

# Opinion Letters

**THIS MONTH** CYCLING WITH PARKINSON'S, GEAR INCHES, BIKES ON TRAINS, THE JOY OF TANDEM, AND MORE

## Get in touch

**LETTERS** are edited for space, clarity and, if necessary, legality. Please note that if you have specific complaint or query about Cycling UK policy, you should address it to the relevant national office staff member. Feedback for the next issue must arrive by 30 August.

**WRITE TO:** Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ or email  
@ [cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk](mailto:cycle@jamespembrokemedia.co.uk)



Letter of the month

Left: Alamy

## BACK IN THE SADDLE

**I**n my early sixties, I have rediscovered a love of cycling following a spate of ill health. In 2013 I received a diagnosis that was to change my life: "You have Parkinson's Disease." The following year I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, treatment for which involved major surgery and six months of chemotherapy. This November will mark five years since the operation, and I plan to celebrate with a bike ride along the Pentewan Valley to Mevagissey in Cornwall.

I recently purchased an ex-hire bike, having not ridden for 40 years, after reading an article by a Parkinson's sufferer who about wrote how cycling improved his health and well-being. Balance is a major issue in people with Parkinson's, hence the many falls recorded. However, I have found that on my bike my balance is fine – a bit wobbly when cars overtake me on the country lanes, but my confidence is growing and I am getting better!

Once I put my helmet on I am no longer Tony with Parkinson's but just Tony the cyclist, enjoying the thrill of cycling and blending in with cyclists of all ages also enjoying their bikes. I hope this letter may encourage more people with Parkinson's to try cycling again so that they can escape the shackles of the Parkinson's label and experience the joy of cycling and all the benefits it can offer.

Tony Baxter

## Win a set of Lezyne lights worth £110

The letter of the month wins a set of Lezyne Macro Drive 1100XL / Strip Drive Pro lights, courtesy of Upgrade Bikes. The versatile front light delivers 1100 lumens on its highest setting yet lasts 78 hours on its lowest, while the rear – at up to 300 lumens – is ultra-bright even in daylight. For more information about these lights, or to find your local stockist, visit [upgradebikes.co.uk](http://upgradebikes.co.uk)



## Otterly delightful

I was delighted to read Sam Jones's article about his tour of the Western Isles in the April/May issue. I did a similar ride with my dad 26 years ago to celebrate the end of my GCSEs.

Our trip back then also found its way in to the pages of what was then the CTC magazine (April/May 1995). Delight at otters crossing causeways, the slightly soggy weather, northerly wind on the Uists, and small ferries battling through waves were themes of our ride that we shared with Sam's.

Adam Birchall



## Gears without tears

I have just read the June/July issue of Cycle and would like to say, as a layman, a special thanks for your Cyclopedia Knowhow page. In the past I've found that the technical aspects of some articles required knowledge and experience that was beyond me. Your article on lower gears and the accompanying 'Jargon Buster' was great. Please keep it up!

Peter Butler



## Shhhhh!

Whilst cycling on The Way of the Roses route between Boroughbridge and York, we passed through Upper Dunsford, where it appears cycling creates an excessive amount of noise. No mention of cars, tractors, or other vehicles, just those loud bicycles!

*Stuart Smith*

## Railing at Eurostar

I recently set out to book bikes on the Eurostar to Paris for the first leg of two weeks of touring, assuming that Eurostar's promise a couple of years ago that "we are not intending to go ahead with the requirement for all bikes to be carried in boxes and will accept fully-mounted bikes" still held true.

Apparently only to a very limited degree: two bikes per train, the rest in boxes. Boxes which our bikes wouldn't fit, as it happens, or not without fairly extensive and time-consuming dismantling.

Of course, the services were booked up way ahead, even at the price Eurostar now charge – £55 per bike per journey, thus an extra £220 on top of the fares. In the end it was cheaper to take our bikes on a train to Portsmouth, a ferry to Caen, then an SNCF service to Paris than go by Eurostar, even if the option had been there. An exciting return to the days when travel took some time!

*Simon Lewandowski*

## In the wrong gear

In Cyclopedia Knowhow, page 66 of the June/July issue, the number crunching for gear measurements has a mistake and an omission. The gear development example is wrong. The correct gear development for the common example is 6.39 metres, not 2.03 as given.

There is a fourth, and technically better, way to represent gears. It was publicised by the late Sheldon Brown as the gain ratio. It is the ratio between the distance (round) travelled by the pedals to the distance (along) travelled by the bicycle. For 170mm cranks, the example has a gain ratio of 5.98. Gain ratio doesn't have units, so does not depend on metric and inch measurements, and it factors in the leverage of longer or shorter cranks.

*Mark Irving*

**I cringed when I saw that, Mark. I know how to calculate development but printed a figure that hadn't been multiplied by pi. Gain ratio is an interesting alternative to inches and development but not in common use.**



## Sharing the joy

Having just returned from The Tandem Club's national rally, I was delighted to see reference to the family tandem in Paul Tuohy's editorial. I was the reluctant cyclist, and our first tandem allowed me to 'keep up' with my husband. We have gone through variations as our three children have grown, from trailers to triplets to tandems. They were used for the school run, for holidays, and for entertaining our children's friends.

The Tandem Club rallies, national and international, have given us fresh air, exercise, fun and lasting friendships. We have explored lovely countryside in the UK and visited countries we might never have been to, such as Sweden, the Czech Republic, and Germany.

I would encourage any reluctant cyclist (or any cyclist) to find a friend and try a tandem – definitely twice the fun!

*Helen Blundell*

### Obituaries

Are published online at [cyclinguk.org/obituaries](http://cyclinguk.org/obituaries). Contact [publicity@cyclinguk.org](mailto:publicity@cyclinguk.org)



## Art of the month

### Yarn bombing

Thought these crocheted cycle-paintwork protectors on a row of Sheffield stands in Lublin in Poland were worth a view.

*Robin Bevis*

## CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other members on the Cycling UK forum: [forum.cyclinguk.org](http://forum.cyclinguk.org). Here's an abridged extract from a recent thread: [cyclinguk.org/forum-cyclingshorts](http://cyclinguk.org/forum-cyclingshorts)



### CYCLING SHORTS – RECOMMENDATIONS?

**LittleGreyCat:** I have been buying cycling shorts/longs from Aldi and Lidl. The latest pair from Lidl, with fleece round the edge of the padding, are chafing. Any well-known brands with a sumptuous chammy?  
**landsurfer:** Planet X Clubman bib-shorts. Super comfort, super quality, not expensive.  
**cyclemad:** I usually wear Assos/Castelli/Santini bib-shorts and use chamois cream on long rides. Most importantly, no underwear. I have, however, just purchased a pair of DHB Blok bib-shorts on a recommendation, and am very impressed.  
**jimlews:** £2.99 from the charity shop. The only place I can find shorts

in my size (28in w) with pockets. No 'high tech' fabric, no padding, but comfortable for 70-80 miles.

**NUKE:** If you don't want the sports person look, try Corinne Dennis – [corinnedennis.co.uk](http://corinnedennis.co.uk).

**JohnW:** When you say 'sumptuous chammy', be careful. Sumptuous padding can mean no ventilation, which can mean hot and sweaty, which then can dry and leave salt crystals rubbing the skin, which can mean dreadful sores.

**ElaineB:** I would try Castelli, not cheap but sometimes you do get what you pay for. Put some Assos chamois cream on you, not the pad, lower the saddle a touch (1/4in), and hopefully you will have no more problems.