



Griffin, B. (2017) 'The tourist gaze: cycling tourists' impressions of Victorian and Edwardian Ireland', *Irish Studies Review*, 25 (3), pp. 283-315.

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis Group in *Irish Studies Review* on 23/05/2017 available online: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09670882.2017.1330178>

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The tourist gaze: cycling tourists' impressions of Victorian and Edwardian Ireland

The period from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries saw a considerable growth in tourist numbers in Ireland, both of Irish people visiting parts of the country that were distant from their native districts, as well as visitors from abroad. A significant infrastructure that catered for these tourists' needs was already in place in the years before the Great Famine,¹ and this grew considerably with the spread of the railway in the post-Famine decades.² Many of these recreational travellers published accounts of their experiences and impressions: according to Spurgeon Thompson, some 569 travel narratives and tourist guidebooks "addressing Ireland" were published between 1845 and 1923,³ a figure that almost certainly underestimates the true total. Whatever the precise number of published accounts of tourists' travels may be, historians of Ireland in the long nineteenth century have long been attracted to this rich literary source of eyewitness testimony, often regurgitating details from it in an uncritical manner to support their discussions of Irish social conditions in this period. A number of historians in recent years have subjected this material to scholarly scrutiny, looking beyond the surface descriptive details to explore what the texts reveal about their authors' prejudices, presuppositions and general attitudes towards Ireland, as well as the contemporary cultural factors that helped to shape these views.⁴ What is largely missing from the scholarly literature on Irish travel writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is a critical discussion of accounts written by tourists who travelled by tricycle or bicycle. The topic of cycling tourism in this period has been touched

upon by some historians, but their focus is mainly on tourist infrastructure or on how Ireland was promoted as a touring ground for actual and prospective cyclist visitors, rather than on examining closely these tourists' written accounts of what they observed awheel.⁵ William Bulfin's *Rambles in Eirinn*, his classic account of his bicycle tour around in Ireland in 1902 and 1903,⁶ is the only cyclist's travel writing that has received sustained attention from scholars,⁷ but they do not locate Bulfin's work in its full context, as an example of a hitherto unexplored form of travelogue in the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras, that of Irish *cyclist* travel writing. This article will provide the first scholarly analysis of the accounts that Bulfin and other cycling tourists wrote about their travels awheel in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Building on Martin Ryle's point that "whatever value travel writing may have as empirical evidence about the terrain it describes, it is itself primary evidence about the cultural relations which it necessarily represents, because it instantiates and embodies them",⁸ it illustrates the many ways in which tourist cyclists' accounts reflected broader contemporary views of Ireland. Many of these accounts were published in the leading Irish cycling newspaper, the *Irish Cyclist*, while others appeared in British and other newspapers and periodicals, illustrating both the growing popularity of Ireland as a holiday touring ground for cyclists and also the appeal of cycling travelogues to readers of the cycling press.⁹ An examination of the contents of such writings, as well as the various accounts that appeared in book travelogues, may not necessarily reveal much about the reality of Irish life in this period, but it does reveal a lot about the authors of this material. As will be shown, the cycling travel writers were often predisposed to view Ireland in ways that, if perhaps not totally culturally predetermined, were

at the very least heavily influenced by prevailing attitudes about Ireland and the Irish, attitudes that were often shared by both Irish and foreign tourists. For example, in their choice of holiday destinations, and in their expectations that they would encounter exotic people, sights and situations on their travels, the cycling tourists shared the predilections of and showed a similar mindset to those holidaymakers who travelled by other means than that of the bicycle or the tricycle. A fascination with the peasant world was a recurring feature of cycling tourists' written and photographic accounts of their travels in Ireland: as detailed in this paper, the peasant world was often depicted in ways which showed the influence of various stereotypical images, including those of the barefooted "colleen" in the countryside or the peasant leading the family pig to market by a string attached to the pig's hind leg. Examining the accounts that cycling tourists wrote of their travels in Ireland not only opens a new window into the Irish cycling world in the Victorian and Edwardian periods, significantly broadening our understanding of that world by exploring this hitherto overlooked topic, but also makes an original contribution to the general literature of tourists' perceptions of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The tourists' destinations

One of the more mundane ways in which cycling tourists were influenced by dominant views about Ireland was in their choice of destination. Long before the advent of the bicycle, it was generally accepted by tourists that certain parts of the country were more worth seeing than others. The mountainous parts of counties Cork and Kerry, particularly the lakes of Killarney, were firmly

established as popular tourist destinations in the decades before the Great Famine; other popular draws included the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains, Connemara, Donegal, and the Giant's Causeway and the Antrim Mountains. Dublin city also featured prominently on tourists' itineraries in this period.¹⁰ These destinations retained their status as the premier tourist regions in the post-Famine decades, as reflected in the fact that most tourist guidebooks focused on them, most of the country's tourist infrastructure was located in these counties, and tourists' accounts were dominated by accounts of their travels to these parts of Ireland.¹¹ The cinematic image reinforced the message that these regions were the most worthwhile areas for the tourist to visit, with Killarney and its environs featuring particularly frequently in several tourism promotional films that were shown to Irish audiences in the period before the Great War.¹² This trend was deepened by the growing perception, especially amongst enthusiasts of the Irish literary and cultural revival from the 1890s onwards, that "the West", variously defined, was where the "real Ireland" was to be found.¹³ The Midland counties of Longford, Westmeath, Meath and King's County were largely ignored, partly because tourists found these flat counties uninteresting, but also because they did not have to pass through them in order to reach, from Dublin, various popular destinations in Munster and Ulster.¹⁴

From the 1870s onwards, most cycling tourists were attracted to the same parts of the country that had attracted travellers by coach in the pre-Famine decades. Before the advent of the railway enabled recreational travellers to quickly negotiate their way through the boglands and other flat terrain of the Midlands, tourists tended to find bogs there dull at best and depressing at worst, a tedious interlude to be endured between Dublin and the sublime mountainous

landscapes of Munster and Connemara; the boglands that skirted Connemara's mountain chains were written off as a "wasteland".¹⁵ Such attitudes persisted into the latter part of our period, when bicycling tourists were advised to take the train from Dublin when heading to the West, thus avoiding the tedious terrain of the Midlands. In 1909, John L. Warden Page summed up most tourists' views when he quoted an unknown writer's description of Ireland as "An ugly picture in a beautiful frame," surmising that the phrase was probably penned by a traveller who had to traverse the "dreary bogland about the headwaters of the Shannon" before reaching the "delightful country about Lough Erne or Lough Gill". Warden Page agreed with the sentiment expressed by the unknown author, explaining that "Central Ireland is not beautiful – I speak, of course, generally, for there are exceptions. Picturesque Ireland is more or less confined to the coastline and a hinterland of, say, fifteen or twenty miles; the core of the country is dull".¹⁶ It is a revealing fact that when the Irish section of the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC), the organization that was founded in 1879 to promote cycle touring throughout the United Kingdom, established a network of some 259 approved hotels for its members, they were located disproportionately in those regions that traditionally drew large numbers of tourists: in contrast, Kildare, Meath and Longford had a mere two such establishments each.¹⁷

Cycling tourists shared their predecessors' distaste for travelling through bog "wastelands" and flat, seemingly featureless and uninteresting countryside.¹⁸ When two Dubliners went on a bicycle tour through the South of Ireland in the summer of 1881, one of them explained that he had "long intended making a run through Ireland, and visiting the spots which song and story writers have never tired of eulogizing". Although he did not specify which spots were thus eulogized,

it is clear from his account of his tour, which was published in an American cycling journal, that they were not the bogs of Kildare or of anywhere else. He recounts that a few miles south of Kildare:

We entered upon a tract of country the features of which are by no means uncommon in Ireland. I suppose you already guess that I refer to an Irish bog. It is about the most uninteresting thing imaginable, this bog travelling – though bog roads are generally good – unless you happen to be a foreigner, and then there is some novelty in the shape of a dwelling house half hollowed out of the turfy soil, with its family standing before the dark orifice, called by courtesy “the dure” [.....] Or you may behold, in red shawl and petticoat, a stalwart specimen of feminine loveliness, in bare feet, and head only owning for covering the luxuriant wealth of beautiful hair which still marks the descendants of the Celt. These objects, with the exception perhaps of a few dark-flowing streams, are all that break the monotony of a bog ride.¹⁹

The bored Dubliners “relieved the monotony of the ride [.....] by chasing a matronly-looking cow for fully quarter of a mile, until she took to butting at the machines, which of course necessitated our dismounting and squaring accounts with her”.²⁰ Their feelings of boredom during this stretch of their journey contrasted sharply with their impressions of the countryside between

Ballincollig and Macroom:

the beauty of the country we were passing through awakened every chord of sympathy with Nature’s handiwork which our feelings could boast of. Wonder, admiration, surprise, and awe were all called forth in our contemplation of so much that was so new and strange and beautiful.²¹

Similar feelings of awe were evoked by the mountainous scenery around Glengariff, Bantry Bay and Killarney,²² before their spirits were plunged into gloom again from riding along “the most dismal expanse of bog land” which stretched for miles between Tralee and Tarbert. As it had rained the previous day, the road surface was reduced to “liquid mud”, adding further to the cyclists’ feelings of misery:

The condition of the machines and our outward appearance I can give you some faint idea of, when I tell you that we presented somewhat of the

appearance of two city scavengers on a dirty day, and the bicycles were so bedaubed and draggled as if Noah's sons had endeavoured to pedal them through the sedimental refuse of the Deluge.²³

Almost twenty years later, Stephen Gwynn's *Highways and Byways in Donegal and Antrim*, a cycling travelogue which Gwynn wrote to encourage English tourists to visit Northern Ulster, was dismissive of the latter area's extensive boglands. Much of the terrain through which prospective visitors would travel was "blank", "a wilderness", "a country for the most part remote, lonely, and storm-beaten, in many districts so wild and barren that to this day no industry of man (even in places where the land hunger makes the main fact of existence) has attempted to reclaim it". Despite this unprepossessing prospect, Gwynn tried to reassure his readers that "those who come there need not be afraid of going home shocked and haunted by the nakedness of the land".²⁴

