

Special Edition

May 2024

Cranks

Alan G Campbell CBE

The magazine of
Deeside Thistle Cycling Club

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Editorial

My editorial for the last ever Cranks in March 2024 started off: "It's the end of the line". I'd spoken with Alan Campbell on a number of occasions about the difficulty in filling our magazine's pages but we both agreed that somehow it should continue to the 600th edition or the completion of 50 years uninterrupted.

I'm delighted that Alan was still able to participate in that last issue and within hours of it being distributed I got a message from him that left me devastated. *Not only Cranks*, he said, *it's the end of the line for me*.

Alan had been closely involved with Aberdeen cycling from early in the 1960s. Though he didn't enrol in the Deeside Thistle RC until January 1975 he had already forged many contacts and took part in many of the club's social events.

His main passion centred on the Tour de France, the Classics and the many cols in the Alps and Pyrenees. Over the years he would ride many of these setting a benchmark for others to follow.

Though following the intricacies of the professional peloton may have been his first

love he nonetheless had a deep knowledge of the domestic scene.

Not restricting this to competition his boundless enthusiasm for all things cycling meant he even joined me roughstuffing and hostelling. Then there was the Aberdeen to Ardnamurchan and back Audax. With the west route over the Lecht and the return over the Devil, I had the opinion that even the 48-hour target would be hard to beat. However, setting off in May 1987 with dogged determination, we completed the inaugural ride inside the standard time.

He'd not joined the club early on for he had a career to establish. This was in Law and Administration in the Local Authorities of Aberdeen, Grampian and Aberdeenshire. Not only did I have him as a close friend in our joint sporting interests, but I am happy to say he was also a close friend in my working environment.

Alan may have spent his time working with the top movers and shakers in Government but it was not unusual for him to give me a call during office hours looking for a sounding board.

I recall one time being summoned into Woodhill House. Alan, in earnest debate with Michael Whyte, the then Director of Education, on the subject of supporting primary school children cycling to and from school, needed a second opinion.

Woodhill House also hosted the local Schoolboys Championships. Once a year Alan ensured the plastic speed bumps were lifted to give the young riders free passage round the building on a Saturday morning.

I'll miss his profound knowledge on all things cycling, his couthiness, his pithy humour. My thoughts are with his wife, Susy, daughters, Louisa and Lucy and son, Simon.

What follows in this special edition of your club magazine is a collection of stories and anecdotes from club members on the life and times of Alan G Campbell CBE.



Alan was a gentleman of understanding and reason.

Bert McIntosh

Doug Haig

I've known Alan since 1973 and rated him as a man of men and a leader of men. He was gifted on ability to communicate at all levels from Prime Minister to the Queen and the King and right to ordinary folk.

Cycling in Aberdeen benefited from his skills when you look back at the star names he brought to Aberdeen where he interviewed them to a cycling audience. I always remember the one at Grampian Studios and star man Allan Peiper. What a reception. Alan did a first-class interview.



(Allan Peiper flew into Aberdeen to visit with Alan round about Christmas)

I look back at all the things he put on for the likes of me. The Saturday bike ride, rain or shine taking in Leggart Hill, Garrol, Learney. It's

called The Chairman's Classic. The Sunday ride, a 28miler, again, always hills .

The toughest ride I did with him was the Snow Roads. He displayed his endurance ability that day. He seemed never to tire.

Alan had a few names for me which stuck for many, many years.

Chunky as I drove around the city just could not think back why he called me that .. nothing to do with Chunky Kit Kats. Then, boom, I remembered.

I was repointing the front of his home on Roseberry St in pare pointing, which projects out from the face of the granite. I had said to Alan this is my favourite point. I love it cuz it's Chunky. That name stuck for many years.

Then there was the classic which sticks to this day from way back in 1978 ... Disco. Even his family still call me that and it's now been passed on to his Grandchildren.

I want to end this on the day I took him to the Chemical Plant to get his Chemo. I picked him up in my works truck. Although he was weak we had a laugh all the way to the plant. His humour was always there.



(Executive transport to ARI)

Alan will be missed by all in cycling and by all those he knew outside his cycling world.



Link

ALAN CAMPBELL

in action, courtesy of **STV** and
thanks to **Michael Watt**

Sandy Lindsay

Word got out that I'd been given a trip to the Alps for a 75th birthday present. Alan, already undergoing chemotherapy, immediately got in touch. In his own words *Delighted to hear you're off to Ventoux with Robert the Strong. You'll enjoy it if you have low enough gears for the long straights through the trees:*

First did it 25 years ago when over-gearing was a problem for many. Done it 14 times in total. Twelve from the Classic side, ie Bedoin, and twice from Malaucene. I've never gone up the easy route from Sault, needless to say,

When you get out in to the open at Chalet Reynard you've beaten the back of it. I've been up in snow in July, a L'Etape du Tour when the slower half of the field, including Greg Le Mond were not allowed to finish at the summit and were turned back at Chalet Reynard. Also done it in a heatwave in L'Etape du Tour when fighting for water at the feed station was necessary.

Most memorable ascent was in 2009 when I rode up with Eros Poli who won Le Tour stage over Ventoux in 1994. A huge rider he was allowed a 30-minute lead at the foot of Ventoux. He got to the summit with a couple of minutes to spare then blasted down to the stage finish at Montelimar with a bigger gap.

