

Spokesfest Human Powered Vehicle Festival Comes to Town

The festival runs from 20th - 28th July this year and features all kinds of bikes and boats, with the popular spectacle of pedal car racing on Humberstone Gate, where a grudge match between the UK champions and last year's Italian winners looks likely. Leicester Spokes folks will be showing off the best of Leicestershire countryside on rides during the week.

Saturday 20th, 2pm - Special Needs ride from Castle Gardens

Sunday 21st from noon - Special Needs Come and Try show at Bede Park with the Riverside Festival

Tuesday 23rd, 10am - Southern Saunter ride starts Howard House on Manor Road

Thursday 25th, 10am - Steam Train ride north returning to the barbeque (see below). Ring Simon on 0116 229 9598 to book on this ride (there is a charge for the train and maybe a museum stop). Starts at Howard House, Manor road.

Thursday 25th, 7pm - Cyclists' Barbeque at the Museum of Technology, Abbey Pumping Station. Next to the river and the Space Centre, a great chance for all cyclists to meet up for a barbie and a beer, and see the massive Gimson beam engines in steam specially for us!!

Friday 26th, from noon - Human Powered Boat day - there should be several different ways for you to get wet this year, at King Lears lake in Watermead Park.

Saturday 27th, 10am - Leisurely Legstretcher ride in the countryside. Starts at Howard House, Manor Road.

Saturday 27th from 10am - British Pedal Car Championship races, Humberstone Gate.

Sunday 28th from 11am - Public come and try event in Humberstone Gate. Try out all sorts of bikes, trikes, quads right in the city centre.

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Regeneration - Cycle Friendly?

Latest reports from the regeneration process look promising for cycling in Leicester. The reports, produced by independent consultants, looked into what Leicester needed to make it a thriving city, and what prevented this. It highlighted the lack of landmark buildings and the difficulty of joining up the various different parts of the city. In particular, it said that the city needed to have better provision for cyclists and pedestrians and that traffic needed to be tamed. The ring road around Castle Park area was seen as a barrier to joining that part of the city to the centre, and some quite radical suggestions have been floated for taming the ring road here and opening up the area around the Magazine. It remains to be seen whether the local authorities will have the bottle to further restrict traffic in this area. What will local businesses think when they find that the process of regeneration, which many of them have encouraged, leads to traffic being restricted and reduced? Now would be a good time for them to start cycling....*Simon Thomas*



Magazine Gateway
- Free at Last?

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Cycling in New York and other observations

Anytime in New York is bound to be a good time, but for the first timer this spring seemed an almost magical experience. The sun shone, the blossom was out and the views were glorious. The buildings are stunning and we could have spent the whole timing staring upward, becoming quite giddy at times, marveling at the heights, shapes, profiles and colours, an architectural dream. This article follows a six-day visit made in April by one impressionable girl and her boy.

Outside the terminal building at JFK we spotted our first cyclist, a policeman, NYPD were out in force everywhere, on street corners, public buildings and on horseback in Times Square, the heart of theatre land, and Central Park. Their presence probably contributed to the feeling of safety and ease that we soon slipped into coupled with the friendliness and politeness of almost everyone we met. We traveled on the subway several times, including 2am in the morning, an all-day ticket costs \$4 and contrary to popular myth it's ok to make eye contact with over ten year olds and people talk to one another.

For someone who finds every road a potentially dangerous and scary experience, I wasn't looking forward to the streets of New York. Would all my sight seeing be confined to one side of the street? Well the roads are wide, noisy and a bit on the wild side but if you follow the 'walk/don't walk' instruction at every junction & are prepared to run every now and then it's fairly easy, most drivers follow the 'rules'. Cycling didn't appear to be that popular and the 'rules' were unclear. Cyclists used the bus lanes but everywhere else as well, in either direction. Very surprisingly hardly anyone spotted was wearing a helmet and at night we didn't see a single cyclist with any kind of light. There were some 'professionals' whizzing about with all the 'gear' but the typical cyclist was a middle aged man, short with a Mexican appearance and a 'care-free' attitude. Unattended bikes were always locked with heavy chains; not a 'D' lock in sight.

One of the first things we did was walk across Brooklyn Bridge. This is a must for stunning views of Manhattan and the islands. There is a separate cycle lane and plenty of cyclists were using it on what turned out to be the hottest day of the trip (74F). We crossed from Manhattan to Brooklyn, a gentle incline whilst to our right cyclists were whizzing down in the opposite direction.

