



PHOTOS AYRSHIRE CTC, ILKLEY CC, LIFE PHOTOGRAPHY PICKERING

# LOCAL HEROES

CTC is involved with flourishing cycling groups across the UK. **Dan Joyce** contacted volunteers from four of them to see what they're doing right

**L**ocal cycling groups of all kinds are alive and well. You sometimes hear it said that people aren't into clubs these days; that they just want to do their own thing. It's true that some cyclists, such as the MAMILs of popular press, have come into cycling outside of a club structure, and that others suppose that a club would add bureaucracy to their spontaneous pastime. Yet CTC has hundreds of Member Groups and affiliated clubs, embracing thousands and thousands of cyclists who prefer to enjoy their pastime together rather than riding alone.

These groups must be doing something right. I spoke to key organisers in a handful of clubs that are thriving to find out how they got started and what they offer that keeps their members together.

## AYRSHIRE CTC

Ayrshire CTC is a Member Group covering the historic County of Ayr and the Island of Arran. It was formed in 1987 as a Section of the then Glasgow DA. It has 210 members.

'When I returned to cycling, the nearest CTC group was 40 miles away,' says co-founder Pat Standen. 'While attending the Haddington Birthday Rides, I discovered that Glasgow DA were encouraging people

to establish local groups.'

With her partner, Drew Moyes, Pat obtained a list of CTC members in the area and sent each an invitation to come on a 40-mile ride that they had devised. 'A third of them turned out and we had a great day cycling and chatting,' says Pat. 'The Ayrshire Section was born.'

Since then, Ayrshire CTC has grown steadily, despite overlapping with four long-established road clubs and a couple of off-road groups. Pat and Drew put this down to the group's focus on leisure cycling and the social nature of the rides.

'We introduce the leader and back marker for the day and encourage people to cycle at their own pace,' Pat says. 'Everyone in the group chats to newcomers and keeps an eye on how people are doing. If someone is struggling, there are always volunteers to cycle with them.'

This focus on non-competitiveness may be behind the number of women who ride with Ayrshire CTC. Initially there was little take up for women-only rides they offered, but they persevered. 'The breakthrough came from a ladies' programme in our "Ride into Summer" events in 2011, which were funded by a £1,000 Lottery grant,' Drew says. 'We sent leaflets and posters

to sports centres, swimming pools, and hairdressers. On our second ride, 28 ladies turned up to enjoy a sunny day cycling.'

There's now a ladies' ride every month, usually about 15 miles, including a coffee stop. Other regular rides include a 35-55 mile monthly ride, an easy ride (25 miles), fortnightly evening rides, and a range of one-off rides over the course of the year.

Clearly there is still strong demand for traditional club rides, although Ayrshire CTC cater for new riders as well. They offer 5-10 mile rides for beginners and families, and they have often run the KM150 audax ride, which celebrates cycle pioneer Kirkpatrick Macmillan.

Ayrshire CTC keep in touch with their members via email reminders, their website, [cycleayrshire.co.uk](http://cycleayrshire.co.uk), and a newsletter, Saddlebag, which is posted or emailed as a PDF.

## PLYMOUTH CYCLING CAMPAIGN

Plymouth Cycling Campaign, which is affiliated to CTC, was set up three years ago by Sustrans ranger Stuart Mee. 'I was disappointed that there was no one campaigning on behalf of Plymouth cyclists,' he says. He canvassed local cycling clubs and Bicycle User Groups and >



(Clockwise from top left) Ayrshire CTC bring in new blood by offering beginners' rides. But harder, hillier rides are available to Ayrshire CTCers who want them. Newbridge Park is a mountain biking facility in Pickering for locals, particularly kids and teens



**In the photos**  
**1** Ayrshire CTC ladies' ride  
**2** Ilkley CC has 1,000 members  
**3** Cycling bridge in Plymouth

reckoned that there was enough support for a campaigns group. A lawyer friend and cyclist, Dom Tucker, helped draft the constitution, aims and objectives, and they had their first meeting.

'Now we have almost 200 on our email list and our Facebook page has 147 members,' Stuart says. 'On average, between 15 and 20 people attend our bi-monthly meetings.' The group doesn't yet have a formal membership structure, although that's coming.

