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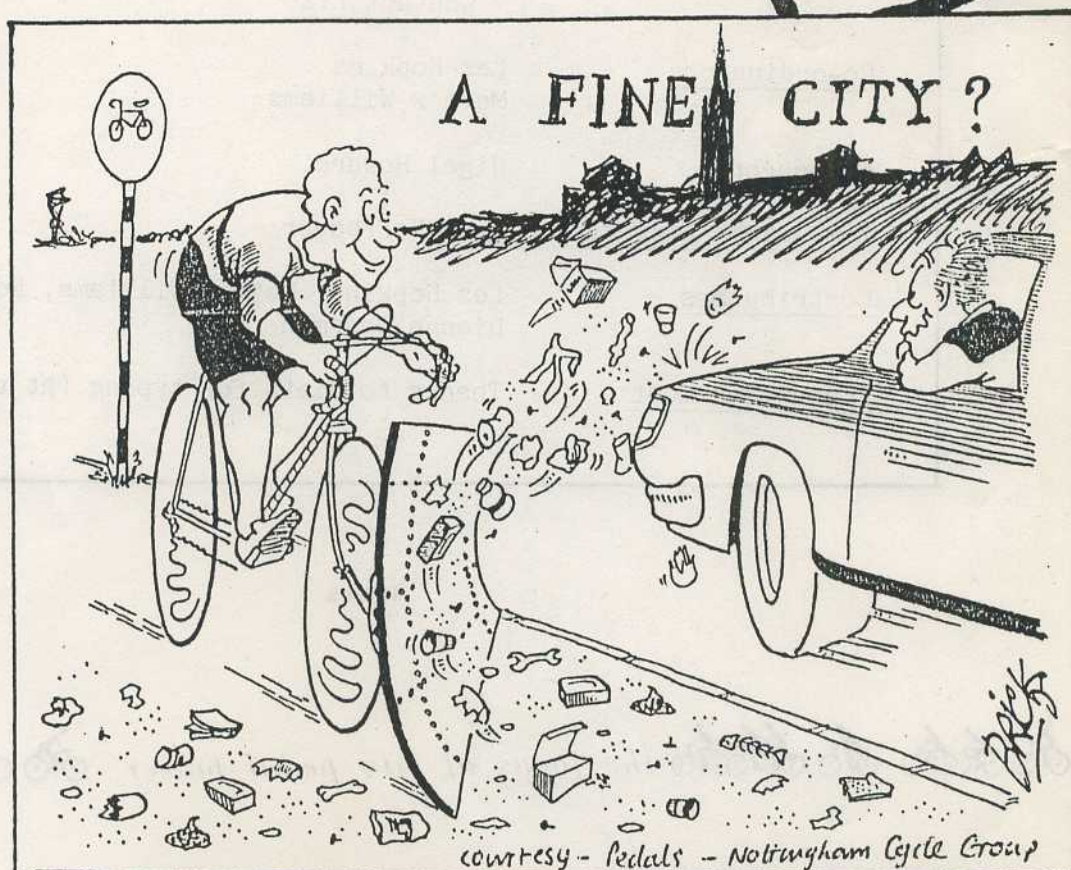
## NEWSLETTER

Autumn 1991

BUMPER  
EDITION  
22 pages!

Inside...

- Campaigns update
- Pacific Coast by bike
- Lots lots more



We are... The first pressure group  
in Norwich to campaign  
**EXCLUSIVELY** for  
cyclists' rights



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### Acknowledgement

Thanks to Rieta for typing (at very short notice!)

\*\*\*\*\*



## DISCLAIMER

Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the  
Norwich Cycling Campaign.



## E D I T O R I A L

By the time you read this newsletter, the Norwich Cycling Campaign will be one year old. So how have we done? Our original stated objective was 'to raise the profile of cycling in the city' and to lobby for 'the best possible facilities for cyclists.'

On the area of raising the profile of cycling I sincerely believe we have achieved a considerable amount. Scarcely a week goes by without a letter in the Evening News on some aspect of cycling - the current topics being the subject of cycle helmets and the campaign to save the Wensum Valley cycle path. We have sent speakers to numerous radio 'phone-ins' on cycling, have had several reports of our activities in the local press, and even got a five minute slot on television when 'Look East' did a special focus on cycling in the Eastern Region.

On the lobbying front we have also had qualified success. Over the last year we have quietly but firmly impressed our views on City Council Planning Department and also on individual councillors. The reports we have submitted on various cycle-related subjects have been well received and their professionalism has been acknowledged. Since the campaign started, we have obtained a cycle path between Edward Street and Anglia Square which was the 'missing link' to an advisory route bringing cyclists into the city centre from the Northern suburbs. Several of our recommendations for cyclists' facilities in the Magdalen Street area (eg contraflow lanes) have now been accepted and will eventually be installed.

On the minus side however lies the problem that afflicts so many well-meaning campaign groups. From the heady days of last autumn when we regularly used to get 40 - 50 people at our meetings, putting forward ideas, offering help with various areas of concern, etc, we now have a hard core of about half a dozen people who do most of the work. Given that these half dozen also have other commitments (jobs, families, etc) it means that we cannot be as effective as we would wish. We desperately need more people to become actively involved with everything from doing surveys to helping produce this newsletter. If we could set up various sub-groups within the campaign, each dealing with different areas, we could achieve much more than at present. For example, the cycle repair workshops we ran in Chapelfield Gardens during National Bike Week were an unqualified success. A large number of cyclists were able to have their bikes checked over by knowledgeable cycle mechanics amongst our membership. We would like to organise these on a regular basis (say, once a month) but cannot unless you the membership offer your help.

So, please, if you have any time to spare, please get involved and let us together make this campaign achieve the things it was set up to achieve.

Les Hopkins

\* \* \* \* \*

→ ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ←

Will be held on Thursday 1.10.91 in the Tudor Room at the Charing Cross Centre, St John Maddermarket at 7.30 pm. All members are welcome to attend to review the past year's work and devise a campaign strategy for the coming year.

BE THERE!



We just haven't the space to reproduce more than these few cuttings from the local press!

# Partial ban on cars is the real answer

ITY Coroner James Hipwell's tirade against Norwich cyclists does no credit to a public official in his position.

While, certainly there are cyclists, especially among the young and inexperienced, who do cycle irresponsibly, this is by no means a majority as Mr Hipwell's comments imply.

