

## **Diary of a bicycle ride**

A few months ago I was looking through some bookshelves at my mother's home. I found a handwritten diary about a 1-week bike ride in the Cotswolds area of England. My Grandfather wrote the diary and my Uncle accompanied him on the trip. The trip took place during August 1938.

My Uncle was called Donald Taylor and he was 18 years old. My Grandfather's name was John Taylor and he was in his 50s. They lived in a small cotton spinning community near Manchester in North West England. Although the Second World War changed my Uncle's career dramatically (he became an aeronautical engineer), at the time of this trip both he and my Grandfather were mill workers. Bicycles were their only means of personal transport.

This diary is so entertaining that I thought it would interest NVP members. I showed it to the illustrious editor of Pedalings and he agreed with me. So we will be serializing it over the next few months. We hope that you enjoy the story and we hope that it inspires NVP members to take on some bicycling challenges. As you read it, note the distances that they cover, their lack of fear of the weather and remember that they were both riding single-speed, sit-up-and-beg bicycles. Remember that my Uncle started the ride with a fixed-gear bicycle (no freewheel). Also note that this was written in the context of the social norms of the time and don't forget that they were from a very humble background. You should also be aware that my Grandfather had been in the trenches during World War I. This had left him with some emotional scars and uncomfortable feelings about Continental Europe.

Gordon Taylor

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*A Cycling Tour in  
the  
Warwick - Midlands  
and  
the  
Cotswolds*

*August 1938*

**Saturday, August 20, 1938**

I arose early and in good spirits; which were not in the least dampened, by the ever-brightening skies, for I had been assailed with gloomy foreboding the previous night owing to the wretched weather, wondering and pondering, should I be able to carry out my projected tour, a project which I had dreamed of and cherished in my mind for weeks past. I eagerly and anxiously scanned the horizon, which was bright in places and of a questionable uncertainty in others.

I had made up my mind long before that it would be something of a very serious nature, that would stay me from my cherished holiday tour. Anyhow, nothing serious did happen, the elements were kind, but of a chilly nature, and the folks at home had long since fallen in with the idea so with a mind at ease from worry and a keen spirit for the venture, after an excellent breakfast and our bags packed with everything necessary we took to the road at 8:45 A.M.

I cannot describe the feeling of buoyancy, that prevailed my whole being, not the anticipation of lovely country, fresh dwelling places, new or rather old architectural buildings which I was hoping to see and once a wheel, and on the way, these feelings increased in intensity, until I was so consumed with a joyousness which pervaded my whole being. I sometimes wonder which is the greater, the joy of anticipation or the joy of realisation, but as my tour progressed, I was forced to the conclusion, that the realisation was far in excess of the expectation, and that, to me, has indeed been great and full of promise.

Anyhow as I hinted earlier, we left home at 8:45, having to contend with a head-wind, which continued to hamper our progress for a few hours. Having got the worst part of the journey over – cobbled roads and tram-lines – we arrived in HAZEL GROVE [*a town south of Manchester, then at the edge of rural Cheshire*] where we were compelled to procure some nuts and bolts, for a deficit toe-clip. Hampered by the wind we pushed on to MACCLESFIELD [*then a town in rural Cheshire, it has just (1999) lost a fight to prevent a second runway at Manchester airport being built on its outskirts*]. A place of narrow main streets, hilly and zig-zagging. As we were passing through, the silk mills were closing down for the week., it being Saturday midday. About a mile or so out of the town, we had dinner at a small place on the MAC-LONDON Rd. My wife's sandwiches being very refreshing. Soon the direction of the road began to change, causing us to have almost a tail wind, the going became easier and we made good pace up the hill past BOSLEY-CLOUD, that famous Staffordshire Viewpoint: Away on our left stretched a vast sunlit plain, and in the far distance could be seen the conical silhouette of the Llantisilio mountains [*the correct spelling is Llantysilio, they are in North Wales*]; backed by the faint skyline of Snowdon [*the highest point in England and Wales*].

Making good progress up the hill we rounded a bend in the road to be confronted with a breathtaking view of Rudyard Lake (reminiscent of Windermere). Pushing along an ever-descending road we made excellent progress and soon we arrived in LEEK [*a town in Derbyshire*].

Ascending the main Street which rises almost perpendicular we saw a public house bearing the somewhat strange title "The Silent Woman". The sign of which depicts a woman with her head cut off. I don't know whether it means that this is the only way to keep a woman quiet, but there is not doubt whatever that the treatment would have been effective. Leaving the town, we made a speedy descent to Cheddleton, and, halting at a little shop, to refresh ourselves with an ice-cream, we had an interesting conversation with the owner, a retired electrical engineer, who used to live in Middleton. Resuming our journey, we had good easy going through some lovely country right on to UTTOXETER where we pulled up at the "Three Tuns" Hotel, and satisfied the cravings of the inner man with a good sensible meal. The weather had been very kind to us and now it seemed to be doing its utmost to imitate a real summers day, the sun being gloriously warm and the air deliciously fragrant and balmy. Near the centre of the town, a sign post read "Lichfield, 19 miles" which certainly quickened our spirits, for I thought that we would not get there on the first day, but a gorgeous road via HANDSACRE, lovely weather, easy-going, and the best of scenery, and believe me, we had travelled so easily, and quickly, that we were surprised to find that we were but 2 miles from Lichfield, as we were having a al-fresco meal sat on a fence by the road side.

We entered the town by Beacon Hill and found a C. T. C. [*abbreviation for Cyclists Touring Club; still and active club - [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)*] place owned by Mr. Oldknow, where were very fortunate to be put up for the night, his wife being ill. He had already refused 6 cyclists: owing to his wife's indisposition but, we were sharing a bed kindly took us in. What a man, about 70 years of age, of fine proportions, as capable in the house as any woman made his own cigarettes from pipe-tobacco which he had been doing for over 50 years. We had a walk round the town, made a few necessary purchases, and got in conversation with a cyclist from Liverpool, who was finishing his tour, he had done 600 miles in 4 days, some cyclist and some lad. Made our way back to our digs [*lodgings*] and after a cup of tea retired to rest at 10:30. The end of a perfect day.

