

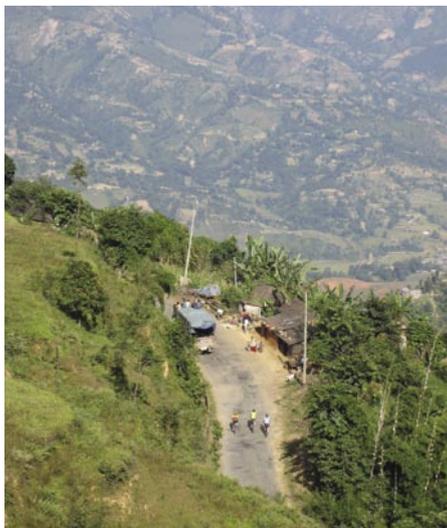
LETTERS

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

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD @

Here are two photographs taken on a recent touring holiday of Nepal with Chris Ellison. I feel that these photos show the true essence of cycling in the beautiful country of Nepal. The first photo shows three fellow cyclists on the 56km climb to Daman, the high point of the holiday at 2,322 metres (7,620 ft). The second is of Debbie Buxton on a descent, with the snow-capped Himalayas in the distance. Although we did not get closer than 45 miles from the Himalaya range, the true enormity of them is shown in the second photo.

Andrew Buxton, by email



EURO SCEPTICS @

Could we have a little less of the island mentality (Chris Davies, Letters, Dec-Jan issue)?

As to the question of 'the best way of getting to Europe': Chris (and Neville Chanin and others) – you're already there!

John Eames, by email



BIKES ABROAD @

Cyclists using 'carbon-based' transport to travel to holiday venues deserve better than a £9 a tonne charge for 'emissions offsets' (Tickets to ride, Dec/Jan Cycle). Surely cyclists earn their offsetting emissions credits throughout the year by commuting and domestic journeys in addition to holiday cycling mileages. Until such 'offset' schemes recognise non-polluting transport, they simply serve as the rich man's substitute for environmental responsibility.

Angus Ricker, Ottawa, Canada

I have followed with interest the various articles related to getting bikes across Europe. As someone who has tried most of the options over the last few years, it is hard to believe that the situation is improving. Even EBE has reduced the number of different routes.

Until revision of the rules – see News, last issue – British Airways was our preferred option for leaving the UK. Even the penalty of carrying the necessary CTC polythene sack is mitigated by being able to use it as emergency accommodation on tour. Because of difficulty in contacting BA by phone, we have never used this for a return trip booked from abroad.

Noting the letter 'Spanish Inquisition' last issue, I would like to add my experience of busing back across Europe this year. Returning from Santiago in NW Spain, the ALSA bike company carried our bikes back to Santander. (We started the tour by flying BA into Geneva.) Similarly, returning from Tulcia on the Danube Delta, the ATASSIB (Romanian) bus company carried our bikes back to London via Bucharest. (We started that tour by flying BA into Budapest.) In both cases the packing process was simply: pedals off, handlebars round, seat-post out. The bikes were then reversed upright into the bus hold and placed against a bulkhead to be safely braced by the other passengers'

luggage. Both bus companies have websites in English.

We wonder if any other members or the CTC touring department are collecting data on cycle-friendly buses across Europe? It looks like we might need them for both legs of the journey next year.

Derek R Tanner, by email

GET SHORTY @

What an interesting article that covered many aspects. In the text, Mike Burrows states that 'changing crank length is just the same as changing gear' but did not follow this through. I would therefore like to point out that Lance Armstrong discovered and proved Mike's point in a different way – that 'twiddling' a low gear was a more efficient way of power delivery.

However, whilst Mike has certainly made a case for recumbents, he has skipped the practical effect of short cranks on a standard diamond frame i.e. he accepts that the saddle height could be increased to maintain the correct knee bend but this would increase the 'foot down' distance and make 'normal' cycle riding that little bit more difficult.

Could we end up with new bike designs with lower bottom brackets to accommodate Mike's theory?

