

Letters

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This month: Taking bikes by air, and by train, cycling with Alzheimer's, 1914's soldier-cyclists, the costs of cycling, bolt-on lighting, and a well-earned certificate

Letter OF THE MONTH



CYCLING WITH ALZHEIMER'S

When he was approaching 70 – five years ago – my lifelong friend began to show signs of dementia. He is now incapacitated with advanced Alzheimer's disease. He can't form words, has difficulty walking, and can't carry out simple tasks. His wife is his permanent carer. To everybody's amazement, including his medical advisers, he can still ride his bike.

Once a week, I take him for an hour-long bicycle ride through pleasant parks and along a paved ex-railway track. As long as I don't

stray more than a few yards in front of him, so that he can keep me constantly in view, he can follow me along traffic-free paths without losing his balance or becoming distressed. At a leisurely pace, we cover seven or eight miles. He loves it. He can apply the brakes and slow down or stop when necessary, and can adequately steer his wide-tyred mountain bike. One thing he can't do is change gear, so I ensure he is in his middle gear when we set off, and he is content to leave it there.

Maybe there are some readers who have friends or relatives in a similar situation. I know that dementia affects people in different ways and cycling might be beyond some, but if they have been cyclists in the past then maybe, just maybe, they could get back on their bikes like him? I'm convinced that he feels better after our rides: it's an achievement, he can do it, and he always gives me a man-hug afterwards. So it's worth it for me too. Cycling really is for everybody.

Fred Warren



BIKES BY AIR

In response to the letter from D Gray in the Dec/Jan issue: I have used the CTC polythene bike bag often over the last 12 years, flying with various airlines from Liverpool, Manchester, Southampton and Gatwick. There have been few problems. My Thorn Raven tourer is robust and has suffered little damage, despite the best efforts of baggage handlers! Usually I just turn the bars and remove the pedals. I pack the panniers/saddle bag into a separate, heavy-gauge, taped-up poly bag as hold luggage.

It's worth getting to the check-in two hours before departure, so that if there are any difficulties, they can be resolved. Take a copy of your airline's rules on cycle carriage, as

the check-in staff are often uncertain. At the other end, I pack the poly bags in my panniers.

I have also flown with my Brompton. It goes in the hold in its bag (along with a few clothes, wash-bag and tools), and the Brompton front bag is my hand luggage.

John Holiday

More information about packing your bike for air travel, plus advice on using the CTC poly bag, can be found on the CTC website, ctc.org.uk. Type 'bikes by air' into the search box in the top right hand corner.

THE RAIL ALTERNATIVE

Compared to short-haul flights, ferry-and-train is a more environmentally friendly, more enjoyable way to transport you and your bicycle to your cycle touring area of choice in Europe. Why not try the excellent Deutsche Bahn site (bahn.com) for train-plus-bike options across Europe. There are bargains to be had. For example, a train last August took us from the Hook of Holland to Wolfsburg in Eastern Germany for 29 Euros each, plus three Euros for the bikes – which stayed intact and 'bagless' all the way.

Robin Bevis



WW1 SOLDIER-CYCLISTS

Whilst researching old documents about cycling battalions, for a WW1 display at the CTC Heart of England Rally (ctc-heartofengland.org.uk) on 17-18 May, I was struck by the bravado and eagerness.

In Cycling (8 Oct 1914), the correspondent wrote of the soldier-

cyclists in the early days of the war: 'Their work has been full of adventure and peril, their exploits more stirring than any that fiction has hitherto anticipated... When the war is over, the tales our cyclist warriors have to tell will be amongst the most inspiring in the annals of this stupendous conflict.'

'The reasons for the success of the soldier-cyclists are not far to seek. His mount, unlike that of a cavalryman, is silent. The cyclist can hear but not be heard. He can approach speedily but noiselessly and, without warning, attack the enemy who, all unconscious of his presence, often fall an easy prey. Should his attack fail, or receive an unexpected or momentary check, the cyclist can beat a retreat and, by a circuitous route, come upon his foe again where he is least expected.'

How quickly the reality changed, in 'the war that was to be over by Christmas'.

John Bennett



WELL DONE, MIKE

A Certificate of Merit was recently awarded to Mike Jones of Merseyside CTC. He was nominated because he has been a stalwart of the Merseyside Group for over 40 years. He is a popular runs leader who formed and ran a Saturday Section for 27 years and helped run a camping section for nine years.

He took on the role of DA Secretary for nine years and then President for seven years. He has written many articles for the Merseyside newsletter, and as an accomplished photographer, his many fine photos from cycle tours at home and abroad have delighted members at numerous slide shows.