As City Coroner he will doubtless be aware of official traffic accident statistics which show that out of all reported accidents involving cyclists it is the motorist who is to blame in, on average, two-thirds of cases. (The last available figures being the Transport and Road Research Laboratory's findings of the mid 80s). In other words, out of 26,561 reported cycl-

ist accidents in 1988 (including 243 fatalities), nearly 18,000 of these were likely to have been caused by an offending motorist, not divinely protected cyclists.

The danger of such comments by someone in Mr Hipwell's position is that it encourages motorists to take even less notice of cyclists than they do at present (ie, "if they've got divine protection then I don't need to look out for them") or that it discourages potential cyclists who perceive that they have little support from official bodies should things go tragically wrong.

The real answer is not to accuse cyclists of being under divine protection nor to accuse

motorists of believing the ownership of a motor vehicle confers a "divine right" to ignore other road users, but to ban all cars (except emergency/service vehicles, residents and disabled orange badge holders) from city centre streets that are not suitable for them and turn such streets over to cyclists and pedestrians.

Now that really would be "divine."

Les Hopkins,  
Cycling Campaigner,  
Norfolk Friends of the Earth,  
Stacy Road,  
Norwich.

## On your bikes!

EEN cyclists in Norwich have joined forces to put together nine days of pedal power to mark National Bike Week.

Members of Norwich Cycling Campaign, a local pressure group campaigning for cyclists' rights, and the local branch of the Cyclists' Touring Club are hoping to encourage more people to get on their bikes and join in the fun.

The week which kicks off tomorrow (Saturday), with a free repair workshop plus police postcoding at Chapelfield Gardens from 12-4 pm.

There are also cycle rides organised throughout the week and a public meeting on Monday entitled "Cycling — the way forward" at the Charing Cross Centre at 7.30 pm.

There is also a road safety exhibition in Chapelfield Gardens on Saturday, June 22, plus another cycle postcoding session.

The week is rounded off on Sunday, June 23 when there is to be a round Norwich relay bike ride.

People are also being encouraged to cycle into work or school during the week.

## Helmet plans support young rider training

I HAVE read with interest the various letters in your paper concerning cycle helmets.

The County Council's road safety team has taken positive action by actively promoting a scheme through schools throughout Norfolk encouraging children to consider wearing cycle helmets.

In conjunction with the importers they have offered a "direct buy" system between schools and the importer, ensuring a very competitive price.

The Bil Atlas helmet being offered not only conforms with the Approved British Standards BS 6863 but also to European Standard ISO 9000.

Whilst the wearing of helmets is not a substitute for good safe riding practice and the necessity to make other road users aware of cyclists, helmets may well prevent a serious head injury in the event of a child falling from their machine.

As for the training aspect of young cyclists: the council's road safety team, together with police officers and other voluntary instructors, have trained over 3000 children in the county so far this year.

Colin Morley,  
County Road Safety Officer,  
County Hall,  
Norwich.

AS A cyclist for over 30 years, I agree with A.W. Marlow (Letters, August 12) that ramps in the road are an obstruction to the motorist which should be removed. So should traffic lights, roundabouts, pedestrian crossings and speed limits. All are obstructive to the motorist.

I don't mind if speeding motorists kill each other in ever-increasing numbers. In fact, it's nature's way of getting rid of them efficiently.

But it's cyclists and pedestrians who need the very real protection of these "obstructions" and long may they increase and prosper.

M.E. Kauffmann  
Manor House,  
Coltishall.

## City roads 'too dangerous for young cyclists'

A CITY councillor admitted to "breaking the law" today — by telling her young son to ride his bike on the pavement.

Liberal democrat Mrs Lynda Jennings told the city's planning committee that she feared many roads in Norwich were too dangerous for young cyclists.

"I tell my 11-year-old son to go on the pavement because of the way cars treat cyclists. I know I'm breaking the law but I'd rather have my son alive," she said.

Mrs Jennings' comments came as Labour councillor Mrs Dot Machin made a plea for new cycle lanes in The Avenues.

"The pavements are very wide down here and I don't see why we can't do something quickly rather than wait for our cycling strategy," she commented.

However, planning committee chairman Mr Philip Tolley warned that creating cycle lanes without a cycle network, as in Newmarket Road, could prove to be just as dangerous.

The city council is currently investigating setting up a network of cycle routes in and around the city centre.

GET back on your bike! That is the message from Norwich organisers of next week's major national cycling campaign.

National Bike Week aims to get rusty cyclists back on two wheels in a bid to keep them fit and cut pollution. The Norwich Cycling Campaign — set up to fight for

experts will be on hand to help you get back on the road. There are eight organised rides, ending with a grand finale round-Norwich relay, and children will get a chance to pick up road safety tips from police and have their bikes security-postcoded.

Mr Matthew Williams, of Norwich Cycling Campaign, said he hoped the campaign would encourage people to cycle to work and school.

"A cycle in traffic-choked Norwich is a good, quick viable alternative to cars and buses," he said.

"This is an excellent opportunity for people to get back on their bikes and find out what they have been missing."

TIME TO CLIMB BACK INTO THE SADDLE

EN 18/10/90 (Thurs) P.S. Colthall.



## B R I T I S H   R A I L   N E W S

Things are now looking decidedly bleak for local cyclists who wish to take their cycles with them on the train.

On Intercity the last areas of free cycle carriage have now been eroded. Cyclists, therefore, who wish to travel to London, for example, will now have to reserve a place for their cycle in each direction at £3 each way, adding a further £6 to the cost of their journey. Also, cycles are barred completely on four Monday - Friday daily trains from London - Norwich and on seven trains from Norwich to London.

On Regional Railways there is now a compulsory bike reservation system for all services on which seat reservations are required, eg on journeys from Norwich to the Midlands and the North-west, again at £3 each way.

On local commuter lines the good news is that cycles will continue to be carried free and without reservation. The bad news is that, due to continuous breakdowns and mechanical problems with the old 'guards van' type trains, these will all be replaced, within six months by new 'Sprinter' type trains with much reduced cycle carrying facilities - either two bikes or six bikes per train depending on which guard you get.

The ridiculousness of this situation was emphasised to me recently in a letter I received from our member, Mark Schlesinger, who describes a recent journey thus:-

"The Guard refused to take more than two bikes on grounds of safety. This resulted in ugly scenes, as five cyclists jostled with each other to board, and further down the line, as a small girl was nearly refused access to the train." On phoning BR Customer Services to complain about this 'antagonistic free-for-all', Customer Services admitted that they hoped that "eventually cyclists would make 'other arrangements' and that they were only a 'minority' of their passengers which, as Mark puts it "one that they have decided is expendable."