*[they had covered at least 80 miles on the first day]*

**Sunday** (August 21, 1938) *our heroes have just spent a night at a B&B in Litchfield.*

After an excellent breakfast of bacon & eggs etc, on examing (sic) the cycles, I discovered a flat tyre, so to make sure, it was definitely a puncture, we put some air in, and decided to let it stand awhile, thereby providing the opportunity for a visit to the Cathedral. We were very fortunate in our choice of time (9 A.M.) as there were few sightseers abroad as yet; and for a time we had the Cathedral practically to ourselves. We had a very interesting conversation with the Verger, who gave us many historical facts about the place. How the roof was destroyed by Cromwell's forces, he also explained to us, that one portion of the roof had become to (sic) heavy, as it were, for the walls, which it was pressing outward, some of which had been rebuilt, and to take some of the weight away, it had been plastered to immitate the stonework, and it was a clever piece of architectural deception. Had he not pointed this out, I don't think we would have observed the difference. He also informed us that the height of the central spire, was over 200 ft. high, and as we stood in the nave we were able to look up, inside this spire. The fan vaulting of the roof, is a most impressive piece of work, and one of the outstanding features of this lovely Cathedral, of which the people of Lichfield are justly proud. We returned to our digs, to discover the tyre was definitely flat; so we had to put our theories of puncture repairing into practice, which eventually proved successful, for we had no more trouble in that direction during our tour. We were late in continuing our journey, but as it was such a glorious morning, we knocked of (sic) the miles easily passing through most gorgeous country, and the roads! My hat! If you cannot ride a bike here, go and get a bath-chair.

We passed through well-wooded country, being so charmed with the scenery, that we did not realise BASSETS POLE lay behind us, until the gable-like road through COLESHILL loomed before us. Fortifying ourselves with ice cream we passed through the forest of ARDEN and stopped at a small place in HAMPTON-IN-ARDEN. Whilst having lunch, a heavy shower of rain fell, and when we had completely replenished the mechanism of the inner man, it had cleared up again, and we took the road in brilliant sunshine. Almost a dozen belighted speedsters, probably 12 hour racing men, passed us on the road in the opposite direction, and very soon we arrived at KENILWORTH, the castle basking in the scorching sunshine. There were crowds of cyclists, sat and laid down on the greensward of castle Hill, which is directly opposite the castle, and motors' and charabanc's [*tour buses*] innumerable. We did not go inside the castle, as there were other places we wanted to see before nightfall, but contented ourselves with as much as we could see from the outside. On the road again, and rounding a bend in the road not far from the castle, we were confronted with a ford, which meanders right across the main highway. I took to the bridge (safety first) but Donald, being young and adventurous, undauntedly rode through the water, being watched by me, and a crowd of cyclists on the bridge.

We proceeded amicably together, and soon pulled up at GUY'S CLIFF MILL, just off the main Warwick road. This is an old corn mill, driven by a water wheel, beautifully situated, an artist's paradise. It was built in 1066, and is still in action, grinding corn. After purchasing a few P.C's [*postcards*] we rode on through WARWICK, the roads being congested by motorists and cyclists. After passing through WARWICK, we dismounted, and made an heroic attempt to have an al-fresco meal by the roadside, but had to hurriedly evacuate the position, and leave the place in charge of the enemy. The ants, who were completely in possession of our erst-while strategic position. We were about to resume our journey, when a damsel in distress, sought our help with a broken down 3 speed gear, and 14 miles to go. I am sorry to report, the trouble was beyond our knowledge of mechanics, and all we could do was offer our sympathy.

We pushed on to STRATFORD where we had tea? I was most disappointed with my first impression of the place. It struck me as being over commercialised, and the river on that most delightful Sunday afternoon was congested with holiday traffic giving me the impression of Hollingworth Lake [*a very popular recreation area near their home*] on Good Friday. We saw the memorial theatre, a most uninteresting building from the outside, more like a modern factory in fact; the people down here, call it the Jam Works. We also paid a visit to Shakespeare's birthplace, which nestles amidst a row of shops. After purchasing souvenir's and P.C's we made good progress through the VALE OF EVESHAM, glorious in the evening sunlight; passing through CLIFFORD CHAMBERS to MICKLETON, where we obtained excellent rooms at Mrs. Yardleys IVY HOUSE. We decided to visit CHIPPING CAMDEN ere the light faded, and after a hard 3 or 4 miles, we were rewarded with many interesting sights in this old-world place. After a brief but most interesting tour of inspection we returned to our abode for the night at Mickleton. After supper, we had a short walk in real country darkness, which was inky black, but the sky above us, seemed one huge constellation of stars, I do not remember seeing so many stars; there are not street lights to guide one on their way, which fact, made us feel, we were literally stepping into a "material blackness". We turned in, and retired to rest at 11 P.M. (Rather late, we shall have to improve our habits)

**Monday 22 August 1938; Mickleton. I made a mistake; my Grandfather seems to have a 2-speed bicycle. On this day they visited some classic Cotswold villages. These places are much the same now as they were in 1938, except for invasion by automobiles and tourists.**

After partaking (that is not the right word, for we took the lot) of a gargantuan breakfast: owing to the state of the weather, which was behaving most unkindly, we stayed over an hour exchanging reminiscences with Mr. Yardley. In other words we had a chin-wag. The rain, which was steadily falling showed no sign of abatement; so we donned capes, bade good-bye to the Yardleys (several editions) and pushed on through WESTON-SUB-EDGE to BROADWAY. About 2 miles past Weston – my two-speed lever broke on the rivet and as I did not relish the idea of patching it up with string and riding these hills in top gear, I looked about for some likely place to repair the trouble. I was fortunate in locating a motor garage at WILLERSY, where the mechanic drilled out the rivet and replaced a new one., quickly and effectively, for the modest charge of threepence [*About 2c; Britain used pounds, shillings and pence in 1938, there was a coin of this value called threepenny bit. A pound was 20 shillings and a shilling was 12 pence, so there were 240 old pennies in a pound. British currency was decimalized in 1971. The new currency was pounds and new pence. The pound kept its 'value', but the old penny disappeared. There are 100 new pence in a pound*]. We proceeded on our way to BROADWAY that old-world village, really beautiful, but fast changing its appearance, and spoiling its dreamy complacency by the number of modern dwellings which are being erected. Proceeding on our way, we passed a large number of orchards, which lined the road, the dark green of the trees being relieved by acres upon acres of ripening wheat. We turned by a side lane to the quaint village of BUCKLAND and its interesting church, wherein we spent quite a time, there being much of interest.

