

CYCLE LETTERS

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

AUDAX OK



In reply to Peter Kenner's letter in the June/July issue: audax is predominantly a tourist event with max and min time limits. This equates to quite low average speeds and, once completed, does not have a result or finishing sheet. The whole concept of the ride is to complete the distance within the allocated time, much the same as the CTC 50-in-4 and 100-in-8 rides.

It is not a case of seeing how fast you can ride through the countryside. It never has been and never will be under Audax UK regulations. If Peter looks at a copy of *Arrivée*, the audax magazine, he will find that the majority of riders have mudguards, racks, saddlebags and even lights – real touring machines not really conducive to riding at speed.

Furthermore, the revenue from the two audax events run by Lancaster and South Cumbria CTC each year is used by the organiser to subsidise the club and its activities. This surely is a good thing for the membership?

David Core, Lancaster and South Cumbria CTC & Audax UK

CYCLE SPORT

In your head-to-head last issue, Matt Wilson, writing about what gets the British public onto bikes, says: 'The question here is: what does professional cycling do to alter these sorts of prejudice?'

Professional cycling is just the tip of a motivational iceberg. The real question is: what does the buzz of competition do to get bums on saddles? And the answer is 'lots'. I am lucky enough to live in a town where a Go-ride club has been launched, with great success. And

all those kids who now time trial, cyclo-cross and road race, do they cycle to school? You bet they do!

The notion that 'proper cyclists' – read athletic types in lycra – marginalise Josephine Public on a bike and leave her more vulnerable on the road is gainsaid by the evidence that motorists give more room to those who do *not* appear to be 'proper cyclists': blondes without helmets get the widest berth of all. All cycling is good: let none of us be marginalised.

Brian Kennedy

I think that perhaps you asked the wrong question. Cycle sport does appear to get people cycling but sadly it does not get them out of their cars. If you attend any cycle sport event, the vast majority of participants have travelled there by car, some from a great distance. Similarly, when helping on a ladies' race a few weeks ago, there were seven motor vehicles going round the circuit with the competitors. In total the cars and motor bikes did 350 miles, creating extra traffic and the pollution that goes with it.

I and other CTC members work constantly to encourage the use of bikes as a viable alternative to motor vehicles but cycle sport most definitely does not do that.

Ian Burt



THAT WAS THEN

Bicycle suspension, 75 years ago...

When our roads were very much rougher than they are today, almost every imaginable kind of shock absorber was placed on the market, but the demand was never sufficient to keep the inventions alive. Volumes could be written on the subject, for we had spring seat pillars, spring forks, spring handlebars, and innumerable varieties of spring frames. One of the most famous was the BSA spring frame, upon which Harry Green broke several records; but today nothing of this sort survives. And if springing devices were not wanted for water-bound macadam roads, who would buy them for the smooth speedways of today? The chief trouble has always been that springs involve a loss of power, and although engines may have plenty to spare this does not apply to human beings.

Editorial response re. springs on bicycles – CTC Gazette, 1935

THE FUNNY SIDE

I was delighted to read Rex Coley's name in Roy Spilsbury's letter (Cycle, June-July), in which he bemoans the lack of a giggle factor in cycling stories today. Rex was Cycling's esteemed Cycle Touring Advisor when I first joined Cycling on Fleet Street in the 1970s, and his dry sense of humour wasn't confined to the printed page.

Editor Ken Evans was a snappy dresser and turned up one day in a vividly coloured shirt, causing Coley to shield his eyes and cry out, 'It's The Shirt'. The name stuck. Henceforth, even Ken referred to himself as 'The Shirt'.

He dubbed assistant editor Sid Saltmarsh 'The Twins' – Salt and Marsh. Coley would turn up at the office, and ask, 'Are they in?' – indicating Sid's empty desk. If the answer was 'Yes', Coley would then ask, 'Both of them?'

He was very funny man, and a brilliant writer. We all have funny cycling tales to tell. But few of us can translate it to the written page

Keith Bingham, Dorking

WELCOME TO SCOTLAND

I've just completed Land's End to John O'Groats, cycle-camping. I really enjoyed

the trip – far and away the longest I've achieved to date.

My reason for writing is this: I felt a warm glow cycling in Scotland as I genuinely felt welcome on the roads. A touring bike, fully loaded with camping gear, with me pedalling it, is a pretty slow, lumbering beast that inevitably causes a little traffic nuisance. Most drivers are considerate and patient people and I had very few reasons for complaint as I trundled along the A30, then up to Bristol, Wye Valley, etc. England really is very nice overall.

