

Your opinions

LETTERS

THIS MONTH BIKEPACKING TO WORK, SADDLE PAIN SOLUTIONS, THE TWEED RUN, DROP BARS, AND E-BIKES



Left: Martin P. Black. Right: © Gorfev/iStockPhoto.com



Letter of the month

Bikepacking

COMMUTING ADVENTURES

WHOLEHEARTEDLY AGREE with your book review about **Bikepacking**: adventures do not have to involve epic journeys. A work colleague and I do what we like to call 'extreme commuting', much to the amusement of our wives, friends and other work associates. This involves loading the bikes with full bikepacking kit and cycling to a pub of our choice for refreshment. We then saddle up again to find a suitable wild-camp location for our bivvy bags.

Morning begins early, about 5:00am, with the bellowing call of a deer or a barking fox. Breakfast consists of porridge and tea while absorbing the early morning sunshine and the glory of the beautiful Essex countryside. All too soon, it is time to pack up and continue our journey to work. The distance from our homes to work is approximately 20 miles. The routes we use are a combination of country lanes and off-road trails.

I know it sounds a bit crazy but, actually, we've had an adventure before work while most people are still tucked up in bed. Give it a try, have fun.

Martin P Black

For more about these innovative bottle/bikepacking cages – and many other products – go online to cyclemiles.co.uk

Write to Cycle

EMAIL: cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk **POST:** Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ. The letter of the month wins a Gorilla Cage or a Monkii Cage plus extra Monkii cleats – your choice. Each is worth £20.



No need to stand for saddle pain

SADDLE SURE

A huge thank-you to Thomas Henry for such an informative, well-researched article on the problem of saddle soreness for women (June/July 2016). It made me realise that I am not alone, not making a big fuss about nothing, nor being especially wimpish!

The problems are discussed with such sensitivity, sympathy and clarity – it's truly inspirational! I now have the information and understanding on how to improve my comfort on the saddle.

All women should read this. All bike retailers should also read this. But I think the onus is on us girls to ensure we have the right saddle/bike, so that saddle pain does not spoil or curtail our joy of cycling.

D. Ann Jones

I am grateful to Thomas Henry for raising the issue of saddle soreness for women. When I retired last year, I treated myself to my first road bike. The difference in weight between it and my hybrid made for exciting riding – but at a cost.

Chafing is a nice word for the problem I had. I could have tolerated bottom soreness, but this was unbearable.

I tried several different saddles. I bought heavily padded shorts. Like Thomas Henry, I accosted other female cyclists and asked to feel their saddles. I searched the internet for information, but there was little out there. The only option seemed to be to sell the road bike.

However, when my husband measured the difference in reach (10cm) and drop (10cm) on my road bike in comparison with my hybrid, we could appreciate how much pressure my 'bits' were under. On his recommendation, I had two spacers fitted to raise the handlebars. Although I could never be mistaken for a serious racer, I can ride my lovely bike now with a song in my heart.

Kate Bullock

NEED FOR TWEED

Attached is a photo of me ready for this year's Tweed Run in May. The CTC badge on my cap is my



Jonathan with his 28in Royal Enfield

dad's from the '50s, when he first joined CTC. The badge on my jacket is from the late '70s, when I joined CTC.

I repainted and restored the Royal Enfield bike 20 years ago after buying the 28in frame from the Ripley Bike Jumble. I haven't researched the age but I think it's either Edwardian or 1920s. All other parts were sourced separately at bike jumbles.

The 15-mile ride through London was quite daunting because this was the first time I'd ridden it on a 'proper' ride, but it was very comfortable. It was a really enjoyable day with superb bikes and costumes.

Jonathan Spearman Oxx

DON'T DROP DROPS

Don't drop your drops, Alan Harding (Letters, June/July): install them upside down and cut off the unwanted sections (use a hacksaw or plumbers' pipe cutter) as per the photo of my fixed-wheel bike (below). The main advantage is having similar handholds as before and being no wider. If you ride in a group, you can still ride shoulder-to-shoulder and your bars won't foul, but your stance when reaching the brakes will be slightly elevated. A problem with straight bars is that they are usually 60cm or more wide, whereas drops are about 44cm max.