Noel Blundell

COSTS OF CYCLING

Sitting at the café at the top of the Cat and Fiddle, I heard a couple of



cyclists talking. The topic was the 80mm deep-section wheels on one guy's bike. The other lad was saying he'd never go training on more than 50mm. Bless them, they had lovely Pinarello road bikes with Dura Ace groupsets. They'd cycled 15 miles and were going to do the same back. I suppose it's up to each of us what we spend, but it did make me think.

When my son needed a 26in-wheel mountain bike. I found him a secondhand 14in Kona Fire Mountain for £90. After an extra £27.50 to have the wheels straightened and the disc brakes sorted, it was ready to go. Late 1980s/early 1990s steel-framed mountain bikes also work well as budget touring bikes for adults.

Jonathan Poole

BOLT-ON LIGHTING

Why is it so hard to buy LED battery lights that bolt to your bike on a simple bracket – for example, at the fork crown? I visited seven local bike shops and not one stocked such a light. All had clip-on lights that strapped onto forks, pannier racks or handlebars. But where are



we meant to put a front battery light if we are touring with front panniers and a bar bag?

I ended up buying two lights with adaptors to fit their clips onto the supplied brackets. These can fairly easily be dislodged – or even removed by light-fingered individuals. I'd much rather have a small bolt to secure my lights than a quick-release.

There must be hundreds if not thousands of cyclists who just want an inexpensive light that will simply bolt onto reflector-style brackets.

Ian Hewitt MBE

Obituaries

► Fred Lloyd: 1928-2013

Fred Lloyd, Honorary President of CTC Lancaster & South Lakes, died in August. He joined CTC in 1947 and cycled through Western Europe in the post-war years. He continued to tour until the very end. Fred was an amazing character and was a founder member of the Lune & Lakes DA in 1984. He was a key member of that small group who organised the successful 1996 CTC Birthday Rides in Lancaster. Fred and his wife Pat were stalwarts of the Rough Stuff Fellowship. *Mike Hutchinson*

► Rita Oakley

Rita was the wife of Bob Oakley, the son of past CTC President Bill Oakley. During nearly 60 years of marriage, Rita and Bob, and sons Philip, Mark and Richard, cycled as a family, making friends at every turn. It was a blow to Walsall CTC when Rita developed a motor neurone disease last year. She died on 11 October. She always took a supportive role in the family and the DA, and there are many others who benefitted from her guidance. She retired at 60 from a career as a teacher of textiles and then special needs. *Joan Bridge-Taylor*

► Alan Kirk: 1931-2013

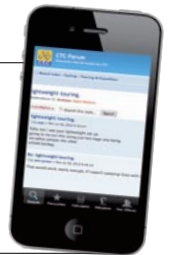
Died 24 October, aged 82. A lifelong CTC member, Alan was the Section Secretary of the Sheffield Intermediate Section in the 1960s and 70s. He enjoyed leading hostelling holidays for the Sheffield group. His favourite area was the highlands and islands of Scotland. Alan was a regular camper at CTC York Rally. In later years, he was awarded the Presidency of the South Yorkshire & North Derbyshire DA (now Sheffield District MG). In 2003, Alan proudly received his 50 years membership badge from HQ. *Gareth Dent*

► Keith Wray

Died suddenly on 17 November, aged 77. For many years, he was Chief Steward to the York Rally Committee. Each year, Keith drove around York a few weeks before the event, armed with a long ladder and an assistant, to erect signs to the Rally. Keith's working life was latterly spent as a guard with Northern Rail, and he was always willing to bend the two bikes per train policy, if it could be done safely. Our sympathy to Mollie and her large family. *Paul Hepworth*

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Get immediate feedback from other CTC members on the CTC Forum: forum.ctc.org.uk. Here's an abridged extract from one popular thread before Cycle went to press (see tinyurl.com/noremv7).



CYCLE SKYWAYS FOR LONDON?

James01: tinyurl.com/m89ytq – Radical proposals for cycle commuter routes.

mjr: Bonkers. Most of the disadvantages of the MK Redways with none of the ubiquity. Boris is looking for the easy way out to avoid upsetting lorry firms.

NUKE: I think this is a brilliant idea. Having them over the railways is a stroke of genius.

Geriatrx: The existing road network is like a fault-tolerant computer

network. Block one path and there is always another way of getting through. I'm not sure if the proposed solution could offer that sort of redundancy. Most importantly, its route needs to be close to the cyclist's starting point, and take the cyclist to where (s)he wants to go.

Claireysmurf: There is talk of them being paid for by tolls. I'm not sure I want to pay to cycle anywhere.

Rualexander: Why not just close some of the existing roads to motorised traffic?



Vorpal: I have a better idea. Let's limit motor traffic on some routes. Not only will it make cycling better for less money, but it will improve things for residents and pedestrians on those routes as well. Or why not propose tunnels under the city for motor traffic instead? Let cyclists have the surface streets. Some Scandinavian cities have done that.