

bristol CYCLIST

Newsletter of the
Bristol Cycling Campaign
FREE to members

£1 where sold

N° 62 - Winter 2006/7



Do as we
say, not as
we do ...

Bristol Cycling Campaign contact details

Contact details for individuals in BCyC are on the inside back cover – general contacts are below

Mail (including articles for this magazine if you don't have email):
BCyC, Box 60, 82 Colston Street, Bristol BS1 5BB

Website: www.bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

Join via our website or email: join@bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

For other information email: info@bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

Email for magazine articles: editors@bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

BCyC e-group: This is a useful way of keeping in touch with what's happening cycle-wise in Bristol and is dead easy to join. You can subscribe with a few clicks from the BCC website at www.bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk – just click on 'Contact' and follow the instructions.

Monthly meetings:

First Thursday of each month at 8pm. Dec 7th meeting will be at Southville Methodist Hall (next to the Southville Centre) at the corner of Stackpool Road and Beaulley Road, Southville. It's 5-10 mins cycle from the city centre, and on the No 25 bus route. Bike parking, wheelchair access. After that, meetings will be at the Llandoger Trow pub, King St. **All welcome!**

Useful Phone Numbers:

Problems with Bristol's traffic-free greenways

Bristol & Bath Railway Path 922-3719

Ashton Pill Path 903-6822

Malago Greenway 922-3838

Problems on the highway 922-3838 Mon-Fri 8.30am-8.00pm.

Helpful line for reporting problems with road surfaces, street-lighting, problems on shared pavements, broken glass and burnt-out cars. They now have a quick-response policy to broken glass.

Parking hotline – 922-2198 to report illegal parking on yellow line(s) &/or adjacent pavement when parking is banned

Smoky diesels (National number) 0870-6060-440 option 6

Traffic light problems 0800-854-229

Police 927-7777 for all departments. Use this line to complain about speeding, pavement parking etc.

Redfield Beat Police for Bristol end of Railway Path 945-5727

South Gloucestershire Council "Streetcare" 01454-868000

Environmental Transport Association To claim discount Quote Ref number 1506 1999 and your BCC membership number

Other cycling groups in Bristol area

CTC

www.ctcwest.org.uk/bristol

Cyclebag East

www.digitalbristol.org/members/cyclebag/intro.html

Avon Outdoor Activities Club

(summer rides only) www.aoac.co.uk/

Mountain Biking

Bristol Cycling Campaign



...is working for safer transport and planning policy for Bristol. Its aims include:

- 1) A freeze on road building
- 2) Control on traffic entering the city when pollution is high
- 3) Council budgets supporting sustainable transport, especially cycling
- 4) Speed limits in urban areas reduced to 20 mph.

This is your campaign and there are plenty of opportunities to get involved.

Shops giving discount to BCyC members

Bike, Queens Ave, Clifton..... 10%

Dave Bater

Willow Centre, Downend.....10%

12-14 Park Street, off College Green.....10%

Harvey's, Henleaze Road, Henleaze.....9%

Kathmandu, Park Street - free Summit Club membership..... 10%; certain items 25%

Mud Dock, The Grove, off Queen Square...10%

Overbury's, Sussex Place, Montpelier.....10%

Pembury Cycles

Highridge Road, Bishopsworth.....10%

236 North Street, Bedminster.....10%

41 Gloucester Rd, Bishopston.....10% (parts and accessories only)

Psyglewrx, Abbotsford Rd Redland.....10%

If there are other shops that would like to join this scheme then let us know.

Remember to take your membership letter/card with you



Designed by Car Busters in Prague (www.carbusters.org) we distribute these and use the slogan as part of our membership of the World-Car-Free-Network. This long thin sticker (approx 10 inches long) fits along your top-bar or similar part of your bike. Shows that you're "not part of the problem but part of the solution"! Cost just 50p each or three-for-a-pound. Available at meetings, our stalls, or through the post with a 2nd class stamp. FFI contact info@bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk



After a brief hiatus, the mag is back – hopefully for good!

Steve Meek has nobly volunteered to edit future editions, so the future of the magazine seems assured.

After such a long break, we have lots of news:

- **Christmas Social Thursday 14 December**, 8-12pm at the Sabrina, the boat moored by the Redcliffe Way bridge, near the roundabout. If you've never been there before, it'll be easy to spot – just look for all the bikes chained up outside! There will be a cheap bar, and you can bring along your own food. We are inviting other 'green' and cycling groups to come and join in the fun, so it should be a great evening.
- **New meeting arrangements.** Not everyone can get to the meetings, so in order to improve participation, an agenda will be sent round to the e-group before each meeting and invite suggestions for agenda items. If you won't be able to make a meeting but have an item for the agenda, and you aren't on the e-group, contact Cathy (contact details are on the inside back cover). At the final meeting of this year, which will be on Thursday 7 December at 8pm, we will be discussing the aims and future of BCyC – so if you have views on the subject, and won't be there in person, please let us know!
- **New meeting venue.** Our end-of-year meeting on 7 December will be at the Methodist Hall in Southville, on the corner of Beaufrey Road and Stackpool Road. Future meetings will be in the Jacobean Room at the Llandoger Trow, the half-timbered pub at the end of King St. It is centrally located and has wheelchair access, so should be convenient for anyone who wants to attend. Everyone is welcome!
- **New discount.** We have negotiated discounts for BCC members at Kathmandu, an outdoor gear shop at the top of Park Street. They are offering BCC members free Summit Club membership, which entitles members to 25% off full price Kathmandu tents, sleeping bags, rucksacks and travel accessories, and 10% off all other full priced stock. To get your free Summit Club membership, just take your BCC membership card or letter into the Kathmandu shop on Park Street, and the staff will join you up on the spot.
- **New e-mail group** for sharing news and opinions. Our previous email group provider has given up the ghost, so we have changed to Yahoo! Groups. If you would like to sign up, just visit the 'Contacts' page on our website. If you're worried about your inbox being clogged up with messages, you can opt to be sent a daily digest of the day's messages, or you can opt not to receive emails at all and just read the messages on the website.

