



Editor's Report

The last three months have seemed quiet on the cycling front in West Berkshire.

The first West Berkshire tri-annual cycle count took place in late October, thanks to all those volunteers.

We had some radio and local press exposure to remind people to check their bike lights and light up at night (more details below).

And at a National level (by the time you read this) flashing lights should have been legal, see below for further details.

Chairman's report: Spokes need its members by Ed Cooper

Newbury Town Centre is obviously a key destination for cyclists and it has to be crossed to get through Newbury. Spokes is trying to represent the needs of cyclists but I for one am struggling to understand how all the different initiatives fit together. Documents already produced include; Newbury Vision, Newbury Design Statement, Various Transport studies, a Strategic framework document of some description and there will be others. Currently Spokes is commenting on the following; The Local Transport Plan, Parkway development, proposals for the Market Place, Highway improvements to Northbrook Street, Strategic cycle routes (Our initiative), Planning applications for flats in and around Newbury. I am not convinced that there is anyone with an overview of all this that will ensure you can ride a bike across Newbury at the end of it all, despite the broad brush policies being to encourage cycling and sustainable transport for environmental and health reasons. I am concerned that lip service will be paid to the needs of cyclists and that a development will slip through the net that stops cycling. Spokes will do our best to be vigilant but we need members to give us credibility and a voice that will be listened to, and we need our members to let us know if they spot a problem.

Our Logo

The consensus on the logo is... keep it just as it is! Well for the time being anyway. Rather than members having no real opinion about the logo, many have expressed their liking of it. Whilst only a few dislike it and think it not fitting.

Cycle Count

Many thanks to all the Spokes members who helped with the cycle count which took place on 18th, 19th and 20th of October. Due to lack of members in the Eastern part of the district one person needed to complete two counts – thanks Angela for that persuasion. For the Newbury and Thatcham areas there were more volunteers that counts.

As there will be three counts annually, Spokes will be looking for volunteers for February – so please ask Santa for that extra warm fleece this Christmas (or two thin fleeces since we are always being told layers trapping the air which then heats up works best to keep you warm).

Newsletter of the Quarter

You need not be a member of Spokes to write (or email). I have only received a few letters to date. To be eligible for a prize you need to write about anything that is associated with cycling in the West Berkshire area. The prize will be kindly donated by Banjo cycles.



When you submit a letter do not forget to include your contact information – just in case you win.



Letter Prize: Specialized Chamonix Helmet

"First" Great Western ?

Extracts from a letter by Sue Everett, addressed to NWN

I am writing this letter to express disgust with the recent behaviour of a First Great Western train driver on [August] Bank Holiday Monday.

While attempting to board a train, he deliberately shut the doors, trapping my bike in them.

Later, at Newbury station, the train waited on the platform for some 10 minutes so I am puzzled as to why he felt he had to make such a quick exit from Hungerford.

On arriving at Thatcham he showed no remorse, and admitted to deliberately shutting the doors. His reason given for shutting the doors was because "You were just strolling along the platform when everyone else had got on."

Earlier in the week I witnessed a child left stranded on a train leaving Thatcham, when the rest of his family (with bikes) had got off. Basically, insufficient time had been given for him to disembark. The driver ought to have spotted the commotion and opened the doors.

From these experiences, I can only conclude that there needs to be an investigation into procedures for ensuring passengers board and disembark trains safely. These two incidents show a failure in the duty of care which rail providers are legally required to provide to their customers.

Have you had an "experience" on First Great Western (Link) or witness to one? Please let me know.

Cycle Bike Show in London

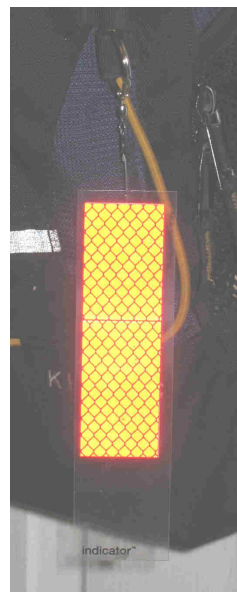
On Sunday 16th October I went to the cycle show at the ExCel exhibition centre in the Docklands area of London.

Not surprisingly there were lots of bikes to look at from all your favourite manufacturers – and the number of exhibitors has definitely grown in size since last year. Giant (reputed to be the World's largest bicycle manufacturer) failed to gain a spot in the main hall since they waited too long for a good deal, only to find there was no space left for them.

Transport for London, being run by Gary a nice chap who used to be a volunteer for a fellow Spokes campaigning group in Canterbury had created an indoor cut down version of London which could be cycled through on various bicycles, tricycles, recumbents, etc.

The exhibition is clearly aimed at the cycling enthusiast due to the number of very expensive titanium and carbon fibre bikes on show (the Airborne Zeppelin being my particular favourite). And, the majority of the

bikes on show were road bikes rather than hybrids or mountain bikes.



SmartReflector - (I have tested in heavy wind and rain, and no sign of wear and tear to date)

Being a bit of a gadget freak – I do like all the different lights and reflectors you can buy. I was tempted by a Smart Reflector (check out www.moorelarge.co.uk or phone 01332 274200 for stockists and range).

I was also tempted by some rain legs. Instead of wearing full or ¾ length overtrousers when it is raining; these little beauties cover just the top part of your trousers.

Fortunately the weather conditions this week gave me a great opportunity to try them out. From stopping, to opening my pannier, to having them fitted and cycling again was less than two minutes. For me, a lot quicker than overtrousers. They are also much lighter and less voluminous than overtrousers.

They can be purchased from www.rainlegs.co.uk or call 01728 720144.



Rainlegs (they really do work)

Light Up Source CTC

It is now legal to use flashing lights on your bike, front and rear. And provided they emit at least four candela - that's all you will need.

