THE EMERGENCE OF BICYCLING AND AUTOMOBILITY IN BRITAIN

Craig Horner
The Emergence of Bicycling and Automobility in Britain
The Emergence of Bicycling and Automobility in Britain

Craig Horner
This book is dedicated to the memory of Malcolm Jeal (1944–2016)
Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of figures</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Resistance to change</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Entrepreneurs</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Trials</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 The ‘old brigade’ and the new ‘steady and careful artisan’</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Tourists</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Futures</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Conclusion</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix: Biography</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>A cycle club out on tour, c. 1880, with a mixture of 'ordinaries' and tricycles</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>The eliminating trials for the 1903 Gordon Bennett Cup held in the grounds of Welbeck Abbey, Notts</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td><em>Punch</em> magazine initially lampooned the motor car as uncontrollable, and the motorist as hapless</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>S. F. Edge, repairs a puncture at the roadside on the Napier during the Thousand Mile Trial</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>S. F. Edge on a 1901 De Dion tricycle with an air-cooled 2¾hp engine</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>The Thousand Mile Trial of 1900 stopped off in Manchester, permitting respectable-looking members of the public to inspect the vehicles</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Vehicles on display in the Royal Botanical Gardens at Old Trafford in Manchester during the Thousand Mile Trial</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Charles Jarrott and S. F. Edge pose on the 6hp Panhard-Levassor (known as Number 8)</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>S. F. Edge endorsing an Ariel bicycle</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Harry Lawson's 'Gyroscope' of c. 1902, demonstrated by his daughters</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Charles Jarrott in the driving seat of a Leon Bollée</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>A motor-cycling couple, oblivious to the foul weather</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Major C. G. Matson in the driving seat of his De Dion, about 1903</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>The 'Flying Pennington Cycle' (1896) is made to leap a ravine of sixty-five feet</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Motor cars at Ascot, 1900, the first year they were allowed into the enclosure</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td><em>Punch</em> magazine quickly changed the way it depicted motoring, moving to portray the motorist and motor car as encroaching and menacing</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>'Almost a motorcar!' The 'trimo' promised motor-car luxury at the price of a motor-cycle</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>The cyclecar ('new motoring') was a phenomenon of the period immediately before the First World War, and provided very cheap and cheerful motoring</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>'An enjoyable experience: Their first trial trip. Many such drawings promised the open road and more for the courting couple</td>
<td>175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>The annual dinner of the Fellowship of Old-Time Cyclists, 1927</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

Twelve or so years on, this book has now appeared in large part because of the many good people whose better nature I have taken advantage of. I'd like to thank them all here, but there are so many that I fear I will overlook a few, and to those I apologize now.

But for those I can identify, I offer my heartfelt thanks. At Manchester Metropolitan University, Professors Alan Kidd and Melanie Tebbutt provided moral and friendly support, particularly as I risked professional oblivion by changing my area of expertise (formerly, eighteenth-century British society). Also, over the years, although they probably didn't realise it at the time, I have drawn support and confidence through conversations with Gijs Mom, Massimo Moraglio, Peter Norton, Rich Stephens and Nick Clayton.

In the process, several people have passed away who had been very helpful. I just wasn't fast enough for them to be able to read the final version. Above all this includes Malcolm Jeal, but also Nick Geogano, John Warburton, Sandy Skinner, Peter Heilbron and Derek Grossmark.

I called on many librarians, archivists and editors, in particular Richard Roberts, Ian Ferguson, Ian Sykes, Jane Holmes, Danny Smith, Nic Ward, Nigel Land and the estimable Patrick Collins.

Two anonymous reviewers, plus Anders Clausager, who read an early draft, have also saved me from delivering a bit of a calamity. Here, too, fellow motoring historians Mike Worthington Williams, David Burgess-Wise, Tom Clarke, Peter Moss, Peter Card, Simon Fisher, Thomas Ulrich, Michael Edwards, Malcolm Bobbitt, John Harrison and Josh Butt have all been generous with their expertise.

I also thank Des Donohoe, the Revd Canon Jeffrey Bell, Rosemary Sharples, Helen O'Neill, Peter Jackson, Jonathan Rishton, Damien Kimberley, Corey Estensen, Eunice Jeal and Julia Dawson. Correspondence and meetings with some descendants of S.F. Edge and Charles Jarrott – Michael and June Cooke, Penny Morris and Sue Edge – have been immensely rewarding.

