club, kit. We were in a transition period and there'd be typically in a club night about four to six people. And it was a job to - we used to be asked to volunteer for marshalling other people's races because of the - rather ashamed to say at that time we didn't promote any ourselves. And it was a job to get people, y'know, you had to literally bring everyone to service. And there were about two of us racing. I mean Tim came and he hit the ground running, he was a younger rider. Started to win races. But some of us had been racing for years. We did eventually get kit but when our last president died in - can you remember the year?

TL: No I can't.

DG: Two thousand and f...

TL: Yeah early 2000s.

DG: I think it was 2001, 2002.

TL: I think so.

DG: When he died he was the mad jack of all trades, John who - John [Bournoff] - he needs to be

remembered. He was a dynamo but in a non intrusive manner, I mean there were no - there was - well there was internet probably. But there was no - the club didn't use it. It was all done by paper and pen and word of mouth. And then we had a fighting committee to save the club basically and at that point the younger members got together and formed a website and I think that we grew in exponentially from that point onwards.

TL: Yeah that was a pivotal point in the club's recent history in many ways wasn't it? I think when Derek and I joined - as Derek was saying, John [Bournoff] was the - he was the club, he kind of ran it. He wasn't the president because there was an older guy, Gil Jessop -

DG: Oh yes.

TL: - who'd been around, um, and we'll come back to Gil later if you want. But John in the 80s, as Derek sort of alluded to, he - he managed to run the club in a sort of, um, dictatorial um fashion. I- essentially because he was making unilateral decisions and doing everything but in a manner you were entirely comfortable and was not as I said intrusive, like Derek said, or any way negative about that. So that's not to use that word negatively -

DG: I never learnt to [inaudible]

TL: Yeah. Exactly so. Everyone was -

DG: Everybody loved it, I mean.

TL: Everybody was entirely content with that. And the trouble was of course you got lulled into a false sense of security and he - and he did certainly die in the early 2000s. Ought to check exactly when. But he died within a matter of six weeks quite suddenly.

DG: Yeah.

TL: And I think for both of us it was a mass- or for anyone in the club it was a massive shock because he went from being out, actively riding [05:00] to us suddenly hearing that he'd been diagnosed to dieing within - literally within the space of six weeks.

DG: None of us got to see him.

TL: Yeah, I didn't see him in that six week period at all. And um [pause] and having been this benevolent dictator, none of us really understood the scale of what he dealt with in terms of making sure club activities took place. So as Derek said -

DG: Well it's incredible on that theme isn't it Tim to think that we split the club into factions, y'know we'd have a time trial secretary, road race secretary, etc etc. And yet, y'know, we realised at that point how much there was to do and he'd managed it single-handedly - it was his life. Quite simply. There were - yes there was a - I won't mention names here, it wasn't John - there had been instances where a wife of a prominent member of the club had said well it's either cycling or me. And the prominent member of the club has gone and packed the woman's bags and said well I'm afraid it's cycling, love. I don't recommend that by the way but that - it was a passion that some people led their lives through. I mean going back to Gil Jessop who was our president when I - he took me on my first club run, he was already in his 80s. And when the club didn't have a club room he'd simply set up a table and tennis - er, table tennis in his own house near - near Chessington Zoo. And they congregated round there, all the young guys, y'know. Girls who [played].

TL: Yeah I think - yeah if you go back to Gil and we're sort of going backwards in time now but yeah but my understanding is that around 1953 Gil and - uh - I wanna say Bill Orpin and there was a third individual?

DG: Er yes there was. And I can't remember, it's on one of the cups. Um.... Maybe come back in a minute.

TL: Yeah. They resurrected the Kingston Wheelers sort of post-war, post-Second World War because it had fallen into the doldrums during the war because obviously other activities took - took precedence. And I think they'd all been members before the war and I think, y'know, drifted apart during the course of the war but then came back together and presumably they were the ones that were still living locally.

Or had come back to live locally.

DG: I think so yeah. I mean a lot of clubs suffered in the war because, y'know, everyone went away to serve or and - and there were more important things on people's minds. Probably it would have been very hard to get races together and so everything went into a [?] until after the war as Tim said.

