

## 'COSY ROSY' AND THE CLUB HUTS

**ANDREW VANNER**

Established residents of Sawbridgeworth may remember the Cosy Cafe. It stood near the top of the hill going into Sawbridgeworth from Harlow, where Springhall Court now stands. I remember it well from my childhood because it belonged to my aunt, Mrs. Elsie Springham. Elsie, who had been a Red Cross cook during the war, ran the cafe from some time in the 1950s until the late 1960s. Elsie was a large lady with a big heart and outward-going personality. She was known to the cycling fraternity as 'Cosy Rosy'. The Cafe was very successful, with a reputation for good food.



**London Road with the Cosy Cafe on the right – a photograph from 1951**

In the early days, the clientele that helped build up and maintain the business was undoubtedly cyclists. At weekends, scores of bikes could be seen stacked outside the Cosy. The main reason for the Cosy's popularity with cyclists was that it was a convenient refreshment stop between London, where most of the clubs were based, and the 'huts' near Elsenham.

The huts were like large summer houses with gardens, complete with bunk beds and showers, where competitors in time trials on the EI course could stay before and after the race. They were, and still are, owned by the clubs. The EI course ran between Elsenham on the old A1 to the turn just outside Cambridge, 25 miles in total.

The Cosy would be used as a stop off on the way to and from races, and no doubt a place to talk about the race itself. The huts are still used but car ownership means there are few, if any, overnight stops.

Apart from being a cafe, the Cosy became a rendezvous point for cyclists and their clubs. I am told it was particularly popular when the Roslyn Ladies visited; many a romance and at least one marriage started at the Cosy. After she left the Cosy, Mrs. Springham opened a very successful restaurant called 'The Swan' in Bishop's Stortford.

A.J.V.