



# CYCLING PAST

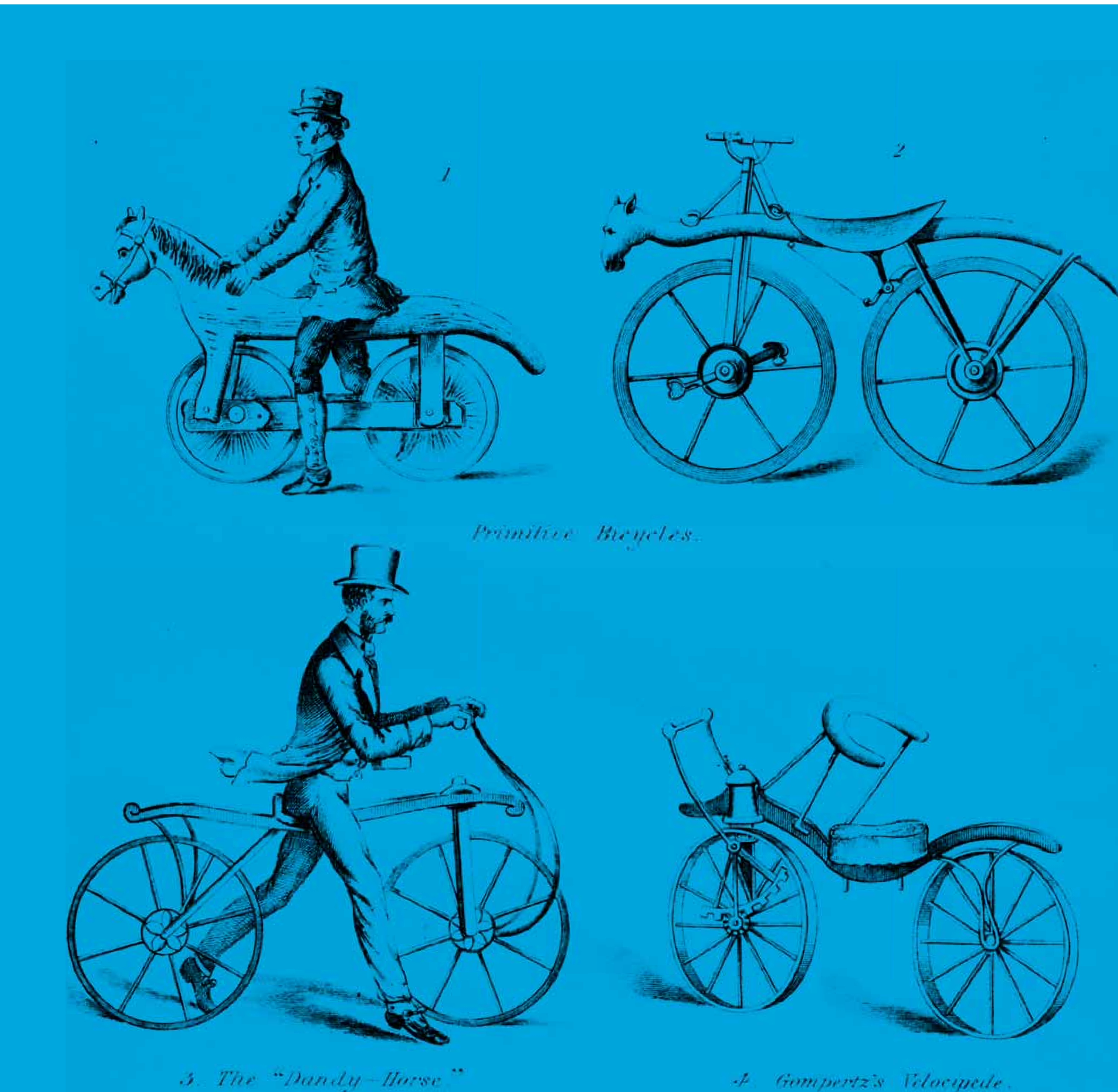
The story of bicycle  
clubs in Ballymoney



Image: Lyle Hill, 1967 (from left: Eddie McKinney  
(Bann Wheelers), Noel McBride (Marjand CC) and  
Chris McCaughan (Route Wheelers))

Ballymoney Museum would like to thank  
Wallace McNaul for his invaluable assistance  
and support throughout the development of  
this exhibition.





## Birth of the Bicycle

In Germany in 1817, the earliest recognisable cycle design was created by Baron von Drais who called it the 'Draisienne'. It had a wooden frame, seat, handlebars but no pedals.

Over the next 60 years, various designs were developed, including the Ordinary Bicycle, or 'Penny Farthing', and the Velocipede, or 'Boneshaker'. More innovations quickly followed – in 1885, the prototype of the modern day bicycle appeared and three years later the pneumatic tyre was invented by John Boyd Dunlop in Belfast. More and more people could now afford to own a bicycle and clubs soon appeared in every town.