TL: Yeah, so - I think from that point on Gil was the driving force at the club through to the 80s and the transition really between Gil and John because as you said when we first joined Gil was already 80 years old plus and so, y'know - physically and mentally sort of [pause] time to take a backseat. And that's when John [Bournoff] took over but that - y'know that's not to forget the important role that Gil played in making sure that the club survived through from the 50s up to - up to the 80s and then he was the benevolent dictator for that period -

DG: Yeah.

TL: - that kind of the role model for John in - I think in many ways wasn't he?

DG: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. And John used to - when he was getting very frail John would pick up for club nights and, y'know the annual dinner and dance. One little anecdote which is very quick and might be worth - cause it amused me at the time. There's a race call - it's kind of a blue ribbon race, not many people do it these days - called the 24 hour where you literally ride 24 hours. The winner gets the most distance. And I knew Gil had done some and I said 'how do you train for that Gil?' and he said 'oh I ride to Lincoln and back'. I said 'Lincoln and back?! Well - how?' He said I just go up the A1. [Laughs]. It was - it creased me because Lincoln's a long way and to go there and back in itself - well you've gotta do that kind of mileage to train but the thought of going up the A1 - it's a vicious road but um - anyway, that's what he said.

[09:32] So do you erm - know much about the club in the sort of 60s and 70s? Was it more active than when you joined - you said it was, sort of -

DG: Fragmented, my knowledge. Because you tend to go with what you've got. Erm, I am interested in history but I think as Tim alluded to it was a - it had fallen into sort of small club, hadn't it? Ra- there were a lot of clubs in the area.

TL: But I - **[10:00]** yeah I don't know. I th- I think we joined at a really low point actually.

DG: We did yes.

TL: And I think in the 60s and 70s - not, y'know, bit hazy on the dates - but I think it was a bit more buoyant and if you - if you listened to Roger and the stories that he told and I - and the point when John [Bournoff] first joined as a sort of a new member and John got us his kids into the club didn't he? When -

DG: Yes that's right, yes.

TL: - they were teenagers. And I've seen photographs of the club at that point - photographs of club members out at club time trials and they'd be like sort of 25 people taking part in a club race. Club only. And no one else. Wh-which was big and significant compared to where it was like when we joined. Also, do you remember seeing photographs of annual dinners?

DG: Oh yes yes.

TL: From that sort of period. They were big events and held at the Griffin? Like -

DG: - yeah down -

TL: - Kingston Market Place is that right?

DG: Where Laura Ashley is or was. And Patisserie whatever it's name was.

TL: That way.

DG: Yeah that was the big hotel and Tim's right, they'd all dress up and the women would - y'know like a proper dinner dance. A band and everything. A lot of time and effort went into that and as the attendance gradually began to drop off I could see poor old John was getting a bit jaded with getting the tickets printed and we moved onto a more fitting kind of event for the times we live in now haven't we?

TL: Mm.

DG: So less formal.

TL: Yeah when we first joined there still was a like a formal sit down not quite black tie but certainly suit and tie sit down dinner. And it was -

DG: Yes it was holded at the Richmond -

TL: Richmond Hill Hotel. For a long time I think. Hotel Antoinette in Kingston for a little number. And then it sort of started to lose interest in that kind of event. And then last weekend a current equivalent was a more relaxed stand around formal -

DG: The ro- the erm - at the Waggon and Horses people quite liked that and they lay on finger food and they had this new thing called - well it's not new actually it dates back years probably to Victorian times called - but it's called [Roller Politzer] - it's two brightly coloured bicycles set up on rollers. With erm - a spee- a distance board behind and somebody times it. So when everyone's had a few they can jump on the bikes and give it - give it hell for leather. But that's attracted people because even that was beginning to get a bit jaded, y'know, you stand around and you talk and - but this centres people's interest a bit more.

TL: Yeah. Yeah.

DG: Erm. So times change.

Absolutely

DG: And we're trying to keep up.

[13:00] Erm - I wonder if I can just ask you both your first personal sort of interaction with the club. Was there a particular - used to cycle to go down to a club run or - how did you personally each get involved?

DG: Well I - I had a heck of a job. Erm - I mean as I say in those days you couldn't Google. Nowadays if I Googled cycling club it would ask me what area I wanted, how many miles away, etc. And it would come up probably with a dozen. In those days I went to the library, I phoned the local Guildhall. And eventually after quite a lot of hard work on the telephone I got a phone number and I rang up and they said yeah yes, it - I can't remember if it was Jill, Gil Jessop or John [Bournoff] but they said yeah we meet in Kingston Market Place for a Sunday club run. And that was the first event I went on. Just cold and there were about five or six out. [Pause] Tim?