Remember, BCC is its membership! We are just a bunch of volunteers. We have no paid staff and no committee with special powers, so if you don't like the way things are run, or would like to see us doing more things, then you are just as capable as the next person of doing something about it. The magazine consists entirely of contributions from the membership – so if there's any topic you want to see in the magazine, or anything you want to share with other members, let us know. If you would like to contribute an article, or have any ideas for subjects you'd like to see articles on, contact us or Steve – contact details are shown on the inside of the back cover. We'd love to hear from you!

Cathy and Philippe

**COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT MAGAZINE
IS 1st FEBRUARY 2007**

Don't wait to be asked!



Would you like a bike train to the Forest of Dean?

We would love there to be occasional direct trains from Bristol to Parkend, which is at the end of the Dean Forest Railway, in the Forest of Dean. The station is ideally placed for exploring the forest on foot or by bike. It seems likely that we will now be able to organise a two-carriage train to Parkend, with the usual very limited cycle capacity. We are however very much encouraging people to bring folding cycles - we will know how many we can carry later.

Our aim is that if the first trip proves successful, the idea will grow and perhaps become a monthly summer service from say April to October. Our eventual aim is still for a train that could carry a large number of cyclists.



For the first train we have **Sunday 13th May, 2007** in mind - when the bluebell woods that the train passes through should be at their best. **We would like anyone definitely interested in coming to provide us with their full contact details** (including email and mobile number for texts) so that we can keep everyone informed as the idea progresses. We need to have an idea of how many would come so that we can go ahead and book the train. The likely cost will be around £10 - £12 for a day return, and we expect the train will be able to pick up from a number of Bristol stations.

John Richfield 0117 9511678

Ben Searle 0117 9879894

bensearle@blueyonder.co.uk

Tandem riders wanted!

Tandem cycling is a great way for blind and partially sighted people to exercise, experience new places and get to know new people. RNIB Bristol are launching a tandem cycling project and need tandem riders, and also tandems! If you are a sighted cyclist who could spare some time to ride a tandem, or if you have a tandem they could use, they would love to hear from you. They will give full training, so you don't need to be an experienced tandem rider, though they are

looking for experienced stokers to help in the training. And of course, if you are blind or partially sighted and are interested in taking part, please get in touch.

Please contact Philippe Cazalis at 0117 9341704 or fsotemp@yahoo.rnib.org.uk.

Showcase bus plans will affect cyclists – have your say

Bristol City Council is undertaking formal public consultation on proposed designs for upgrading the A420/A431 bus route to 'showcase' status.



The proposed measures include new bus lanes, changes to parking and loading restrictions, the modernisation of existing traffic signals to improve pedestrian provision, a 20 mph zone on Church Road and other environmental and pedestrian improvements along the A420, together with improvements to off-street car parks along the route. They also include bike provision, including on-road cycle routes and advanced stop lines.

The official deadline for consultation is now over, but the council are still keen for feedback from cyclists. Terry Miller has already made representations on behalf of BCC, but we need others to give their opinions too.

Some of the suggested cycle provision features many of the things that cyclists often complain about. For example, cycle lanes that suddenly appear at the side of the road, then just as suddenly disappear, and advanced stop lanes with no feeder lane. We have to point this out now – it will be too late once the project has gone ahead!

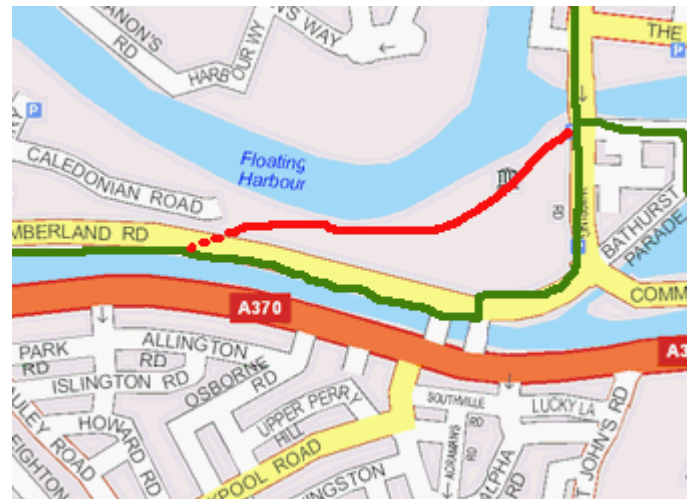
A leaflet with further details of the scheme, including how to make formal representations about the scheme, is available to download at www.bristol-city.gov.uk/showcasebus. It's very straightforward to submit comments, so do it now!

'One Less Car' goes global!

We are proud to announce that the 'One Less Car' slogan has made it to Japan, thanks to BCC! Adam Dunajko sent us this picture of his bike Judy sporting one of our 'One Less Car' stickers outside his local Shinto temple in Okayama-ken. He said 'I'm afraid I'm not a member - i just googled "one less car" stickers and you guys were top of the list (maybe you're not so small after all, eh?). I'm sure you won't be too surprised to hear that since i got slogan-ized i've been called "sanctimonious" more than once. I normally live in Derbyshire, but I'm out here teaching English for a year. My school is around 15km away, and I'm riding in every day in spite of the persistent snow and sub-zero temperatures (Feb 2006).'

New bike path to link quayside with South Bristol

Now you can get from the harbourside to the New Cut entirely traffic-free! A new bike and pedestrian path has been opened along the disused railway siding which leads from the Industrial Museum to the path alongside the New Cut, under Cumberland Road Bridge. This is very welcome, as it allows walkers and cyclists to avoid the busy Cumberland Road, and creates a new link between the city centre and South Bristol. Very handy for getting to our new meeting place in Southville!



The path is a joint project between Bristol City Council and Sustrans, and was officially opened during European Mobility Week in September, in a ceremony featuring Dave Sproxton of Aardman Animations and Gromit on a unicycle! The map shows the new route in red, and in green Sustrans Route 41, which previously ran along Cumberland Road and required cyclists to negotiate a roundabout and a busy road crossing.

BCyC in the summertime

BCyC have been busy throughout the summer, with stalls during Bike Week and at Streets Alive celebrating European Car Free Day in September.

