

CYCLE LETTERS

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

CABLE-TIE REPAIRS

You asked (Letters, Feb/Mar) for a best cable-tie related repair. On a solo ride to the south of France a few years ago, the down tube suddenly parted just below the top lug. Fortunately I was able to continue by train, but needed to steady the frame for travel. I bound the frame with black tape and fashioned the splint with three spanners and cable ties (photo below). Had I needed to ride (albeit carefully), the repair seemed firm and tight enough to support the tube.

Chris King-Smith, Alton

I recently went to a concert at Newcastle City Hall to see the band Toto. Some fans had a large banner, which they wanted to hang over the balcony but had forgotten to bring any string. Luckily, I had a pocket full of cable ties and by joining a few together the fans managed to attach the banner to the balcony rail.

When asked by a non-plussed member of the audience why I had brought cable ties to a rock concert I was, sadly, lacking a plausible reply.

Jeff Palmer, by email

I ride with a small group of pals off-road on the North Downs every Saturday. We ride some very big technical pieces and reasonably regularly have spills that rarely damage us but often do damage our machines. It would seem that saddles these days are made to quick release from their rails. Two of us have had this happen and anyone who has tried to reattach a saddle to its rails will know how futile it is. Bring out the cable ties and within seconds you have a saddle that will get you back to civilisation. With the odd shapes of



saddles, nothing else will do.

Stuart Lloyd, by email

Thanks to those who sent in their suggestions, which included: splinting broken rims; 'mending' a puncture by cable-tying off the hole; and, most impressive of all (take a bow, Howard Rolfe of Whitstable) strapping up the front suspension on a Volvo with a broken ball joint!

BIKE, CAMERA, ACTION



Well done to Dave Brennan from your article last month for putting his money where his mouth is and doing a great job increasing awareness about cycle safety/driver courtesy while commuting by bike with his video camera. Keep it up!

I spent nearly a year commuting through the busy Glasgow West End traffic by bike and I'd be interested in your views, and those of other cycle commuters, on my experience. I used a Brompton with a good set of lights and cycled every day in my suit and a waterproof jacket or cape but no helmet. Although the traffic was very busy, I can't remember many incidents where I was cut up or badly treated by a motorist. I think there was a comment in a previous article about being given more space by motorists when not wearing a helmet. Has there been any research on this? What have others found?

John Rowe

Dr Ian Walker, a traffic psychologist from the University of Bath, did a study in 2006 using a proximity meter. He found that drivers overtaking cyclists passed an average of 8.5cm closer to those wearing helmets. He also found

that drivers gave him an extra 14cm of room when he was wearing a long wig to make him look like a woman (to someone approaching from behind).

THAT'S WHY I JOINED TOO

I read the letter 'Why I joined CTC' from Caroline Page with great interest. It could have been my letter, as I too joined CTC when I signed up to do a Women for Women charity bike ride. I found my local group in Lincoln extremely helpful and supportive.

Unlike Caroline, my ride is now behind me. I did 'Cycle Cuba' last November, together with 83 other ladies. It was a fantastic experience, but boy was it tough: 375km over five days, from the Bay of Pigs to Cienfuegos, via Trinidad and Santa Clara. My abiding memories are of heat, hills, and headwinds – but also happiness. The happiness of the Cuban people, the happiness and exuberance of my fellow participants, but mostly the happiness and sense of achievement I felt when I cross the finishing line.

It was a life-changing experience, and one that I would recommend to anyone. To my fellow female CTC members, I would say 'why not give it a go?' The 2010 event will be 'Cycle China' – see www.actionforcharity.co.uk.

To Caroline, I say: good luck! I know you will love it.

Prue Chadderston, Lincoln



JARGON BUSTING

I agree fully with the point that Esther Clarke makes in her letter in the February/March issue of Cycle, but I think there is a bigger point. CTC functions as a talking shop for fellow cyclists, most of whom are male and middle aged (or more). They enjoy using



their jargon to exclude the uninitiated. (Notice how few women write to Cycle magazine.)

In contrast, a lot of the work Esther has done in making Leighton Buzzard such a successful cycling town has been to try to make cycling more accessible to more people. Jargon plays no part in this.

If cycling is like a religion, which it is to many Cycle magazine readers, shouldn't CTC try to evangelise more, and try to reach a wider population who have not yet 'seen the light', by cutting the jargon?