So how has this situation been allowed to develop? About five years ago BR commissioned the Harris Institute to survey existing and potential cycle passengers. The Harris report showed that the cycle market was, then, worth £10 million annually with a potential further £10 million if conditions were made more favourable for cyclists. When I spoke informally to a member of BR management, I was told that, in his personal capacity, he believed the root of the problem lay in insufficient Government funding and the legal requirement for BR to achieve a profit on all investment. Translated down to local level this effectively means as many bums on seats in as small a space as possible, paying as much as BR think they can get away with. This may be barely acceptable to business commuters with attache cases, personal phones and limitless expense accounts, but it is not much use to people with children or heavy shopping, the disabled in wheelchairs, or cyclists who may wish to go to the seaside for a day, or who choose, or are obliged, to commute with their cycles.

Nationally, Cycle Campaign Groups intend to

1. Refer the whole BR mess to the Minister for Public Transport, Roger Freeman;
2. Query why their needs are not met under the Public Service Obligation;
3. Demand that County Councils include cyclists' needs when subsidising BR services;



4. Alert tourist bodies to the steady loss of cyclist access to trains;
5. Make the integration of cycling and public transport more of a political issue.

Locally, the Norwich Cycling Campaign will be collecting as much data as possible from local cycle/train travellers (how often they use the train, how many are there of them, and how much they spend annually on fares, etc). Possession of such information will assist us invaluablely when we put our case to BR locally and if other cycle campaign groups around the country do similar surveys this will undoubtedly strengthen our hand nationally as we try to persuade BR that their strategic thinking regarding bikes on trains needs a good kick up the bum.

If you are interested in helping collect and assess data on BR services, or have any anecdotal 'horror stories' of problems with BR locally, please contact Mark Schlesinger on Norwich 660134 (evenings) or myself on 762722.

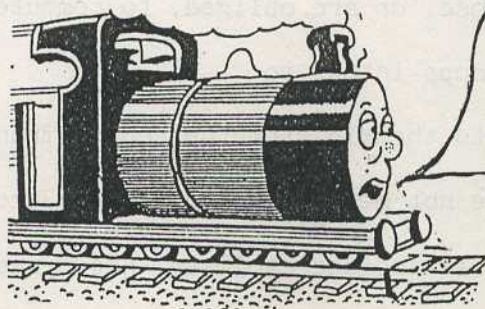
Les Hopkins

In short.....

*You can take bikes on some of the trains all of the time,  
But you can't take bikes on all of the trains all of the time.  
You can't take bikes on all of the trains some of the time,  
Or even all of the bikes on all of the trains some of the time,  
But you can take some of the bikes on some of the trains some  
of the time,  
At the guard's discretion.*

*Mike Shearing*

*(reproduced by permission of Cardiff Cycling Campaign)*



**WOT!  
NO  
BIKES!**



# LOCAL LOBBYING NEWS

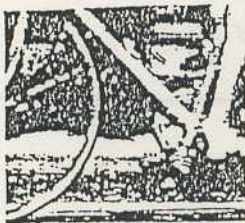
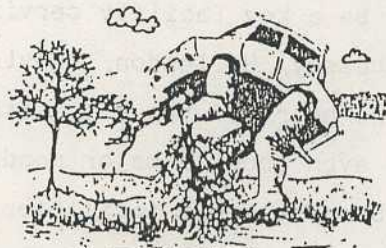
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## ► ST STEPHENS STREET HUMPS

Having registered our interest by writing to the planners when this scheme was first mentioned, we were duly consulted and had our ha'penny-worth on behalf of cyclists. We expressed some concern about the 'pinching' effects on traffic at the position of the ramps, and also the confusion as to whether or not the pedestrian has the right of way. We also pointed out that the extensive metal barriers would tend to be used as convenient bike racks in the absence of other parking facilities for the many cyclists who use the street. It's now a *fait accompli*, but are there any other points you think we should raise as cyclists (i.e. before other similar humps appear elsewhere)?

## ► SAVE THE WENSUM VALLEY CAMPAIGN

Save the  
Wensum  
Valley



Mass Cycle Ride  
Sunday 22nd September 1991

norwich cycling campaign



Meet 1pm at Barn Road Roundabout



Optional distances to suit all riders

Norwich - Attlebridge : 14 miles return

Norwich - Drayton : 8 miles return

Norwich - Hellesdon Mill : 5 miles return

For details phone Norwich (0603) 762722

\*  
DON'T MISS  
\*



# SAVE THE WENSUM VALLEY CAMPAIGN *contd...*

Members will doubtless have read in the local press about this campaign which appears to be becoming the biggest local issue for ages. A joint campaign group has now been set up by several interested groups including the Norwich Cycling Campaign, Friends of the Earth, Norwich Labour Party and others.

Matthew Williams writes:-

'In our original report on the N.A.T.S. proposals to Norfolk County Council we stated that 'the loss of the M & GN route as a major artery exclusively for cyclists would be a tragedy and *we will fight tooth and nail any proposal to place a road along this most valuable route.*' Unfortunately the rather blinkered and we think foolish decision has been taken by the County Council to support the principle of a road linking Barn Road and Sweetbriar Road, so the tooting and nailing has already begun. We are represented on the committee of the Save Wensum Valley campaign and among other things we will be organising a mass cycle ride on 22nd September.

For the sake of a few thousand pounds worth of crushed limestone the completed route could already be a key facility serving cycling commuters and shoppers in Costessey, Hellesdon, Drayton, Taverham and Thorpe Marriot - right into the heart of the city without the need to mix with motorised traffic or even cross a major road. Why wasn't this obvious step done ages ago? Because cycle facilities are such low priority, and perhaps because of the political danger that the route might have become even more popular than it already is.'



If members wish to read how our wonderful county council decided on what John Garret MP has described as "an act of environmental vandalism" I would suggest they read the excellent article by John Allaway in the current issue of the Friends of the Earth Magazine "Down to Earth" (available from the Development & Environment Centre, 38 - 40 Exchange Street, or from newsagents/wholefood shops, etc across the city - price £1.



What they have said (from "Down to Earth")

"People need more roads and the proper solution is to build the M & GN radial ... so that people can drive into the centre."

Cllr Wallis (Conservative)

"People should be free to choose the comfort of cars."

"They can choose what music to listen to and who they sit next to."