Illustrations of early bicycles (left)

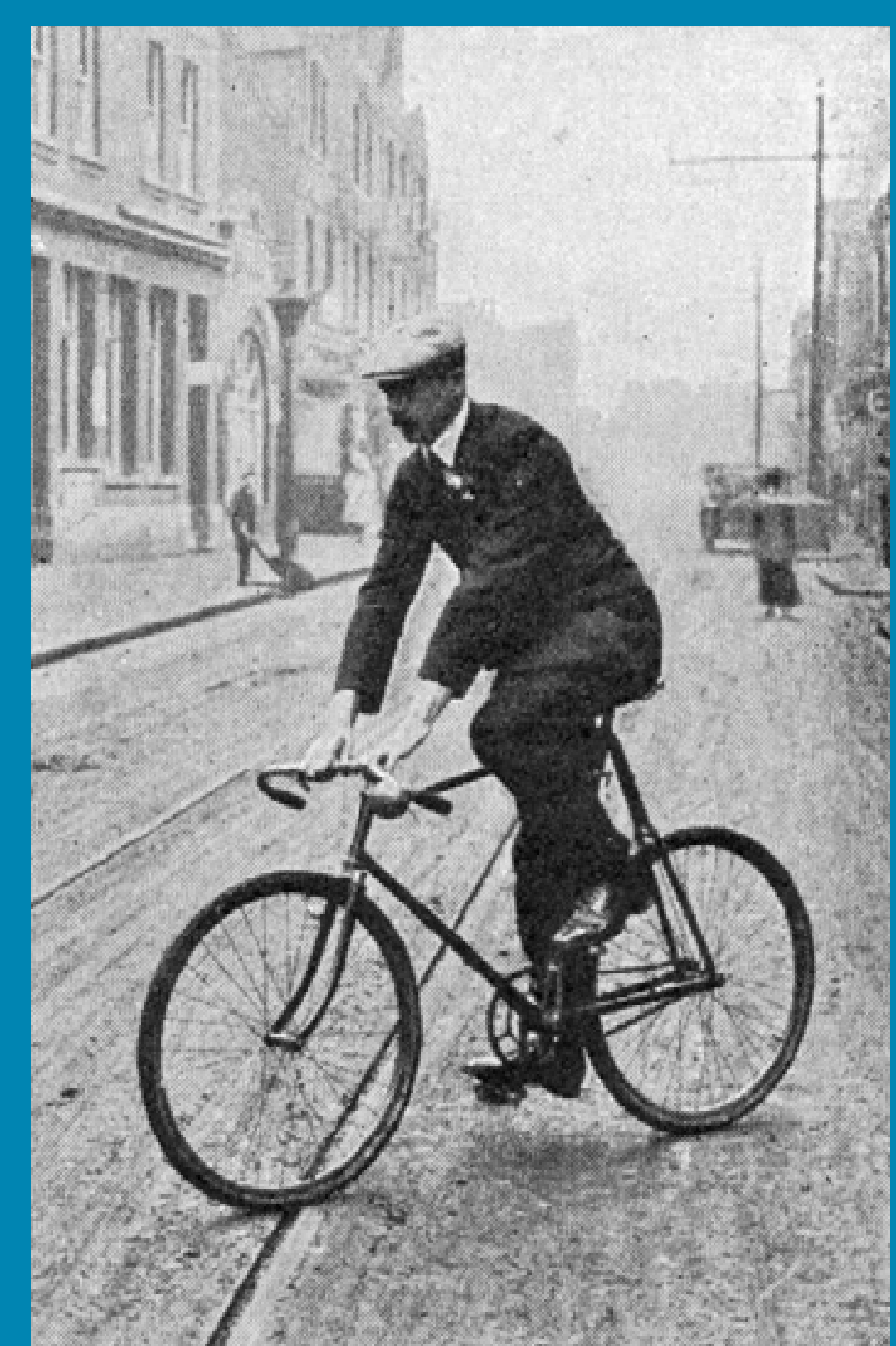
## The first Ballymoney Bicycle Club

In 1888, the Ballymoney Bicycle Club was established. That summer, the first road race took place in front of an 'immense crowd'. Riders competed on Penny Farthings and raced on a challenging circuit from Charlotte Street, through Balnamore, Taughey and passed the gates of Leslie Hill to the Model School.

This short lived Club was replaced in 1891 by the Ballymoney Cycling Club which encouraged the public to take part in the growing 'cyclomania' that was sweeping the town. Very little encouragement was needed and soon bicycles became a frequent sight on the roads of North Antrim.

## Early cycling safety

These early photographs promoting road safety show how cyclists had to learn quickly the hazards of travelling on roads with other vehicles.



"Dangers to be avoided in the street

It is always dangerous for a cyclist to ride upon a tram-line, for, if his wheels catch on the rail, he may get a side-slip, as shown in the first picture, and, with a tramcar coming rapidly up behind, his danger of being run over would be great. The correct way to pass over the tram-line is at wide angle, as shown in the right-hand picture."

