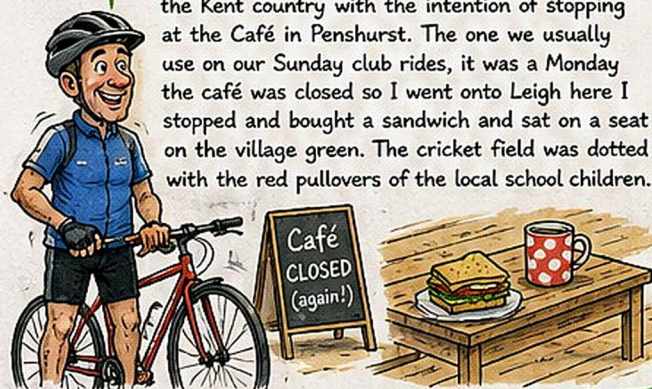


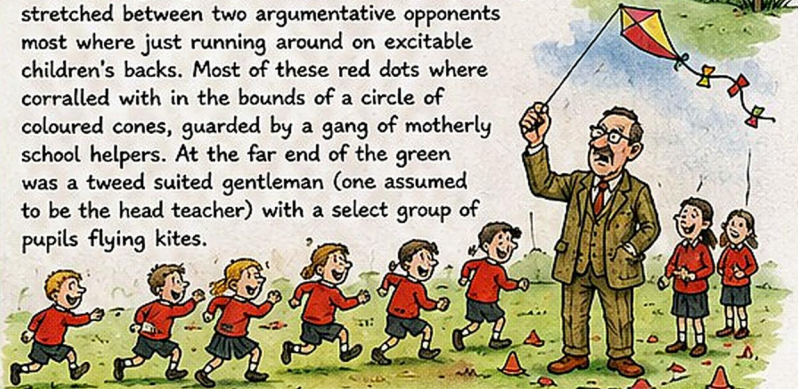
Lunch at Leigh

6th September 2004

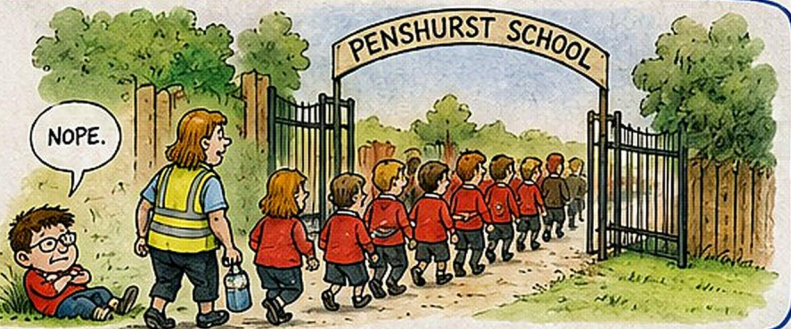


I had set out on one of my lone cycles through the Kent country with the intention of stopping at the Café in Penshurst. The one we usually use on our Sunday club rides, it was a Monday the café was closed so I went onto Leigh here I stopped and bought a sandwich and sat on a seat on the village green. The cricket field was dotted with the red pullovers of the local school children.

Some were goal posts, others where flags, or being stretched between two argumentative opponents most where just running around on excitable children's backs. Most of these red dots where corralled with in the bounds of a circle of coloured cones, guarded by a gang of motherly school helpers. At the far end of the green was a tweed suited gentleman (one assumed to be the head teacher) with a select group of pupils flying kites.



The lunch break finished and the red dot bounced their way to one end of the green and formed lines. The kite flyers proudly escorted the Head to their class's line. The cricket green was empty only three red dots where so involved in their game as to not move with the others. Soon the helpers had gathered them up the reluctant pupils leaving one small bundle of defiant child lying on the ground. Eventually the lines snaked across the green into the school gate and where gone. The lunch time helpers walked off in different direction their duty done. Later they would have to return, to gather up their own particular red dot and take them home.

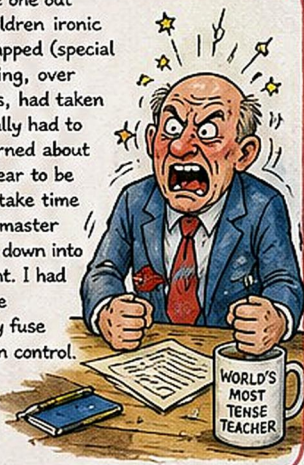


No sooner had the green cleared it self of the village children when a mini bus pulled up and out got a group of handicapped adults for a picnic. They spread a blanket on the ground under the large Oak at the far side of the Green, the comings and goings that I would miss on a normal ride as I pass through on my way home. The thing about a cycle ride is that it is from home to home for the sake of the ride, the places in between are incidents on the route, the ride is the point of the activity not the getting from A to B. The passing through the landscape not stopping was the important thing.



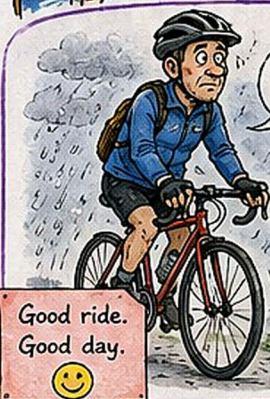
This time a few years ago I would be the one out there trying to contain the group of children ironic that the children I taught where handicapped (special needs) like the adults. The bizarre rocking, over excited laughter, the uncontrolled shouts, had taken their toll on me over the years and I finally had to take early retirement. "Dave I am concerned about your attitude towards the pupils you appear to be losing your gripe of things, I want you to take time off and consider your position." The headmaster had, had to intervene when I finally broke down into a screaming rage over some minor incident. I had tried to control my actions but had become increasingly aware of how much shorter my fuse had become I know longer believed I was in control.

THAT'S IT!
I QUIT!

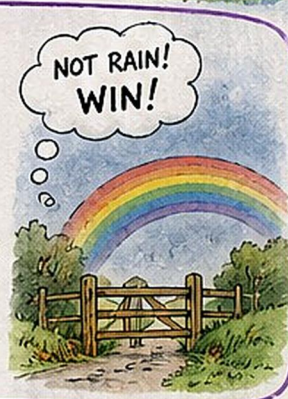


All those years of idealistic effort and I finally realized it had been wasted for every generation you battled through with, another appeared and the problems started all over again. The solutions that in your youth you thought where just around the corner never came.

If only you could do things your way, but you knew that this was a myth even as a young teacher you knew this, but! You hoped it was not true, and some how things got better, they never did. They just got more difficult then the final straw the government hit you with the national curriculum all children must reach a certain standard or your school was deemed to be a failure.



"Riddle far?" a curious passer by, a middle aged woman looked as if she was about to drop something off at the vicarage, interrupted my thoughts. "Oh! Plumstead." I interjected. "Where is that, is that far?" As if it was a foreign place hundreds of miles away, not just 20 odd miles away. "South East London". "Oh London you deserve a brake weathers looking a bit threatening might rain later". Then she disappeared on her way. The oak tree had stuck in my mind for some reason I thought of William Corbett's rural rides. I had found this book in the library at school one day and had tried to retrace his routes on many occasions. There was something about this route in his "Rural Rides" shall have to look it up at home. I reluctantly get back on my bike I shouldn't have stopped my leg had stiffened up and the first miles where going to be painful. I turned back on my route out to take the shortest route back home, Chiddingstone Causeway, Bough Beech, Four Elms, and then Westerham Biggin Hill and home. It didn't rain and I was home quicker than I thought. I found William Corbett's Rural Rides. Cobbett had dated it 6th September 1823. Today was 6th September 2004.



Good ride.
Good day.