Plymouth Cycling Campaign's identity is held together not just through face-to-face meetings but by its online presence. 'The campaign website ([plymouthcyclingcampaign.co.uk](http://plymouthcyclingcampaign.co.uk)) is useful for new members or people looking to find out about what's happening locally,' says Stuart. 'Facebook is more immediate and offers members a chance to say what they think on issues. It's well used. Emails are sent regarding events, planning applications and so on.

'We encourage people to come forward with their concerns and then to become involved in moving forward on them. But we try to ensure that there are no unrealistic expectations of success. It's a long haul with many setbacks!'

Yet Plymouth Cycling Campaign has achieved impressive things in three years. 'We successfully campaigned for a cycling officer on Plymouth City Council,' Stuart says. 'And we have involved the local branch of the Association of Professional Driving Instructors in a day-course of cycling awareness, which they will feed through to their pupils.'

That's just the tip of the iceberg. They've campaigned for better and more structured funding for cyclepath maintenance – 'a partial success', Stuart says – and have

## “PEOPLE HAVE JOINED US WHO WOULD NEVER HAVE DREAMT OF JOINING A MORE TRADITIONAL CLUB” – ILKLEY CC

made proposals for new cycleways. They're getting Plymouth city councillors, planners, and police officers to understand and address the group's concerns on everything from cycling provision to incident reporting. 'We successfully campaigned for the message "Give cyclists space" to be displayed on roadside electronic message boards,' Stuart adds.

Plymouth Cycling Campaign, like other successful groups, isn't sitting on its laurels but is reaching out to other cyclists. 'We have organised several guided rides,' says Stuart, 'designed to get people out on their bikes who might not be aware of the infrastructure or who would be too nervous to venture out alone.'

### ILKLEY CYCLING CLUB

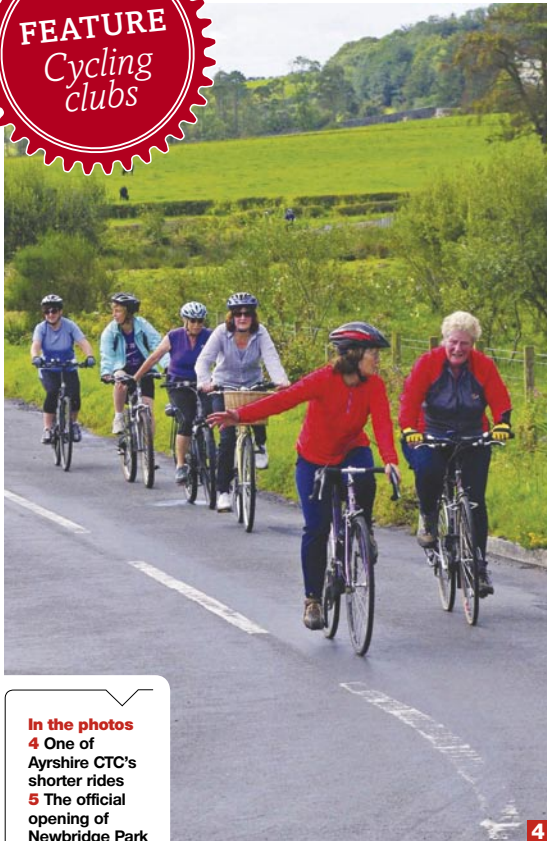
Ilkley Cycling Club is the reincarnation of a club that was founded in 1896 and died in the 1960s. The new version has more than 1,000 members.

'We started in March 2011 with a Facebook group,' says founder and secretary Paul O'Looney, 'and then advertised a meeting in a local pub to see if there was much interest. Well, 85 people turned up! We agreed the aims of the club, a constitution and structure, elected a committee and away we went. The first rides started in May of that year and have grown ever since.'

That rapid growth helped Ilkley CC pick up the Sport and Recreation Alliance's 'Community Sport and Recreation Awards Club of the Year' in July this year. 'A lot of the growth has been on the back of the Cavendish-Wiggins effect and the London Olympics, but our club's ethos on inclusivity and respect has also been a big part of it,' says Paul. 'People have joined us who would never have dreamt of joining a more traditional club.'