'Well done to Simon and his helpers for arranging the Bike Breakfast, which was held as part of Bike Week last June. A big thanks to Harry, who left home at the crack of dawn to get over to Easton to help Lucy and me with the transporting the stall stuff. Plus many thanks to Nicolette, Sara, Dave and Adrian for also helping on the stall. All in all it was a great success. Thirteen (yes 13!) new people signed up for membership, loads of the latest mag sold, nearly seventy pounds in takings, plus plenty of chats about campaigning to new faces.'

Rowland Dye



Photo: Harry

'Transport for Bristol' manifesto launch

BCyC is a member of the Transport Alliance, a coalition of Bristol-based groups which is pressing for radical changes to transport in Bristol. The Alliance believe that a bold new approach is needed to reduce congestion and combat climate change, and have put together a manifesto setting out our vision for transport in Bristol. We printed a summary of the manifesto in the Summer 2006 edition of the magazine – you can view the full document at <http://uk.geocities.com/transportforbristol>.

The Manifesto contains all the policies necessary to transform transport in Bristol, providing genuine alternatives to the car as part of a move to a low carbon economy. To achieve this, two fundamental changes are necessary – creation of a Transport for Bristol authority and increased funding for transport. The government is now discussing increased powers for city transport authorities across the UK, so we will be lobbying local councillors and MPs for a Bristol authority.

The Manifesto was launched on 6 November and got very encouraging press coverage, with articles in the Evening Post and Venue and an interview on BBC Radio Bristol. Venue described the Alliance as 'remarkable', and the Evening Post ran a positive leader article on the Manifesto – though they did rather spoil things by saying 'It is difficult to see how with the current infrastructure we can even begin to consider abandoning our cars!'

An online petition asking for a central Transport Authority for Bristol has been set up. If the petition is to be taken seriously and make a difference, we will need thousands of signatures. If everyone in BCC signs and gets one other person to sign, that will be nearly 1000 more names! Signing up is easy – all you need to do is visit www.bristol-city.gov.uk/item/epetition/html

Campaign Against Climate Change demo

4th November 2006 was the Saturday before the UN Climate Talks in Nairobi, and saw demonstrations and events around the world demanding urgent action on climate change. Events in London included a bike protest which led from central London to the US Embassy, stopping on the way at the Australian embassy and delivering a letter to No 10 Downing street, demanding a Climate Bill with annual targets. The day culminated in a rally in Trafalgar Square, organised by the I Count campaign, which was attended by 30,000 people – more than twice the number of last year's event. Several BCC members went down to London for the day, some with their bikes. There was a great positive atmosphere, and some very creative banners, slogans and outfits (for bicycles as well as people!). And who knows, it may even have done some good. The Government has since announced that it will introduce a Climate Change Bill in 2007, so watch this space...

• *You can sign up to the I Count campaign at www.icount.org.uk*



The I Count Campaign calls on the UK government to provide

- action internationally: ensure that global greenhouse gas emissions are irreversibly declining by 2015
- action for justice: deliver assistance to developing countries to adapt to climate change and give access to clean energy to meet their developmental needs
- action in the UK: introduce a Climate Bill to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 3% per year

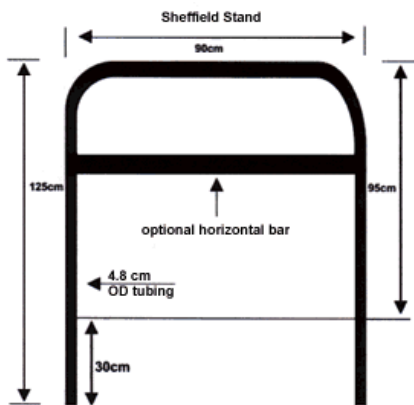
KEEP YOUR BIKE SAFE!

The key aim for any cycle campaign group is to get more people cycling. And once they are cycling, to keep them cycling. And yet even the simplest events can undermine these efforts. Recent research has suggested that one in three people who have their bikes stolen subsequently give up cycling. It is therefore important that we do all we can to avoid this happening. Advice from the Police and the major cycling organisations suggest the following measures to keep your bike safe from would be thieves:

- use a good bike lock, or preferably two, and secure your bike to something solid; always ensure the lock secures the wheels as these can easily be stolen;
- photograph your bike, and take a note of the serial number – normally found on the underside of the frame near the bottom bracket;
- get your bike stamped with your post code;
- if your bike is stolen, you must get a crime number from the police; insurers won't pay without it.

Standard home insurance policies often cover for bikes up to a nominal value, typically £250. They may also offer legal help if you have an accident, pay legal costs and offer personal liability cover.

Stuart Andrews



FREE BIKE STANDS

Lifecycle UK, the Bristol based cycling charity, are offering free Sheffield stands for employers under their 'Take A Stand' scheme. The scheme enables organisations to apply to up to two free stands, and to buy further stands at a competitive rate. Any organisation can apply – shops, cafes, voluntary sector groups, schools, small businesses, parish councils, churches, surgeries... They give priority to small, not-for-profit organisations and community enterprises, though larger organisations may still apply.

STAND UP FOR BIKE STANDS

In April 2004, the Somerfield Store near the junction of Ashley Down Rd and Gloucester Road took away the Sheffield stands outside the store. Since then, people have been using the railings to park which are often festooned with advertising banners making it very awkward.

I wrote to them at the time and since then have had verbal reassurances that they would be putting in more cycle parking to replace that which they removed. To date nothing has happened. So, I've asked again, and apparently the staff have raised the issue with management. As yet nothing has been done.

I have written to the Regional Manager to complain. The more of us who write in, the better. So, here's the address: Hugh Whitaker, Regional Manager, Somerfield Stores Ltd, Somerfield House, Whitchurch Lane, Bristol BS14 OTJ.

Sara Basterfield

- If you do write, you could point out that Somerfield may be losing business because of the lack of cycle parking provision (e.g. to the nearby Co-Op which has 3 Sheffield stands), and that they have promised to install 6 stands in order to be allowed to convert waste land next door into a car park.