Cllr Mogford (Conservative)

"It would seem a good thing as motorists should have the opportunity to drive through pleasant countryside ... everybody has a car and should be able to use it wherever and whenever they want. If you've gone to the trouble of buying a car and taxing and insuring it, you shouldn't be forced to use public transport."

Cllr Dorrington (Conservative)

# SAVE THE WENSUM VALLEY

## It is not too late to stop this new road.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- \* Sign the petition calling on Norwich MP's to oppose the road.
- \* Write or telephone your County Councillor.
- \* Attend the Public Meeting on Friday 4th October 1991.
- \* Sponsor our advertisement against the road in the Eastern Evening News.

for further information contact Phil Harris (Tel: 765252 (day) or 700557 (night))

We intend to place a full page advertising feature together with a statement against the road prior to the public meeting on 4th October 1991. If you would like your name or organisation added to the protest please complete the form below. The cost of the advertisement will be approximately £1200 so we need 240 individuals paying £5 each or 120 organisation paying £10 each or a combinations to achieve our objective.



Please include my Name/Organisation in the advert in the Eastern Evening News

Name/Organisation \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a donation of

(minimum £5 for individuals £10 for organisations.)

Please return to Save the Wensum Valley, c/o Phil Harris, 7a Friars Quay, Norwich, NR3 1ES.



arguments have already been well-rehearsed in the cycling press, and we've drawn heavily on Don Mathew of the CTC for a clear view of the issues:

# Let cyclists decide

## Helmet laws won't increase our safety

ON THE face of it, making cycling helmets compulsory may seem a good idea.

Lynda Jennings' campaign will no doubt attract support, particularly from those who have least to do with cycling. Many active cyclists are less enthusiastic. Why is this?

One reason is that we cyclists would prefer to prevent the accidents happening in the first place.

Groups like the Norwich Cycling Campaign have for years been campaigning on excessive vehicle speeds, hostile road design and bad driving, the sort of things witnessed every day on Unthank Road (and elsewhere), as Mrs Jennings is only too aware.



Lynda Jennings with her son Mark.

Another reason is our fear of initiating another bout of "victim-blaming," whereby however fast or drunk a driver may have been, the injured cyclist would get the blame if he was not wearing a helmet.

Cycling is inherently safe, but riding in urban traffic can present some hazards.

Cycle helmets help to reduce certain kinds of injury, but they are not like motor-cycle crash helmets. They are designed to survive a one metre drop test, equivalent only to an impact of 12 mph.

This saves your child's head when he accidentally falls off while learning to ride, but is little or no protection against a speeding car.

Wearing a helmet is surely a matter of individual choice: I do frequently wear one and so does my nine-year-old son.

However making it compulsory for every trip would tend to discourage people from taking up cycling, which would be a great shame when it has been estimated that the overall health benefits of going by bike outweigh the risk of injury by 12 to one.

It is also worth noting that 10 times as many car occupants and pedestrians suffer head injuries as cyclists. Who'd like to start a campaign for drivers' helmets?

Matthew Williams,  
Christchurch Road,  
Norwich.

Compulsory cycling helmets?



In the last newsletter we mentioned the City Council's Draft Cycle Network which covers the whole of Norwich except the city centre (which is probably where most of us are actually trying to get to). In late May we put together a proposed network for the Inner Area, based on comments and suggestions received from members. This was sent to the City Engineer for consideration, and we simultaneously issued a press release to generate some publicity. Council spokesman Tim Anderson gave a typically defensive response (see press cutting) but passed the reporter over to the police to comment on one of our suggestions about allowing out-of-hours cycling on London Street: "It's currently illegal" they pointed out. That's exactly the point!

# Cycle campaigners want more routes

CAMPAIGNERS have presented City Hall with plans for a radical new network of cycle routes.

Joint co-ordinator of the Norwich Cycling Campaign, Mr Matthew Williams, said the aim was to give commuters and shoppers improved access to the city centre while complementing the cycle network already planned by the city council.

Mr Williams said: "There is now tremendous demand for cycling facilities

in Norwich. We know that many more people would take to their bikes if only they felt safe.

"With the rapid changes now happening in the city we must ensure that cyclists are not prised out by pedestrianisation schemes and one-way systems," he said.

The proposals include:

- Drop kerbs at Duke Street and Colegate.
- Contra-flow cycle lanes along St Giles', Queen Street and part of King Street.
- Allowing cyclists to use London Street outside shopping hours.

Norwich City Council spokesman Mr Tim Anderson said: "I would have thought we would have to look at it in very great detail."

But he said while some of the proposals might be worth seriously considering, he added: "I cannot see the police being too

happy about cyclists using London Street at any time of the night or day."

Norfolk police spokeswoman PC Frances Shute said as the law stood it was currently illegal to cycle in London Street.

"It is designed for pedestrians. They may be campaigning for cycle routes like those abroad, but until that happens people cannot ride along pedestrian areas," she said.