An amazing descender in 2009 he rode down with one hand on the bars while taking photos with the other.

I'd taken great photos at a stage start in 1994 including ones with me, Chris Boardman and world champ, Lance Armstrong. I'd also pics of Eros's bike which had an unusual saddle with a high back so you could push back against it.

(They were subsequently made 'illegal'.) But Eros had the self-same saddle on his bike in 2009!.

I've only ever stopped twice on the climb. Once during that heatwave for water. And once going up through the trees when a young lad was struggling with a puncture - and he'd been in sight for 5 or 6 minutes as I toiled up,

I've always done it on a Colnago — 5 of them. They descend well. The best for Ventoux was probably a C40 from our Banchory sponsor, Neil, as it had a triple chain set when most cassettes gave up at 26 teeth.

There's a great challenge for you. Three times up Ventoux in a day from each of Bedoin; Malaucene and Sault. It's called Club des Cinglés du Mont Ventoux

When Alan found out that we'd accepted the challenge and stormed another 9 iconic Alpine passes in the five days we were there he said that we'd to get together and reminisce on the efforts.

Though Alan and I did get the chance to walk round the block in Hamilton Place only a few weeks before his death we never did get the opportunity to reminisce.

Alan time-trialled regularly. His interest lay in longer distance events and as long ago as 1977 he shared the glory of winning ADCA's Furneaux Trophy 100-mile Team Award. The same three riders won again in 1978



(Furneaux Trophy winning team: A Campbell / A Lindsay / M Robertson)



Bob MacGregor

I first met Alan shortly after I moved to Aberdeen in 1975 following a job transfer to manage our new offshore operation, and with us both having 3 young children we seemed to hit it off.

We were both interested in the European events and had talked about long distance Audax events and in the early 1980's I introduced him to a couple of my old cycling friends from my original Glasgow club, Jim Thomson and David Meek, and we decided to enter the Paris Roubaix Audax (would be called a Sportive now).

We travelled with a UK organised group by bus with all the bikes (complete with mudguards as required by the UK regulations for these type of events) transported by van with the event starting in the dark, we rode through the Forest of Compiègne with poor 1980's cycling lights avoiding a section where vandals had scattered tacks on the road.

It had been raining and when we reached the "pavé" sections there were puddles and mud everywhere, and at one point Alan had come to a halt and put his foot into a large muddy puddle but when he tried to get going again one of his shoes was missing in the mud! We eventually found it and got going again and completed the ride and endured the traditional Roubaix showers only to then find that, due to a miscommunication all our dry clothes had been taken to the event HQ in Calais – you can imagine Alan's reaction to finding this out – one of the rare times where I almost saw him lose his temper.

This was the first of many cycling "adventures" that the four of us completed together, The Marmotte in 2003, The Maratonna Dles Dolomites in 2004, The Raid Pyreneaan twice with our back up driver, the late Dave Anderson, the Raid Alpine, again backed up by Dave Anderson and accompanied that time by the legendary Ronnie Boa. We also had a week riding around watching the Mid Libre in the late 1990's and met the legendary Raphael Geminiani near the finish in Seté.

I also rode the Ride London event with Alan in the legendary wet edition in 2014 and in addition to riding together we also planned trips to Belgium and Italy to watch many of the classics including the Tour of Lombardy twice 2004 and 2007, The Tour of Flanders, the E3 where, having just arrived in Courtrai and parking outside the Saxo Bank hotel we were watching the mechanics working on the team bikes when Alan received a phone call.

On finishing the call he asked if I could drive him to Ghent as he had to get back to Aberdeen for an important meeting – it transpired that the phone call had been from Prince Charles but when I said – did you not tell him that we were on holiday, he replied that Prince Charles didn't rate holidays so I drove him to Ghent and with a trip on the overnight sleeper he made the meeting on time.

I rated Alan as one of my closest friends as, not only were we almost exactly the same age, but rather bizarrely, as children we used to go to Elie in Fife every year at the same time during the 50's and into the 60's, although at that time we hadn't knowingly ever met.

We had the same interest in photography and had similar views on life, business, and politics in general so had many an interesting discussion over the years.

Although my best cycling results were obtained from Road and Track events, I regularly rode TT's especially in the Evening League where I could beat Alan over the shorter distances but in longer distances the roles were reversed, and in the rare instance that I rode a 100, Alan would generally beat me by a minimum of 30 minutes.

I remember vividly one particular 25 in the late 1980's where I set off a couple of minutes behind Alan and confident that I would catch him, I rode flat out and despite breaking the hour, was shocked to arrive at the finish in Leggatt Terrace without catching him, only to discover that on the way out to the turn his front forks had snapped and he was in hospital with a serious head injury following which, he was one of the first people I knew to wear one of the new polystyrene helmets.





Chris Good

When I joined Deeside in 1991 aged 12, Alan who lived close by very quickly became my mentor.

We met every Sunday morning at the Shell petrol station at Queens Cross at 8:00am, then proceeded to the usually chilly descent down Anderson Drive to meet the rest of the Leggatt Terrace chaingang at 8:15am for the 28 mile Sunday run before Alan headed to church.

The highlight for Alan was always the freewheeling competition from the summit of Banchory Devenick back down to South Deeside Road. We remained close friends ever since.

Alan would regularly get late evening phone calls from a young me the night before an early morning TT pleading for help to sort an issue with my bike; he always invited me round to fix it, he was always happy to help.