Only a minority of tourists, whether they travelled by bicycle or other means, were attracted to Ireland's boglands or the flat terrain of the Midlands. The most well-known of these was William Bulfin, whose *Rambles in Eirinn* concentrated on precisely those areas of the country which a "West Briton" editor of a road book, and others, regarded as devoid of interest.²⁵ Bulfin's travelogue deliberately avoided most of the tourist sites beloved of British travellers and "shoneen" Irish tourists alike. Mainly concentrating on the Midlands and contiguous regions of Munster and Ulster instead, Bulfin sketched a landscape – "a giant graveyard", as one scholar terms it²⁶ – that was rich in sites of interest to the student of Irish history and legend, sites that told a tale variously of Irish valour, "Saxon" iniquity and despoliation by landlords. As Ryle explains, the topography and the "descriptive modes" in *Rambles in Eirinn* were determined

partly by a negative impulse: the desire “to erase from the represented landscape the marks of ‘West British’ tourism, and to mount a rhetorical attack on the material and cultural power of landlordism”.²⁷ Bulfin’s rejection of the more popular tourist sites of the period, in favour of the Midlands, was shared by at least one other cycling holidaymaker, H.T.B. Drew, a New Zealander, who visited Ireland in 1910. At first, it appeared that Drew would follow in the tracks of so many other foreign cyclist tourists after they arrived in Dublin and that he would head for the Wicklow Mountains, especially after he visited the CTC consul, C.D. Whiteside, “who, kindness itself, mapped me out a pleasant run to the Vale of Ovoca, and lent me his guide-books”. Instead, Drew decided on a whim that it would be more interesting to visit the region described in one of the guide books as “boggy, uninteresting flat, etc.”, and he rode out on “one of the bumpiest roads in the world” towards Westmeath, King’s County and Queen’s County. There, “in the interior of Ireland, I saw all the typical life I desired – Irish life, undisturbed and unpolluted by the tourist.” Even though he got “wet to the skin one dark night in the bog district”, this did not dampen Drew’s enthusiasm for a part of Ireland that was relatively unfrequented by the tourist.²⁸ While Bulfin and Drew should be regarded as interesting examples of cyclist tourists who ventured into the relatively flat interior of Ireland, it is important to remember that they were not typical in their choice of itinerary: most cyclist holidaymakers preferred to visit what were, by the end of the nineteenth century, long-established “canonical” sites and districts of tourist interest. Bulfin and Drew’s accounts stand out precisely because their choice of subject matter marks them as untypical of the genre of Irish cyclist travel writing in this period.

Cycling as a mode of touring

Regardless of where cycling tourists headed on their travels in Ireland, they all shared the belief that the tricycle or bicycle was the best mode of transport to utilize for seeing the country. As one Dublin bicycling holidaymaker asked rhetorically in June 1882, “And, after all, if not for practical use as an agent in travelling, and making one’s self acquainted with his native land, of what utility is the bicycle?”²⁹ Cyclists in Ireland, like cyclists in other countries, enthusiastically embraced the cycle as a means of recreational touring.³⁰ The bicycle was particularly extolled for offering tourists in Ireland greater flexibility in their travels than that offered by other modes of transport.³¹ Even if cyclists tended to visit the more popular tourist destinations, having a bicycle meant that they could easily vary their routine and veer off into territory that was not part of their original planned itinerary if they so desired. Elizabeth Priestley of Saintfield explained that the freedom to embrace the unexpected was one of cycle touring’s attractions:

A wrong turning, a puncture, a cloud no bigger than a man’s hand arising out of the west, yet gathering into the fury of a rain-storm, may one and all land us very far from the stopping-place we had carefully jotted down in our note-book or itinerary. But though there may be some personal discomfort connected herewith, the very charm of the pastime lies here. While the spirit of inquiry and desire for exploration remain inherent in man, this erratic attribute of the cycle, though it may provoke momentary vexation, oftener than not leaves permanent matter for rejoicing. A landmark, a ruin, an interesting phase of life, a pleasant chance acquaintanceship, may thus unexpectedly be added to memory’s store. Moreover, in a world of cut-and-dried detail and mechanical routine in office and warehouse the human machine requires, pre-eminently on holidays, a complete and radical change, an entirely different set of circumstances and environment to what it is ordinarily accustomed to; thus dormant faculties and relaxed muscles are alike called into play. It is in this direction that the cycle will always score as a touring machine, apart from the fresh air and the personal independence it guarantees.³²

Cycle touring, it was believed, liberated the traveller from the restrictions imposed upon tourists who travelled in Ireland by railway, and also provided the cycle tourist with scope to acquire a more intimate and more accurate knowledge of the country than was possible when travelling by train.³³ As explained by the *Southern Star* in 1893:

The owner of a pneumatic or cushion tyre has made life many degrees happier for himself. He cares not for railway trains to carry him to scenic places; cars he discards; his iron steed is all sufficient, and he can see more of nature by its means than he could in any other way.³⁴

The bicycle also enabled tourists to visit places that were off the beaten track and otherwise inaccessible to railway travellers,³⁵ as emphasized by a cyclist holidaymaker on the furthest reaches of the Dingle peninsula in 1903, who stated that the bicycle “enables one to treat with contempt that poor little railway by which alone most of the few visitors to Dingle come hither”.³⁶ On a prosaic level, Stephen Gwynn encouraged tourists to cycle as this would be their best means of gaining access to golf links in Donegal, as well as to rich angling sites.³⁷ For Gaelic League enthusiasts, most of whose knowledge of Irish was patchy, the bicycle had two advantages: it gave neophyte students of the language easy and direct access to Irish-speaking areas, at the same time as allowing them to speed away from native speakers after “shouting out salutations in broken Irish”, thereby keeping secret the fact that they did not speak Irish fluently.³⁸

In his seminal work on the tourist “gaze” – the ways in which tourists view and interpret the sights that they encounter on their holiday travels – John Urry emphasizes that difference, a break from the norm, is central to the tourist experience. He writes that:

Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered [...] The tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. The viewing of such tourist sights often involves different forms of social patterning, with a much greater sensitivity to visual elements of landscape or townscape than normally found in everyday life.³⁹

Glenn Hooper supports this general interpretation, stating that in the touring process the traveller is “removed from the domestic and the routine”, and “presented with all that is defamiliarizing and, at least potentially, strange”.⁴⁰

There is plenty of evidence from contemporary sources that the tantalising prospect of a change from the routine was one of the factors that prompted Irish and other cyclists to undertake holiday tours in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. According to the *Irish Times* in July 1886, the mere act of touring by cycle would have a physically transformative effect on the cyclists and heighten their ability to appreciate the novel sights that they would encounter:

In no other manner can touring be enjoyed with the same zest as on the cycle. The rush of the air as the rider coasts down a smooth long hill, the steady, practised stroke as he courses along the level, and the determined exercise of muscle and skill as he surmounts the brae, all tend to make the blood dance through the veins with the glow of health that makes the elderly man gaze on nature’s beauties with the eye of youth and the young man to see all things wrapped in the roseate hue born only of health and spirits.⁴¹

Bicycle touring’s superiority to any other form of recreational travel was also highlighted: “Contrast this with the stuffy railway journey, the stiffening drive on a jaunting car, and the rush and anxiety to catch train, boat, &c., and one will understand the growing popularity of cycle touring”.⁴² Elizabeth Priestley extolled the pleasures of bicycle touring in a similar rhapsodic vein in *To-Day’s Woman*, the Dublin society journal aimed at women:

We get the perfection of bicycling in touring – *that* is the *crème de la crème* of the pastime. Pleasant as a solitary ride alone with nature often is, there is an added exhilaration in a merry spin in congenial society. What endless visions of delight does wheel-touring not open? of way-side incidents, of fresh scenes and people, of alfresco meals, or quaintly given hospitality in primitive inns, of the beauty of broad noon-day in sylvan shades, or the glory of golden sunsets; no happier store can be laid among the treasures of memory than the reminiscences of a bicycle tour with choice spirits under bright skies.⁴³

Priestley’s reference to “wayside incidents” as one of cycle touring’s pleasures is an important one, as they added an element of adventure and excitement to the tourist experience, further heightening its inherently extraordinary nature.

The nature of these exciting “wayside incidents” varied. One English cyclist collided with a donkey on the road between Bagenalstown and Kilkenny on his summer tour in 1876, while another ran into a flock of geese on the road between Kilkenny and Clonmel in 1881, an incident which he recounted in minute detail:

In one place my appearance created quite a stampede among a large flock of geese waddling along the road. Never before, I think, did anything on wheels cause such utter confusion. The ungainly birds, who were apparently undergoing a course of fattening, seemed suddenly to have become possessed with a flock of devils. With discordant shrieks and extended necks they ran helter skelter before me, flapping their broad wings against the ground and raising a storm of dust. A few of the leanest managed to take wing, and these flew out of sight to seek fresh fields and pastures new [.....] The remainder kept up the race, I coming on behind at my best pace wickedly enjoying the fun, till one by one they fell exhausted by the road side, but one busy gander made a violent struggle and eventually avoided defeat by turning up a by-lane. I had barely given up the chase when a big dog, not so easily frightened, came very near avenging the geese. He rushed full tilt at my little wheel, and nothing but my constant good luck could have saved me from a nasty fall, and the dog’s teeth into the bargain.⁴⁴

A group of Belfast cyclist tourists considered it worth recording that they startled an unattended horse and cart on the road near Ballymena in July 1886, which caused the horse to bolt and eventually led to its smashing the cart in a gateway, much to the ire of the animal’s owner.⁴⁵ (Figure 1) Other examples of

diverting incidents a wheel included a group of cyclists pedalling through a large puddle and cycling across an extremely narrow footbridge near Newrathbridge in the Wicklow Mountains in 1894 (a photograph of which incident was published in Ireland's leading cycling newspaper), and a pair of English cycle tourists narrowly escaping a rockslide while cycling along the Antrim coast road in 1900.⁴⁶ What these and other similar episodes had in common was that they strengthened cycling tourists' sense of their being engaged in an activity that was out of the ordinary, which probably made it more likely that their travel accounts would also focus on the extraordinary and the exotic, something which was, and is, a salient feature of the travel writing genre anyway.⁴⁷

Encountering the exotic: round towers and other historic buildings

To a considerable extent, what the tourists saw and what they recorded was influenced by what they expected to see. Their "gaze" was influenced by their expectations, and these expectations varied according to such influences on the visitors as the pre-tour travel literature that they read, or images of the Irish that they saw on the stage; prevailing notions about social conditions in Ireland or about the Irish peasantry or the Irish character, including stereotypes of the Irish;⁴⁸ popular ideas about sights that were distinctively Irish; or romantic representations of the country in song, story or the cinema, to highlight just a few. Some distinctive sights, such as round towers, were considered iconically Irish:⁴⁹ they were simultaneously familiar to tourists before they even saw them, but also strange or unfamiliar as they were not sights that they normally encountered. When cyclist tourists encountered such iconic sights, they felt compelled to write about them in their travelogues,⁵⁰ possibly influenced by the

lively scholarly and popular debates about these enigmatic structures' mysterious origins and purpose.⁵¹ One American was so impressed by the round tower that he claimed in 1895 that such buildings were to be seen "everywhere" in Ireland.⁵² An editorial intervention in an account of a tricycle tour in Ireland in the 1880s indicates the contemporary fascination with the Irish round tower. After an Englishman, A.J. Wilson, described how he and his wife visited Glendalough and its famous round tower on their honeymoon cycle around Ireland in June 1887, the editor was apparently so struck by the round tower's power to evoke an Irish setting in the American reader's mind that the published account of the trip features a drawing of Wilson and his wife scattering some geese on a road, with a different round tower to that of Glendalough in the immediate background. (Figure 2). This episode and setting were fabrications on the editor's part.⁵³ It is indicative of the round tower's iconic status as a tourist sight that C.P. Redmond's *Beauty Spots in the South-East of Ireland and How to See them by Car or Cycle*, published in 1901, features a round tower on its cover, along with other talismanic symbols of Ireland, a Celtic cross and a ruined church or abbey.⁵⁴ (Figure 3)