Of particular help, providing me the run of their superb resources, were the Vintage Sports-Car Club, the Veteran-Cycle Club, the Reference Library at the National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, the collections of the Royal Automobile Club (at Westminster Archive Centre), and the Richard Roberts Archive in Stockport. I also took advantage of access to the Museum of English Rural Life in Reading, the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University, the BFI Reuben library, Penge Library and the British Library. The excellent gracesguide.co.uk was used to help fill in the gaps for the biographies.

My apologies to the many whose hopes I raised over the years that this would be a biography of S. F. Edge. That, as you'll see, remains to be written. Meanwhile, all errors here are mine.

And above all, thanks and love to Nancy, Martha and Judith.
Introduction

The appearance of the motor car – or, in the then new legal terminology, ‘light locomotive’ – on the public highways of the United Kingdom in the 1890s gave advertisers a new medium to promote their products. This happened to be particularly the case with soap. Mr Goodwin advertised Mother Shipman’s Soap as he drove his Lutzmann Benz around Manchester in about 1896¹ – his was probably the first motor car in the town, so he could be sure of attention. Similarly, Lever Brothers used the novelty of ‘motor vans’ around the country to advertise their Sunlight soap in 1896; this must have presented a sight sufficiently common for the Illustrated London News to feel able to publish a cartoon that same year featuring Mr and Mrs John Bull as they surveyed a passing ‘Sunlight’ van.²

In the popular imagination, then, the motor car could be little more than a freakish contraption with few uses beyond advertising. This presented a challenge for entrepreneurs trying to promote the new ‘motor traction’ as a potential new industry and practical means of transport in its own right. The journalist Henry Sturmey (1857–1930), at that time the editor of The Autocar magazine, knew this when he set out in 1897 to be the first to drive a motor car from John O’Groat’s to Land’s End. His suspicion would have been reinforced by a conversation he overheard. He was at John O’Groat’s House with his Daimler motor car when a ‘coach and four [horses]’ delivered a ‘fashionably-dressed party’ of gentlemen. Having spotted the Daimler, one said, ‘I wonder what that motor-car was doing at Groat’s today?’ ‘Oh, another beastly advertisement – Pear’s soap, or something of that kind, I suppose.’ Sturmey knew what this meant: no gentleman would ‘demean himself by being seen on one [a motor car] so long as there was a good horse about’.³

Before the turn of the twentieth century, and for some years beyond, motoring played no useful part in the lives of most of the population. For travelling beyond their locality, middle-class families might have kept a horse, or hired one as necessary, possibly with a carriage. The ‘safety’ bicycle was becoming popular, while the train was affordable, sensible and fast. The steam traction engine had been present on the public

¹ Science and Industry Museum Archive, YMS 0197.2.
highway for half a century or more, but many people had yet to see a light motor car, and this remained the case into the first decade of the twentieth century. A cartoon in *Punch* magazine in 1902 illustrates this. With a milestone indicating they were well into the Wiltshire countryside, a girl in a horse and carriage, seeing a motor car for the first time, said, 'Oh, papa! Look! The horses have run away, and there's the carriage running after them! Isn't it funny!' Similarly, the 1907 diary of Dr Tracey described his experiences as the first to run a motor vehicle in his Somerset village.

Motor cars were so novel that there was no established name for them. Sturmey, once underway on his epic trip, went to put his Daimler on a ferry, only to find the ferryman at a loss to match it against his list of tariffs. The new motoring magazines, springing up in the 1890s, discussed what the new 'motor-carriages' should be called; the very titles of *The Autocar* (founded 1895) and the *Automotor Journal* (founded 1896) show two terms then in use. The latter magazine made a list of suggestions in 1896 which did not even include 'motor car' – although that term was probably used as early as 1891, it did not catch on until later. Instead, the magazine thought of, amongst others, 'movers', 'autokinons', 'motes' and 'go cars.' Even the activity of motoring did not have an agreed term: in a letter to *The Autocar* in 1900, 'Oilman' described himself as the 'owner of an “autocar”', but 'I cannot get used to call myself a “motist” yet'.

