

LETTERS

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

SHOULD CYCLISTS FLY?



CTC should meet the aims of cyclists of all political and environmental views. We should not become or be seen as an anti-car or anti-flying organisation – there are other organisations leading those fights. Saving the planet is seen by most of us as a by-product and not the reason for cycling – we cycle because we enjoy it!

If we do not accept cars and 'planes then CTC is at risk of being seen as nothing more than a few eccentrics and thereby losing CTC's position as the leading cycling lobbying organisation. We should not create a split among members – we should all act together to support cycling. CTC members who wish to support views that not directly related to cycling are able to join other organisations that promote those views.

Only with CTC's aims remaining solely related to cycling will it continue to be the most influential, successful, useful and friendly cycling organisation.

Henry Davidson, by email

I wholeheartedly support Richard George's point of view. Chris Juden's arguments are faulty. Two wrongs do not make a right. He is saying 'when you stop, I'll stop'.

If we know that flying is a serious cause of carbon pollution, then we should be doing something about it and not waiting for someone else to take the lead. I love travelling and will miss all those far away places, but the cost to the planet of everyone continuing in the way they are at the moment is too tragic to contemplate. I wish that the government would walk the

talk, but in the meantime, I am prepared to practise what I preach and stick to boats, trains and buses rather than 'planes.

Well done to CTC for having this debate.

Anthony Lamb, by email

I'm not convinced that Cycle is necessarily the most relevant place to see a debate over the ethics of flying to holiday destinations, but both Richard George and (on the Letters pages) Liz Snook seem to fail to appreciate that for many, if not most, CTC members holiday time is a limited resource and even a week's cycling is a challenge to squeeze in alongside work and other family commitments.

I try to use ferries and trains as much as possible but I consider myself lucky to get away for five days every couple of years. I don't want to spend two or three of them travelling. So yes, it would be lovely to spend a year going overland to Cambodia or even to take two days to travel to Italy. However, the reality for most of us is that we want to spend as much of our scarce holiday time as possible actually riding our bikes, which means that to visit anywhere beyond north-west Europe, flying is usually the more realistic option.

Rob McIvor, by email

I was very interested to read the articles by Chris Juden and Richard George on whether cyclists should fly. After the Terminal Five fiasco I am amazed anyone would consider flying – with or without a bike – if any other method of travel is feasible! It's nothing to do with being environmentally friendly, just wanting a comfortable journey and a bike that doesn't get lost or damaged in transit.

Perhaps Cycle could do a survey of CTC members' satisfaction when taking their bikes by air? We hear tales of damage caused to bikes by airline employees and it would be interesting to know if this is widespread. After all if your suitcase ends up on the other side of the world you can replace clothes etc. comparatively easily, but if your bike is lost or damaged beyond repair, that's the end of your cycling holiday.

We live on an island and I only wish there were more opportunities to travel by sea. I'd love to be able to cycle to the nearest ports – Heysham or Fleetwood in my case – and catch a ferry going round the coast north to Oban and the Hebrides or south to Wales and Cornwall.

Mary Hodges, Scorton

Both the 'Should cyclists fly?' article and the climate change survey in the same issue prompted a wide variety of responses – of which these are a fair sample. We'll publish the survey results in the next issue or two. So far it seems that you're broadly in favour of points 1, 2 and 3 and, to a lesser extent, 4 and 5.

Oh, and for the record: Alistair Humphreys travelled between continents by sea and not by air on his expedition around the world.

PASS THE WINE GUMS



A recent CTC ride took us over a 520m high pass – the Bwlch in South Wales. To take our mind off the climb a couple of us tried to figure out how much energy we were expending and how many wine gums we would need to replace it. On the basis of 20 kCal per wine gum, a simple calculation revealed that six would be sufficient to lift 16 stone of bike plus rider the 520m. But of course this did not include the various losses in both bike and rider, so we made a separate estimate assuming an energy expenditure of 1,000 kCal per hour. On this basis 40 wine gums would be needed – an efficiency of only 15%.

