

## Your opinions

## LETTERS

**THIS MONTH** BIKES ON TRAINS, MIDGES, PEDAL MODIFICATIONS, ELECTRONIC SHIFTING, AGGRESSIVE DOGS, MEASURING RIM WEAR, AND MORE



## Bike-rail

## RESERVATIONS ABOUT TRAINS

I recently returned to cycling, and I've made quite a number of trips on trains with my non-folding bike. The bike spaces on most trains have been full, and on many occasions there have been more bikes than there were proper spaces, despite some of the companies requiring prior booking. Happily, the train staff have made no objection and everyone has boarded, pre-booked or not.

Which begs the question: why put us through the faff of bike reservations? Northern, my local train company, is heavily used by cyclists, but seems to cope without any pre-booking. My attempts to self-reserve bike spaces online with other train companies have failed. When the National Rail website transfers me to a train operating company for ticket purchase, the PlusBike option never appears. Bike reservation for me entails a visit to my nearest station with a booking office, or an interminable phone call to a train operating company.

John Fletcher

I used to suggest [virgintraineastcoast.com](http://virgintraineastcoast.com) for cyclists booking online as you could reserve a bike space after reserving a seat. But the 'beta' version of Virgin's new website seems to have dropped this facility. It doesn't bode well. The Scotrail site ([scotrail.co.uk](http://scotrail.co.uk)) still works for cyclists travelling on any network, as does the First Great Western site ([gwr.com](http://gwr.com)).

## Write to Cycle

EMAIL: [cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk](mailto:cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk) POST: Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ.

The star letter wins a **£39.99** Altura Microlite, an ideal just-in-case jacket that's wind and showerproof yet packs down into its own rear pocket.

For more about this ultra-lightweight jacket, which comes in men's and women's designs, go online to [altura.eu](http://altura.eu)



**ALTURA**



Unboxed bikes can travel too

## EUROSTARS

I was delighted to read about Eurostar's change of policy to allow assembled bicycles on their trains. I took up cycle touring to celebrate my 60th birthday. I rely heavily on trains and, owing to arthritis, I do not have the strength to reassemble my bicycle. I used Eurostar a few years ago on my way to cycle the Danube trail. I found the staff very helpful. It made the journey much easier than it would have been if I had had to take a ferry.

Diana Palmer

## WATCH OUT, MIDGES ABOUT

I arrange my CTC Cycling Holidays trips to avoid the worst of the Scottish midge season. However, on the last day of my most recent tour, as well as the sun coming



Masking the midge problem

out for us, so did the midges. As we hung around and regrouped at Gairloch, four of the ladies were required to deploy their most effective anti-pest equipment. Fortunately, this day was not typical.

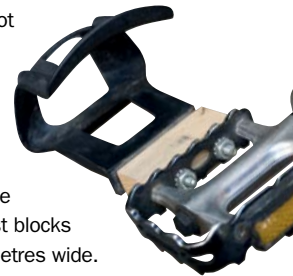
Gary Cummins

## WORST FOOT FORWARD

Like Brian Parry (Letters, June/July), I had a left knee replacement. I don't use clip-in pedals or (except on one bike) toe-straps, but I favour plastic 'half clips' to locate feet on pedals. I placed wooden spacer blocks between the left pedals and their clips on all my bikes. These allowed me to position the foot somewhat forward, and the knee to bend, but not so far that I had to use the instep. The first blocks were 30 millimetres wide. As weeks went by, I reduced the blocks to 25 and later to 20 millimetres.

Sixteen months after the operation, I took delivery of a new Thorn Raven touring bike. Too impatient to fit a block to the left pedal, I went for a test ride and to my amazement found I no longer needed it.

John Rhodes





## ASSAULT ON BATTERIES

I was sad to see a review of bikes with electronic shifters with no mention of how they violate the bicycle's basic principles of simplicity, serviceability and efficiency. I see them as the gear shifting equivalent of electrically assisted bicycles – a wonderful idea for people who might not otherwise be able to ride, but unacceptable on a racing bicycle. The UCI needs to re-think this one, and either ban electrically-assisted shifting or make sure that the riders charge the batteries themselves after the race has started.

I do not see how electrically-assisted gear shifting makes sense for touring or utility cycling because of its adverse effect on easy servicing and potential difficulty obtaining spare parts. Low tech gear cables are easy to carry as spares and easy to obtain. Clever though electrically-assisted gear shifting may be, it should not be fitted to bicycles. It corrupts an otherwise near perfect purely mechanical machine.

**Hugh Thornton**

**At this year's Bepoked, the UK Handmade Bicycle Show, I saw a road bike built for a bloke with dwarfism. It employed electronic shifting because that was easier for him, having short fingers. I**

## OBITUARIES

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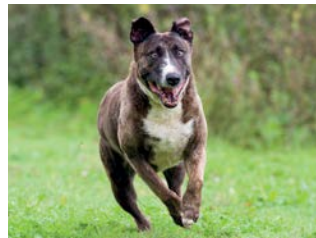
can see it being useful for long distance riders too, as a way to reduce fatigue in the hands, and for time triallists wanting multiple shifter positions. But, equally, there's nothing wrong with getting a bike with electronic shifting just because you want it. (I don't so I haven't.)