However, when I got to Scotland everything changed. Cars, vans, and lorries would, without fail, slow down and overtake very carefully and considerately. Not once in Scotland did I feel at all pressured or intimidated. I got lost on a few occasions and three times in the outskirts of Edinburgh, while standing studying the map, I was approached by a local and offered help even before I'd asked.

Frank Manning, Jodrell Bank

POST SCRIPT



I write as a postman of over 20 years, all spent on bicycle delivery. Many of my colleagues and myself were saddened to hear late last year of Royal Mail's plans to dispense with almost all cycle deliveries. These would be replaced with two-man teams driving 'car-derived vans' or single posties using high-capacity trolleys for walks less than a mile from the delivery office.

Many of us do not wish to use vans because of the extra packets we will have to deliver. Bulk packets are at the moment delivered by vans, which also handle our many extra bags, which are deposited in pouch boxes or safe points on our delivery routes.

Another anxiety for posties is that many of us enjoy the freedom of cycling

to our deliveries and being our own masters – being able to deliver at our own pace and using our own methods of tackling the job. We also enjoy not having to be waited for or having to wait for colleagues while working in 'loops' around vans.

Max Lambert, Colchester

For an update on CTC's campaign on this topic, see ctc.org.uk/royalmail.

ON THE WRONG SIDE

I had a thought the other day: why can't cyclists cycle facing oncoming traffic? A cyclist uses the same amount of road space no matter which way he is facing. Walkers are advised to walk facing oncoming traffic, so why not cyclists? Think of the advantages. You will be facing oncoming cars, some of which are so quiet that you can't hear them until they have run you off the road – and when electric cars become more common they will be even worse.

You would also see the face of the oncoming motorist for future reference. Gone would be the days when nutters can approach you from behind and shout at you or smack you on the back with a rolled up newspaper. If you rode two abreast you could see approaching motorists and fall into a single line.

The more I think about this, the more it makes sense. Roundabouts and traffic lights? Best to get off and walk.

Dennis E Hiller, Chorley

This isn't as crazy as it sounds, when you consider the London trial of cyclists being allowed to ride against the traffic flow on one-way streets. Problems arise when you consider not just roundabouts and traffic lights but junctions of *any kind*: left turning traffic would be looking where you're not.

DIVERSITY & EQUALITY

Having read the letter from Gary Wilson in your latest magazine, I decided to flick through and see if he was right.

I was shocked to see in that issue there was only one Asian woman in the magazine and she was in the picture that had been put in to respond to Mr Wilson's letter. The only other two examples of anyone who wasn't white were both in adverts.

CTC is meant to be a modern magazine that promotes new, interesting and different ways to cycle, travel and

OBITUARIES

LES WARNER MBE

Died 18th June, aged 82, after a long illness. Les joined the CTC staff in 1953 and was National Secretary (Chief Executive, as was) from 1959 for 21 years. Throughout that time he handled major negotiations with Government and other authorities, represented CTC at countless meetings, conferences and events relating to the promotion of cycling for travel and transport, road safety, countryside access etc.

Les began cycling as a wartime evacuee exploring the Surrey countryside. Returning to London he joined the South Western Road Club. It was on a CTC tour that Les met Sheila Messenger, whom he married in 1960. The Warners led tours at home and abroad and never owned a car.

Les took the reins of CTC with cycling and membership both in decline. From a 1971 low, CTC membership more than doubled to 40,000 by 1980, when Les's growing workload precipitated an early retirement. Earlier that year Les received the MBE with characteristic modesty: as an honour for CTC rather than himself. He was also awarded the Bidlake medal and a new role as CTC President.

Les went on to work for WWF and then several voluntary positions associated with his other interests, particularly music, French and literature. For most of the last 30 years Les continued to enjoy cycling. That we can also do so is in no small way due to his work. He leaves a devoted wife Sheila, three children, and eight grandchildren. (A longer obituary for Les Warner appears on the CTC website.) *Chris Juden*

ERIC HARRISON

Died after a stroke, aged 81, on 27th January. He joined Bramley Wheelers in 1945, club riding and racing until RAF National Service. Following discharge he worked for the Postal Service. He was a member of the National Hill Climb Championship in 1954 and '57, and was later a BCF coach and active with the VTTA. He retired to the Lake District and joined the Patterdale Mountain Rescue Team. He completed the Wainwright 240 peaks in the winter of his 65th year. *M R Arundale*

OBITUARIES

LEONARD J DUFFIN: 1922-2010

Died from a leg infection in February. Len was a lifelong cyclist who never drove a car and was a past president and treasurer of Essex DA. With his wife Minnie he rode tandem when he joined CTC and the Romford Section in 1951, transferring to the Western Section in 1964. He was a founder of the Tandem Club with Don Jourmet in the 1960s. After Min's death in 1987 his cycling declined and he took up canal boating. *Charles Comport*

