

# LAWRENCE FLETCHER – FATHER OF BRITISH ROAD CYCLING?

By David Birchall

Anyone who knows *The Black Anfielders*<sup>1</sup> will recognise the name Lawrence Fletcher (illustration 1). It was Fletcher who set the Anfield Bicycle Club on the path it has followed since the 1880s. To his friends he was a “genial, enthusiastic and unassuming gentleman with all the information as to cycling at his fingers’ ends”<sup>2</sup>. But there was another side to him: from his cycling exploits alone there can be no doubt that he was single minded, highly competitive, and, on matters of principle, unshakeable. And he conducted his business affairs similarly.

The Anfield’s foundations were in place when he joined in 1881. But it was his personality that, as the club history puts it, “set the pattern for the next fifty years of what a good Anfielder ought to be and to do”. His importance to cycling goes far beyond the Anfield, and he deserves to be recognised as one of the key men in the evolution of the sport. He was involved with the creation of the Cyclists’ Touring Club (CTC); and it is thanks to his single-minded opposition to the National Cyclists’ Union (NCU) and his energetic defence of the right to compete on public roads that we have the sport of time-trialling, and, indeed, road-racing today.

## Early years

Lawrence Fletcher was born when cycling was in its infancy. In an interview with *Athletic Journal*<sup>3</sup> he recollected learning to ride during school holidays in 1872 on his brother’s “Eclipse” boneshaker<sup>4</sup>. The Eclipse was built by one of the most innovative designers (and top rider) John Keen. Such a machine would have been rubber tyred with a spider driving wheel of 46" diameter or more, and effectively an “ordinary”<sup>5</sup>.

By 1875 he was sufficiently competent to consider himself a fully fledged “wheelman”<sup>6</sup>. And by the time he was seventeen in 1878 his enthusiasm for cycling was boundless, and his talent formidable. In this year Stanley Cotterell (four years Fletcher’s senior) was busy forming the Bicycle Touring Club (later renamed CTC) to look after the interests of touring cyclists. Fletcher threw himself into this work too – to such an extent that Cotterell later named Fletcher as one of the fourteen “men who worked hardest in the first and most anxious year of the Club’s existence” – no mean compliment given that others on the list included men like Henry Sturmeay and E .R. Shipman<sup>7</sup>.

## Winning ways

By 1879, Fletcher was a member of the Liverpool Amateur Bicycle Club and the Birkenhead Bicycle Club, winning races, and developing a liking for 24 hour rides<sup>8</sup>. He put his average annual mileage at

<sup>1</sup> *The Black Anfielders: the Story of the Anfield Bicycle Club, Centenary Edition, 1979*

<sup>2</sup> *The New Zealand Wheelman*, 20 October 1897: *A Cycling Celebrity: an Interesting Interview with Mr Lawrence Fletcher*: The article is in a scrapbook, compiled by W M Owen (WMO), of photographs and press-cuttings about club members, from the early years to 1900 (WMO, p59).

<sup>3</sup> *Athletic Journal*, September 6, 1887, p9: “Lawrence Fletcher Anfield BC” (WMO, p11)

<sup>4</sup> Correspondence with Les Bowerman suggests that the “Eclipse” was introduced in 1874. So either Fletcher’s memory was wrong about when he learned to ride, or about the machine on which he learned. Either way he started young: he was eleven in the summer of 1872, thirteen in 1874.

<sup>5</sup> Correspondence with Nick Clayton

<sup>6</sup> *The New Zealand Wheelman* (footnote 2)

<sup>7</sup> *Anfield Circular* No.602, August 1956: letter from Cyril R Rowson

<sup>8</sup> *Anfield Circular* No.327, May 1933, p470: *In Memoriam – Laurence Fletcher*

15,000 miles and rode “hundreds of twenty-four hour races” (winning three Anfield 24 hour scratch events)<sup>9</sup>. He competed in many place-to-place rides. In 1885 he broke the Land’s End – John O’Groats tricycle record (8 days 5 hours 20 minutes)<sup>10</sup>, while in 1892 he reduced the time to under four days (3 days, 23 hours 55 minutes) on a safety bicycle<sup>11</sup>. Riding a Raleigh with Dunlops in September 1893 he claimed the 1000 mile world record (4 days 2 hours, 30 minutes) in conditions that would certainly have defeated a lesser mortal<sup>12</sup>.

