

LETTERS

This month Cycling in the Netherlands; bikes on trains again; lorries and cyclists' safety; cycling for all; touring at seventy; and more

GET IN TOUCH

WRITE TO US: Cycle Letters,
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forum.ctc.org.uk

GOING DUTCH

FOLLOWING UP on 'Fiets First In Holland' in the February/March issue: as a regular traveller to the Netherlands, I would like to add emphasis to a couple of points in Nigel Bell's article.

Bicycle theft is very common in the Netherlands, and British bikes are particularly attractive. Do not leave your bike unlocked for even a few seconds. (I speak from bitter experience.) Nigel did well to use a supervised bike storage facility ('fiets stalling').

Secondly, if there is a cyclepath ('fietspad', either labelled as such or with a round blue sign with a white bicycle) available, then you must use it. If you do not use the path but cycle on the road, then you will get shouted at and risk a fine.

Other points: cycle route maps are freely available in local tourist information offices – look for signs to a 'VVV'. I find a compass helpful at cyclepath junctions since the layout is often different from the map.

Finally, if you take your bike to the Netherlands and want to stop for a coffee, be aware that 'coffeeshop' means 'drugs café'. Look for a bar or 'eetcafé'. In towns, check out department stores; the HEMA stores often have a mini-restaurant ('koffiehoek').

— **Colin McEwen**



LORRY SAFETY

I agree with the view that cycle training for lorry drivers would be a great help. But it would have been useful to have a sidebar on what cyclists can do to help themselves too. Most lorry drivers are aware of the danger that they pose and work to eliminate it.

The most obvious thing is never go up the inside of a lorry or sit just in front of it when stationary, even when it is legal to do so. The driver is looking at the traffic light above and in front; you are not in his/her line of sight.

Wear big blocks of bold colour. Black may be fashionable but it is seldom highly visible. Use a rear view mirror to get a better awareness of what's coming up on you. Leave the music at home; you will hear the traffic.

— **John Heathcote**

Your feature on lorry safety in the Feb/Mar issue advocated a number of training and technological solutions to the disproportionate danger lorries pose to cyclists. Very laudable, but I fear implementation might take a while. So permit me to suggest a simple measure that I've found works well, at least in relatively free-flowing traffic, helping make the driver more aware of your presence and, equally, indicating

that you are conscious of theirs.

First, having sighted the approaching lorry in your mirror, a quick wave to acknowledge their presence. Then, as the lorry passes and is kind enough to give you a sufficiently wide berth, another wave by way of thanking the driver for their consideration, the brief flourish with one's hand proportionate to the room given. It frequently results in a friendly toot from the driver.

— **Ken Roberts**



ALL CYCLISTS WELCOME

I found the latest issue of Cycle to be the best for a long time. It is great to see the efforts that CTC is making up and down the country encouraging more people to take up or resume cycling after long intervals, particularly women and children. It's also good to see the amount of equipment available for those with impaired mobility, and the inspirational articles about people such as Mike and Rhona Copp. I met them back in the 1990s on a cycling holiday in Herefordshire, where Mike gave me most helpful advice following a car accident. It turned out that he was a Citizens Advice Bureau adviser.

There does seem to be something of a snowball effect going on in certain areas in terms

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Photo: E. Dronkert (Flickr creative commons)

» of cycling, for which CTC can claim some of the credit through your campaigning. Keep up the good work.

— **John Wickens**



STILL PEDALLING

As a cyclist in his late 70s and a CTC member, despite living in Australia, I wish to comment on the letter in the Oct-Nov issue by Donald Wells on his Brompton touring. What an inspirational story that is! Would it be possible to get a more comprehensive version published? Congratulations Donald: you've reawakened my desire to cycle the Camino.

As I am awaiting a knee operation that will allow the knee to bend the correct amount, my bicycles have been lying idle. The bikes all have 175mm cranks. Looking at my rarely-ridden Aldi folder, I realised it had 150mm cranks – therefore 50mm less travel in total. I tried it and it was fine: back in the saddle! I checked with my doctor, who gave it her blessing. Maybe this option could help others?

— **Neville Roberts**

Thanks, Neville. Swing cranks are another option, which you can read about (as well as shorter cranks) at highpath.net. While Chris Bell has retired, a cycling friend of his is 'poised to take over'. As for publishing stories in *Cycle: I'm always looking for interesting Travellers' Tales*. Guidelines for writing them are available on the website or from me.