It is a very old church, in an excellent state of preservation, though the tower is being restored, owing to most of the beams being in a state of decay. We took to the road, doubling back on our tracks somewhat: and entered the village of STANTON. This is very picturesque, breathing rusticity and prolific growth. There is a fine old mansion here also, Stanton Court. Pushed on through TODDINGTON and DIDBROOK, a quaint old-world village, and arrived at STANWAY, a somewhat similar village to STANTON, being almost a reflection of its beauty, but more extended. The rain by now, had eased up, so we refreshed the inner-man with an al-fresco meal, on the green near the village cross. Mrs. Yardley had made us a large concoction of bread and butter (brown and white) so with the aid of two tins of fruit and a couple of apples, we made a decent meal, although the wasps were a blooming nuisance during the process. Having revived ourselves, we proceeded on our journey to STOW-ON-THE-WOLD. It is most appropriately named, for we had to walk practically the whole way passing through most wonderful country, abounding in magnificent trees and glorious wild flowers lining the roadside. Up we walked up and still up, until we seemed to be on top of the world, but it was well worth the effort. Here we had tea, which we bought without a doubt; and were joined by two other cyclists. One was an R. A. F. [*Royal Air Force*] man, he had come from Bournemouth (100 miles) and was making for Stratford before nightfall. He was cycling to Glasgow [*about 300 more miles*] working up the Yorkshire coast; and coming back through the Lake District [*add another 400, so about an 800 mile trip altogether*]: The other one was from London, who chummed up with us, so we had a brief walk round the village, Donald purchasing a map of the Cotswolds, which proved very useful as we finished our tour. We made our way to BOURTON-ON-THE-WATER, where we visited the famous model village. This is a wonderful piece of work, done by one man, an exact replica of the village itself, in very detail, built out of Cotswold stone. Our London friend decided to stay here the night, but as it was such a beautiful evening, we pushed on to NORTHLEACH and obtained rooms with Mrs. Andrews.

This is a quaint old-world village, but boasts a modern pharmacy which we visited to purchase a few P. C.'s [*Postcards*] and a bottle of Ellimans (every picture tells a story, but this one didn't; it was true) [*Ellimans Embrocation was still available in the 1960s when I used it in the grammar school running club; it was a lotion for easing muscular pain – three solid days of tough cycling (and pushing up hills) was beginning to take its toll on my Grandfather and Uncle!*]. Had a look at the church with a fine porch and tower. Many fine brasses of the wool staplers [*a person who sorts wool in to different grades or classifications*] who built the church. Adjoining the church in the rectory resembling a mansion with spacious lawns, and well-

kept gardens. Near Mrs. Andrews, is a fine half-timbered house, still in perfect condition, in which the wool-stapler who built most of the church used to live. North-Leach church is called the cathedral of the Cotswolds being the finest in this part of the country. We retired about 10-15 PM (after sampling the Ellimans) to rest in a comfy bed. It seemed going back a generation when we lighted our way upstairs with the useful (but almost despised in some quarters) candle *[by the 1930s most of the UK had electric light, but obviously some of these quaint old houses had avoided such new technology]*.

**Tuesday 23 August 1938; Northleach. This was a tough day, they had to ride up and down several memorable hills, but some of the places that they visited are very interesting and still worth a visit.**

On arising at 7:30 AM we were greeted with the prospect of a delightful day, so after an excellent breakfast; and the purchase of a pair of broad gaiters, to keep my plus-fours in a sensible position and incidentally, to add comfort to my leg, where they made contact; we took to the road again at 9:30. Once ahweel we passed through some delightful country to CHEDWORTH the road winding and turning, up hill and down dale, through splendid parklands, and glorious woodlands, and the morning air like wine. We were lured on, mile after mile by various signs along a well metalled road {“road metal” is the British term what’s known in the USA at “black top”: the dictionary says that it means “crushed rock, broken stone, etc. used to construct a road” since the root of “metal” is the Latin “metallium”, for product of a mine, this makes sense} to the ROMAN VILLA. This is supposed to be the finest excavation of Roman work in the country {in 1938 the roman villa at Fishbourne in Sussex had not been discovered, I suspect that Fishbourne is now a more impressive site, but nonetheless roman villas are not very common}, and gives one an insight of the high development and outlay of a wealthy Roman’s abode, and speaks much of his ingenuity in household comforts of that day. This place has now been taken over by the National Trust; who are doing a great work in protecting and keeping such places for the benefit of posterity.

We had to retrace our steps somewhat to pick up the main road to CASSEY-COMPTON, where we were intimidated, challenged, and held at bay for a short time by, two ferocious looking cows, who refused to move from their stronghold, which barred our progress. Eventually we persuaded them that we had the right of way, so they gracefully allowed us to pass on?

We walked bout half a mile, then dropped down into WITHINGTON, another of those small picturesque villages, one is continually coming across in this part of the country. The sun was now pouring down his beneficent warmth, and the earth in response had put on a glorious garb of rich foliage and beautiful flowers.

After purchasing to soothe – to wit cigarettes (one g) {I don’t know what “one g” means, but my uncle was a smoker all of his life and it killed him in 1995} which we sampled as we pushed up a long hill, pestered by flies (one hand in action all the time to drive them off) we gained the main road to GLOUCESTER, pausing to look at the SEVEN SPRINGS once the reputed source of the THAMES but now dried up. The road wound up still higher, being crowned at the summit by a small public house which has the uncommon name of “The Air Balloon Inn” {this pub is still very much in business and is still a landmark, I used to drive on this road a lot in the 1980s and it was very busy. It’s been widened since 1938 and did carry a lot of trucks when I was driving around here, but the recent opening of the M40 motorway a few miles east of here may have reduced the and it might be a good bike route again}. From here the road dropped like a stone for about 3 miles, it was a glorious thrilling ride, and another 2 miles of gradual descent brought us right in to the city. I had thoroughly enjoyed coasting down these five miles, whilst Donald, with his fixed gear: had been compelled to twiddle the pedals round, needless to say, I had left him behind, which fact, coupled to the ease of the situation, became too much for him and the thought of “ease of distribution” altered our horizon, so we decided to make a “change”, not of mounts, but in the method of propulsion: so after an excellent dinner {as working class northerners they would refer to their mid-day meal as dinner; the evening meal was called “tea” or in some cases “high tea” this habit has changed in recent years and northern English people have lunch and dinner like the rest of the world}, at a reasonable price, we made our way to the nearest cycle stores, where Donald had a free wheel and front brake fitted to his already excellent machine. This necessarily took up some time, which was spent in looking round eventually reaching the cathedral which we inspected.

There is so much architectural beauty and monuments of historical associations that one would like to stay longer, and go over the place at leisure, but our time would not allow. I must mention the fine East Window, with its glowing colours, also, the tablet erected to Sir Hubert Parry, commemorating the excellent work of this fine musician over 40 years {my grandfather was a first class amateur pianist, he was also conductor of the orchestra in the town where he lived and so musical landmarks were especially interesting to him}.