He introduced such riders as G P Mills<sup>13</sup> and R H Carlisle to the world of long distance cycling. He acted as their guide and mentor, and they considered themselves “greatly indebted to him for starting their wonderful careers”<sup>14</sup>. He was responsible for the commissioning of the Anfield Long Distance Shield<sup>15</sup>, and led the escort of wheelmen who guided Thomas Stevens from Liverpool at the start of the European stage of his round the world ride in May 1885<sup>16</sup>.

While he was charm and geniality to his friends, he was unforgiving if he was against you. And this side of his nature inevitably led to his resignation from the CTC, and intransigent opposition to the NCU and all it represented.

## Conflict with the CTC

The issue with the CTC arose in 1886 over the publication of a “road book” containing information about road gradients and surface conditions<sup>17</sup>. Fletcher had been the CTC Chief Consul in North Wales from 1879. In this role, and also as President of the Caernarvonshire Bicycling Club, one of his jobs was to lobby road surveyors to keep their highways in good repair. Another role was to advise

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<sup>9</sup> **The New Zealand Wheelman** (footnote 2): “I rode on average about 15,000 miles a year”. The phrase “hundreds of twenty-four hour races” might be a figure of speech – but whether as record breaker or as pacer, or just for enjoyment, ABC Annual Reports show that his riding was prolific – in some years he missed only a handful of weekly club fixtures. See also **The Black Anfielders**, p3: “Here is Lawrence Fletcher’s idea of a pleasant Saturday; 1879: October, 173 miles in 18½ hours on Welsh roads. This was followed in November by 227 in 24 hours: Liverpool, by way of Newtown, to Aberystwyth and back via Dolgellay and Bala.”

<sup>10</sup> The ride is referred to in the **ABC Annual Report 1885** (p9) thus: “On Whit Monday at noon, Mr Lawrence Fletcher left the Land’s End on his tricycle, and in spite of bad weather and adverse circumstances, succeeded in reaching John O’Groats’ House on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> June, at 5.20 p.m., making 875 miles in 8 days 5 hours 20 minutes, and *beating the tricycle record* over this course by 6½ hours”. When the RRA was formed in 1888, only sixteen road records were accepted from the NCU: this ride appears to have been one excluded: see **RRA Handbook** and **The Black Anfielders** (p16).

<sup>11</sup> **RRA Handbook**, 1982, p7

<sup>12</sup> **The Black Anfielders**: Chapter 5 “Five Days with Lawrence Fletcher” – at one point on this ride Fletcher walked, shoeless, in heavy rain along the road to Inverness that he found to be “practically non-existent owing to railway construction work” (ABC Annual Report for 1893). An attempt on the End to End record had been his aim, but in the face of this “calamity”, the plan was abandoned. He and his supporters (who including John Siddeley – later Lord Kenilworth, motorcar and aeroplane builder) hastily worked out an alternative route that took Fletcher back to Stirling and the 1000 mile record. This ride was Fletcher’s third End to End attempt of the year, the previous two having also been abandoned. But he had secured the Irish End to End and 24 hour records. For his efforts the ABC presented him with a special medal for “the meritorious performances” (Committee Minute 4<sup>th</sup> December 1893), but the 1000 mile ride was not recorded by the RRA, nor did the Irish rides count.

<sup>13</sup> See **The Boneshaker**, No.145, vol 15, Winter 1997

<sup>14</sup> **Anfield Circular** No.327, May 1933, p470: *In Memoriam – Laurence Fletcher*

<sup>15</sup> See **The Boneshaker**, No.133, vol 14, Winter 1993

<sup>16</sup> **Around the World on a Bicycle**, Thomas Stevens, first published in 1887: *Classics of American Sport edition*, with introduction by Thomas Pauly, Stackpole Books, US, 2001

<sup>17</sup> **CTC Monthly Gazette**, March 1886, pp78/79. The idea was to publish the “book” in separate volumes, region by region, covering the whole of mainland UK and Ireland.

visiting cyclists on the state of the roads. Fletcher argued that in relation to information about *surfaces*, the book would be out-of-date by the time it was published, of little value, and a waste of members' money:

*The atmospheric surroundings, consequent on the vicinity of so many mountains, vary so constantly, that the roads require and receive almost daily attention and repair, and it will therefore be obvious that any printed information so far as the **surface** of the roads is concerned will in very many instances prove to be a failure.*

Worse, in his view, the book would undermine his reputation for providing reliable information. Compromise there was none, and the CTC's Northern Welsh Division accepted his resignation "without even the customary formal expression of regret"<sup>18</sup>. So despite the good work with Cotterell in the early days, his relationship ended on a sour note, and he resigned from the CTC itself.

