



Pedal Press



Summer
2011

**“Promoting Cycling for Transport, Health
and a Better Environment”**

Patience – an unachievable virtue for some?

Alan Johnson—Chairperson of Merseyside Cycling Campaign

“Do you mind waiting while we let another barge pass?” I was asked by the keeper of the drawbridge over the Shropshire Union canal at Wrenbury. While I am not normally given a choice before the bascule bridge raises at East Float in Birkenhead, I told her that I was quite happy to pause for a moment as it wasn’t something I saw every day!

She thanked me and said it was the drivers who usually became impatient and within the few minutes that it took for the barge to pass, a queue of cars began jostling for position. In what was normally a quiet spot, the atmosphere began to feel less relaxed even though our journeys were interrupted for only a few moments at a very pleasant location.

Whether it is commuting in Merseyside or travelling farther afield, it is the impatience of some drivers, unable to comprehend that they are part of the traffic they are sitting in, that causes pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists the most grief.

Like many other road users I had time constraints that day, but even with my hopelessly over-ambitious prediction for journey time and an unscheduled puncture stop my bike kept me connected with those around me and I was able to enjoy the trip, Relax...and best of all eat lots of cake!

Cycling remains a civilised activity and a pleasure. If you fancy an impromptu ride, why not tell fellow members on our Googlegroups site when and where you are going and you might end up with an informal group ride?! Happy riding this summer!

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AND MUCH, MUCH, MORE.....

Lobbying for Sanity

Derek Gould

Recent Guardian headlines showed appalling statistics for Afghanistan: ten killed every month. These are individual tragedies that disrupt families and whole communities alike. They reflect a level of carnage in military service that is regrettable yet reflects an underlying and essential strategic purpose. Another headline shows that ten are killed on the roads of the UK every DAY. And whence do we hear the howls of concern from our politician leaders?

The road, near Saughall, Cheshire, is narrow with passing places. Red-bordered triangles warn of pedestrians, horses and bicycles. Twelve cyclists, many over 70 years old, are riding here, chatting together in the clear sun of a crisp, fresh November morning. A distant, on-coming van leads the riders to diligently 'single out', into single file. Yet something is wrong, the van travels far too fast for this narrow road, maybe 40mph. As the vehicle draws abreast, cyclists scatter from its path. The occupants are clearly visible, a young male driver wearing a beanie hat, a female passenger alongside. He jabs his right forefinger in our direction and then in a wide gesture, gesticulates towards the grass at the roadside as he tears past, his face contorted and malicious.

Fifty years ago, at clocking off time for factory workers, English streets would be filled with cyclists on their way home. The rarely encountered motor-car would stop and respectfully wait for them to pass. It was a time of thriving cycle touring and racing clubs, young British people in their thousands rode fast and safe, in the fresh country air. They were slim and fit, and childhood diabetes was unheard of. Now cycling is uncommon amongst the young. Permissions for cycle racing on the road are increasingly difficult to obtain. Indeed this sport has become poorly tolerated on today's roads that were, for the most part, never intended for such vast numbers of motor vehicles. In the face of progressively dwindling interest in most parts of the UK, cycling remains a pursuit followed by a handful of old, fit men and lithe women, well into their 70s and 80s. Yet these enterprising people are seen, by most of today's youth, as social outliers.

In 1958, Aldous Huxley predicted, in his book 'Brave New World Revisited', that the people of the future would be ruled through the television, by Big Government and Big Business. Indeed, today's media have become foremost in defining our culture, embedding convenient behaviours in the national consciousness. Thus defined for us are our perceptions of beauty, our level of consumerism, dietary habits, alcohol consumption, recreation and choice of transport mode. In the latter, we are duped into a love affair with a machine. Beautifully crafted, kinetic imagery defines the car's relevance to our status, attractiveness and potency. Profoundly influential promotions depict macho images of irresponsible car use, while certain highly influential media personalities ridicule cycling, even advocating violence.

