

CYCLE LETTERS

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

BIKES FOR SMALL WOMEN



When my mountain bike wore out, I decided I wanted to try drop bars. I quickly discovered there were no suitable bikes small enough – or more specifically, short enough in reach. Except... the Islabikes Luath 700, designed for children aged 11-plus.

After protracted discussions with Islabikes, we decided it would just about cope with the child seat and bought one. We changed the 34/48 double chainset for a 24/34/44 with 165mm cranks.

I have found it very comfortable and have had several other smaller people looking at it. I haven't used it much with the bike seat, but I think that is to do with the seat and Reuben's weight rather than the bike. I think the only disadvantage is the price: £450, which means that nothing is very high spec.

Helen Hubbard

I asked Isla Rowntree about small adults fitting on her children's bikes. Her reply was that some might. Her bikes are not scaled down adult ones; they're proportioned differently. But as you've found, that's not always a problem.

Last year, after nearly 30 years, my 'step through' framed Coventry Eagle finally had to be put to rest. As we were scheduled to cycle tour the Canal du Midi in France that September, I didn't have much time to find and buy a new bike. It was nigh on impossible to obtain what I wanted off the shelf.

I searched the local bike shops and explored the net, finally settling on a Dawes Horizon, which has turned out to be an excellent replacement. It is sturdy but not cumbersome, with a great

range of gears. We toured for two weeks, camping, and the bike was more than up to carrying all our gear. My height is 5'6".

Gill Cochrane

SPORTIVE GEARING

You say in your 'Sram gears down' news piece in April-May that 'While you could (mix and match road shifters with mountain bike cassettes) no one does... which is why you'll see some sportive riders walking up the likes of Hardknott Pass.'

Well I, for one, have been using 9-speed Ultegra shifters with MTB rear gears (and a triple chainset) on my Fred Whitton bike for the last two years and will do so again this year. I've never had to walk any of the hills and have achieved sub-8hr times on both occasions! I admit that this choice of kit looks a little out of the ordinary on my carbon Planet-X time trial frame, but what works, works...

Myles Davison, Edinburgh

EUROPE'S BIGGEST SPORTIVE

Steve Thomas suggested that the Ardechoise sportive might be the biggest in Europe with 15,000 taking part. The 300km Vatternrundan (Round Lake Vattern) in Sweden will have 20,000 entries this year (now full). It advertises that it is the biggest recreational cycle ride in the world, measured by people times kilometres.

Keith Chesterton

WHITE, MIDDLE-AGED MEN?



I have just received the latest CTC magazine and I again notice how very few images there are of black and ethnic minority groups. There may not be so

THAT WAS THEN

100 years ago...

Rear lights

Recently the West Riding County Council passed a bye-law compelling all vehicles to carry a red rear light, and also expressed the opinion that this new regulation should also apply to cyclists. The Lancashire CC is also considering similar legislation – urged thereto by the Royal Automobile Club, it is generally supposed.

Cycles are not at present included in the Universal Lights Bill, and consequently are not affected by such bye-laws, but there is fear that the motorists will make a determined effort to enforce rear lights upon us, their object being palpably the increase in speed at night.

This is only one of the constantly arising new phases of road usage, which necessitate the existence of a representative cycling body like our club to maintain our rights to a reasonable use of the King's highway.

It is unfortunate that several of the 'cycling columns' in the general Press suggest that cyclists would not be averse from the innovation. These columns are only too often contributed by writers whose practical cycling is a thing of the past, and who are influenced largely by the motor trade.

CTC Gazette editorial June 1910

many different ethnicities cycling but our failure to show positive images of different groups will hardly help in drawing these people to cycling. I am a white middle class mid-50s rider and quite frankly I'm surprised at the narrowness of the ambit of the magazine. We should do better for everyone.

Gary Wilson

You're right, of course. While Cycle is the only cycling magazine I'm aware of that does track this issue, it's something we clearly can do better on.

CTC's Cycle Champions are reaching out to ethnic minority groups. As well as the immediate benefit to those cyclists, there is a secondary benefit in that Cycle magazine will have a more diverse, more representative choice of cycling images to draw on.



A good laugh at the expense of a competitor in the Northern (Metropolitan) Section v. William C.C. Paperchase. The "gallery" is evidently enjoying the situation.

FUNNY PAPERS

When was the last time we found a giggle amongst the pages of our mag? One decade ago, two... three? I really can't remember. No criticism of our editor intended, but what is it about cycling these days that we no longer produce the likes of, say, Rex Coley who could tickle a titter out of even the most innocuous of happenings awheel?