Gloucester itself is disappointing apart from the Cathedral, one can take it as any busy industrial city teeming with life, and the center crowded with business houses. It was really depressing, heavy and drowsy (the day had much to do with the feeling) and we were really glad to be on the move again, so we retraced our steps to the cycle stores, to retrieve Donald's cycle, and moved off, Donald eager to try out his new additions. Once outside the city our impressions altered for we journeyed along a fine open road lined with trees, and dotted about with many ancient buildings. We had a steady climb for almost 2 miles, then dropped rapidly for about 4 miles through PITCHCOOMBE into STROUD. This is a cramped higgledy-piggledy place, industrial and full of activity, boasting a piano factory, a place of steep descents, and also steep ascents; as we were soon to discover. The day being hot; (the tourists also) we called a halt for liquid refreshment; and after replenishing the human carburetor, we hurried out of town, and took to the upgrade, walking and pushing the bikes about 5 miles to a small place right on the ridge called NYMPFIELD never shall I forget that climb up; and still up the gable like road, it looked as though it would never end. We were completely fed up. On reaching the top, we called at the first place available for tea; being in a ravenous state after our toilsome climb. This was a delightful cottage, right on the top of the hill, (mountain is a more appropriate term), and from the roadway in front we had an excellent view of the Malvern Hills, and below them the river Severn 8 or 10 miles above Bristol. Not far from this cottage is one of the long barrows or tumulas of the megalithic times, which goes by the name of Hetty Pegler's Tump {according to [www.britannia.com](http://www.britannia.com), "the name Hetty Pegler derives from one of the 17th-century owners of the field in the which the tump is located: Hester and Henry Pegle, Hester died in 1694, and Henry in 1695"; also from this website: "it is a chambered neolithic long barrow 120 feet long, 85 feet at its widest, and 10 feet high at the entrance end... ..During the 1821 excavation the remains of 15 skeletons were found, and a later, intrusive Roman burial above the northeast chamber", I believe that visitors can still enter the burial chamber; the word "tump" is western English dialect for a small mound or clump}, one authority declaring it to be the finest long barrow in the South Cotswolds, and one of the most impressive in England. The mound is posed on the lofty edge of the western scarp, like a bird's nest at the exposed bough, and the megalithic chambers, which their large blocks of stone make a grand sepulcher. The covered way leads beneath the mound to the living-room of the dead, with two asymmetrical lateral chambers on the left: divided by a single large monolith dripping dank and dismal in this stone mansion of the living-dead, but now sovereign was their domain when they climbed upon the turfen roof, who can doubt; that in so choosing the high places, the primary purpose of these, our first English builders, our ancient mariners from the sea, was religious? These dead loads were on their way to the sky-world and perhaps they built on Hetty Pegler's Tump long-vanished stone houses which were the sky-world in their conviction.

Leaving the cottage we rode on the ridge road for almost a mile and then commenced to descend, and what a drop. For about 4 miles the road was in a delicious state, it snaked down & down, our momentum increasing to the speed of a motor-car, it was most exhilarating, but I doubt whether it was worth the trouble or rather the donkey work we had done on the other side. After this brilliant burst of speed we reached the village of WOTTON-UNDER-EDGE, and the name aptly describes its position, for it gave one the feeling that the high hills around may topple over, and destroy it at any moment. We intended pushing further along, but after an interesting talk with one of the natives, and what proved later to be excellent advice we stayed here the night at a C. T. C. place owned by Mrs. Lacey, and what a woman to make you feel comfortable and at home. This lady has 3 sons and a daughter, 2 of the sons are organists. I discovered an excellent piano in the sitting room, and a good class of music ranging from Bach's organ fugues to Debussy, Delius, Ravel with Gershwin added.

All in all this was the worst day of our tour, we had toiled laboriously, had glorious weather, but had covered the least mileage. However we were recompensed when we found this domicile. The warm reception we received, and the helpful conversation helped to dispel some of the unpleasant memories of our climb out of STROUD and after a light supper we retired to rest at 10:15 P. M.

**Note: In last month's episode I had a question about what "1g" meant in the context of the purchase of cigarettes. Shag has suggested that this was 1 groat, a coin that was legal tender during the period 1351-1652. The term continued in regular use until the 1940s however. A groat's value was fourpence, or about 7c at 1938 values, probably about the correct price for a packet of cigarettes.**

**Wednesday 24 August 1938, Wotton-Under-Edge. They visited many interesting places on this day; I could fill the newsletter with notes about some of them. If you are interested in reading more about these places, the Internet is a great source of information.**

After breakfast; we bade good-bye to Mrs. Lacey, and once more took to the open road. We soon passed through ALDERLY, a very small village and walked over a long common to the summit of the hill, which is crowned with a noble pile – The Somerset Monument, a massive tower with a balcony round the top, which provides an excellent view of the Malvern Hills [*Classical music fans will know Malvern as Elgar's region, car fans will know Malvern as the home of Morgan cars. A walk along the Malvern Hills is a very pleasant way to spend a day*]. We had a fine run from here down through HAWKESBURY-UPTON into BADMINTON, the seat of Lord Beaufort: these titled people know how to choose the beauty spots; and they have the money to obtain them [*In 1938 this was still true. Since the Second World War many of the landed gentry have had to give up their big houses and estates, or find a way of making money out of their property. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the world and the tax system stopped favoring people that live off inherited wealth. Badminton is now the home of the "Mitsubishi Badminton Horse Trials", a big annual equestrian event. The Beaufort family still owns this estate, which has been their seat since 1608. William Kent and the ubiquitous Capability Brown modeled the grounds*]. We pushed on through ACTON-TURVILLE to CASTLE-COOMBE, reputed to be the prettiest village in England [*Still a cute place; see [www.ccombe.fsnet.co.uk](http://www.ccombe.fsnet.co.uk). There is now a motor racing circuit nearby and these days it's likely that many people will associate this name with touring car and motor cycle racing*]. Words fail to describe its beauty, it is absolutely unspoiled by anything modern and breathes an atmosphere of a dim past; where the hurly-burly and bustle of present day life was unknown, and the people lived close to nature. Everything is kept in an excellent state of preservation the inhabitants being justly proud of their beautiful village. We had a glass of cider [*in the UK cider is alcoholic, this kind of cider is VERY strong and probably is what's known as "scrumpy", made locally from local grown apples*] in a public house, which was over 500 years old, and by all appearances it will carry on for another 500. A stream runs through the village, crossed by 3 foot bridges, one of which dates back to the Romans. There is also a fine court owned by a member of the Wills family [*Wills was a huge tobacco company, it has now been absorbed in to one of the conglomerates*] We were very loath to leave here, and it was with much reluctance that we retraced our steps to join the main road to CHIPPENHAM; a real fine road for cycling. We did not go on to Chippenham, however, but took a bye-road which took us right in to MALMESBURY. We had an excellent lunch here, of the real Wiltshire ham, and afterwards had a look at the abbey and market cross. This cross is in an excellent state the carvings being well preserved, and in close proximity to the Abbey. The entrance to the abbey is unique in this country, the deep dome-like entrance having no supporting pillars.