These carefully selected moments are intended to illustrate just how niche, hobbyist, even reckless the sport of motoring was understood to be by the wider population. In the popular imagination, the motor car was dangerous and likely to blow up. The pioneer motorist Charles Jarrott (1877–1944) observed this when he took a motor car from Margate to London in 1897. The starting ritual involved creating under the bonnet 'rather a big blaze' with petrol just to get the ignition burners lit, a necessary prelude to attempting to turn the engine over by starter handle. Not surprisingly, the onlookers were highly agitated. The very term 'petrol' was novel, referring to a product then available by the fluid ounce and usually used as a cleaning agent. Another early motorist J. A. Koosen (c. 1860–1913) recalled, 'My experiences as a pioneer – well, they were simply awful. For a long time I could get no petrol; nobody knew what it was. I then asked the chemists for “benzin”, and one of them had some in stock and asked did I want a two-ounce or a four-ounce bottle! When I said something about five or ten gallons he nearly had a fit.'

5 *Punch*, 15 October 1902, p. 257.
10 *The Autocar*, 17 February 1900, p. 167.
Introduction

Punch magazine’s 1900 ‘Roll of Fame’ was a cavalcade of all that was modern and credible in science and industry. It celebrated the bicycle and the X-Ray, but featured no motor cars. For some people, the motor cars they saw appeared to be uncontrollable: Punch in 1901 published a cartoon in which the hapless owner of the ‘violently palpitating’ motor car attempted to restrain it with a pitchfork as villagers looked on.\textsuperscript{13} Even as late as 1905 P. G. Wodehouse was publishing stories in which control of the motor car remained a dark art.\textsuperscript{14} For others, the motor car was somehow capable of ridiculous feats. The magazine The Strand published stories where motor cars were capable of heroic if implausible mercy dashes.\textsuperscript{15} The motor car also featured in the same magazines as a likely sporting replacement for the animal. ‘The newest twentieth-century game’, was, for example, according to the Harmsworth London Magazine, ‘motor polo’, where ‘nimble little racing motor cars replace the trained pony’,\textsuperscript{16} while in another tall tale in The Strand, the wealthy American Mr Hanks impressed a marquise by bringing his 10hp Daimler into the bull ring. (After his suitable display of heroics, they married.)\textsuperscript{17} Automotive company promoters took advantage of such gullibility among the wider public; an artist’s impression of the motoring promoter Edward J. Pennington’s (1858–1911) motor-cycle in his company catalogue in 1896 featured it leaping over a ravine.\textsuperscript{18} There were no trusted brands of motor car, and so companies with other specialisms launching into motor-car production did not necessarily imbue the consumer with confidence. For example, the French company Panhard and Levassor had been a manufacturer of woodworking equipment. The German Daimler company was a manufacturer of internal-combustion engines, which were more likely to find uses as stationary engines in factories, or perhaps to power a boat, than power a motor car.\textsuperscript{19}

Finding the open road

Cycling had not long before experienced a similar standing among the wider public. In the 1870s – in the form of the ‘ordinary’, or ‘penny-farthing’ – it had been a niche sport