Roger Winstanley

Alan Harding says that he's going to drop using drops on his new touring bike because he's down in the drop position only 5% of the time (June/July 2016). He should think again. There's more to drops than drops. On a straight set of bars, you have only two



E-bikes: power to the people

hand positions: one on the grips and the other on the straights near the stem head. On drops you have five positions: on the drops, on the hoods, just behind the hoods, on the curve, and on the straights. On a long ride these extra positions are invaluable. You can relieve the pressures on palms and arms, thereby lessening the possibility of aches and sores.

Karl Wray

ELATED BY MY E-BIKE

My electric bicycle has put the pleasure back into cycling. Gone is the dread of hills. Crossing a busy main road is a doddle: with the motor's boost at 100%, I'm across in a flash.

I find it best to use as little power as possible. None at all on the flat, 40% for gentle inclines, then 100% when it becomes too hard. I save 150% for steep gradients; I don't know when 225% would be needed. Twenty- or thirty-mile trips are easily accomplished without depleting the battery.

Riding with friends without motors, they start to pull away on the flat when pedalling unassisted. So I sometimes need to switch to 40% to catch them. On steeper hills, the others slow and change down. I switch to a 100% boost and push hard, passing them easily, shouting 'Put your back into it!' This goes down well. I wait at the top so we can regroup before continuing to our pub destination for lunch, the object of the ride.

Richard Nisbet

Obituaries

EDDIE BRAY: 1944-2016

Died 26/3/16 at home, aged 72. Eddie was a family member of CTC from birth; his parents Stan and Jean Bray were very keen cyclists. Eddie cycled all his life, time trialling and touring. He bought his wife Chris a 'proper bike' after their marriage and they went on several CTC foreign tours before starting a family. A tandem and kiddy-crank kept the family on the road, and they enjoyed going to 26 of the Birthday Rides, plus rides with their local section. – Chris Bray

MARION SMITH

With husband Den (who died in 2010), Marion was a long-time and very active member of the Bristol Section and Bristol DA. On the bikes, they toured all over the West Country and Wales – and Scotland, Ireland and Europe too. Off the bike, she was Section Secretary and helped with magazine production for several years. No car ever featured in the Smith household – for them, cycling truly was a way of life. – Hugh Marshall

GEORGE FAULKNER: 1919 - 2016

George Faulkner, who has died aged 97, having had his last ride at 92 (at the insistence of his late wife Margery) was a life-long CTC member. Always a keen club cyclist, George and Margery rode a tandem and sidecar when their daughter Lorraine came along in 1949. George was the proud recipient in 2014 of a CTC award for 75 years membership. Knee-joint problems did not prevent him officiating at time trials in later life. He loved traditional jazz and had a jazz band at his funeral. – Bob Caldwell

Join the conversation

CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other Cycling UK members on the Cycling UK forum: forum.cyclinguk.org. Here's an abridged extract from one recent thread bit.ly/cyclinguk-carryingaphone.



CARRYING A PHONE IN SUMMER

Si: So how do you do it? I need a smartphone with me as I need to be on call. Wearing a T-shirt and baggy shorts, the phone won't fit into the pockets on the shorts.
Mick F: On the bike, I wear a cycling top, and they have back pockets. Failing that, I have a small saddlebag that would hold it.
manybikes: I sometimes wear it around my neck, in a see-through pouch. Easily

accessible and can be on the outside or tucked under shirt.
Psamathe: I use one of these bit.ly/cyclinguk-aquapac. Waterproof, wear round my neck under my shirt, pretty cheap. Doesn't swing around. I don't even notice it.
PH: Never tried one, but the phone arm bands seem popular with joggers.
Bez: I use a Rickshaw Pipsqueak (which attaches to the handlebar). Failing

that: Alpkit Stem Cell? Vittoria Bottle Cage Tool Bag?
Zanda: I have a neoprene utility pouch on a belt. Smaller than a bum bag and the look is more 'first aider' than 'roller blader'.
blackbike: I have no need for a smartphone. My phone is tiny and goes in a screw-top water bottle with a spare inner tube, tyre levers, puncture repair kit and a credit card. My water is in another bottle.
reohn2: Shrewd move ;-)

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 31 Aug. Write to: cyclinguk@jppublishing.co.uk or **Cycle Letters, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ**



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