We could not stay here long so we pushed on, up the CIRENCESTER road, past the Thames Head, the real source of the river Thames and on in to CIRENCESTER, by a lovely road.

Just outside the town, we pulled up to consult the map and whilst getting our bearings from this useful source of information an old gentleman came along and kindly asked if he could be of any help to us. We had a very pleasant, and varied conversation with him for a short time, during which he gave us some very useful information regarding the road to Bibury. In the saddle again, and following the old man's directions, we struck a good road through BARNSELEY to the village of BIBURY. This is another of the high spots of our tour, for it is a lovely place. There is a stream pulling through the village, parallel with the main road, which abounds in trout: Across the stream, almost at right angles is the famous row of ancient dwelling, fully occupied and covered with a wealth of bloom called Arlington Row. These cottages have been bought by the Royal Society of Arts, who have restored them and keep them in an excellent state of preservation. Needless to say, here is an artist's paradise.

It was our intention to spend the night at some undecided place further on the road, but the beauty of the place with its quiet; peaceful attitude, seemed to hold a spell over us, so we decided to stay the night here. We were very fortunate in finding Pigeon-House-Farm, which eventually proved to be the old manor house, and is over 400 years old; but the comforts are not old, neither are the fittings, quite the reverse, everything inside being quite modern, and the service excellent.

While we were making ourselves presentable, a motorist and his wife from Nuneaton drew in. We had a very happy time with these delightful and interesting people, not stand-offish as some motorists are to cyclists, *[things haven't changed much in 62 years have they?]* the reason for their friendliness was that they were both cyclists, the car, being a quite recent addition to their "momentous" days. The lady is evidently a person of culture *[obviously, if she was a cyclist!]* and the gentleman was a press photographer. They were touring the Cotswolds, taking photographs for articles for the paper: They were very interested in Donald for, as usual, he was doing his bit (and everybody else's) in the conversation *[he never changed!]*. He was able to tell them of several beauty spots which they had not seen, which they promptly decided to visit on the morrow, in the hope of obtaining some useful snaps. The lady recommended a book to us on the Cotswolds "Wold without end" *[Bad puns are not a new thing]* which we intend to read, when we reach home.

We retired to rest about 10-20 PM; and after Donald had done a spot of moth swotting (large type) in the bedroom, we settled down to rest about 11 PM, and so ends another glorious and interesting day.

**Thursday 25 August 1938, Bibury. This day marks the start of their journey home. They avoided the West Midlands manufacturing belt by retracing some of their route from earlier in the week. In 1938 the West Midlands region was the home of Austin, Triumph, Rover, Jaguar cars (then the Swallow Sidecar Company); Triumph, Norton, BSA and other motorcycles, Dunlop tires, Lucas Prince of Darkness, etc. However even with all of this industry, there are a couple of gems in this region such as the Cadburys Chocolate factory at Bournville and, for cricket fans like our newsletter editor, there is Edgbaston Cricket ground in Birmingham. The bike tour stayed in the countryside though.**

Up in good time and ready for the excellent breakfast served at 7:30 am. After we had done full justice to these gastronomic delights we had a general pack-up, and again continued on our journey.

The morning was heavy, and overclouded, as we took a second-class road [*in US terms this means an unnumbered road*] passing through old-world villages of COLN-ST-ALDWYN, and QUENNINGTON, and eventually reaching FAIRFORD [*Fairford is now known for its 'airfield, used by the RAF and the US Air Force. Some friends of mine live near there and on my visits the aircraft have been very quiet and unobtrusive*]. We made a short stay here, chiefly to look at the church, which is noted for its unique 16<sup>th</sup> century hand painted (not stained) glass windows. They were presented to the church by a wealthy wool-stapler and they represent scenes from the Old Testament, and also the life of Christ; the idea being to teach Christianity to the people of that age easier, quicker and more understandable than by the then known oral method. The colours of these windows are most striking in their freshness and vivid colourings, with the exception of one or two, which have faded through the centuries. We remounted our cycles, accompanied by threats of rain but managed to reach LECHLADE on the Berkshire border, when we were compelled (that is literally correct) to dismount and hurriedly don cape and leggings. We sheltered under the trees that bordered the roadway and the heavens seemed to split in twain and the rain fell, and great was the fall of it. [*The underline was my grandfather's*] After a time the storm abated a little allowing us to make good pace on the main road to BURFORD. [*Burford church dates back to Norman times, but the town's present buildings on the High Street date back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The town was a center for wool merchants from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.*] Arriving at BURFORD, (the rain had now ceased) we coasted down the steep, but extremely picturesque High Street; noting the old house in our descent. We dismounted at the foot of the hill and made our way to Providence Lodge (C. T. C.) where we were served with a good dinner [*note that this is the midday meal*], in a room supported by fine, well preserved old oak beams, and possessing a large open stone fireplace with a large fixed grate, complete with spit; and roasting bars, not forgetting two seats carved from solid stone, inside the fireplace, one on each side, well worn by constant use, down through the ages. Much time could be spent describing the various curios ranged around this room, but time will not allow us to linger. As we looked out of the window we perceived that the rain had recommenced in a steady downpour, so we made a dash to visit the church, one of the most interesting we have seen during our tour. This visit being a hurried one, we remounted in teeming rain, to climb a steep hill. A grand drop of about 2 miles took us into SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD, where, owing to the state of the weather (which was behaving most rudely) we dismounted, and had a discussion under some trees, which afforded us a little protection from the deluge. The outcome of this was that we decided not to work our way back home through fresh country, which would involve the unpleasant prospect of a journey through manufacturing towns like Coventry, but to cut across country to MICKLETON, and spend another night with Mr. & Mrs. Yardley.

A study of the map and the help of one or two local inhabitants we were soon in Stow-on-The-Wold for the second time during this tour, but approached from a different angle. The rain had now ceased, but the clouds were very heavy, so we decided that our best policy would be to push on while the going was good. This we did and rode steadily on through the 5 mile drive, which I ought to explain is a ridge road, passing through a dense, rich belt of trees for the aforementioned distance. The road then began to descend steadily, and taking a right turning we dropped dizzily in to Chippen Camden. We passed quickly through this beautiful old world town, which I have described more fully, earlier on in this account; and after a

gentle up grade, we had an easy drop, which worked out into a speedy free wheel through Mickleton's only main street; bringing us to our destination – the Yardley's, just as the rain recommenced. We were welcomed like members of the family. We took a fresh change of under-clothing out of our bags, which this good lady readily put out to air and warm. Whilst we were proceeding with our ablutions, and after a change, and an excellent meal we felt new made and ready for anything.

By this time the weather had become more sensible, so Mr. Yardley who from a previous conversation discovered I was interested in horticulture took us round to see his friend's place, a Mr. Webb, a great supporter of the Methodists here, and a man who employs practically everyone in the village who desires work.