I feel heartbroken to lose such an amazing man and friend who for me was always a beacon of inspiration and positivity, but feel blessed to have so many wonderful memories - weekly turbo training in Ken's garage (Alan on his rusty Puch which would have disintegrated if moved from its assigned spot in the garage), the Raid Alpine in 2006, annual cycling trips to Majorca (accompanied by so many club members over the years).

When I was very ill in 2005 with severe depression, outwith immediate family Alan was my most constant support and without doubt he was a significant part of my recovery in the months that followed.

I was hospitalised for a period as a result of the illness - Alan would phone me during my time there to chat and in the months that followed once home, we would very regularly chat on the phone and it was always a highlight of my day, often discussing important matters such as the key moments of that day's stage of the Tour de France.

Alan also took me out on short trips as a way of getting me out of the house and helping with a period of rehabilitation, I recall a drive up to visit Brian Duncan in Peterhead one evening.

Alan was a great companion, witty and always in complete control and always expected our trips to be completed with precise detail and he wasn't therefore impressed with me when, having organised a weekend cycling trip in the borders for 4 of us, when we arrived at the hotel in Berwick on Tweed, we discovered they only had two rooms with double beds available, despite me having supplied the 4 male names!

He had an amazing cycling knowledge (2nd only to Jim Thomson who could recite precise cycling data from the 50's onwards) and had an amazing ability to analyse a situation and calm things down thereby avoiding any difficulties that may have arisen.

A caring and thoughtful man we had arranged a cycling weekend in Pitlochry in 2017 to celebrate his 70th birthday which had occurred a year earlier but which he'd refused to acknowledge at the time, but on attempting to pay our account we were told that everything had been paid in advance by Alan.

A true and loyal friend who is greatly missed.



At the time Alan had a hugely demanding job, as Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council. He had ultimate responsibility for around 15,000 employees. In addition, he had his own busy family life and responsibilities as Chairman of Deeside. Yet, he still found a considerable amount of time to support and encourage me through an extremely difficult time. To me that says everything you need to know about Alan, and I'll be forever indebted to him for the part he played in my recovery and the positive impact he had on my life in the years that followed.

Alan will be greatly missed, but most definitely never forgotten.

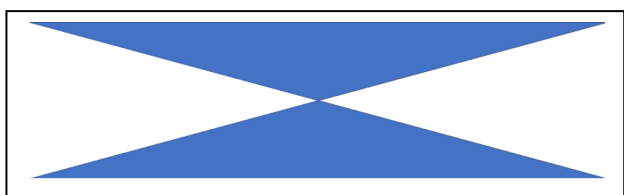
Kenny Walker

As a young loon of 16, I joined DTRC in 1969 in the Congregational Church cellar at the end of King Street. There were lots of 'auld mannies' like Alan Gibb, Dave Anderson, Ricky Pratt, Sandy Gray and Sandy Lindsay and the leader Ian Downie. It was a time of change and the club moved to the TA at Woolmanhill in 1970ish.

Another 'auld mannie' appeared. Alan Campbell attended regular monthly and annual meetings and all us 'loons' could see there was proper organisation. By the early 1980's I'm no longer a young loon – I'm also an auld mannie – and regularly finding meetings on the changing of DTRC to DTCC and the reorganisation of local Aberdeen cycling – and Alan (as now the Chairman) became a strong friend and leader in managing, maintaining and moving Deeside into a changing 'modern' cycle regime.

Alan remained a strong (auld mannie) rider virtually all his life and did so much in Deeside for setting up and organising the regular (non racing) Spring and Autumn Reliability Trials from the early 90's (maybe even in the 80's).

Alan will be sadly missed – but these events should be continued for Deeside in some way shape or form.



Robert Lindsay

From a child Alan was an ever-present person in my life

I recall the cream coloured Merc heading off to races with my dad and as I got older, the committee meetings in his house on Hamilton Place. Here, Susy always laid on a feast towards the end of business.

Alan was an important back up eulogist at my mum's funeral where he told me that he wished he'd started clapping at the end of the speeches. I was moved when, at Alan's thanksgiving Service, someone was bold enough to call for three cheers in his honour.

Then there were the Ride London adventures and sharing Alpine experiences via messaging last September, again so happy for our joint ventures.

Alan was a dedicated family man and true cycle sport.

Dave Milne

An anecdote I recalled on Friday at the church was when I was working as an apprentice at Aberdeen County Council Roads Dept - Drawing Office (pre Woodhill House days) in the mid 1960's when it was based in Albyn Place, Aberdeen.

On certain Friday mornings I was summoned by my then boss Ian Piper (Chief Engineering Assistant) to assist in hanging proposed new road improvement plans on a large display board (pre PowerPoint by many years) in the Council offices in Union Terrace for Councillors to review and to approve/refuse accordingly at their council meeting later that same morning.

Inevitably, Ian's "council chum" based in the Council Legal Department, Douglas McNaughton, accompanied by his youthful protégé, Alan Campbell, would make an appearance in the chamber during this procedure.

The "seniors" resultant chat meant some useful time for Alan and I to talk about far more pressing matters; specifically in the cycling world.

I remember these nostalgic mornings chats in the musty old council chamber vividly and it was so clear even then that Alan was destined for great things,,,,, as he clearly proved.