By Lydia Fitzpatrick

EEN 25/5/91



April 1991

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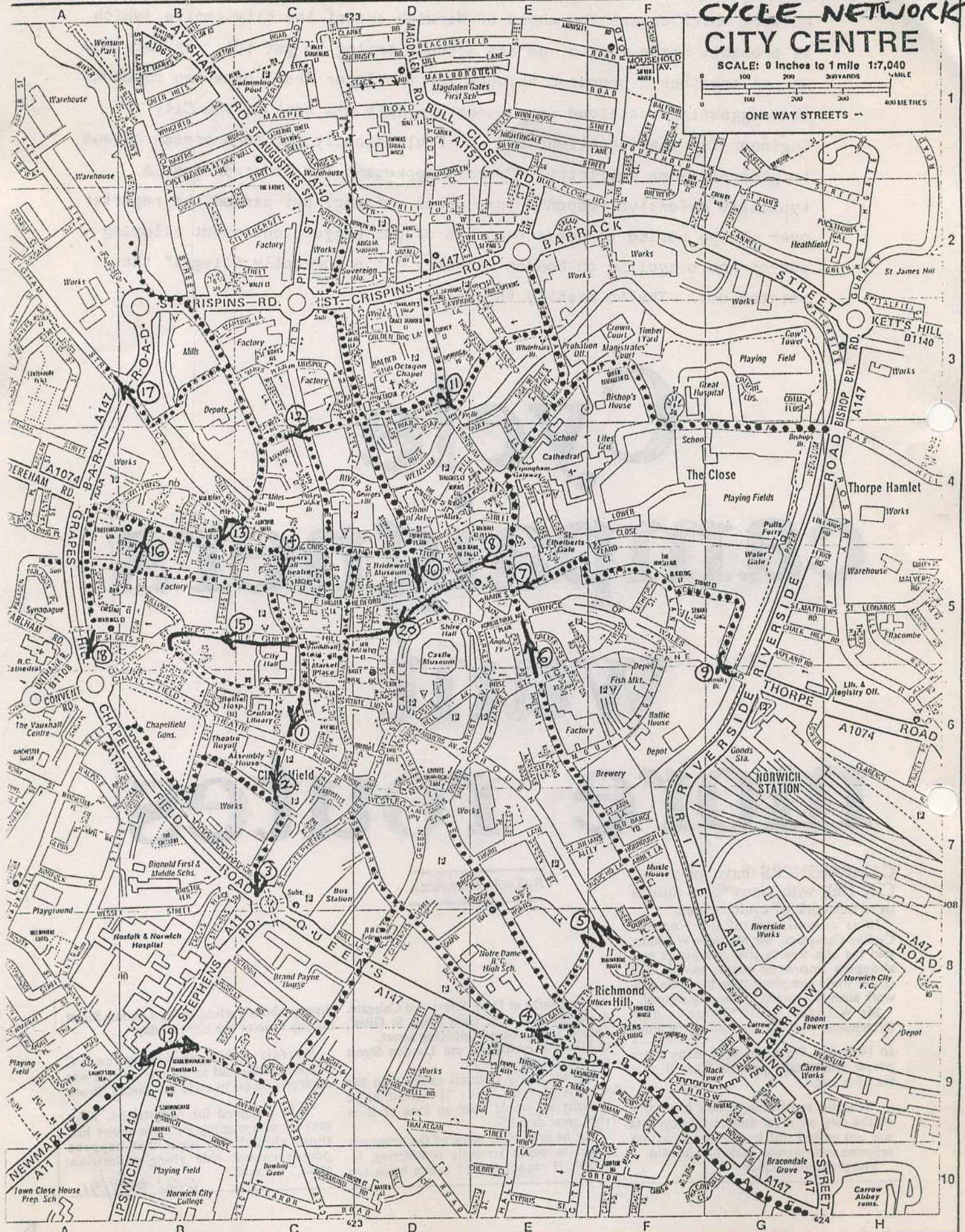
# norwich cycling campaign

## DRAFT INNER AREA CYCLE NETWORK CITY CENTRE

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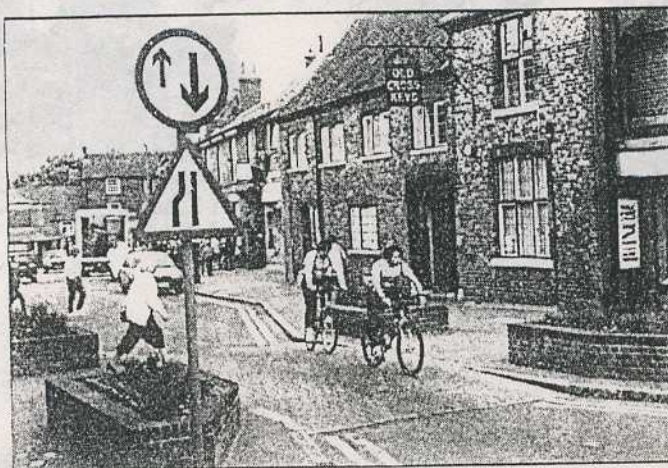
ONE WAY STREETS →





If you wish to add to these ideas, please contact Matthew on Norwich 503824.

The next stage in this campaign is to get hold of some statistics on cycle movements through particular junctions - this is what will be needed to persuade the City Council of the need for committing modest resources to making engineering improvements. To this end we are targetting certain junctions and are presently carrying out simple counts of cyclists at different times of the day. It would be very helpful to our campaign if you were able to offer an occasional hour, especially during the weekday rush hour periods, to assist in getting our data together. It's very easy to do and the forms will be provided.



re London Street

from CTC Cycling Digest

## Cycling and pedestrian areas

# Ban the ban?

The vexed question of cycle access to pedestrianised streets is now under active scrutiny by TRRL. ABT Consultancy is investigating whether real reasons exist for excluding cyclists from traffic-free areas. Twelve sites were selected from an initial list of thirty, three of which will be the subject of particularly detailed study. Comparable locations on the Continent are also being looked at. Peter Trevelyan from ABT gave some personal and provisional findings at the CTC's Spring Conference. He observed that cycle use of such areas fell into two main categories, shopping and cross-town journeys. With the former, cyclists seemed content to have some controls imposed. Many pushed their cycles even when riding was permitted, and good cycle parking at the edge of precincts appeared to entice cyclists to leave machines there.

However, where pedestrian areas formed part of a crucial route cyclists tended to keep on riding. This was for reasons of directness, time savings and — crucially — safety. Alternatives to banned areas were often long and meandering, or involved busy inner ring roads, together with unpleasant roundabouts.

Trevelyan felt these factors should sound a note of caution

to those intending a bike ban. If cyclists were offered an unrealistic or unattractive alternative they were likely to ignore any restrictions. Authorities should also ponder the financial costs of providing alternative routes if they were considering imposing a ban.

The basic problem seems to be that cyclists are a perceived danger, rather than an actual one. Continental experience suggests that the issue is mostly self-regulating — the denser the pedestrian flows, the less cycling takes place.

This seems to support the concept of making any bans apply to peak shopping hours only, as currently in York. This has the effect of not discriminating against cyclists when they are going to and from work when pedestrian flows are low, but keeping them out of the way when traffic-free streets are busier. Certainly, 24 hour bans appear mostly unnecessary and difficult to enforce.

