

FROM CTC'S CHIEF EXEC

ON THE UP AND UP

*New Chief Executive **Paul Tuohy** reflects on CTC's role in making cycling accessible to more and more people*



IT'S HARD to believe I started as Chief Executive of CTC just three months ago, as I write. It's been a crazy whirlwind of activities, meetings, travel and more meetings. CTC has lots of meetings; my wife is starting to give me 'the look' whenever I mention another one. But CTC absorbs you into every nook and cranny, as it's such a diverse organisation – and one that seems to have been with us forever.

Yesterday was a welcome break because my club, Catford CC, were promoting their annual Hill Climb Classic. It's the oldest continuing bike race in the world, having first been run in 1886. I was down to ride with my son, Ewan. I had planned to give it a miss after I reached my goal of beating three minutes in 2012, but the CTC Press Office insisted I do it! I decided that with limited fitness and two 25% sections to scale, I would ditch the skinsuit (not a pretty sight, and what's the point at a snail's pace?) and don my CTC heritage jersey and cap. That didn't go down so well with a few of Catford CC's old guard due to rules regarding club jerseys... rule 27, subsection 12a, clause 4.1b or something like that.

GETTING BRITAIN ON BIKES

After my ride, I found a spot on the hill with family and friends to give the riders a 'hup, hup'. I met some CTC members, two smashing chaps from Kent who told me about the problems they were experiencing on the Thanet Way. Apparently, the cycle route there is overgrown and it's difficult to ride in places. They wanted to know if I could help. I was half tempted to say 'I've got a trimmer in my car, let's get going!' but refrained. I asked if



● Paul riding Catford CC's Hill Climb Classic in October

they had contacted Sustrans. Sustrans focuses on infrastructure, while CTC's role as the national cycling charity is to get people cycling – and to help them keep cycling. Part of my role is to increase awareness of our work nationally so we can help get Britain cycling. It's some task, but I'm up for it!

INSPIRING CYCLING

Since my arrival, I've been very impressed by the team at CTC. My trip to Colchester on a wet October morning has to be the pick so far. A lot of our supporters have no idea that CTC runs some amazing projects to help people enjoy a bike ride when they otherwise couldn't. I met Angela, who is 80 and was referred to us by her GP. She had been

overweight and depressed, but for the last two years has hardly missed her 11am-1pm ride with 30 other riders. Her husband, retired dentist Harry, had lost his confidence after a spill and his bike had stood unused for years. He joined Angela 'to keep an eye on her' and they have never looked back.

'I can't wait for this ride to come around every week,' she exclaimed. 'It's changed my life!' Harry said he loved still being able to climb the hills. 'I know how to use my gears so it's no problem,' he told me, grinning.

Another rider was Mike (72). Mike also joined the ride two years ago. Prior to that he had not ridden a bike since 1950, when he was 10 years old! He said that now he can't stay off it. There were other stories that unfolded, and they all made me realise that CTC is a lot more than a touring club. We're a family of cyclists whose support and generosity is helping others to learn how the humble bicycle can change their lives. You'll be learning more about these projects in future editions of *Cycle*.

As I watched my son and others race up Yorks Hill, resplendent in their lycra skinsuits, I thought about Harry. I reckon that with his new lease of life (and knowledge of gears), he'd still be able to ride it. ●



● Angela and Harry can't wait for their weekly CTC ride



● Until recently, Mike (right) hadn't cycled since 1950