PETER STUBBS: 1951-2010

Peter was fatally injured on 4th May when struck by a car on the A20. A keen long-distance rider, touring with West Kent DA and racing 12 and 24 hour time trials with Catford Cycling Club, he was one of 19 Britons to complete the 1975 Paris-Brest-Paris. A year later he helped found Audax UK. His palmarès included 400 miles in the 1977 Mersey Roads 24. Peter put a lot into cycling, running and helping out at events with Catford CC, West Kent and the Kent Cycling Association. *Catford CC and West Kent CTC*

LEN HOOK: 1921-2010

Died peacefully aged 89 on 12th March. Len was a founder member of the BLRC along with Percy Stallard. In 1945 he won a stage of the Tour of Britain. When he crashed in the event a year later, he married Betty Durrant after she had picked him up from the gutter. In 1950 he was the only rider to complete the first Warsaw-Berlin-Prague Peace Race, and in 1951 he finished 5th in the London-Holyhead and 3rd in the Dover-London. He later managed British international cycling teams. In 2003 he joined CTC. *Leslie Osborne*

VIVIENNE TREMAINE

Tragically killed aged 66 in a road traffic accident on the 6th April while touring in Australia with her partner Jesse. They were hit from behind, concussing Jesse and killing Vivienne; a police investigation is ongoing. Vivienne travelled extensively, and spent much of her life living on a boat which she and her late husband Roy sailed around the world. In later years, Vivienne was a regular rider with CTC Diss in Norfolk. *Paul Moore*

explore and modern, efficient ways to get around on bicycles. Yet CTC gives the impression of being old fashioned and backward in its multiculturalism.

Being a girl myself and having two sisters, I was upset to see that about 85% of the magazine's pictures and articles were aimed directly to your male readers and all the writers are men. Again this not does represent the British population.

Leah Jones, aged 13, Hackney

Diversity and equality are issues that CTC is engaged with – see, in particular, the article on the Cycle Champions on page 48.

BIKES FOR WOMEN

I am 149cm tall, or just under 4ft 11in in old money. I have never found a quality bike off-the-peg to fit so my bikes are bespoke. Expensive! I did consider Islabikes very seriously for my most recent bike but in the end opted for a Roberts – an urban bike to complement my Longstaff tourer.

Of course it's not just the frame. There are problems obtaining good quality short-reach levers, especially for drops – we modified my drop-bar levers by fixing little spacers inside to force the levers a bit nearer the handlebars. There are problems obtaining quality short cranks – I'll hang on to my TA 160s forever! Then there's gloves – very little to choose from – and shoes, also very little to choose from in size 4.

Viv Mackay, Romsey

FOREVER LEATHER

I attended York Cycle Show on the Saturday and visited the Brooks stall where I spoke with Steve Green. I had with me a Brooks Pro saddle that has caused me problems for a few years in that the 'nose' is bent and offset. I just wanted advice. Steve took the saddle and said he would have a look at it. I agreed that I would pay any costs.

Just three days later on Tuesday I received a parcel from Steve containing my old saddle and a new saddle as well. In a note he explained that the repair of my old saddle was doubtful and that he had sent me the 'slight second' (I haven't spotted any fault yet!). The biggest surprise – 'No charge'.

I'd like compliment this incredible service from both Steve and Brooks. It was also a reminder to me why I have

Brooks saddles on all my solo bicycles and tandems.

Don Crabtree

A FITTER WORKFORCE



The June/July Workplace Challenge article contained a slip. Fuel savings, costs, CO2 and energy figures were all consistent, but the estimate of pounds of fat burnt was over optimistic. Looks like someone got their kilojoules and kilocalories mixed up. The blubber number should be roughly 20 stones rather than half a ton.

Still worthwhile, but worth also putting into perspective in the context of cycling's historical place in transport. Back in 1950 – when we still had food rationing and Woodbines were a bob for 20, bike sheds at school were full, as were those in the workplace – a war-weary populace managed to ride 15 billion miles, six times the cycling mileage of today (nearer eight or nine times per head).

Those extra miles would amount now to somewhere between 2.5 and 5 megatons of CO2 saved annually, or 50,000 tons of human adipose fuel burnt. Spread across 60 million waistlines, that adds up to nearly a stone and a half per person over 10 years.

Michael Woodman, Exeter

Letters are edited for space (if above 150 words), clarity and, if necessary, legality. Please note that if you have specific complaint or query about CTC policy, you should address it to your CTC Councillor or relevant national office staff member. Letters and emails for the next issue must arrive by 27th August.