Ironically, Fletcher was right in his criticisms: the CTC faced serious difficulties over the road-book project. Some two years after his resignation there was no sign of the book<sup>19</sup>. It proved almost impossible for the CTC to obtain accurate route detail. And there was alarm at how "disastrously" expensive it was proving<sup>20</sup>. Although the first volume saw the light of day in 1891, it took until 1900 to complete the project<sup>21</sup>.

## At war with the NCU

The dispute with the NCU was just as acrimonious and lasted decades (illustration 2). Indeed it was still a sensitive issue in the Anfield when I joined the club in 1960.

The NCU began life as the Bicycle Union in 1877 with the aim of governing amateur sport both on the "path" and on the road. From being a side show at athletic events, under the control of the Amateur Athletic Club, bicycle racing grew so popular that it was necessary and logical that it developed its own organisation. At first the Anfield had no issues with the NCU – Anfielders were active participants on the "path" and indeed the club ran track events (illustration 3). Even after secession from the NCU, there were Anfield track events, though for members only (illustration 4).

## Sham amateurs

One cause of trouble was the NCU's attempts to ban "makers' amateurs", who, it was thought, posed an unfair challenge to "gentlemen"<sup>22</sup>. Commercialism was also a problem that led to dubious place-to-place record claims. The NCU attempted to address sham amateurism through licences that could be withdrawn on suspicion, not proof. Fletcher considered this unsportsmanlike and against natural justice<sup>23</sup>. The issue over the definition of "amateurism" rumbled on bitterly. It dogged the 1890 Anfield AGM<sup>24</sup> and continued to cause problems in 1896, when Anfielders "Doc"

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<sup>18</sup> **CTC Monthly Gazette**, March 1886: letter from Lawrence Fletcher

<sup>19</sup> **Athletic Journal**, September 6 1887 (footnote 3): "the book has been in preparation now for three years and is still not published"

<sup>20</sup> **CTC Monthly Gazette**, July 1891, p170

<sup>21</sup> **CTC Monthly Gazette**, December 1900, p581

<sup>22</sup> **The Origins of Bicycle Racing in England** by Andrew Ritchie, JPMPF, 2007: for example see pp55/57

<sup>23</sup> **Athletic Journal**, September 6 1887 (footnote 3)

<sup>24</sup> Resolutions seeking to prevent members with links to manufacturers from serving in the club were roundly defeated (**ABC Annual Report for 1890**, p15)

Carlisle and Billy Neason lost their amateur status by competing in the Paris – Bordeaux race (finishing 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively despite inadequate pacing)<sup>25</sup>.

## Road racing

Equally bad, in Fletcher's view, was the threat to cancel the licences of riders taking part in road races and place-to-place record attempts. Perhaps it was inevitable, given his appetite for the road and the overwhelming dominance of Anfield riders in competitive road racing, that Fletcher took exception to what he saw as NCU interference in aspects of the sport that were at the heart of his and the Anfield's ethos. The upshot was that in February 1887 the club "seceded" from the NCU<sup>26</sup>. Unfortunately the decision ruled out Anfield riders from competing for road records on the NCU books: definitely not acceptable, give the club's pre-eminence in the sport. The solution, with a handful of other clubs (including the North Road CC, Speedwell BC, and Bath Road Club), was to set up a new and independent organisation to govern distance events and place-to-place records. So the Road Records Association (RRA) came into being in 1888 with the Anfield's Sydney Chalk its first Secretary and Treasurer<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, the NCU renounced road racing entirely, handing over its books to the newly formed association. There was still a problem for the Anfield: the RRA did not reflect competition on northern counties roads whether for distance or place-to-place record attempts. So, to fill the gap, the Northern RRA (NRRRA) was formed by local clubs in 1890, with Lawrence Fletcher its first President<sup>28</sup>.