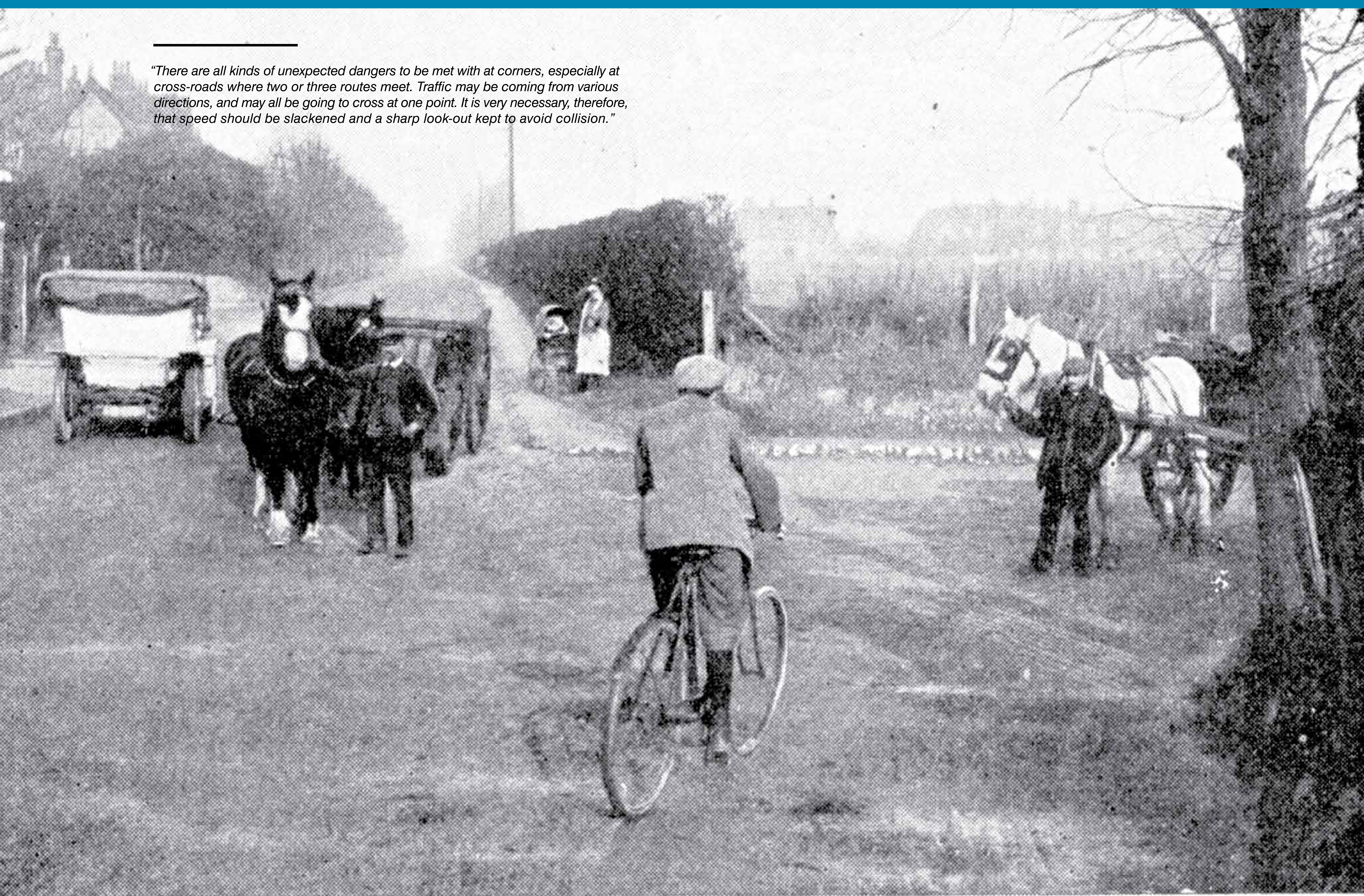


"The rule of the road for cyclists

It is foolish for a cyclist to ride heedlessly along a road that has little or no footpath, keeping near the fence, as a cart or carriage may come suddenly out of the gateway without warning, and a collision is likely to occur."



"In a quiet road that has very little traffic, the cyclist should ride in the middle of the road, and should pass a standing vehicle, or any slow-moving traffic going in the same direction, on the 'off' or right side. Of course, when cyclists meet traffic coming the opposite way, they will obey the regular rule of the road and keep to the left."



"There are all kinds of unexpected dangers to be met with at corners, especially at cross-roads where two or three routes meet. Traffic may be coming from various directions, and may all be going to cross at one point. It is very necessary, therefore, that speed should be slackened and a sharp look-out kept to avoid collision."