David Woodroffe, by email

I appreciate the position that Esther Clarke is in, being at the very start of what will hopefully be a lifetime love of cycling. However, a magazine is not the place for her idea of 'starter' information explaining things from first principles. A constant flow of new members means that such articles would need to be in virtually every issue, but since people will only need the basics for a short time, they would rapidly become tedious with the repetition.

What every beginner needs is a book. Esther has done good job of outlining what a beginner's book should contain, and bike technology is not moving so fast that such books go rapidly out-of-date. And don't worry about being able to 'strip and rebuild a bike in 30 seconds'. It takes me that long to decide which bit to do first.

Simon Hartley, by email

Along with campaigning and touring, technical advice is one of the highest rated elements of Cycle magazine. Without some jargon, it's difficult to talk meaningfully about any technical aspect of bicycles. Maybe, as a middle way, we should just have a 'jargon buster' sidebar to explain the terms we can't sensibly avoid using?

DAFT CYCLE LANES

I thought this photo might amuse fellow cyclists. Ireland is a much busier place to cycle than it was when I grew up



there in the 1950s and '60s. However, the Celtic Tiger has enabled considerable investment in public transport and facilities for cyclists, though not all these are consistent. We are all too familiar with facilities that come to a sudden end, which seems to be the problem here!

Geoff Saunders, Dorking

FIXED WHEEL TEAR-AWAY

Your article on fixed-wheel bikes reminded me of an incident that happened to a friend of mine many years ago. Both he and I are now in our 80s.

This friend relates that, one evening he was with a group of friends on the edge of a wood looking for poaching possibilities, when 'the law' was seen to be approaching. There was an immediate scattering of the group. My friend immediately hopped on his bike, a fixer, and furiously pedalled off. He had not gone far when he felt something seriously wrong. His jeans were caught up in the chain and chainwheel. He had the choice of either facing the police properly dressed, or escaping with his jeans severely torn. He chose the latter.

Remember, if you're getting on a fixer, to make sure that your trousers are properly fixed before you do so.

Martin Mottram, Salisbury

TAXING ISSUE

With reference to the letter in December/January 2008-09 issue about tax and cyclists: a long time ago I had a discussion about what level of road tax would be fair for cyclists. Someone produced a measure of damage to road surface, which of course goes up rapidly with axle load, so HGVs naturally pay a high rate. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gross_axle_weight_rating, which

ON THE 'NET

The CTC Forum (<http://forum.ctc.org.uk/>) lets you pick the brains of your fellow CTC members 24/7. One popular topic before we went to press with this issue was...

Touring Tent

Patricktaylor: I'm looking for a two-person, three-season lightweight tent for bicycle touring Denmark in May, then elsewhere in Europe maybe. One that will last, not leak or blow over, and is lightweight - about 2-3kg. £300 max. Two travellers, perhaps six panniers that will need to be kept dry in the tent - some of them, at least. Any thoughts?

bikepacker: Go the little extra and get a Hilleberg Nallo 2. It's worth it.

Georgew: +1 for the Hilleberg Nallo 2. Can't do better.

MikeP: I'm with georgew and bikepacker. We've been using a Hilleberg Nallo for the past three years - I feel a warm glow every time we put it up.

syklist: Above your budget (by a long way), but we've been using a Macpac Citadel for a few years (3.5kg) and last summer a Helsport Fjelheimen Camp 3 (3.2kg). Both of these make comfortable two person tents with space for eight panniers plus barbags and space to get in and out. Both allow you to put up the outer tent first. Handy in the rain.

Megilleland: Check out the Robert Saunders range of tents. I have used a Robert Saunders Space Packer Plus (£210.00 ten years ago). Very easy to put up and plenty of room at both bell ends. Also two exits. Weight from 1.9kg to 2.8kg. Packs down to 44 or 48 x 13 cm.

willem jongman: Another vote in favour of Hilleberg. We have a Keron 4 GT for family use and it has been spectacularly convenient and reliable. They really are the best there is

AndrewLynn: I bought a Vango Spirit 200+ last year. Only used it a couple of times but seems ok so far. Fairly similar to the Nallo GT, a little heavier but about half the price.

This messageboard thread has been abridged.