Throughout the many years of conflict with the NCU, the Anfield's response was to carry on as normally as possible, while establishing separate rules and governing bodies to ensure that road-racing and place-to-place records could still be run in an organised and well managed way (illustration 5). This was Fletcher's "great work" not only for the Anfield but also for competitive cycling on the road in the UK:

*Undoubtedly Lawrence Fletcher's great work for the Club was in leading us away from Track racing to confine our activities purely to the road, with the result that when the NCU issued its historic ban on road racing, the Anfield totally ignored it and became the only club not driven off the road. And this spirit of independence, with "what is best for the Sport" as its guiding principle, has been the tradition the Anfield has built upon and made us famous, virile and so much to be envied<sup>29</sup>.*

There was much opposition to the Anfield's stance. An editorial in ***Athletic News***, 1896, deplored "the wisdom of the 'men in black' in so persistently sticking to their guns":

*It matters not that road races promoted by the Anfield BC are invariably conducted as carefully as possible. To so argue is begging the question, which is: if the Anfield are to run races on the road, why not other clubs? The other clubs have many of them answered the question "on their own" – agreeing that in these days of hot pace and police persecution the*

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<sup>25</sup> Carlisle and Neason had given advance notice of their intention to compete in the Paris – Bordeaux race which was confined to professional riders. The Anfield committee, having "found no rule of the club calling on [them] to resign" allowed them to retain their membership, on the understanding that they would no longer be eligible to compete in club racing. (***ABC Annual Report for 1896***, pp7/9)

<sup>26</sup> Anfield BC Committee Minute, 14 February 1887 – under the chairmanship of G B Mercer

<sup>27</sup> ***The Black Anfielders***: *Editor's Note* (page viii), and p16

<sup>28</sup> ***A History of the NRRRA 1890 – 1990***, T.M and P.B Barlow, 1990

<sup>29</sup> ***Anfield Circular*** No.327, p470, May 1933: *In Memoriam – Laurence Fletcher*

*game is to be tabooed. One cannot avoid the reflection that if, for once in a way, the Anfield BC would fall in line with the others it would be no bad move*<sup>30</sup>.

The “police persecution” mentioned in the editorial was not to be dismissed lightly. Indeed, it proved costly to Anfielders: there are many press cuttings in W M Owen’s scrapbook illustrating the cat and mouse game that was played between riders and police. For example, in 1897 Tom Conway was fined 5/- for his “little scorch from Edinburgh to Liverpool”<sup>31</sup> (illustration 6), whilst the price for Billy Neason’s London – Brighton “ride”<sup>32</sup> was 40/- and costs. The cutting states, laconically: “He took detectives for the Press and gave them full particulars of his ride ...”. Oh dear!

Public hostility and ever more police persecution compounded the difficulties facing road racing in its traditional paced form<sup>33</sup>. Some clubs (like the North Road CC Limited) experimented with un-paced time-trialling in secret, but this too came under attack<sup>34</sup>. Matters came to a head in 1897 when the NCU banned licensed riders “from taking part in any race or paced record attempt upon the road”<sup>35</sup>.

That the Anfield was the only club left pursuing paced road riding was clearly unworkable. Inviting riders from other clubs was not feasible, so, bowing to the inevitable, from 1900 the club introduced un-paced time-trials, on a “private and confidential” basis for members and by invitation only. Such events were held at the crack of dawn to minimise conflict with the public and police.

So had Fletcher won or lost the battle? By opposing the NCU so effectively on behalf of the Anfield, he had set in motion a sequence of events that had kept racing on public roads alive. However, had there been the kind of public and state support for road racing, as for example in France, then the development of cycle sport in the UK would have been very different. Nevertheless it is greatly to the credit of the clubs that carried on the work started by Lawrence Fletcher that road racing in any form survived the 1890s. As it was, it took until 1922 to regulate time-trialling nationally, and half a century until “massed-start” road racing was seen again in Britain.

## The man himself

Lawrence Fletcher was the fifth of eight children<sup>36</sup>. The 1871 Census records the family living at Litherland<sup>37</sup>, north of Liverpool, and his father’s occupation as “ship broker”. By 1881, they had moved to a large house on Edge Lane, near Wavertree Park, in Liverpool itself, run by a cook, housekeeper, and maid<sup>38</sup>. In 1886 Lawrence married Grace, a girl from Llanfairfechan, at Bangor, Caernarvonshire. They set up home in Birkenhead<sup>39</sup>, on the Wirral side of the River Mersey.

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<sup>30</sup> Cutting from *Athletic News*, 1896 (WMO, p44)

<sup>31</sup> Edinburgh - Liverpool bicycle record, 27 Sept 1897: 14hrs 35mins (*ABC Annual Report 1897*, pp 12/13)

<sup>32</sup> London - Brighton and back bicycle record, 11 Sept 1897: 5hrs 6mins 42secs (*ABC Annual Report, 1897*, p12)

<sup>33</sup> See also *The Evolution of Time-Trialling in Britain*, Les Bowerman, Proceedings, 13<sup>th</sup> ICHC, 2002

<sup>34</sup> *RTTC / North Road CC The Centenary Time Trial Commemorative Programme*, 1 October 1995

<sup>35</sup> Letter to the Editor of *Sports*: “NCU and Road Racing”, signed by S R Noble, Secretary, Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 1897 (WMO p44)

<sup>36</sup> His father, two sisters, and two brothers were also Anfield members (*ABC Annual Reports 1885/1886*)

<sup>37</sup> “The Elms”, Field Lane, Litherland.

