

CYCLE LETTERS

Write to: Cycle Letters, CTC, Parklands, Railton Road, Guildford, GU2 9JX, or email cycleletters@ctc.org.uk



SURFING USA

On a recent trip from Canada down to Mexico with a friend, Jim Morris, we chanced upon some surfers north of San Diego. They had a novel way of carrying their surfboards using bicycles.

They were carried on a frame attached to the head tube and rear carrier. It consisted of a rod projecting to the side, allowing the cyclist to pedal, and on the end of the rod was a flat bar hanging down with a U-shaped piece at the bottom. The board was slotted in a bungeed over the top onto the projecting bar.

These cyclists were some considerable distance from the nearest town and were on their way home from surfing. They were using the excellent cycle routes in this area. I took this photo at 8.24 in the morning, and it was noticeable that surfers were often out on their boards at first light catching the waves. Then they went to work.

We heard that the police were cracking down on surfers who carried their surfboards inside their cars where the boards were projecting into the passenger seat next to the driver, obscuring their view and often inhibiting the drivers changing gear or drinking coffee etc. as they drove. These lads on their bikes did not have that problem.

Peter Ling, Trimley St Martin, Suffolk

TRAVELLING LIGHT?

I found your article on lightweight touring very interesting. My first tour was in 1953 and I managed quite well for a week with just a saddlebag. In recent years I have done a lot of backpacking and camping. The Pennine Way and the Tour du Mont Blanc were two of the harder ones. For those, everything was carried in a 50-litre rucksack.

I used my Brompton for loaded cycle touring in France. It was meant to be for a week but the same kit did for five weeks in New Zealand backpacking last year. Of course, not everyone travels light. I enclose a picture of a bicycle being used for touring in New Zealand. I forebore to ask the owner if he had actually used the kitchen sink that he had probably packed!

Jim Beed, Devon
CTC & Backpackers' Club



I was interested to read your article on 'Travelling Light' but dismayed at the suggestion that camping should be avoided. We have been on a number of camping cycle tours over 4-10 days and have paired down luggage so that neither of us has to carry more than two medium rear panniers. Kit taken includes: TerraNova Supralite Voyager tent (1.3kg); two 3/4 length Thermarests; 2 down sleeping bags; MSR Dragonfly stove with 2 pans and a few other bits and pieces; wooden spoon; bike tools; lights, spares etc.

For touring in France last year I made up two bike bags which whilst simple in design and not offering anywhere near as much protection as fancier ones were very cheap (less than £10 each), light (300g) and met the requirements of the French TGV trains. They also double as rain shelters!

To make one, simply cut a 138x185cm rectangle from a lightweight ground sheet bought from the garden centre, sew velcro along the 138cm edges (this will be the top), fold in half and sew up each side. Cut appropriate lengths from the reinforced edges of the sheet to make handles. To stow the bike remove the wheels, saddle and post, and one pedal, put the bike in and then carefully arrange the wheels along side before chucking the seat and pedal in after it.

The advantage of camping is that you can be so much more flexible than with hostel or hotel accommodation, and if the fancy takes you just pull off the road in a secluded spot of your choice.

Matthew Holmes, Rottingdean

It's possible to pack a tent and camping gear in a backpack small enough to cycle with, let alone into a couple of panniers (see page 20). But the focus of the article last issue was: how you can travel with less. Swapping the tent for a tarp – and/or a bivvy bag – does just that.

WILD CAMPING WALES

In the name of a 'stag do', three of us recently set off on a 400km cycling trip from Shrewsbury through the back roads of Wales finishing in the



Forest of Dean.

We followed a route plan created by the Stag to find our way roughly but ended up riding quite a lot of NCN Route 8. I was riding my custom audax Solitude Cycles road bike, the Stag was riding a custom Solitude Cycles MTB fixie (with flip flop hub and a freewheel), and the third rider was on a geared Independent Fabrication mountain bike.

In the true spirit of adventure we washed in rivers, 'stealth' camped in hedgerows using bivvy bags, and cooked our own porridge at day-break hoping that we could find a town each evening for takeaway or pub food for our main meal. The Welsh weather gave us three days of blazing hot sunshine to tackle the endless climbs and two hot sticky and dry nights. The last night and day were pretty wet and miserable but it didn't dampen our spirits as we made the final push for the finish line where a hot tub, BBQ and beer awaited us!