Never have I seen such a vast estate, acre upon acre of orchards much of the fruit having been gathered, but still plenty to carry on with for some little time. There seemed to be miles of greenhouses, full of tomato plants; some of these houses being so long one could scarcely see the other end, there were also narrow gauge railways running down the center the fruit being borne away in large trucks to the sorting sheds. There were tens of thousands of tomato plants growing outside heavily laden with fruit. Quite a dozen large dwellings on the estate which housed the foremen and their families, and garages and packing houses dotted here and there. This man (Mr. Webb) began the business 30 or 40 years ago with one medium sized greenhouse and at the present time, (so I was informed) he can scarcely calculate his wealth. The extent of the place is amazing to a townsman, and can only be fully realized by a tour of inspection. I was most impressed, and greatly pleased that I had been allowed to have a look around the estate.

On reaching Mr. Yardley's home we had a long and interesting talk about church work in the village which kept us going through supper until 11:00 PM, when we suddenly realized that it was time to retire.

Taylor Diary Friday 26 August 1938, Mickleton

*This was the penultimate day of the trip. The ride home is now fully underway. As I typed this, I could sense their emotions. They still managed to visit some interesting places, even with the thought of going back to work in the Lancashire cotton mills at the back of their minds.*

We were up, and bestirring ourselves in good time, after a good lengthy sleep in the most comfortable and magnetic bed, I ever occupied.

After a growing lad's breakfast and a thorough lubrication of our machines, a brief look around the garden, and good-byes all round, we recommenced our journey, turning our faces homewards.

We had a comfortable easy run into STRATFORD, and had a good look around the old town, which altered my impression of the previous Sunday. What fine old half-timbered buildings there are here, a delight to the eye. The Grammar School dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and is still in use. *[The town is crowded in summer when there are tourist busses everywhere. I like Stratford at off peak times and I have had some very pleasant evenings at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre; in 1984 I saw Kenneth (now Sir Kenneth) Branagh and Brian Blessed in Henry V there. If you like canal boats this is a very popular place to stop; there is a large canal basin where you can rent a barge for a multi-day trip.]* We lingered in this quiet part of town as long as possible, but we had many mile to cover, and a late start from Mickleton had delayed us somewhat; so after purchasing a few postcards we bade "Au-Revoir" to the immortal William's birthplace.

Keeping a good pace we were soon in Warwick, *[These old English words are not pronounced the way that they are spelled. The correct pronunciation of this town's name is "Warick". Warwick castle is worth a visit and is in excellent condition. In recent years it has been restored by, of all people, the company that owns "Madame Tussaud's" waxworks; I'm sure it will be seen a monument to Margaret Thatcher's free enterprise economy.]* where we paused to look at Leycester Hospital which is considered an architectural gem, and is certainly a "thing of beauty" and lingers long in one's memory.

But we must be moving on to Kenilworth, not forgetting to turn off the main road to take a look at Guy's Cliff Mill, now working, and performing the function for which it was created – grinding corn, as in the days of its youthful vigour. Arriving at Kenilworth, the inner man reminded us of his existence, so we consulted the C. T. C. handbook and discovered "Castle View" advertised to provide for the hungry cyclist. We partook of lunch, which was good, and sustaining, but we got stung, for we were charged practically double the price stated in the handbook.

However, such things cannot always be avoided, particularly when one is ravenously hungry. We journeyed on to Coleshill, descending the steep main street with alacrity (and a free wheel) and were soon in STONEBRIDGE, where we were compelled to don capes, as the rain began to fall. Once through Stonebridge and the sky cleared a little, but we retained our capes, which proved a wise course, for soon another shower fell. We stopped on our way to BASSETS-POLE to buy some pears (I said buy) we got 14 for the huge sum of 1 penny, and we were not long before we had finished the lot.

The rain had now ceased, so we packed our capes, and pushed on our way, passing through many miles of well wooded country, descending into Lichfield as another shower commenced. Mr. Oldnow was very pleased to see us again, and readily put us up for the night. After a game of cards, a light supper, and a walk around the town, our minds dwelling on the previous Saturday, when we were consumed with a spirit of adventure, and now, the episode drawing to a close, naturally there were many delightful experiences exchanged, and premature plans formulated for a future tour on similar lines to this one. We could have talked all night, but life is not intended to be one long holiday, for our development it is decreed otherwise, so we retraced our steps and retired to rest about 10-15 well satisfied with our day's progress. *[Betsy found a quote from my Uncle in a letter to my father in 1979. He noted that when with Mr. Oldnow "they were lulled to sleep by the sound of death watch beetle in the paneling"!]*

Post Script (From Gordon). My uncle's letter to my father in 1979 has some interesting notes about the visit to Wotton-Under-Edge described in an earlier section of the diary:

When we were there, we visited the local church, and Dad, as he usually did, made straight for the organ. After a chat with the vergier [caretaker] during which Dad established his bona fides as a church organist, the sliding glass doors were unlocked, and Dad was allowed to play a few pieces. The quiet rather flutelike tones of this two manual organ delighted Dad, and one of the most delicious moments of his life occurred, I think, when he saw the old brass plate over the organ which said "This organ was officially opened in (I think) 1746 by a recital played by George Frederick Handel". I have looked up the authenticity of this, by the way, and it was indeed opened by Handel, but in London. Much later on, the instrument was bought by this little church. I think one of my most happy memories is of Dad, playing on the actual keyboard on which his idol had played, in that small church in the Cotswolds on a summer afternoon so long ago.

I couldn't help mentioning this, since Father's day is on June 18. My father was an exceptional pianist and also a dedicated cyclist. He was very close to his father and brother. He would have been very excited to read about this organ.

Taylor Diary Saturday 27 August 1938, Lichfield

“Our finish sprint home”

On arising at 7:00 am we were greeted with the prospects of a glorious day, so after a good sensible, homely breakfast we decided to get moving while the going was good. We bade goodbye to Mr. Oldnow and Lichfield and took to the road at 8:45 AM.