<sup>38</sup> 1881 Census; and *Anfield Circular* No.602, August 1956: letter from Cyril R Rowson. Rowson notes that the house (“The Grange”) “was on the corner of Botanic Road on a site occupied by the the new Territorial Army Building”.

<sup>39</sup> At the 1891 Census Lawrence Fletcher was living at “Carlton”, Woodchurch Road, with his wife and children Lawrence Gordon (3) and Louisa Kathleen (1))

By 1887 Fletcher was established in business with “well-appointed offices” in Central Chambers, Liverpool’s South Castle Street. As head of “Fletcher & Fraser”<sup>40</sup>, he was reported as carrying “the same thoroughness with the business of life that he displays in pursuit of his favourite pastime”<sup>41</sup>. Without exception his contemporaries regarded him as “thorough”, “knowledgeable” and “astute in commercial undertakings”.

Describing himself as an *African Merchant*, his company dealt on the Gold Coast of Africa in rubber and gold. In this context he was the Honorary Secretary of the Gold Coast Chamber of Commerce, an office which required “discretion and wide experience in African matters”<sup>42</sup>.

Cycling and business notwithstanding he also found the time to write novels<sup>43</sup>. *Into the Unknown* (published by Cassell & Co at 4/-), *Zero the Slaver* (illustration 7), and *The Shadow of Death* were based on his knowledge of Africa. One commentator noted that the African novels enabled Fletcher to show his familiarity with the romantic side of African subjects. *Zero the Slaver* was “awaited with considerable interest by students of African fiction”. The fourth, *Legend of the Land’s End*, was first serialised in the *Bristol Times* and *Irish Independent* in 1897.

Business led him from Liverpool in 1893 to Africa and then to Cork where he lived while working for the Dunlop Cycle Company<sup>44</sup>. Despite these commitments, 1893 was nevertheless the year that he found time to establish Irish End to End and 24 hour records, and to make the three abortive attempts on Land’s End – John O’Groats (the last turning into the 1000 mile record claim)<sup>45</sup>. On his return from Africa and Ireland he seems to have lived in Newcastle-on-Tyne, and, curiously given his views, he became the NCU representative for Northumberland (illustration 8)<sup>46</sup>.

In 1894 he again attacked the End to End record, and also the Edinburgh – London, but on both occasions bad weather defeated him (illustration 9). From then on we read less of his active cycling. What we do know<sup>47</sup> is that in 1897 at the age of 36, with his family, he visited Australia (where he considered setting up an office with his old friend Hugh Fraser), and New Zealand. He was there partly under doctor’s orders (over-work) and partly on business.

After 1901 ABC Annual Reports list members’ addresses, and by then we find him in London<sup>48</sup>, working for the Welsbach Company “well-known in the days of gas-lights in the home”<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Fellow Anfielder Hugh Fraser was also Fletcher’s business partner

<sup>41</sup> *Athletic Journal*, September 6 1887 (footnote 3)

<sup>42</sup> Cutting from *Liverpool Echo* dated May 1893 (WMO, p11)

<sup>43</sup> *The New Zealand Wheelman* (footnote 2); and WMO cuttings (e.g. p14 and p30)

<sup>44</sup> *The Wheeler*, p443 - undated but immediately post-1000 mile ride, 1893 (WMO scrapbook p14)

<sup>45</sup> Footnote 12

<sup>46</sup> Cutting (unsourced), dated February 1894, from WMO (p68): “... it is interesting to note that he has rejoined the fold of the NCU, the Northumberland County C. and A.C. having recently elected him one of their delegates to the local Centre.”

<sup>47</sup> *The New Zealand Wheelman* (footnote 2). Fletcher is described as Managing Director of the Australian Cycling Agency Ltd and similarly MD of “that mammoth English concern, the Griffiths Cycle Corporation Ltd”. At this time, the *John Griffiths Cycle Corporation Ltd* was a cycle-riding school and showroom, in the former Sun Music Hall (Knightsbridge Hall), Knightsbridge, London (see [www.arthurlloyd.co.uk](http://www.arthurlloyd.co.uk))

<sup>48</sup> ABC Annual Reports record six different addresses for Lawrence Fletcher from 1901 to 1933. From 1907 to 1912 both father and son were at the Welsbach Company Works. Lawrence Fletcher’s last address was the Elmo Garage, Barlow Place, Bruton Street, London W1, while his son’s was 41 Swinderby Road, Wembley.