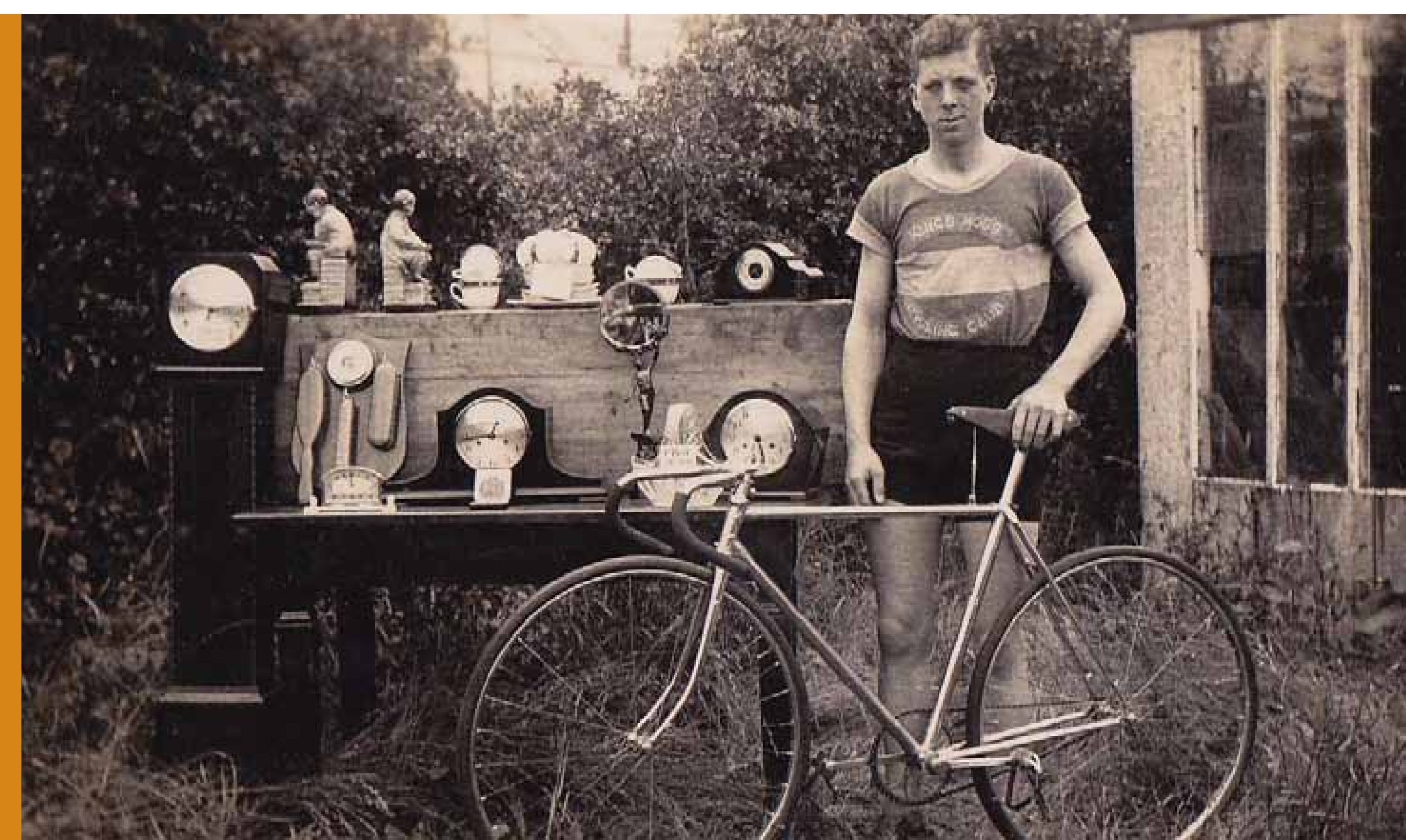


## Competitive Cycling Clubs

During the early 20th century, cycling competitions became more and more popular. In the 1930s, one local rider, Bertie Hughes, achieved national recognition and was a match for the best riders in the country. He was destined for the British cycling team at the 1940 Helsinki Olympic Games until the outbreak of World War II brought his dreams to an end.

### Badge of Ballymoney Cycle Club

Ballymoney Cycle Club is believed to have been formed c.1920 and closed during the war years.



### Bertie Hughes

Bertie Hughes stands proudly with his racing bicycle and trophies.