Are we really so inefficient? A good measure of cycling efficiency should be obtainable by monitoring a cyclist on a stationary bike equipped with the means to measure the power output (relatively easy) and the energy consumed by the cyclist (relatively difficult). Has this been done? If so what percentage efficiency does it indicate for cycling up long hills?

We would then know just how many wine gums are needed for the climb up the Bwlch.

David Naylor, Swansea

CYCLIST BATTALION



In answer to Mr Rhodes' questions about military cyclists, I would refer him to 'The London Cyclist Battalion' (Forster, Groom and Co Ltd, 1932), a chronicle of the 25th London (Cyclist) Battalion from its beginnings in 1888 to its disbandment in 1922. This covers its service on the Home and Western Fronts, in India,

CYCLING CELEBS



WAYNE HEMINGWAY DESIGNER

Why do you cycle?

For fresh air, to keep fit. It's quicker than the tube in London. You see more, feel alive, it's thrifty, and it's sustainable.

How far do you ride in a week?

70-plus miles at the moment. I snapped my cruciate and have had reconstructive knee surgery so can't run. Cycling is my rehabilitation.

Which is your favourite bike?

A rust-bucket roadster with a wicker basket. Had it since I was 18. I rode it to uni everyday.

Who mends your punctures?

Not me.

It's raining: bike, bus, train, or car?

Public transport.

Lykra or normal clothes?

Lykra? Not on your bloody nelly.

What's your favourite cycle journey?

To the beach from our home in Sussex.

What do you take when cycling?

A lock.

What single thing would most improve matters for UK cyclists?

Cycle lanes. Just making things safer – more like Denmark, Holland, etc.

If you had £100 of bike shop vouchers, what would you get?

Are you offering? Lights – they are always breaking. Spray: my bikes are always going rusty 'cos they go on beach. Bungy straps: always getting them wrapped round the wheel and having to cut them.

Hemingway Design specialises in affordable and social design. Wayne is on the panel of the Eco Towns Challenge and formerly ran the Red or Dead fashion label with wife Gerardine. Their Shackup bike shed will be reviewed in Cycle soon.

Afghanistan, Mesopotamia and Waziristan. Headquarters were at Fulham House in West London.

Recruits were plentiful, including some from Harrods. One method was for Recruiting Sergeants to visit theatres and make speeches during the intervals. Obviously the uniform, patriotism and the chance to ride a cycle had an impact. A 2nd Battalion was raised in 1914 by Col Gilbertson Smith TD, who later became the second President of the Essex DA. The 25th was the only dedicated cyclist battalion; other regiments had cyclist sections.

A pre-1914 recruiting poster for the 25th shows a dismounted soldier apparently taking pot shots in a remarkably Home Counties village street. The reality, at least on the Western Front, is best described by Private W G Bell, No 4640, 9th Btn, Army Cyclist Corps:

'You say, "What did we you do in the Cyclist Corps?"

"We dug up half of France!" I always say.'

He goes on to describe how 300 army cyclists would pedal as close as they could get to the front line as it got dark, dump their bikes, pick up shovels and then follow a tape out into No Man's Land until they were told to start digging. The trenches had to be six feet deep and they worked all night. They carried water bottles but not rifles. At dawn they picked up their bikes and pedalled back. Private Bell did this for three months in 1917 and comments that casualties were high. ('They Called it Passchendaele' by Lyn Macdonald, Penguin, 1978).

Fascinating stuff, this cycle history.

Roger Bugg, Veteran-Cycle Club

I was surprised to see that no one at the CTC appears to know about Jim Fitzpatrick's book on the use of cycles in war (Cycle, April/May 2008). It's called 'The bicycle in wartime: an illustrated history', ISBN 1574881574. I borrowed the book from the library so there must be a copy in the UK somewhere!

Rosemary Sharples, by email

You can order it second-hand via Amazon.co.uk, but it's around £120!

