

LETTERS

Write to: Cycle Letters, CTC, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 9JX, or email cycleletters@ctc.org.uk



GOING DUTCH

We loved the cover on the last edition of Cycle, and the accompanying article on cycling in Holland. Having just returned from a short trip to Holland we would like to suggest that at least part of the reason that cycling is so ubiquitous over there is the style of bike largely in use. My wife and I are keen utility cyclists, making multiple short trips (under five miles) to the shops and to work. Janet has a pre-war ladies BSA 3-speed a bit like your cover girl (but without a dangling mudguard stay likely to jam and cause an accident!) which she finds much more comfortable than most bikes available today.

Whilst such bikes are slower than a modern British bike and collect more wind, we feel that on most journeys it is faster to go slower because there is no need to dress up. Few Dutch seem to wear helmets, and on a typical Dutch bike work clothes are protected from catching in the chain. The upright, short-reach riding position is more comfortable and the lack of speed is actually a blessing as one can step off one's bike into work or a party without needing a shower.

We realise Cycle is for touring cyclists too, but would welcome the promotion of graceful utility cycles as something that anyone can make part of their everyday transport needs.

Janet and Nick Brakspear, Corsham, Wilts

The rather battered bicycle featured on the cover of October's Cycle magazine doesn't appear to be fitted with any form of front brake whatsoever. Are brakes not obligatory in the Netherlands? The idea of riding pillion on such a machine, as in your

Dutch article, would seem to be fraught with danger, especially if it were attempted here in Devon where we have hills. What would be the legal position if this young lady where to bring her bicycle to Britain?

Roger Thomson, Plymouth

Last issue's cover polarised opinions. In terms of content and composition, some loved it, others hated it. It's true that the bike is a wreck, but it's also true that such bikes are everywhere in Amsterdam.

With regard to brakes: a bicycle in Holland requires only a back-pedal brake to be legal. If such a bike were brought to Britain, it would need a front brake fitting or it would be illegal. And in the UK, you're not allowed to carry a passenger unless your bike is specifically designed to do so.

LISTEN UP

Do you do a big print version of Cycle magazine? Or a version on CD or tape? I am a CTC member, by the way.

Roger Naylor, by email

Yes, there's a tape version. Write to: David Slater, 289 Rullion Road, Penicuik, Midlothian, EH26 9AW. David called me in November to say that he was desperate for volunteer readers to be taped reading the magazine so that he can continue the service. Please contact him if you can help.

SADDLE SURE



I read with interest in the Aug-Sep issue of Cycle the article 'Saddle Up' by Dr Douglas Carnall. I wish to say a heartfelt 'thank you' for such an enlightening page full of facts a lot of us cyclists don't know about. Many suffer in silence. It is no giggling matter when you cannot sit comfortably in a chair or on a saddle. I've had my share of discomfort.

I've cycled since I was 10 years old and am now 65. I never had any saddle problems until my late 40s. At this time I started to organise and lead 'B' runs for Preston CTC. In the first 12 months my group increased from three (two women and one man) to 20 (12 men, 8 women) and the main discussion of the day was knickers, padded shorts, saddles, and

CYCLING CELEBS



LOYD GROSSMAN
TELEVISION
PRESENTER AND
CHEF

Why do you cycle?

I have always loved bicycles and as an inner city resident think that they are the most convenient, most environmentally sound and most enjoyable way to get around.

About how many miles do you ride in a week?

I suppose 25 to 30 miles a week.

Which of your bikes is your favourite?

I am very much in love with my bright orange Brompton.

Who mends your punctures?

I hope that my new Kevlar-reinforced tyres mean that there won't be any punctures!

It's raining: bike, public transport, or car?

Tube or taxi.

Lycra or normal clothes?

I last wore Lycra seriously when cycling the National Byway from Gloucestershire to Cheshire. Otherwise it's more or less normal clothes and cycle clips.

What's your favourite cycle journey?

