

Next Year's News Now!

May will see the **Belvoir Castle Cycling Weekend** happening again, dates to be confirmed. Hopefully this time we will be able to use the estate roads.

July 20 -28 will be the time for **Spokesfest Leicester Bike Week**. Featuring a Special Needs Cycle day at the Riverside Festival, public bike rides most days (maybe every day!), a cyclists' barbecue at the Museum of Technology, a day of pedal boats, pedal car racing, veteran bikes and of course the public 'come-and-try' event. There may also be an exhibition of historic Human Powered Vehicles over a couple of months in the summer.

And next year's **summer fashion** colour will be baby blue. It's the new purple.
Simon Thomas

Greg has a variety of cycling and environmental magazines to give away, such as CTC magazine, Bicycle, Bike Culture, Going Green. A full list can be seen at <http://homepage.ntlworld.com/greg.puczylol/Cycling/OldMags.htm>

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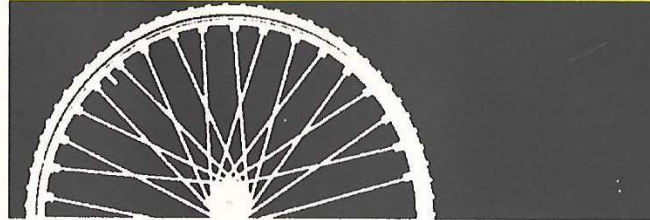
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LEICESTER SPOKES



Winter
2001

Christmas Presence

It's that time of year again - Lots of traffic queues as people try to get all their Christmas shopping done. What a good opportunity this is to get your bike out and glide past all those fuming motorists waiting for a parking space to become available. The bike is the ideal Christmas shopping vehicle - no waiting for a parking space and you can get all that expensive perfume in a pannier. Why not get together with some friends for a shopping ride and a meal afterwards? And the more you ride, the more turkey you can eat. While you're there you can get me some Chanel No.5.

Simon Thomas

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2002 News



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Cycling: from Austria to Athens (well, not quite)

There are certain things that a cyclist setting out on a long-haul holiday must remember: one of these is to never expect things to go according to plan. This way if things pan-out all nice and easy it will be a big surprise and lead to a relaxing holiday and alternatively, should absolutely nothing correlate with your plans, you will be a little bit prepared. As long as you have your tent, plenty of water containers (especially if you are in hotter climates) and as always something to eat life should not be too difficult.

Bearing this in mind, my sister and I set out to cycle through Austria, Italy and down into Greece. All that can be said for this holiday/experience is that we both returned feeling, like a lot of people, that we needed a holiday to recover from this one. Just about everything that could happen to make our lives more difficult did! Space doesn't allow me to elaborate too much, but suffice it to say that it was a miracle that we returned friends!

This leads me on to my shortened list of cycling holiday do's and don'ts:

- DO – take somebody who you know you can shout at and will forgive you afterwards!
- DO – take a tent – without it we would have been up that proverbial “creek”
- DO – make absolutely sure that you can deal with all bicycle repair scenarios
- **DON'T – GO ANYWHERE IN AUGUST**

If you just followed this last piece of advice you would have avoided most of the problems that we encountered: even if your sister says she can only go away in August, don't do it! Do anything instead! Go at any other time! Ditch her and find someone else!

If I were someone who hadn't had good cycling holidays I would read this and think NO WAY am I spending my well-earned breaks on-pedal. So I need to balance this out by saying that cycling across northern Spain following the pilgrimage route was simply one of the best experiences of my life!

If you are new to this thing, or want to have a good time, or minimise the risk of having a bad one, take my advice – miss out Greece completely. Do go to Tuscany and Umbria, but be warned about the hills! And forget Pisa – be prepared to discover beautiful medieval towns like Lucca and Cortona (its only disadvantage being the 1.5 hour climb to the top).

But the best cycling we had, and the most cyclists I have ever seen, are to be found up the Danube!

And my final DO – that would be follow your instinct – most of the time it's right – if we had, our journey would have been very different, cycling all the way home from Vienna up the Danube, through the Netherlands perhaps. But then, that, I suppose, is another holiday?

Anna Peavitt



Simon's Top Touring Tips - No.98

Always take an expert with you to fix mechanical problems, that way you can stand around making annoying comments without getting your hands dirty.

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Leicester Cycling Map is published by Leicester City Council, produced by CycleCity Guides.
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Cycle Courier Superheroes

Cycle Couriers in San Francisco have grouped together to form a rapid response team. In the event of earthquakes or other serious disasters which disrupt traffic (particularly emergency vehicles) they can be called upon to deliver emergency supplies using their local knowledge and superior speed. They will also receive training in first aid and resuscitation so they can help the emergency services.

Did you know that research shows that the person most likely to come to your aid is a cyclist? Apparently out of all people, cyclists are most likely to stop to help out someone in distress. What jolly nice people we are.