Simon Lott

I confess that I am still reeling from Alan's passing and finding it difficult to accept that I will never speak to him or see him again. I've passed such wonderful times with him both on and off the bike and he has been a strong presence in my life since I first met him in 1997 with his beautiful art deco Colnago Master Piu.

I left the Northeast of Scotland in 2010 but spoke with him regularly since and saw him every year in Mallorca in March for what can only be described as sheer cycling indulgence in warm weather and wonderful scenery. We never tired of this holiday despite doing it every year for almost 20 years until it was interrupted for COVID in 2020.

It was an annual highlight and an absolute joy. It was a healing experience and no less so through the presence of Alan with his charisma, boundless enthusiasm and passion for the sport of cycling and, of course, his irrepressible sense of humour.

He leaves a huge hole in my life, I will sorely miss the banter, the insightful conversations on professional cycling and cyclists both past and present and on life in general.

Some memories in no particular order:

Deeside reliability trials: Alan always stressed that these were not races but never discouraged, and even instigated in some cases, them turning into one. Fantastic rides through the beautiful Aberdeenshire countryside, sometimes in appalling weather and Alan was always great company on these.

Deeside Thistle AGMs: Alan's chairing of these meetings was a master class on how to chair a meeting, with supreme skill and great humour.

Deeside Thistle Celebrity Guests: Alan handled these as well or even better than top TV chat show hosts, putting the guest completely at ease and ensuring the evening was enjoyable and memorable for all.

Celebration in Aberdeen City to mark the end of the 2002 cycling season and a year of Tuesday evening turbo training sessions in Ken Bryson's garage. Alan was on great form this evening, possibly fuelled a little by Phil Duncan's

enthusiastic ordering of wine at the Stage Door restaurant. We continued to various city nightspots before fortunately exercising some discretion and taking a taxi home. Alan confided with me afterwards that he was relieved not to appear on the front page of the Press and Journal, snapped by opportunistic paparazzi, being Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire council at the time.

The Raide Alpine 2006 (I think). 6 of us set out to do the 6-day ordeal over mythical Alpine cols in July from Thonon les Bains to Antibes, supported by the late great Dave Anderson in the van. Epic cycling in magnificent scenery.

I remember a painful ascent in the searing heat from Bourg St Maurice to Val d'Isere and Alan's red sunburnt face and Klingon like indentations on his forehead from his helmet that evening.



Then there was the long arduous ascent of the 2715 m Col de Bonette, for which Alan insisted that we rode together, saying that he knew the route. The location of the summit was elusive, as I recall, but Alan knew exactly where it was and



jumped away without warning to take the mountain points.

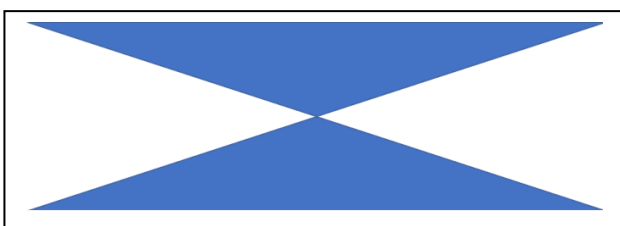
A highlight of this trip was a great evening in Briancon with plenty of red wine and shenanigans, whilst trying to, but failing, to meet up with Sally Ashbridge. Then there was a great evening meal in Nice at the end of the tour with copious ice-cream.

Bikes and attire: Alan's bicycles and attire were always immaculate, plenty of Colnagos, Assos and Rapha. He ascribed to the notion that even if you were not too fast, you should at least look good on a bike.

The Chairman's Classic: A popular choice of route for the Saturday morning ride devised by Alan which started on Leggatt Terrace then went through Netherley, by Knockburn, through Strachan over the Shooting Greens before heading North through Torphins then a tussle up the Learney hill finishing chain gang style through Echt and Garlogie. A great route and especially enjoyable with Alan's company.

The Raide Pyrenean 2021: Hendaye on the Atlantic Coast to Cerbere on the Mediterranean Coast taking in many of the major cols of the Pyrenees one of the last excursions I did with Alan. Unfortunately, he crashed on a descent at the end of the first day and was unable to continue, in fact we almost had to physically restrain him from getting back on his bike. His son Simon and myself completed the tour with him in support with Bob McGreggor. It was sad that he couldn't ride but still great to have his company in these epic Pyrenean locations.

These are the memories that spring to mind, I am sure more will surface with time. I am devastated that a little more than a year ago that I was cycling with him in Mallorca and now he has gone, way too soon, in my opinion. He was a very special person and a huge personality in Aberdeen and Aberdeen cycling. A very sad loss indeed.



Aberdeen – Ardnamurchan – Aberdeen

A milk float whined its way into the fog; a seagull tugged ineffectually at a damp chip paper; Girdleness light bounced off a curtain of white and its foghorn growled into the coming dawn. Morning was late. So was Clark Kent. He'd forgotten his recording equipment but a swift dash back to Broadcasting House and a faster return through red lights and over wet pavé, had him taping words of wisdom just after 5.30am on 05 May.

Enough light had filtered through the blanket of wet by the time the three frontier breakers had explained their reasons for undertaking this sporting challenge. To Ardnamurchan, the furthest west point of the British mainland, was the venture. They also had to return. A distance of 450+ miles in under 2 days was the challenge.