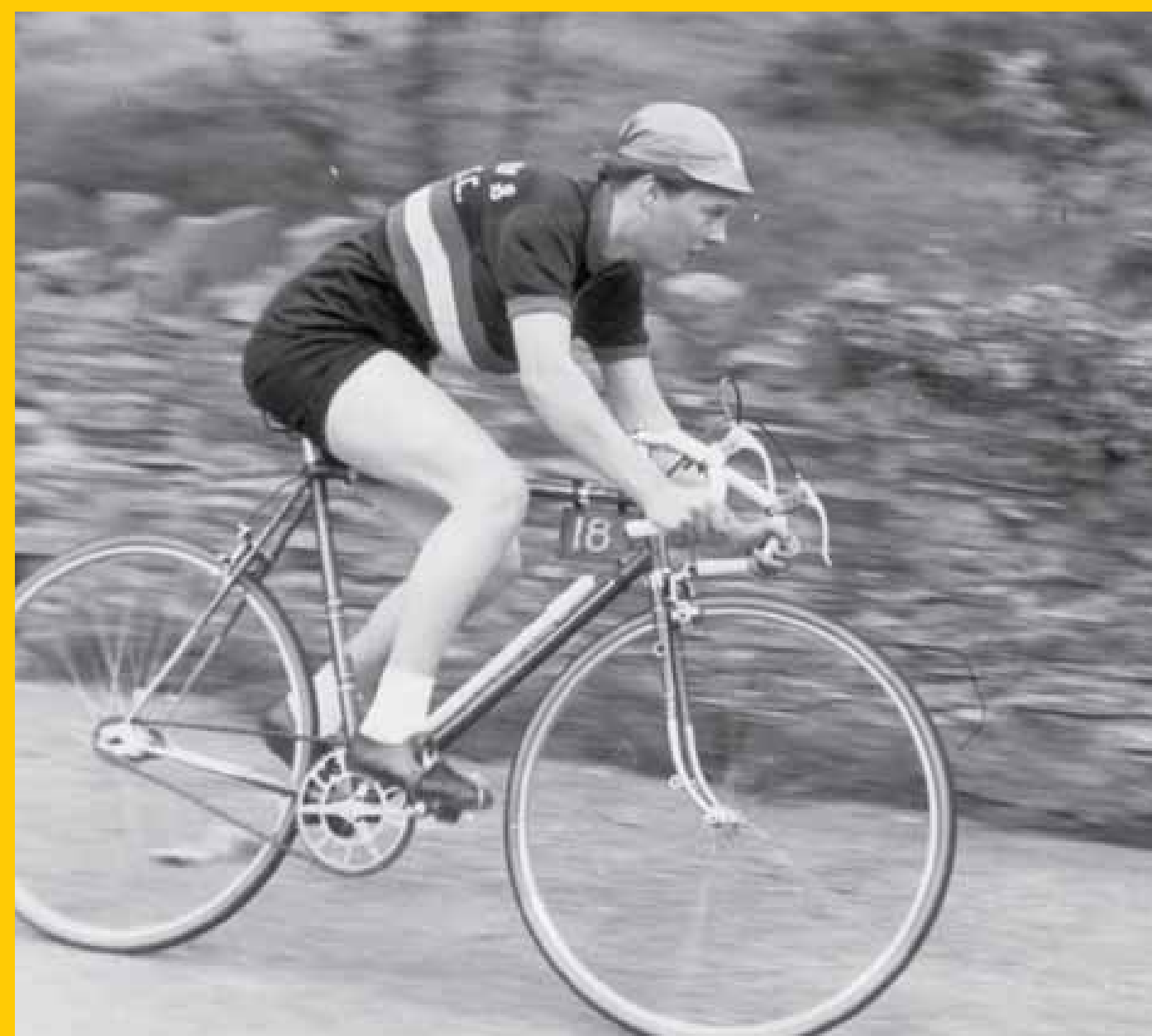
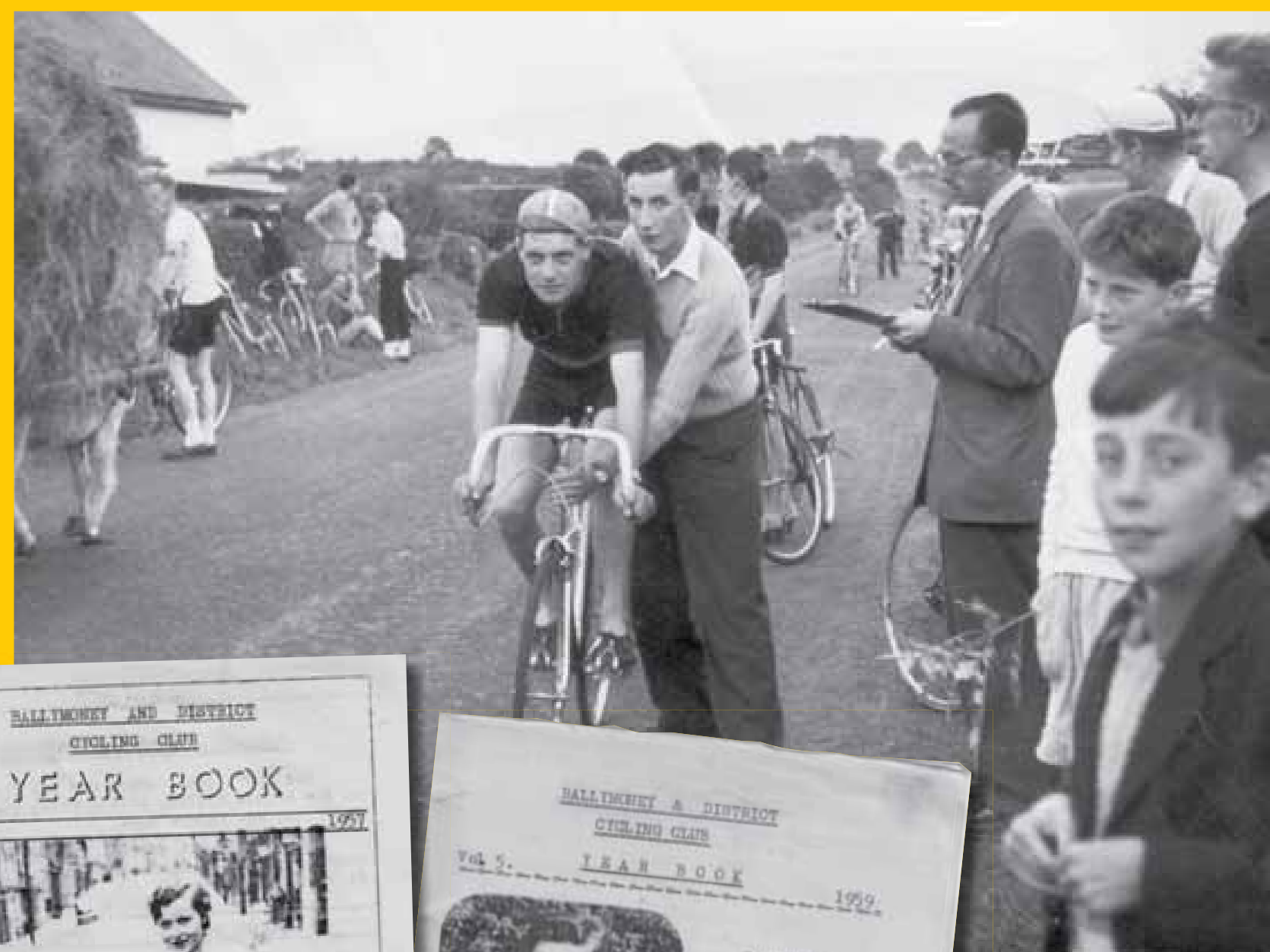
*Image courtesy of Primrose Tweed*

## Ballymoney & District Cycling Club

In 1949, the Ballymoney & District Cycling Club (B&DCC) was formed by Douglas Barkley. The early members met in the YMCA and held weekend cycle runs. Within a year, they had organised the Club's first 10 miles Time Trail on the Portrush Road, Ballymoney and soon members were competing for the inaugural B&DCC trophy, the Harrison Cup.



Badge of the Ballymoney  
& District Cycle Club



### B&DCC 10 mile TT, 1961 (above left)

Graham Calvin waits to start on the Portrush Road. He is supported on his bicycle by Davy Smith.

### Ballymoney & District Cycle Club Yearbooks, 1957 & 1959 (left)

### Girl power!

In 1956, the Club welcomed its first female member, Helen McKeown (née McKinney). Within two years, two more women riders, Zillah McCaughan (née Calvin) and Kathleen McKinney (Née Kane), had achieved first and second place in open competitions in Dublin and raced in a 25 miles Time Trail in the Isle of Man. Pictured are Zillah (above, centre) and Kathleen (above right) racing in the Isle of Man.



### 'Drum up' at Fahan, Co Donegal

In 1955, the B&DCC formed the Hostelling Section. The enthusiastic members toured hostels throughout Ireland, Scotland, England and Europe. This picture shows a 'drum up' on a trip to Donegal in July 1959. From left: Davey Smith, Johnny O'Neill, Owen Caulfield and the late Tommy McKeown and Danny Martin.



