

# CYCLE LETTERS

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## ODE TO AUTUMN

I was wondering if you would like to use the attached photo in Cycle magazine? There is no particular story to go with it other than the fact that it seemed to sum up an autumn Sunday morning club ride. It was a foggy start and as we climbed up to higher ground (Bagwich Lane near Godshill) the mist cleared slightly but was still thick enough to create some tempting photo opportunities. I fumbled for my trusty camera and snapped a few shots. Among the blurred pics of the road and my own face was this image, which captured the moment!

The riders featured are members of the Wayfarer Cycle Touring Club, from the Isle of Wight.

Alan Rowe, Isle of Wight

**Any interesting cycling photos for the Letters pages are gratefully received. Don't send your only copy: a digital photo or a duplicate is better. And bear in mind that we might not have room to print all that we receive.**

## MADE IN BRITAIN

Could we please have an article about traditional British-made steel-framed bicycles. I am sure that British

manufacturers – for example, Mercian, Argos, Bob Jackson and others – deserve some mention. It seems these days that every magazine is full to the brim with articles about such makes as Specialized, Trek, GT, Marin and so on. I guess it is fashionable to ride anything other than British machines. I am sure that it is the cycling press that is responsible for, in part at least, killing off Raleigh! I have two steel-framed (Reynolds) machines: a 26-year-old Raleigh Professional, still in near perfect condition, and a nearly new Mercian Strada. I have no desire to have anything modern and I am sure there are many like me. So, please give this a thought. The British cycle industry needs support and encouragement!

R S Fuller, by email

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## BIKING MOUNTAINS

We (husband Bill and myself) are just back from a Scottish coast-to-coast mountain bike trip, including Corrievaraick Pass, over the shoulder of Culardoch to Braemar, and the Capel Mounth track over to Glen Clova, all above 700m. We had booked B&Bs and were not camping.

Al Churner (Biking Mountains, Oct 08) seems to be happy cycling all day with a big rucksack. I find panniers easier for most terrain. But for steep or very rocky ground, I can wear my pannier like a rucksack. The straps on the pannier buckles have been lengthened so they do not sit on my shoulder blades. All the heavy gear is on my back and this is reasonably comfortable for some hours.

The bike is nothing fancy – a Ridgeback Meteor hybrid, on which I changed the chainset to give lower gearing.

Eileen Holttum,  
Edinburgh

May I respond to two items in the Oct/Nov edition of Cycle? Firstly, the article about cycling mountains. Are Al Churner and his mates bonkers? As a cyclist, mountaineer and rock-climber, I know about loads. I use a hardtail bike for access to hills and rock-

climbs. The load goes into the panniers for the bike bit and into a rucksack for the walking bit. I note that at least one of them had a rack, which was used to carry his helmet. Also, a quick comment about bivvy bags. They're okay on your own but two quality bags weighs more than the lightest available two-man tent.

Secondly, the bits about fixed-wheel bikes. Many cyclists of my age (74) who were riding in the 1950s could tell you a thing or two about fixed-wheel bikes. In those days I was a member of the Oxford City Road Club and I think that I can say that at least 80-90% of its members rode fixed, both for touring and time trials. That this form of cycling should become some sort of cult I find odd.

These days I do ride gears, but a nice, simple fixed-wheel bike (or should I call it a 'fixer' to keep up with the times?) has its attractions. With the frame and every component made in the UK, what more could one ask for?

Bob Brown, Dingwall

**The best way to carry loads off-road depends not just on personal preference but on the type of riding you're doing. Rough-stuff touring, where you might be walking some sections, is fine with the load on the bike. For mountain biking over difficult terrain, having the load on your back is better for bike control than the dead weight of panniers.**

## FIXED CAPITAL

The article on fixed-wheel bikes in the Oct/Nov issue prompted me to check over my own rather neglected 'fixie' and venture out on it, if only to remind me





why it has been so little used.

So last Friday, on the first sunny day since reading about the big surge of London 'fixie' riders, I set forth on a carefully planned flat circuit and found out very quickly why I was not alone in favouring my 24, 27 and 30 gear bikes. You see, instead of the usual benign weather (i.e. relatively little wind) around London and district, I was cycling on the Lancashire plain and immediately found myself spinning my 42x17 (66.7 inch) gear before I made a sharp turn and found progress was a lot slower – and much harder – due to a NNW 23mph headwind, gusting to 31mph (the Met Office told me on my return). After only a 26-mile ride I was left with aching thighs for two days, so I doubt if I will be repeating the exercise.