Matt Maltby, by email



CYCLING ENERGY

How much energy do you use when cycling? The letters section of Cycle had 20kCal per mile, plus 1kCal per metre height gain. The CTC email newsletter (Swindon Workplace Cycle Challenge) has 35,000 miles equivalent to 35MJ, equating to 1,000kJ or 250 kCal per mile (taking 1kCal equals 4kJ) and the caloriesperhour.com website has around 40kCal per mile.

I suppose that a normal ride in Warwickshire, where I do most of my riding probably has around 20 metres

of height gain per mile, so the first and last of these are (fairly) equivalent – but nowhere near the newsletter. Have I missed something, is my maths wrong, or can I eat a whole lot more without getting fat?! I think we should be told.

Nigel Briggs, Coventry

We last looked at energy expenditure when cycling in the June/July 2006 issue. Cyclists burn around 300 calories per hour for easy cycling, up to around 600 for moderate club riding, and around 900 per hour for hard cycling. That's approximate, of course, but it squares with the figures in Cycle and caloriesperhour.com – assuming that 'moderate club riding' in Warwickshire has you travelling at about 15mph. Possibly there was a decimal point issue with the newsletter figures: 25kCal/mile, rather than 250kCal, is back in the ballpark with the other figures.

GET STUCK INTO THE WEB

Regarding Peter Gibson's letter in the Aug/Sept issue about internet access, and not wanting to upset Mike Andrew of Cheadle by discussing a non-cycling issue, I can recommend to Mr Gibson his local library to contact WWWs. Most libraries offer a bookable, free service and I've found it most useful, since talktalk give me such a poor service. I regularly contact our council cycling officer this way.

As a fairly new member, I'm really enjoying the mag and especially the letters pages. Thank you CTC for campaigning on our behalf. I'd like to ask members what they think of taxing cyclists, say £5 per year, to help pay for cycling routes and facilities?

J James, Brighton/Hove

COACH CLASS

I read with interest your article on travelling with bikes by coach. However, I would like to take issue with the way in which you portray the relative costs of using car, coach, train or aeroplane to get from place to place.

You have omitted to say whether the cost is for one person travelling or two. Having checked the prices (I know, very nerdy) I find that the quote is for one person. As the article consistently talks about 'we' and two bikes, unless the

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...

Commuting in London – how can I convince the missus?

forums: I get the train into London and would like to bin the tube/bus and cycle with a folder. My wife is convinced I will get hurt or worse. I am an experienced cyclist but she says it is not me that she is worried about but other road users. How might I convince her?

Captain Morgan: The good thing about London is you're more likely to be seen because there are more cyclists and cars are more prepared for you. There are also some very good cycle paths around if you're going in certain directions.

andyf: A lot of London cars are going much more slowly than those in the country.

lauriematt: Put the money you'd normally spend on fares into a jar. Once she sees the pennies adding up she'll come round. Maybe put the savings towards a weekend break... or to really win her over, some shoes.

Khornight: central London is fine. I have no fear of being knocked off once I'm in sight of the river (I live in south London) because pretty much all traffic is doing 5 miles an hour...

Tandemist: I love cycling in London, but suspect it is safer on a proper full sized road bike. But I do not think you should let your wife make the decision whether you should cycle or not – are you a man or a mouse?

eileithya: I would think a solo audax ride through countryside at 2am is probably far more dangerous than cycling in inner London traffic.

blaugrana: I used to commute into central London and would often be one of a dozen cyclists at lights. Have you got the very useful TfL cycling maps for your route? I hope you do get to ride into work – once you've done it for a bit, going back on the tube is unthinkable.

This thread has been abridged.

correspondent has multiple-personality disorder and a masochistic tendency to carry a bike for his alter-ego I shall assume there are two people travelling. Therefore, shouldn't the quoted prices be for two?

Kenji Shermer, by email

In the August/September issue in the Article titled 'Coach Class', where it said you can travel from London to Aberdeen for as little as £8 if you book far in advance, you can actually travel each way for £1! I have made this journey twice for £1 each way and although the journey takes ages, it is well worth the money. That's over 2,000 miles for £4!