<sup>49</sup> *Anfield Circular* No.602, August 1956: letter from Cyril R Rowson suggests he was the company head

The move from Liverpool in 1893 had marked a turning point in Lawrence Fletcher's life, and his ties with the Anfield gradually lessened, though he continued to regard the club with great affection. For several years, despite being separated by distance, he engaged with club life when possible, and indeed, his son became an Anfielder in 1906, remaining a member until his father's death. But as far as active involvement in the sport, neither ever made the journey from London to an Anfield fixture during this period. So the story effectively ends at the AGM on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1901 at Laurence's Hotel, Clayton Square, Liverpool:

*"Mr D R Fell moved, and Mr G B Mercer seconded, and it was unanimously resolved with acclamation that Mr Lawrence Fletcher be elected to Life Membership for eminent services rendered"<sup>50</sup>.*

The honour was significant: Lawrence Fletcher had become the club's first life member<sup>51</sup>.

## Acknowledgements

My thanks go to Glynn Stockdale for information about Lawrence Fletcher's conflict with the CTC; and to John Sinclair for providing the cartoon "*Anfield Devotion*" from his bound copy of ***Wheel World***; also to Alec Baxter, Gordon Blaikie, Phil Heaton (CTT) and Andrew Ascroft (NRRRA) for their help; and finally to Andrew Ritchie, Les Bowerman and Nick Clayton for sharing their knowledge, and for their constructive critical contributions, particularly on John Keen, the Eclipse and the nature of early competitive riding.

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<sup>50</sup> ***ABC Annual Report, 1900***, p21

<sup>51</sup> Lawrence Fletcher died on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1933 in his 72<sup>nd</sup> year and was cremated at Golders Green, London.

## Illustrations

1. Lawrence Fletcher: The photo, by Guy & Co Ltd, Cork, is undated – but was probably taken in 1893 when Fletcher lived there. The machine is unidentified, though it appears similar to the 60 inch geared Raleigh on Dunlop tyres he was then using.
2. This cartoon “Anfield Devotion”, undated (pasted from an unknown publication into a bound volume of *Wheel World* 1886), caricatures Lawrence Fletcher (his name is written on the neck-scarf). He is shown as a Roman centurion “Marcus Curtius Anfieldianus” leaping unseated from his Ordinary. In his right hand he brandishes a sword while in his left he holds the “Monthly Race Meetings” list. In the dust are the words “Northern Counties Suspension” and “Disqualification”. Over this scene looms the spectre of Robert Cameron of the Amateur Athletics Association. In the background a group of sketchily drawn but distinctly unhappy riders at a track meeting watch the events unfolding.
3. 2 June 1883: Anfield Bicycle Club Athletic Festival programme front page. The event was run in conjunction with Robinson & Price, cycle agent, builder and repairer. The business was headed by Anfielder G B Mercer
4. The photo is from WMO scrapbook (p2). The *ABC Report 1892* states: *This 50-miles Sealed Handicap was brought off at the Trotting Track, at Aintree. There were ten starters, but owing to the tyres of Messrs Saunders and Toft’s machines going wrong, the race was robbed of much of its interest at an early stage of the proceedings, and was easily won by Mr J A Bennett, who covered the distance from scratch in 2h 44m, Mr P C Beardwood, 6 minutes’ start being second in 2h 59m, and Mr R Thomas, 4 minutes’ start, being third in 2h 57m 17s, whilst Mr W R Hood and Mr I Roberts respectively accomplished the good times of 2h 57m 27s, and 2h 59m; thus winning Time Medals for getting under 3hrs.*
5. 29 February 1892: letter from Lawrence Fletcher inviting W M Owen to a meeting opposing the formation of a Liverpool Centre of the NCU (WMO scrapbook)
6. Tom Conway “collared” after his Edinburgh – Liverpool record ride (WMO scrapbook)
7. “*Zero the Slaver*”, a story of African adventure and romance, can still be found in the world of antiquarian books.
8. Cutting dated Feb 1894: Fletcher rejoins the NCU in Northumberland (WMO scrapbook)
9. Cartoon (from WMO scrapbook) of Lawrence Fletcher’s 1894 End to End record attempt. Scenes and characters involved in the ride are shown at the Norton Arms Warrington. Fletcher is depicted “*arriving muddied up and persuaded to abandon the attempt for the present when well ahead of record*”. Pacers shown are J Butterworth (from Bodmin to Exeter - top left) and Dave Fell (from Wellington to Warrington - top right). Artie Bennett “attends to the commissariat (below right) while the centre sketch shows “*Fletcher in bed wiring pacemakers of his stoppage*”.

