

Bicycle racing at Ilkeston

Most of the bicycle racing at Ilkeston took place at the Rutland Recreation Ground and the Manor Ground between 1881 and 1948. There were a few early, isolated races at the Skating Rink and on Cotmanhay. There is a wealth of information about bicycle racing in Jeff Wynch's book 'A Town on Two Wheels – Cycling in Ilkeston 1880 -1900 (my reference [108]). The book concentrates on the Ilkeston Bicycle Club, which was the leading cycling club in the town from 1884 to 1900.

Skating Rink

Possibly the first bicycle race in Ilkeston was on November 6th 1879 which was reported in the Nottinghamshire Guardian on November 14th 1879. The event was a 30 hour bicycle race, for a silver challenge cup, between JH Taylor of Loughborough and GH Upton of Leicester at the Skating Rink. The race ended on Friday 7th November 1879 with Taylor winning, having ridden 262 miles. After the race, there was a one mile scratch race. Although the race took place at a time when 'roller mania' was sweeping the county, I could not find any other record of a roller skating rink in Ilkeston.

Cotmanhay Road

A three hour race was advertised to take place on October 17th 1880, in a field near Cotmanhay Road, lent by Mr W Sherwin. It is not known if this race actually took place.

The Shipley and Cotmanhay Brass band concert, which was held on August 5th 1882 included a one mile handicap bicycle race which was won by Ilkeston man J Bostock. The event was held in 'a large field on Cotmanhay Road.'

The Cotmanhay Grand Sports and Athletic Fete was held on May 22nd 1886 at a location off Cotmanhay Road. Unfortunately, the bicycle race turned into a farce because of the poor organisation and the unsuitable ground.

Rutland Recreation Ground

The first bicycle race at the Recreation Ground was in 1880 at the Ilkeston Flower Show. The annual Ilkeston sports were held here and the Ilkeston Bicycle Club held their events there from 1888. The Recreation Ground was famous for the balloon ascents (or attempted ascents) made by Mr Emanuel Jackson.

When the cinder track at the Manor Ground opened in 1894, the Ilkeston BC sports moved to the Manor from the Recreation Ground. The Hospital Sports moved back to the Recreation Ground in 1927 and were then held there spasmodically until 1948.

Manor Ground

Bicycle racing on the cinder track at the Manor Ground started in 1894 and the first meeting was organised by the Ilkeston Bicycle Club. The Ilkeston BC annual sports ran until around 1900, when the club folded. The annual Hospital Sports were held there until 1924, which was the last time that bicycle races were seen at the Manor.