Thanks for another good edition of Cycle, Frank Nocetti, Liverpool



I can't let Mike Burrows article on short cranks pass without comment. To suggest that I, 6ft 2in, on 185mm cranks, and my wife, 5ft 0in, on 172 mm cranks, would benefit from using 150 mm cranks, is nothing short of ludicrous. Additionally, his quoting of 'power is force multiplied by speed' is a bit wide of the mark. Ignoring

CYCLING CELEBS

constants, power is the average torque per revolution multiplied by revolutions per minute. The difference is significant, in that torque is tangentially applied pedal force, multiplied by crank length. More crank length, more torque, more power available.

The most efficient pedalling speed – from tests/trials by American Universities – is about 60 RPM, provided your knees can stand the pressure. Everyone has an optimum pedalling speed, to give best comfort and maximum efficiency. This normally lies between 75 and 90 RPM.

To produce an equivalent power output on 150mm cranks would require extreme pedal pressure at optimum pedalling speed, or having to pedal much faster, giving diminishing average torque and reduced efficiencies. As a generality, riding the longest cranks that are comfortable will give maximum efficiency, and the required power when needed. In the real world, there are hills, and torque is needed, in 'bags full'.

Mike used the internal combustion engine as an analogy of how the body works. The petrol engine produces a low average torque, and needs high revolutions to produce enough power. The diesel produces twice as much average torque at more modest revolutions, and is 35% more efficient. It is torque that gets you along the road, either by internal combustion engine or pedal power.

Mick Davey, Ludlow

Mike's article generated a lot of interest but I don't think he was trying to say he's got all of the answers. He was asking questions about conventional wisdom.

He's not the only one. Some years ago, cycling technical writer Leonard Zinn tested a variety of crank lengths with a power meter and found, contrary to expectations, that some of the best results came from 150mm cranks. He's 6'6", by the way. See www.velonews.com/tech/rev/crank.html.

DESERVES DECAPITATION? @

I trust that Matthew Parris's article in The Times on 27th December will already have drawn a response from the CTC direct to the editor. Even if it were written tongue in cheek, inciting decapitation of cyclists is very offensive and must draw an appropriate response from our own magazine. Failing the use of humour, a factual attack on his fatuous environmental impact argument might be best. With a target like Parris, there's plenty for you to aim at.

Bob Keen, by email

CTC wrote to The Times, making clear that this sort of sloppy, hateful journalism must never again appear in the paper. Three-hundred letters to the Press Complaints Commissions later and Parris backed down, saying he was sorry and claiming it was all a joke that backfired. Whether his editor agreed is another matter – the article was the third most complained about in 2007!

IT'S A FAKE! @



I received the winter edition of Cycle magazine with the usual pleasure, but when I looked at the photograph on the front cover I became suspicious.

I suspect that the cyclist has been applied onto the scene using a software package such as Photoshop. Riding in the snow can be fun but you do leave tracks. Tyre treads and frame get clogged up and a powdery coating quickly covers legs and feet. All these features appear to be absent from the cover photograph.

If this is the case then I believe that in these days of political correctness, when major organisations are under fire for making misrepresentations to the public, we may have a problem. Would you care to confirm or deny my suspicions?

Roy Hayhurst, by email

Seriously? I think the rider is cycling under a tree on a nice sunny day, on compacted snow, and the photographer has just kicked the tree to get the snowfall – hence the mix of big blobs and powder.

CHEAP & CHEERFUL @

It's fantastic news that CTC is part of a consortium that has secured Lottery cash



RICHARD BALLANTINE
CYCLING
AUTHOR &
PUBLISHER

Why do you cycle?

To get to places. Especially in London, cycling is

reliable and fast. Cycling is also a great way of transporting groceries, building supplies for the house, etc., and for taking 'Sunny' the dog (42kg) up to Hampstead for a long run. And I ride because I love the feeling.

How far do you ride in a week?

In winter, not much – 50 miles. In better weather, more – say 100 miles, excluding holiday or touring runs.

Which is your favourite cycle?