TL: Yeah I can't - I can't totally clearly really exactly who but it was definitely through a friend at school. Erm. And so I'd been like 16, 17 - it was around - around that sort of age. And h-he and I, erm, sort of chatted about y'know mutual interest in getting into cycling and enjoying cycling and uh you y'know you watch a little bit on TV at the time so we kind of had an interest and we discussed the theory of joining a local club. And eventually Sam - I think he made the initial contact and I don't know how he did that. I think - and I can't remember exactly how, I think he had some contact with Des [Balland] - do you remember Des?

DG: Yes I remember Des.

TL: Erm, who used to live very close to where I currently live now but he erm - yeah so this school friend sits me - yeah I've [15:00] made contact with Kingston Wheelers and he'd been out once I think with them. And then he said to me there's a - so he told me where to go for the club run so I didn't have to do what what Derek did and try and make the direct contact. And he said come down, we'll go out with them on a - on a Sunday. So I turned up and this mate from school never made it. Didn't turn up that Thursday so I was there on my own and met probably about half a dozen people and remember vividly Derek was definitely on my first club run along with John [Bournoff], Des [Balland], Paddy O'Donnell. And then there would have been a few others.

DG: Yes [coughs] erm-

TL: I can't remember exactly who. A guy who worked at Heathrow Airport, sticks in my mind - can't remember what his name was but I remember he worked at Heathrow Airport for some reason.

DG: There-there-there was a trio - one of the guys John I've forgotten his surname was an ex independent rider so he'd been a semi professional and he was always brilliant, the attire - wh-what it might be worth saying is that when you've just ridden your bike for pleasure and you don't re-and you're still getting a kind of position and you're trying to still work out what the sport's all about to go on your first club run it is quite nerve wracking I suppose it's the equivalent of joining a tennis club. You don't know how good you are, you don't know if you'll be about to keep up. And I remember I had this adrenaline rush when I realised that I could actually keep up but then I realised well come on Del, keep a sense of reality, you do have an 80 year old leading the club ride. [Laughs] Erm - yeah. So - but there was some good riders but erm - it was when Tim's lot started to come along that we - we started to up the ante and records started to fall and Tim won loads of hill climbs didn't you?

TL: Yeah. I think - the thing I remember about my first club run is I-looking back on it in hindsight is the complete naivety for one - for some location without any expectation or knowledge of what you were letting yourself in for at all. And I can't believe in hindsight that my 17 year old self would have done that but I did and y'know - been involved with the club ever since.

DG: Well you see that's a contentious point now - we would actually love to have been more welcoming to juniors. But now - shock horror the thought of a 17 year old riding with us without the parent or any parental - I mean if you have what happens from time to time a touch of wheels and the lot go down and the boy gets injured or worse. Who is culpable?

TL: Yeah - yeah times change don't they?

DG: And that's why we've had to - y'know with political correctness and litigation we've had to really t- we do have a junior cycling person who - and there is a thing - what's it, Kingston Wheelers Juniors or King- not - Kingston Juniors -

TL: Well there's Kingston Juniors Cycling which is the - which is independent of us but yeah but we - we yeah - obviously we have to deal with the - er - the paperwork side of accomodating underage people in the club. But...

DG: It's a tricky one because obviously if it was football or any sport played in a safe environment you're trying to encourage kids from as young as possible but you can't have like a 7 year old kid coming out with adults in the Surrey Hills. So we have to try and get them to do things like Cycle Across or - or more - yeah, y'know. BMX or something that introduces them gradually and they feel safe doing it. Anyway I digress.

[18:31] Obviously erm - so - that's a big jump from there being 5 people on a club run to now where it's 550 members. I just wondered - erm - what do you kind of attribute that to? Do you think cyclings become more popular in general and that's sort of been reflected in the club?

TL: Ye-well I think Derek sort of touched on part of the answer to that. An-and I think it's both of what you said. I think - erm - I think the timing, y-I think for us, the club it was - I don't know what, it was one of those unique moments in - in time where the - the pivotal change with John [Bournoff] dying in the early 2000s and therefore the need to manage the club in a very different. That - that coming around the time in the sort of rise in internet use and accessibility and the club developing a website for the first time ever. And then you align that and you think I was doing this, like start trying to work it out when the different Olympics were.