I enjoy any cycling that takes me along the Thames.

What do you always take with you when cycling?

I always take a cleverly designed little Topeak tool kit with me but I don't know how to use it.

What single thing would most improve matters for UK cyclists?

I would like to see more dedicated cycle lanes and paths.

If you had £100 of bike shop vouchers, what would you get with them?

Even more flashing lights, although I already look like a Christmas tree!

We reserve the right to edit letters for space and clarity. The editor reads all letters and emails, and all are acknowledged, but we cannot guarantee that yours will be published or that you'll get a detailed reply.

You can use the letters page to comment on any cycling topic, but if you have a specific complaint or query about CTC policy that you want answering, you should address it to the relevant councillor or National Office staff member; the editor can provide only an opinion and a platform for debate.

YOU RIDE



ROD KING'S WINDCHEETAH

It was when browsing around Bicycle Doctor in Manchester in 1997 that I first came across a recumbent tricycle. It was an Anthrotech and after a few questions I was given the opportunity to take it 'around the block'. It was a little heavy, but I immediately warmed to the idea of sitting back and pedalling. Internet research told me that there was a recumbent trike builder in nearby Altrincham, and I duly went in to see Bob Dixon of the Seat of the Pants Company to try out a Windcheetah.

This really was something. I borrowed the 'Speedy' for the weekend and was well and truly hooked. Not only was this fun, everyone else on the rods thought it was as well. Smiles all round. Whether they were laughing at me or with me was immaterial. So that's how I came to purchase my Windcheetah (No. 456).

Since then I have regularly used it as my favourite cycle, and also toured The Western Isles, Ireland, The Netherlands, Germany, Spain, Portugal and of course the UK, especially attending CTC/CCN conferences.

The most popular question is whether it's safe, to which I usually reply that from 100 yards it looks like a dustbin in the middle of the road and drivers tend to slow down for those. The great thing about a trike when touring is that going uphill you can cycle as slowly as you like and then descend as fast as you like!

Modifications have included reducing the crank length to just 140mm, which makes spinning a lot easier. Hedges do limit sideways viewing, but I tend to see far more of the scenery without having my head pointed down at the Tarmac.

Cycle wants to know about your favourite bike. Contact the editor to find what's required (p80).

where it hurt the most. Nobody had the answer to this problem.

After reading Dr Carnall's article I have taken his advice and purchased a saddle that fits. I feel sure that I am now on the right road for a comfortable ride in future. Well done.

Edna Lydiate, Leyland

STANDING ON ONE LEG



For as long as I can remember, Chris Juden has been writing some of the most accurate and informative tests and reviews of cycles and related bits, and I am happy to admit to having benefited from his wisdom. So I think this could be some sort of record, for not once but twice in the same issue of Cycle he has fallen short of his usual high standard.

First off, in his review of the Specialized Globe, he talks about the Nexus 8 hub gear being direct drive in 5th gear. It is indeed a one-to-one ratio but this is achieved not by locking out the gears but by using lots – possibly all of them. That Chris did not notice is an indication of what a good little box of cogs it is.

More seriously, and rather closer to home for me, I found his comments on monoblades a bit disparaging, and not informative enough in answering Mr Purcell's question. So to start there: the reason that the cycle industry has not adopted the monoblade more than it has is down to its inherent conservatism. It does not help that the governing body of cycle sport has banned any improvements in cycle design, but even without this stupidity, 95% of 'cycle design' for the major manufacturers involves only colour and graphics.

Monoblades themselves can be quite wonderful, but you do need to understand not just the principle but the details. They are not going to make a big difference to the regular touring bike, which will have quick release wheels, rim brakes, and barn-like aerodynamics. They are very much the best choice for city/utility cycles that will not have QR for theft reasons, but should have drum brakes, the mounting of which is so much neater and lighter than with forks.