OBITUARIES

JOHN ROWLAND

Died 9/10/08, aged 84. In Germany, he helped form the Liberation Cycling Club. After the war he toured with Essex DA and raced with the Viking Road Club. In the 1960s, he led CTC tours with wife, Phyllis, and daughter, Jean. He was later Wessex DA President. *Jean Anderson*

MICHAEL JOHNSON: 1924-2008

A quiet man of hidden depths, Michael's first love was cycling. After working in London, New Zealand and Bristol he spent his retirement with Exeter CTC. He had a huge non-fiction library and enlightened rides with his insights into places, people and history. *Mike Bowden*

RON MARTIN: 1931-2008

A lifelong CTC cyclist who never owned a car, Ron rode with the East and West Kent DAs and the Hadrian cycling club. He won awards for his photography and attended the CTC Meriden Cyclist Service for 50 years. He died in hospital after falling from his bike. *Barry Jordan*

MARGUERITE STATHAM: 1942-2008

Died of cancer. After being a full time mother to her three boys, Marguerite joined West Surrey DA in 1976. She rode the End to End, Whitehaven to Sunderland, and Wales to Norfolk. She campaigned to save local buses and footpaths. *Hilary Lancashire*

LIN SHEFFRIN (NYE): 1951-2000

Died in September after a battle with cancer. Coloncancerdiary.blogspot.com gives her account. Lin worked with children with behavioural difficulties. She began club cycling in her 30s, first with the West Kent DA Newcomers, then restarting the Intermediate section. *Chris Nye*

FLORENCE DORETHY PALMER: 1914-2008

Died in September, two years after husband Dudley. They were a genial couple on West Dorset rides. Both were keen swimmers; Dorothy won the Weymouth pier to pier and Xmas cross harbour swim! For their 1940 honeymoon, they toured Scotland on a tandem. *Malcolm Howell*

gives damage proportional to the fourth power of the axle load.

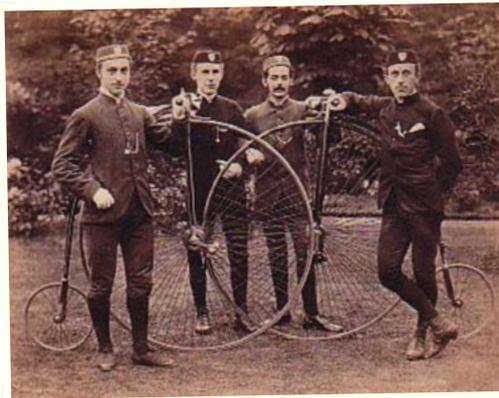
A typical car weighs 1000kg plus passengers, 10 times the weight of a bike, so tax for cyclists should be 10,000 times less. A fair assessment for a bicycle would be around 2p per year.

So, a proof-of-payment which would be secure and which would not have too great an overhead to manage would be a second-class stamp, mounted in a regular tax-disk holder.

Rod Dalitz, by email

A good argument, but what about cars with carbon emissions lower than 100g/km? They pay nothing. Against that, even a 27p stamp looks expensive.

AN ORDINARY EPIC



Trawling through our family archives I came across and scanned this sepia photo of my great grandfather, George Frederick Hoon (far right) leaning confidently on his penny farthing. He and his three friends cycled from central London to North Wales.

George lived in Hackney and had a gentleman's outfitters shop on Oxford Street. I believe that this picture is a souvenir of that journey or certainly from around that time. As George was born in 1865 and died in 1947 I guess this photo dates from between 1885 and 1895. Can any readers identify the cap badges or recognise the make or model of the machines? Or indeed are any of the other riders recognised by anyone?

Our family have always been keen cyclists and travellers and enjoyed touring and outdoor pursuits, but London to North Wales in the 1890s must have been an epic. Unfortunately no diaries or details of the journey

have been passed on down through the generations, just what my father and his brother, also keen cyclists in the 1940s and '50s, had heard on their grandfather's knee. If Cycle readers can provide any extra information or insight I would be happy to receive it.

Steve Hoon, Glossop

SAFE WITH CTC

I am sure that many club members and club officials have read with interest Paul Kitson's reply to John Turnbull's letter regarding club liability last issue. It certainly made our Club committee look to our indemnity details, since as well as normal club runs each weekend we run two audax events each year.

Something that came to mind concerning the reply however was why did Paul Kitson not put the minds of many club officials at rest by indicating that any club which had paid its affiliation fee correctly to CTC was, to the best of his knowledge, fully indemnified to the tune of £10m?

Iain Ralph, Bridgwater Cycling Club

ROUGHSTUFF TOURING

I've just got around to reading Al Churcher's article on Biking Mountains from last year. As a long time devotee of off-road touring, I hope the article inspired

many of you to give it a try.