My all-time favourite is the Windcheetah 'Speedy'. There's nothing to touch it for a combination of exhilarating excitement, control and safety, and comfort. I also love my town bike, a rescued Kona frame with Deore bits and fast wheels and a huge rack of my own design. It's fast, yet can haul a good load of shopping. Of course, now there is the 8Freight, a machine majestic enough to sweep back at the cars... Nor must I forget the 2D (pictured), 10kg of aluminium and carbon fibre and an absolute gem for mixed-mode, hopping on and off trains .

Who mends your punctures?

Me

It's raining: bike, bus, tube, or car?

Bike if the weather is marginal or the mission is important. Public transport (which is free for me) if it is pouring cats and dogs. Don't have a car.

Lyca or normal clothes?

Around town, normal. Out for a sporting ride or along byways, cycling togs.

What's your favourite cycle journey?

The run from my parents' house in the Catskill Mountains, from Woodstock to Phoenicia, then back down through Mt. Tremper. It's really beautiful.

What single thing would most improve matters for UK cyclists?

Dutch road rules.

If you had £100 of bike shop vouchers, what would you buy?

Probably a high-performance lighting system. Some of that stuff looks pretty cool, but prices are exciting.

YOU RIDE

DENNIS FLINN'S
PHIL BROOK

In 1959 I was a schoolboy riding a pre-war Claud Butler. One of the lads turned up on a Grandini from Meridian Cycles in South London. It had features that we had not seen before: the lugs, internal fork crown and an allen key seat bolt with the seat stays brazed on. The recesses had been filled in and filed up as solid block. The finish of the frame was superb, a thing of beauty, and I fell in love with it. A couple of years later Meridian closed.

In the late 1970s I moved to Kent and met a couple of cyclists riding Phil Brook cycles. I recognised the name and remembered he had worked at Meridian. Looking at their frames, I was sure he had made that Grandini. Before long I was ordering a frame. When it came to the seat stays I pulled out a sketch. Phil Brook immediately said I wanted the Grandini – it had special lugs and he still had the template. He gave me a cup of tea while he worked out the price. I needed it, although by now no price would have been too high.

Twenty-eight years later it is still my main bike and I ride it every week. The highlight must be touring in Australia, the Great Ocean Road, riding a road that climbed the rim of a huge extinct volcano, racing to catch a ferry in the early morning through a strange landscape with the sky illuminated by a lightning storm in the distance.

Cycle wants to know about your favourite bike. Contact the editor (p80).

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.

to promote cycling. The hard work and effectiveness of the CTC on campaigns (as well as the insurance!) is one of the reasons why I chose to join in the summer.

I love my bike and have used it as my main means of transport for over 10 years. I go to work, the station, shopping and visit friends and family. I cycle for lots of reasons: health and fitness, environmental sustainability and the sheer love of being outside in all weathers. I share these joys with many other cyclists. However, there's another reason I cycle: cost.

Cycling costs me pence per week. And this, I'm afraid, is where CTC sometimes seems to fall down. Cycle magazine is full of adverts and reviews for things I just can't afford. I bought the bike (through the cycle to work scheme), soft shell jacket (Aldi), computer (Aldi), lights (Wilkinsons), hi-vis tabard (friend at work), 'sports' top (Aldi) and Camel-type hydration system (Aldi again) for less than the price of some of the lights in your magazine.

Hobby cycling, though not for me, is fine, but Cycle magazine needs to reach out beyond the Lycra and cleated-shoe brigade. There are lots of us out here who can't afford a second (third? fourth?) bike that costs a thousand pounds, even it does fold up.

Paul Hayes, Sheffield

Cheaper bikes? Check out our second-hand/scrapheap challenge next issue.

BIKES & BUSES



As a part of cycle training, how much attention is paid to large vehicles? Tragically one person in Coventry recently lost their life in a collision with a service bus. And last November our 23-year-old son had a collision between a cyclist and the tour coach he was driving in London. The emergency services were called, although thankfully no injuries were received by the young woman.