Although no other Irish antiquities held the same iconic position in contemporaries' imaginations as the round tower did, cycling holidaymakers also commented on other ancient structures that they encountered on their travels, especially ruins. The Rock of Cashel – "the finest ruin in the United Kingdom", according to Frank A. Elwell, the veteran American touring cyclist⁵⁵ – prompted feelings of awestruck wonder in Grace E. Denison, a Canadian female cyclist, when she saw it in 1892. Writing for an American magazine, she lovingly depicted a romantic landscape surrounding Cashel that was dominated by "six

castles of six centuries' dead kings", which, she argued, would be enough to ensure that "your modern pine-shaving democracy will curl up and wither within you – just see if it doesn't!".⁵⁶ To the cycling tourist, the Irish countryside seemed to abound in ruins of historical interest;⁵⁷ indeed, according to one enthusiastic observer, no other European country had as many sites of interest to the antiquarian as Ireland had.⁵⁸ An English tricyclist travelling through County Cork in August 1883 commented that "there are so many castles hereabouts that one begins to lose all respect for them",⁵⁹ but his was an untypically negative tourist response to the numerous ruined remains of ancient buildings that cycling holidaymakers came across.⁶⁰ For Dora Mellone, an Englishwoman who made a bicycle tour of Tipperary, Waterford and Wexford in 1908, the numerous ruins of the region were essential markers of its Irishness: "here and there [were] the grey square tower of a castle, or the ruined wall of a monastery, reminding the traveller that this was Ireland, the land where war and religion held equal sway over the hearts of the people".⁶¹ Two American travellers, George E. Holt and Lester E. Creutz, who went on a cycling tour in Ulster and Leinster in October 1906, provided an account of their trip in which the antiquities that they saw were foregrounded, sometimes to the point of exaggeration. For example, they described Glenarm as "merely a typical and picturesque Irish village, but like nearly all Irish villages, it has its old castle", while their description of their ride from Belfast to Dublin also overstressed the amount of sites of historic and prehistoric interest that one would encounter on the route: "We passed many an ancient church, many a mouldering castle, now and then a cromlech or monument of a time in Ireland when the Druids offered sacrifices upon stone altars".⁶²

Encountering the exotic: the people of rural Ireland

Encountering round towers, ruined castles and other ancient structures helped to confirm in cycling tourists' minds the strangeness of the Irish countryside. This was merely one illustration of how the entire experience of cycle touring in Ireland was an exercise in anticipating, encountering and noting the exotic or the unusual: this is a feature of almost all written accounts of cycle tours in this period, whether they were written by Irish cyclists (most of whom were from an urban and/or middle-class background, and therefore effectively outsiders when it came to viewing rural Ireland) or visitors from abroad.⁶³ Travel accounts written by cyclists repeatedly alerted prospective cycling tourists to Ireland's strangeness, especially rural Ireland's.⁶⁴ This often involved stressing the different pace of life to be expected by travellers, as well as outlining desirable changes in tourists' behaviour during their holiday trips. For example, as early as September 1876 a bicyclist from Banbury advised that if the English cyclist wished to enjoy himself in Ireland, it was "indispensable" that he should proceed slowly, and also that "He will get on well by greeting cheerfully all the people he meets with a smile, a word, or nod. In short, being in Ireland he must be Irish".⁶⁵ According to the writer of *Cycling's* "Tourist's Page" column in 1896, time "moves slowly" in Ireland, and "to tour happily in Ireland you must imbibe sufficient of the spirit of the country (we do not mean the 'cratur') not to hurry at any time; no one ever does anything there in a hurry or by any rule other than that of thumb".⁶⁶ The trope of the slow pace of Irish life was repeated by another Englishman in 1899 in his description of bicycle touring in Antrim, when he claimed that a holiday in that part of Ireland was ideal for "those who

aim at being something more than brainless scorchers".⁶⁷ N.G. Bacon, an Englishwoman who went on a cycling and camping holiday in Munster in 1909, gave the most complete recommendation regarding the necessity for the English tourist to adopt native ways when touring in Ireland:

he must of necessity cease to be English, and become Irish. Having achieved that, all else is simplicity itself, and the tourist a-wheel who cannot do this had better give up all idea of revelling in Irish delights, for nothing but misery will await him. In Ireland he must be Irish, and leave all his Englishism on the steamer as he sets his foot on Irish soil, otherwise it will go very bad with him. He must, indeed, be "a soaring, human boy", rid of all his insular prejudices, eager to enjoy, willing to suffer, ready to let himself go, if he is bent on having a good time in Ireland with the Irish.⁶⁸

In Bacon's view, the English male visitor would have to make an effort to change his nature when holidaying in Ireland, but according to *Cycling's* correspondent in April 1900, such a transformation would be almost effortless, as "He will be a morose, icy individual indeed that does not thaw amidst the beaming geniality" of the "Celt".⁶⁹

These snippets of advice, written by English cycling tourists for prospective English cycling tourists, were obviously influenced by prevailing notions about the efficient and emotionally restrained "Saxon" and the easy-going and emotionally unrestrained "Celt". Even Irish sources stressed that what distinguished the Irishman was his "Celtic" nature. Commenting in 1900 that "Uncertainty, mutability, is the key-note to Ireland", the *Kerry Evening Post's* advice to cycling tourists linked Ireland's "depressing rains and general dampness" with the shaping of the distinctive character of the Irish:

The Irish people do not mind the excess of moisture. Indeed the softness of the climate is accountable for one of the poetic characteristics of the Celt – his peculiar sadness. It underlies every phase of his existence, if one could only understand its workings. It is concealed, because it is sacred. He hides it under his wild mirth, his devil-may-care bravery, his sparkling humour; but it is seldom absent from his heart, and it is a grand leavening which ever gives

that mystic quality to the Irishman of being what he is – inimitable, irresponsible, reckless, bold, clever, foolish, lazy – a conglomerate of the most peculiar contradictions. Just so the Irish climate is, and everything else in Ireland for that matter.⁷⁰

Ireland's supposedly exotic air was also commented on by an English tourist on a cycling holiday in the Wicklow Mountains in 1903, when he stated that once he left the environs of Dublin behind him "the air was as soft as meritorious whisky, with the welcome peat reek in it too".⁷¹

Another exotic feature of Irish life for cycling tourists was the fact that the Irish language was spoken in some parts of the country, "which lends the charm of novelty and of adventure to one's proceedings", according to the *Lady Cyclist* in 1897.⁷² The Irish language's existence wasn't always apparent to cyclists who holidayed in the country, even in the West, where it was spoken most widely: for example, the veteran English cyclist, A.W. Rumney, who cycled almost 500 miles from Antrim to Galway in the summer of 1893, stated in 1901 that "Ireland has many of the charms of a foreign country and none of its drawbacks in the way of a foreign language".⁷³ Cyclists who were supporters of the Gaelic League's drive to preserve and revive the Irish language, however, were keenly aware of the language's existence, and it was, for them, the main attraction in visiting the West.⁷⁴ One Gaelic Leaguer, an English-speaker from Kildare, wrote an account of a bicycle holiday trip that he made in Northern Galway for the purpose of trying to learn to speak Irish. His evidence shows that, for the Gaelic Leaguer from Ireland's Eastern seaboard, the Irish language, and the people who spoke it, could be as exotic as it was to the British readers of the *Lady Cyclist*. Like other Gaelic League enthusiasts in this period, "Micheál Ruadh" was overjoyed when he encountered Irish as a living language for the first time, which undoubtedly

affected the tone and content of his holiday account. It is apparent from his summary of his holiday that the Irish-speakers with whom he stayed were exotic objects of interest to him, and that he both idealized them and their way of life, a common feature in Gaelic Leaguers' writings about the life that they observed or imagined in the West.⁷⁵ After a visit to the Galway races with some members of the family with whom he was lodging during his holiday, Micheál Ruadh wrote:

The principal charm for me lay in the fact that the Irish language was in its rightful place to-day. Scarcely a word of the *Beurla salach* [dirty English] was to be heard. I kept all the time within hearing distance of one or other of the various little groups of Irish speakers. Several times I caught my friends laughing at my enthusiasm, particularly on one occasion when they heard me listening intently to a conversation between two old fellows who had evidently not met for some time. Not that I was able to follow them, for I could only understand a word here and there, but the spirit of the whole thing was grand, and surely it was a sight to make a Gaelic Leaguer's heart glad. On every side there were to be seen groups of Connemara men, with their white *bainíní* and home-spun trousers and vests, speaking their own language, distinct from England and her rotten shoddy civilisation.⁷⁶

Not all Irish cycling tourists regarded the Irish language as favourably as Micheál Ruadh did when they came across it on their travels, however: it may certainly have struck these others as exotic, but also as something to be either ridiculed or regarded with hostility, or both. The former attitude is apparent in an account of a trip by Dublin bicyclists through the Irish-speaking districts around Gweedore in 1892. One of the touring party knew only one phrase in Irish, which commenced with "thorum" – this was almost certainly the hackneyed phrase noted as early as the 1790s by Gabriel Beranger in Sligo, "Torum pogue Calinogue", or "Give me a kiss, young girl."⁷⁷ Despite his limited knowledge of Irish, this cyclist, named Sealy, "persisted in conversing with every peasant he met, and made strange remarks in every conceivable tone of voice, said remarks usually commencing with 'mullagatawney' and ending with 'pogue'. The natives

invariably stared in blank astonishment, and said ‘What?’”⁷⁸ In a later encounter between English-speaking Dublin cyclists and Irish-speaking peasants in the Dunbeg Fort region of the Dingle Peninsula in 1898, mutual incomprehension was apparent between the two groups when the tourists tried to converse with the local “aborigines” and requested them to make the cyclists some tea. The effort was in vain, with even the efforts of “Bubbles”, one of the visitors, to explain in “his most persuasive Dublin brogue” what was required, proving of no avail. As one of the touring party explained, “They ‘had no English’, and none of us had any knowledge of the Irish language beyond such standard phrases as *thorum pogue colleen ogue*, which did not produce the desired effect.”⁷⁹ The stone beehive huts that dotted the landscape added significantly to the travellers’ sense of the unfamiliar. Both locals and tourists were intensely interested in the other group, their mutual sense of strangeness acting to both draw them together and keep them apart. One of the bicyclists wrote that:

Our party and the machines, especially the triplet, interested the natives quite as much as they did us, and they gathered round us in crowds and poured forth floods of Irish. At first it was unpleasant until I discovered an absolutely infallible method of putting them to flight. It was only necessary to point the camera at them and they fled in wild confusion, tumbling over each other in their haste, and taking refuge behind walls and rocks. Up to a range of 100 yards the result was deadly, but beyond that distance they seemed to think they were safe.⁸⁰

The cyclists made many attempts to take photographs of “these strange people”, but although “they simply swarmed round us it was impossible to take them off their guard”:

Before the camera could be levelled they were off like redshanks. The ubiquitous Bubbles did actually capture a youth and hold him, but he yelled and struggled at such a rate that he was afraid the village would rise *en masse*, and so [Bubbles] let him go.