*Image courtesy of Cliff Ledger*

### Singing cyclist

Cliff Ledger was one of the better known members of B&DCC, but not just for his cycling. Cliff had a successful career in entertainment and still records music from his home in Spain.

The B&DCC became affiliated to the Northern Ireland Cycling Federation in 1953. The following year, the Club ventured into open competition and several riders competed in a 25 miles Time Trial promoted by the East Tyrone Cycle Club.

The B&DCC was now ready to promote its first inter-club event. In 1958, their 5 miles Time Trial on the Coleraine Road attracted riders from Ballymena, Old Bleach and East Tyrone Cycle Clubs. The B&DCC riders were now racing against the best in Ireland and the same season five entered in the famous 'Tour of the North' race.

In 1960, Willie Smylie brought home a gold medal to Ballymoney when he won the All-Ireland Individual Pursuit Championship in Belfast, breaking an Irish record on the way to victory.

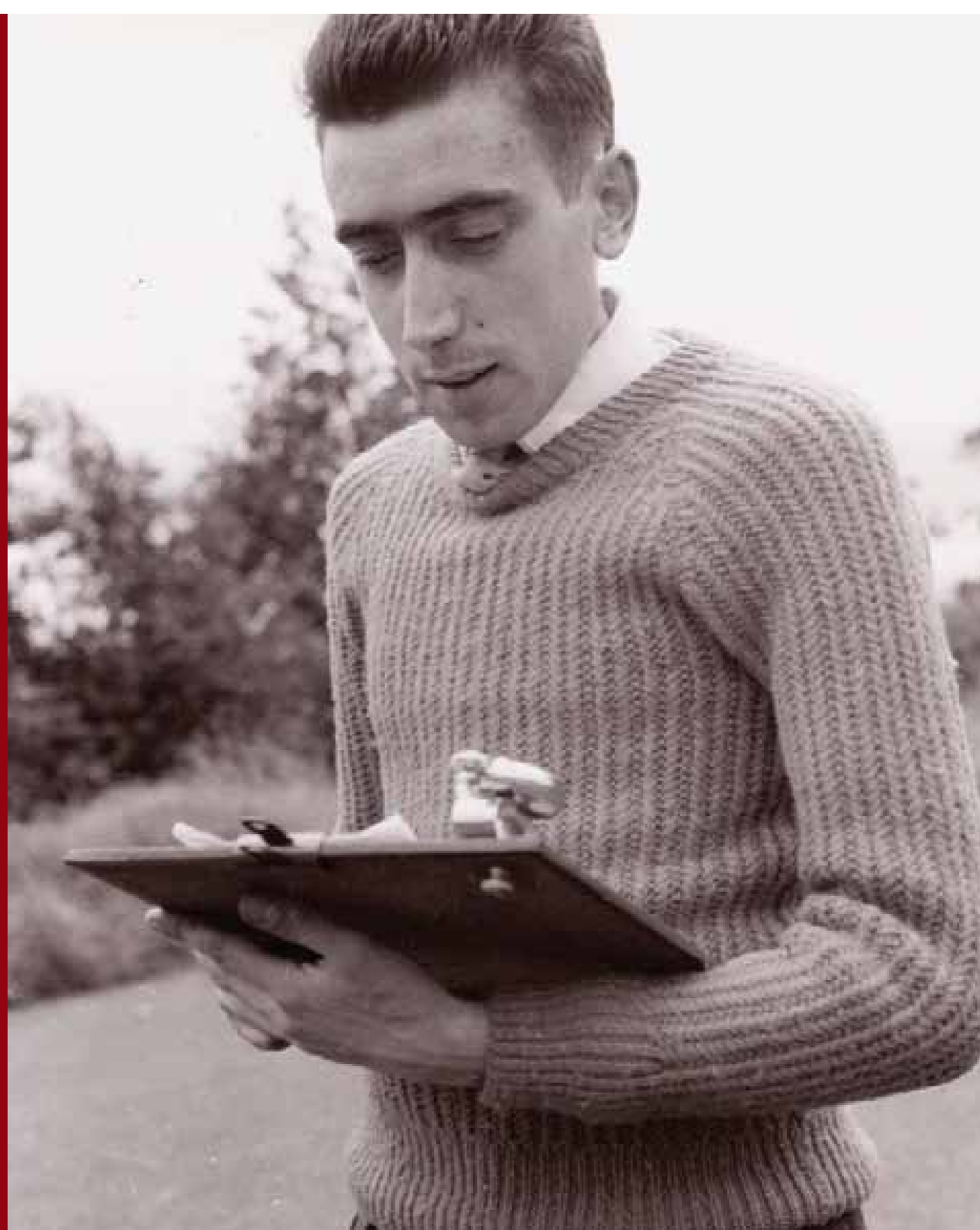
The B&DCC continued for another two years before closing. It was an important part of the sporting community in Ballymoney and is still remembered with great affection by many of its former members.

### Members of Ballymoney & District Cycle Club, Portrush Road 10 miles TT, 1958 (below)

Left to right: Davy Bell, Danny Martin, Harold McAfee, Stephen McDowell, William McLean, Charles Miller, Noel Laverty, Graham Calvin, Eddie Kane, Johnny O'Neill, Thompson Hunter & Wallace McNaul.







## The Route Wheelers

In 1960, Wallace McNaul, a former member of the Ballymoney & District Cycle Club, formed the Route Wheelers. Wallace's ambition was to establish a club in which he could give aspiring cyclists the dedicated coaching and training to compete with the best riders in the country.

