



The show organiser

York Cycle Show Secretary **John Taylorson** talks to Dan Joyce about putting on CTC's flagship cycling event each June

This summer, as they have done for decades, thousands of cyclists will gather for a weekend of cycling events and displays at the York Cycle Show. Or as it was – and to some, still is – known: York Rally.

'I get a lot of hassle about the name change,' says show secretary John Taylorson, 'and there's a lot of things on the CTC forum about it. But these people don't get the calls that I get from members of the public who ring me up and say "Can I come to this event? I'm not a CTC member." The name was changed to give people the idea that it was an open event. We want the general public to come as well. We want people new to cycling, who could become CTC members.'

John has experience when it comes to getting occasional cyclists enthused about cycling. He's organised the Great Yorkshire Bike Ride since its inception in 1984. It's a 70-mile ride from Wetherby to Filey that now gets around 2,000 entrants a year and has raised nearly £2million for charity. John was awarded an MBE for charity services. 'I'm very proud of the ride,' he says. 'It's been a great introduction to cycling for a lot of people, and is still a great cycling challenge.'

He's been organising the York Cycle Show, meanwhile, since 2006. 'It's a great tradition,' he says. 'But it doesn't have to sit on its traditions. It also has to move forward.'

Part of that might be a literal move: to Harrogate. 'We have looked at the Yorkshire Event Centre in Harrogate, although there is a problem with dates. Late June is around the time that they're starting the Great Yorkshire Show, which is their biggest event. I'm now looking at possible dates for 2013.'

The prospect of moving CTC's flagship event isn't something John takes lightly. 'I am aware of the heritage of this event. To move it from York is a big decision. However, we are dealing with a very difficult site. The racecourse doesn't have the facilities that people are expecting and this has impacted on our visitor numbers. There's been no investment in the infrastructure of the racecourse land itself. We're short of water points, power access... we've even



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lost our Elsan disposal point and have had to rent tanks. It's a very difficult site to manage. Plus we've had problems with flooding in 2006, 2007 and 2008.'

Many cyclists will have fond memories of rallies at York. A few want the event to stay exactly as it once was and react angrily to changes – especially where money is concerned. 'I get many comments and emails from people complaining about having to pay for anything,' says John. 'We don't charge to enter the site but we charge people £250 for a programme that gets them into the trade show. This small fee also helps pay for the event, which costs over £50k to stage.'

That the fee is as low as £2.50 is down to the fact that the show is put on largely by the efforts of unpaid volunteers. 'They do a fantastic job,' says John. 'But their ranks are diminishing and new people are needed to carry on their work – a steady injection of new blood and ideas to help support an event like this.'

Yet he remains upbeat about the show and reels off reasons to attend this June: bargains; trade stands; a cycle stunt team; traditional arena events; displays of recumbents and veteran cycles; organised rides from 20 miles to (in the shape of the Ron Kitching ride) 100-150km; entertainment for children and adults; a real ale bar; the nearby attractions of York itself...

This year also sees the introduction of a Youth Challenge event, linked into CTC's work with Cycle Champions and Bike Club. 'It's to give kids different cycling activities that they can do at the show. We're hoping to expand it into a national event next year. It'll bring a lot of kids in, which in turn brings in their parents.'

'I'm quietly confident about the future. We're having a couple of lean years but there's no reason why a relaunch on the back of the new Youth Challenge event isn't going to help us turn a corner and let people see this event in a new light.'

This year's York Cycle Show takes place on 19th-20th June. For more information visit www.yorkcycleshows.co.uk