However, before you do it may be worth considering another approach to load carrying. I believe that the bike is the pack mule and should carry as much of the load as possible. Carrying all your gear on your back puts a lot more weight on your saddle and is literally a pain in the backside. Our approach, tried and tested over many seasons and in many remote parts of the Scottish Highlands, is to distribute the load round four 15-litre universal panniers. Heavy



OBITUARIES

EILEEN LANGMAN

Died aged 85. She was a founder of the Ladies Cycling Fellowship. Members and ex-members will recall many happy cycling weekends and friendships made over 21 years. She rode the End to End in 1993. She leaves a handicapped son, Andrew, who moves into Mencap home. Eileen will be greatly missed.
W Wenclen

JOSEPH KIPLING: 23/01/1923-22/11/2008

Died aged 95. Joe was a founder member of the Yorkshire Century Racing Club. Joe loved club cycling on Sundays and preferred his fixed-wheel bike. He joined the VTTA in 1965 and was a member, and a respected timekeeper, for 43 years.
T Kelly

MARJORIE McMAHON: 1921-2008

Died 24th Dec. A lifelong member of the Yorkshire Road Club, in 1940 Marjorie road 200 miles to Essex for a 25-mile TT, which she won in 1-12-54, then rode back to Bradford. She drove an ambulance for the Red Cross in London during the blitz, and later into Europe after D-Day.
A E Smith

THOMAS RAY ERMSHAW CBE

Died aged 91 in Dec 2008. A lifetime cyclist he was a member of CTC in Liverpool in the 1930s. War service took him all over Britain and to India. Demobbed in 1946, he had a successful career as an export director. He enjoyed walking and cycling in Oxfordshire up until his death.
John Hutton

LEGACIES

- William Ernest Hammond from Nottingham left £21,928.82 to CTC.
- CTC life member Geoffrey Richard Priddle from Yeovil, Somerset, who died in November 2008, left £72,088.64 to CTC.
- Edwin Clarke, a CTC life member from York, left CTC Charitable Trust £10,000.

Send obituaries, preferably 100 words or fewer, to the usual editorial address. As space is limited, some may not appear immediately.

stuff in the rear ones and lightweight stuff up front. The front panniers are mounted on a Blackburn mountain rack customised to attach to front suspension forks. The panniers being small and mounted relatively high avoid the problem of catching in ruts and or your legs while pushing.

On the subject of pushing, you will be faced with a lot of it on an off-road tour. Don't be put off: the push is usually well rewarded by beautiful scenery and a superb descent.

Alex Wilson, Cumnock,
Ayrshire

ONE-HANDED CYCLING

I'm one handed. Not a problem generally – brakes and gears on the right hand side of the bar, toe guard on the left to give a grip to my arm stump.

The problem comes on hills. I have to twist my body to get my left arm under the handlebar to give myself leverage. This never bothered me until my ageing back became jiggered (perhaps not unrelated).

I'm not the first one-handed cyclist and wondered if there was anyone out there who could think of a way of gripping the left arm in a way that allowed you to pull up hill without dipping under the bar.

Chris Hill, Leeds

TOURING WITH DISCS



Photo: Cass Gilbert

I am surprised Chris Juden advised against the use of disc brakes on

expedition bikes, on the grounds that spare brake pads may be difficult to obtain in remote places. Surely these items are so tiny that carrying a ludicrously massive amount of spares would be no problem? Indeed, after a few thousand miles on dusty roads in the Third World, the rims of a conventionally braked machine could be dangerously thin. In my opinion, the sooner traditional dropped-handlebar touring bikes have cable-operated disc brakes the better. The wheels can then be built solely for the purpose of comfortably carrying a heavy load.

Graham Figg, by email

VARIETY IS THE SPICE

Congratulations on producing a superb magazine. I subscribe to various magazines on the subject of cycling. Sadly some of them in recent years seem to have become narrowly focussed on sportives and pro-racing. Although those subjects interest me, only your

magazine shows what a diverse range of topics fall within the interest of an all-round cyclist. The Feb/March edition was a particularly fine example, with a superb range of features plus the regulars – I read it from cover to cover as usual. Keep up the good work and please don't change your formula.

David A Wright, by email

WHERE'S THE 'THE' IN CTC?

I enjoy every issue but one small detail really winds me up. The lack of the definite article in front of 'CTC' and 'Council' makes your various reports sound really twee. It's the sort of omission I expect my eight-year-old granddaughter to make, not a professional magazine like this. Please put the 'the' back into CTC.

Michael Griffiths, by email

Some organisations use the definite article. Others don't. Try adding 'the' to: Microsoft, IBM, or SCOPE.