Wallace McNaul,  
Route Wheelers' Team Coach  
Timekeeping at a time trial, Dervock Road, 1962.

## The Boys in Red!

Within a few years, the Route Wheelers were winning inter-club competitions. John McBride and Robert McLean were the first Wheelers to put their name on silverware and they were quickly followed by young enthusiastic riders such as Noel McBride, Brian McGookin and Chris McCaughan. Such was the Wheelers' reputation that a Belfast club once approached Wallace and tried to poach one of his riders for their own team!

John McBride (*right*), of the Route Wheelers,  
competing at the Kings Moss Cycle Club TT.

Robert McLean (*far right*) of the Route Wheelers,  
competing at the Portaferry Time Trial, 1963.



## teamROUTE

In 1970, the team changed its name and became *teamROUTE*. By then it had 25-30 members and five sections (Schoolboys, Juniors, Seniors, Ladies & Veterans). The size of the small team meant that each member received individual training.

Under Wallace McNaul's continued management, the team competed in Ireland and Great Britain. Sponsorship was secured from local businesses to help support the riders as they travelled abroad and required more professional equipment.

Team members soon came to prominence in Irish cycling with riders such as Richard Nicholl, Stephen Hunter, Vanda McClure (née McVicker) and Mary Boyd (née Davidson) achieving success everywhere they competed.



### teamROUTE

A group photo before the start of a 10 miles TT on the Finvoy Road (South). From left: Jason Henry, Vanda McClure, Mary Boyd, David McVicker, James Davidson, Stephen Hunter, Richard Nicholl & Eddie McLean.

*Image courtesy of Sam McMullan, Ballymoney & Moyle Times*



*Left to right*

### teamRoute women cyclists, 1986

Wallace McNaul, Team Coach, with Mary Boyd (seated on bicycle) and Vanda McClure. Vanda and Mary ensured that *teamROUTE* were in the top places at the local races in women's cycling.

*Image courtesy of Sam McMullan, Ballymoney & Moyle Times*

### Cyclo-cross event, 1996

Jonathan McCurdy battles the elements in *teamROUTE* colours during the Under 14 Cyclo-cross at Leslie Hill, Ballymoney.

*Image courtesy of Mervyn McBride*

### Cyclo-cross event, Leslie Hill, 1999

Left to right: Robert McIlreavy, Shaun Rodgers and Jonathan McCurdy.

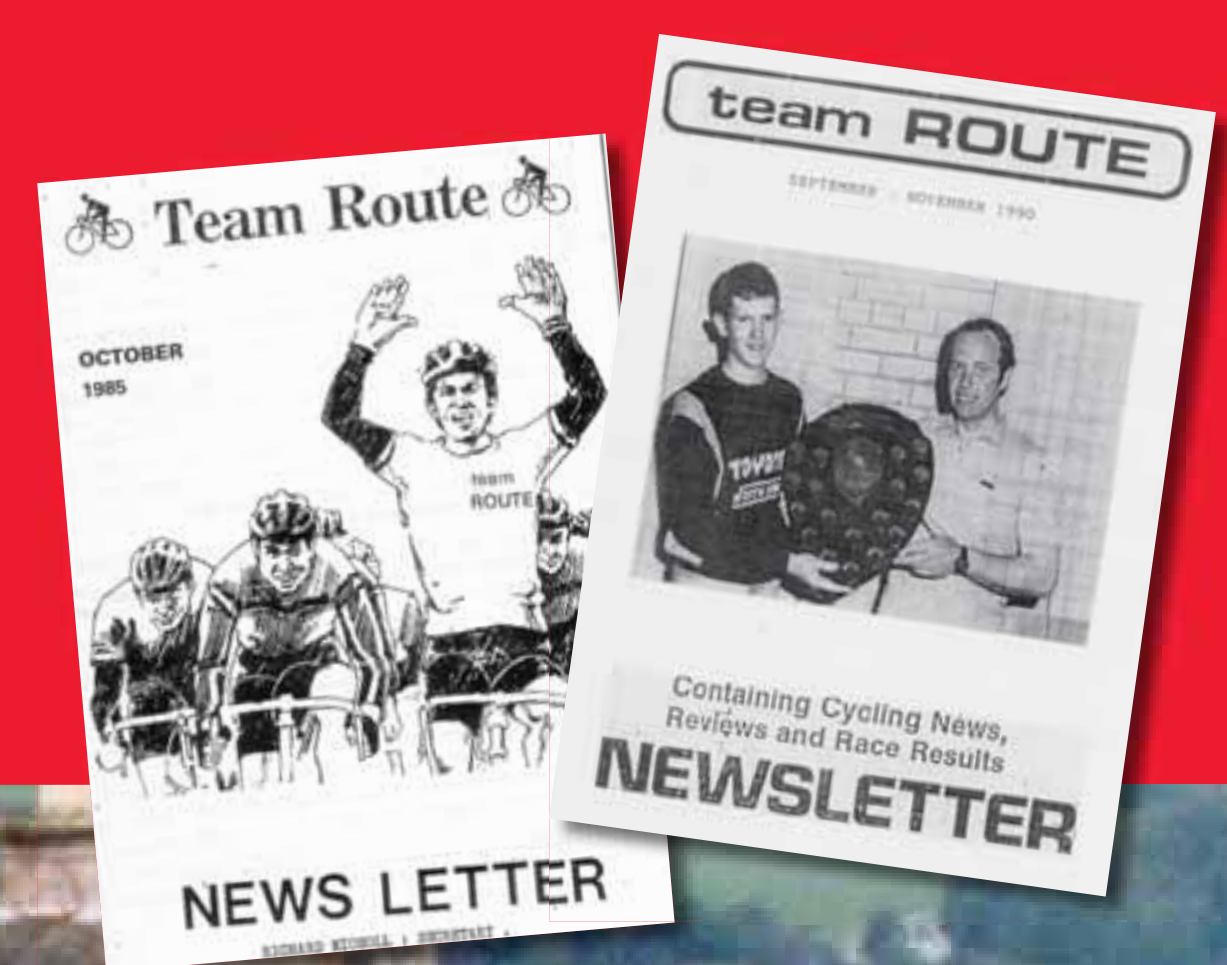
*Image courtesy of Mervyn McBride*

## team ROUTE

Wesley Henry competing in the Serpentine Hill Climb, Isle of Bute (*below*)

