

Whatever your favourite form of cycling, CTC's new member group structure should make it easier to find regular riding companions. **Rob Fuller** explains

# 21<sup>st</sup> century club riding

**E**very week, rain or shine, CTC groups are out spinning along through the lanes, enjoying the countryside and the camaraderie. For many cyclists, one of the main attractions of CTC membership is the opportunity to share their passion for cycling with like-minded people.

For more than a century, CTC's local groups have been providing fellowship and riding activities to CTC members in their area. But the cycling landscape is changing, and this April sees the biggest shake-up since their formation in the way CTC's local groups are structured and the way they interact with their members and the wider cycling world. These changes are the culmination of a three-year process, led by National Council and involving widespread consultation amongst members.

## CTC member groups

The first CTC member groups, known as District Associations, were set up in the early 1900s. Despite a surprising early resistance from the organisation to their existence, the idea became popular. In a short time, District Associations covered much of the UK. A key aspect of the local groups structure at that time was that each DA, by agreement with the club and neighbouring DAs, could 'claim' a specific region of the country as their territory. As a result, the DA effectively controlled all club activities in their area and any new members joining the club were automatically allocated to the DA in their area.

## Why change?

CTC's local groups are the foundation of everything we do, and we want to maximise the opportunities for group riding and the benefits it brings to all our members. Yet even at the height of their popularity, fewer than 20% of club members had any interaction with their local group.

Sometimes CTC members didn't ride with their local group because of a lack of awareness. Many new members have said that they found the terms District Association and Section confusing. For others, the local group did not provide the type of riding that interested them – whether that happened to be mountain biking, family riding, or whatever. Lastly, rightly or wrongly, it has been recognised that a stereotype of DA riding has emerged which is often ill informed but might put some members off. This is an opportunity for a fresh start.

Today, with the club approaching record membership levels and with many more types of cycling now popular, it is of paramount importance that our local group structure is able to reflect the huge range of interests of



Photos: Jason@cycling-images.co.uk

our members. Alongside this, CTC has a stated aim to be the most diverse cycling organisation in the country, something that we won't achieve without giving members the opportunity to set up new groups that reflect their local communities.

## The key changes

■ **Terminology.** All groups are now known simply as 'CTC Member Groups'. Each group has also simplified its name to provide a much clearer description of where they are based and/or what they do i.e. CTC South West London Beginners or York CTC.

■ **Geography.** The previous fixed geographic boundaries will be removed. Whilst the majority of groups will still be

**Want to set up a CTC Member Group for recumbent cyclists? No problem**

## CTC MEMBER GROUPS

based around a town or county, there will be no restriction on groups having overlapping boundaries – or, indeed, having no boundaries at all.

■ **Multiple membership.** Members will now be able claim membership of more than one local group. Whilst new members will still be allocated to their nearest group upon joining, they will also be able to register their involvement with other member groups. This means that you should receive information, news and invites to events from all your groups rather than just your 'home' group.

■ **New groups.** It is now a much simpler process to set up and register a new member group.

■ **Officer roles.** The number and type of officers that groups are required to have has been simplified to ensure that the essential bureaucracy doesn't get in the way of the cycling. In addition, the new role of Welfare Officer has been created to ensure that groups are able to meet the demands of involving children and vulnerable adults in their activities.

### The new groups

At their AGMs last October, all current CTC groups were asked to update National Office on their new identities and any changes to geographic area covered, officer roles, volunteer names, etc. Since then, staff at National Office have been working hard to build all of these changes into the national member database. This in itself has been no small task as the software has had to be significantly updated to reflect the new flexible arrangements. Finally, during March, the member groups have been updating their lists of current members.

Those of you already familiar with the member groups structure will note some significant changes in both the names of the groups and the areas covered. You will also notice some old names missing where groups have dissolved but also some new names where new groups are already forming. Moreover, the list isn't yet complete. Not only are a number of groups still finalising their details, but there are new groups contacting National Office on a regular basis. So if your group isn't there, don't panic. Either contact your local group representative or get in touch with Adrian Lawson at National Office (details below).

### Just the FAQs

■ **How do I find out what's going on in my area?**

The list is on the website at [www.ctc.org.uk/groupsandclubs](http://www.ctc.org.uk/groupsandclubs). You can obtain a printed copy from CTC National Office. Call 0844 736 8450.

■ **How can I change my member group or register with other groups?**

Phone the CTC Membership Department on 0844 736 8451. In time, you will be able to sort this out online.

■ **What do I do if there's nothing near me?**

If there is no local group near you, or if that group doesn't do the sort of cycling that appeals to you, then why not set up your own group? You could set up a group for mountain biking, recumbent cycling or faster, sportive-type cycling – or almost anything else. All you'll do is find 10 like-minded individuals. For advice on setting up a new member group, contact Adrian Lawson at National Office: [Adrian.lawson@ctc.org.uk](mailto:Adrian.lawson@ctc.org.uk), tel: 01483 238331.



CTC member groups aren't all about 50-mile rides to the cafe. You could set up a group for family beginners (above)



## Cycle Bristol CTC

Formerly part of Bristol DA, Cycle Bristol CTC are now a separate group with the aim of extending the reach and diversity of activities they provide. An example of this is their Get Gorge-ous Cycle Challenge, which aims to encourage people out on their bikes on a regular basis to improve their fitness and wellbeing. It is aimed at people who have not previously been regular cyclists, and it culminates in a 50-mile ride from Bristol to Cheddar, up the Gorge and back to Bristol on 13th June. There's a spectacular climb through Cheddar gorge and an exhilarating descent back down again.

Already more than 100 riders have signed up. These riders have committed to do a series of training rides of increasing distances (10, 15, 20 and 30 miles) before they undertake the Cycle Challenge in June. Experienced cyclists help with tips and support and there is a series of meetings where people can get information about ride preparation, what bike to ride, what to wear, etc.

For more information about Cycle Bristol CTC, visit [www.ctcwest.org.uk/bristol/](http://www.ctcwest.org.uk/bristol/)