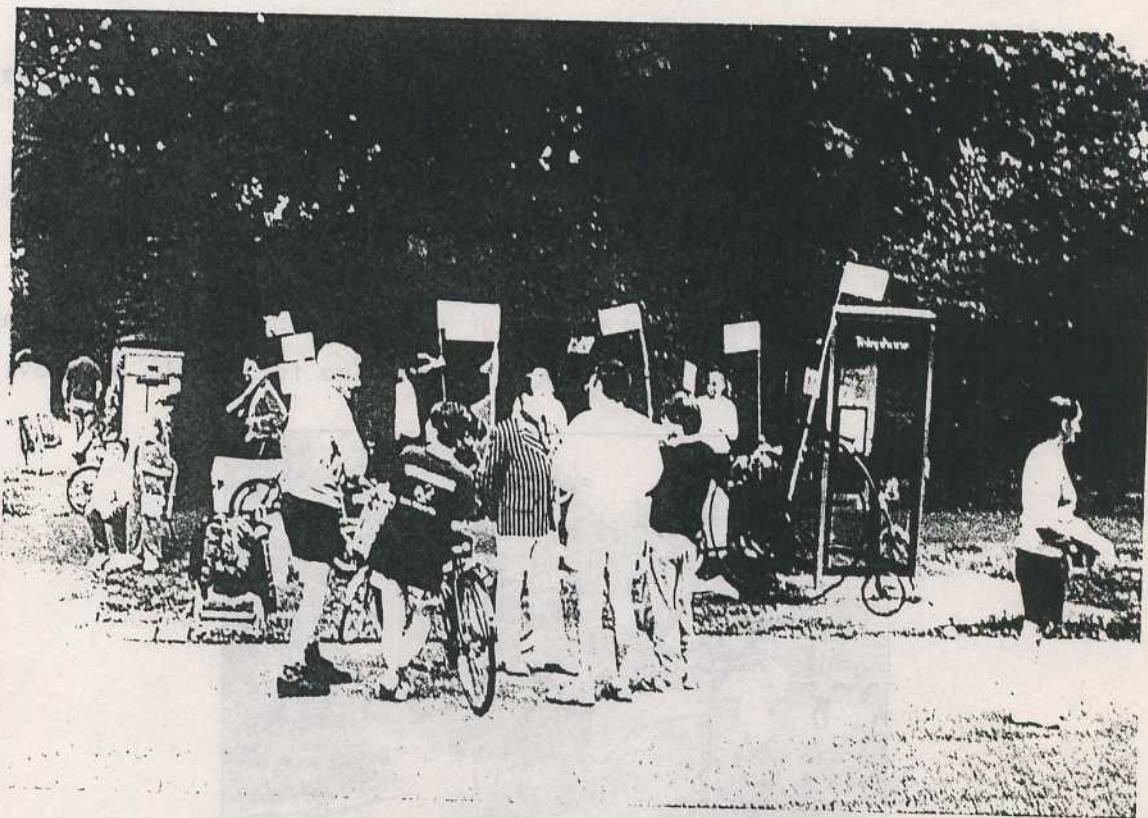
Trevelyan observed that muddled thinking seemed fairly widespread on these and other matters. Some authorities 'solved' the problem of inadequate cycle provision by arranging seating and planters so that routes could not subsequently be provided. Others with light cycle flows imposed bans, whilst some with heavy flows, such as Beeston, did not. Oxford banned cyclists from its bus-only Queen Street, but Bristol allowed them into its East Street equivalent.

The overall project is due for completion this year. The CTC is grateful to TRRL and ABT for early insights to this ongoing saga. More news when we have it.



► LORD MAYOR'S PROCESSION

Certainly the highlight of the year's activity for some of our members! Those who didn't participate missed all the fun of the carnival, with bikes, trikes, tandems and even a penny-farthing all sporting their Norwich Cycling Campaign pennant for maximum publicity. We gave out several hundred leaflets and everyone felt the effort was well worthwhile.



Getting ready for the 'off' - note 1886 'Penny Farthing' Ordinary.



# The Lord Mayor's Procession

(A poem by Dianne Sharman)

Many weeks of work to prepare for the great day.  
 "Bigwheels" was there to lead the way.  
 Mountain bikes, helmets bright, coloured array,  
 Bikes with trailers, yellow as suns rays  
 A tandem for two was the wedding in May.  
 Bikes old and new, boy! what a display.  
 The teddy bears picnic was well under way.  
 Star of the show a penny farthing  
     - people shout 'hooray'  
 At the end of the day a firework display.  
 A day that for me will not fade away.



At the end of the day!



# PACIFIC COAST BY BICYCLE, Summer '87

By Roger Hunt.

"Hey - photo opportunity!" I think the first time we heard that cry was the evening we reached the huge red-granite slab by the side of the highway. 'COLUMBIA RIVER', it said, and underneath: 'West of here the mighty Columbia ends its journey and flows into the Pacific Ocean...' I recalled the soft-vowelled Wisconsin voice of the Amtrak conductor, a few days earlier, as the blue light of a Rocky Mountain dawn filtered through the compartment. "Good morning, folks. If you'd care to look out the left side of the train, you'll see the Columbia River, the last major river to be discovered in North America. We'll be arriving in Portland, Oregon around 11.30, about three hours behind schedule. Enjoy your breakfast."

Munching the Amtrak coffee and Danish, I remembered giving thanks to some mountain Deity or other for the titanic thunderstorm that had delayed our train in crossing the Rockies the previous evening. Leaving behind the grey-needle silhouette of the Sears Tower in Chicago, 'The Empire Builder' had toiled across the ochre plains in Nebraska and Montana in unbroken ninety-degree heat, but when we reached the edge of the Continental fault at Glacier Lake, the storm broke over us, as if the Gods of the place were angry at our presumption, penetrating their second territory in our air-conditioned comfort. From the observation-car, we'd looked down into boiling cataracts, and up at storm-leashed precipices, all lit by terrifying sheets of blue-green lightning. This colossal Wagnerian experience had a further epilogue, for had the train been on time, we should have reached the Columbia during darkness, and therefore missed one of the grandest sights of all: the pure, white

triangle of Mount Hood, towering above the river in a dawn sky washed clean by the storm...

Hey - photo opportunity!" The cry became the group's in-joke, repeated down the Oregon coast in Paul's nasal drawl (he was a Jewish lawyer from Miami), in Phylliss' Swedish-American vowels, reminiscent of Garrison Keillor (she was the group leader, from Minnesota), in Debbie's clipped, Californian airiness (she was a Berkeley sophomore), and in my British English, the short Brummie 'a's maybe lengthened a touch after a year's teaching on the Fulbright Exchange Programme in Birmingham, Alabama.

So we jumped off the bikes, rummaged for cameras in front panniers, and took our photographs: Paul and Phylliss and Debbie and Roger, in cycling shorts, racing vests and crash hats, the advance guard of the American Youth Hostel 'Oregon Coast' cycle ride, Summer 1987.