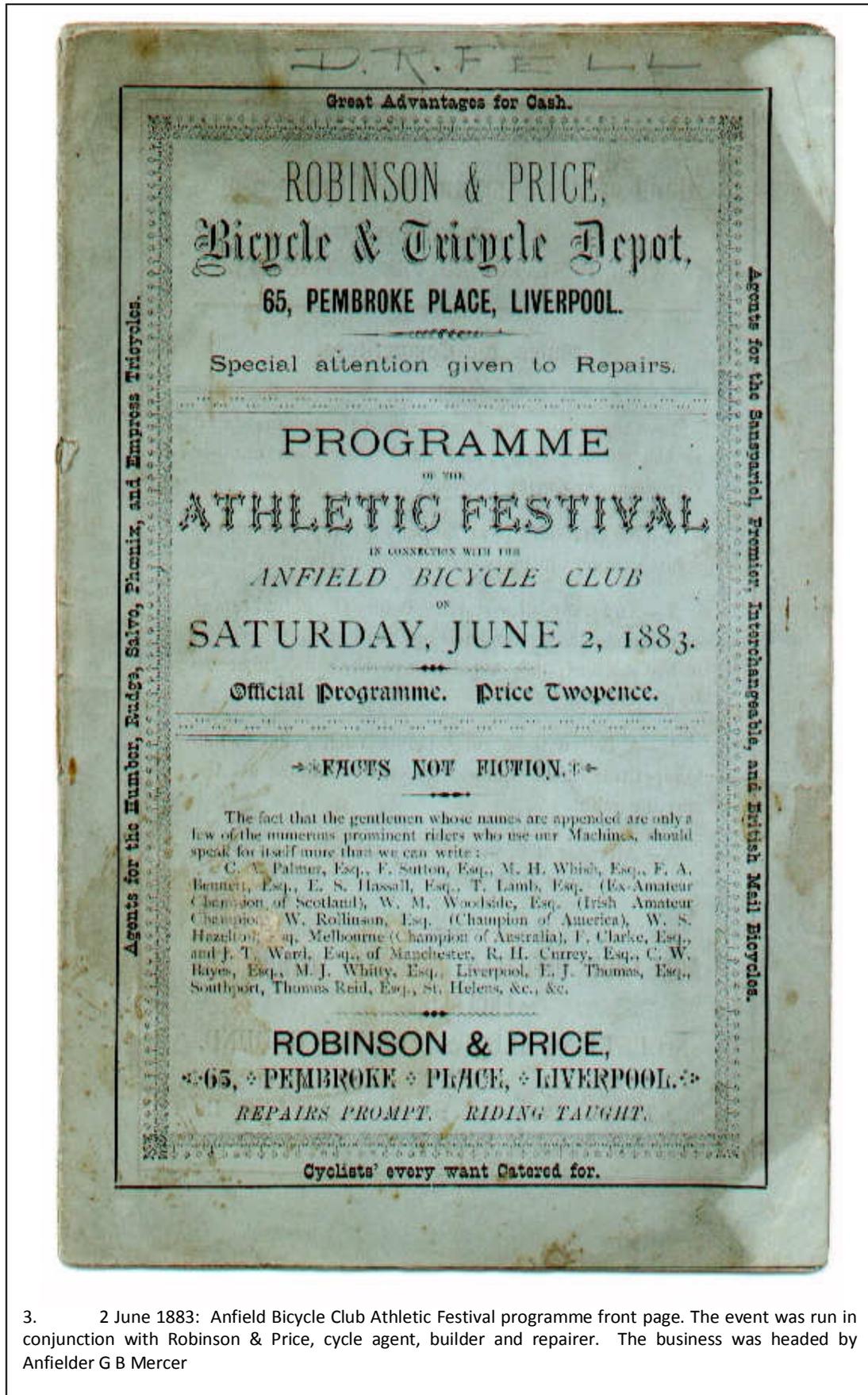
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Anfield Bicycle Club  
 (formed 1879)  
 17 South Castle St  
 Liverpool 29 Feb 1892.