Wesley Henry and Paul McConaghie of teamROUTE travelled to the Isle of Bute in 1992 to compete in a hill climb and a 10 miles TT. Their arrival made the headlines in local newspaper 'The Buteman'.

teamROUTE Newsletters ►







## XIVth Commonwealth Games

### Auckland, New Zealand 24 January — 3 February 1990

In 1990, Women's Cycling became part of the Commonwealth Games for the first time. In the months building up to the Games, qualifying races were held across Great Britain and Northern Ireland to select riders who had the skills and ability to compete.

In September 1989, it was announced that Vanda McClure, then 24 years old, of teamROUTE would be going to Auckland to race in the 72km Road Race.

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#### Training run (*left*)

Training near Mornisville, January 1990. From left: Cormac McCann, Vanda McClure, Mark Kane, Andrew Moss and Alistair Irvine.



### Training

Vanda immediately began a rigorous training schedule, covering 150-180 miles a week. At the same time, money had to be found to pay for the trip and a campaign of fundraising was launched appealing to the local businesses and members of the public to support Vanda's Commonwealth Games dream. The people of Ballymoney responded with remarkable generosity and by December not only had enough money been raised to take Vanda to the Games, her coach Wallace McNaul was also able to join her.

### Race day

The Women's 72km Road Race took place on the last day of the Games. Four of the 21 riders were forced to drop out as they faced temperatures of 28°C and a circuit with two steep hill climbs. However, Vanda's fitness and training paid off and she finished the event in 2 hours 16 minutes 9 seconds, giving her a very respectable average speed of 32Km/h.

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#### Northern Ireland's top woman cyclist

Vanda McClure of teamROUTE was the only woman cyclist selected for the Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games team.



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#### Vanda leads the team in Auckland (*below*)

Vanda McClure out in front of the *Northern Ireland Cycling Team*, Auckland 1990 (*from left*) the late Davy McCall, Mark Kane, Cormac McCann, Joe Barr, Andrew Moss and Alastair Irvine. The Northern Ireland cyclists left for Auckland on 4 December 1989 ahead of the national team. This allowed the riders valuable time to get some vital experience competing in the warm New Zealand climate.

*New Zealand Herald*

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#### Starting line (*above*)

Women's 72km Road Race.

#### Vanda on rollers (*right*)

7am on the morning of the Women's 72km Road Race.

Auckland 1990 logo (*inset*)





## The end of teamROUTE

In 2002, teamROUTE was brought to an end when Wallace McNaul retired. During his 41 years as Team Manager, he had trained over 200 cyclists and helped them achieve success at the highest level in the sport. He organised and promoted countless cycle races and events throughout Ireland and spent two years as the secretary of the Northern Ireland Cycling Federation. His reputation within the sport stretched as far as the Czech Republic, USA, Canada, New Zealand and beyond. He was, and for many still is, the best known face of cycling in North Antrim.

During Wallace McNaul's 41 years as Team Manager, he had trained over 200 cyclists and helped them achieve success at the highest level in the sport.



**Wallace McNaul**  
Taking control at a cyclo-cross event at Leslie Hill.  
*Image courtesy of Sam McMullan Ballymoney & Moyle Times*

## Ballymoney Cycling Club

In 1984, a new Ballymoney Cycling Club (BCC) was launched by Maurice McAllister. He hoped to encourage more riders, young and old, to compete at club level. From the start, BCC junior riders, such as Adrian Archibald (now a famous motorcycle road racing champion), David Wallace and Trevor Wilson, were bringing trophies home to Ballymoney. More success followed with Alastair Henry and William Loughridge representing Northern Ireland and winning national titles at junior and schoolboy level.

## Into the 21st century

In recent times, BCC has been reformed and revitalised with Maurice McAllister once again leading the way. In the past year their membership has grown rapidly and the club has hosted a series of popular races. The members of BCC have also become involved in a series of community projects throughout the Ballymoney district ensuring that bicycle sport will continue to be a part of life in North Antrim for many years to come.



*(Images above, clockwise)*

**Early days of BCC with founder members Ivan McKane and Maurice McAllister**

The young riders of BCC in 1984. From left: Adrian Archibald, Ivan McKane, Alastair Henry, Danny Rodgers, David Wallace, Paul Dunlop, Trevor Wilson, Paul Rodgers, Eddie Dunlop and Maurice McAllister.

### Street race

BCC organized a race around Ballymoney town in 1984 as part of the Ballymoney Borough Council Civic Week.

### A memorable race!

In 1991, Trevor Wilson of BCC finished sixth in the prestigious Tour of the North.

### Ballymoney Cycle Club, 1991 (below)

*From left: John Patton, Trevor Wilson, Neville Patton, Robert Holmes, Errol Patton, Quinten Gordon, Dessie Lees, William Loughridge and Nat Magee. Front: Maurice McAllister.*