After this, the canny “natives” took to following the cameraman around in single file, and scattering whenever he turned around to try to photograph them.⁸¹ R.J. Mecredy, the editor of the *Irish Cyclist*,⁸² struggled to differentiate between stupid cattle and their Irish-speaking owners when he and his family and some friends went on a cycle tour in Kerry in July 1897. The tourists’ machines included a triplet – a machine ridden by three cyclists – and some of the women wore so-called “rational” cycling clothes, which normally consisted of knickerbockers and a jacket. He records that, when the tourists went cycling in the Coppal Lake region, “Occasionally a herd of stupid kine was started, and sometimes it was a dumb group of peasants who rose from a bog-hole and let out their brown eyes at the phenomenon of a triplet and rationals”. In the Irish-speaking region between Ballinskelligs and Glenmore, “the stupidity of the Kerry cattle” exasperated the cyclists once again, as they had to force them out of their way, and the local human inhabitants did not endear themselves to the tourists either:

The peasants themselves have most vague notions of danger, too; and will risk their persons almost under the wheels to save a flustered chicken. Another little peculiarity is their phlegmatic realisation of a change in the condition of their surroundings. As a psychological curiosity the study of their acceptance of a surprise is interesting. The warning tones of the bell hopelessly meander through dormant brains, and some time later strike a sensitive portion connected with the gaping and yawning departments. Accordingly the owner gapes and yawns, and the full exposure of his eyes and mouth slowly take[s] in that something approaches. Slow faculties absorb the fact, and a speculative nerve suggests the advisability of something being done. About which time the triplet is a few yards off, wobbling on a decision, for the peasant is usually accompanied by a stolid donkey and cart occupying the narrow road skew-wise and fully. While all this machinery is being put in motion we are juggling on the triplet, doing masterly balancing tricks. It is a peculiar contrariness that such slothful perception should be found in a people so largely Celtic.⁸³

When the tourists were trying to find their way to Lough Derriana, they were told by a “native” that the next lake along their route was called Iskanamacleery, “and further up he gurgled about Nambrackdarrig, Coomeathcun, and other perplexing polysyllabics in guttural, slithering Celtic. We almost thought we were in Wales”, observed Mecredy.⁸⁴

These encounters in Kerry in the late 1890s between English-speaking cyclist tourists and Irish-speaking “natives” illustrate a common feature of travel writing: the “othering” of the observed by the tourist observer. As Carl Thompson explains, this othering can have two meanings: the processes by which the people from one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and the people of another culture, and also the processes by which people from one culture depict people from another culture as not only different, but also inferior to themselves.⁸⁵ The latter type of othering is clearly observable in Mecredy’s acerbic observations on the Irish-speaking peasants that he encountered in Kerry in 1897, and is implied in the encounter that “Bubbles” and his fellow travellers had with Irish-speaking peasants in the same county in the following year. The former type of othering – a general tendency to highlight the differences between the observed “native” and the tourist observer – is much more common in the written testimony produced by cycling travellers in our period. Occasionally, the observers’ emphasis on the strangeness in what they saw involved people from above the peasant stratum. This is evidenced, for example, by the gentleman clergyman with “a long, pendulous, red nose, tipped at the extremity with several stiff grey hairs”, wearing “rag-shop clothes”, that one English observer saw emerging from a Wicklow drinking shop, the clergyman “wiping porter froth from his yellow beard, and holding buttercups in

his other hand, as if he had got his cue from Ophelia in the straw scene, and his smile was something radiant to remember". According to this witness, this episode in 1903 encapsulated what he believed was a greater freedom from conventional restraints in Ireland, a fuller individuality "which tends at least towards picturesqueness".⁸⁶ Most "othering" in cycling tourists' written accounts of their travels focused on the peasantry, however. That the Irish peasant should be an exotic object of curiosity to foreign tourists is perhaps understandable, but one should bear in mind that the Irish peasant was often no less strange to Irish cyclists, who may have lived on the same island as the peasant but who nevertheless inhabited a very different social and cultural universe. To both sets of observers, the peasant was an objectified "other", which a close reading of their travel writings makes apparent.

Useful parallels may be drawn between cycle tourism in France and Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As Richard Holt shows, the bicycle made it easier for middle-class, urban French cyclists to tour in the French countryside in this period. The French rural-dweller became an object of curiosity for these tourists, and cyclists would "swoop unannounced on quiet villages and proceed to observe and interrogate the inhabitants as if they were anthropologists examining a primitive tribe".⁸⁷ Many cycling tourists in Ireland in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods were involved in a similar exercise in pseudo-anthropology, an activity which was gently mocked in a *Jarvey* cartoon in 1890. (Figure 4) At one level, the cartoon illustrates mutual incomprehension between a cyclist, a "rising statistician", who represents the urban world of rational enquiry and a "rustic cuss", the latter of whom defeats all attempts to answer seemingly straightforward questions in the manner desired by the

cyclist. On another level, it portrays the contemporary vogue for cycle touring as a possibly futile exercise by the cyclist observer to understand the world of the Irish countryside.⁸⁸ The fact that many cycling tourists claimed that Irish peasants were apparently incapable of answering simple questions about directions, distances or local topography⁸⁹ (an inability shared by members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, according to an English bicyclist in 1907),⁹⁰ illustrates further the “otherness” of Irish rural-dwellers as far as the tourists were concerned. The peasant’s alleged indifference to, or inability to appreciate, the scenery which was a powerful attraction to the cycling tourist, was another marker of difference between the observed and the holidaymaking observer.⁹¹ This supposed difference contrasted the supposed ignorance of the peasant and the refined sensibility of the cyclist holidaymaker. In a rare moment of clarity, an *Irish Cyclist* correspondent offered a plausible reason for the peasant’s alleged indifference to his or her surroundings when writing about a bicycle tour that he undertook in Kerry in 1898:

Bare, bleak rocks on every side, struggling potato patches in the crannies; and when the skies are lead, and the rain falls all day, and the smell of the rotting tubers and rank weeds rise, one may learn something of the sorrows of the poor. I have no morbid longing to microscope the sufferings of the peasantry, and the spectacle pains me so much that I always try and avoid it. Yet by chance I have seen lives lived out in Kerry as I would not that a dog should endure. These people are not beggars: many of them have as good blood in their veins as the proudest Norman; but the height of many of their yearnings is to do without workhouse relief, and be buried without the shame of a pauper’s coffin! And, alas, small though the wish is, it often rises beyond their power.

Fever and measles, dirt, hunger, and hopelessness; the rain rotting in through the roof, the old granddame crooning in Irish over the hungry fire, the children sick with fasting, and at the door looking out into the rottenness, the beaten peasant who does not think of suicide because he does not understand its utility. How often have I seen this awful drama!

And I and thousands of others go to Kerry and enjoy ourselves, and gain new health and spirits. The roads lead through magnificent scenery, and when the sun shines on a fine summer day, and all looks fair, we cannot think of

the misery and hunger which the long wet weather will bring, and of the people who must live here despairingly to the bitter end. Doubtless we may pronounce them lazy, dirty, and faint-hearted; but those who say this never started a half-starved life in a miserable cabin, with luck and opportunity the wrong way.⁹²

Although such an account was far from typical in its bleak portrayal of the peasant's lot, what it has in common with other cyclists' travel accounts is the objectification of the peasant and a revelation of the social gulf between the person observed and the cyclist observer.

American travellers who went on cycling tours in the USA or in Europe in the 1880s often produced accounts of their impressions that focused on the picturesque nature of what they had seen on their travels. As Dave Buchanan shows in his study of their writings, the concept of the "picturesque" was a broad one: it could include the "sentimental" and the "charming" in landscapes, but also "quaint" people that the travellers encountered, especially tramps and others on the margins of society.⁹³ In the case of Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tramps do not often feature in cyclist holidaymakers' accounts,⁹⁴ but peasants frequently feature as undeniably "picturesque" and "quaint" objects of their gaze. The peasant fascinated both Irish and foreign cyclists, and the prospect of seeing them up close was a key factor in prompting cycling tours in Ireland. One English woman explained that "to catch a glimpse of the primitive life as lived by the Irish" – by which she meant the Irish peasant – had been a dream of hers before she went on a cycling and camping tour in Munster in 1909.⁹⁵ In the following year, a compatriot recommended Wicklow as a tourist destination to English cyclists, not merely because of its pretty scenery but also because "The country people are a never-failing source of amusement and delight".⁹⁶ Stephen Gwynn encouraged English cycling tourists to visit

Donegal so that they could experience at first hand the peasants' "picturesqueness in diction". As English was, for many peasants there, "an acquired language, not the speech of their first years", this meant that "for the student of queer forms of speech their talk is delightful merely for the dialect".⁹⁷ The peasantry in parts of neighbouring County Fermanagh were also picturesque, but in different ways to their Donegal counterparts:

Lough Melvin, a favourite resort of anglers, and a place of some antiquity, lies beside the little hamlet of Garrison. This is the real "Irish" district of the country, the other parts being more or less Anglicised. The peasantry have little of modern ways about them; the belief in fairies and magic is still active, and the seanachie (story-teller) is still a man of note in his locality. Nor would anyone have it otherwise. The folks salute you with a cheery "good morra and good luck" as you pass by, and if you trouble them for a drink, it isn't water they will be offering you.⁹⁸

R.J. Mecredy and Gerald Stoney gave prominence to mingling with "unsophisticated peasants" and observing these objectified "others" as one of the attractions of cycle touring in Ireland:

To go where one lists through the length and breadth of the land, independent of railways and time-tables; to wander here and loiter there; to mingle with unsophisticated peasants in out-of-the-way districts; to listen to their quaint legends, mark their strange customs, and sympathise with their sorrows – these are pleasures true and genuine, calculated to educate, to elevate, and expand the mind, and to supply an unfailing store of subjects for future thought and meditation.⁹⁹

According to Mecredy and Stoney, conversing with the "inmates" of peasant cottages would also provide amusement to the cycling holidaymaker.¹⁰⁰

Cyclists awheel were especially inquisitive about the domestic lives of the peasantry, and devised a number of stratagems for gaining access to their homes. One English tourist recommended in December 1883 that one should "beg a light for your cigar, or a piece of string to tie a failing tyre, or any other excuse, just to see how they live".¹⁰¹ Two Australian cyclists, while bicycling through Ireland in