While the extraordinary health, social and psychological impacts of the bicycle have been well demonstrated worldwide, a succession of UK Governments have avoided leading on a UK-wide, cycle-friendly infrastructure. Hence, transport policy has repeatedly failed the cyclist, confounding with specious rhetoric while much of our road network descends into a fearsome place, congested, dangerous and practically lawless. Indeed the new coalition government now introduces a 37% cut in road safety support grant funding to local authorities and has frozen the number of fixed speed cameras. This approach to transport planning seems far from rational yet not inconsistent with Huxley's views on the closeness of corporate lobby groups to government.

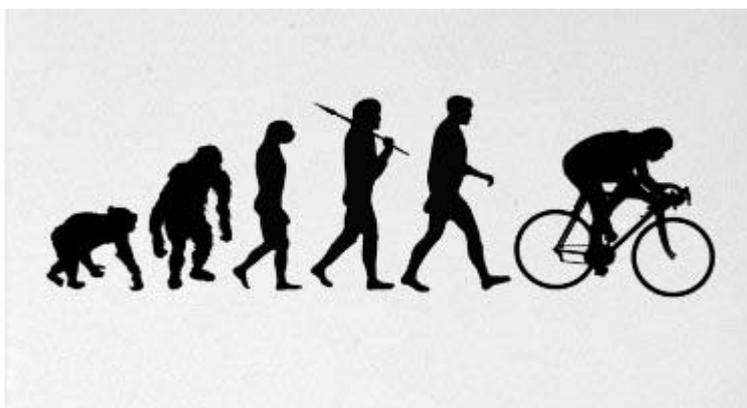
Without doubt, the industries surrounding motoring represent a major contribution to our oil-based economy and GDP. A recent attempt to introduce a basis in law for a road user hierarchy that favours the vulnerable was overturned through influence of the road lobby. Adverse revisions (for bicyclists) of the Highway Code, continued underinvestment in cycle facilities, poorly educated and unmotivated highways engineers and a lack of cycle audit, provide little evidence for high level commitment to, or perceived intrinsic value in, the use of a bicycle for transport. In the face of highly creative advertising media obsessed with car sales, and populist car-struck television, the cultural perception of cycling as a marginal activity is not unexpected.

It is certainly arguable whether our modern culture is *entirely* formulated by the media. Yet there seems little doubt that, given the legitimacy of fair and appropriate enforcements, it is left to the police and the courts to underpin a culture's freedoms and bounds. At the same time, personal experience has seen profound and unenforceable infringement of the freedoms of vulnerable road users: drivers swerving towards cyclists, moving away just before impact; a motorist driving on a line to hit a group of cyclists head on, unwavering, forcing the riders to veer rapidly away; perilously close overtaking; jeering through open windows; various items thrown at bike riders. Cyclists are not the only vulnerable road users, and motorists have been seen to drive at speed towards pedestrians crossing the road, forcing them to break into a run: what would occur in the event of a disabled pedestrian?

This opportunist bullying of vulnerable road users seems difficult to challenge in law. Yet we know little of the frequency whereby a pedestrian or cyclist death on a lonely road is the result of mere incompetence, a mischievous prank gone wrong, or a deliberate killing, obfuscated by excuses of being 'invisible', 'wobbling', 'dazzled by the sun', and 'appearing from nowhere'. To what extent does our car-culture polarise the public view, catalysing a minority of occurrences where malicious actions have tragic outcomes? Could it be that such attitudes and behaviours are considered justified through a perceived downgrading of the cyclist into something to disrespect, something less than human? To try to answer such questions, CTC are conducting a much needed search for data on the extent of cyclist victimisation by motorists (www.stop-smidsy.org.uk).

We have polluted our world, are changing its climate, preside over an epidemic of cardiovascular disease, are escalating obesity in our children and tolerate a scale of road kill that exceeds the mortality in our various offshore wars. Yet a simple transport intervention, re-introducing the bicycle, stands to address and reform these afflictions of our sedentary lifestyle.

There is a pressing need, throughout the UK, to embed the cyclist and pedestrian as valued social elements, respected within both our culture and our legal system. Bringing this change about is a role and a duty of our elected body while putting to one side, for once, partisan corporate interests.