Such winds are commonplace and frequently much higher, hence there being few, if any, 'fixie' riders hereabouts. However, as a result of riding regularly in such conditions, including a 15-mile commute before I retired, I found that the need to fight such headwinds over 20 or 30 miles in whatever gear was necessary helped enormously when, with my friends, I completed (at age 58) the Raid Pyrenean, followed by the Raids Alpine, Dolomites and Corsica – at least you could freewheel after a 10 or 15km climb!

In case there are those who are put off trying a 'fixie' because of the cost, I would point out that there are lots of older steel frames with horizontal dropouts that can adjust to a fixed-wheel chain and these could be picked up at little cost. I also wonder if a mention could be made as to 'fixie' gearing preferences to guide beginners.

Frank Nocetti, Liverpool

### DIGITAL CYCLE

As a member of CTC and an internet user, I would like to ask if you have any plans to publish Cycle in electronic format. This would:

1. Reduce harm on the environment by reducing use of paper, and transportation of copies.
2. Reduce printing costs and costs of postage, sorting etc.

You would of course still need to print many copies for those who wish to receive a printed version, but for people who elect for an electronic copy only, this would have the savings above. I

would also like to be able as a member to scroll through past editions online.

Chris Wilby, by email

**As yet, there are no plans for a digital version of the magazine to appear alongside the printed version. However, we are in the process of archiving recent issues of the magazine as PDFs on the members-only section of the website. This will take some time.**

### IT'S A WINNER

Just thought that I'd let you know that we're really pleased with the Puky bicycle that I won in the Cycle magazine prize draw in May. Although it's been a wet summer, my seven-year-old son Alasdair has been thrilled with his new bike. It's now in regular use for the journey to school, and should get many more years of use, as five-year-old Hazel already has her eye on it!

The photo was taken on a sunny day in July in Kings Norton park, Birmingham, on National Cycle Network Route 5.

Alison Kennedy, Birmingham



### DOWN THE DANUBE

I have often wondered how much response advertisers receive from advertisements placed in Cycle magazine, especially the December/January edition.

This year an advertisement for a guided tour of the Danube cycle path caught my eye so I sent for details. The company (Mercurio-Bike-Travel.co.uk) were advertising for trips on the Elbe and the Rhine/Mosel paths as well as the Danube.

## LOCAL HEROES



### STEVE KINSELLA

Right to Ride campaigner for the South West Region

**What's your main project at the moment?**

› Bristol Cycling City

**What's been your best moment as a volunteer?**

› Experiencing utility cycling in the Netherlands, where the bicycle has priority over other traffic. That's our future.

**And the biggest challenge?**

› Getting any part of the UK to be like that. There's an awful long way to go, but one has to have an objective, even if it's beyond my lifetime.

**What are your future plans?**

› Keep trying. And making sure I have some quality time on the bike when I can forget campaigning!

**Why did you become a volunteer?**

› To do something useful for CTC.

**When and why did you join CTC?**

› 2003. I had started going on local group rides, which were really enjoyable.

**What's your favourite cycle journey?**

› Our Somerset levels in winter, as the mist rises and the cattle are steaming.

**Which of your bikes is your favourite?**

› My wife Claire and I have had some terrific times on the Bike Friday tandem, mainly on CTC tours.

## ON THE 'NET

The CTC Forum (<http://forum.ctc.org.uk/>) lets you pick the brains of your fellow CTC members 24/7. One popular topic before we went to press with this issue was...

### Where 2 next year?

**BTFB:** anybody making plans yet? I am unsure still... So many options, so much time, so little money!

**lisap:** Not only planned but the plane ticket has been booked and paid for. Flying to Vancouver, up the sunshine coast, across to Vancouver Island, down through the Puget Sound and then onward to San Francisco. The classic Pacific Coast trip. Can't wait for May to arrive.

**eileithya:** Son wants to attend New Forest week again, so am left with little choice, again... Roll on him finding girls, package trips to the Costas, so I can go touring again!

**Mike F:** An idea I have is to cycle from here in Cornwall to Dover, cross to Ostend, then make my way down to Santander, and catch the ferry back to Plymouth. A sort of 'English Channel/Bay of Biscay Coastal Tour'.

**Si:** I've still not carried out the plans for this year. However, a proper tour is on the cards (one with hills 'n' things, lots of hills, and some more hills). And a rough-stuff tour, probably with tent. And a mini-tour in Cornwall next week if health holds out.

**simonhill:** A couple of months in Thailand before Christmas, then two & a half months in New Zealand in the New Year. Then I'll be praying for a better summer next year in the UK.

**vernion:** I get my buzz from the riding not the planning. I rarely know more than the start and end points of a tour and like the middle bits to be a surprise. I'd be bored if I knew the details.