August 1889, often asked for a cup of buttermilk on their travels as an excuse “to see the Irish peasant as he is”.¹⁰² R.J. Mecredy recommended that the bicycle tourist should ask peasant women to make tea, which would involve the provision of hospitality within the peasant home as well, and suggested what he considered an infallible method of approach in this situation:

I generally make a habit of lunching in the peasants’ cottages for the sake of conversing with them and studying their quaint sayings and curious characteristics. My *modus operandi* is to select a clean-looking cottage, and, knocking at the door, a conversation of this nature ensues: “Good morra’, ma’am”. “Good morra”, koindly, Sorr”. “Fine weather for the crops”. “It is, thank God”. “Is there anywhere here that I could get a cup of tea?” “Bedad, then, there’s no place nearer than Mick Ryan’s public-house in the town beyant”. “That’s too bad, now. I have ridden a long way, and am hungry and thirsty”. Well, your honour (with some hesitation), if you could put up with our little place, I could wet you a cup myself”. A few minutes later I am sitting beside a big turf fire, drinking excellent tea, and eating home-made bread and butter and new-laid eggs. Then a smoke in the corner and a chat with the inmates form a fitting finale to my repast.¹⁰³

This allegedly infallible method opened up the closed world of the peasant “other” to Mecredy, allowing him to observe these curious people at first hand. Such was its success, that Mecredy could record that “Many a pleasant hour have we spent in their homely cottages, listening to their quaint sayings and queer expressions”.¹⁰⁴ Some cyclist observers took a more direct approach towards gaining close access to the objects of their desire by simply persuading peasants to allow them to holiday in their homes, as a married English couple did in Connemara in 1898, thus allowing the cyclists “to watch the simple lives of our civil host and his wife and two daughters”.¹⁰⁵

Various stereotypes or clichéd images of life in the Irish countryside often shaped cycling tourists’ expectations of how Irish rural dwellers should behave, or affected their portrayals of these people in their written accounts. For example, James Bennet, of Belfast’s Northern Bicycle Club, obviously expected to

find overt evidence of poteen-making when he and a companion went on a bicycle tour in Donegal in October 1880. He failed to find any, so instead Bennet startled a local man on the road between Dungloe and Glenties by asking him whether there was any poteen in the neighbourhood. Bennet claimed that, once the countryman was satisfied that neither of the strangers were policemen, he procured them “a nice bottle of the mountain dew” for a shilling.¹⁰⁶ Other cycling tourists were influenced by what was, by the late nineteenth century, the hackneyed image of the peasant and his pig enjoying a companionable existence.¹⁰⁷ The image of “Paddy” and his pig was beloved of *Punch* and other cartoonists in this period, and the image of a pig was often used as a caricature of the Irish.¹⁰⁸ A.J. Wilson, on a tricycling honeymoon trip with his wife in 1887, had an opportunity to take a photograph replete with stereotypical images of rural Irish life, including the centrality of the pig, when they were passing through the County Cork village of Adrigole. As Wilson explains:

Here I experienced one of the annoying disappointments which beset the path of the studious amateur photographer. It was a typical group of cottages; or, perhaps, I should not say typical, but ideal. There were the regulation old beldam seated on a broken chair outside the low-doorway; a characteristic plump Irishwoman; an old man bent double, in the obsolete knee-breeches and swallow-tailed coat familiarized to us on the stage; and a few grimy children playing with the family pig. It was the pig that completed the picture, and I rigged up my camera in double quick time, had it focused upon the scene, and had withdrawn the shutter of the double-back, when – just at that precise instant – the porker elected to start off for an exercise canter, and thus destroy the poetry of the picture. Although the whole village turned out to “chevy” his porcine highness into the field of view, the operation spoilt all the composition. The pig would not keep still long enough even for a snap-shutter exposure, and the crowd of natives quite spoilt the character of my scene. With such disappointment is the path of the photographic enthusiast strewn.¹⁰⁹

Two British women who went on a cycling tour in the Southwest of Ireland in 1898 allegedly had a more satisfactory experience in their encounter with pigs in

County Kerry. They found the squalor of Castleisland depressing, but the town's pig fair was a redeeming picturesque feature. Beatrice Cresswell, one of the tourists, recorded that "I left Castleisland preparing for its Pig Fair, and I own I left that Pig Fair with regret – it was so very funny! The sight of two Paddies, two pigs and two strings inextricably tied up was sublime! Squeals, grunts, protestations from Paddies and pigs filled the air behind me as I rode away".¹¹⁰ Whether Cresswell actually witnessed what she claims that she saw is impossible to verify, but it is still nevertheless significant that she felt that an account of such an episode would appeal to her readers. Almost twenty years earlier, a British cyclist gave rather different evidence regarding the peasant taking his pig to or from market on a string lead, when describing a bicycle tour through

Kilkenny :

I met numerous drivers of cattle returning from Kilkenny fair, and had as numerously to dismount. I refrain, though much tempted, from saying that I met the typical Irishman with knee-breeches, tail-coat, and caubeen (hat) with pipe stuck in the band, returning from market, leading the family pig by a string attached to its hind leg. This kind of Irishman is quite extinct, or, at most, exists only on stage and in the minds of some Englishmen. He existed in my imagination, before I came to Ireland, but though I have now been here some four years, I never yet saw him in the flesh, so I have fair grounds for stating that he is extinct.¹¹¹

This iconic and stereotypical image of the Irish peasant and his pig was obviously considered to be such an alluring one for British readers that it appears on the title page of Thomas Hiram Holding's account of the bicycle tour that he undertook in the West of Ireland in 1897, even though no such incident features in Holding's text.¹¹² (Figure 5)

A.J. Wilson's account of his failure to photograph the family pig in Adrigole is of interest not just because it reveals Wilson's familiarity with certain stock images of life in rural Ireland, but also because it shows that by this time cycling tourists

were beginning to record their impressions in photographic images as well as by the printed word. In the era of “documentary photography” which began in the 1880s,¹¹³ astute owners of camera shops targeted the cycling tourist with cameras¹¹⁴ (Figure 6) and equipment for making lantern slides of their holiday trips. A number of tourists gave talks, illustrated by lantern slides, of their cycling tours in Ireland,¹¹⁵ which possibly induced at least some members of their audiences to visit some of the sites depicted in the slides. Articles of tours in Ireland that were published in the cycling and general press in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century were often illustrated by photographs of the sights described by the authors. Photographs of historic buildings and scenic views, especially of mountain scenery in the most popular tourist destinations, predominated,¹¹⁶ indicating that the articles were aimed at those “tired and tiresome souls desirous only of treading in the footsteps of the cheap trippers who follow one another like sheep”, as William Bulfin characterised those tourists who stuck to the well-established travel routes and destinations.¹¹⁷ Bulfin included some nineteen photographs in his own *Rambles in Eirinn*. Most of these were rather unremarkable, rather like the William Lawrence Company photographs that were familiar to Irish consumers in the early twentieth century,¹¹⁸ but one photograph, captioned “Auburn: Scene in ‘The Deserted Village’”, made a political point that was rather at variance with the photographs in the cycling and general press. While the latter photographs tended to portray a rose-tinted and romantic view of Irish scenery, Bulfin’s photograph of one part of the Irish Midlands was intended to evoke a landscape that had been depopulated due to landlord oppression and the devastation inflicted by the Great Famine.¹¹⁹ It was far more common for cyclist

photographers to include stereotypical images in their photographs, such as the donkeys and their owners in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains who were the subject of a photographic essay in the *Irish Cyclist* in 1893;¹²⁰ two women riding “an Irish tandem” – a donkey – who were photographed in Kerry by a Kingstown correspondent of the *Irish Cyclist* in the autumn of 1894;¹²¹ the bare-footed young woman, sarcastically described as a “girl in rational dress”, who was photographed on the road between Newry and Downpatrick in 1894;¹²² the pair of bare-footed “Donegal Colleens” who were snapped outside a stone cabin during a tour of Ulster in 1898;¹²³ or the pig, knowingly described as “The gentleman who pays the rent”, who was photographed in the rocks outside a stone cabin in Kerry in the same year.¹²⁴ In one instance, cycling tourists in Kerry simply staged their own stereotyped photographic pictures, by posing as stock characters such as an Irish jarvey, a “broth of a boy” holding a bottle of poteen, and, rather incongruously, an English monk, and capturing these images on film.¹²⁵

As this suggests, cyclists’ depictions of their tours in Ireland were shaped to an extent by various stereotypes of the Irish peasant world, stereotypes which were often shared by foreign and Irish tourists alike. A particularly common stereotype – that of the bellicose Irishman, sometimes depicted as a simianized Fenian or violent agrarian agitator, but the image was often a more generic one, portraying any violent Hibernian¹²⁶ – was at least indirectly at play in some cyclists’ accounts of their Irish travels. This does not mean that the tourists subscribed to the messages portrayed by this stereotype, but that they were aware of the stereotype and that their writings refer to it, usually to dismiss its message of the Irishman’s inherently violent nature (and, when alluding to the

simianized caricature, his deformed physical features). An early instance occurs in W.H. Duignan's account of a number of tours that he made in the South and North of Ireland in the early to mid 1880s. His description of Waterford's "poor and ragged people of the lowest class", in which he states that "you may trace divers races, aborigines with massive protuberant jaws, small eyes, low forehead, and stunted figure"¹²⁷ can only be fully understood in the context of the popular Victorian caricature of the simianized Irishman.¹²⁸ However, Duignan stresses that such prognathous-jawed people were in a small minority in Waterford, and that "the great majority are of material fine as could be desired, and many lovely features peer through the dirt upon them".¹²⁹ He made similar approving comments about the physical attractiveness of the people he saw in Kilkenny, Cork, Kerry and Donegal.¹³⁰

A.J. Wilson directly attacked the caricature of the bellicose Irishman, as well as other clichés regarding Ireland, in his account of his arrival in Dublin in April 1888:

I saw not a single pig running about the streets or country roads during the eight days I was there; not one Irishman requested me to tread upon the tail of his coat; no shillelagh was twirled in my presence; nobody shot at me from behind a hedge; nor was such a thing as a blunderbuss in evidence. There was not a trace of bellicose tendency on the part of one solitary individual who came within range of my eyesight [.....] The traditional hospitality of the Irish nation was fully displayed towards me, and the most loyal of Englishmen could find no fault with the enthusiastic reception of "The Queen" after dinner.¹³¹

Another Englishman poured similar comical scorn on stock images of the violent Irishman, in his account of his cycling tour in Ireland in May and June 1907:

As the steamer drew up at the North Quay, Dublin, last Sunday morning, I almost expected to see men waiting for us in baggy red trousers, with sword at thigh. That was the result of having visited France seven or eight times, and Ireland never before. Theatrical memories then supervened, and I looked for men in threequarter-trousers and shapeless hats, knocking the ground with

bulbous clubs, and shouting “Hurroo!” There were none of these, nor any bright green anywhere at all, at all.¹³²