Lifecycle UK will arrange delivery of the stands and give instructions for fitting, or can recommend a contractor to fit them for you. The scheme is available to organisations in Bristol, Bath and North-East Somerset, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. Lifecycle are particularly keen to advertise the scheme to areas outside Bristol, as it has only just been rolled out to these areas.


To apply, call Paul Andrews at Lifecycle UK on 0117 9290440, or you can download an application form from www.lifecycleuk.org.uk/cycle_parking.php.

RIDES AND EVENTS

We have plenty of fun, family-friendly rides planned in the run-up to Christmas!

Most rides meet near the centre of town – if the ride is likely to pass down your way and you'd like to arrange an alternative meeting place, contact the ride leader.

If you would like to lead a ride, please contact Cathy or Philippe on 0117 9669414 or bris046-cycle@yahoo.fr. We like to have rides suitable for all, from complete beginner upwards, so anyone can lead a ride!

Date	Ride leader	Route details	Approx length		Lunch stop	Start
30 Nov		<i>Monthly meeting, 8pm Methodist Hall, Beaulley Road All welcome!</i>				
3 Dec	Susan Nichols 0117 9222843 07760 197567	HorseWorld carol concert, Whitchurch, with stop at Windmill Hill city farm Free entry		Yes	Cafe	Water tower, Durdham Down 11.30am
10 Dec	Dorothy Greaves 0117 9669070	Tyntesfield NT estate Xmas special opening – free entry for adults, Xmas shop	17 miles	Yes	Simple café or picnic	Arnolfini 10.15 for 10.30
14 Dec		<i>Christmas social on the Sabrina, 8pm</i>				
17 Dec	Rowland Dye 07711-214-168	Mistletoe ride – out to Avonmouth to search for mistletoe	20 miles	Yes	Picnic	Arnolfini 10.30
		No rides 24 /31 December				
4 Jan		<i>No meeting!</i>				
7 Jan	Liam Morris 07890 487632	Hinton Blewett	35	Yes	Pub	Arnolfini 10.30am
14 Jan	William Baker	Our Friends from the North - ride to Churchill with visiting cyclists from Liverpool, with possible short walk	30	No	Pub	Arnolfini 10am
21 Jan	David Borrows 0117 9730846	Wassail at Honeycombe Farm – massive bonfire, morris dancing - bring pans to bang to ward off demons, red wine	10, some hills	Yes	Cake and hot punch at bonfire – bring gingercake	Water tower, Durdham Down, 10.30am
28 Jan	Adrian Harrison 07871 108109	Stanton Drew	25-30 miles	No	Pub lunch	Arnolfini 10am
4 Feb	Stuart Honeyball 07952 687371	Littleton-on-Severn	30 miles	Yes	Pub	Water tower, 10am
8 Feb		<i>Monthly meeting, 8pm Llandoger Trow, King St All welcome!</i>				
11 Feb	Joe Prosser 0117 9255217	Crown Inn at Churchill	35 miles	Yes	Pub lunch	Arnolfini
18 Feb	Cathy Sampson 0117 9669414	Radstock and the Colliers Way	50 miles	No	Pub lunch	Valentine's Bridge 10am
25 Feb	Paul Guest 0117 9080218	Castle Combe	50 miles	No	Picnic	Start of railway path 10am

Join our email group or see our website for last-minute changes to rides, or to download a copy of list:

www.bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

Starting points

Create Centre, Smeaton Road. This is the last large red-brick warehouse at the end of the docks towards the gorge.

Arnolfini. Start outside Arnolfini Arts Centre which is near Prince Street Bridge, at the south east end of Narrow Quay part of harbour from the Centre.

Start of Railway Path – officially known as the Bristol & Bath Railway Path and often called “*the Cycleway*” starts at the junction of Trinity Street and St Phillips Road, off Old Market.

Valentine Bridge is the “bendy” bridge between the Weatherspoons Pub and Bristol & West office that links the back of Temple Meads station to Avon Street.

Water tower, Durdham Down is the concrete tower on Durdham Down near the top of Blackboy Hill.

General advice

Many regular riders will know these things already, but for those new to cycling or to the group here are a few tips that you may find helpful.

The times shown are the START times of the rides. Although some may wait a few minutes for a chat, it's best not to rely on this. **Arrive earlier rather than later and don't get left behind.**

Make sure your bike is in good working order. If you think it needs more than a “tweak” then it's probably better to **get it serviced at a bike shop**. You are wise to carry a few basic repair items with you, such as pump, puncture repair kit or, even better, an inner tube of the right size and basic tools. If you're new to cycling and don't know how to use them, the chances are someone else will show you (that's how most of us learned!)

In winter you are more likely to be riding home in the dark, so bring your **bike lights** and hi-vis wear. Remember the temperature can drop significantly in the evenings, so bring extra warm layers, gloves, socks, hat, etc. In summer you will definitely need a full drinks bottle, sun-protection cream, plus light but maybe protective clothing. Remember it can pour with rain summer or winter, so pack a waterproof jacket and maybe also waterproof trousers.

Always **carry food with you**, even if it's only a banana! Cycling is exercise and you will get hungry. Preferably some carbohydrates – sandwiches, flapjacks, cereal-bars, and fresh/dried fruit are some examples.

On the road, **behave responsibly** – don't obstruct traffic and only stop where it's safe to do so. It's also nice if you warn others behind you of potholes or other obstructions in the road.

These tips aren't meant to put you off or make you think a day's bike ride is like climbing Everest! But with a little forethought you will enjoy the adventure of a day out even more. You'll notice we often suggest a picnic or packed lunch, or a visit a pub. Our rides are often built round a theme or local beauty-spot of place of interest. **We are a convivial group who make new-comers welcome and we usually ride at a moderate pace.** Contact the ride-leader if you're unsure.

Ahoy there!

SABRINA CHRISTMAS SOCIAL

Thursday 14 December, 8pm.

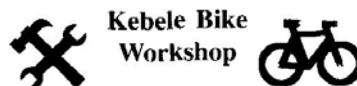
The Sabrina is the boat moored by the Redcliffe Waybridge, near the roundabout – it'll be the one with all the bikes outside!