It was a glorious morning ideal for cycling; the sun shining, and a tang in the air. That was exhilarating and refreshing. We set a good pace, covering the ground very easily, passing through lovely country to Handsacre where we took a right turning and eventually arrived at Abbots-Bromley. Pushing on we passed through the delightful BAGOTS WOOD, on to Bounts Green through Uttoxeter, and on to Lower-Teian, where we decided to halt having covered the first 25 miles in 1 hour 40 minutes, which is not so bad for a veteran. We called in at the Dog and Partridge inn, and fortified ourselves with ham sandwiches and lettuce, and a little light liquid refreshment; Donald deciding to sample the cider (This lad will turn to drink someday). *[Oh how right he was – my uncle liked his “two fingers” of scotch every evening! Note that cider is always alcoholic in the UK, non-alcoholic versions have many names such as apple juice and trade names such as “Cydrax”]* while we were so engaged one or two of the locals came in for their morning’s gill – and pint; *[a gill was a common term for ½ pint of beer – the word has gone out of use in recent years.]* we heard some choice repartee in the local dialect. We left here fully refreshed at 11:45 am; and the day being much warmer, the sun shining brilliantly, we made steady progress through CHEADLE, then a steady climb up to Whetley Rocks, and a delicious free wheel of about 4 miles brought us to CHEDLETON. A short, sharp climb and we reached the town of LEEK with its church perched atop a hill and its main street dizzily descending out of the town.

We were now comforted with some steady collar-work on the main Macclesfield-London Road for about 9 miles (a stream of on-coming traffic, mainly mechanical) to Freshwater swimming pool. After passing this place, we had a fine view of Rudyard Lake. A steady decline of about 3 miles brought us into Macclesfield with its tortuous, zigzagging, congested, narrow main streets. We made a necessary short halt here, and once outside the town, we pulled up on the tree-lined road. After exploring the contents of my bag, I discovered a half pound packet of dates, which we vigorously consumed; a cigarette completed the menu, and once more mounting our trusty steeds we proceeded on our way, not with the same alacrity as we had begun in the early morning; but pushing along we soon found we had an easy ride, and were not long before we passed through Pointon, which was thronged with people, it being their annual Carnival Day, Hazel Grove being reached soon afterwards. I was not feeling too vigorous by now and the going became hard and laborious. I daresay a great portion of this feeling was purely psychological, for after passing through such glorious country, with fine roads and now approaching those places, and scenes more familiar to me, flaunting their everyday sordid apparel, the effect was sure to be felt, and it hit me hard for a time. Passing on to OTTERSPOOL BRIDGE, a brief rest, followed by a walk up the hill, things became better, my viewpoint has altered, my mental vision accepting things as they were, for I now realised that my wonderful holiday was almost at an end, and I settled down to meet the commonplace things of life in a sensible manner until the next opportunity of revisiting some of the beautiful places I had explored during this never-to-be forgotten week.

We passed through the uninteresting places of Denton, Guide Bridge and Ashton *[all industrial suburbs of Manchester; in 1938 they would be full of coal-fired cotton mills that churned out black smoke while in operation]*, with their holed road surfaces to the almost formidable Bardsley Brow *[in the local dialect this is pronounced “Bardsley bru”, I have ridden my bicycle up this hill many times and it’s an awful hill to have at the end of a long trip]*, at the foot of which we had a refreshing drink before commencing the walk up the hill. *[they didn’t bother to try to ride!]* On reaching the top of this “pimple” we remounted and rode up through Hathershaw to Oldham. With a vigorous burst of enthusiasm, we passed through Heyside and reached home at 5:30 pm having covered the 80 miles since 8:45 am with two hours break for meals, lighter in pocket, but greatly enriched in mind and spirit.

*That’s it for the diary. I hope you have enjoyed reading about this bike trip. Several people have commented on how much they liked this addition to the newsletter. Obviously, for me there was a*



*lot of personal attachment to this story and so it's hard for me to judge how much this particular series entertained and encouraged you, but I hope that we can turn the Pedaler in to more than just a calendar of events. So if you have some bicycle stories of your own that could be shared with the rest of the membership let us know.*

*Gordon*

### **John William Taylor**

Born 30 June 1884, 5 Turner Street, Crossbank, Ashton under Lyne (now transferred to Oldham district), Lancashire

Died 22 August 1953, Stomach Cancer

Father: Walter Taylor

Married: Emma Holland on 14 March 1910 at St Paul's Methodist Chapel, Rochdale Road, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire.

Children: Raymond (b 1911, d 1987), Donald Lee (b 1920, d 1995).

Military Service: Gunner in an artillery unit, Royal Lancashire Fusiliers, 1916-1918. Saw active duty in France during WW I

Occupation: Cotton Spinner, Cape Cotton Mill, Shaw, Oldham, Lancashire

Other activities:

- ≡ Noted amateur musician and piano teacher, led the choral society at the Cape Mill.
- ≡ Organist at Westwood Moravian Church, Chadderton, Oldham, Lancashire.
- ≡ Active in Oldham Liberal Party.
- ≡ Attendee at St Paul's Methodist Chapel, Rochdale Road, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire

Lived in:

- Turner Street, Crossbank, Oldham, Lancashire
- Dawn Street, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire
- Lion Cottages, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire
- Refuge Street, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire
- Farrow Street, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire

### **Memories of John Willie Taylor by Gordon Taylor (grandson)**

I was four years old when my grandfather died in 1953 and so my memories of him are rather distant, but there are several things that I recall. Even though his primary occupation was in cotton spinning, everyone that knew him thought of him first as a musician. He was well known locally for his skills as a pianist and music teacher. He was tall and fairly thin, had a full head of black hair and was a cigarette smoker. His piano had at least one cigarette burn on the keys. In his earlier years he had been very active in the British Liberal party and at one time received a thank you certificate for his efforts in the election of one of Oldham's many noted Liberal MPs

The small 3-bedroomed house that he occupied with my grandmother was packed with music, books, 78 rpm records and his piano. The house was a mid-terraced, stone fronted home on a steep hill (Farrow Street, Shaw). We believe that this is where he lived at the time of the bicycle ride, but it's possible that he was living on Refuge Street, Shaw (this house has been demolished and the site is now occupied by an Aldi supermarket).

In common with most terraced houses occupied by Lancashire cotton mill workers 58 Farrow Street did not have a bathroom. There was a very old fashioned outside toilet with a primitive flushing mechanism. As was the tradition among people in the area my grand-

parents bathed once per week (usually on a Friday) sometimes by going to the local public baths, or more likely by using a galvanized steel bath about 4 feet long that was stored by being suspended from a hook on the outside of the house at the rear. Filling the tub entailed repeatedly heating a large kettle on the stove. The tub was emptied by pouring the contents down a drain just outside the back door.

The house was heated by coal fires. The coal storage building (usually called the coalplace) was located in a paved back yard surrounded by a brick wall about 6 feet high. This yard was about 20 feet long and width of the house. The rear gate to the yard faced the entrance to a members-only bowling green across an unpaved passageway about 10 feet wide. The house still exists and has been extensively modernized. One of the bedrooms has been converted in to a bathroom. The bowling club is also still alive and thriving at the time of writing (November 2006). The yard and passageway are much the same as they were in the 1950s

My father was Raymond Taylor (also an amateur musician). My father and I used to visit my grandparents every Sunday morning. It was about a 1 mile walk from our home. My grandfather and my father used to play duets together on the piano. In the 1930s the father and son duo had collaborated on many musical projects together including some composition under the name "John Burwin". They had also made a demo disc at a recording studio in Manchester.