Wilson assured his readers that the popular image of Ireland as a country beset by violence was mainly a media distortion:

To the American reader it may seem queer that a Londoner should prefer to go holiday-making in such a dreadful country as Ireland. Even among English people, who ought to be well-informed concerning a country so near their own home, and forming an integral portion of their own Queen’s dominions, a sadly distorted idea is prevalent regarding the real state of the island, which some people habitually term “the distressful country”. The political problem of governing Ireland has led to this mistaken impression, for in the interests of party politics undue prominence has been accorded to the worst aspects of certain phases of Irish life, and local disturbances of an agrarian nature are so prominently brought before newspaper readers as to convey the idea of Ireland being a very dangerous place for law-abiding and peaceable people to inhabit or travel in. The truth is that the Irish social character is as good and quaint and admirable as when Thackeray wrote his *Irish Sketch Book*; and I would feel safer in traveling, alone and unarmed, in any part of Ireland, than in the districts around London itself.¹³³

One English cyclist, Samuel Dawson, was unusual in that he was actually persuaded to visit Ireland in the late 1880s by newspaper reports of the “disturbed state” of the country, and particularly accounts of the “wholesale evictions that were taking place there every day under the most cruel circumstances”.¹³⁴ In what may perhaps be seen as a precursor to the “Troubles Tourism” phenomenon of modern-day Belfast,¹³⁵ Dawson visited such notorious locations as the site of the Phoenix Park murders (noting the “large gaps” in the ground that had resulted from other visitors scooping handfuls of soil from the spots where the two victims had fallen), the Ponsonby estate in County Tipperary, where some evictions had recently been carried out, and Mitchelstown, the site of the “Mitchelstown Massacre” in September 1887, and he also claimed to have witnessed several evictions.¹³⁶

Dawson's emphasis on the troubled state of Ireland was not typical of cycling holidaymakers' accounts of their trips in the country. Most stressed that Ireland was a perfectly safe country in which to undertake a cycling tour, even if some of their soothing assurances were possibly undermined by the clumsy manner in which they were made. For instance, R.J. Mecredy, while describing a cycling tour that he undertook in Connemara in August 1883, stated that "strange though it may appear, it is in most cases a fact that the very peasant who would shoot an obnoxious landlord in cold blood, and think nothing of it – nay, even consider it a righteous act – would share his last bit and sup with a stranger, and expect no return".¹³⁷ Henry Sturmeay and a friend went on a cycling holiday in Ireland in September 1885, and Sturmeay later reflected that:

we found the people, especially in the country places, most hospitable, friendly, intelligent above their corresponding class in England, and with no animosity against Englishmen as such, but rather the contrary, so that the absurd fear which some people have of "being shot" on visiting Ireland exists only in their imaginations, and no one need fear for his personal safety during a visit to the West, so long as he refrains from discussing politics and religion with the natives, and forcing his own opinions upon them.¹³⁸

Most writers offered less ambiguous assurances about Ireland's being a safe touring ground for the cyclist, and tended in particular to stress the warm welcome that awaited the tourist there.¹³⁹ Just as the American cycling press in the 1880s contained numerous articles that were illustrated with romanticised, picturesque portrayals of scenery, to accompany cyclists' accounts of their bicycle tours in the USA and abroad,¹⁴⁰ similar idealized and romanticised depictions of Irish scenery were published in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century in the Irish and British cycling press. These drawings, which often featured cyclist couples – presumably married ones – present an image of tranquillity, that undoubtedly reinforced the dominant messages in the

press about cycling tourists' safety in Ireland.¹⁴¹ (Figure 7) That Ireland was a safe touring ground for the cyclist was demonstrated by assertions that female cyclists – even those who toured alone – would be perfectly safe on their travels,¹⁴² claims that were supported by a number of women who spent cycling holidays there.¹⁴³ Such assertions ignored the unpleasant reality that women on bicycles were sometimes assaulted in the countryside, especially by tramps.¹⁴⁴ Vagrants were associated with criminality in the popular imagination at this period, although the threat that they posed was exaggerated:¹⁴⁵ nevertheless, by fostering the image of a crime-free Ireland where cycling tourists could travel unmolested, the advocates of cycling holidays in Ireland were replacing one imaginary land – that of an excessively violent, crime-infested country – with another, more appealing, but equally misleading one, that of a perfectly safe Arcadia.

Conclusion

In his study of pre-Famine Irish tourism, William Williams points out that tourists in this period were, in effect, “semioticians”, travellers who searched for characteristic signs of “Irishness” in their travels: such signs could vary, from distinctive ways of speaking to more tangible markers of difference, such as distinctive architectural features.¹⁴⁶ Cyclist tourists in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras were also engaged in a process of “reading” what they regarded as distinguishing signs of Irishness, as well as signs of difference that differentiated the observed phenomenon from what the observer regarded as the norm. Some were more adept at this than others: an English cyclist and her companion, for example, managed to record, in the course of a single day's cycle

from Leenane, having encountered a boy and girl riding a donkey, “the gossoon bestriding his ass as far aft as he can stick on, his toes almost on the ground”; a pig that was a family pet; a cabin that was the shared home of people, hens, cows and, possibly, pigs; a funeral attended by two aged female keeners; two women, “red-skirted, beshawled, and bare-footed”, leading an ass laden with panniers of turf; and, at the end of their journey, an old *uillinn* piper playing various airs, including “The Wearing of the Green”. Several of these exotic sights were photographed and duly documented in a photographic essay.¹⁴⁷ While few cyclist tourists could record quite such an impressive tally of exotica as this, they were all, to varying degrees, engaged in a similar process of interpreting sights of quaintness or the extraordinary that they encountered and many of them documented them in travel accounts. Martin Ryle explains that “The travel writer’s text is multiply determined [.....] by the intrinsic nature of the physical and cultural scenes that are encountered, by conscious writerly intentions, by the wider cultural-historical setting”.¹⁴⁸ There is no single tourist gaze, as John Urry reminds us, as numerous social and cultural factors help to determine what the tourist sees, but the gaze is “constructed through difference” and is also “constructed through signs”.¹⁴⁹ A close reading of the numerous travel accounts that were written by cyclist tourists of their trips in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reveals the numerous influences that contributed towards shaping their texts: while the travel accounts may not necessarily accurately reflect Irish society in this period, they certainly reflect the social and cultural milieu of the writers who produced them.¹⁵⁰

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¹ Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*.

² Horgan, *Victorian Visitor*; Furlong, *Irish Tourism*.

³ Thompson, "Famine Travel", 164.

⁴ Woods, *Travellers' Accounts*, 11, 13-18, 25-35; Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 13-38; 63-85, Hooper, *Travel Writing*.

⁵ James, "Tired of Touring"; Griffin, *Cycling*, 153-163; Griffin, "Bad Roads".

⁶ Bulfin, *Rambles*.

⁷ Callan, "Rambles"; Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 111-123, 126-127; Bruna, "Irish Revival"; Staunton, "Monumental Landscapes".

⁸ Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 6.

- ⁹ For a discussion of travelogues written by American cyclists describing their tours in Europe, see Buchanan, "Cycling and the Picturesque".
- ¹⁰ Horgan, *Victorian Visitor*; Hooper, *Travel Writing*; Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*.
- ¹¹ Horgan, *Victorian Visitor*; Hooper, *Travel Writing*; Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*.
- ¹² Condon, *Early Irish Cinema*, 124-139.
- ¹³ James, "Wilds of Ireland"; Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 63-86; Nash, "Embodying the Nation"; Gibbons, *Transformations*, 28-30; Neville, "Into the West", 266.
- ¹⁴ Woods, *Travellers' Accounts*, 20.
- ¹⁵ Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 166-169.
- ¹⁶ "Ireland as a Touring Ground", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1909.
- ¹⁷ Griffin, "Bad Roads", 201-202; Shipton, *Cyclists' Touring Club*, 209-220. The CTC appointed a network of officials known as chief consuls and consuls, who gave information to CTC members about roads, restaurants, accommodation and places of interest in their localities. The organisation also negotiated for their members reduced rates for meals and accommodation with hoteliers and innkeepers throughout the United Kingdom, as well as recognising various workmen in each district as CTC-approved cycle repairers: Griffin, *Cycling*, 154.
- ¹⁸ Robert Cromie, "A Run through Donegal", *Wheel World*, June 1882.
- ¹⁹ "A Tour through Ireland", *Bicycling World*, 31 March 1882.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*
- ²¹ "A Tour through Ireland", 7 April 1882.
- ²² "A Tour though Ireland", 21 April 1882.
- ²³ "A Tour though Ireland", 28 April 1882.
- ²⁴ Gwynn, *Highways and Byways*, 4.
- ²⁵ Bulfin, *West of Ireland*, 7.
- ²⁶ Staunton, "Monumental Landscapes", 138.
- ²⁷ Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 115-119. There was probably also another impulse, a pecuniary one, that helps to explain Bulfin's strong focus on the legends, history and topography of the Midlands. Bulfin, a native of King's County, wrote his nostalgic travelogue "with an exile audience in mind", particularly an Irish-Argentinian audience, and most of the Irish-Argentinian community originated from the Midlands: Callan, "Rambles", 391, 393. His evocative rendering of a Kickhamesque Arcadia had an irresistible appeal to many readers: Tomas S. Cuffe, "The Poorer Man's Mount", *Sunday Independent*, 4 November 1928.
- ²⁸ H.T.B. Drew, "A New Zealander at Home", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, December 1910.
- ²⁹ "A Tour though Ireland", *Bicycling World*, 16 June 1882.
- ³⁰ Norcliffe, *Ride to Modernity*, 222-234; Holt, "Discovery of Rural France"; Buchanan, "Cycling and the Picturesque"; Simpson, "Touring in New Zealand"; Jamieson, "Bicycle Touring"; Driver and Arundell, "Touring in Australia".
- ³¹ A.J. Wilson, "An Irish Outing, Awheel", *Outing*, September 1888; F. Freeman, "The Emerald Isle", *Cycling*, 20 February 1892; "How She Cycled Cheaply Abroad", *Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*, 20 November 1909; James, "Tired of Touring".
- ³² "Anticipation and Realisation", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, April 1902.