Adrian's ABC bike clinic Free advice on Bike illnesses and upgrades. Inexpensive courses of treatment administered using new or donor parts. Any age of bike treated including Folding Bikes (City Centre location) Contact Adrian on 0117 9294618.

Emmaus Looking for a second hand bike? Or looking to donate? It's always worth checking out the Emmaus showroom on Barton Manor (off Midland Road), St Phillips. They're open Tuesdays to Saturdays, 10 am to 5 pm (4pm on Fridays). Emmaus is a working community of formerly homeless people who renovate donated furniture, electrical items, bikes etc.

Tel 0117-954-0886 or email www.emmausbristol.org.uk.



Kebele Bike Workshop runs every Wednesday between 12 & 5pm at Kebele, 14 Robertson Road, Easton, Bristol. We are a volunteer run project that provides low cost bicycle maintenance and repair service, aimed at people on a low income, in order to promote the bike as an alternative to car culture. We charge only for the costs of parts and a donation for the labour. We also have (specialist) tools available for use if you wish to fix your own bike. We're particularly looking for more volunteers at the moment, so if you can spare an some time for the cause get in touch via 0117 939 9469

Be Safe, Be Seen! You've probably all seen the posters for the Council's safety awareness campaign, encouraging cyclists to wear high-visibility clothing and use lights. Remember, it's not just in the dark that you need to worry about being seen – dusk can be even more dangerous. Fluorescent yellow is a great colour for being seen in low light conditions. When it gets dark, though, you need reflective clothing – and lights! 'Sam Browne' belts and tabards are ideal, and it's also useful to use a reflective ankle strap as the movement of your legs will catch drivers' eyes. And modern LED lights are cheap, light



and portable and the batteries last for ages. You've no excuse for not having them! The road safety department can provide high-vis wear, and we have our own range of hi-vis tabards featuring the 'One Less Car' logo (shown left). They sell for a mere £8 – unfortunately they've proved so popular they've sold out! More are on order, though - FFI email info@bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk

Like It, Bike It, Like-a-bike It!

If you are used to getting around by bike, and you have small children, you will probably want to cycle with your children once they are old enough. One BCC member has found the ideal way to help them learn quickly and safely...

Cycling on two wheels is something most of us take for granted. That is, until we have to teach our children. Unfortunately the method of choice for most, stabilisers or training wheels, tend to teach children to cycle leaning first one way and then the other but rarely learning real balance. Removing the cranks from an ordinary child's bike, lowering the seat and allowing them to push along as if on a hobbyhorse would avoid this. However, the average children's bike seems to be made from solid steel and extra weight can zap even a child's enthusiasm. Fortunately for my eldest and me some years ago I read about a lightweight wooden bike called the Like-a-bike in the A-to-B magazine (www.atob.org.uk/).



The Like-a-bike is from a small company in Germany called Kokua Holzspielzeug (www.likeabike.co.uk) and is an attractive looking bike made in birch plywood. Pretty much like a real bike but without pedals and brakes, it is really a revival of Baron Von Drais's early C19th century "walking machine" hobby horse.

For the first few days our eldest hesitantly shuffled around the block on the bike standing on both feet but surprisingly quickly he learnt the art of scooting along at speed with judicious use of a foot here and there. Eventually we found we had to jog along to keep up. The bike sped up trips to the shops and the park and the sight of a two year old happily flying along on two wheels certainly attracted positive comments. The bike's light weight (3.5 kilos, about 7½lb) makes it easy to ride and to pick up, and, very importantly, when the rider runs out of puff it's not too much of a burden for Dad or Mum to carry home.

Having no brakes other than shoe leather means that extra supervision will be needed in the steeper bits of Bristol(!) but it does mean that stopping is intuitive (unlike brake levers that are often forgotten in the heat of the moment). The handles are restricted to allow turning without jack knifing and thick felt saves trapping fingers.

The tyres are solid rubber which do not mark floors or get punctures and the rest of the bike is maintenance free although after 3 years of knocks I might re-varnish it for younger brother.

At the time I thought the price was a little steep at around £110 but this has easily proved value for money over the years. I really can't recommend the Like-a-bike highly enough.

I got the Like-a-bike by mail order from Cyclesense in Tadcaster (www.cyclesense.co.uk) but they are available more locally at Bath wooden bikes : www.wooden-bike.co.uk
Born on Gloucester Road or Natural Nursery on North Street, Bedminster also stock them.

Our Like-a-bike is the original 'racer' version but they also come in different versions some with spoked wheels and tyres.

Shawn Pearson

- Lidl make their own version of the Like-A-Bike, which is much cheaper but no doubt less hard-wearing. Another option is the RennRad, which is similar in price to the Like-a-Bike, but is made of metal rather than wood and converts into a bike with pedals that your child can use once they've got the hang of balancing.

In the next issue - cycling with children too young for their own bike

Cycling made easy

Unless you're a bike obsessive who already knows everything there is to know about gear ratios and the latest in titanium tube technology, you can probably make cycling a lot easier just by making a few simple changes to the way you ride. The easier you find cycling, the more you'll enjoy it, and the more you'll use it – for fun, and as an alternative to the car and public transport. And that can only be a good thing!

Starting right at the beginning:

- **Get a decent bike.** It doesn't have to be expensive – you can get good second-hand bikes cheaply (try Emmaus – see centre pages). You can get a good new bike for £200 if you choose wisely – not cheap, but minimal compared to the cost of a car - or even the cost of FirstBus... Don't, whatever you do, be tempted to buy a cheap new bike! Any new bike under 100 pounds will almost certainly be poor quality, poorly designed and weigh a ton, and will put you off cycling for life. And even in the £100-200 price range, you are more likely to be paying for gimmicks like double suspension that quality.