During our later discussion we viewed my copy of the 2007 Highway Code. The incident was almost as described in rule 73. This undertaking manoeuvre is not just taken by cyclists but also car drivers.

Cycling on the footpath and undertaking a large vehicle appear to have the same importance allocated to them in the Highway Code. Yes, one can protect cyclists but the other has the opposite outcome. With the successful influence CTC had on the Highway Code, it would be desirable if this good work were extended.

I admit my knowledge of cycle training is very limited but I would still like to make some suggestions.

- Stage a large vehicle turning left in video using a stunt person in a dramatic incident.
- All cycle and driving instructors to have

OBITUARIES

SHEILA KING: 1931-2007

Sheila met Ted while cycling in the Chilterns in 1952. They married in 1954, spending the honeymoon on bikes in Scotland. After the family began – a son, and later two daughters – she helped form the Luton family section. The children travelled in sidecars and tandems before their own solos. When the family moved to Bristol in 1966, Sheila was quickly absorbed into the DA. For 30 years almost every DA committee meeting was held at her home. She helped organised the club's Birthday Rides, BCTC finals and audax events, plus ten Bristol DA annual dinners and also the National Dinner held in Bristol. Her support for husband Ted during his presidency of the Club was unfailing. She looked upon the introduction of the church service at the Birthday Rides as the most satisfying achievement of her cycling career. A wonderful wife, mother and companion. *Ted King*

DAVID EMERSON

It is my sad duty to report the death earlier in 2007 of David Emerson, a dedicated reader of Cycle onto tape for the benefit of blind and partially-sighted CTC members. Mr Emerson was a cyclist and well understood the experiences of those riders to whose contributions he gave voice. He is greatly missed. I would appeal to anyone willing to be a reader to contact: *David Slater, tel: 01968 672872.*

PETER SMITH

Cycling Time Trials Yorkshire District Secretary and National Committee member Peter Smith died instantly in a collision with a van. He was 54. Peter had been a member of the CTT National Committee for three years, where he had gained a reputation for his no nonsense hands-on approach. He was an active cyclist who rode his bike daily and regularly enjoyed time trials and audax events. Peter was liked by all who knew him. *Phil Heaton*

TREVOR BOYLAN: 1934-2007

Died doing what he loved most, cycling with friends. He collapsed on the Taff Trail on a ride to Aberfan with CTC Swansea and West Wales. A chemical engineer, Trevor rode audax events but only up to 200k due to family/work. Work took him to South Wales, where he became DA chairman, section treasurer and social secretary

OBITUARIES CONTINUED

for Swansea and West Wales. An affable and intelligent companion, he had different bikes for all occasions. *Des Radford*

ALAN NEWBY

A very strong rider, Alan was a stalwart of CTC Hull and East Riding. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, with membership in decline, Alan was instrumental in keeping the show on the road. He led the remaining members of the intermediate section every Sunday without fail. Alan regularly attended the Birthday Rides and York Rally and was a keen supporter of the Standard Rides. He became a DA committee member in 1960 and was president until his death aged 81. *Pete Wilson*

COLIN CLIFFORD FOSTER: 1933-2007

Colin took up cycling to keep fit in his long battle with prostate cancer. He and wife Heidi enjoyed long tandem tours across Europe. He became treasurer, chairman of the West Dorset section, and a vice president of the CTC Wessex. They were a popular couple, with renowned hospitality. Starting out in blacksmithing and welding, he retrained to become a senior nursing officer. We shall all miss his tales, wide interests and cheerful wisdom. *Malcolm Howell*

BERNARD THOMPSON: 1924-2007

Died suddenly in November aged 83 after a day out with cycling pals. He and late wife Eth were cycle tourists and time trial enthusiasts. They lived in Rutland, enjoying club-life fully. He was fit and happy to the end, completing an 80-mile ride on his 80th birthday. Kind and always a gentleman, Bernard was a micro-engineer and a keen photographer. His monochrome shots capture the atmosphere of cycling from the 1960s to 1990s. *John Ruskin*

JIM ASHWORTH

Born 1910, died 20/5/2007. A CTC member since 1931, Jim was the son of village bobby in Trawden in Lancs. He became a tackler in the textile trade, and in WWII used his skills in munitions. Jim never married but enjoyed the company of women: his other hobby was dancing. In younger days, he rode a motorcycle all summer and cycled in winter. Later he stuck to cycling. He was planning to get back on the bike the day before his death. *Dave Higginson*

a few hours as a passenger in a large vehicle.