This liberalisation of the law is mostly down to campaigning by the CTC. Unfortunately the law for steady lights will not be changed and they must still conform to BS6102/3. The consequence is, it is easier to be legal with flashing lights!

Working Lights

This is the usual plea for all those cyclists, for whatever reason, whom do not use lights when it is dark (which can be both ends of the working day at this time of the year) to Light Up NOW.

I know you can spend up to £750 on lights for a bike now, but spending just £30 for a pair of lights front and rear will help you to be seen – and may even save your life.

If you would even more visibility there are reflective tops, stickers and bands for the body, helmet and bags.

As some people have no lights on their bike they see the pavement as a safe place for them. However, this exposes night time pavement users to the dangers of being run down by an unseen bike (as almost happen to me whilst out running recently – and no it was not a shared use pavement).

So, LIGHT UP now!

Golden Bell - Chocolate Chain

The awards are as follows:

Golden Bell

- the straight on cycle lanes on the St John's roundabout
- improved signage and facilities for Sustrans Route 4
- Kevin Bushell's never ending enthusiasm and the way he finds time to respond to stuff right across the district. Brilliant
- Cold Ash Chicanery

Chocolate Chain

- the turn right cycle lanes on the St John's roundabout.
- the removal of the cycle lanes under the Burger King roundabout

- every cyclist who sets us back so much by being inconsiderate to other road users
- Railway "foot" bridge at Kennet Heath, Thatcham (bridleway 18).

Your Streets This Quarter From Kevin Bushell (Highways officer)

Western Avenue

By the time you read this, changes will have been made to Western Avenue's junction with Oxford Rd. This is primarily to provision additional pedestrian crossings of those two roads, but WBC took the opportunity to consult Spokes about the (very broken) system of poor shared-use footways around the roundabout. (This is what we wrote to WBC: <http://tinyurl.com/843w2> .) The design finally agreed between WBC Highways and Spokes is a rare example of a collaboration where Spokes' opinions were taken forward and included in the design. We hope that, when complete, this project will result in a genuine improvement in priority and safety of cyclists within the streetscape.

Bridleway 18 – Kennet Heath

The shortcomings of the new foot bridge over the railway close to the new Kennet Heath estate at Thatcham are well documented (the new footbridge fails to accommodate the right-of-way for horse riders and cyclists). Back in May, Spokes was asked for its view on the closure of the existing level crossing (<http://tinyurl.com/dme8h>), our view was that it should not be closed until the bridge is upgraded to fully facilitate cycling/horse-riding. Our views are predicated on a premise that one sure way to work against WBC's policy of increasing cycling within the district is by making it more difficult to cycle on bridleways. Nevertheless, WBC has ignored our views and is to proceed to close this important route for cycling.

Thatcham Stn Environmental Improvements

By the time you read this, changes should have appeared at Thatcham railway station. Our comments on the proposals are on our web site here: <http://tinyurl.com/89rou> We anticipate that the scheme will go ahead as WBC has planned despite our repeated attempts to have the shortcomings for cyclists addressed. The one-way aspect of the scheme is a recipe for criminalising cyclists in the area because it fails to address the basic need of a direct route for cyclists. Spokes' long-standing views on one-way streets, and ameliorating their effects on cyclists can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/76y3x>.

AWE – Tadley

WBC consulted us on proposals to build a facility to aid cyclists getting to and from the site (a laudable aim). Spokes' survey found that the proposals were

likely to worsen conditions for cyclists, anticipating some features which are potentially dangerous for cyclists. See: <http://tinyurl.com/99aun>. WBC wrote to us acknowledging that all our expressions of concern were valid, but that WBC (supported by AWE) would continue with the scheme unmodified irrespective of those acknowledgements. We think that this is a wholly unsatisfactory position – basically WBC is consulting Spokes as an expert user group, and ignoring its advice.

CCN News

Fewer and less serious casualties in 2004, but fatalities up

Cycling casualties reported to the police in 2004 fell to 16,648, a 2.2% fall on the previous year. The number of serious injuries was down from 2,297 to 2,174 and the proportion of casualties involving serious or fatal injuries also fell, from 14.2% to 13.9%. However, the actual number of fatalities went up by 20 to 134, the highest number since 2001.

25 child cyclists died last year, an increase of more than a third over 2003 while for adults the increase was only 14%. Similarly, while total adult casualties fell by 8%, for children the comparable figure was only 1.8%.

The bicycle is streets ahead

According to a Radio 4 listener survey, the bicycle is considered to be the most significant technological innovation since 1800. Almost 60% of the 5,500 voters put pedal power above nominations such as the Internet and the internal combustion engine. The transistor and the magnetic induction ring

were joint second. Professor Heinz Wolf said that the affordable transport had "changed humanity".

Source: news.bbc.co.uk

Membership Details

Families can join SPOKES for only £5 a year; individual subscription is £3; £1 unwaged. Send your name, address, phone number and e-mail address to Graham Hunt, SPOKES Membership Secretary.

Events. If you would like any events to be advertised here, please contact the Events Co-ordinator, contact details at the end of the Newsletter.

Adverts. Please contact the Editor if you would like to place an advertisement in this newsletter.

Articles. If you would like to contribute or have any ideas you would like to suggest please contact the Editor.

10% Discount

Show your Spokes Membership card at the following local stores and receive a 10% discount:

Banjo Cycles, 109, Bartholomew St, Newbury
Tel: 01635 43186

The Cycle Shop, 55, Cheap St, Newbury
Tel: 01635 582100

Contact details for Spokes

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Next Newsletter: Closing Date for articles is 2nd December 2005, publishing date 18th December