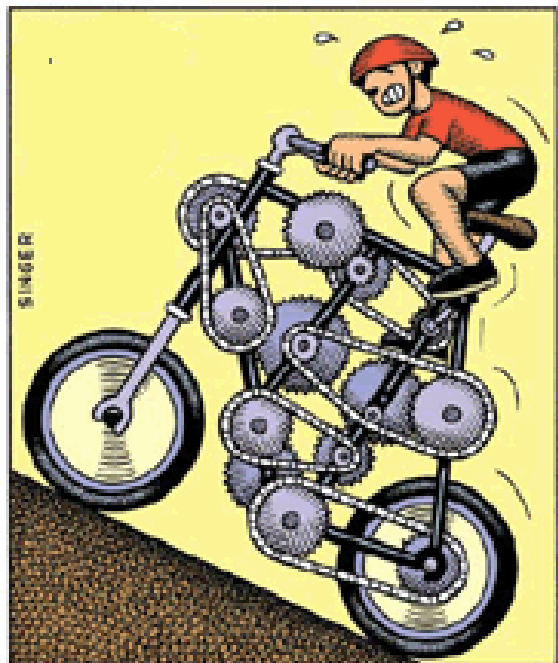
- **Adjust it properly.** In particular, make sure the saddle is the right height. Many beginners have the saddle too low, so they can easily put their feet to the ground, but this makes cycling very hard work and can damage your knees. At the other extreme, having your saddle too high can cause Achilles problems. The rule of thumb for saddle height is that your leg should be more or less straight if you sit in the saddle without shoes and put your heel on the pedal when it's at its lowest point, ie the point where your leg is extended maximally.

- **Spin those pedals!** Another mistake commonly made by beginners is 'grinding' – using a gear which is too hard so your legs make unnecessary effort to push you along. Ideally, your pedals should be going round at 80-100 rpm. This is probably faster than you're used to, and will feel strange at first, but you'll soon feel the difference. You'll be able to go faster, further and your legs will recover more quickly.

- **Use your gears.** Sounds obvious, but to keep your pedals spinning round at 90 rpm all the time, you're going to have to use your gears. If you're going uphill – change down to an easier gear! Why make life hard for yourself?

- **Pump your tyres** until they're really hard – the maximum pressure will be marked on the tyre. Having well-pumped tyres will make cycling instantly easier, and will also reduce your chance of getting punctures. If you find it hard to get your tyres properly pumped with a normal pump, consider buying a track pump (the kind you pump up and down) . They're a bit more expensive, unless you're lucky enough to find one in Lidl, but well worth it.

- **Consider cleats or toeclips** on your pedals. They take a bit of getting used to, but make pedalling easier and more efficient – especially uphill – by enabling you to 'pull' as well as 'push' on the pedals. The opposing actions also mean your muscles will recover more quickly. You can get pedals which have cleats on one side only, so can be used with your normal shoes too.



- **Lean forward.** A forward-leaning riding position is more aerodynamic, and may even be better for you. It means that your body weight is partially supported by your arms, which provide suspension to absorb bumps and jolts, reducing strain on your back.

- **Some optional extras** to make life more pleasant include **udguards** – there's no reason not to have them, in this country! – and a **pannier rack**: carrying baggage in panniers is vastly easier and more comfortable than carrying it on your back. If you're buying a new bike, make sure these can be fitted, if it doesn't have them already.

Biking the Balkans

In September I spent a month touring the countries of former Yugoslavia and Albania, a spectacular and fascinating region. I started in pretty, prosperous Slovenia, but things got progressively more chaotic as I made my way through Bosnia, still recovering from war, and into Albania, still recovering from half a century of crazed Stalinist dictatorship. Here are some extracts from my emails home.



Tue 29 Aug *Julian Alps, Slovenia*

Camped by the fairytale lake at Bled, then cycled along the Radovna Valley to Kranjske Gora and up the Vrsic Pass (1611m and 50 hairpin bends!!!) which damn near killed me - forgot how much harder it is cycling with baggage. But the fabulous views and 25 hairpin descent down the beautiful Soca valley made it all worthwhile!

Thus 31 Aug *Ljubljana, Slovenia*

After the Julian Alps looped through the limestone karst country of south-west Slovenia, including a trip down the amazing Skocjan caves, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Am now staying with two friendly cyclists in Ljubljana, the pretty pocket-sized capital of Slovenia, a clean and civilised place full of bike paths and attractive Austro-Hungarian architecture. You could call it the Amsterdam of the Balkans. Sadly, it has been struck by the Curse of Easyjet - it's now full of drunken British stag parties, causing my hosts to quiz me on why British men seem to have a compulsion to get horribly drunk and show their bottoms in public (it seems us Brits are now notorious for binge drinking even in Slovenia...)

Tue 5 Sept *Banja Luka, Bosnia-Herzegovina*

I got from Ljubljana to the Croatian border in a day (125km) and camped at the thermal spa there - lovely water of 32 degrees, just the thing for tired muscles. Then crossed Croatia quite fast, more or less straight across to Bosnia. The countryside in that part of Croatia isn't that exciting, mostly rolling farmland, but it's really interesting to see the farm buildings and the way of life on the land - a way of life that disappeared decades ago in the UK.

Everyone was super nice and helpful in Croatia. On Sunday night an old couple invited me into their home, made up the spare bed for me and plied me with food (four fried eggs for breakfast!) and they gave me a huge bag of fruit, crisps and four pieces of homemade cake to take with me the next day. They even gave me a pair of giant blue pyjamas to sleep in. They were very amazed that I plan to cycle to Bosnia alone and in alarm phoned an English speaking relative so she could warn me about the danger of mines in Bosnia!

I am now in Banja Luka, capital of Republika Srpska (the mainly Serbian part of Bosnia-Herzegovina). Bosnia feels quite different - for a start in Republika Srpska all the signs are in Cyrillic! As soon as I crossed the border I saw my first mosque and the muezzin started to wail, as if on cue.

Thur 7 September *Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Bosnia is really gorgeous if you stick to the small roads, the scenery is fabulous and people are really helpful and nice. Yesterday I cycled from Banja Luka to Travnik, which was mountainous but spectacular. Then I got the bus from Travnik to Sarajevo because I couldn't see how to avoid the main roads, which are really horrible because the driving here is appalling!