\textsuperscript{13} For example, ‘There’s no need to be alarmed’, Punch, 23 January 1901, p. 63.
\textsuperscript{14} P. G. Wodehouse, ‘The lost bowlers (a cricket story)’, The Strand, 30 (1905), pp. 298–303. Here, some friends accidentally start a motor car by touching the lever, which ‘sets the thing going’, and are unable to stop it.
\textsuperscript{15} For example, L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace, ‘The Sorceress of the Strand’, The Strand, 25 (1903), pp. 198–212.
\textsuperscript{16} [Henry Leach], ‘Motor Polo: A fast and furious game, rendered more exciting by the use of automobiles in the place of ponies’, Harmsworth London Magazine, 10 (1903), pp. 195–6.
\textsuperscript{17} R. B. Townshend, ‘A motor in the bull ring’, The Strand, 26 (1903), pp. 575–80. The bicycle had long since made its appearance in the bull ring: see, for example, ‘The progress of velocipeding’, The Mercury [Tasmania], 12 November 1869, reporting on a circus at Nîmes. My thanks to Rosemary Sharples for this reference.
\textsuperscript{19} Montagu and Burgess-Wise, A Daimler Century, pp. 9–16. I am grateful to Prof Chip McGoun for making available to me his unpublished paper, ‘Automobile commerce and competition in the nineteenth century’, delivered at the fourth Annual Michael Argetsinger Symposium, Watkins Glen, 9 November 2018.
for athletic men, and while it was cutting edge in its adoption of the latest technology, when seen on the public highway it had been associated with middle-class arrogance and privilege. Cyclists then took to the roads, usually unsealed and dreadful out of towns, and absorbed abuse and missiles hurled at them by a large majority of onlookers who did not share their enthusiasm. Encroachment on the highway by cyclists and, later, motorists was real; as Denning has found, they ‘initiated a contest for the use of public space, challenging centuries of practice in which roads and streets were a public amenity meant for common use’. But by the 1890s, cycling was booming, and among the middle classes was now widely indulged as a fashionable leisure pursuit. The appearance of the tricycle and the tandem from the 1880s had facilitated cycling for ladies and couples. Fashion and general-interest magazines had picked up on the visibility of cycling, and members of the royal family were endorsing the activity. Cycling magazines had sprung up to cater for a wide cross-class interest; cycle racing, where spectators paid to watch, and long-distance record breaking, were reported widely. Cycling technology – in the form of the ‘safety’ bicycle, with its diamond-shaped frame – was now seen by consumers as, in a sense, mature, and cycling was now perceived as reliable and accessible. While cycling continued to challenge many people’s values – the ‘scorching’ (reckless cycling), going out for a ride on the Sabbath, unchaperoned female cyclists, some wearing ‘rational’ dress (divided skirts) – by the turn of the century, it had become an acceptable part of life. Cycling had offered something entirely novel: speed, and the freedom of the open road. Until the 1890s, the bicycle had been the fastest device on the public highway. The ‘ordinary’ by the 1870s was already averaging about 10mph despite the appalling roads. By 1880 crowds were paying to watch cycling ‘cracks’ cover twenty miles in an hour.

By the First World War, motor traction was to experience a similar shift as it became more widely tolerated and more attractive for consumers, offering increased reliability and ease of use. Motoring adopted technology developed by the cycling industry – the spoked wheels, tubular frames, chains – and utilized the new, light petrol engines such as Daimler’s. The potential that motor traction then offered for even higher speeds than cycling on the open road was, for many, bewildering. Writing in 1900, ‘The Deserter’ said:

We live in an age of ever-hastening activity and unceasing rush. The motor-car is generally regarded as the embodiment in metal of this characteristic of the century – a monster that goes throbbing through quiet villages and snorting through busy streets with the impartiality of the plague . . . even in connection with the

21 See, for example, Carlton Reid, Roads Were Not Built for Cars: How Cyclists Were the First to Push for Good Roads and Became the Pioneers of Motoring (Newcastle on Tyne: Front Page Creations, 2014); or Andrew Ritchie, Early Bicycles and the Quest for Speed: A History, 1868–1903 (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2nd ed., 2018).
23 Ritchie, Early Bicycles and the Quest for Speed, esp. chap. 2, at pp. 62–4; and chap. 4, at pp. 130–1.
Great Trial [the Thousand Mile Trial of 1900, described later], which was to test the vehicle and not record its speed, chronicles of a mile in four minutes have been told in private conversation. These things distress the easy-going man with a respect for the law – and a wife and family.24

By 1899 the Belgian racing driver Camille Jenatzy (1868–1913) had driven a motor car at more than 100km/h, and stories appeared in middle-class fiction-based magazines such as The Strand of motor cars capable of racing trains. By 1900, even the bicycle, paced by a train, was reported to reach ‘a mile a minute’.25 Duffy has suggested that, with the motor car, speed was ‘repackaged as a sensation and a pleasure’. To understand the first few days of cycling and then motoring we need now to recapture the excitement of those who drove the first cars or saw one raise the dust on a village street, for whom twenty-five miles an hour was intensely fast. For a brief moment, roughly the first quarter of the twentieth century, the thrill of velocity at any speed was vividly palpable.26