DG: 2012 was the big year where -

TL: Well I was thinking like Sydney.

DG: Oh I see yeah.

TL: Yeah. When Great Britain first started winning gold medals on a bike.

DG: Well it was four years earlier then, 2008. Was it?

That was Beijing.

DG: 2004?

I think that was Athens.

TL: Four Athens, so 2000 Sydney you see. So - if you say like the club's going through that transition in the early 2000s and from Sydney Olympics 2000 all of a sudden public consciousness of cycling is sort of [20:00] stepped up quite significantly. And then you've got that built with Athens 2004, Beijing 2008 onwards. Then I think that mirrors our progression as a club in some respects. Y- you're also... I don't know, I'm trying to think. Despite the fact that when we first joined - erm - the cycling clubs in the area were fewer, erm, in number and therefore more spread out. Our membership at that point was probably a lot more local focused. So now we draw people from a - sort of quite a wider area. We - it's not unusual but y'know you go down to Woking, you get people coming up from there. As members. Which - I don't know wholly understand the logic. Got quite a few people from Wimbledon and the sort of southwest London boroughs, so that - that sort of way. So we - our net is quite wide for our membership. Erm. Where the reality is there are other clubs between us and where they come from that they could realistically join but I think the accessibility through the internet makes it easier for people to - to make contact with the club and to understand what the club's about. And therefore attracts people to us for specific reasons plus you also get that - little bit of word of mouth as well.
DG: Yes.

TL: Pe-people join from further afield because they know somebody, that kind of thing.

DG: On that note I'm sure every cycling club round the M25 would argue that they have access to those beautiful countryside but I mean Surrey is known as - in colloquial terms as little Switzerland and it's a good tester - a lot of the - erm - the reliability trials come out to the Surrey Hills. The Olympics ch- chose to rode - riders road race I beg your pardon incorporating Box Hill and -

TL: Yeah.

DG: - etc. And the other thing that I think played a part was we adopted a more proactive role in who we ordered our cycling gear from and we noticed a lot of younger riders were choosing cycling clobber according to what gear they wanted to be seen in.

TL: Yeah that's true yeah.

DG: It's a kind of fashion thing and we - and ours is kind of eye catching. And the latest range is - well y'know, it's very professional and erm - and - and very modern. Erm. Yeah. I mean there are - you do say it - see occasionally cycling clothing which is quite disastrous. It's - and the other thing was materials, I mean there was nothing to ride all the shame of drawing up at the traffic lights with a pair of wooly shorts that have got wet. And they're all saggy and people used to lean out their cars and make some acrid comment because of course as the publicity towards fitness, cycling as Tim rightly pointed out all the events that took place and th-the clothing itself and the machinery - people began to appreciate that these weren't people who couldn't afford a car. They were people who were riding machines that were probably more valuable than the cars they were in. And the whole public conception began to - with natural exceptions - began to increase. And I think it's now got a much higher profile in the eyes of the general members of the public. Would you agree Tim?

TL: No yeah I do. And you're right, absolutely technology and gear and clothing and attitude towards er - fitness and s-social sporting activity generally, be it - y'know gym or whatever y'know, that does increase people's willingness to - to try out activities like cycling and participate. I mean it's also fair to say, y'know that side of it - there's a slight negative side to that that our membership - whilst it's large, we track and we m-monitor - there is a proportion of that membership which is in - which is transient and doesn't last sort of very long than the two year sort of initial membership period. They come and they go, they try it out and they move onto something else. I think that's a fact of life, modern life, y'know, so we don't - we - we keep an eye on that. And we-we debate in the committee pros and cons of that and - and their - engagement of those people with - with the club and club life. But I think ultimately you just have to write it off to being - being a modern life thing. Erm. But yeah I doubt the fancy kit, nice bikes, y'know what's not to like about that?

[24:28] AB: Do you - I mean obviously you've both cycled a lot and for a number of years. I just wondered - have you noticed any sort of change, part of what we're trying track in the project, any sort of change in the relationship between sort of other road users and cyclists in that time? Do you think people are more receptive to there being bikes on the road or less or - has there been any sort of change? [25:00]

TL: I - yeah. Hmm.

DG: It's a tricky one.