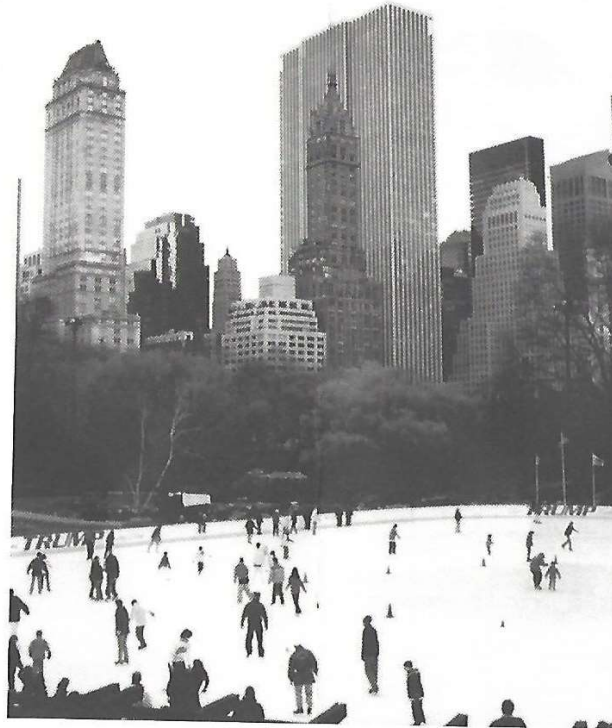
We had a whole day to visit Central Park. It is vast, 843 acres, with a variety of features and terrain. To see as much as possible we decided to hire bikes. Although it had been predominantly sunny, the temperature had fluctuated all week and Saturday turned out to be very cold indeed, in the 30's. We sat beside the boating lake trying to warm up with a cup of tea, even the lake side kiosk offers several different varieties of tea, and a choice of whole or skimmed milk. It began to snow, with tiny flakes. The ensuing flush of excitement led us to resume walking with renewed vigour and after a short divergence at the bronze 'Alice in Wonderland' sculpture we found the cycle hire hut.

Bikes on offer were 21 speed cruisers or a more basic no gears 'Hamilton Classic'. After a try out the latter seemed best, helmets were available but not locks. The Hamiltons' braking system is in the pedals, in order to brake you have to back pedal. I was somewhat anxious about this but we quickly got the hang of it, the braking is very gradual but effective. Bikes cost \$9 an hour and a deposit of \$100 is required, this covered both bikes.

We set off for the 6-mile loop road. This is a popular jogging/walking road with a separate cycle lane and is closed to vehicles. The multitude of joggers keeps you alert and is fascinating viewing, there are people jogging whilst pushing buggies ahead of them and hanging on to dogs, rollerblading is popular too. The only other cyclists we saw were racing types probably doing circuits. It was a fun way to see the park and spot buildings and landmarks along the way, such as the Guggenheim art gallery. This is well worth a visit; the interior consists of a spiral shaped slope so you view the exhibits as you walk up, with rooms leading off the spiral.

In six days it's only possible to see and do a fraction of what New York has to offer, other highlights included the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), Empire State Building, very long queues, the most formal processing up and down, but some surprisingly tasteful gifts available at the top. The ferry journey to Staten Island takes bikes too and passes close to the Statue of Liberty (since September it's not possible to climb the statue itself) and the impressive Grand Central Station where we sat down and very nearly wept on discovering that the 'left luggage' facility had gone. Luckily the Hyatt hotel next door obliged. This is a city to return to again and again.

Christine Keen



Try skating - it's as easy as falling off a bike...

Bikes on Planes

It's in most airlines' Terms and Conditions that they will carry bikes as luggage, but whether they're actually enthusiastic about doing so is another matter. I have recent experience of this having organised a Spokes trip for six of us to Spain. We travelled by Go from Stanstead to Bilbao at the bargain fare of £30 per person each way.

At first Go had suggested taking the bikes as cargo (guaranteed to get on the flight and treated with more care). Two months before we left, Go suddenly said this wasn't available. We didn't want to take bike bags as Go couldn't guarantee us anywhere to leave them during our trip and they thought the left-luggage facility might be suspended at Bilbao. We could take our bikes as part of our 25kg baggage allowance with the option of paying an extra £20 return per bike not to have to wrap or dismantle the bikes, only take the air out of the tyres. For the extra money the bikes would also be wheeled to the cargo hold for us (a lie!). We were treated like very unwelcome guests by Go at Stanstead, kept waiting for well over an hour while a succession of uninterested employees failed to help us. We paid the £20 each but later saw our bikes heaped on a trolley like mailsacks. In short, one bike was lost in transit. On the return leg, three of the bikes arrived damaged. Insurance claims are in progress. Not a good first experience taking bikes by plane.

A fellow-cyclist in Spokes has taken his bike as luggage on planes four times with far fewer problems. Once the bike arrived a flight later than he did (none of the airlines will guarantee that your bike will travel on the same flight as you) but the other three flights (Manx Airways, Lufthansa and EasyJet) were trouble free. Each time the bike was in a bike bag or a full bike box.

A colleague who cycles far more often abroad than I do has had plenty of bad experiences on airlines and feels that airlines regret ever getting into the bike-carrying business. He is convinced that the best option is to get flattened cardboard boxes from a supermarket, turn your handlebars through 90 degrees, remove pedals and zip tie them to the frame then tie or tape the cardboard round the bike so the bottom part of the wheels are not covered and the package still looks like a bike. If you do remove the wheels, you must bolt tubing or dowelling between the forks to stop them being compressed. Also pad the bike with clothing, soft shoes etc to help prevent damage. Foam heating insulation tubes split and taped on are good too. Our lost bike did turn up in Bilbao (three days late, by which time we'd hired an excellent bike and were 200 km away) but its pannier arrived separately only 12 hrs late. How you explain or, even better, prevent this, I'd love to hear.