The ride had begun inauspiciously enough, a day and a half finding our way through the tacky sprawl of Portland, and the busy coastal highway with cheap motels and saw-mills, and all the time a cold drizzle spitting in our faces. But by the time we reached the first hostel at Fort Columbia, we'd dried off, the legs had become supple, and the coastal rain had given way to what I can only call, in Wordsworth's simple phrase, 'an evening of extraordinary beauty'. Great - we had already proved that we were not just fair-weather cyclists, and that evening, when Bob Berry, the gentle, wry warden of Fort Columbia (like many AYH hostels, an old military



establishment) showed us around his favourite places, we felt the first thrill of the epic ride.

Skins glowing, wrapped in sweaters against the sudden chill of the evening, we scrambled down to the shore through a scene that could have come from an Oriental embroidered-silk scroll. Pines sculpted by sea-winds clutched at rocks choked with sea-anemones, tree-trunks arched out of encroaching sand-dunes, suddenly giving way to a mile of white sand washed by the booming surf of the Pacific.

In the sunset, Bob pointed south across the white-capped bay to where a line of mussel-blue hills merged with the ocean. "Well - that's where you're heading, you guys. Quite an adventure!"

'Adventure...adventure'. That night, before drifting into the deep, dreamless sleep that follows physical exertion, the word echoed around my mind. Indeed, for me, it was to be even more of an adventure than the others. For them, and the other cyclists who joined us at Astoria and Rainer, the trip would end inland, two weeks later, at Eugene, from whence they would take their trains and 'planes home to different parts of the States. For me, on vacation until mid-August, when I had to fly home from Washington DC, the adventure continued. From Eugene, I would take the train overnight to San Francisco, my English touring bike parcelled up securely in the luggage-car, and then join a second AYH group for the 600 mile ride down the California coast to San Diego.

But, lying there, in my old Army cot in Fort Columbia, under the steel engraving of Geronimo, I could not guess at the thrills and delights that were to come on the thousand mile ride. These Oregon mornings that

I loved, packing the panniers, checking the beautiful machinery of a superb Dawes Galaxy bicycle while banging in a last delicious blueberry muffin and sweetened coffee, then riding off in tracksuit and gloves for the first hour, until the sun got over the Cascades to the east and burned off the sea fog in golden shafts of light, as we stripped down to shorts and cycle-mits; descending hair-pins on a mountain pass above the tree line, indulging the boyish thrill of imagining that I was wearing the *maillot rose* of the race leader in the Giro d'Italia, and that Paul or Sean or Carole, riding with me that day, was actually Jaques Anquetil struggling to stay on my wheel... the next moment riding from sunshine into the dappled cool of pine forest, thinking of Virgil's line about 'the trees' mysterious shade...', then the heart lifting at seeing the road curving down toward the ocean through acres of unspoilt meadows of wild flowers...always the flowers of green Oregon, before the brittle heat of southern California, ditches and wood-verges thick with cobwebbed foxgloves, soft clouds of pink champions in damp undergrowth at bends in the road - how perfect the bicycle is for travel, rapid enough to let you see so much variety in a few hours effort, yet slow enough to allow appreciation of a stone, a leaf, a tree...And always as we headed south, the changeless, still-changing Pacific on our right shoulder, as we ticked off the stages at about sixty miles a day. Evenings, at youth hostels, we'd eat communally, overlooking the ocean, before strolling to a bar to replace precious calories with iced pitchers of Michelob. Once or twice, scheduled to stay in motels in vacation towns, we'd dine out on barbaque'd steaks or smoked amberjack, and put awsay quantities of salad and corn-on-the-cob and



ice-cream ready for the next day's ride.

Nor could I dream of what was to come in California. After a few days' break in San Francisco, doing the jazz clubs and Chinese restaurants, paying homage to Kerouac at City Lights bookshop, and to Shakespeare at a splendid open-air *As you like it* in Golden Gate Park - meanwhile staying at the International Hostel for \$4 a night! - I joined the *peloton* of about twenty cyclists, from all over America, heading over the Bridge to our first stop, the AYH hostel at the converted lighthouse at Montara Point. This was an easy thirty mile day for the new riders, and I was tanned and superfit from Oregon. This didn't stop me enjoying the delights of the hostel hot-tub, shared with Rob, the tour leader, and two Dutch girl cyclists doing the ride south to north...

Those little bits of California dreamin' were well-earned, on the six hundred miles of Highway One: a mountain range, a river valley, a mountain range... Monterey, Carmel, Big Sur and on south. We became true cyclists the day a hard, dry wind blew against us for ten hours on the dusty, totally exposed road to Guadalupe, a flat slog across an agricultural plain, where hundreds of wet-back labourers bend to the red earth pulling lettuces and strawberries under the eye of the gang boss: cycling through the brief, blessed cool of a water sprayer, you understand at last the true human cost behind those huge, cool, American supermarkets, always stacked with ice-beds of fresh fruit and vegetables...

That was California. The other was the hideous up-market trash of Malibu, the richest, poorest place on earth, with its screaming six-lane highway, death for cyclists had not the saintly Highway Patrol officer

taken pity on us, and led us through in convey with sirens wailing, as if we were in the Tour de France... How far that seemed from the paradisaical rest days at Big Sur National Park, where I had wanted to be since reading Henry Miller's *Big Sur* and the *Oranges of Hieronymus Bosch* during tea-breaks in a Birmingham factory when I was a teenager: wild deer grazing in the dappled shade of a grove of ancient Californian oaks, whales basking off-shore when I went for a morning run... and that, too, seemed a universe away from the twenty-seven mile long cycleway along the beach at Santa Monica, packed with achingly lovely monokini'd girls, and narcissistic, carcinomatically-suntanned hunks working out...

Nor, at Fort Columbia, did I know the end of the group ride for me would be another hostel cot, a thousand miles south in Los Angeles. Brought down by food poisoning, I mooned around the Palos Altos hostel for three days, slightly febrile and distant, drinking pints of chilled orange juice, chatting with the warden (a nice lad from Catford, East London) looking at the sea, and sending postcards about adventure. I thought how trouble-free the ride had been (good old Dawes!). I thought about the old lady who had driven a Pontiac into my back wheel in San Luis Obispo. And I thought, perhaps a little too much, about the angel in lavender roller skates, with very long tanned legs and very short shorts, who tagged along for the ride along Huntington Beach, and said, "You guys cycled from where???"