'One of our straplines is "from recreation to racing", which means that >

**FEATURE**  
Cycling clubs



**In the photos**  
4 One of Ayrshire CTC's shorter rides  
5 The official opening of Newbridge Park



**CLUBBING TOGETHER**

**CTC supports groups in a number of ways**

**CTC MEMBER GROUPS**

Resources for CTC Member Groups include: an annual grant; support with constitutions, policies; guidance on issues such as Data Protection, Child Protection etc; free organiser's liability insurance worth up to £10 million; marketing support, such as materials and publicity; lists of members in the area; event registration; Tourist Competition events; event and ride organising support and guidance; a bi-monthly e-newsletter; and more. To find your nearest Member Group, or for advice on forming one, see [ctc.org.uk/local-groups](http://ctc.org.uk/local-groups). Or contact Julie Rand: [groups@ctc.org.uk](mailto:groups@ctc.org.uk), tel: 01483 238 308.

**CTC AFFILIATES**

Affiliation provides £10m liability insurance, covering club officials, ride leaders and event organisers against any claims made against them as a result of their negligence. Members of a CTC affiliate group can join CTC as an individual for £16 as an affiliate member, gaining £10m third-party insurance, a wide range of discounts and weekly e-newsletters. Affiliated clubs also get access to event registration and publicity too, as well as marketing support. See [tinyurl.com/q458o2j](http://tinyurl.com/q458o2j) or contact Julie Rand, as above.

**CTC CAMPAIGNERS**

CTC's Local Cycle Campaigning Network is the largest team of cycle campaigners in the UK, with over 400 volunteers campaigning for better cycling conditions. Supported by the CTC Campaigns and Policy team nationally, our campaigners are making positive changes to the lives of all UK cyclists. Contact Mark Slater: [mark.slater@ctc.org.uk](mailto:mark.slater@ctc.org.uk), tel: 01483 238323.

› we cover the whole spectrum from those that want social rides to those wanting to compete. But we have now branched out further in to supporting and trying to catalyse utility cycling.'

Club rides take place primarily on Thursday evenings and Sunday mornings. More than 100 cyclists attend, so are divided into faster and slower groups. 'But we all meet up afterwards for a chat in our local pub. We are one club and enjoy that feeling of togetherness and support. We also have a Monday morning women's ride, a longer Tuesday social ride, and a Saturday morning chaingang.'

The club is involved in cyclo-cross, time trials, circuit racing, youth rider coaching, and even has its own sportive, the White Rose Classic. The demand for volunteers is high but doesn't seem to be a problem. 'The expectation is that everyone will do something for the club each year, whether it's helping with events or making cakes,' says Paul.

Ilkley CC is affiliated to a number of organisations, including CTC. 'Our local CTC official, Ginny Leonard, is an absolute star and helps us with lots of initiatives,' Paul says.

As you'd expect from a club formed via Facebook, digital communication remains a key part of Ilkley CC. 'We aim to be a paperless club,' says Paul, 'so the website ([IlkleyCyclingClub.org.uk](http://IlkleyCyclingClub.org.uk)) and social media are at the heart of this.'

**NEWBRIDGE PARK**

It's not only traditional cycling clubs that affiliate to CTC. Businesses, organisations, charities and individuals who organise cycling activities can also affiliate. 'We're essentially a site that has affiliated as a group,' says Mike Hawtin. 'We're a group in

Pickering who formed to develop a mountain biking facility for local kids who can't get to places like Dalby. The committee formed three years ago to develop the site, and we have 200 members of our club, Newbridge Park Groupies.'

Newbridge Park was a disused quarry and neglected woodland that now features a cross-country mountain biking loop, a skills area, and a pump track for kids. Members – mostly families from Pickering or nearby towns – get free access to the site for the year, instead of having to buy a day-pass each time like non-members, plus discounts at local businesses and Newbridge Park events.

The site is a work in progress. 'We have regular dig days,' says Mike. 'Three committee members have just completed CTC Trail Inspection and Repair training. We also have woodland meets – riding and barbecues – and other social events.'

'We plan to have a trail crew, for inspection and repair, and a trail patrol group, for help, advice and policing. We're also putting in a woodland discovery trail. We want Newbridge Park to be a place for the whole community to enjoy.'

Once again, online media is pivotal. 'The website – [newbridgepark.org](http://newbridgepark.org) – and social media are hugely important,' says Mike. 'We use Facebook, Twitter, the website, and word of mouth to attract and keep members. We have over 700 likes on Facebook and when we were building the site we had 60,000 picture views in eight weeks.'

Newbridge Park affiliated to CTC because, says Mike, 'we see the work CTC is doing at other sites and we'd like to offer our members access to affiliate membership rates. We're also hoping that CTC can offer event and eventually site insurance.' ☺