Is it that we have become too preoccupied with images of maudlin Martians with not a jot of personality protruding from under those ridiculous looking helmets and ubiquitous sunglasses? Or have we just become too darned intense about our cycling these days?

Let's have less poncey posing and more girth grabbing guffaws. The West Metropolitan section knew how to do it in 1927. Why not now?

Roy Spilsbury, Penmaenmawr

NOT SO FAST

When did CTC become an adjunct of Audax UK? The What's On pages have had 70-80% audax events in every issue for a long time now. The current issue has 49, excluding double/triples on the same day, against 26 other, more traditional club events.

The April-May issue of Cycle was a 'Sportive Special' and had an article on sportive bikes that states: 'The Boardman is a racing bike, pure and simple.'

My local group is run by an audax enthusiast who refuses an alternative ride, wanting everyone to support his event. CTC is supposed to be for cycle touring and not for proving how fast you can ride through our beautiful countryside.

Peter Kenner, Lancaster

Cycle lists touring, audax and other events submitted by CTC member groups and affiliated groups as a member service.

Many members would regard audax cycling as part of cycle touring – or at least a close relation – as both are really about the journey rather than the result. In an audax you can stop when you want, and the maximum speed and modest minimum speed mean they're not races.

While Cycle doesn't focus on racing, even 'pure racing bikes' can be used for sportives, audax, and recreational rides. Myles Davison (above) uses a time trial frame! I wouldn't – but vive la difference.

ROYAL MAIL GOES POSTAL

The otherwise excellent article on Pashley Cycles in Cycle (April/May issue) omitted the sad fact that the glory days of the Pashley MailStar are over, at least as far as the Royal Mail is concerned. The Royal Mail plans to replace all but 500 of their 24,000 bicycles with vehicles and electric trolleys, citing concerns about the 'risks of cycling'.

Michael McKrell, Manchester



We'll have more on this next issue. For now, see the news item on page 6.

THE H-WORD

I was surprised and disappointed to read your response to Richard Salt's letter in the April/May magazine. I belong to a cycle club that insists that all members wear helmets on club rides. We believe we have a duty of care to our members, and a responsibility to minimise risk and set standards for careful riding.

Your use of the word Orwellian to describe the anti-choice position reminds me of the arguments used against motor cycle helmets, seat belts, drink driving bans and smoking bans. You should take note of the BMA's change of stance on compulsory helmets

OBITUARIES

DEREK ROBERTS MBE: 20/8/1916-15/3/2010

A CTC member since 1948, Derek served on CTC Council for 10 years. He proposed the introduction of National Councillors, supported the creation of the National Cycle Archive and revived the Cycle Touring and Countryside Trust. He was a passionate advocate for cyclists' rights, particularly regarding helmet use (which he opposed) but was best known as a cycle historian. In 1955 he co-founded the Southern Veteran-Cycle Club (now the Veteran-Cycle Club). In 1965 he established the Fellowship of Cycling Old Timers (FCOT) as a successor to the Fellowship of Old Time Cyclists (for cyclists who cycled prior to 1890), and edited its magazine, Fellowship News. For his services to cycling he was awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List for 2007.

Andrew Millward

NEVILLE CHANIN

An extraordinary cyclotourist, Neville Chanin rode in 50 countries on five continents in over 50 years awheel, before dying of heart failure at a B&B in Winchester on his way home from watching the Paris/Camembert cycle race in Normandy. A CTC touring information officer from Stroud, Neville was an ebullient after-dinner speaker, CTC AGM cross-toaster, and slide show presenter; his shows often drew crowds of over 100. He cycled almost 650,000 miles, despite never commuting on his bike. Twice in the 1960s he led 200-mile night rides from London to the York Rally, and he watched the Tour de France in person for over 50 years, as well as spectating at the Giro, Vuelta and other races. A past president of Evesham Wheelers, his funeral drew a peloton from many clubs across the country, as well as the president of Cycle-Club Dieppe, whose cyclosportive rides Neville completed every year since 1971.