- Take a large vehicle to schools and allow pupils to experience a driver's view but more importantly the blind spots, possibly using a tailor's dummies or other props.
- Add a large vehicle into the hazard awareness part of theory tests.

Robert Rowe, Nuneaton

National standards cycle training does address the issue of a cyclist's position on the road. 'Key National Standards training methodology is "see and be seen";' said Greg Woodford, CTC's Senior Cycle Training Officer.

'This implies that you must usually overtake rather than undertake and certainly not get caught in blind spots. On no occasion should a National Standards cycle trainer suggest undertaking a large vehicle.'

CAUTION, CYCLISTS @

The suggestion that one should consider claiming compensation for an injury sustained whilst negotiating a 'crush' strikes me as another case of the individual seeking a figure of blame for his or her own mistakes (Cycling Answers, last issue). Mr Whybrow confesses to having negotiated this feature on his route in the past. However, on the occasion that he falls off the 'crush' becomes a dangerous feature.

I appreciate that your expert has answered the question according to the letter of the law but could we not include an editorial response leaning toward the cyclist taking a bit of responsibility upon his/her own shoulders? I presume that the 'crush' is entirely safe to negotiate had he stepped off his bike so by choosing to ride through one accepts the likely risk?

Tim Henney, by email



Right: courtesy of Matt Hodges

Should you have to get off your bike on a cyclepath? Drivers don't, as a rule, get out of their cars to negotiate roads...

NORTHERN IRISH AGM @

That is a first I think. I refer to Northern Ireland hosting the 2008 AGM. I was in Ireland last August intending an Irish End-to-End plus a bit. But about 500km and

eight days of cycling ended at Galway with bronchitis. At 80, I wasn't ignoring it. We rented a car and used all our pre-booked and pre-paid B&Bs. Of course, Murphy's Law ensured much better weather once the bikes were packed in the Fiat!

I wonder why in 2008, of all years, the AGM would be in Northern Ireland? It wouldn't have anything to do with the fact the world's oldest distillery, Bushmills, is celebrating its 400th anniversary next year would it? My bottle of 12-year-old that can only be purchased at the distillery is almost gone... Might have to go back and get another!

I first joined CTC in 1942 as second family member. I first rode with the Enfield Section of the North Met DA in 1944. Don't think I ever went to an AGM, though.

**Harold Bridge,
Port Coquitlam, BC, Canada**

STEP TO IT @



Just off cycleway 81 near Aberaeron in west Wales I spotted this sign. So sad this will put cyclists off riding up the steps!

Peter Crook, Hickling, Norfolk

CYCLE SAFETY @

I believe there is a significant error in your News in Brief item, 'Cycling Up, Casualties Down'. You state that 'there are now 374 reported cycle casualties per 100,000km cycled'.

Thinking this seemed rather high, I checked your source, Transport Statistics Great Britain 2007 – which gives a figure of 16,196 casualties (146 killed, 2,296 seriously injured and 13,754 slightly injured) for the (correct) 4.6bn km cycled in 2006. This in fact works out as 0.35 casualties per 100,000 km cycled.

Since one of the biggest barriers to getting more people cycling is a perception of cycling being dangerous, it's really important we put this right and put out the good news that cycling isn't a high-risk activity at all.

Sarah Carr, by email

CTC Campaigns Officer Richard George replies: 'Whoops! Sarah is absolutely correct. There is one casualty per 300,000km cycled; only one person is killed for every 31.5 million miles cycled, making cycling a great deal safer than you might think.'