Speed and its attendant dangers preoccupied all road users. Literature on (horse-) driving, cycling and motoring often featured witnessed or fictionalized accounts of carelessness or malicious intent by speeding drivers. The travel writer J. J. Hissey (1847–1921), who had been writing on travel since the 1880s and therefore had the perspective of both horse- and motor-travel, wrote in 1906:

there is a joy in speed, and poetry in it, and danger in it too. But a rush at full speed in a motor car over a lonely road, and a deserted country, wide and open, is an experience to be ever afterwards remembered. Truly, for such a moment, life is worth living, and optimism is rampant.27

The Victorian middle classes had long sought the ‘open road’. Hissey had described his adventure by phaeton into Kent, Sussex and Surrey in the 1880s, bemoaning the incursion of the railway as he came across it.28 However, it was the railway that enabled the cyclist to get even further afield – Wales, the Lake District, Scotland. Now, the road was the means to discover a new England (and Wales, and Scotland), and suddenly the road – once adequate for its purpose, the train having eliminated much road traffic – was found to be wanting. Cyclists reported in magazines the ‘dangerous’ bends, cambers and hills which nobody had noticed before. The coming of the ‘safety’ cyclist, in much greater numbers than the ‘ordinary’ cyclist, simply accelerated road use, and

---

28 J. J. Hissey, A Holiday on the Road: An Artist’s Wanderings in Kent, Sussex and Surrey (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1887).
then the coming of the motorist tipped the balance altogether. The Brighton road, for example, mostly single-track, unsealed, ‘thick with white dust during the summer, and very muddy in the winter’, 29 might have tolerated countless cyclists on a sunny weekend in the 1890s, but not countless motorists as well.

This book will suggest that there was, like with cycling, a clear shift in the motor-traction movement from a niche, sporting, clubby activity to one with a wider appeal. Improving reliability, a standardization of design, and a second-hand market in the period to 1914 all facilitated this. It will suggest there was a move from the ‘old brigade’ of pioneering motorists, for whom the journey was all, to a ‘steady and careful artisan’, who as a consumer was feeding in to a process of incremental product improvement and starting to demand a more reliable motor car or motor-cycle requiring less intervention. The 1880s and 1890s were already a melting pot of private mobility technologies, with the myriad dead-ends of bicycle design and the appearance of the motor-cycle and light motor car. 30 ‘Ordinary’ cyclists, the very early motorists, horse-driving amateurs, the first ‘safety’ riders: they all drew on cultures in place to create and join their clubs, to set records and improve the technology, to start up magazines, to find strength and comfort in their numbers. The club offered access to information and the potential to network. However, the exclusivity and certainties of the club changed in the late 1890s and early 1900s, when demand for the ‘safety’ brought into its orbit cyclists with no interest in the cultures of competition or forming clubs. Not as if most were clubbable anyway; clubs continued to make sure only the right sort were admitted. The slow but inexorable appearance of the owner-driver of the used motor car or motor-cycle in the ten or so years before the First World War reinforced this; it was this ‘class’ of motorist (and cyclist), then, who by the First World War typified the wider motoring and cycling experience. Studies of registration records for the period to 1914 have demonstrated the transfer of motor cars and motor-cycles from addresses in wealthier areas, to middle- and even working-class suburbs. 31 These new users, while mostly middle class but hardly the clubbable sort, were buying second-hand and buying (or borrowing) maps and guide books when they drove to find the ‘open road’ for a day at the weekend.

There was a constant interchange of cultural practice and personnel between the different modes of mobility. It will be shown that many motorists, particularly the pioneering ones, came from a cycling background, and often remained cyclists. In addition, though, it was not unusual to see a mixing of modes to suit sporting or leisure interests. Horse riders, for example, accompanied cyclists on club runs, while

Introduction

some motorists were also drawn to motor-boating or aviation – this cross-pollination is evident by the way that the publishers of the cycle magazines in the 1880s often branched out with new titles which latched on to these new modes. Emphatically, horse traction did not go away, at least not in the period to the First World War. Most people continued to rely on it and had no desire to see its demise; for all its faults, horse traction worked. Many cyclists and motorists would probably have thought the same.

