

Letters

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This month: The H-word, bikes on trains, fashionistas who forgo brakes, careless cyclists, tandem solutions, fines for drivers, and a reminiscence on rain



HELMETS & FLAMEPROOF SUITS

Has CTC been taken over by a breakaway faction of The Flat Earth Society? I listened to Radio 4's The World at One on Thursday 2nd August when CTC spokesperson Chris Peck tried to convince us that cycling without a helmet was sensible. I was unconvinced by his suggestion that even trying to persuade people to use a helmet would increase deaths as the effect

would be for fewer to ride and hence for more to fail to gain the health benefits of cycling.

I then received my Aug/Sep copy of Cycle and read 'Hats off to Boris and Co', in which the CTC's totally partisan arguments in favour of free choice regarding use of a helmet were expanded.

I keep taking the magazine for the adverts and the odd travel and technical article but have no sense of pride in being associated with the CTC and its loony cycle helmet usage policy.

Bernard Rowlands

I live in Germany and am a member of both CTC and its German equivalent, ADFC. I have compared the illustrations of cyclists with and without helmets in recent club magazines. The percentage of cyclists wearing helmets in editorial, in advertising, and in total were as follows: ADFC 49%, 59%, 52%; CTC 83%, 89%, 85%. Cycle gives the strong impression that helmets are normally worn by cyclists. In Radwelt the image of cyclists is more balanced.

Cycling is still perceived by many in Britain as sport. Levels of cycling are lower than in Germany, perhaps because most people agree with Thoreau, who wrote: 'Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes.'

CTC has work to do to reflect in Cycle the policy of no compulsory helmets for cyclists. The appearance is that the majority of cyclists voluntarily accept the need to wear a helmet.

Peter Lancashire

My heart sank when I read your article 'Hats off to Boris and Co'. I had hoped the issue of helmets had been dropped, as I perceive the issue to be divisive and secondary. Instead, I feel CTC should be focusing on one of the most fundamental obstacles to the greater take up of cycling in the UK, which is the widespread view that cycling is a dangerous activity, a perception reinforced by the recent bleak accident statistics from the Department for Transport.

Comparison with North European



We're getting there...

Here's a copy of my recent email to Southern Trains.

I thought I'd share with you one of my summer holiday photos. I had a lovely two weeks in Provence. I booked the holiday some time ago, then tried to book my train tickets. Except that Southern Trains had decided to instigate a ban!

After three hours on the phone (one lady suggested I leave my bike in one of your station lockers, which I think is stellar advice on the best way of transporting my bike to the Continent!) and a few weeks of panic, I thought: 'Stuff it, the worst they can do is throw me off.'

Luckily your staff overlooked my bike, standing in its empty carriage. I think we can all look back on your bike ban as an amusing moment of misguided silliness and perhaps see it as an opportunity to implement better bike carriage facilities in the future.

ANNA SCRAFIELD



countries confirms that cycling over there is five to ten times safer per kilometre cycled due to a number of reasons. Perhaps one of the least commented upon of these is the comparative absence of legal protection for cyclists in the UK in the event of a collision with a vehicle driver. I understand from diverse sources that in European countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France and Denmark, that in the event of a collision the driver is presumed to be liable unless they can show that the cyclist was negligent.

Mike Martin

Roger Geffen replies: Mike Martin makes a good point, which CTC agrees with. CTC's campaigns team was pleased that, beyond the first few days of The Times's 'Cyclesafe' campaign, helmets have hardly been mentioned in subsequent discussions on cycling – in The Times itself, in Parliament, or in our subsequent discussions with Government officials. You know you're winning the arguments on helmets when people aren't mentioning them. You can't stop people talking about helmets, as we saw with Bradley Wiggins's comments, which he later retracted. More useful was the recent comment on BBC Breakfast TV from fellow Olympian Chris Boardman. He argued that when a gunman is at loose on the street, you don't advise the public to wear flak-jackets, you do something to stop the shooting!

HAPPY FAMILY



The Family Valued issue could not have arrived at a better time for us, as we were just starting to think about getting back on the bikes with our two boys. Alex, our four-year-old, loves cycling and has

just learned to cycle his own bike (thanks to 18 months on a balance bike) so the FollowMe tandem featured in this issue was perfect!

My husband, Matt, took him out on it this weekend and he had a great time. With our younger son Michael on the back of my bike, we're now two-wheel mobile again.

It was only our second issue of Cycle, after being bought it as a 40th birthday present – we're now hooked!

Clare Dando

CAN WE STOP THIS?



I have noticed, especially around London, many people with no rear brake. Am I correct in thinking that this is illegal unless there is a fixed-wheel? The bikes are singlespeed but many singlespeed bikes now seem to be sold with a free wheel. Are people removing the rear brake to look trendy, or are dealers selling them in this state? Does it matter, in view of the fact that most of the useful braking comes from the front brake?

Nick Dennis

A modern bicycle must have two independent brakes to be ridden legally on the road. A fixed-wheel counts as a rear brake, so you can go without a rear hand brake on a 'fixie' (as pictured above).

Brakeless fixies are dangerous on public roads. Freewheeling singlespeeds with a front brake only are less dangerous but are just as illegal. Editor

ROAD HOGS!