Muesli Eater writes:

Richard Hebden

Twocan Toucan:

Two new Toucan crossings over Utting Avenue at Richard Kelly Drive in Norris Green and over Queens Drive at Acanthus Road in Old Swan have been finished.

Well done Liverpool City Council. That is what they said they would do and they have done it!

Dueling Carriageways:

The City have, in accordance with their Cycling Strategy plans, built a cycle path across the wide central reservation of Muirhead Avenue in Tuebrook. This has connections on each side to Delamain Road & Maxwell Rd, so that Old Swan & Clubmoor are now connected up.

And on Utting Avenue, they have constructed a cycle gap to enable people to ride across the Central Reservation to get to or from Broad Lane



Open Government.



The Council recently publicized a proposal to close Dale Street at the Hatton Garden end, in an attempt to reduce the amount of through traffic entering Dale Street. MCC wrote in support. But we have now been told that a majority of responses were against the closure so it will not proceed.

This is most curious, since a majority of documented responses from local residents and businesses were in favour. No evidence has been provided to the contrary.

The council's normal procedure, when faced with objections, is to hold a public hearing into the issues, at which elected members, having heard the arguments, make a decision. But this has not happened.

Seel Street sealed one way:

Seel Street links Berry Street to Hanover Street and L1. It was the only through two-way cycleable route in the whole of the Ropewalks area between Duke Street & Renshaw Street. Some years ago MCC fought a battle to enable cyclists to ride through the closure at the bottom end (where Tesco is now).

Recently Council Officers took it upon themselves to make Seel Street One Way in the outbound direction (going from Hanover Street to Berry Street). This is part of their plot to discourage cyclists from getting to or through the City Centre.

Seel Street is identified in their own Cycling Strategy (which they have not read) as part of their planned cycle network.

The exercise has been done using an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, which enables them to bypass the normal processes of public consultation. Now that MCC has objected, after six months the scheme will have to be subjected to scrutiny by the Highways Committee.

At a time of massive spending cuts, the cost of altering the signs and road markings etcetera comes to an eye watering £19,000.

If public money is going to be wasted on sabotaging City Council Policy, the sooner the cuts come, the better.

When cyclists are left with no legal options for getting from A to B, they have a choice: stop riding or go illegal – riding the wrong way or using the pavement.

Cyclists Dismount:

A brand new Cyclists Dismount sign appeared at the bottom of Duke Street, at the Hanover Street junction, a key link in the city Council's Cycle Route Network and part of the National Cycle Route 56.

Enquiries at the Council reveal that no-one knows who put it up or why! We are informed that it will be removed!

There was an Advanced Stop Line here (installed at public expense with a contribution from Sustrans) but the officers removed it, leaving cyclists with the option of being mashed by left turning cars or running red lights (see picture!)



More Pleasant Mount Pleasant.

MCC has had a frank and constructive exchange of views with the City about plans for the top end of Mount Pleasant, which runs between Hope St and Brownlow Hill past the Students Union.

The Highways Committee overruled objections from motorists, saying that “the likely benefits in terms of pedestrian safety and amenity outweighed the likely prejudice to vehicular access.”

The middle section of the road will be turned into a Bus/Taxi/Cycles only road, enforced by camera. This should reduce the amount of through traffic to create a better environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Parking News - brought to you by courtesy of Stella Shackel

[ParkThatBike](http://ParkThatBike.info), is a consultancy specialising in cycle parking initiatives. By visiting the free service <http://ParkThatBike.info> people can...

identify places where cycle parking is needed.

report cycle parking that is damaged or defective.

locate 'wheel-benders', slotted slabs, etc that don't meet modern needs.

The site uses Google mapping. You can mark the location precisely. People can comment on cycle parking (or lack of it) on the road, in public spaces, railway stations, leisure centres, libraries, surgeries, etc (assuming there are any left after the Coalition cuts).

ParkThatBike collate all comments and submit detailed reports to the relevant local authority.

Please use the service, and spread the word! Stella has used it to report the under-provision on the Lord Nelson Street side of Lime Street Station, and Muesli Eater has reported (not for the first time) the absence of any cycle parking at The Rialto.