Simon Thomas

(one of the very first cycle couriers in London. Not many people know that)

Have you got a story to tell?

Been on a nice bike tour somewhere? Or maybe you want to air your views about cycling in Leicester? We welcome articles for inclusion in the newsletter. There's no guarantee, of course, but if you want to see something new in the newsletter - *write it!*

Indecisiveness rules - OK?

After ignoring the many years of ridicule that fellow Spokes members heaped on my trusty circa 1973 Hercules Balmoral with S.A. 3 speed hub, disintegrating kneecaps finally persuaded me that perhaps in my declining years I needed something better. But what? Unkind persons suggested an electric wheelchair, but I ignored that and saw that nearly everyone rode mountain bikes. I decided however that while these seemed excellent for harassing pedestrians on the crowded pavements of Narborough Rd., they were not suited to riding 30miles or so on a Spokes ride.

My local cycle shop was Smith & Parker, who kept a wide range of spares for older bikes at reasonable prices, but who always seemed strangely reluctant to admit that they had a part in stock. I remember once visiting three times before they agreed to sell me a tyre for another of my old bikes. I looked at their range of new bikes but there were too many to instantly choose from, with different gear change systems and not a Hercules in sight.

Purchasing indecisiveness is a virtue in my book because over the years there have been many occasions when I've vacillated over which product, model or size to buy and eventually had the decision taken out of my hands by the manufacturers ceasing to produce the items in question. In the meantime my money was still in the bank and I realised that I had survived without the product.

Anyway after looking in Smith & Parker's window regularly every month for a year, on one Saturday I was stunned to find that all the bikes had gone and the shop was to close two weeks hence. This set me back several more months, but in January when I was driving back from a customer who had temporarily unhinged me by paying on the spot and thanking me profusely for my work, I passed Graham Goode Cycles, whose range Roger had previously reconnoitred. I asked to try their cheapest hybrid which was the Falcon Explorer XV (assembled in Norfolk) at £150. I was allowed to ride it round their garage forecourt for 5 minutes and paid for it 5 minutes later. I did say was temporarily unhinged didn't I?

Since then I have ridden 700 miles without anything falling off but I have had to change a few things. More of this another time unless you write in and complain to the editor.

John Woodcraft

(No, sorry, that's not good enough, only a brown envelope stuffed with tenners will do the trick -Ed.)

Birdy Folding Bicycle

The Birdy is a lightweight folding bike with front and rear suspension. It's not the most compact folder but it makes up for that with a very stiff frame and good suspension.

Fitting - The seat tube extends a long way and copes with my height (6'2") easily. There are two stems available giving a choice of a very upright position or a more leaning forward position. This all allows for a very wide range of adjustment for different sizes of rider.

Comfort - We have set up the Birdy with the upright stem and the ride feels for the most part like a hybrid style bike. It would probably be worth using a sprung saddle but the suspension works very well - it doesn't feel like a bike with small wheels, even down the bumpy Great Central Way.

Climbing - This is a very light bike, lighter than most normal upright bikes and it does seem to climb quite easily. On very steep gradients the front wheel feels a bit light as the wheelbase is quite short, but it's not really a problem and this is common to most short, small-wheeled bikes. There is a small amount of flex in the stem when fully extended, but this is much less than on the Brompton when similarly fully extended.



Manoeuvrability - Like most small wheeled short bikes it is very manoeuvrable once you feel confident.

Speed - I reckon I hit over 100mph with it on the way to London. On the train. And you could probably get up to 70 on the motorway.

Luggage - There is a small rack fitted over the back wheel and other rack options are available, including one for the front wheel. If you have big plates of meat like me you may find that a large pannier hits your feet, so many people use a rucksack which sits quite nicely between the saddle and the rack.

Gearing - various different options are available. Ours is last year's Blue Birdy which has a seven speed derailleur gear, there are also hub gear options and 3x7 hybrid gear options. Ours seems ok for quite steep hills, but if you wanted to go touring on it (by plane, perhaps) you might want the 3x7 option depending on how hilly it is where you are going.

Fun Factor - Although we bought our Birdy for its usefulness it is a lot of fun to ride. I'd certainly be quite happy to take it touring with me if I couldn't take my normal hybrid style bike, and it looks like you should just be able to fit it into your Tiger Moth biplane.

Tall Story - this is the best folder for tall people that I've ridden. If you are shorter, you may be happy with the Brompton which folds smaller but just gets too flexible when fully extended. Why not take a test ride on both?

Simon Thomas - November 2001.

Birdy bikes are made by Riese und Muller in Germany and are available from the Bike Park in Leicester, who also sell Bromptons.

The summer rides programme has now ended. Over the year we have seen many new faces and we will be publishing another ride guide in the Spring. However, the evening rides are still going strong on Wednesday evenings, meeting at London Road/Guilford Road junction at 7pm.