Because this was the breaking of new ground, Andrew Manwell, PE Director, Aberdeen University, and Neil Spinks, both of whom were trying to institute a permanent Randonee across and back, were to go as travelling support, and establish various checkpoints along the route. 10 minutes after scheduled departure, Alan Campbell, Sandy Lindsay, and Alan Burwood set out.

The first scheduled stop was at the top of the Lecht and since the coastal fog had quickly given way to clearer, brighter weather, this climb, the first severe test, was tackled with gusto.

Burwood was the first and only one to give best, stopping to rest several times on the way up. Climbing into cloud the ski-station was eventually sighted and the support van gave necessary sustenance.

Out of the cloud and weather warming, Tomintoul came and went and the Brig o' Brown also disappeared tail wards.

In high spirits the trio swept through Nethybridge and were missed by the support crew who waited for ages. The three cyclists reached Loch Insh and had ordered lunch before the support vehicle arrived.

Now in shorts, the sun out and pleased with progress, they pressed on down Laggan side to Spean Bridge to the next stop at Glenfinnan where the pleasantness started to evaporate. Beautiful views towards Lochailort were enjoyed but with the terrain becoming lumpy, half-



wheeling, an unpleasant trait at any time, began to have its effect. In the end one rider was left to make his own way to meet darkness while the other two progressed at a more sedate pace for the type of event.

Teatime at Lochailort saw the support team tuck into a sit-down meal. The randonneurs pedalled on heading past the fish breeding factory.

At Salen with under 30 miles to the turning point and the roads now single track, lights were fitted and an agreement to stay together signed, they continued.

A steep climb took them high onto moorland and the only close scrape of the weekend when a car made things a little difficult on a corner.

Then they met chuckies, only a day or so old and thick enough to steer their wheels. Descending for six miles on this surface took them to Kilchoan and sea level. Another narrow road swichbacked to Ardnamurchan Point where the van stood sentinel beside the tall stack of the lighthouse, beaming out to sea. Beds not available a doss on the floor was virtually as good.

Morning, clearer than Aberdeen, dawned at 5.00am and with a few hurried minutes packing food into pockets they left about 5.30. A cup of tea for breakfast seemed okay at the time since a second breakfast would be eaten after 2 hours at Salen. This proved costly.

The half-wheeling business proved costly as well. Worse than on the previous day the half-wheeler was left riding several lengths clear or allowed to disappear on the hills.

At first the balmy day of Saturday appeared to be spilling into Sunday but gradually the wind strengthened from the north-east bringing with it a cold airstream. Time passed too quickly and once through Strontian and onto easier roads a bit of speed was put on to try and catch as early a ferry as possible.

Into the wind on the Caledonian Canal, Ardgour took ages to reach. 30 minutes down after only 50 miles did not bode well and the increased effort could not be sustained.

The previous days' efforts of continually fighting to hold a fluctuating wheel had told on Alan Campbell and in Glencoe his despair was apparent. Completely shattered an extended rest in a café and 3rd breakfast were taken. Alan was

plied with more and more free toast and loads of sweet tea from a considerate waitress. A counselling session eventually persuaded him to give it a few more miles.

The climb through Glencoe and round the edge of Rannoch Moor to Loch Ba saw a good recovery and by the time Crianlarich was reached Alan's condition had remarkably improved.

Into a continuing headwind the climb above Loch Tay seemed never ending and the descent to Kenmore didn't seem that way. Tired limbs propelled them into Pitlochry by 8.00pm.

Refitting lights and donning warm clothing before the climb to Braemar it was agreed they should stay together. This would have been sensible for the Devil's Elbow is a long grind and into the headwind they could have sheltered each other. However, one rider pressed on out of Pitlochry and wasn't seen again until Braemar. Cold settled in as darkness approached making the extra clothing welcome.

Over the Cairnwell and down to Braemar their schedule time for finishing passed. Taking a last extended stop in the village they headed down Deeside, now with a welcome tailwind. With no traffic and lined out down the white line they travelled at 20s into Banchory. Taking a quick stop to ease tired limbs and eat a little they pushed on even faster.

Wending through deserted Aberdeen streets as light began to creep into the sky, they charged up the slope to the lighthouse. There waiting, microphone in hand, was Clark Kent. Mutual back-slapping and claims of "never again" saw the trio and helpers head to bed just after 4.00am, 46½hrs after they'd left the same spot some 750kms earlier.

It was hard. The Gold standard (36hrs) seems almost impossible. Hardly enjoyable, it would be a lie to claim so, it was more satisfying to know they were the first to have tackled and completed the event. Others will come afterwards, and it is hoped that a hardened randonneur will show that for events like this, Audax UK may have to consider altering their standards.

750kms on easy roads cannot be equal to the same distance on this route. The Deeside trio had squeezed inside the Silver standard and well they deserved it.



Dave Meek

I recall when Alan first rode the Marmotte in 2001. The weather was terrible with torrential rain and freezing cold with most of the field failing to finish, including Alan, myself and David Millar (former professional Omnium Champion).

Having got almost to the top of the Croix du Fer climb Alan had turned round and was descending back towards the start but was so cold that he took shelter and spotted a concrete bin containing a heavy-duty plastic bag. Alan emptied the rubbish out of the bag and made holes for his head and arms and then put this on and rode down to the first village where he met up with the two Davids and a taxi was organised.