LIGHTWEIGHT TOURING

I note the intention in the recent magazine for a future article on lightweight touring and thought you might like to take note of my experience of some lightweight/compact spare shoes. I have no connection with this product other than the pleasure of finding something so useful, which is also ethically sourced.

Shoes are a challenge for lightweight

cycle-touring, as spares can take up such a lot of space in the panniers. Doing without a spare pair of shoes can be okay on a short dry trip, but for longer or rainy tours a change of footwear is a nice luxury. Lightweight sandals or flip-flops are one option if you like them, but I have recently discovered some good value (£35/pair), comfortable, lightweight, well-made trainers (size 41 weigh only 260 grammes) called 'Jingas' that fold into a very small flat shape.

They come in a range of over 30 colour combinations, and are handmade made by a Brazilian fair trade cooperative. You can see the selection and buy online at www.jingashop.com. They are mostly used for salsa dancing in the UK (for which they're great!), but for more general use in Brazil. The soles are hard wearing but flexible compared with 'normal' trainers so are suitable for street use rather than for rough stony surfaces.

Ian Smith, Peterborough

We'd like to hear any lightweight touring tips you've got; we'll print our favourites in a sidebar (or sidebars) in the article. Keep the tips as short as possible – no more than two or three sentences per tip. Write or email the editor by 20th June, using 'CTC lightweight touring tips' as the top line of the address or the subject header of the email.



GALAXY SHRINKING?

Just read Chris Juden's excellent review of the Dawes Super Galaxy in your Feb/March issue. As a 30-year rider of Dawes bikes can I make a point for the taller cyclist? For me, at 6ft 4in (190cm), the 55cm maximum frame size of the Super Galaxy makes it an unviable option, as is the Ultra Galaxy. Therefore I have had to drop down to the Galaxy which does, or did, a max 63cm frame. It's very disappointing as until the last few years Dawes has always been a good bet for riders over six foot.

Simon Atchley, London

The 2008 Super Galaxy (we had the 2007 one) is listed in 54, 57 and 60cm sizes, as is the Ultra Galaxy and the Galaxy...

GPS MEETS MAC



Readers wanting to use a GPS unit with a Mac computer might be interested in trying TrailRunner, available from www.trailrunnerx.com for a donation of £17.50.

It is still in pre-release form and contains a lot of bugs and inconsistencies, but it shows great promise and is well worth supporting. You will also need a copy of LoadMyTracks, available free from www.cluetrust.com/LoadMyTracks.html. A copy of Google Earth is also helpful – available via Apple's website.

Roger Edwards, by email

Another way to make GPS units work with Macs is a program called Ascent. You can download it free from www.montebellosoftware.com/.

BIKES IN TAXIS...



I regularly commute to work in Peterborough from my home in a village on the outskirts of Huntingdon using my bike and the train. I have rarely had any problems with the trains and find it generally works well.

Recently I arrived at Peterborough station to find my train home was initially delayed and then cancelled due to an overhead power line failure. First Capital Connect were quick to lay on a replacement bus service, but would they take me and my bike?

As I approached the coach I was prepared for a quick, but probably polite, refusal, and contemplating a dark, 22-mile ride home that I enjoy regularly in the warmer months but was not really equipped for on a chilly day in early March.

Instead of the refusal one of the First Capital Connect staff, without fuss or argument, cheerfully informed me they would put me in a taxi (which they paid for). Within minutes my bike and I were in a London-style cab on our way home, arriving at my destination only half an

hour later than originally planned.

The efficient and polite way that the First Capital Connect staff dealt with the situation made me feel that, when it comes to cycle and rail integration, at last we might actually be getting there.

Andrew Harwin, Huntingdon

...BUT NOT BUSES



On a recent cycling trip in Wales, I arrived at Machynlleth just as it was beginning to get dark. I was tired and decided that I didn't feel like cycling the extra miles up an unknown track to our hostel, so I was delighted to learn that a bus would be leaving in just five minutes. I was told that the bus would even have a bike rack!