Sustrans volunteer conference held March 4 and 5th in Liverpool

Over 3,000 volunteers currently help Sustrans. Early in March, Liverpool hosted a large number of group coordinators from as far afield as Northern Ireland. It was our opportunity to meet with Sustrans staff and other volunteers to hear about successes in the movement and the challenges for 2011.

Friday afternoon saw 50 or more of us pedal off on a cycle ride designed to welcome visitors to the sites of Liverpool using the National Cycle Network. It was ably led by staff from Cycling Solutions and our own Don Thompson. The social theme continued into the evening with an excellent dinner at the Everyman Bistro and opening address by Malcolm Shepherd, the Chief Executive of Sustrans.

The conference itself took place on Saturday at Blackburn House. There was an emphasis on the practical: volunteers were able to choose from workshops on signing, maintenance, planning issues, ecology and promoting Sustrans at events. We were advised that in the high profile Connect 2 programme, 50 schemes are currently in progress out of the original 79. £12 million of the £560 million identified by the government for the Local Sustainable Transport Fund has been top sliced to support Sustrans Bike it scheme, Links to Schools and Living Streets. Speaker's Corner gave local groups a chance to showcase their own successes.

Good stuff is certainly happening. However, as a result of the huge funding cuts, Sustrans' work near you is at risk or has already been cancelled. We need your help more than ever. If you want to get involved, visit the website www.sustrans.org.uk. In the North West, Sustrans is currently looking for a group coordinator to help run a newly established volunteer maintenance team on the Trans Pennine Trail (National Route 62). The team meets on the Liverpool Loop line every second Tuesday for a task day.

Mike Dagley is the paid Sustrans volunteer coordinator for the Northwest, Northeast and West Midlands of England. Office base: 10 Bradley Street, Manchester M1 1EH. Telephone: 0161 923 6053/ 0787 645 3773. Email: mike.dagley@sustrans.org.uk.

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### THE MOTOR BUS by A.D. Godley 1856 - 1925

What is it that roareth thus?  
 Can it be a Motor Bus?  
 Yes the smell and hideous hum  
 Indicate Motorem Bum!  
 Implet in the Corn and High  
 Terror me Moroyus Bi:  
 Bo Motore caedar a Bo –  
 Dative be or Ablative  
 So thou only let us live: -  
 Whither shall thy victims flee?  
 Spare us, spare us, Motor Be!  
 Thus I sang; and still anigh  
 Came in hordes Motores Bi,  
 Et complebat omne forum  
 Copia Motorum Borum.  
 How shall wretches live like us  
 Cincti Bis Motoribus?  
 Domine, defende nos  
 Contra hos Motores Bos!

Godley was in his forties when the motor car was introduced. As he slipped into his fifties and sixties it must have become an increasing irritant on the streets of his beloved Oxford. If a mixture of French and English is 'Franglais', is this mixture of English and Latin 'Anglatine'?

I thought you might like to share this poem that I discovered recently (ah, the joys of retirement and more reflective living). It seems quite prophetic when read alongside a number of the articles in this issue.

- Editor

## Team Green Britain Bike Week – a national celebration of cycling!

Team Green Britain Bike Week is the UK's biggest mass participation cycling event – last year almost half a million people participated at events across the country. The aim is to get more people cycling, more often, and the event offers something for everyone – from families, schools and companies, to seasoned cyclists and those who have never cycled before.

### Events on Merseyside:

#### Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> June 13:00 start

Once again we are pushing the pedals for the infamous *Metal Birds to Metal Men* cycle ride. Heading out from the centre of Liverpool, following a watery byway through the industrial heartlands and out to the golden sands of the Sefton Coast. Join us, members of the Merseyside Cycle Campaign supported by Cycling Solutions, Sustrans, CTC and friends, and meet us at 13:00 next to the Beatles Museum by the Pier Head Ferry Terminal Ticket Office. All welcome, but be prepared with a well-maintained bike and enthusiasm. Limited first aid for you and your bike.

#### Monday June 20<sup>th</sup>

Come along and join members of the Merseyside Cycling Campaign, Sustrans and the CTC on their annual B2W ride into the city and enjoy a 'Biker's Breakfast' courtesy of the Campaign. We meet in Sefton Park next to the Aviary Cafe at 8:00am for a leisurely ride into Liverpool City Centre and secret venue or breakfast!