If you think of Alan who mixed with Royalty, Members of Parliament and senior business executives wearing a used rubbish bag, this seems incongruous but it was something which he admitted and recalled when we rode the event together again in 2003.

Brian Duncan

Alan was a very special friend to the Duncan family! And like myself he had a passion for Colnago racing bikes and Campagnolo components.

Over the years that I have known Alan, he would phone up and ask if I would build up another Colnago frame set that he had just purchased, one of many.

Alan was a perfectionist in everything that he did! And always giving advice and encouragement to the young and upcoming club cyclists. Alan was also a great asset to the Deeside Thistle Cycling Club .



Rod Stone

Like Alan, my career was in Scottish local government. Sport played as big a part in my life as my job. The two coincided because my first jobs were in sports development and leisure facility management. I picked up responsibility for other services like libraries, museums, the arts, parks and community education.

Public expenditure cuts, however, made work in local government difficult and most of us had to change jobs and face uncertainty about our futures. I moved north from the central belt and settled in Aberdeenshire and joined the council where Alan Campbell was Chief Executive. It was a novelty for the boss to have an interest in sport.

With a background in law, I assumed Alan would have a traditional and unexciting approach to managing the council. How wrong I was. He didn't have the ego of many of his counterparts elsewhere in the country who wanted to show how dynamic they were with new styles of management.

In my experience most of these just unsettled staff with constant change and uncertainty without any noticeable benefit to the services their council delivered to the public. Rivalry between top managers and personality clashes and the fact that most of them saw the services I managed as worthy of soft cuts made the atmosphere demoralising.

What I learned quickly about Alan was how easy to approach he was and what a wonderful sharp wit he possessed. He had two framed posters of cyclists in his room. As a sportsman myself that immediately put me at ease. But Alan also had a wonderful skill in bridging the divide between staff with experience of the services they provided with councillors who only had political interests. It was rare for any chief executive to enjoy the immense confidence he had from both sides. Meetings involving councillors, senior staff, representatives of other organisations and the public he handled with easy confidence, good humour and skill and he always avoided tension spilling over into stand-offs.

Alan also trail-blazed an initiative to improve the process of delivering important aspects of services that involved staff at all levels. My wife



took a secondment to work with him on that. We had different perspectives on Alan's management style but we shared one opinion about him being a great guy to work for with remarkable personal qualities.

Alan had a commitment to people that marked him out as a first-class manager but it wasn't a contrived management style, it was a feature of his personality. I met him at a funeral after we had both retired and I had started cycling on a regular basis. He gave me contact details for joining club rides in Banchory. I loved it.

I had many training rides with Alan, and I met new friends and learned so much about the sport that I became completely hooked. I started taking part in sportives which were perfect for someone too old to compete at a serious level but great for motivating me to see what I could still achieve as a sportsman in my sixties. I did a couple of Ride Londons meeting Alan and his son Simon afterwards. We had a few drinks and plenty of laughs. Alan became a friend as much as a former work colleague.

I was more than happy to help Alan out with the Spring Classic and the Falling Leaves not just as a favour to Alan but because I loved the events. They are part of what makes Deeside Thistle a great club.



Sadly, Alan is no longer with us to organise these popular events but I want to see them kept going. I'm more than happy to play a part in organising future events. That would serve as a way for me personally to remember Alan, but I am sure many club mates would like to remember him by continuing to take part.

Norman Smith

Alan and I had a lot of early Sunday runs; Leggart Terrace, Durris, Lairhillock and home hopefully in time for Kirk with the family.

The Monster from the Craiglug Wood: Cranks June 2015. tells the story:

Riding neck by neck, rev by rev, never changing their place, Alan Campbell and Norman Smith gritted their teeth as they strove for supremacy in an oft repeated duel on the South Deeside.

Close to 8.00am on Sunday 27 May they were about the turn of the 15, gently climbing towards Craiglug. When suddenly, crashing from the undergrowth, a seeming dervish, completely unexpected, like the monster from the green lagoon, looming huge and, terrified, appearing intimidating, head forward, smashed straight into Norman's nearside (or as they call it now, deerside).

They all, the three of them, crashed to the ground. The roedeer lay stunned across the bent bikes, bleeding freely. Norman could do little with his hands and Alan's leg began to swell at the knee. With difficulty they got to the verge and bemoaned their fate while watching the poor deer stag-ger to its feet and wobble back into the bushes.

Two Ladas passed before they flagged down a BMW and asked for assistance. Chucking their bikes, both with bent wheels, after the deer they got a lift to Casualty.

Norman now has both arms plastered; setting broken bones and they are supported in slings. His left leg has changed colour knee to waist. Having just moved house, six weeks off work sounds okay but what can you do without hands? He can't even go to the toilet! Alan is heavily bruised down one side and misses the Evening League.

Also, the many Randonnees and Bretevs organised by Andrew Manwell in the late eighties with the Big one in 1986 THE SNOW ROADS, one to remember.



Brian Gourlay

Like many who came across Alan Campbell in Deeside Thistle, it was most often a warm and generous encounter. Always a man to see the best in others. Equipped to offer encouragement to those who felt disappointed. One of the first to offer his congratulations to those who enjoyed success.

And it didn't matter who you were or what age you were, if you achieved something significant and had a connection with Deeside, then Alan would recognise you.

It might have been on a Tuesday at the Evening League that he so faithfully supported, or latterly a comment on Facebook. Alan rarely let the chance to wish you his best, pass by.