Sarajevo is a fascinating place, a real melange of East and West. There are 90 mosques in the town so you can imagine what it is like when its time for the call to prayer! The architecture is a mix of Ottoman, with little bazaars and tiny shops, and Austro-Hungarian baroque architecture. Most of the Ottoman centre has been rebuilt, but further out there are many buildings still burnt out, mined or full of bullet holes. It's only a decade ago that the town spent nearly four years under siege.

Sun 10 Sep *Kotor, Montenegro*

I took the train from Sarajevo to Mostar - a really spectacular journey. The old bridge and old town in Mostar have been beautifully restored and are lovely, but only a few hundred metres away where the front line was there are rows of bombed out buildings standing in ruins. From Mostar I cycled to Medugorje, the biggest Catholic pilgrimage site outside Lourdes. Six teenagers saw the Virgin Mary ten years ago and now the town is heaving with the faithful and a quite unbelievable number (possibly hundreds) of souvenir shops selling astoundingly tasteless kitsch (holograms of the Virgin Mary morphing into Jesus, illuminated pictures of Christ on the cross, Jesus jigsaws, you get the idea...).

Then south into the south-east corner of Herzegovina, a very sparsely populated area - I went 100km without seeing a single shop! I asked a family in a village if I could camp, and caused the most terrible fuss. All the old ladies were horrified that I was travelling alone, and the idea of camping caused great consternation: It is dangerous. There are snakes. The police may arrest you. Bad people may come. Fortunately one of the people there was a teacher who spoke good English, or I would have been most confused. 'Since the war, we are all afraid of everything', she explained. Isn't that awful? In the end they opened up the old school, now used once a week by the travelling doctor - I slept on the examination table!

I am now in Kotor, on the Montenegrin coast. Montenegro is the most beautiful place in the world. Imagine a place with the scenery of Norway, the architecture and food of Italy and the weather and prices of Turkey and you have Montenegro. It's gorgeous. Kotor is at the tip of a huge fjord, with enormous jagged mountains rising up behind. It has a perfectly preserved old town of beautiful Italianate buildings, and an old castle on the hill behind.



The new 'Old Bridge' in Mostar

Weds 13 September *Kruja, Albania*

Albania is a completely wacky country. Crossing the border is like going back in time 60 years, or entering a different continent. Managed to stick to asphalt roads so far - most roads are still unsurfaced; really bad asphalt roads, but still asphalt. Am now in Kruja, near Tirana, seat of the ancient

capital - up a huge great hill which was hard work in the heat!



The beautiful Kotor Fjord in Montenegro

Bizarre mix of old and new here. The old women still wear traditional dress (kind of like the Greek national dress, with white leggings, broad skirt, colourful belt, waistcoat and a kind of headdress), the roads are full of livestock, small children herd cattle and goats in the fields (I even saw a turkey herder!!) and many people live in unbelievably primitive conditions; and yet the roads are full of gleaming new Mercedes-Benz - every Albanian's dream car, mostly stolen from Germany - and new houses paid for by workers abroad are going up everywhere, all painted in a riot of garish colours - must be a reaction against the grey Communist years!

Fri 15 September *Elbasan, Albania*

Spent a day in Tirana and am now on the road again, in Elbasan south of Tirana. I got a furgon (a minibus-taxi) for the last few km into Tirana, as it was getting late and I didn't fancy navigating my way into the centre of town in heavy traffic. Definitely the right decision! The furgon ride was pretty hair-raising (I was sitting in the middle so had a prime view of all the head-on collisions we miraculously managed to avoid as the furgon driver recklessly overtook everything in his path) but that was nothing compared to cycling from the furgon stop to my hostel. Imagine Cairo but with eight lanes of traffic (Tirana streets are built wide, suitable for May Day tank parades) and Mercedes-Benz instead of Fiats. I was a wreck by the time I got to the hostel!

Tirana was very interesting, if not beautiful. I went to the National Museum which has exhibits about the history of Albania from prehistoric times. They've had a hard time - Albania only gained independence from its various invaders in 1912, then after the world wars (between which they were ruled mostly by the self-styled King Zog, a petty politician who overthrew the government and proclaimed himself king) they suffered 45 years under a maniac Stalinist dictator who thought Mao was too soft! There was a large exhibition about all the people who were imprisoned and murdered by the Hoxha regime, and walls full of names of people who died in prison. It was pretty grim.

But the Albanian people are really the nicest, most generous and helpful people you could hope to meet. I have had many coffees bought for me, and despite the lack of road signs never get lost - I only have to study my map for ten seconds and someone will come over and ask if I want help. I've been sticking to main roads in Albania, because they are the only ones that are surfaced, so the cycling itself is pretty horrible - dusty, dirty and noisy - but I'm really enjoyed it because the Albanians are such lovely people.

Sun 17 Sept *Pogradec, Albania*

I was invited to an Albanian village wedding!! I asked if I could camp in a village and was invited to stay the night; there was a wedding happening the next day so I was asked to stay for that as well. It was so nice. The wedding happened over two days - the first day is the celebration, the next day is the ceremony itself (which is for family only, but everybody else was still partying outside!). There were

traditional musicians and everyone dances in a circle, like the Greeks, from tiny children to old grannies - the dances start off slow and then the grannies drop out as it gets faster and it all ends up in a manic frenzy!

The family I was staying with was very poor but educated and really interesting to talk to (they didn't even have a TV - imagine that! On this trip I've stayed in homes where people have no fridge, no washing machine, no stove, no running water, no toilet - but until then no home without a TV constantly blaring in the corner). They had three rooms - one was the lounge by day, and the three children sleep there at night; another was the kitchen by day, and the grandad and two grannies slept there at night; and the other - which didn't even have glass on the windows - was the parent's bedroom. Bathroom facilities were a hole in the ground and a bucket of cold water.

Tue 19 September *Tetovo, Macedonia*

After Albania I cycled round Lake Ohrid in Macedonia - lovely night camping wild on the shores of the lake - then north through the Mavrovo national park - a beautiful area of lakes and mountains - and now I'm 40km from Skopje, in Tetovo, the capital of the Albanian part of Macedonia. Tensions are high between Albanians and Macedonians - there was an Albanian uprising a few years ago, and the situation is still volatile - I wouldn't be surprised if it happened again.