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- ³³ W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, November 1883; Mecredy and Stoney, *Art and Pastime*, 157; *Cycling*, 21 March 1896.
- ³⁴ *Southern Star*, 20 May 1893.
- ³⁵ Helen Elrington, "The Nearest Village to America", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, February 1901.
- ³⁶ C. Edwardes, "Dingle's Roads and Interests", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, February 1903.
- ³⁷ Gwynn, *Highways and Byways*, 18.
- ³⁸ McMahon, "Gaelic Summer Colleges", 126.
- ³⁹ Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 3.
- ⁴⁰ Hooper, *Tourist's Gaze*, xiii.
- ⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 30 July 1886.
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ *To-Day's Woman*, 1 June 1895.
- ⁴⁴ *Bicycling News*, 1 September 1876, 2 September 1881.
- ⁴⁵ "A Tour Round the Antrim Coast", *Irish Cyclist*, 4 August 1886.
- ⁴⁶ *Irish Cyclist*, 11 April 1894; *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1900.
- ⁴⁷ Campbell, "Travel writing"; Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 66-67, 119, 130-166; Youngs, *Travel Writing*, 13, 129, 159, 184.
- ⁴⁸ One of a group of seven Bostonians, three women and four men, who toured the South of Ireland on tricycles and bicycles in 1886, used stereotypes when summarizing their trip when he stated that "we had lived in a land of romance and poverty, of poetry and peasantry, of whisky and milk": *Bicycling World*, 4 February 1887. Another American cyclist tourist described his enjoyment in visiting "the land of hospitality, potatoes, evictions and brogue": *Irish Cyclist*, 17 July 1889.
- ⁴⁹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 108-140.
- ⁵⁰ For some examples, see W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, December 1883; *Irish Cyclist*, 8 August 1888; *Kildare Observer*, 8 September 1888; Beatrice Cresswell, "Experiences in Erin", *Cycling*, 5 November 1898; A.R. Quinton, "Cycling in Ireland. From Dublin to Killarney", *Leisure Hour*, June 1899; Dora Mellone, "The Golden Vale, the Blackwater, and the Barrow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1908.
- ⁵¹ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, 108-140.
- ⁵² *The Bearings: The Cycling Authority of America*, 25 January 1895. There are, in fact, just 95 round towers, either complete or in ruins, in Ireland today, according to Brian Lalor's inventory of these structures: Lalor, *Round Tower*, 13. For a general discussion of the round tower in American travel writers' accounts of Ireland in the nineteenth century, see Kincheloe, "Two Visions".
- ⁵³ A.J. Wilson, "An Irish Outing, Awheel", *Outing*, July 1888.
- ⁵⁴ Redmond, *Beauty Spots*.
- ⁵⁵ Elwell, *Cycling in Europe*, 60. Elwell, from Portland, Maine, organized several bicycle tours in the USA, Canada and Europe, including Ireland, in the 1880s and 1890s: Phillips, *Awheel in Europe*, 4-7; Herlihy, *Bicycle*, 255, 258.
- ⁵⁶ Grace E. Denison, "Through Erin Awheel", *Outing*, July 1893. It should be pointed out that Denison was probably predisposed towards a romantic view of the countryside that she traversed due her Irish grandmother's vivid depiction of an idyllic life in rural Kerry before she emigrated. According to Denison, when

she arrived at Muckross, her grandmother's native area, "All the country round has been mine in nursery lore. I know the trout streams and the shooting. I recognize the oft-imagined mountain heights". When she eventually went to bed on her first night in Kerry, she claimed, "No dreams came to me. I had realized them all". For a discussion of the underexplored topic of Canadian tourists in Ireland in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Morgan, "A Happy Holiday", 124-160.

⁵⁷ Robert Cromie, "A Ruinous Ride", *Wheel World*, July 1883; "An American View of Touring in Ireland", *Irish Cyclist*, 17 July 1889; Bulfin, *Rambles*; Lohan, "Antiquarian Craze"; *Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*, 7 January 1911.

⁵⁸ *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1898.

⁵⁹ W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, January 1884.

⁶⁰ J. Bleakley of Lurgan, an enthusiastic observer of Irish antiquities, counted "close on 300 ruins (historical) of all kinds" on the 11-day cycling tour of around 500 miles that he and at least one other person undertook in July 1896. The cyclists explored "a great many" of these sites, "often leaving our route a long distance to do so". His route from Lurgan went through Enniskillen, Bundoran, Sligo, Ballisodare, Ballinasloe, Mullingar, Trim, Bective Abbey, the Hill of Tara, Navan, Slane, the "Druids' Caves" (probably the prehistoric burial mounds at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth), Drogheda, Dundalk, Carlingford, Greenore, and Newry: *Irish Cyclist*, 16 March 1898.

⁶¹ Dora Mellone, "The Golden Vale, the Blackwater, and the Barrow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1908.

⁶² *Bicycling World and Motorcycle Review*, 17 November 1906.

⁶³ Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 66-67; Griffin, *Cycling*, 66-70.

⁶⁴ An English cycling tourist, Mabel Richards, pointed out that Ireland "has a fair proportion of the quaintness in people, habit, and custom, which leads tourists to seek 'foreign' lands in search of novelty": "The Vales of Wicklow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, August 1910.

⁶⁵ *Bicycling News*, 1 September 1876.

⁶⁶ *Cycling*, 21 March 1896.

⁶⁷ E.G. Rucker, "In the Country of Castles and Giants. A Paradise for the Photo-Cyclist. Part II", *Cycling*, 20 May 1899.

⁶⁸ N.G. Bacon, "A Bachelor Girl's Camp in Ireland", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, May 1909.

⁶⁹ "Where the Queen is Spending Her Holidays. Ireland as a Cyclist's Touring Ground", *Cycling*, 21 April 1900.

⁷⁰ "Wheel in the Kerry Kingdom. Some Touring Notes", *Kerry Evening Post*, 18 August 1900.

⁷¹ C. Edwardes, "From a Centre in Wicklow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, June 1903.

⁷² *Lady Cyclist*, 31 July 1897.

⁷³ Rumney, *Note Book*, 300. Almost thirty years later, after the newly independent Irish state launched its effort to revive the Irish language, Rumney modified his comments. In his later musings on Ireland, he wrote that "I have always advised young tourists to visit Ireland before the Continent, as the former gives all the atmosphere of a foreign country without the trouble of a foreign

language – they are trying to give the latter also nowadays”: Rumney, *Fifty Years*, 21.

⁷⁴ Griffin, *Cycling*, 148-150.

⁷⁵ Edwards, *Patrick Pearse*, 50-52; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, 448-449; Mathews, *Revival*, 43-44.

⁷⁶ Micheál Ruadh, “A Holiday in Connacht”, *United Irishman*, 18 October 1902.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 154.

⁷⁸ “Through the Donegal Highlands”, *Irish Cyclist*, 19 October 1892. At least some of these tourists were members of the Ohne Hast Cycling Club, a Dublin and Wicklow based club that was founded in the 1880s to promote leisurely bicycle and tricycle touring in scenic parts of Ireland. Following this attempt by Sealy to converse in cod-Irish in Donegal, the word “thorum” came to be used by Ohne Hast members to signify “a buxom lass”.

⁷⁹ “Dingle of the Forts. The Strangest Place in Ireland”, *Irish Cyclist*, 30 March 1898.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² For a brief biography of Mecredy, which includes a short account of his editorship of the *Irish Cyclist*, see Montgomery, *R.J. Mecredy*.

⁸³ R.J. Mecredy, “A Family Tour”, *Irish Cyclist*, 25 August 1897, 1 September 1897.

⁸⁴ R.J. Mecredy, “A Family Tour”, *Irish Cyclist*, 8 September 1897.

⁸⁵ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, 132-133.

⁸⁶ C. Edwardes, “From a Centre in Wicklow”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, June 1903.

⁸⁷ Holt, “Discovery of Rural France”, 133.

⁸⁸ *The Jarvey*, 20 September 1890. The *Jarvey*, often described as “the Irish *Punch*”, ran from January 1889 to December 1890. It was edited by Percy French, who at this stage was just starting out on his comic career.

⁸⁹ *Bicycling News*, 1 September 1876; Mecredy, *Tour to Connemara*, 34; “Through the South of Ireland on a Bicycle”, *Belfast News-Letter*, 6 September 1890; *Cycling*, 24 October 1891; Spurrier, *Cyclists’ Route Book*, 164; Holding, *Cycle and Camp*, 55; “A Trip in the Emerald Isle”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, January 1904; Griffin, “Bad Roads”, 195-196.

⁹⁰ Fitzwater Wray, *Note Book*, 201-202.

⁹¹ Members of the Ohne Hast Cycling Club referred to the peasants who were indifferent to the physical beauty of their surroundings as “spectathres”. This arose from a conversation between one of the club members and a peasant at Glenmalure in Wicklow. When the cyclist, who was admiring the view, commented on the beautiful mountains that surrounded them, the peasant replied that “We make no spectathre of thim”. The Ohne Hasters also laughed at the possibly apocryphal story of the Roscommon farmer who had to travel to Dublin, and who was urged to visit the Meeting of the Waters at Avoca during his trip. On his return to Roscommon, the farmer dismissed this renowned beauty spot as “Three small strames and thirty acres of the worst land in Ireland”: *Irish Cyclist*, 5 October 1892.

⁹² *Irish Cyclist*, 20 July 1898.

⁹³ Buchanan, “Cycling and the Picturesque”.

⁹⁴ A rare exception of a description of an encounter between holidaymaking cyclists and a tramp in Kerry may be found in the *Irish Cyclist* of 13 July 1898. The tramp was clearly an exotic creature as far as the cyclists were concerned, and they insisted on extracting the most amusement that they could out of this encounter, by forcing the reluctant tramp to mount one of their bicycles and making him attempt to ride it. According to one of those present, they placed their “specimen” on the machine, and the tramp, wearing “elephantine boots”, “lumberingly pawed for the pedals” as his feet repeatedly slipped off them. Although the tramp “was extremely uncomfortable, and squirmed without ceasing”, the tourists insisted that he continue to try to ride the bicycle. The whole affair was photographed, for the delectation of the *Irish Cyclist*’s readers.

⁹⁵ N.G. Bacon, “A Bachelor Girl’s Camp in Ireland”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, May 1909.

⁹⁶ Mabel Richards, “The Vales of Wicklow”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, August 1910.

⁹⁷ Gwynn, *Highways and Byways*, 8.

⁹⁸ Cahir Healy, “Two Days by Lough Erne”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, October 1908.

⁹⁹ Mecredy and Stoney, *Art and Pastime*, 157. One presumes that the peasants with whom Mecredy “mingled” did not speak Irish.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, 109.

¹⁰¹ W.H. Duignan, “Ireland from a Tricycle”, *Wheel World*, December 1883.

¹⁰² Hurston and Stokes, *Round the World*, 265.

¹⁰³ *Irish Cyclist*, 30 May 1894. In a slightly different version of this kind of exchange between the thirsty and hungry cyclist and the peasant hostess, Mecredy recommended that the supplicant should put on his “most bewitching smile” before initiating a conversation with her: R.J. Mecredy, “Through the Donegal Highlands”, *Irish Cyclist*, 5 October 1892. Mecredy later fondly imagined that he had “peasant friends scattered all over Kerry” as a result of the lunches that he shared in their homes: *Times*, 4 November 1919. He remained unaware that his presence and those of his friends might have been unwelcome to their peasant hosts, but the social awkwardness that these occasions involved for the peasants comes though in an account that he wrote in 1909: “A hearty, if apologetic, welcome always greets the stranger. The good wife’s ready apron is swept hastily over the best chairs for the guests, and if, as often happens, the homely kitchen is crowded, all but “herself” and perhaps her husband or eldest daughter, will quietly and mysteriously vanish. It is not good manners to intrude when the “quality” are being entertained”: Mecredy, *Health’s Highway*, 118.