The bus arrived and it did indeed have a rack, but the driver refused to let me take my bike. He said he would risk losing his license if he allowed me on with it. I suggested that I could take my bike inside the bus as there was plenty of room. It was a modern bus with collapsible seats to accommodate people in wheelchairs and there were only two other passengers. No again!

The driver later explained that the Welsh Assembly had insisted on fitting the bike racks but in three years he had never used them. I have since taken this up with Arriva. Readers will probably not be surprised to hear that Arriva carried out a risk assessment and determined 'for the safety of the passenger and the driver the services would only load and unload cycles at designated stops'.

Why are we so obsessed with health and safety that we seem to disregard common sense? How ludicrous to have cycle racks unused because there are so many restrictions!

In the end I had no choice but to lock my bike up and travel on the bus without it, picking it up again the next day.

Cathy Gaultier-Carter,
Thame, Oxon

SKIS ON A BIKE



I have recently returned from a skiing trip in Obergurgl in Austria. One of the ski instructors had a cycle adapted for skis.

Jonathan Sladden, by email



OBITUARIES

PENNY BROWN

Penny died of cancer on 3rd March. She began cycle-touring while living in Birmingham, and her enthusiasm grew after she joined the ROH Orchestra at Covent Garden. In 1994 she rode a solo End-to-End in 9 days, and her CTC Certificate was always proudly displayed. She met husband Chris through cycling. They had many wonderful holidays, especially in Scotland. More recently she was fully occupied by bringing up her three children whilst gaining a 2:1 BA degree in Illustration. *Chris Tucker*

PETER J HUNT: 1920-2008

Peter was a keen member of the Cambridge DA, which he joined after his war service in 1946. In the 1940s he had an interest in racing. He founded the Eastern Roads Cycling Club, the DA's racing offshoot. He was best known as leader of The Explorers' Cycling Club, the DA's junior section for 12-16 year olds. He was very good with young people and was awarded the CTC's Certificate of Merit. In his last years he had ill health and had not been riding with us for some time. He died on 26th February. *George B Rich*

FRED POYNTER: 1926-2007

Fred died last June after suffering from a brain tumour. He was a life-member and had joined the South Bucks DA in the early 1950s, together with its racing offshoot, the South Bucks RC. He was a great tandem stoker, but his cycling virtually ended when a serious car accident severely damaged his legs. He then spent much time restoring coaches on the North Norfolk Railway – he was a skilled woodworker. He is sorely missed, not least by wife Myra. *Les Reason*

KEITH LEE

Died aged 60 on 22/3/08 following a long illness that he dealt with in a typical Keith way – hope, courage and a massive effort to try to get back on the bike. Keith cycled all his life, loving long-distance touring. For many years we 'got the miles in' on our tandem, in the local Dales, all over Britain, and in Europe. He loved the Ventoux area of Provence, enjoying the climbs and local wines equally. Keith will be missed locally, especially by his wife Sue, his best mate and partner in so many two-wheeled adventures. *Sue Lee*

ROUND THE WORLD RECORD ✉

We were disappointed that there was no mention (not even briefly) of Mark Beaumont in the Apr/May issue of Cycle. Mark, as we're sure most cyclists know, completed an unsupported world cycle tour on February 15th in a new world record time of 195 days. We were doubly disappointed as Mark is a CTC member. I thought touring was the mainstay of CTC.

Other cycle publications and national newspapers have included articles and interviews about this quite amazing feat. Indeed, we in Scotland have just had an excellent four-part series on the BBC about his tour called 'The man who cycled the world' which was mainly made up of Mark's own video diary. This programme was probably not shown in England, much to your loss. We in Fife and Kinross are very proud of Mark's achievement and would like to take this opportunity to heartily congratulate him.

**Charles Brown,
Fife & Kinross CTC**

I tried to get hold of Mark for an interview in this issue, but was unable to do so in time. Stay tuned.

