Edinburgh Road Club

**Some notes on its relationship with the Lothians DA  by E.N. Zoller**

The publicity during the National Bicycle Week in 1923 – the organisational work for which was done largely by CTC members – brought the DA into touch with several local riders and officials who had been active prior to the 14/18 war.

The several clubs which had been active in Edinburgh prior to the war had ceased to exist, their members probably largely casualties of the war. A growing number of young members in the CTC felt they would like to ” have a go” at time trials and they and others as mentioned above decided in 1923 to form a racing club which took the name of Lothians CC. For the first year and more it and the Lothians DA shared a common social runs programme as it was felt that there were not enough riders to keep two separate runs programmes going. All time trials were run on Saturday afternoons when most of the active CTC members would turn out to help or “spectate” if not racing.  Sunday racing was spreading in England but was still rather frowned upon in Scotland.

By the latter part of 1924 there were an increasing number of Lothians CC riders who wished to switch to Sunday events and when it was decided to do so, the club was not prepared to put on Saturday events for those few members who for one reason or another did not wish to race on Sundays. In 1925 a small group of CTC members decided to form a racing offshoot of the DA for the sole purpose of running events on Saturdays and the title Edinburgh Road Club was chosen. The new Road Club thrived with an increasing number of the harder riding “tourists” in the DA joining.  In these happy go lucky days, with little traffic on the roads, there was no question of national ruling bodies, police permissions and the like.

Most young folk were lucky to have the one bicycle on which to ride with the CTC, tour, possibly also ride to work as I did, and when a race day came round simply pulled off the popular Bluemel’s quick release mudguards, possibly upped their gear a bit and went to the start line. If competing say in the Borders or West of Scotland they would ride there in touring trim and strip the bike at the start, replacing the mudguards etc and riding home after the event.  Some of these rides to and from races may well have been the beginning of the “massed start” idea!  Sprints and tubulars were out of the question for many.

It was not long before some of the “long run” tourists began to show an interest in place to place records and in 1927 Eric Rae joined forces on a tandem with Bill Carruthers, also a CTC member but who raced in the Lothians CC colours, to attack the Edinburgh to York tandem record of the Road Records Association.  They were successful in taking 26 minutes off the record set five years previously by an English pair and as far as I know were the first Scottish riders to break a national RRA record. Then in 1928 D. M. Ross, shortly before he became “the Rev. D.M.”, also established a new Scottish RRA 12 hour record, and the following year a young Royal High schoolboy acquired a second-hand tricycle, not having ridden one before, took to it at once and all in the same year set five new RRAS tricycle records – 12 hours, Glasgow/Dundee and back, Aberdeen/Inverness and back, Edinburgh/Berwick and back, Edinburgh/Glasgow and back.

A considerable friendly rivalry over records developed between the Road Club and the Lothians CC and when the war put a stop to such activities the Road Club name appeared against five RRA and thirty RRAS records.  In four of these cases tandems had been stoked by CTC members riding in Lothians CC colours – a happy co-operation between “rival” clubs.  Further records activity since the war has brought the grand total of records in the books of the RRA and RRAS to forty-seven, including the four joint ones mentioned above, in name of ERC. Some years ago I asked in Cycling if any other club in the country could better that figure.  There were no replies!\* I have kept no notes of the racing performances of Club members but these should be in the books of the racing secretaries.

**E.N. Zoller additional information**:- The inaugural meeting of ERC was held 9th Nov. 1925 in Mr. Caw’s house in Morningside, at which the officials selected were G. Blount as Secretary, and Beveridge, Rae, Ross and Zoller as Committee Members. The first race organised by ERC was probably the Novices 10 on Sat. 10th April 1926 (won by Ramsay in 28.26) Other races organised that year by ERC were as follows:-

* 10 mile on Wed. 28th April 1926 won by E. Rae 27m 24secs. (EZ 31.29 after flu’)
* 10 mile on 5th May 1926 (Wed) 25 mile Sat. 5th June 1926.
* 50 mile Sat. 3rd July 1926.
* 25 mile Sat. 11th Sept 1926.
* 10 mile – gears under 63” – Sat. 2nd Oct 1926.

**Edward Zoller** – When he stood down as President of the CTC Lothians D.A., Club President Jack Murdoch was honoured to be awarded the Edward Zoller Quaich, a beautiful trophy in memory of a singular character who did much for cycling, especially in the Lothians area, for very many years.  How appropriate that the trophy should be awarded to Jack, given what Jack brought to Scottish cycling in the preceding sixty years.  But there’s another obvious parallel in the lives of these two men, because, like Jack, Edward Zoller kept ERC alive for very many years. **Here’s a brief account of a great man**:-

**Edward Zoller** was one of six people who started ERC in 1925.  He was the leading light of the breakaways.  He was an insurance agent with W.G.M. Oliver, solicitor and insurance agent who was at one time secretary of the C.T.C. Lothians D.A., and before that of the Edinburgh Amateur Bicycle Club.  Zoller didn’t do a great deal of racing himself – he just rode 10s and 25s.  He was a low gear specialist , riding 76″ at the very most.  We had a number of low gear races at the start of the season in those days.

Edward Zoller was a tall, lean man with a mop of white hair, and was known widely as “Mr. Cycling”.  He wrote frequently to the press on cycling matters, and on occasions his views would excite controversy.  He rode into his nineties, and on the day he died in the early 1990s he had just taken delivery of a new wheel from Robin Williamson.  He rode up and down the street to try it out.  He was 92 when he died, after a lifetime dedicated to cycling.  He was the secretary of ERC for about twenty years until about 1970.  He’d been a official of ERC since 1925.  He was a leading light in keeping the club together, and keeping it going.  He was made an honorary life member of the CTC.

Zoller was an RRA (Roads Record Association) observer from his early days and he followed nearly all the record attempts on Scottish roads.  He was a man of principle, and he enforced the rules strictly, which caused a few controversies.  One of the earliest record attempts by a professional was in about 1930, from Land’s End to John o’ Groats.  Zoller organised  a boat to take him across the Forth – that was before the bridge was built – to go from Granton to Burntisland, but the rider never turned up.  He had abandoned, but Zoller still had to pay for the boat.  Zoller wrote to the rider to complain about being let down, and the rider sent the bike he’d used for his record attempt to Zoller as compensation!