Entrepreneurs

For motor traction to suggest the promise of the open road, it needed the participation of a pioneering group with entrepreneurial drive. However, to fulfil the promise, motoring had to diversify. It had to become less a sport and more a consumer activity if it was to draw on a much wider body of users, who would not be attracted until they saw that motor traction was demonstrably more reliable and less clubby. To promote motor traction in the face of public hostility required energetic entrepreneurs, many of whom had come from a cycling background. They had absorbed its cultures – of the clubs, the racing, the sport. They were accustomed to abuse or indifference as they indulged their hobby. As the first motor agencies and entrepreneurial businesses were established, they started to promise a product which would be the equal of the horse in terms of carrying capacity and hill-climbing. The publisher Alfred Harmsworth (1865–1922, later Lord Northcliffe) edited a collection of articles on the new sport of ‘motors and motor driving’ in 1902, and emphasized that a motor car, unlike the horse, did not need resting, would not catch a chill, yet could do far more than ten miles or so – the reasonable limit for a horse – in a day. Where the bicycle promised speed and the open road for the fit, motor traction promised more for less effort.

These entrepreneurs had backgrounds in, say, sales or journalism, and many cases were simply transferring their professional attention from the cycle industry to the motor industry. Sturmey is a case in point – he edited The Cyclist magazine from 1877 and was prominent in the Cyclists’ Touring Club (CTC, now Cycling UK, set up in 1878 to campaign for better roads and conditions for cyclists). His trip from John O’Groats was promotional, providing exposure for the Daimler motor car, and copy for his magazine. Cyclists had by necessity adjusted and improved their machines, sometimes at the side of the road, in the rain. Motorists did the same when they bought their first motor cars. The entrepreneur had this same gritty experience, and was instrumental in ensuring that feedback, from those motorists who had learnt so much the hard way, made for a better product. Testimonials, and positive results from the many motor trials of the time, were used in advertising copy.

Selwyn Francis Edge (1868–1940) will stand out in this story. As one of many cycling and motoring entrepreneurs in the late-Victorian and Edwardian period, he was, and remained throughout his life, a cycle-club member. Edge made a name for himself, first as a cycle racer in the 1880s and 1890s, and after 1899 as the sole agent

for the new, up-market Napier motor car, a new direction for a company that had specialized in precision engineering.\textsuperscript{33} Edge went on, though, to become a household name by winning the international Gordon Bennett Cup motor race in 1902 for Great Britain. His methods of doing business, his projection of his image as a masculine hero in a time of change and challenges to certainties, mean for us that now he can serve as a barometer of the opinions and attitudes of the English, their road-traction movements, their nationalism and their attitudes to foreigners.\textsuperscript{34}

Historiography and sources

Approaches to the histories of late-nineteenth-century private ‘mobilities’ have fundamentally changed in the last generation. The present-day global ‘system’ of automobility as outlined by Urry\textsuperscript{35} is being explained now by an unpicking of the context in which motor traction appeared. Understanding mobilities, and particularly ‘automobilities’, is now better achieved seen through the cultures of representation and national identities.\textsuperscript{36} The diffusion of automobilities is now explained through the contexts of gender, technology, class, consumption and power relations (the displacement of the weak, or, the ‘making’ of the pedestrian).\textsuperscript{37} Mom, in particular, in trying to account for the emergence, then the persistence, of the motor car has described the creation of the ‘adventure machine’ and challenged the ‘toy-to-tool’ thesis, suggesting that the early days of motoring would be understood, instead, by its participants’ ‘touring, tinkering, racing’.\textsuperscript{38} Older approaches by economic and business histories remain pertinent; Saul, for example, discussed the early motor industry while


\textsuperscript{36} See, for example, Mom, Atlantic Automobilism; David Jeremiah, Representations of British Motorising (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).


Harrison looked at the cycle industry. In particular, some recent ‘general’ histories of motoring, or of famous marques or visionary leaders, some written by amateur motoring historians, are often overlooked by the academic community because they appear to be descriptive or light on referencing, when many draw on a broad and imaginative range of primary sources. This book, then, is probably the first attempt to bridge two schools of history – the academic and cultural historians, and motoring and cycling historians.