PS. In Spain, taking a bike on the trains was difficult (they only really want them on the overnight ones) on RENFE, the main nationalised railway. On FEVE the wonderful narrow-gauge private railway that runs along the North coast, the staff were helpful but there wasn't a lot of space. Fares were very low, often with no charge for the bikes. The easiest and most welcoming, surprisingly, were coach companies, putting the bikes safely in the big luggage lockers under the vehicle. This was May though, the height of summer might be different. *Philip Draycott*

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Police target Watermead on 2 wheels - thanks to City Cycles

The Police are to use bicycles to patrol Watermead Park thanks to City Cycles of Thurmaston. Officers will home in on criminals that commit crimes in the park, including the car parks. They will also pursue thieves that use the park as a route to travel to and from Birstall and Wanlip.

Until now it has been difficult for officers to police the park effectively as their vehicles cannot get through many of the paths. City Cycles will loan the bicycles to Syston Local Policing Unit and have promised to service and update them as required. The main Watermead Park car park at the end of Meadow Lane is considered part of Birstall and so affects the crime figures in our village.

from Wanlip & Birstall Village Watch Newsletter May 2002 *Greg Pucylo*

Bike Review : Falcon Explorer XV

The bike was purchased new for £150 in Jan 2000. It's a hybrid bike "handbuilt in Lincolnshire" by Falcon Cycles, from globally sourced components but including British wheels, and weighs about 15kg. So far I have ridden nearly 1200 miles without anything falling off, but I have had to change a few things. The 24" handlebars, no doubt designed to give elbow room in traffic to our upcoming nation of fatties, were awkward to get through some cycle gates and an embarrassment in town. I sawed 2" off each end to make them standard length. The plastic covering of the gel type "Comfort" saddle gripped my buttocks in a rather over-familiar way which inhibited my normal pedaling motion. Simon offered to spray it (the saddle that is) with Pledge but this effect wore off after a week or so but I did have a fragrant bottom. I swapped with the saddle from my town bike.

After six weeks of hardly using the new bike because of wintry weather, I spotted a dent in the front rim, which due to it's position looked to have been factory-caused, and certainly not by me hitting a kerb. I returned the bike to Graham Goode, all prepared for an argument, but they took one look and immediately offered to obtain and fit a new wheel. I collected the bike with it's new wheel two days later. Impressive service.

The bike seems to roll along quite easily with and it feels very solid. The Shimano 15 spd gears are changed by rotating Sdram GripShifts which are a lot more convenient than the older lever type. After 11 months one of the Gripshifts did develop a split in it's plastic housing, but once again after showing it to Graham Goode they ordered another and fitted it free of charge in 30 mins while I went for a pint in the nearby pub. Both brakes and gear shift cables have convenient finger adjusters at the handlebar and so the gear shift can be fine tuned as you ride along. After 15mths the other Sdram Gripshift split in the same place so it looks like I'll have to find a tougher design to replace it with. It's not

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a lightweight bike but gear shift apart, it does seem to be made to last and it copes well when ridden along rough country lanes.

John Woodcraft

"Little Confidence" in meeting Cycling Targets

The Government's 10 Year Transport Plan has been scrutinised and largely criticised by the recent 8th Parliamentary Transport Committee Report. Here is an extract from that report in relation to cycling. It should be borne in mind however that this is not directly related to our Local Authorities attempts in improving cycling provision. "The Government has under invested in cycling provision. Despite some improvements, cycling levels have not grown overall in recent years, and have certainly not doubled as originally intended. The failure to meet the 2002 target has shown the importance of interim targets against which progress can be assessed. It is regrettable that no targets now exist until 2010. There is little confidence that the target set for 2010 will be met. Much greater commitment and local investment in cycling infrastructure is required if the target for 2010 is to be met."

Spanish Tour Update

Six members and five bicycles arrived at Bilboa for the first Spokes trip to the Peninsular. We started with a bang, when Andy reflatd his tyres in the arrival lounge. He must have pinched the inner tube in the tyre beading because there was a huge noise as it burst under pressure. The blood drained from the faces of the Guardia who are accustomed to Basque separatists and their antics. In spite of this early setback, the group, with a hired bike to make up for the machine lost by "Go", covered 300 miles in 10 days of glorious cycling.


In the next newsletter you will be able to read about our trip, including an account of the stunning mountainscape of Los Picos de Europa and the excitement of supporting Real Racing Santander in an epic promotion struggle with the prize of a Spanish Premier League place.

Thanks to Philip Draycott for his excellent leadership and organisation in getting six men there, around and back. Plans are afoot to visit Italy in 2003. Watch this space.....
Peter Simmonds

Bob Warner Cycles

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