## P R O F I L E

(an occasional series on individual members)

### No 1 Des Jeckell

The article reprinted here originally appeared in "Whifflers City" in 1987. Despite horrific injuries received in his accident Des is still pedalling away around the city and beyond, quite often towing a fully laden 'Shuttle' cycle trailer.

Moral of this tale?

Must be

"Where there's a wheel  
there's a way."



GUY Farnbank and Des Jeckell were always grittingly determined to succeed. For Guy it meant overcoming cataracts on both eyes — cataracts he had since birth.

For Des it meant overcoming a steel pin in his left leg — a painful legacy of an accident 11 years ago when he was in collision with a car while cycling.

But despite that, both joined the Norfolk District Association of the Cyclists Touring Club, to cycle many miles each weekend. Today we tell you their stories...

DES Jeckell went for five years before daring to get back into the saddle after his cycling accident.

His collision with a car shattered his left leg and left him too wary to go out on the road again.

But then one day, with the surgeon's steel pin still firmly wedged from his knee to his ankle, he took his courage into his hands and tried again. It is a decision he has never regretted.

Thirty-two-year-old Des, who lives in The Avenues, Norwich, still finds it difficult riding up hills, but his determination has taken him thousands of miles all over the country... and further.

Three years ago he even cycled to see his sister who lives near Hanover in Germany. "I may go over to visit her again next year," he told me.

That's not all. He has relatives in Birmingham whom he visits every year on his bike and he thinks nothing of cycling more than 50 miles in a weekend on club runs.

Add it all together and he rides about an amazing 8000 miles a year.

Des had a recent set-back when surgeons operated on his leg again but found the pin had knitted into the bone. So the pin will stay.

But that doesn't put him off. He admits the pin gives him a little pain but he'll carry on. "I enjoy touring the countryside. I'll keep riding as long as my leg will stand it," he told me.

## BRAVE CYCLISTS BEAT THE ODDS

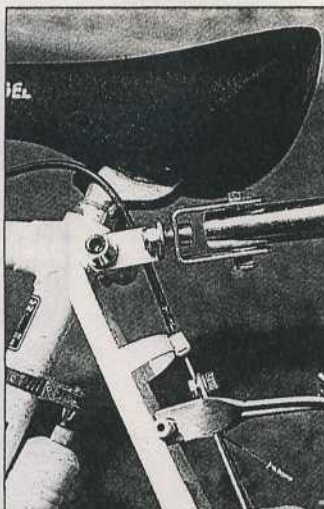




PHOTOS BY SUE DARLOW

Left The Columbus trailer has a payload of up to 100kg. This volume 'presented no problems on the journey home'. Below The universal joint coupling for the Columbus fits to the seat clamp and can be strapped down when not in use

Below The flexible reinforced PVC 'basket' folds flat and, with its subframe, drops into the open trailer. Bottom Once in position the subframe snaps securely into place



# CLIP-ON-CARRY-ALL

The Columbus Folding Cycle Trailer arrives in a large cardboard carton, in its fold away configuration. Unfortunately, there are no written instructions, however, a well-illustrated leaflet shows the steps you need to go through to have it ready for the road. First time around it took me a little while to work out, but it was time well spent.

The design is based on an oblong mainframe supporting two wheel-bearing subframes that can rotate to make folding possible. Once in position, the subframes are braced with two handy snap-in crossmembers. This is where the product could do with some precision engineering, since setting up was somewhat akin to wrestling with a dead goat. The purchase of a small rubber mallet is recommended to ease this operation.

The tow bar is exceptionally long, and will clear rear panniers and racks. It connects to your bike with a simple universal joint, attached by the seat pin binder bolt. An extension from the coupling simply snaps into the end of the tow bar. Finally a stand clips across the front of the subframes. The stand works well in practice.

Into this assembly fits the heavy-duty, box-shaped, reinforced PVC container. This is supported on a lightweight tubular four-piece frame. The method of assembly is not immediately apparent - little grey cells to the rescue! Once completed the four-piece springs into position within the main frame.

The PVC floor has a drain hole in the centre, which is slightly daft, because, at rest, the trailer tilts, and rainwater (not

Cycle trailers extend a bicycle's carrying capacity. The Columbus adds a foldaway feature as well. **Pete Redwood reports**

much) collects at one end. However, these problems are easily solved by anyone with an 'nth' of nous.

A generous tarpaulin rain cover completes the unit. This is tied down with a length of strong nylon rope, the ends of which should be melted over a small flame to prevent fraying. The rope has to be completely unlaced whenever the cover is removed - time-consuming and tedious. In due course I will replace the rope with hooked bungies, which will be much more efficient. Additionally, unlike a 'lidded' trailer, this tarpaulin accommodates irregular shapes.

All the steel tubes used in the construction are coated in a durable black plastic. Wheels are BMX-size, so replacement tyres are easy to come by. Weight is about 15.5 kilos and the width is just 70cm, allowing the trailer to squeeze through most door apertures. The stated maximum load is 100kg, and loading up with 102kg of comestibles proved no problem on the four-mile journey home.

It has been a delight to road test the Columbus. This Danish-made trailer is

extremely well thought out and behaves admirably under all conditions - even on the cobbled streets of Norwich, where many trailers fail miserably. Used extensively, over a month, the Columbus has behaved excellently.

One of the problems with a cycle trailer is where to put it when not in use. Well, this one can be dismantled for storage in less than two minutes, and re-assembled in about the same time.

After a 'kindly' motorist decided he or she wanted to park where I had left bike and trailer (fully loaded and with all wheels locked) he or she moved both parts onto the pavement. On my return I didn't bother to check whether it had been properly coupled before I rode off. As a result, after 30 yards the trailer went its own way. All credit to the design though; it remained upright and no damage was caused. But for peace of mind I will fit a safety chain here.

I, just like my bike, have become very attached to the Columbus Trailer. Its versatility is extended with an optional T-bar handle: you unclick the trailer from the coupling on your bike, and snap in the T-bar. The Columbus can be pushed or pulled, fulfilling a range of tasks.

The trailer, including the raincover, costs £175 plus carriage (about £15) and is available from **Neatwork, The Lees Stables, Coldstream, Berwickshire, Scotland TD12 4NN ☎ 0890 3456**. Extras are also available, including spare couplings, T-bar handle, mudguard/wheel covers and an extra stand. **NC**

*This review has been written by Pete Redwood of Squirrel Services of Norwich, a company which sells ecologically sound products and delivers them by pedal power. We will be featuring the company, and its activities in a future issue of New Cyclist*