For cycling history, social, technological and cultural aspects are well represented through the journal of the Veteran-Cycle Club and a regular International Cycling History Conference. Smethurst has recently attempted a global history of cycling. Oddy has pointed out how even now while there are many cultural and political histories of the road, they still tend to focus on either motoring or cycling, not both. He also makes the point that cycling and motoring had effectively diverged, in terms of their mutual interests, by 1906 or so; their commonalities up until then, however, are evident. Studies on, say, the road lobby tend to remain motorist- or cyclist-based rather than engaging the wider collective of road users.

O’Connell’s now venerable study of motoring was groundbreaking with its vantage points of class and gender, but despite its title is predominantly concerned with the interwar period. With some exceptions, that is the period where much scholarship

---


42 The club publishes *The Boneshaker* every quarter, while the proceedings of the International Cycling History Conference appear as *Cycle History*; Smethurst, *The Bicycle: Towards a Global History*.


45 O’Connell, *The Car in British Society*.

remains. Law’s recent work on road-houses and class in motoring is largely interwar, as is much motor-cycling history.\textsuperscript{47} While there has been much written on gender and motoring (and cycling), there is little directly relating to the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{48}

For primary materials, much use has been made of cycling and motoring magazines. In the early period, these magazines reflected a much broader interest between these sports than, say, after the First World War. \textit{Bicycling News}, for example, started in 1876, moved to include motoring in 1900 – changing its name to \textit{Bicycling News and Motor Car Chronicle} – so as to cater better for ‘both sections of the wheel world.’ To account for the shift, ‘The trades and the pastime are necessarily so closely allied that no apology is needed,’ it said, and ‘after all, it is almost impossible to write concerning cycles without touching upon motors, and vice versa.’\textsuperscript{49} It started a new regular column by ‘a recognised authority on motoring matters,’ C. W. Brown.\textsuperscript{50} The magazine believed that cycling and motoring ‘engross the attention of much the same class of people. Granted that motoring appeals to a wealthier \textit{clientèle}; we think it will be found, as it has been found in cycling, that there’s a will for motoring, a way will be found in the majority of cases to provide the money.’\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, Temple Press, publishers of \textit{Cycling} magazine which appeared in 1891, launched \textit{Motorcycling and Motoring} in 1902, renamed it \textit{The Motor} within twelve months, and that in turn spawned magazines on commercial vehicles, cyclecars, motor-boats and aviation, all before the First World War. Newspapers, in particular the \textit{Daily Mail}, have been used, while remaining alert to the clear stance of its owner, Alfred Harmsworth, a dedicated pioneer motorist whose editorials endorsed the new worlds of cycling and motoring. The cycling diary and reminiscences of the club-cyclist turned motoring entrepreneur G. H. Smith (1862–1946) are also used.\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Punch} magazine, a sixpence satirical weekly at its peak in the late nineteenth century, is used to reflect middle-class opinion and inertia;\textsuperscript{53}


\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Bicycling News and Motor Car Chronicle}, 14 March 1900, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{50} Charles William Brown (b. c 1866) claimed to have driven 2,000 to 3,000 miles prior to 1900. In 1927 he was a councillor for Finchley Urban District Council: Qualification Form, Circle of Nineteenth-Century Motorists, RAC archive, ACQ2/1.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Bicycling News and Motor Car Chronicle}, 14 March 1900, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{52} The unpub. diary (1891–6) of G. H. Smith; and G. H. Smith, \textit{Some Notes About the Anerley B.C.} (privately pub., 1930).

\textsuperscript{53} Richard Noakes, ‘Representing “A century of inventions”: Nineteenth-century technology and Victorian \textit{Punch},’ in Louise Henson et al (eds), \textit{Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-Century Media} (Ashgate: Aldershot, 2004), pp. 151–63; Constanzo, ‘“One can’t shake off the women”; Henry
through its pages it is possible to chart the emergence of the motor car and the reaction of ridicule by *Punch*’s readers, and then observe how the portrayal was ‘normalized’ within a mere five years or so. According to Duffy, *Punch* ‘waded enthusiastically into the world of “scorchers”, “driving habits”, speed traps, chauffeurs and choleric majors at the wheel’. It was ‘eager to jazz up [its] pages and [its] circulations’ by inventing a new language for the new ‘thrill’. Editors of the motoring press, no doubt sharing some of its readership with *Punch*, did not fail to spot this shift. They saw *Punch* on the cusp, for example, when the *Motor Car Journal* wrote in 1900: ‘*Punch* appears, judging from the frequency with which automobile illustrations are now appearing in its pages, to be quite a convert to the motor-car and to have fully caught the enthusiasm of motoring.’