## CALL OFF THE DOGS

I recently spent a joyful fortnight riding the hills and mountains of the north of Corfu. The scenery was breathtaking, the climbs and descents exhilarating, and the road surfaces generally better than in Britain. The only downside was being ambushed and pursued by an assortment of dogs, large and small. What do you do? You can try to outrun them but if it is uphill, that fails. Booting them out of the way swings you off balance. What other remedies can you recommend? Is there a dog whistle with a pitch they dislike? Or is there a spray that works? I am returning to Corfu next year.

**Nick Hill**

**If you don't want to go full Ballantine on the dogs, one option is the Dazer:**  
[dazer.com/dog-deterrent.jsp](http://dazer.com/dog-deterrent.jsp)

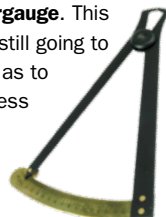


Left: Getty Images

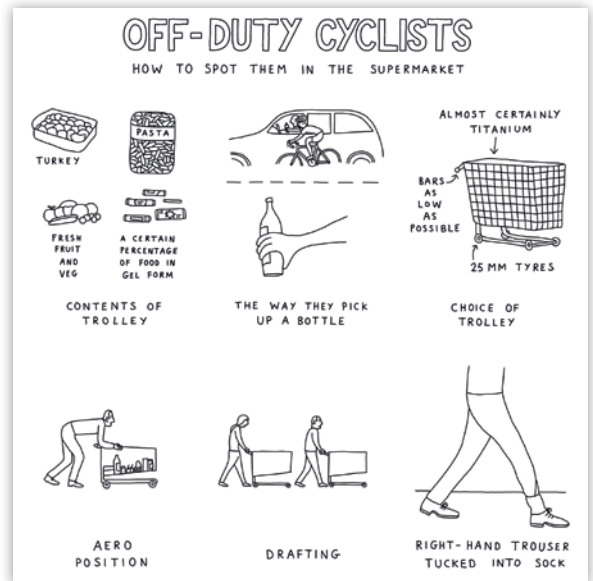
## GAUGING RIM WEAR

I was interested in the item in Q&A regarding rim wear (Apr/May). Rims that do not have wear indicators are a problem. You can buy a Proops Brothers rim wear gauge for £5 plus postage from: [bit.ly/cycle-rimweargauge](http://bit.ly/cycle-rimweargauge). This a great tool but it's still going to be a judgement call as to the minimum thickness of rim that is safe to ride.

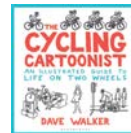
**Simon Phillips**



## The Cycling Cartoonist



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The Cycling Cartoonist, An Illustrated Guide to Life on Two Wheels, is published by Bloomsbury ([bloomsbury.com](http://bloomsbury.com)), priced £10.99.

## Join the conversation

### CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other Cycling UK members on the Cycling UK forum: [forum.cyclinguk.org](http://forum.cyclinguk.org). Here's an abridged extract from one recent thread: [bit.ly/cycle-lejog-ebike](http://bit.ly/cycle-lejog-ebike)



**LEJOG ON AN E-BIKE**  
**Ian Stuart:** My wife and I, in our 60s, are considering LEJOG June 2018. Does anyone have any experience or advice doing this on an e-bike?

**Mick F:** I reckon you could easily do an End2End on e-bikes, doing a reasonable mileage per day. The only proviso would be being able to charge the battery each evening.

**James01:** Make sure the bikes have easily removable batteries for in-room charging. Choose bikes that can be pedalled as normal without any dead-motor drag for those occasions

when you exhaust the battery.

**horizon:** On a previous thread, I wondered aloud at the potential of touring on an e-bike. I questioned whether touring with luggage (and a longer day) would eat up the battery power. If the battery did run out, would that leave you with a heavy bike and luggage?

**Vetus Ossa:** I can say categorically that I would not want to pedal an e-bike on the flat for ten miles with no power, never mind up long hills.

**pete75:** Speaking as someone who's ridden one 120 miles in the last

couple of days, with full camping load in front and rear panniers, and using electric assist only on the longest and/or steepest hills (maybe 10 miles in total), I'd say it's easily possible to ride one long distances without using power.

**cakefiend:** If you want advice, then these people are probably a good source: [ebikecycletourists.com](http://ebikecycletourists.com).

**Mick F:** e-bikes are aimed at people who want to ride a bike. In order to tour with one, perhaps you need a two-battery version, i.e. more capacity and power.

## How to contact Cycle

**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 Cycling UK policy, you should address it to the relevant national office staff member. Letters & emails for the Oct/Nov issue must arrive by 23 August. Write to: [cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk](mailto:cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk) or **Cycle Letters, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ**

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