All welcome to come along and celebrate Bike Week with like-minded cyclists

For more events happening on Merseyside go to [http://www.bikeweek.org.uk/event\\_search.php](http://www.bikeweek.org.uk/event_search.php)

#### Sunday 12th June 2011

Join The Wirral Bikeathon to raise money for those affected by blood cancers.

Everyone from 8 to 80 can take part and help to raise money for the charity Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research. Whether you're riding solo or as a group, the day guarantees fun for all ages. So motivate your friends, family and colleagues now!

Choose to cycle either 14 or 28 miles along minor roads and some off-road sections. It is well signed and fully marshalled with checkpoints. Arrowe Park which houses the start/finish venue is a 425 acre park and woodland, making it the perfect base to spend a day out with family or friends. There will also be a jazz band to keep you entertained along with light refreshments and a bicycle repair service.

#### Registration information can be found at the website

[www.wirralbikeathon.org.uk/New/Site/Entry.html](http://www.wirralbikeathon.org.uk/New/Site/Entry.html) or by emailing: [info@wirralbikeathon.org.uk](mailto:info@wirralbikeathon.org.uk)

Or for those without web access further information, route maps, entry forms and other information can be obtained from Ernie Macaulay on 0151 327 3129 or

[ernie\\_macaulay@hotmail.com](mailto:ernie_macaulay@hotmail.com)

We also need more people to help with marshalling. There is no requirement to direct motor traffic, and we normally marshal in pairs. For those who would like to take part as a marshal please contact [SoniaOldershaw@hotmail.com](mailto:SoniaOldershaw@hotmail.com)

Wirral Cycling Campaign help with the marshalling for this event. Last year about 1,400 cyclists took part over £50,000 was raised.



## Wirral Bicycle Belles – one year on

Janet Gregory

Back in February 2010, we invited women to join us for the first of a regular programme of cycle rides on Saturday mornings. Ten showed-up for 10am outside Port Sunlight station. We rode a circuit of 12 miles with a café stop part way round. That was the beginning for the Wirral Bicycle Belles.

We have met every month since, welcoming many new faces, all ages and abilities. Our rides have varied in distance and destination but a firm favourite is the coffee break and the chat. In April, we pedalled our own Pink event to raise funds for Breast Cancer Research. A few of our members managed a weekend away in May together with the Fabulous Ladies of Chester, a sister group that has been meeting for longer than us. In June during national Bike Week, we found a reasonably safe way across the A540 to mingle with those racier sorts in the famous Eureka cyclists' café. Many of us have taken advantage of a one day course in basic cycle maintenance delivered by Cycling Solutions at Brunswick in Liverpool. The trainer was a woman, too. Now we can change a tube if absolutely necessary!

You may ask, why just women? We think it works as a way of encouraging women to feel more confident with their cycling whether that is for trips to work, shopping or leisure. Some of our newcomers have gone on to join other locally led cycle rides which is great but with the Belles, there is no pressure to take it any further or faster. We have secured grants from CTC (Cyclists Touring Club), Wirral Borough Council and, most recently, the Rural West Area Partnership Board, which is funded by NHS Western Cheshire, and Cheshire West and Chester Council. We have used the money to buy computer equipment and promotional materials and to train ride leaders so that more women can try cycling. Travelwise Merseyside has also supported the Bicycle Belles in kind with high viz drawstring bags which we pack with useful information to welcome newcomers.



You can read more about us on [www.wirralbicyclebelles.blogspot.com](http://www.wirralbicyclebelles.blogspot.com).

Enquiries can be directed by email to [twomills@ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk](mailto:twomills@ctcchesterandnwales.org.uk), or text/voicemail 0795 433 3930.

Janet Gregory  
Secretary, CTC Two Mills

### Fancy trying three wheels?

One of the MCC supporter and member Ron Onions is keen to sell his Adult KMX Tricycle Recumbent. Since buying the bike a few years ago Ron has developed a debilitating illness and consequently it has had little use.