Layout of the book

It is the context of Edge and his peers that will form the mainstay of this book. **Chapter 2** considers the context in which motor traction was introduced in the United Kingdom, and the reasons why the country was so slow in setting up a manufacturing presence. Much of the nineteenth-century culture of the club and its rituals were passed on, unchanged, into the cycling and motor-traction movements. Horse traction was fully understood to be imperfect, but ‘worked’, and very few saw any sense in moving away from it. The club was illustrative of a social-class system which was also evident within the motoring fraternity, seen by, for example, being able to afford the ‘right’ clothing, or overnight accommodation.

**Chapter 3** then attempts to define the cycling and motoring entrepreneur, paying particular attention to Edge and his circle. There was no stereotype, as the entrepreneur was drawn from all social backgrounds. One commonality, though, tended to be the cycling club, which provided a model for social and commercial behaviour. There was also a tendency for the entrepreneur to want to learn all about the product, often done through hard experience. Entrepreneurs were mostly male, but some light is shed on the key activities of women in the promotion of the cycling and motoring worlds.

**Chapter 4** shows that the motor trial was a key opportunity for entrepreneurs to place the product in full view of the consumer, while providing copy for the magazines, and awards for manufacturers to shout about in their advertising. This was not without risk for the entrepreneur, though, as the fragile vehicles were very much in the public eye. A case study is made of the 1900 Thousand Mile Trial. Trials became increasingly stringent and of mixed interest to consumers and manufacturers. They were often staged locally through the offices of the local motor club. But when *The Motor* magazine attempted to organize a trial, an analysis of the furore this generated will show that this particular magazine better understood its place in appealing to a

---


The Emergence of Bicycling and Automobility in Britain

more ‘modest’ motorist than rivals such as, say, *The Autocar*, or the Automobile Club of Great Britain and Ireland.

**Chapter 5** shows how the intending consumer of the new motor traction played a proactive role in guiding the development of the product. As a consequence, motor cars and motor-cycles moved from being understood as niche, unstandardized and unreliable, because this did not bring confidence in the product. By about 1905, though, a standardization, of mechanicals and ‘look’, was starting to emerge. Motoring became increasingly marketed on the appeal of ‘this year’s model’, and the pioneer of the earliest days became increasingly irrelevant, although the exclusivity of ‘old timer’ clubs showed just how important the pioneer had been in the development of motor traction.

Motor traction was, above all, sold as a leisure activity, from the three-month European tour for some (usually the clubbable) to the weekend drive or camping trip for others (everybody else). **Chapter 6**, though, suggests that the tour evolved. The pioneers, such as those driving before 1900 or a bit later, derived pleasure and satisfaction in getting an utterly unreliable vehicle to its destination, with its punctures, breakdowns and abuse from bystanders. The consumer, though, came to expect an entirely different experience by the First World War, demanding reliability, infrastructure for repairs, petrol and hospitality, and assistance in the form of guide books and maps. It is this ‘open road’ that the entrepreneur sold, with its impossibly idyllic views, picnic spots and delightful camping experience, reached by the trouble-free motor car, ‘so easy a woman can drive it’. The downside was the incompatibility of the nineteenth-century road network with the motor car in any numbers, leading to congestion, despoliation and speed traps.

Flicking through any motoring magazine of the period quickly conjures up the rose-tinted vision that writers and entrepreneurs had for the future of motor traction. Illustrators fantasized about empty roads, fast and trouble-free motor-cycles and motor cars, some of which would be flying or floating. Another vision, though, was of clogged streets and flying policemen. **Chapter 7** considers the different futures presented, and the ‘spin-offs’ such as motor-boating and aviation, copy for which appeared in the motoring press. The envisaged future for the roads network is discussed, while the persistence of the horse is considered. By about 1910 the elements were in place for an increasingly socially diverse motoring experience requiring ever less intervention.