Saw the first and only MacDonald's of my trip yesterday, in Ohrid, Macedonia. I was told it doesn't sell burgers, only shakes and sandwiches. It was quite a cute MacD's, actually - it was in a tiny building designed like an Orthodox church!

Weds 20 September *Skopje, Macedonia*

The end of my journey! Central Skopje was reduced to rubble by a massive earthquake in 1963, so is now mostly an impressive array of magnificently ugly communist architecture. There are some lovely old mosques and hammams left though (two of the hammams are now art galleries) and an interesting bazaar in the old Ottoman centre. There is also a Roma settlement at the edge of town, the only Roma community in the world to have its own local authority.

Cycling is over (1750km) and now the stressful part begins, going home on the train with my bike! *Cathy Sampson*

Traditional dress still worn by old women in northern Albania. Younger folk favour tight jeans, crop tops and bling



I wanted to avoid flying, both for environmental reasons and to avoid my bike being trashed by airport baggage handlers. So I put my bike in a bag and took the train. On the way out I caught the Eurostar to Paris, sleeper train to Munich and then Austrian Rail to Salzburg and Bled. Return via sleeper train from Skopje to Belgrade (only €20 for a compartment all to myself!); spent a day in Belgrade, then train to Munich on the Zagreb-Munich sleeper; a day at the Munich Oktoberfest, then home the same way I came, via sleeper train and Eurostar. More expensive and slower than the plane, but much more fun and much less polluting!

Voice of the Public

The following is an open letter sent to BCyC, published here without comment...

Dear Bristol Cycling Campaign

I am writing to you after a most unpleasant and upsetting encounter with a cyclist this morning. I was driving down Gloucester Road, and overtook him, perfectly safely – I am always extremely careful with cyclists, not least because of their potential for unpleasantness. At the next set of traffic lights, he caught up with me, banged on my window and shouted abuse at me, simply, as far as I could tell, because he did not like being overtaken by a car. I was physically shaking after this encounter – it is upsetting to know that there are such horrible people living among us.

I am, frankly, terrified of cyclists – as a pedestrian, because I have on several occasions narrowly avoided being knocked down by cycles shooting red lights, swerving across pedestrian crossings, and riding on pavements, and as a driver because it seems that however careful and considerate I am, I am open to abuse simply because they hate me for being a motorist. I implore you to publish something in your Newsletter to try and offset this horrible behaviour. Of course, you will say that your members are responsible, none of them would behave like this, etc – but you cannot be sure of that.

Yours sincerely,
[Name withheld]

Any suggestions for a response?

CaFE Wheel Network

Many people cite aggressive car traffic as the main reason they choose not to travel by bike. The CarFree Express Wheel Network (CaFE Wheel Network) initiative put forward a radical solution to this problem.

The initiative calls for the creation of a car-free cycle network with a capacity for a high volume of bike traffic. This would be achieved by converting some of the current road network to car-free streets that would be for the exclusive use of non-motor transport. Pedestrians would remain on the pavements, enabling the network to be used as a high-speed bike route.

The CaFE Wheel Network would be shaped like a bicycle wheel,

with numerous spokes allowing rapid safe travel to the city centre from all parts of the city. Additional ring roads would allow easy transfer between the spokes of the network.

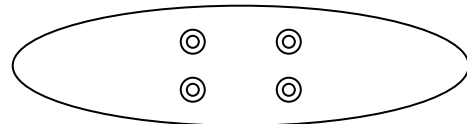


Because the CaFE Wheel Network makes use of existing infrastructure, it would only require limited modifications to link roads that are selected for the network. The network would use mainly quieter roads – allowing existing traffic flow to continue as normal.

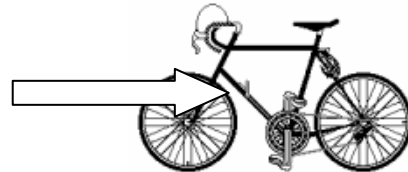
Topical Tip

Now that winter is here and the roads are wet and grimy, here's how to use a discarded plastic water bottle to make a front mudguard to protect your clothing, combining cycling and recycling!

- 1) Find a long thin round (not ridged) plastic bottle lying around. A 1.5 litre soft drink bottle is ideal, or 2 litres if you have large MTB tyres.
- 2) Cut into an elongated oval with a knife and scissors, and make 4 round holes on it as shown, as near to the centre as possible (using a big hole punch, for example).



- 3) Attach the mudguard lengthways to the underside of the downtube, as near as possible to the fork (shown by the arrow in the picture), by threading a nylon tie through the hole. Make sure that you don't trap any cables, and that the front wheel can move from one side to the other without touching the mudguard.
- 4) Put the rest of the bottle in the recycling bin!



The CaFE Wheel Network would benefit all road users. Pedestrians would benefit from greater safety, cleaner air and quieter environment. Businesses along the route would enjoy greater passing custom from pedestrians and cyclists. Motorists also stand to gain – there will be fewer inexperienced cyclists on the busy roads. If levels of urban cycling increase significantly, there will be fewer motorists on the roads. This will reduce congestion and make journeys for motorists easier, faster and safer.

This is an idea that could revolutionise travel in British cities.
Jesse

• *Pie in the sky? Or visionary?*
Contact Jesse on 0781 458 77361 or
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Unlike big organisations with loads of funding, we're just a collection of activists who believe in cycling as part of a sustainable transport system. If you believe this too then get involved now. There's a lot everyone can do. Just riding your bike more often is a great start, and mixing with other cyclists, such as on our social rides or meetings spreads ideas around. You'll also find useful resources on our website (www.bristolcyclingcampaign.org.uk) - leaflets to complain about pavement parking, our membership promotions cards to pass onto friends, and more. Most of all we want **YOU** to get involved. Come to our meetings with your good ideas and make them happen.

**If you're already a member pass this magazine onto a friend.
If you're not a member, send off the form below - now!**



Thanks to Paul for the cover photos, taken outside the Trinity Road police station on 22 October 2006 between 10 am and 2 pm.