

140 years of Cycling UK

# MAKING HISTORY

Founded in 1878, Cycling UK is 140 this August. Historian **Sheila Hanlon** highlights some landmark dates and achievements

In 1878, a group of high-wheel enthusiasts identified a gap in cycling club culture for those interested in touring. Stanley Cotterell, a medical student living in Edinburgh, spearheaded the initiative and served as its first Hon Secretary. Around 50-80 cyclists attended the club's first meeting on 5 August 1878 in Harrogate, Yorkshire. The Bicycle Touring Club (BTC) was born. By year end, it had 144 members.

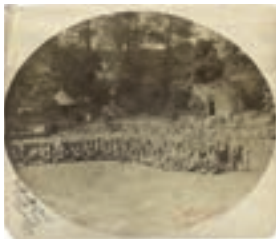


**1899**  
Lady Harberton vs the Hautboy Hotel

Cycling in Surrey in 1898, CTC member and rational dress campaigner Florence Wallace Pomeroy, Lady Harberton, stopped at the Hautboy Hotel, Ockham. The landlady refused to serve her in the dining room due to her knickerbockers. Harberton reported this to CTC, who represented her in court in 1899. The jury ruled for the Hautboy, but CTC stripped the hotel of its club endorsement.



First World War cyclists' battalion



**1883**  
Bicycle Touring Club rebranded as the Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC)

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**1914**  
Cyclists at War, 1914-18

## 1878

Founding of The Bicycle Touring Club

**1880**  
Mrs Welford joins as the first female club member

**1884**  
Danger signs introduced, primarily for steep hills

**1906**  
Club application to be renamed 'The Touring Club' rejected in High Court

**1910**  
King George V appointed first CTC Royal Patron

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF CYCLING UK

**1879**  
Listings of recommended hotels introduced



The nature of cycling changed quickly in the club's early years, going from an all-male pursuit to a pastime that women could enjoy on tricycles. Jeannie Welford, born in Oldbury in 1854, became the first female member, joining the BTC under her maiden name Morgan. She soon married Walter D Welford, club secretary 1879-1881. Jeannie carried on cycling well into her 90s.

**1895**  
The safety cycle craze is in full swing

When war was declared in 1914, CTC offered to mobilise cyclists into the war effort. The War Office declined but CTC encouraged cyclists to enlist. Two cycling battalions were established that year, with a third to come. Cyclists proved useful for home front patrols. They were deployed overseas for reconnaissance, despatches, scouting and guerrilla action. In 1921, the National Cyclists' Memorial was erected in Meriden, West Midlands, to remember those lost in service.

# 2018

Cycling UK is 140  
this August



Safe, confident cycling has always been important to Cycling UK. In 1936, the organisation helped develop the Cycling Proficiency Scheme. Cycle training in schools was seen as one way to combat road traffic fatalities. The outbreak of World War II put the scheme on hold, but in 1947 the first seven children passed the test. The scheme was revamped in 2007 as Bikeability.

WWII delayed the roll-out of the Cycling Proficiency Scheme until 1947



In 1968, CTC helped establish the right of cyclists to ride on bridleways and long distance cross-country routes under the Countryside Act. Cycling UK has a long history of securing cycle access, dating back to 1885 when the organisation lobbied for the right to cycle in Richmond Park and Hyde Park – still popular venues among cyclists today.

## 2016

CTC rebranded as  
Cycling UK



CTC was rebranded Cycling UK in 2016. The organisation retains its original spirit under a new name that reflects its broader, charitable purpose and diverse membership. Cycling UK supports, promotes, and defends cycling for all, focusing more widely on recreation and transport – not just touring.

## 1968

The Countryside  
Act, 1968

## 1954

Plaque unveiled in Harrogate to celebrate the CTC's 75th anniversary

## 1945

The first  
York Rally

## 1936

Cycling  
Proficiency  
Scheme  
launched

## 1921

National Cyclists' Memorial erected at Meriden to commemorate cyclists and CTC members who died in service during WWI

## 1934

Defence Fund established. First segregated cycle track built, on A40

## 1923

First National Bike Week. CTC Relay Ride in England for The Prince of Wales's birthday



Cliff Pratt, CTC councillor and Hon Secretary of the Hull and East Riding DA, initiated the first York Rally in 1945. Held on the Knavesmire, the rally attracted nearly 5,000 cyclists from all over the UK; many cycled there. Accommodation was provided at campsites, local hotels and army huts. The rally included rides, races, demonstrations, a show of classic bikes, and formal presentations.

## 1990

The National Cycle Archive is established with funding from CTC

## 1978

CTC centennial year celebrations

## 1980s

Greater London Council (GLC) sponsors cycle paths such as the Ambassador Cycle Route, opened 1981

## 1996

'A New Direction for Cycling' is published by CTC