

The Cyclists' Memorial May 1921

Meriden had been a popular centre for cyclists from the advent of the safety bicycle. The village had been quick to respond to an influx of visitors. Cottagers put out notices saying 'Teas for sale' and both the Bull's Head and Queen's Head advertised in the local Coventry paper that each could offer superior refreshments in the field behind their establishment as well as offering bikes for hire. Clubs planned excursions with Meriden on the itinerary and races, some illegal on the road, are mentioned in newspapers too. Edwardian post cards show bicycles and small motor bikes on the Green often propped against the Cross.

After the Great War a discussion began about commemorating cyclists: those who had enjoyed the pre-war sport or hobby as well as those killed in the conflict as couriers using cycles on the Western Front. Several venues were suggested for such a memorial, all in the central region of England, most in Warwickshire. The place frequently mentioned was Meriden, long since known as the 'Centre of England'. In fact it seems that the advent of cycling helped the re-emergence of the tradition. Within about a year, Meriden Green was accepted and a design agreed. A local stone mason's firm: White and Sons of South Yardley, Birmingham won the contract for the obelisk of Portland stone.

It now has three separate dedications on it, the last one added this May, 2014. Every year since 1921, with the exception of the Second World War period (1940-45), an outdoor service of remembrance has been held around it. The Parish Council has its future much in mind as we begin a period of commemoration for the Great War centenary.



