

MEMORIAL TO KIRKPATRICK MACMILLAN

Inventor of the Bicycle.

(Contributed by Mrs. D.A. Browne.)

Brown Island

At Courthill Smithy, Dumfriess-shire, last Sunday, Sir Harold Bowden, Bart., President of the National Committee on Cycling, paid tribute to the memory of Kirkpatrick Macmillan, inventor of the bicycle, and unveiled a centenary memorial tablet inserted in the wall of the smithy. Sir Hugh Gladstone, laird of Courthill and Lord Lieutenant of the County, introducing Sir Harold, said that millions all over the world owed a debt of gratitude to Kirkpatrick Macmillan for his invention, from which a great industry had grown up in both our export and home markets.

Sir Harold Bowden, before unveiling the tablet, said that the bicycle had made the world a happier place to live in. He spoke of its value during the war years, and estimated that seventy million bicycles are in use in the world today. The tablet reads,

"1839: The Centenary of the Bicycle:- The National
Committee on Cycling honours the memory of Kirkpatrick
Macmillan, the Inventor of the Bicycle: 'He builded
better than he knew.'"

To attend the ceremony, we cycled to Courthill via the glorious Dalveen Pass. We felt we must pay homage to the inventor of a machine which had given us endless pleasure, and by means of which we had toured the length and breadth of this fair land. Hundreds of other cyclists came from far and near. A picturesque touch was provided by the veteran Scots cycling champion, John Millar, a kenspeckle figure with his ruddy cheeks and bushy red beard, giving a demonstration along the road on a "hobby horse" built in 1818 for the Duke of Argyll. The chiefs of the big cycle industries in Britain came to tour by bicycle in the south of Scotland and be present at the ceremony, while folks from all the countryside poured in.

A replica of Macmillan's bicycle leaned against the smithy wall. It looked ^{to} our eyes a cumbersome thing, yet on it Macmillan had ridden all around the neighbourhood, and in 1842 cycled the seventy miles to Glasgow. The people of the countryside stared in amazement as he passed along, while some fled in terror from what they thought was the devil on wheels. On reaching the city, such were the crowds surrounding him that to escape them he knocked down a child. The mob got furious, and Macmillan was put in jail, and was next day fined 5/- for driving such a reckless contraption on the King's Highway. The child was not hurt.

After the unveiling, Sir Harold presented to the youngest descendant of the inventor, four years old Marion Callander, a smart blue bicycle of ^{the} very latest pattern.

A Commemoration Service was held in Keir Kirk, which was filled to capacity. Rev. W. Wylie Fulton, B.D. offered thanks for the flash of genius which had been gifted so often to men of the British race, and in this instance to one of the sons of Keir. Led by the minister, the whole company then filed to the old Kirkyard of Keir, down by the Water of Scaur, where Mr. Frank Urry of Birmingham, one of the grand old men of the cycling world, laid of chaplet of laurel on the grave of Kirkpatrick Macmillan.