TL: It's a difficult question to answer because I think it's multi faceted for v-for various reasons. I don't think - [pause] I think it's a bit neutral for me. My - my experiences, it's relatively neutral. I think - I think back when I started, obviously publicly perception of cycling was erm - was y'know it was a relatively rare thing to do to take up cycling as a sport which is what I do at the time and to participate and cycling clubs were far and between - small in - small in membership numbers. So the bikes on the road were fewer. I think traffic volumes were undoubtedly lower at the same time so I think you've got less cyclists and less cars so - sort of a lower grade competition but less understanding of cycling on the part of the public. Er. And so whilst now you do probably have a greater affinity and understanding for cycling amongst the public and the motoring public, I think the increase in numbers of cyclists, potential increase in traffic volumes probably sort of cancels each other out. And th- and the - you - yeah. So I don't see any - any great or lesser extent of friction, it's sort of still a continual underlying level of friction an-about there. And we do experience - I mean Derek sort of mentioned Kingston itself er - and so for us as Kingston Wheelers one of our attractions - Kingston being like the gateway to the Surrey Hills for a lot of people and th-that having been so as we were talking before you arrived f-for over a century going back to Victorian era -

DG: I've got some pictures you might be interested in.

TL: Y'know the Portsmouth Road route out from sort of Southwest London down into Surrey Hills, that's a sort of typical way to go. That attracts a lot of people for us. Erm. The 2012 Olympics, erm - that's a really positive thing. But if you live out around Dorking, Box Hill, places like that. That's an entirely negative thing. And we're on the receiving end of - erm some negative feedback erm -

DG: The NIMBYs.

TL: Yeah we - we do on occasion get reports of incidents were local residents have been upset by the numbers of people riding out in those parts of - of Surrey. Erm. And the effect that has on the local - erm, inhabitants of - of those towns and villages down there th-th-that sort of see that their countryside in their eyes being taken over by people on two wheels. Erm. Y'know. There's two sides to all of that. But er-

DG: And that's not a mo-not necessarily a modern phenomenon. I was riding and there's some pictures that I can-I could get up off - a lot of them hand drawn cartoons of - it w-well you called them penny farthings. Erm. I don't wanna be too pedantic on this but I believe that correct term is an ordinary and then - oh you know that. And then they progressed to the safety cycle but all manner of contraptions were made in those days. And it was seen as a way of getting out to the countryside for people who were y'know didn't have a lot of leisure time and lot of money. But you would get the people in the villages putting strings across the road and little boys sport was sticking sticks in the front wheels. And they were very unbalanced machines so erm - yeah.

TL: Yeah in some of those spokes you've gotta have the full circle sort of thing haven't you?

DG: Yeah. And the other cycle clubs - again I've got beautiful picture of Catford erm - were dressed like erm [pause] like little cavalry officers. Er cavalry erm people, y'know in sort of tunics, brass buttons. Natty little hats. And you'd get a bugle boy who will se-you know about this?

[28:55] AB: And they would ride according to rank with the senior at the front.

DG: Yeah and that's so much - if you start to delve in, we mentioned a few things earlier. It's a fascinating parallel of social life in - in Britain. And it - it was also taking place in France and a big movement in America, y'know - never think of America as a hotbed but they were right up there, especially with track riding. And - it had famous track riders. And I think big money used to change hands. Anyway we're getting off - y-you stay on course.

[29:28] AB: I just wondered if I could ask sort of what you-

DG: Sorry before you do, I just want to pick you up. Not pick you up but - the main focus of that question was erm - on a work - I volunteer for this panel representing the club in Richmond Park. And you mentioned interaction between cyclists - could there be a safer place in the world? You would not think so when you hear the amount of whinging and moaning from - it's a multi-use group who represent horse riders, the ballet school. **[30:00]** Mushroom people and - y'know people wildlife people-

TL: Dog walkers.

DG: Dog walkers etc. And the police. Friends of Richmond Park. So it's kind of - and there we are, about 20 of us assemble, there's another cycling representative, Paul Hartnett from London Dynamos. And the amount of angst that cycling causes in the park. And I remember 10 years ago saying for God's sake gentlemen, we're talking about people getting out and getting fit and taking the air, we're not - they're not criminals. And they - it's that kind of thing. You've gotta bring people to realising that it's a benign - you don't create pollution. By and large you don't kill people. And w-what's there not to like? They find something. So sorry, I mean I needed to get that point in.