Recently I had the misfortune to have to share the road with several

Obituaries

▶ Robert Fotheringham

Bob was a life member of CTC, President of the Gainsborough Aegir CC, a member of the Tricycle Association, and Vice President of the Lincolnshire Road Riding Association. Bob's love of bikes and trikes was legendary to fellow cyclists in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire. He rode and organised time trials for the Aegir CC for many years. He suffered a stroke in November 2011 and died aged 70 in February 2012. Morton Village church was packed with friends. **MJ Crawford**

▶ Joan Wooldridge, John Lumbers, Peter Rowell

During the last 18 months, the Cambridge Member Group has lost three senior members. In April 2011, Joan Wooldridge died in a cycling accident. Joan was a lifetime cyclist, and with her husband David cycled in many countries. They once rode from Alaska to Argentina. November 2011 saw the death of John Lumbers, aged 82. John was a well-known CTC tour leader and with the help of his wife Greta, he led tours in countries as far apart as the USA and New Zealand. In June 2012, we lost Peter Rowell. Peter was a past Cambridge DA Secretary and webmaster. Peter was 83. **George Rich**

▶ Charles Comport: 1925-2012

Charles joined CTC in 1946, contributing a lifetime of activities and services to Essex cycling. He helped set up a number of local sections and was a winner of the BTC Final. In retirement, Charles was involved in organising many riding and social events including CTC's National 400k Audax Ride. Charles was DA Chairman and President as well as Editor of the DA Magazine 'Spotlight' for nearly 20 years. In the 1980s, he received Essex DA's Certificate of Merit and, with wife Joan, the CTC Certificate of Merit. **Neil Comport**

▶ Les Reason: 1919-2012

Joining CTC in 1937, Les was soon a stalwart of the South Bucks DA. Amongst the many positions he held was editor of The Beech Leaf, the DA magazine. Together with wife Faith, they toured the UK and passed on their love of cycling to daughters Heather and Jenny. Les raced on bicycle and tricycle, later becoming a timekeeper. He was a past CTC Councillor, and a long-time member of the FCOT, being both its president and chairman. Although latterly living in Norfolk, he considered his beloved Chilterns home. **Heather Beeson**

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Get immediate feedback from other CTC members on the CTC Forum: forum.ctc.org.uk. Here's an extract from just one thread (see <http://tinyurl.com/8mjbc4d>).



OLD RAILWAY PATHS

cycle cat: What are your views on old railway paths that have been converted to walking and cycling paths? We used the Tissington Trail today. It was rather busy as it's the bank holiday weekend. IMO we should all respect each other.

Cycloret: It's dog walkers who don't control their dogs who give me the most bother. Worse are those using a retractable lead who have the lead across the railpath.

Mick F: Have a read at my report on The Granite Way (<http://cycleseven.org/the-granite-way>). Not keen, to be honest.

org/the-granite-way). Not keen, to be honest.

Gentlegreen: I've used parts of the Bristol to Bath path every working day for the past 24 years. For me, it's almost the single best thing about Bristol or Bath.

DavidT: I tend to find them quite boring. That said, it's been nice to have traffic free routes into and out of towns and cities, for example Derby, Lincoln and Newark.

snibgo: They can be very near to cycling heaven – e.g. the Cambridgeshire Busway route, which is

designed and built as a cycle path for commuting into Cambridge. Or they can be designed and built as 'leisure routes for toy bicycles'.

KarlT: No-one's forcing you to use them. I'm pleased there's somewhere I can take my kids to cycle where a random veering six feet to the right doesn't put them in front of a bus.

Pau'line: As for respecting walkers, it's the cyclists' responsibility as the faster moving person to take care going around pedestrians.



(Above) Tom Lynch wants advice on tandem trikes like this. Could it be from Roman Road Cycles? See roman-road.co.uk

(Above right) After a summer like this, autumn is something of a relief

hundred riders in a mass cycle event. Basic courtesy to other road users and road craft were conspicuous by their absence. Riders were two, three, four and even five abreast. They swerved into the middle of the road to turn right without a glance over the shoulder or a signal. They rode the wrong way round traffic islands. Mobile phones were in common use.

Such 'marshals' as the organisers had put out seemed to be more observers and spectators than doing any work to ensure the safety of the cyclist and other road users. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies.

Colin Clapshoe

While I wouldn't excuse some of the behaviour you mention, it's perfectly legal to cycle two abreast. It's not illegal to use a phone while cycling either. Editor

TANDEM TRIKING

Whilst cycling the return leg of my solo LEJOG charity ride in 2006,

I met this charming couple on the old road between Inverness and Aviemore. Our respective journeys and experiences were discussed and their 'trike' became the focus of my attention. I recall the couple being CTC members, retired, but with an engineering background.

Now well into our seventies, my wife, sadly, finds difficulty when riding solo – hence my interest in finding a stable three-wheeled tandem with which to continue our touring adventures. It would need to be car portable. Advice from fellow members would be most welcome.

Tom Lynch

ON-THE-SPOT SPEEDING FINES

I have been cycling for over 55 years and car driving for 45. In all this time the one thing that stands out about the UK's public highways is that motor traffic goes much faster than ever. Whilst I applaud CTC's and other organisations' efforts to make the roads safer for all to use, I fear these will largely be ineffective without a drastic increase in fines for speeding. I suggest we should start immediately with a minimum 'on the spot' fine for exceeding speed limits of £1,000.

When this level of fine for breaking the law was applied to smoking on London's buses (and probably other areas too) it had instant success – a good precedent. Could CTC push for this in addition to its other campaigns?

Derek Vivian

FAREWELL TO SUMMER

This picture, taken in May, is fairly typical of cycling this 'summer'. I was



riding up Cheddar Gorge and, as you can see, the Gorge had turned into a fast flowing river carrying stones along with it. Quite scary as the 'river' was swinging around the bends pushing us sideways at times. Just managed to avoid oncoming traffic!

Martin Cockersole

BOTTLE CARRIER

I took this photo in San Cristobel de las Casas in Mexico, on a recent trip. It was a wine shop promo bike.

Jim Rawnsley

Cheers, Jim! Editor



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For national councillors and CTC Member Groups, see the separate sheet of A4 paper with your address on that came with this issue of *Cycle*.



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