Monoblades are even better again for

use off-road, where the fore and aft loads are massive and the bike takes a lot of abuse. It's down to the numbers: if you double the diameter of a piece of tubing you will naturally double its weight but its stiffness will increase by a factor of eight. And if you need suspension, bendy steel forks are no substitute.

Also, monoblades are cheaper and easier to make. After all, there is only one set of parts to make. It is surely just a matter of time before even the most backward of bike builders decide to follow my lead.

Mike Burrows, Norwich

It's true that *some* manufacturers are already using monoblades. Here's Cannondale's new concept bike, snapped at Eurobike in September.

PENNY-FARTHING REBORN



On a holiday this summer in the Scottish Highlands, staying at Strathpeffer, I came across a small cycle shop. Much to my surprise, outside there were two modern versions of a 'penny-farthing'.

They were smaller than the original, which I believe had 50-inch or so wheels. These had a modern 36-inch front wheel, with tyre and innertube, with the pedals still on the front axle. The cycles are built in Taiwan and cost £250, which the cycle dealer thought was very reasonable.

Some of the cycles were used in the local Victorian carnival earlier in the year.

Phil Allen, Coalville, Leics

FERRY WELL THEN

Peter Smith in his letter last issue seems to indicate that cyclists cannot use the Dover-Dunkirk route, which is operated by Norfolk Lines. This is not the case. Cyclists can use this route, although foot passengers (and passenger coaches) cannot. This is explained on the company's website (www.norfolkline.com). Although

I have not used the service, I know cyclists who have done so.

JA McKinnell, London

SPANISH INQUISITION

I am writing to complain about an article I read in the June-July issue of *Cycle*: Travellers' Tales, 'An Iberian Coast to Coast'.

The article says that a good way to travel is by coach. Well, I have just returned from a holiday in France on which I had to use a Spanish coach to transport my cycle to Santander to catch the ferry. The article fails to mention the fact that Spanish coaches require the cycle first to be stripped then packed in a bike bag or similar. As I and my two fellow cyclists didn't have any bike bags, at short notice we obtained heavy-duty plastic sheeting to parcel our machines up, securing them with tape. I ended up with a damaged rear wheel, which will require two or three new spokes and truing up.

It was reading this article that made our minds up to use Spanish buses. Please inform the readership that this article is misleading.

Whilst on the subject of transport, French trains seem to be in utter chaos. The booking offices don't always know if a train has any cycle facilities when they book you on. Some trains require the cycle to be bagged, others have special racks, while others don't take bikes at all.

Larry Clarke, Saltash

Apologies. We've got a feature on travelling to and through Europe with your bike this issue, which should clear up any confusion. Bagging your bike is recommended for most overland journeys, although you'll need to make your own bag if you want maximum portability (i.e. cycling with a folded bag) at the other end. More on p36 onwards.

GETTING TO YOUR TOUR

It's not often I disagree with the views expressed by an experienced member like Neville Chanin (Letters, Oct/Nov issue) but surely the best way of taking a cycle into Europe is to ride it there?

Chris Davies, Havant

FOLDING ALTERNATIVES

We enjoyed reading Chris Juden's review of folders for touring but we think he missed a trick. New ranges of narrow, puncture-resistant very high pressure tyres make 16-inch wheels viable for touring and larger wheeled folders almost as fast as full-sized bikes.

Neither the Brompton nor Dahon ranges



were included in the article. The Brompton is still by far the best bike to fold. It makes an excellent tourer, with superb luggage-carrying arrangements. Its main drawback is its poor gear range but a 34-tooth front chainring and 90-tooth chain does not mess up the folding. Some top of the range Dahons are lighter and faster than most tourists' normal bikes.

It is possible to have bespoke small-wheeled tourers, just as it is with full-sized bikes. Stephen Parry of SP bike fame (tel: 01934 516158) has modified most standard folders for customers. We can recommend his latest Rohloff version of the Brompton. It has a gear range of 20-100 inches, folds just as well as the standard version, and braking is superb. His rear luggage carrier makes it possible to carry more luggage than we need for a two-week tour on ours.