LEARNING TO RIDE ✉

Photo: Likeabike

I was interested to see the letter about Ian Hewitt's experiences of teaching his grandchildren to ride their bikes. I am an Occupational Therapist (OT) working with children with a variety of special needs and physical difficulties.

Over recent years we have run groups jointly with the local council road safety team, and have successfully used this approach to teach these children to ride their bikes independently. Often these children (ages 7-plus) have struggled for years and the sense of achievement felt by the children (and parents!) when they

set off unaided is amazing. The knock on benefits to physical skills, health, self-esteem and social interaction are huge. If CTC would like to find out more, please get in touch. We're not the only group in the country working like this to make cycling accessible to all.

There are many others doing similar groups (we weren't the first!) and most use this approach of pedals off, pushing the bike, scooting, then supported riding before independence. It definitely works!

Helen Joiner, Leeds

CARBON RATED @

It was good to read Mike Burrows on his usual good form, writing pragmatically about where it is advantageous to use carbon in bikes and where not (April/May issue).

The article included a photo of one of his monocoque carbon bikes, which looks the same as the one in his excellent book 'Bicycle Design'. In that book he describes it as: 'Still the best, but you can't buy it.'

This Burrows monocoque kills two birds with one stone – the frame encloses the entire drivetrain (apart from the cranks etc.), which makes it more aerodynamically efficient, and also increases the life of chain and sprocket on account of them being protected from all the road muck. I realise there are a lot of town bikes with hub-type gears that already do this, but I have not yet found a racing bike – with the more efficient derailleur gears – that does so.

Writing as a cyclist who is time-poor (like many parents), and not-quite-so money-poor, I spend a disproportionate amount of my time cleaning chains and cog-wheels, and a disproportionate amount of money replacing them. I would dearly like to buy a bike of this monocoque kind, to free up time (though not necessarily money), and to go faster for the same effort. Will it ever be available?

Malcolm Lamming, by email

CHEAP BIKES ✉

I thought you might like to know another possible source for an inexpensive steed: your local CTC-friendly family bike shop.

I live in Preston and have used the same bike shop for over 20 years. One of its characteristics is that it sells second hand bikes of various types. With a little judicious inspection, it is possible to pick up a reasonable vehicle for £50 – possibly

one turned in by a person influenced by changes in bike design and therefore not as worn out as you might think.

My own purchase was a second-hand Claud Butler Pagan hardtail mountain bike. It was £50, including a look over by the bike shop owner and a replacement rear mech cable. Worn, yes, but six months later it is still giving very good service on my local Sustrans routes, etc. I use it as a hack, but there's enough grip and stopping power for use off-road.

Of course, it helps if you have some nouse to overcome any problems you may encounter which were not obvious at purchase (none of the latter, so far, in my case!) and you need to look for the appropriate place to buy it – not every shop sells second hand bikes – but I would still recommend a good look around.

Mike Bridges, Preston, Lancs

**NOT SO SUPERMARKETS** @

Customers visiting UK supermarkets by cycle will have seen the good the bad and the bizarre in terms of cycle parking provision.

A 'leading' supermarket insists on fixing its toast-rack bike stands right against walls with the result that your bike does not get enough support from the stand.

Other examples to be found include old-style 'wheel-grabbers' (located under a cigarette stubbing-out point at my local supermarket!); stands uncovered from the elements; parking hidden from public view; and, of course, a complete absence of facilities.

Do other members feel that we should be launching a campaign aimed at bringing the leading seven supermarket chains into line with agreed minimum cycle parking standards? With supermarket green credentials frequently assessed in the media, I'm sure that this campaign would get media interest.

Rob Sawyer, Macclesfield Borough BUG

We reserve the right to edit letters for space and clarity. The editor reads all letters and emails, and all are acknowledged, but we cannot guarantee that yours will be published or that you'll get a detailed reply.

You can use the letters page to comment on any cycling topic, but if you have a specific complaint or query about CTC policy that you want answering, you should address it to the relevant councillor or National Office staff member.