**CJ:** In September I'll be leading a CTC tour to the Rioja and Basque country.

**jags:** hoping to tour France for three weeks, camping all the way. My very first tour so let's hope it's a good one. If that doesn't come off I'll stay here in Ireland and maybe do end to end.

*This forum thread has been abridged.*

Cutting a long story short, I signed up for the Danube cycle path. It was wonderful. Everything was perfectly organised, and luggage was carried in a van from hotel to hotel. I recommend this company to both starter cyclists and more experienced tourists. For anyone contemplating cycling in Europe for the first time, it is a must.

**Peter Brake, Castlemartin, Pembroke**

**We know from our last survey that 73% of CTC members have responded to an advert in Cycle. As for riding the Danube cycle path: we've got an article on exactly that next issue.**

### AFGHAN REBEL

As a member of the armed forces serving in Afghanistan I was intrigued to see in the latest copy of Cycle Rob Liwall's account of his trek across the country. I read the article with a mixture of admiration and horror. I admire his adventurous spirit but I couldn't help thinking that the potential risks of his journey were not worth the experience.

In the 19th century the struggles between Britain and the Russians in this region were known as the Great Game. Today it is no longer a game and a full-scale counter insurgency operation is in progress, with people, including many members of the Afghan security forces, losing their lives in daily incidents. Yes, the northern part of the country is quieter than the south but it is not without significant dangers and I think Rob conveys his own fears and anxieties well. No matter what one may think of the politics surrounding the conflict in Afghanistan I would urge anyone 'inspired' by Rob's article to think again and plan a detour around this troubled region.

I ask that if you decide to publish this letter that, for obvious reasons, you withhold my name.

### SITTING COMFORTABLY

As a sufferer of lower back pain for the past five years I can relate my own experience to Stephen Brownlow (Cycling Answers, Oct/Nov issue). After damaging a couple of discs and not allowing them time to recuperate, I found myself with chronic and increasing lower back pain. After two years it got the state that any imperfection in the road was agony. I too went from the racing bike to the full suspension bike for all rides.

After a number of consultations, the NHS offered a disc fusion op but for a variety of reasons I didn't want to do this. An article on suspension seat-posts got me thinking, and I invested in the most expensive Post Moderne offering. At £50 it proved to be an excellent investment and riding comfort was amazing by comparison. It still sometimes takes a mile or two for the back to get used to the hunched position, but the rest of the ride is generally painless. I would say: buy one at the earliest opportunity. Even if my lower vertebrae ultimately knit together I will keep the suspension post because it is so comfortable, especially combined with a Brooks saddle. (Some feel it isn't in keeping with the full carbon frame, but we Brooks converts know better than to be a slave to fashion!)

When choosing the post, go for an elastomer sprung one. I have a cheap spring unit on my commuter bike. It suffers from the pogo stick effect, unlike the expensive one, which only betrays its presence with increased comfort.

**Richard Hill, by email**

### GROUPTEST REQUEST

Your review (last issue, page 63) of a kickstand suggests to me that it would be much more helpful to members to have proper 'Which?' type reviews of equipment rather than of just one item that happens to have been sent into you for review, which is, I assume, what happens. I have tried several kickstands although not the one reviewed and none of them has been very successful when touring with four panniers. The best I have come across is the Bontrager one but this doesn't seem long enough for a 28" wheel and is not adjustable. The others tend to bend or break. Equally useful would be a review of head and tail lights e.g. effectiveness of beam,



## PLETSCHER MULTI ZOOM £17.59

Reviewed by expedition cyclist Cass Gilbert



Kickstands can be surprisingly useful when touring. At 473g, the Multi Zoom will add heft to your bike, but it is tough enough to support one laden with four panniers. It fits a range of frame sizes, thanks to adjustability in the leg, and is braced across the seat and chainstays; the chainstay clamp is also adjustable depending on tubing size or disc brake tabs. In use, the Multi Zoom works very well and saves scuffing your panniers on the ground

when making a stop to take a picture. The stand is also handy when loading up your bike on a solo trip. When riding, my heel occasionally clipped the pivot point and I'd advise using rubber shims to protect the frame. Also, wrap an elastic band around the brake lever and handlebar so you can engage the brake and stop the front wheel arcing around when the kickstand's down on an uneven surface.

From: [www.chickenicycles.co.uk](http://www.chickenicycles.co.uk)

whether it is visible to other road users, strength of casing if dropped, etc.