[30:56] AB: In your sort of patch right where you leave there'll be that - there's that new cycle lane isn't there?

DG: It's Hampton Trail.

TL: No the one on Portsmouth Road.

DL: Oh that.

AB: Yeah. No the one on Portsmouth Road. It goes to that. I know that's also been another [?] point.

DG: Don't get me started. Don't get me started. The money that was spent on that. The m-I drive down and get irritated in my camper. If I'm cycling I get irritated by - it was perfectly alright when we had a white line and you had - you wore your clothing. I always have a back light going in - in the day time as well. I felt perfectly safe. And now people if they catch you not riding that then you've gotta cross the road to get onto it if you're going west. And they think well we've spent all this money, you need to be on there mate, and I'm thinking well no because if you keep switching sides of the road that's your - the viability of your journey gone. You don't expect car drivers to keep getting out of their cars and doing stuff. But no - cyclists are supposed to swap around and stop at people's drives and goodness knows what. Anyway sorry if I'm getting a little bit vehement.

[32:09] AB: Well they - it runs out, that's the problem isn't it? If you're on it.

DG: It runs out. That's it. And how much did it cost?

[32:32] AB: I wonder if I can just ask you what you sort of personally get out of being a club member? Is it sort of - are you in it for the sort of thrill of racing or just being out there on your bike or - just tell us a bit about what it means to you to be a club member and why you love it.

TL: Erm I started out because I was attracted to the sport side of cycling. Erm - y'know watching it on TV I was lucky to spend erm a few successive summers in France when the Tour de France was on and it's like wall to wall when you're out there. So yeah - it kind of got drawn in and sucked in by that sort of the glamour of that and it's yeah - y-y-y'know something sparked your interest, it's not for everyone. But for me that was the thing. And so my early days in the club was all - all about - entirely about racing and

competitive side of cycling. Erm. And doing that as - as much as I could and you pretty much have to be in a club to be able to access racing so it was kind of joining a club was a kind of means to an end if you like to getting that introduction into racing. Erm. Obviously time goes by - I haven't raced for a few years now. Erm. Er. And you're - your attitude to cycling sort of changes and you - y'know I think just enjoying being out on the bike is - is now more important. My association with the club is now sort of more one of just erm - kind of affection and having been in a club that long erm I wanted to keep involved with the club. Erm. Because the club gave me an awful lot err - when I first started I think it's important to make sure that there's some sort of continuity within the club and it carries on and it can offer those opportunities to people now and going on for the future. So yeah my - my interaction and needs to be in the club has changed over my - over my membership period. But y'know. Cycling and riding the bike remains the bedrock to that. One way or the other.

DG: Erm I can entirely - I'm a strange animal in that actually I've done the bulk of my riding on my own. So riding erm in groups at the weekend was not something I could do that often due to my job. But I had time in the day and I quite enjoy the isolation actually, it was a great stress reliever. And I - I don't really wanna spend a lot of time talking about bottom brackets and - and hubs.

TL: Gear ratios.

DG: Gear ratios. Erm. Yeah. And exactly like Tim I learnt - **[35:00]** I wanted to learn from my betters. I got a lot out of club nights on a Monday, was in those days. Erm. I felt cheated if I missed one. Erm. And just the camaraderie - although they were very few of us. And like Tim - I think we have a kind of benevolent erm [pause] feeling that we like th-the club's got great ethics. I mean erm - th-the ethos is being y'know being all inclusive. And well we're happy to volunteer I guess. And er sometimes I know Tim's very pushed y'know when he gets home from work. It's not easy. You put a lot of erm - put a lot of graft in and erm - it's a volunteer sport. Someone - someone's gotta step up to the mark basically.

[35:54] AB: Erm. And yeah - just a couple things I'd kind of like to return to. You mentioned that at the minute it's sort of about 80/20 gender split. Is that something that's erm - is female participation slowly increasing or is it kind of static or any sort of thoughts on reasons behind the split?

TL: Erm. Yeah I think - I think female - erm membership of the club is on a slow upward trajectory. And yes - slow but upwards. Erm. We're taking proactive steps amongst the club to - to try to er - accelerate that possibly just generally encourage female participation, try to make the club erm - as open and accessible as it can be to - to women should they feel that there's any barriers to it. I don't necessarily believe there is but if that's an issue for anyone, try to address those. We've got women on the committee. Erm. Y'know intentionally as that's always been a design, we have always had women on the committee throughout the committee's existence in the last 10, 15 years.