Anne Neale & Ken Reed, by email

The aim was to test touring bikes that you could fold (or disassemble) for travel, rather than folding bikes you could tour on. Similarly, we haven't included the Brompton in our 'bikes abroad' feature this issue. Not because it isn't a good idea, but because 'How can I get my Brompton on a train to Spain?' isn't a dilemma.

SAFE OVERTAKING

Please find attached a picture of a road sign seen in Decazeville, France. It was beside the main road to Rodez. I do not know about the legal status of these signs. However, they clearly state what is expected and are there as a constant reminder to drivers. *Je dépasse* – 'I overtake' – seems to personalise the message and is better than passive symbols alone. Has anyone seen these signs elsewhere in France or is it unique?

Scott Williams, by email

OBITUARIES

STOP PRESS

Many CTC members will be sorry to hear that Sheila King of Bristol DA died on 4th November. Sheila, wife of former CTC President Ted King, was widely known for her tireless work throughout the club. A full obituary will be published in the next issue.

RAY PARHAM: 1938-2007

Ray was a member of Folkestone CC, Ashford Wheelers, YHA, CTC, and West Kent DA. To his friends, Ray was generous, an eccentric – sometimes stropky – who spoke his mind. Because of his faults he was very well liked by his many friends, who turned out in large numbers at his funeral. Ray's real passion was cycling, often riding many hundreds of miles on his own. But he loved company as well. He will be sadly missed. *Ron Martin*

ELIZABETH DALE

Betty was the better half of George Dale, who died in 2001. Not long after she celebrated her 90th birthday, she became poorly and passed away on 28th October. I'm not sure when they joined CTC, but I'm 54 and there is a photo of me as a baby in a sidecar attached to a tandem with my sister Linda on a baby seat at the back with Dad up front and Mom behind him, cycling in the snow with the rest of the section. *Derek Dale*

FREDERICK CHARLES PARSONS: 5/7/1915-12/9/2007

Died in his 92nd year after a short illness. Fred joined the London 'South Western' B section of CTC and toured across the UK at weekends – on a tandem with wife Lucy after marriage. In the South Western Road club, Fred was variously press secretary, newsletter editor, TT secretary, social secretary, secretary (longest serving in the club history) and president. He was also a timekeeper for time trials and an occasional official observer for the RRA. *A Callen, M & G Parsons, R Gill*

GORDON WHITE

Gordon was a CTC member from his teens, enjoying cycle-camping and hostelling with the Leeds Section, as well as taking part in cyclo-cross and racing at various times. A formidable and determined rider, he completed the PBP and LEL Audax events in 2003 and 2005 respectively. A delightful riding companion, his

OBITUARIES CONTINUED

quiet encouragement has been a great motivator to so many cyclists. His death is a great loss to Yorkshire cycling. *Chris Boulton*

JEFF WEEKS: 1934-2007

Died suddenly at home in August. Jeff was an avid cyclist who, on his return from National Service, found his bike had been given away! He started motoring, but returned to cycling in middle age and toured the length of England and Scotland. He enjoyed tinkering with components, made his own mudflaps and several string-operated dynamo systems! Above all, he enjoyed the freedom of the open road. *T Read*

DOUG MAISEY: 1927-2007

Doug was keen member of the Swindon & District road club and in later years CTC. He was a fixture of Wiltshire & Gloucestershire roads and lanes but in the early days he rode many parts of the UK. He was reliable for always being late for club runs but invariably caught up at the tea stop. He held many time trial records. Doug enjoyed cycling until the onset of ill health in recent years. *Eric Collier*