Benjamin Norton, by email

My wife and I recently used National Express coaches to and from Heathrow airport. Our bikes were packed in padded bike bags for conveyance by British Airways.

When I booked the coach tickets by phone, I was told that bikes packed in this way would be carried. But the driver on the return journey told us that he wouldn't have taken them if there'd been more in his luggage compartment – he said it was at his discretion.

So who was right? Do National Express undertake to convey bikes in padded bike bags or not?

Chris Bell, Cribyn, Wales

They're both right. National Express will carry bagged bikes, but only if there's space – which is at the discretion of the driver. That's why our mountain bikers were concerned about being able to get on the coach back to London.



BIKES ON 'PLANES

Roger Pratt responded in the CTC Aug/Sep issue regarding air travel with bikes. I couldn't disagree more! My cycling companions and I have toured the length and breadth of Europe in recent years almost always arriving and departing by 'plane. Between us we have clocked up over 50 flights in that time. We have never had a serious issue with the bikes and certainly nothing to stop us riding out of the airport.

My favoured method for preparing the bike is to do nothing at all other than rotate the handlebars. The reason this seems to work is that it looks and acts just like a bike (although riding a bike with handlebars through 90 degrees is a worthy challenge). No mistaking it for anything else and it is damned awkward for anyone to do anything other than put it on top of everything else in the hold. Your problem solves itself.

So far so good. With so many cheap, budget airlines covering Europe it seems a shame to get in a car to drive hundreds of miles to your destination, although be aware that many airlines limit the numbers of bikes on any particular flight. Also, do remember to book the bike on the 'plane as well as yourself, or you may end up without your trusty steed at the other end!

Paul Meader, by email

ON THE MAP

The Ordnance Survey have changed the cycle route symbols on 1:50,000 Landranger maps, and I haven't seen this mentioned in Cycle. For mapping up to September 2007 National and Regional cycle network had filled-in green circles along the routes, with green dashes for surfaced off-road routes like many Sustrans routes on former railways. On mapping from Sept 2007, cycle routes on roads have the filled-in green circles, traffic-free cycle routes have hollow circles, there is no special symbol for off-road surfaced routes.

For an example, see the Camel Trail as it passes through Wadebridge. See grid reference SW9872 on the Ordnance Survey Get-a-map

OBITUARIES



IAN HIBELL: 6/1/1934-23/8/2008

Ian was killed while cycling in Greece, by a driver who was later arrested. An honorary member of CTC, Ian was Britain's greatest touring cyclist. He lived for the bicycle and for a life on the road, breaking his journeys only to earn money for the next one. He had ridden in almost every country in the world, including all the Pacific islands. He had ridden from Nord Kapp (the northernmost point of Europe) to Cape Town, crossing the Sahara alone, and prior to that from Tierra del Fuego at the foot of the Americas to Alaska at the top, including the first crossing of the Darien Gap. More recently, entering his eighth decade, Ian rode alone from Rotterdam to Vladivostok (through Mongolia and Siberia) and then from Bangkok to Vladivostok (via Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and China). *Barry and Margaret Williams*

JOHN (JACK) WALLSGROVE: 1911-2007

Died peacefully in his sleep on 28th December 2007. A CTC member since 1928, also Birmingham/Midlands CTC/camping section. Dad bought his first bike at 16 and continued cycling until aged 90. He never owned a car. He enjoyed cycle camping in the British Isles and Europe, solo, with friends or with late wife Hilda and two daughters. Memorable adventures were 1933 Norway/Arctic Circle, 1938 Tunis/Algeria, 1939 Corsica/Sardinia/Italy and, approaching age of 80, a tandem tour of Malta. Jack had a wonderful, interesting life. He spoke French and German and made many friends here and abroad. Thanks for the memories, Dad. *Cynthia and Jacqueline*

OBITUARIES

STAN WILD

Died 7th July after a short illness, aged 100 years and five weeks. He cycled more than 600,000 miles in his life. A life member of CTC, Stan began cycling in 1924 aged 16. He explored every corner of Britain and crossed all the major passes in Europe. In 1971, aged 63, he was one of the first cyclists to have climbed the Pico Veleta in Spain, the highest road in Europe. He led CTC tours for 20 years. He was interested in all aspects of cycling. He was a life member of the Cheshire Roads Club, and was president from 1947-1950 and editor for 21 years. He also joined the Anfield Bicycle Club, whose Saturday runs didn't conflict with the Cheshire RC Sunday run. He was a founder member of the Manchester and District Time Trials Association and was a timekeeper for 20 years. He emigrated to Australia in 1978 with his wife to join their only child, Clare, and her family. In the year he was 90 he rode 7,143 miles.