Simon Hillyard, by email

### CYCLISTS AND TAX

Further to Letters last issue, anyone proposing a tax on cyclists should be prepared to answer the questions below. In lieu of a vehicle (bicycle) tax disc, there would have to be a some form of proof-of-payment – a credit card style document, perhaps – that would be difficult to forge. It would not be cheap. Record keeping would require a database maintained at national level.

- Q1. What would be the percentage and total cost of administration and therefore the net value of the contribution to cycling?
- Q2. At what age would a cyclist become liable to this tax?
- Q3. Who would enforce it? And how would this be done? 'Road tax' was replaced in 1938 with Vehicle Excise Duty, i.e. a tax upon vehicle ownership that went straight to the national exchequer. Expenditure on roads was then and still is funded from general taxation. So despite neither owning nor running a car, I already pay for highway building and maintenance.
- Q4. Why should 'cycle routes and facilities' be considered as not part of the general transport infrastructure?
- Q5. Why should cyclists be required to pay separately and additionally for facilities that they may never use?
- Q6. How could you guarantee that any money collected for a given purpose would be correctly spent?
- Q7. Who would make the decisions on expenditure and what mechanism would there be for appeal?

J Rose, Gillingham

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## OBITUARIES

### PETER JACKSON: 1936-2008

Peter died suddenly from a heart attack while playing badminton. Active to the last, he'd been an enthusiastic cyclist from his school days. Touring, in Europe and the UK, was his first love, although he enjoyed time trialling, road racing and MTB riding. A CTC member since 1952, Peter was a councillor for 15 years, two as chair. Always happy compiling lists, he ran the DATC competition for years and was very active helping to run the British Cycle Quest. Peter lived for most of his life in London.

Rita Jackson

### NORMAN TAYLOR

One of the famous cycling brothers who had been making frames at Stockton since 1936, Norman died in hospital on 28th August aged 85. Norman was a keen cyclist all his life. He rode for the Stockton Wheelers and helped form the BLRC. After his racing career he rode with CTC's Teesside Hardriders Section from 1970 until his illness in 2003. Norman's other love was jazz. His favourite artist was Louie Armstrong, whom he once met. Ian Bowman

### LEONARD HALSTEAD:

24/2/1923-20/5/2008

Len passed away in Huddersfield Royal Infirmary after a short illness. A life member of CTC, Len started cycling as a teenager and carried on until his death. In his youth, he would ride to Blackpool on a Sunday to have lunch with his aunt – a 130-mile round trip. By the early '50s Len was the Secretary of the Huddersfield Section and was to be seen helping and officiating in all capacities on events such as West Yorkshire's DA Tourist Competition rides. He was Huddersfield's auditor at the time of his passing. John Radford

### RAYMOND JOHNSON:

16/5/1952-3/8/2008

Ray was a staunch member of York section of the North Yorks DA for many years. He was well known for his enthusiasm for and involvement in the DATC. Ray's highest standing was 2nd in 1990 but he was the driving force behind the NYDA dominance of the competition from 1989 to 1991. In 1994

he was involved in a collision with a car on the A64 on his way to ride a DATC-counting event in Malton. He sustained serious injuries from which he never recovered enough to cycle again. Continuing health problems led to his untimely death. Keith Benton

### JOHN RUTHERFORD

Died 30th September, aged 92. John was the last survivor of the old guard of the Northern Ireland DA, who kept the club going during the war years and after. A keen outdoor man, he had a great love and knowledge of the countryside and wildlife, as well as being an outstanding photographer. His favourite area was Scotland and in particular the Applecross region of Wester Ross. He rode from Ireland to Cape Wrath in 1948 at a time when very little was known of the area. He was a true 'gentleman of the road'. Billy McCormick

### JOYCE SYBIL NEIGHBOUR: 1930-2008

Joy died on 1st September, four days after falling from her bike due to a heart attack on the way home from a section meet. Married to Bert for almost 60 years, they both enjoyed cycling on solos and their tandem, first with the West Kents and latterly the West Norfolk section. Joy and Bert soon became involved with West Norfolk's day-to-day affairs and organised some memorable cycling trips. They toured widely in Britain and France. Joy will be sorely missed by members, particularly at meetings at Milcham Village Hall. Dennis Ford

### NORMAN FEY

Norman was killed and a fellow cyclist badly injured when they were riding to the York Rally on 20th June. Norman would have taken his place in the veteran cycle group leading the parade back from the Minster after the Sunday service. Norman was 72. From his shop in South Shields, Norman sold bikes but also rode them, built them, restored, repaired and adapted them. His workshop was a treasure trove, a bike his normal mode of transport. He and wife Marion cycled throughout the UK and overseas. He was enthusiastic about classic bikes and modern folders. Ralph Stather