RICHARD OSWELL: 1932-2007

Richard was a lifelong cyclist and sportsman. He was always a cheerful rider regardless of weather conditions or problems: on one audax in Boulogne he had at least six punctures but was content to repair them as the spare tubes ran out. He rode regularly with the Weekdays, and with car assistance led many rides into Essex, Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, on long day rides. Richard also got his local villagers from Smarden to join the annual Kent Churches Ride. *Eric Watts*

GEORGE ROBERT CLAPTON

George died 7th October 2007, aged 88 years. A member of the Derby DA, he was variously secretary, treasurer and club room organiser with his late wife Hilda. He always welcomed fellow cyclists, and was a keen rough-stuff rider and tandemist. He loved Scotland's forest tracks and mountains. *Fred Dolman*

LEGACY

Charlie Winstone (1917-2007), whose obituary was printed in the Aug-Sep issue of *Cycle*, kindly left CTC a legacy of £61,097.



We've printed a similar picture before, so I'm sure it's not unique. We could do with a British equivalent!

SATNAV? SUITS ME @

In the Aug/Sep issue, Mark Waters (p10) wrote about motorists increasingly relying on satellite navigation systems and also internet-obtained route descriptions. This is to our advantage as cyclists. Such sources (not surprisingly) direct you via 'A'-class roads and motorways. Motorists' maps also tend to emphasise such routes and mark them with 'essentials' such as toilet stops, picnic areas, Little Chefs, etc. This channels most traffic onto the roads that we prefer to avoid and leaves the 'yellow' and other routes to us. Suits me!

Mick Anstis, by email

UK CYCLE-CAMPING @



Having cycled 2,400km in getting to St Malo from Narbonne, my wife and I had been toying with the idea of crossing by ferry to Portsmouth, riding to Dover and crossing back to France. This would save us quite a few kilometres getting to the WW1 sites in the area of Vimy and we were running short of time

We had been asking fellow cycle-campers about info on camping and biking in the UK along our desired route. We had been spoiled rotten by the frequent municipal campsites of France, the – for the most part – quiet canalside towpaths,

'pistes cyclables', wide shoulders on highways, the courtesy of French drivers, especially truckers. Not one person we asked expressed any enthusiasm about our plan to shortcut along the south coast of England, citing no cycling paths, congested narrow roads, few-and-far-between expensive campsites. The picture they painted was as gloomy as the weather is reported to be.

Our impression from written articles of cycling in the UK had been a much more positive one. Sadly, after comparing the info from our two sources, we decided not to visit the UK and opted for train to Lille. Who was right, the British cycling/campers or the Cycle articles about cycling and camping in England?

Don Stewart, Canadian Senior Citizen Cyclist

IT'S GOOD TO RIDE @

I've been riding my bike to work for three weeks now. My trip is 18 miles per day. I feel so much better. My weight is going down and my attitude is better. I feel upbeat and so thankful to be alive. My blood pressure was high – now it's coming down.

I'm working hard to get off of medication. In May 2005, I was diagnosed with Renal Cell Carcinoma. It's kidney cancer. I had an operation at The University of Maryland, on July 22, 2005. I started riding my bike again in September 2005. My outlook on life is different. I wanted to share this story with you.

Keep up the good work, and the wonderful articles that convey the wonderful message of how good it is to ride bikes. God bless you.

Ralph Kevin Bland, by email

THE MISSING SHOE @

Exustar Stelvio shoes were enthusiastically reviewed earlier this year, but can I find anyone selling them? No.

The distributor (RSI) gave me a list of local shops that should be able to help. Of these, none had heard of Stelvio shoes and one had ceased trading!

I know that CTC can't be responsible for the state of the bike industry, but as a potential customer I do find life incredibly frustrating. I need good comfortable shoes for long distance touring. I think that I shall revert to good old-fashioned toe-clips and Reynolds shoes.

Roger Pratt, by email

Before you go back to toe-clips, try calling CTC Shop. They have Exustar Stelvio shoes in stock. Call 0870 873 0069 or visit www.ctcshop.com. Sizes 38-47 were available at time of writing.