If you go to <http://www.kmxkarts.co.uk/> you will get a feel for the design on the adult trike section [Tornado/Typhoon] . For more pictures email me. Price: we are asking £300 for the bike but it has to be sold soon so sensible offers will be considered.

Don Thompson [theroost@tesco.net] 0151 724 2924.

## **Peak oil, what is it and should we be worried?** **Andrew Grimby – MCC Secretary**

In simple terms-what is peak oil? Briefly, we will reach a point when the world's oil suppliers cannot pump the remaining reserves out of the ground fast enough to meet world demand (currently about 88 million barrels a day and rising). Once that happens, (a) oil price will become much more volatile and generally much higher, and (b) ownership of the resource will matter at least as much as the ability to pay for it. Another related issue is the growing demand for oil due to the rapidly increasing world population - by 81 million per year!

When global oil production peaks, there is likely to be wild volatility in its price. It will spike, there will be a subsequent recession, the price will temporarily collapse, and upon economic recovery the price will spike again. Each time this cycle occurs, the economy will weaken yet further. The risk is that our financial institutions will finally collapse under this onslaught. The worst outcome could be that our food supply will fail if there is no diesel for farming or distribution.

Britain is believed to be particularly vulnerable because it has gone from being a net exporter of oil (and gas and coal) to being an importer, and is becoming increasingly exposed to competition for supplies. Another concern is that if supplies become limited, those countries that export oil will tend to hold onto supplies for their own use, making the potential crisis for countries that are net importers of oil far worse.

Many are worried including a group of business leaders (UK Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy Security) who have warned that UK is unprepared for significant risk to companies and consumers and they have urged for the formation of a coalition of government, business and consumers to address the issue. The UK Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil and Energy Security have warned that oil shortages, insecurity of supply and price volatility will destabilise economic and social activity potentially as soon as 2015.

It is vital that the UK and all oil-dependent countries focus on cutting demand - that means saving energy and using alternatives including the most efficient of transport - the bicycle. This is why on balance it is necessary to keep the rate of UK taxes on fuel high as it gives the government leeway to cut duty if required compared with countries with low fuel taxes. It also means that the UK is slightly further down the very slow road of increasing fuel efficiency than other nations.

Whilst I for one believe that peak oil will result in a difficult time and, no doubt, a horrific time for some. But it will also be a time when many people will find liberation in new social and personal roles. Part of the preparation will be in the acknowledgement of our predicament, so that we recognise it when we see it. As systems fail, we should spend our efforts on positive change and adaptation.

### **Further reading.**

The Oil Crunch - A wake-up call for the UK economy Industry Taskforce on Peak Oil & Energy Security - February 2010 – available online

Near-Term Systemic Implications of a Peak in Global Oil Production – 15th March 2010 – available online

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**Media VACANT—Volunteers?**

Merseyside Cycle Campaign was set up in 1985 to work for the provision of better and safer facilities for cyclists and for the safe behaviour by all road users. We encourage all our members to get involved in campaigning. This may be small scale improvements at work, in school or at your local railway station, or on a larger scale by writing to your local council or MP to influence policies at national level. Attitudes are at last beginning to change for the better and you can play a part in ensuring that the mistakes of the past are not repeated in the future.

Campaigners meet on a regular basis for discussion and we publish this newsletter to all members (see website). Membership also entitles you to an updated copy of the Cycle map. More members give make a greater pressure for change, so why not join today?

Contact the Membership Secretary, Carol Fitzpatrick, on  
0151 653 3887

**Articles for the Winter Edition by  
1st October to Helen *via* email to  
richard@rhebden.wanadoo.co.uk**

## **MCC website found a new home**

**Martin Dunschen**

The Merseyside Cycling Campaign website can now be reached at:

**[www.mersecycle.org.uk](http://www.mersecycle.org.uk)**

Over time I want to review the content of the site. There are some ideas of making it more user-friendly to our members and other cyclists in Merseyside, and I will implement these in due course.

Have a look and visit the site at it's new address. I welcome any input you might have to improve usability and content.

Please email me with any suggestions:  
[mdunschen@gmail.com](mailto:mdunschen@gmail.com)