I received a call from Alan not long after completing my first and only 24 hour TT. He was keen to know not just about my mileage but how technically I rode the event. He finished the conversation with not only have you done yourself proud, but you've done Deeside Thistle proud too. A true club man.

Within the club Alan has left a legacy of goodwill and useful benchmark rides. Notably The Chairman's Classic – a good 60 miler taking in the Garrol and Alan's favourite, the Learney.

The other feature in the club's diary has been the end of year Reliability Trial. A choice of either 100, kms or miles, over some glorious Donside/Deeside terrain with the renowned pitstop in Tullynessle Hall. Most likely everyone has groaned at the thought of heading back out for the other half of their route after scoffing the overabundance of sandwiches and buns.

Alan has led the club in various ways, be it by committee or by example. Those early years of the Ride London event as a club entry gave Alan the opportunity to harness some "team" attitude for those who were prepared to make the journey. The togetherness didn't always happen on the day, mainly due to the size of the event, but at least everyone knew they are riding for Deeside Thistle, and whenever anyone else saw the jersey, it was often remarked about these hills will be nothing to you! Indeed, they weren't.

Alan was a faithful man, sticking with what he knew and loved. Not just in marriage and family, but also serving the various guises of the wider regional council, serving in office within Deeside Thistle, and delighting so many with his passion for Colnago bicycles. A most capable cyclist and a gentleman to boot.



Alan Gibb

In 1962 Alan rode for the Wheelers as a guest in their Massie Shield Team and Alastair Gordon was an early touring and hostelling companion.

In the early 1970s at a car evening in Maryculter House he bought Mike Adams' Major Nicholls.

On a Friday evening he was known to speak to the Plumbers Association and I often gave him some jokes to pad out his speech.

He never broke the hour in Aberdeen but rumour has it that he did creep under in a 25 in England.



Andrew Harrington

One my earliest memories of Alan is when I was in my twenties not long in the club. Alan used to take a few of the younger riders on long distance rides.

Always encouraging, giving us advice, making sure no-one was dropped. Though on climbs he would always try to be first to the top but wait patiently for anyone who was dropped.

It was also his passion for the club and cycling, bringing pro riders such as Sean Yates, Alan Peiper and David Millar for talks or training weekends.

His enthusiasm, knowledge and experience will be missed by all of us.

John Sands

Many years ago, 1987 perhaps, there was a kermesse run up and down Aberdeen Beach Boulevard.

I had ridden a few time trials by this point but had never ridden any “massed start” event and was a wee bit nervous, especially as the only Deeside branded clothing I could afford was a skinsuit (proudly sponsored by Cameron Farquhar, Builders Aberdeen) and everyone else seemed to be wearing separate jersey & shorts.

I saw Alan mingling with some other riders near the start line so went up to see if I could wring some last-minute nugget from him – nutrition, tactics, anything that might help.

As always, Alan was pleased to see me. He briefly eyeballed my less than lean physique under the skin suit, leaned forward with the air of a man about to share a grave secret, and said: “Well John if it was a downhill race my money would be on you”.



Kenny Anderson

Alan was an intelligent, humorous, and sporting friend with us, spending many a March in Mallorca on a ten-day training camp.

Alan truly enjoyed training led by Ken or Andy and in later years planning and participating in group rides around the island. Everyone taking part enjoyed Alan’s support and friendly banter as we explored the island routes and good climbs. He was a true sportsman and gentleman.

One of Alan’s favourite areas in Mallorca is the Lluk area. On one occasion we had just passed the petrol station on our way to Sa Calobra climb and just before the watershed I was pulling along at a leisurely pace when we were passed by about 25 German club riders.

They were motoring along and all I heard from Alan was *get on that wheel!* Well to say we had never travelled that road so fast; they were going for it. We broke a few records albeit that we were being towed along.



Alan was a rider of grit and determination. On another day we had just climbed the Puig Malor and were heading back to Puerto Pollensa.



There is a long straight descent just past the Lluc Monastery and I had pulled hard and jumped onto the wheel of two other riders. I had left Alan a little behind and with a small bunch we were pushing ahead.

The road is a little rolling and before the main descent there is a 150-metre sharp hill. I pulled past the other two riders to go for the ridge, only to hear from the back of the group: *There's that mad Scotsman again*. I had given Alan up for being well behind, but he had fought his way back onto our wheels. In his fight he was more of a mad Scotsman than me.

Alan's knowledge of cycling was immense and his interest in the pro racing circuit meant he knew all the main players in all the races. This passion, knowledge and love of cycling was inspiring to us all.

Alan will be greatly missed by everyone in all walks of his life. His kindness, humour and intelligence touched so many people. So many good times

Andrew Ramsay

I met Alan around 40 years ago when I first joined Deeside. My memories of him from that time are vague but I do remember that he was a man who was well respected and was 'an achiever' – not least because he drove a magnificent Mercedes estate car.

More recently I knew Alan as the club's President – the person who would effortlessly deliver a speech after an event having previously mingled with the crowd picking up points of interest for incorporation into his delivery – a skill that is not to be underestimated.

His passion for cycling was clear – he enjoyed taking part and he enjoyed following the sport. A man for the long distances – I remember him pushing me off at the start of the District 100 in 2016 saying *"This is a proper time trial"*.