DG: Trying - it's very hard actually. We've got a new recruit, Caroline, who seems to be excellent. But y'know not a lot of women a) have - either have the time or the desire to sit on what effectively is a largely male committee. Erm we're very careful I think that we don't play the male thing too much do we?

TL: No I think the point about getting increase in female membership is making sure that the club is able to offer to a woman that would want to start up in cycling whatever it is that they want. Erm - and that's not necessarily the traditional things that a male cyclist might want. So it's - y-you need - erm. You need women involved in the organisation and commission themselves to - to be able to facilitate that. And I - it's just where we come from as a committee and having women only activities to - to try to sort of break down those - those barriers if there any. And try to sort of - erm - perhaps establish role models for - for women so that they - can see - I mean I know - I do - I got a sort of side involvement in-in-jn another branch of women's sport for my daughter. And. Erm. Based-based on my knowledge of her experience erm - kind of aspiration and mentoring is important for young females when it comes to sport because I think then n-n-society erm - kind of perhaps frowns a little bit on female participation in

sport and there's a lot of social pressures on young - on young women. That - that y'know that they shouldn't be seen to be sort of too active and y'know sweating and y'know where the glamour is key that goes against sort of sport. So if you can provide erm - examples and as I said as mentors and role models for - for young women in whatever sport you're in to say, y'know, you can do this. And you can still be a woman. And y'know and still be female. And -

DG: We've had some great role models.

TL: And not lose that femininity. Then I think that - that's a part of it. I mean maybe slightly digressing from your question.

DG: People like Victoria Pem-Pen-Pendleton did wonders for -

TL: Yes.

DG: - cycling. Very articulate and I saw her interview - very emotional. Y'know. She-she is erm - sh-she-she is - she lives it and erm, she broke down in the interview. And I think that got through to a lot of people. Erm. But y'know. Gritty as hell. When she got on the bike, we've had similar - Lizzie Armistead and people - well my personal heroine in all sports, both sexes is a woman **[40:00]** called Beryl Burton. Erm. But I don't want - I don't wanna bore you but she was a multi record holder, mixed it - at the same level as the men. She rode in mixed events. She won the 24 hour race at one stage. So there have been these role models and Eileen Sheridan, 5ft nothing who was a multi-record holder, lan-er - place to place record holder. And rode professionally for Hercules Cycles. But it kind of lapsed and I think there is this thing about - there are certain sports that favour women. I mean tennis is a great sport because you actually have an event called mixed doubles. And-and you play on the same court and you - yeah. I mean there are some sports that favour women more than others. But er - even boxing now you've got great women boxers coming through.

TL: Yeah I think cycling is kind of middling in that. It's not entirely favourable but it's - it's more accessible-I mean you can. There's no barrier to men and women going out and riding together in the same way as like - y'know. Say tennis, you've got mixed - mixed competition but like rugby which is what my daughter does. It's very split. For obvious reasons. Erm. So yeah - so y'know on a bike -

[41:23] AB: Cos your club members are mixed?

TL: The clubbers are entirely mixed. Yeah. Absolutely. And there's no - yeah. There's no - there's no barrier to that and there's - yeah quite frankly it's not really about what sex you are, it's really about whether - whether you can ride the distance or not and y'know-

DG: We've got some phenomenal women riders now.

TL: Yeah but I think - science is just suddenly coming around to the - to the realisation that probably the evidence has been there for many years that women actually when it comes to endurance sport are physiologically better erm - set up than men. Y'know so when you talk about cycling as being essentially an endurance sport it really should favour women better-better than men in some respect so. Yeah.

DG: Interesting.

[42:08] AB: Just another that's sort of related, I just wondered if - erm - how you think the sort of - because obviously cycling dis-differs from say a sport like football as in you need a bike and you need some gear. I-it's - you can't just pick up a football and play with jumpers as goalposts. I just wondered do you think the cost of setting yourself up with a good enough bike is prohibitive or do you think now the availability of cheapish bikes has increased participation?

DG: Yes and no I would say.

TL: Yeah.