BIKES & TRAINS AGAIN

We think Andy Miller (Letters, February/March 2015) painted a too-negative picture of accompanied bicycle transport

on Continental railways. In our experience, many of the French TGV high-speed lines take bikes – for example, the Paris-Strasbourg route. It's true that Deutsche Bahn high speed ICE services do not take bicycles except folded bicycles, but there are fast long-distance intercity services covering much of Germany that can take up to 16 bicycles per train.

Practically all trains in Switzerland allow accompanied bicycles. Belgian, Danish and Dutch railways are also cyclist-friendly. Admittedly, southern European railways do not appear to have many cyclist-friendly services. You can expect to pay on Continental long-distance services, but often not on local trains. We would rather pay a small charge than have no services at all. There is more information on atob.org.uk/bike-rail/bikeeurope/.

— **Judith and Neil Forsyth**

SKYE HIGH

I have been a member of the CTC for more years than I can remember. I have always been intrigued by the cover photo on the magazine. Throughout my touring life, I have visited the Highlands of Scotland on many occasions. Last June, I did a magnificent tour of Skye



in incredibly good weather. A photo I took on this particular trip was used as the cover of *The Spokesman*, the magazine of my local club, The Lancashire Road Club. Its title is: 'Approaching the Cuillin Ridge towards Glen Brittle, Isle of Skye'.

— **John R Greenhalgh**

Obituaries

▶ Frank A L Bradley

Died 13 Oct, aged 82. A 'gentleman of the road' who once dreamed of being 'a superhero time triallist', he later concentrated on his love of hosting and cycle touring, which were enhanced by his hobbies of photography, botany and the history of his beloved Teesside DA and the Cleveland Wheelers, a club he helped form in 1958. — *Edward Grainger*

▶ John Tobin 1929-2014

A CTC member for 65 years, John joined after National Service. He worked Saturday mornings, so often rode 150+ miles alone to meet mates at far-flung hostels. He met wife Jean through CTC, and they spent their honeymoon cycle camping. He and Jean were awarded CTC Certificates of Merit for services to West Kent CTC. — *Peter Ashlee*

▶ Norman Foot

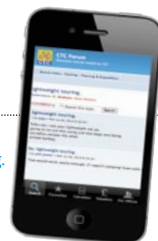
Died 26/10/14, aged 93. A life member of CTC, he rode with the Buckshee Wheelers in Cairo during WWII and took part in a film. Post-war, his cycling was on a tandem: first for two, then three with a sidecar, then four with a back seat. He then rode his fixed-wheel Evans, changing to a freewheel when he was 70. He was still cycling at 90. — *Marian Saunders*

▶ Roy Potter MBE: 1935-2014

Roy was a CTC Right to Ride rep for Fylde, a Sustrans activist, and the founding secretary of his local Safe Cycling Action Group. Dogged and stubborn, with his aerospace 'right first time' approach, Roy was frequently exasperated by the poor quality of provision encountered. He was awarded an MBE for his contribution to local cycling. — *Robin Field*

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 bit.ly/1zNY7EV)



TOURING

1kcover: Hi, I'm looking to start touring the UK once I have finished building my bike. Any tips on safe riding on the roads and what should I avoid? I have been riding MTBs for some years so I have a good riding ability.

Freddie: Avoid riding in the gutter, like most utility cyclists do, as you leave yourself no room to escape a close pass from a vehicle. Avoid A-roads wherever possible.

Merry_Wanderer: Have a read of

'Cyclecraft', an excellent book by John Franklin. It gives very good advice to cyclists on positioning on the road. It changed my cycling for the better.

pwa: Study good, detailed maps and try to plan routes that keep you on nice quiet lanes, and avoid busy main roads as much as possible. Traffic-free cycle tracks are fine, but they get boring if that is all you do.

hamster: I think route planning is the biggest contribution to a calm, relaxed

and safe ride. Decent maps allow you to see the whole route and then find ways using quiet minor roads. It's the one problem I have with GPS – fine for navigation on the spot, but hard to use for planning.

kylecycler: OpenStreetMap will help you plan your routes. There are three options: Bicycle, Car and Foot, so provided you have it set up for Bicycle it should give you the best routes. (I think it always tends to incorporate Sustrans routes.)



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 June/July issue must arrive by 30 April. Write to: cycleletters@ctc.org.uk or *Cycle Letters*, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ



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