Dear Sir,  
 It has accidentally come to my knowledge that a meeting of Local Cyclists has been called for Wednesday next at the Falcon Restaurant Lord St at 8 pm to discuss the question of again forming a Liverpool + District Local Centre of the National Cyclists Union. As the matter is one of very great importance, I beg that you will make a point of being present. I may mention that your Committee has decided that "the Anfield Club cannot see its way to support a Lpool Centre of the N.C.U."

Yours truly  
 Lawrence Fletcher  
 Hon Secretary

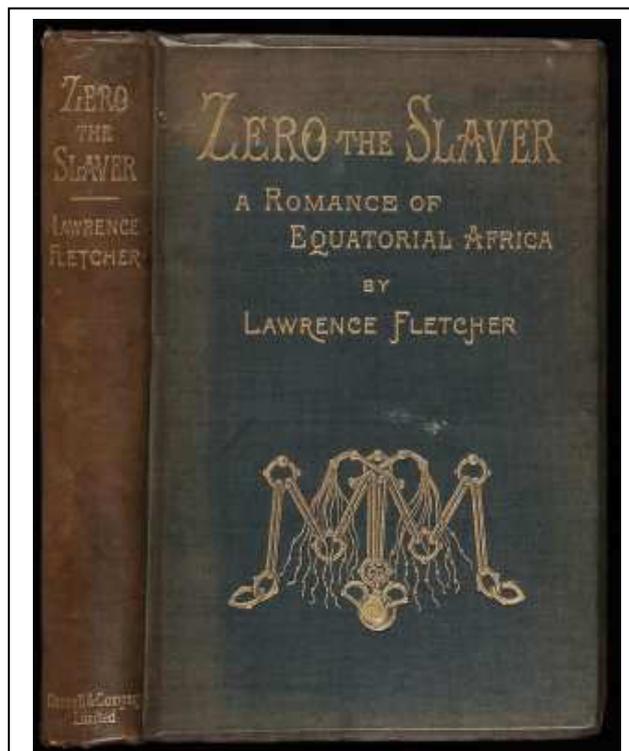
Aug 1898  
 The Anfield B.C.      Mr. E. Buckley of Manchester and

past the Anfield B.C. has declined to the fold of the N.C.U., and their road is partly opposed to principles to which we pledged itself. Under those circumstances it is easily understood why our local club should not strain a point as to the question which would enhance the prospects of Anfielders to secure the fifty miles per day at the Tower track. I have no opinion that no race is really fair if it is not of a general character.

5. 29 February 1892: letter from Lawrence Fletcher inviting W M Owen to a meeting opposing the formation of a Liverpool Centre of the NCU (WMO scrapbook)



6. Tom Conway "collared" after his Edinburgh – Liverpool record ride (WMO scrapbook)



7. "Zero the Slaver", a story of African adventure and romance, can still be found in the world of antiquarian books.

**LAWRENCE FLETCHER**

seems likely to awaken an interest in road record-breaking among the Tynesiders. Fletcher's enthusiasm for this his particular branch of the sport is "catching," although, strange to relate, he himself is a very self-contained man. By-the-way, it is interesting to note that he has rejoined the fold of the N.C.U., the Northumberland County C. and A.C. having recently elected him one of their delegates to the local Centre. It is a long time since Fletcher took any part in Union work. In the brave days of old, he once made a rattling speech at a Council meeting, haranguing the Londoners on the iniquity of suspending men on mere suspicion. Shortly after the delivery of that speech, which was esteemed at the time as one of the most telling to which councillors of the Union had ever listened, Fletcher withdrew from the Union, and was followed by the Liverpool Centre—then one of the strongest in the country—*en bloc*.

Feb 1894

A moment of the ...

8. Cutting dated Feb 1894: Fletcher rejoins the NCU in Northumberland (WMO scrapbook)



9. Cartoon (from WMO scrapbook) of Lawrence Fletcher's 1894 End to End record attempt. Scenes and characters involved in the ride are shown at the Norton Arms Warrington. Fletcher is depicted "arriving muddied up and persuaded to abandon the attempt for the present when well ahead of record". Pacers shown are J Butterworth (from Bodmin to Exeter - top left) and Dave Fell (from Wellington to Warrington - top right). Artie Bennett "attends to the commissariat (below right) while the centre sketch shows "Fletcher in bed wiring pacemakers of his stoppage".