DG: We-we had a guy join, he was a - smoked, he w-and he was a bit of a drinker. And he worked on - for British Rail on track laying. And he came along and h-h-he - he was riding a bike he got out of a skip. And he just blew everyone to bits. He did er - he did a 58 on an unfashionable course with his first 25,

well that's not fast in these days but in the 70s it was. Dave Williams.

TL: Yeah. Yeah.

DG: So. If you got it in the legs - you can race on an inferior machine but it is true that it's getting more and more expensive and it's in the mind as well.

TL: Yeah I think mentally it's a barrier and it's a perception that you - and - y'know like we said earlier for all that er - y'know great kit and technology attracts people to the sport the downside to that is if people see that and that's the image - the glossy image that's portrayed then that can be a barrier if they think while that's great there's no way I can afford that so I can't join in. Absolutely you can join in and there's - yeah if - if you scratch the surface y-you-you you can get a perfectly decent adequate at a moderate price and the - erm. The boom in cycle production and increase in technology that keep manufacturing costs down, y'know that all helps with accessibility like that and you can definitely participate with a a very modest bike from - y'know mass produced from superstores and the rest of it. And you can equally get cheap kit from the same basis.

DG: Yeah. Decathlon as well.

TL: Yeah that's what was going through my mind. You can keep yourself up in a decathlon and a set of kit which would not look out of place but wouldn't cost you a fraction of what erm - the top range stuff would cost.

DG: I got an - erm - email this very morning from a company called Ribble who build up in Pres-Preston. And it's for this carbon fibre frame which is better than when I started any Tour de France would have access to any professional rider with s-one down group set and Shimano Ultegra and it's just about a thousand pounds. Well that is a lot of money to a student but it's not totally unattainable. Erm. **[45:00]** I mean if you could do it through a loan if you were determined enough y'know. So yeah. It is and it isn't.

[45:08] AB: Great. So just one last really nice thing that you mentioned which I just wanna get on the tape. You mentioned that it's not uncommon for members of the club to meet their future husband or wife at the club.

DG: Yeah. We have personal experience - do you remember Ingrid? Erm.

TL: Yeah. Yeah course I do, very well.

DG: She we-she was going out with a guy from Bellevue. Forgotten his name, but he was a really lovely guy, very nice rider.

TL: Erm. Nick.

DG: Nick. Yes, Nick somebody. Anyway. And John erm - our ex eldest longest running member, Roger - he erm - he met his wife Janet. So I don't know if it was Kingston Wheelers, it was certainly through cycling. And she was our latest champion for a while.

TL: I met my wife - my wife through cycling.

DG: Mm?

TL: I met my wife through cycling.

DG: Oh yes of course you did. I beg your pardon, Tim, I'd forgotten that.

TL: Yeah. Living breathing example. We're still together.

DG: Well you were differ-you were different clubs weren't you?

TL: Yeah we were different clubs. Y-yeah cycling is not a sport which is err - which is club-centric. In the sense yo-you you do meet and socialise with other clubs an-and our - and I think per-maybe less so than when we first joined but when I was first racing - my brother and I were road racing at the time just the two of us but we were the only ones from Kingston Wheelers who were racing regularly. And when you're the only club representative in a field of like 60 riders in a road race. Y-you do tend to start talking to other people and other clubs and you build up a network of friends that are not in your same club but are in other clubs are stuff like. But anyway long story short. W-well the club's always had a good friendly social relationship with the Southwestern Road Club. Who are sort of Esher, kind of Cobham

based. Geographically.

DG: Er they meet - yes exactly they meet sort of the other side of the A3 on - going towards Chessington. Hook.

TL: We used to erm do shared er activities - shared rides. Erm. And shared holidays to Mallorca a few times as well. Stuff like that. Anyway. Erm. My wife was in Southwestern erm at the time. Erm. And yeah. She was going out with a guy in Southwestern so I knew so I knew her through her through my friendship with him. Got chatting with her. They split up and a little while later we got together and then - she's still my wife 25 years later or whatever.

DG: She still cycling on a tour now?

TL: On-only casually and socially. But she still has a bike.

DG: I like that whole idea - Southwestern to run these film nights. And you'd have a - or you'd have erm - John Pritchard, he was a top time trial trialist he held a tour there one night. And you'd turn up to this village hall, tea and cakes, it was all very sweet. And erm. And. You'd get couples who'd been together in their 70s and 80s.