¹⁰⁴ *Irish Cyclist*, 2 January 1895.

¹⁰⁵ *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, October 1898. A cycling tourist who stayed in peasants’ cottages for several weeks during a tour of Donegal in the 1870s “came near to dissolution on the potato diet of the peasants’ cabins”: *Cycling*, 16 December 1899.

¹⁰⁶ James Bennet, “Bicycle Tour in Ulster”, *Bicycling News*, 11 February 1881.

¹⁰⁷ Bourke, “Paddy and Pig”. “The Wandering Worm”, a correspondent of *Cycling* periodical, stated when he was a child, his mother, who had visited Ireland, “used often to tell me tales of how fond the Irish were of the porcine race; how these sweet, domestic, pets lived in the cottages; and how all – pigs, men, women, and

children – kept each other company”: “In Ireland So Green”, *Cycling*, 18 March 1893.

¹⁰⁸ *Punch*, 14 July 1877, 1 December 1877, 7 August 1880, 12 March 1881, 29 April 1882, 12 May 1888, 5 January 1912; Douglas, Harte and O’Hara, *Drawing Conclusions*, 55, 117, 168, 192-193; de Nie, *Eternal Paddy*, 17, 220, 232, 233, 235.

¹⁰⁹ A.J. Wilson, “An Irish Outing, Awheel”, *Outing*, September 1888.

¹¹⁰ Beatrice Cresswell, “Experiences in Erin”, *Cycling*, 26 November 1898. Later on in her tour, Cresswell experienced another picturesque episode when she took shelter from the rain in a peasant cabin at the Pass of Keimaneigh, sharing the warmth of a turf fire with a married couple, some wet hens, and a cat that had lost one leg in a trap: *Cycling*, 10 December 1898.

¹¹¹ “A Short Run In Ireland”, *Bicycling News*, 2 September 1881. This earlier writer’s evidence suggests that Cresswell may have been predisposed towards seeing “Paddy” and his pig on her trip to Ireland, as a result of having seen some “stage Irish” play. Cresswell admitted that before she began her bicycle tour in Munster “my sole knowledge of Ireland could be summed up in a thorough acquaintance of Moore’s *Irish Melodies* and the *Fairy Legends* of Crofton Croker”: Beatrice Cresswell, “Experiences in Erin”, *Cycling*, 5 November 1898.

¹¹² Holding, *Cycle and Camp*, title page.

¹¹³ Kelly, *Photographs*, 34.

¹¹⁴ Advertisement for Thomas Mayne’s photographic business in W.St. J. Joyce, *Rambles*, unnumbered page. The light and compact “Luzo” camera was particularly recommended to cycling tourists in Ireland in an *Evening Herald* advertisement: “By means of this very efficient and small apparatus, which measures about 6 x 3 inches, and weighs a little more than 1 lb., you can bring home 100 beautiful negatives of all the principal places you have been to”. Advertisement in *Evening Herald*, 30 August 1894.

¹¹⁵ *Bicycling World and League of American Wheelmen Bulletin*, 28 November 1890; *Irish Cyclist*, 22 April 1891; *Belfast News-Letter*, 12 November 1891, 3 December 1897; *Freeman’s Journal*, 3 March 1896; *Los Angeles Herald*, 20 December 1896; *Evening Herald*, 21 April 1899.

¹¹⁶ For some examples, see *Irish Cyclist*, 25 August 1897, 20 September 1899; “Cycling and Camping, Lough Gill”, *Irish Tourist*, July 1898; E. G. Rucker, “In the Country of Giants and Castles. A Paradise for the Photo Cyclist”, *Cycling*, 13 May 1899, 20 May 1899; F.H.D., “A Day in the Wild West of Ireland”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, December 1902; F. Marion Gallagher, “How to Bike through Ireland”, *San Francisco Call*, 15 December 1907; W.F. Markwick, “Killarney”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, August 1908; C. Edwards, “Easter Running in S.W. Ireland”, *Cyclists’ Touring Club Gazette*, March 1910.

¹¹⁷ Bulfin, *West of Ireland*, 8.

¹¹⁸ Horgan, *Victorian Visitor*, 30-31.

¹¹⁹ Thompson, “Politics of Photography”, 127-128.

¹²⁰ “A Study in Donkeys”, *Irish Cyclist*, 24 January 1893.

¹²¹ “Snap Shots”, *Irish Cyclist*, 2 January 1895.

¹²² R.J. Mecredy, “Amongst the Mourne Mountains”, *Irish Cyclist*, 6 June 1894.

¹²³ “Suggested Tours. The North of Ireland”, *Cycling*, 21 May 1898.

¹²⁴ *Irish Cyclist*, 20 July 1898.

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- ¹²⁵ R.J. Mecredy, "Camping in Kerry or Feats on the Fjords", *Irish Cyclist*, 10 October 1894.
- ¹²⁶ Curtis, *Apes and Angels*; de Nie, *Eternal Paddy*; Whelehan, "Revolting Peasants".
- ¹²⁷ W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, December 1883.
- ¹²⁸ Curtis, *Apes and Angels*; de Nie, *Eternal Paddy*; Whelehan, "Revolting Peasants".
- ¹²⁹ W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, December 1883.
- ¹³⁰ W.H. Duignan, "Ireland from a Tricycle", *Wheel World*, December 1883, January 1884; Howard, "Man on a Tricycle", 257.
- ¹³¹ Wilson, *Two Trips*, 4-5.
- ¹³² Fitzwater Wray, *Note Book*, 191.
- ¹³³ A.J. Wilson, "An Irish Outing, Awheel", *Outing*, July 1888.
- ¹³⁴ Dawson, *Incidents*, 29.
- ¹³⁵ Wiedenhoft Murphy, "Touring the Troubles".
- ¹³⁶ Dawson, *Incidents*, 31, 40, 44-45. For an account of the struggle between Ponsonby and his tenants, see Geary, *Plan of Campaign*, 109-113.
- ¹³⁷ R.J. Mecredy, "Twenty Days in the West of Ireland", *Wheel World*, March 1884.
- ¹³⁸ Henry Sturmeay, "An Irish Trip with Wheel and Lens in the East and West", *Wheel World*, October 1886. Sturmeay, a keen photographer, tried to photograph the Treaty Stone in Limerick, but found it "was for the most part hidden by the ragged urchins who would persist in intruding themselves into the picture", while he succeeded in photographing Limerick's new cathedral only "after some considerable trouble with the inhabitants, who were most curious and interested, and several firmly impressed with the idea that their presence in the foreground added vastly to the beauty of the building". When Sturmeay visited the waterfall at Powerscourt, a carman, "so drunk he could barely stand upright", pestered him for a "likeness" as he wished to send it to someone in America: *ibid*, May 1886.
- ¹³⁹ For just some of many examples, see H.M. Wright, "Across Ireland", *Bicycling News*, 17 June 1881; "Touring in 'Ould Ireland'", *Cyclists' Touring Club Monthly Gazette*, April 1884; "From Galway to Belfast on a Bicycle", *Belfast News-Letter*, 24 August 1887; Phillips, *Awheel in Europe*, 5-7; Frederick J. Somerville, "A Fortnight's Cycling Tour in Ireland", *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 25 February 1893; Spurrier, *Cyclists' Route Book*, 163; *Bow Bells*, 5 October 1894; "A Cycling Tour in Kerry", *The Wheelwoman*, 12 December 1896; "Cycling and Camping, Lough Gill", *Irish Tourist*, July 1898; "Irish Diamonds", *Irish Cyclist*, 10 August 1898; "Ireland as a Touring Ground", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1898; A.R. Quinton, "Cycling in Ireland. From Dublin to Killarney", *Leisure Hour*, June 1899; Gwynn, *Highways and Byways*, 150, 298; *Kentucky Irish American*, 24 March 1900; "A Trip in the Emerald Isle", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, January 1904; Bulfin, *Rambles*; John L. Warden Page, "Ireland as a Touring Ground", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1909.
- ¹⁴⁰ Buchanan, "Cycling and the Picturesque".
- ¹⁴¹ A.R. Quinton, "Through Ireland Awheel", *Cycle and Motor World*, 10 March 1897, 14 April 1897, 12 May 1897, 7 July 1897; "The Mourne Mountains and their Roads", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1898; A.R. Quinton, "Touring in the Emerald Isle", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, May 1899, June

1899; A.R. Quinton, "Cycling in Ireland. From Dublin to Killarney", *Leisure Hour*, June 1899; John L. Warden Page, "The Antrim Coast Road", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, December 1904; John L. Warden Page, "The Donegal Coast Road", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1906; E.C. Palmer, "The Wild, Wild West", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1907; John L. Warden Page, "Ireland as a Touring Ground", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, September 1909.

¹⁴² *Cycling*, 13 February 1892; *Irish Cyclist*, 11 January 1893, 30 May 1894.

¹⁴³ Beatrice Cresswell, "Experiences in Erin", *Cycling*, 5 November 1898; "Wheel Wanderings. The Blackwater District. By One of the Fair Sex", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1899; "Ireland as a Touring Ground", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, January 1899; Dora Mellone, "The Golden Vale, the Blackwater, and the Barrow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, October 1908; N.G. Bacon, "A Bachelor Girl's Camp in Ireland", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, May 1909.

¹⁴⁴ *Skibbereen Eagle*, 12 June 1897; *Leinster Express*, 27 August 1898; *Munster Express*, 24 September 1898; *Kilkenny People*, 10 June 1905; *Freeman's Journal*, 4 August 1905.

¹⁴⁵ Clear, "Homelessness"; Crossman, *Poor Law*, 212, 214, 225. It is revealing that one woman carried a revolver with her when she cycled in the Dublin and Wicklow Mountains in the 1890s, because of the perceived threat that tramps posed to female cyclists there: *Social Review*, 29 October 1898.

¹⁴⁶ Williams, *Creating Irish Tourism*, 153-164. On the perceived exoticness of the Irish brogue, from the perspective of both foreign and Irish commentators, see "A Trundle through Ireland", *Belfast News-Letter*, 6 September 1884; *Irish Cyclist*, 26 June 1894; "Emerald Isle Again", *Cycling*, 1 September 1894; W.J. Spurrier, "Cycling Touring. Ireland", *Weekly Irish Times*, 3 July 1897; N.G. Bacon, "A Bachelor Girl's Camp in Ireland", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, May 1909; Mabel Richards, "The Vales of Wicklow", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, August 1910.

¹⁴⁷ F.H. D., "A Day in the Wild West of Ireland", *Cyclists' Touring Club Gazette*, December 1902.

¹⁴⁸ Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 6.

¹⁴⁹ Urry, *Tourist Gaze*, 1,3.

¹⁵⁰ Ryle, *Journeys in Ireland*, 6.