Chris Davies

JACK GILL: 1932-2010

Died suddenly on 8/1/2010, aged 77. A lifetime member of the CTC, in the 1970s and '80s he rode with the Southern (Family) group. He first did a 100-mile cycle ride in 1946, aged 14. He was a cyclist all of his life right up until the end. Ann Gill



OBITUARIES

BRENDA CARLTON: 1937-2010

Died in a tragic accident on 1st February. Brenda married fellow Medway Road Club cyclist Ron in 1960. They had a son and daughter, and cycling continued without a break. They joined the Cheltenham & County CC in 1972 and became involved in the Cheltenham CTC section in 1980, Brenda becoming Rides Secretary, Social Secretary and later Outdoor Events Secretary. Catering was her forte and many riders appreciated her fruit cake on the audax events that she and Ron organised. *Ted King MBE*

RICHARD R RUSSELL: 1930- 2010

A pivotal figure in Lothians CTC, Richard toured (youth hostelling and camping) all over the country and raced on both bicycle and tricycle, setting Scottish tricycle records at 25 and 100 miles and 12 hours in 1955. A printer by trade, he was a CTC Councillor, committee member and Road Club official for years. His awards included the Tom Davis cup and the Zoller Quaich but, most prized of all, honorary life membership of CTC. *Peter Martin*

DENNIS RAYBOULD: 1932-2010

President of CTC Shropshire since 2007, Dennis was an inspiration: he was encouraging and supportive to committee members in their roles and always willing to help newcomers. He was instrumental in establishing the popular Shrewsbury Midweek group and will be sadly missed. Our sympathies go to his children, Susan, Andrew, Jane and Emma and the rest of the family. *John Nowell*

MAURICE GARRETT: 12/7/22-25/1/10

Died in hospital in Eastbourne. Maurice was a lifelong cyclist, despite suffering for many years from the results of an accident with a bus around 1940. He joined the Bath Road CC before the War and in his latter years was a member of the East Sussex DA and its mid-week section. We will remember him as a true gentleman. *John Armstrong*

Send obituaries, preferably 100 words or fewer, to the editorial address.

rather than dismissing it. It is they who have to deal with the consequences of 'freedom of choice'.

I would expect CTC to at least promote the use of helmets, if not support compulsory use. Your stance, backed up by your selective use of data on your website, seems to indicate that you are anti-helmet, which I view as totally irresponsible.

Peter Welch

I strongly support the CTC's position of free choice on whether to wear a helmet when cycling (and preferably informed free choice) together with the use of mixed helmeted and unhelmeted cyclist images in Cycle.

As well as being depressed like the editor by the 'Orwellian' anti-choice position, I am depressed too that people pronounce on the subject without informing themselves on even the basic facts first.

First, most cyclists don't wear helmets. It's about a quarter of cyclists in the UK that wear them (and only one in a thousand in the Netherlands!)

Are they a sensible piece of safety equipment? Well, as has been pointed out in the British Medical Journal, if they are it would save many more lives and serious head injuries if pedestrians wore them. The death and head injury rate of pedestrians from trips and falls alone far exceeds that of cyclists from all causes.

But the biggest presumption is that they work. The two most detailed investigations of accident data in the UK by Hewson found: 'The conclusion cannot be avoided that there is no evidence from the benchmark dataset in the UK that helmets have had a marked safety benefit at the population level for road using pedal cyclists' – in line with a number of other non-UK studies.

Dr Tony Raven

SPEED WOBBLE

I was recently cycling downhill with a group in Northumberland when I had an alarming experience. I was descending at about 45mph leaning over the handlebars, on a steep incline of a well-worn, rough-surfaced tarmac road.

I went into a wobble – handlebars violently swinging from side-to-side. With white-knuckles I hung on, and applied both brakes, which I realised was increasing the front wheel wobble. I



quickly put more pressure on the rear brake, which brought me to a standstill, near the bottom. Was there anything I could have done to reduce the wobble?

Ron Hawdon

This is shimmy, which Chris Juden addressed in Cycling Answers in the Oct/Nov 2009 issue. See www.ctc.org.uk and follow the links 'News and Publications' and 'CTC Publications' to download the relevant PDF. In short, the best thing to do is to lift your weight off the saddle and grip the top tube between your thighs.

SNOWBALLS & SOAKINGS

I was pleased to see the 'Cycling answers' item in the April/May edition on the legal position around cyclists having snowballs thrown at them. This is clearly a deliberate (if minor) assault.

Another insult we face is also touched on: Dan Cook (p39) mentions being drenched by a passing lorry during a rainstorm. Does being splashed matter? Yes. While not always dangerous, it's horrible, and is one more preventable problem for cyclists, and a reason that fewer people cycle.

What can be done? I was told that in Sweden it was required that motorists splashing pedestrians should offer to pay for dry-cleaning of their clothes – maybe this should be considered here, too.

Tim Dowson

Letters are edited for space (if above 150 words), clarity and, if necessary, legality. Letters and emails for the Aug-Sep issue must be received by 25th June.