He was open and shared his time with everybody. He engaged with the old and young members of the club and was interested to hear firsthand how the youngsters were progressing. My sons enjoyed speaking with him.

Alan was our President and will be missed by the cycling community and by Deeside in particular.



Ian Ord

When I first took up cycling as a result of a boozy bet with a friend. I turned to Alan for some help and advice.

He turned up to lunch with his usual boundless enthusiasm and clutching a map to show me the routes I should ride and how I should prepare for riding Alpe d'Huez as my first bike ride.

Even when I explained that I did not own a bike, nor had I ridden one in decades, these facts did not deter him from his task to evangelise me to his sport.

Some 15 years on, I'm indebted to him for taking the time to indulge a naive beginner, introducing me to a sport that has opened a window on a new world for me. Thank you, Alan.

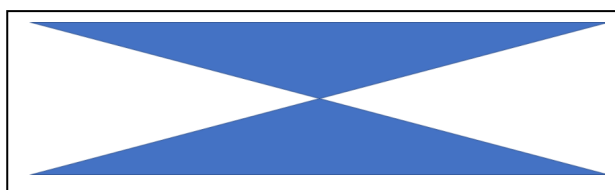
A couple of years ago on one fine morning a friend and I were riding toward the Slug Road when Alan came up behind us on one of his glorious Colnagos. We chatted a while and it turned out we were all planning on heading over The Garrol.

Continuing our conversation, we pedalled up the hill, distancing my friend, who is a reasonable 40 something rider.

We parted company at the top as I wanted to wait for my pal, then I had the pleasure - this never gets old - of telling him he had been dropped by a 75-year-old man. Chapeau Alan.



(Bennachie, Christmas morning in the 1980s)



Jonathan Ritchie

I first remember Alan when I was 13 or 14 and had cycled to Garlogie for one of my first time-trials. I soon realised the fuel and stamina needed to both cycle to the event and try to compete!

Alan came up to me and, as always, warmly conversed with me about the challenges of cycling across and competing at my age. Clearly it made an impression as I recall the chat vividly, not knowing anyone really in the cycling scene.

In the following years I recall the banter at the layby during the evening league with him,



I also recall his face of commitment during his efforts in competition – slaving down his chin – he was always fully committed!

Nonetheless he always had bounds of positivity and engagement which was quite infectious and, in many ways, influencing to youngsters.

He was always very encouraging and part of the scene that one simply got used to him always being there, similar to Mary always being there at the roadside. Alan and my old man used to always have a good blether also.

In more recent years I bumped into him at David Lloyds in Aberdeen when we lived there and he would do a spin class or two with me and blether to my wife and I. I also bumped into him at Offshore Europe maybe 10 years back, and the last time was in John Lewis one Christmas pre-Covid when we were back home and we stopped and chatted about Colnagos in the kitchen section!

Despite being overseas most of my working life, I would keep up to speed with ongoings back home and whilst I don't think I ever rode it I know Alan was famous for his organisation of the reliability trial and many other events.

One of the most poignant moments that I recall with Alan was when I thought it a good idea to tackle an Etape du Tour, around 10 years back. It was a hell of a day in the Pyrenees and top of the Tourmalet was wet and cold.

After sheltering and continuing on it finished at the Hautacam and the sun was out. Not knowing Alan was taking part I was nearing the top of the final climb and trying to dig in to justify the hours of effort put in already when someone shouted at me from their descent '*dig in Deeside!*' and



it was clearly Alan who had spotted me in my old PosRes jersey.

It was such a delight to hear that I can't tell you; made my day which was long sore and lonely! It is that spirit of, not only cycling, but the people behind it that made the club and scene what it is, that resonates with me day to day. Alan was one of those people and the impact on me and countless others out there is immeasurable.



Ken Bryson

Alan attended Winter turbo sessions which I organised every winter from the autumn of 1997 to the spring of 2023. He regularly kept the assembled company entertained with his dry and self-deprecating sense of humour.

Despite attending as many sessions he could, he was never far away from his council commitments and he was often found in my garage talking to a senior council member, First Minister or senior politician.

When we were travelling to training camps it was almost inevitable that some council business would disrupt the travel arrangements. I remember on one occasion we were due to share an airport hotel room in anticipation of an early morning flight. Alan arrived at our room at 2am after a council function when we had to get up before 4am for the flight.



Work didn't stop when he was on a training camp and if we were sharing a room, I would often

wake up in the morning to find him sitting on the side of his bed communicating with his Blackberry in one hand and his old-style Nokia mobile phone in the other.

I remember him arriving at a turbo session one Tuesday evening, straight from work and chuckling quietly to himself because the council had been holding health screening sessions.

He had found 5 minutes to attend and had his blood pressure and resting heart rate tested. On reviewing the results the tester told him that he had normal blood pressure and the lowest resting heart rate they had seen so he obviously didn't have a very stressful job!

He was at heart a competitive person and he didn't like people passing him on his bike, even in a non-competitive situation.

One Sunday morning in Mallorca three of us were riding gently back towards Port De Pollenca from Pollenca on a gently downhill road. Suddenly two riders came past us travelling significantly faster than we were.

Alan took off after them like a rocket and quickly closed the gap to sit in behind them. We were watching to see what his next move would be when the rest of the peloton in the local Sunday morning road race came past us chasing the two break away leaders (plus Alan).



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