David Birchall

LEN STEEL

Died in July 2008 aged 85. Len joined the North Cheam CTC Section before the war. His ambition to become a pilot in the RAF changed when his mathematical and mapreading skills were recognised and instead he gained top marks as a navigator. From the formation of the South West London DA in 1948, he rode with the Cheam & Morden Section and became its first Treasurer then Secretary then DA President from 1971. Len was a CTC national Councillor 1966-1972, serving on several committees, he organised Triennial Veterans' rides, monitored Rights of Way and, from 1966-1980, co-organised the British Cycle Tourist Competition annual final. He was awarded a well deserved CTC Certificate of Merit in 1987. Len leaves Jean, three children and two grandchildren whose company, memorably, he was enjoying at a school play the evening before he died. *Colin & Shirley Quemby*

Send obituaries, preferably 100 words or fewer, to the usual editorial address. See p80.

site: <http://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite/getamap/>. Or see the latest paper Landranger map 200 in that area. Or see the OS map section on <http://www.geograph.org.uk/article/> where I give other examples.

David Hawgood, by email

- ● ● On-road cycle route
- ○ ○ Traffic-free cycle route

CYCLING SONGS

I was disappointed by the one-sided choice of tracks in the article of July 2008. Nothing from the classical world. There has, however, been at least one significant contribution from classical music. I refer to the Velocipedo Polka – Strauss Opus 259. You can download it here: <http://www.classicsonline.com/catalogue/product.aspx?pid=1271>.

Fred Lupton, St Alban



Continuing on the bike music theme, I feel the Desperate Bicycles are worth a mention, as much for their DIY methodology as their music. In the spirit of punk 1977, they set out to record a single ('Smokecreen') as cheaply as possible. It cost them £153 for the first pressing of 500. Some of the distribution was carried out by bicycle. The music had a political edge and repeated the refrain 'it was easy, it was cheap, go and do it!' They played a benefit gig for Cyclebag (who went on to form Sustrans) in Bristol. Cyclebag organised a large

guarded area to park dozens of bikes. 'Cars' is all about hating cars and loving bikes. They are still remembered fondly – search for them on www.wikipedia.org and follow the links to read more and hear them.

Ben Searle, Bristol

MOTORBIKES IN CYCLE LANES

I have been a cyclist for some 60 years and a motorcyclist for some 50 years. I must disagree with your stance on motorcycles in bus lanes (News, Aug/Sep '08) for the following reasons.

In all the years I have been on the road I have never witnessed an accident caused to a cyclist by a motorcycle. Indeed, I believe (and have found) there is camaraderie between us as we both brave the elements and all that is thrown at us. As far as pollution goes, I would argue that my motorcycle, which returns 60mpg and has only two wheels that need to be shod, and unlike cars and lorries never wastes petrol by sitting in traffic jams, is far less polluting.

We have a common cause of injury to both of us and that is from cars and lorries. Get us out of the way of these and we will all be better off.

Alan Hartopp, by email

CTC Campaigns and Policy Manager Roger Geffen replies: 'CTC's stance on motorcycling does divide opinions, but is based solely on the evidence of the safety and environmental issues with motorcycles. It is not an attack on their riders. Many CTC members and some staff do ride motorcycles.

'Safety first. Per mile travelled, motorcycles have significantly higher involvement rates than cars in collisions that cause injury to pedestrians and cyclists (especially for serious and fatal injuries).

'With regard to pollution, the most recent Government stats (2002) show that emissions of the most noxious pollutants are 7-12 times worse from the average motorbike than from a car.

'A fully referenced briefing, outlining CTC's stance on motorcycling and the evidence supporting it, is at www.ctc.org.uk/DesktopDefault.aspx?TabID=4790.'