Sometimes they would listen to records on the HMV gramophone that stood near the front window. All their tastes were classical, but their own compositions had a very 20<sup>th</sup> century style. Since my grandfather had played the organ for a number of churches he had many collections of religious music. Most of the music was in a cabinet full of orchestral scores, choral works and piano pieces. This cabinet also held his batons and various other necessary bits and pieces. I remember his piano brush in particular because of its special shape. Many of these items had been used during his time as conductor and leading light of the Crompton orchestra. He was also the conductor of a choral society based at one of the local cotton mills (the Cape).

I don't recall either of my grandparents being very religious even though both of them were brought up as Methodists. My grandfather's time as organist at Westwood Moravian Church in Oldham was a spare time job.

One of the memories I always treasure about the Sunday visits was sitting on my grandfather's knee while he entertained me by dismantling his pocket watch (a Waltham) These moments obviously meant something to him too because his will was very clear that I would inherit this watch: I still have it and it works very well.

My grandfather was thought of as a gentle fellow and was very popular in the community.

## **Donald Lee Taylor**

Born May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Clough House, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire

Died February 13<sup>th</sup> 1995, Lung Cancer

Parents: John William and Emma Taylor

Married: Joan Helen Niebel, 7 July 1945 at St Thomas's Church, Newhey, Lancashire.

Children: Nigel Anthony Lee (b 1956)

Education:

- ≡ St Paul's Methodist Church School, Rochdale Road, Shaw and Crompton, Lancashire
- ≡ Chadderton Grammar School
- ≡ Apprentice draftsman
- ≡ Member of the Royal Aeronautical Society
- ≡ Chartered Engineer (UK)

Military Service: RAF 1939, cut short because his drawing skills were considered useful as part of WW II war effort and was apprenticed in to the aircraft industry

Occupations:

- ≡ Before Military Service clerical work in the cotton industry
- ≡ After Military Service:
  - A. V. Roe and Company, Manchester England (1940-194?)
  - Saunders Roe and Company, East Cowes, Isle of Wight. (194?-1952)
  - Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Burbank California (1952-1965)
  - Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, Rye Canyon Research Center, Valencia, California (1965-1987)

Other activities:

- ≡ Automobiles
- ≡ Crosswords
- ≡ Book and record collection
- ≡ Sailing

Lived in:

- Clough House, Shaw, Lancashire
- Ogden, Newhey, Lancashire
- Osborne Court, Cowes Isle of Wight
- Dolorita Ave, Glendale, California
- Capistrano Ave, Glendale, California
- High Point Drive, Ventura, CA

## **Memories of Donald (Don) Lee Taylor by Nigel Taylor (son) and Gordon Taylor (nephew)**

Donald and Joan Taylor left the UK for the USA in 1952. Don was 32 years old and had grown up in the North of England. Before leaving he had been employed on the technically excellent, but commercially unsuccessful Princess Flying boat project at the Saunders Roe aircraft company on the Isle of Wight in Southern England. He became a drafts-

man and engineer after an apprenticeship at A. V. Roe and Company, but his working life had begun as a clerk in the office of a Lancashire cotton mill. World War II had given him an opportunity to use his drawing skills as part of the war effort and this led him to a lifelong career in aerospace companies.

Don had answered an advertisement for the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation in Burbank California. The advert had promised high pay, location on the Pacific coast, sunshine and a relaxed California atmosphere. Joan had seen the advertisement and they despaired of post World War II Britain with its shortages and low pay. The couple had moved to the Isle of Wight a few years earlier from the Industrial North of England with its smoking cotton mill chimneys, wet weather, crowded houses and week-long pea-soup smogs that often reduced the visibility to as little as 30 feet. Joan's feelings about Britain were always influenced by her memories of the dirt and damp of 1940s Lancashire.

Britain and America changed a lot over the remainder of Don's life, but Don never stopped being proud of his Englishness. This lasted even though there were some very difficult times in Britain. Joan once remarked that he was "homesick for the next 8 years" after his arrival in the USA.

The family visit to England in 1957 seemed to cure Don of some of his urge to return to the UK (Britain was still struggling to find its way as the Empire disappeared), but for a long time he would occasionally talk of his desire to retire to the Cotswolds. Nigel, their son, was registered as the offspring of ex-patriots at the British Consulate in Los Angeles, thus giving him some rights to claim British citizenship. Don and Joan became US citizens in the late 1950s. Don said that this was to allow him to develop his career because he was being asked to take on security clearance.

Don and Joan saw the best years of California prosperity and Don worked for Lockheed during the heyday of the US aircraft industry. He was proud of his association with famous military and civilian aircraft projects such as the L1011 airliner, the ill-fated SST and the F104 fighter.

During the period on the Isle of Wight Donald and Joan had been regular attendees at estate auctions. They had acquired some desirable antiques including a Chippendale table, some Bristol rollers and many books "bought by the yard". These items were very evident in the Taylor's California home, especially in Don's study which always smelled of stale tobacco smoke from his cigars and pipe (a Glendale tobacconist had blended a mixture that was sold in his shop as "Taylor's reserve").

Don and his brother Raymond were never very close in their youth (Raymond was 9 years older than his sibling), but Don's emigration from the UK actually brought them closer together. They exchanged letters every couple of weeks and for a long time used short 15-minute tape recordings for greetings. Joan would often say a few words and sometimes Nigel would add a message.

These tape recordings and letters included some reminiscences of Don's early life, including some snippets of information about the bike tour and the stories of his misdemeanors as a schoolboy at Chadderton Grammar School. He would talk about his life in the USA and mention his cars. The automobile collection included a 1950 Bentley, a 1960s Rolls Royce and sequence of Jaguars which he said "needed a mechanic in the passenger seat". He would talk about his huge collection of books. He and Raymond seemed to compete for the number of books in their collections with the result that both of them had large libraries.

On the tapes, he would talk about some of his spare time enterprises such as his patent for a high temperature seal, his attempt to be a host on a classical music radio show called "Major to Minor" and the block of apartments that he and Joan owned.

Don retired from Lockheed in the late 1980s, but for a time he took a part time job helping to set up a museum of memorabilia to Kelly Johnson, one of Lockheed's most famous employees and the head of the original skunk works where Lockheed had developed some of its most famous aircraft including the SR 71 Blackbird and the U2.

In 1994 when being examined after a minor automobile accident Don was diagnosed with lung cancer. There was a short period of optimism about his chances of survival after radiotherapy, but he died in February 1995.