

LEICESTER CYCLIST

for cyclists in and around Leicester

Summer/Autumn 2004

More Cycling NEWS

Ireland Trip

Eleven Leicester Spokes members returned, happy and with aching legs, from a tour of South West Ireland on Sunday 12 September. In the next edition of this newsletter you will be able to read about the wonderful scenery, ferry journeys to remote atlantic islands close to the Fastnet Rock and stories from the village pubs of music making and the unique Irish welcome. (You can also learn how the group became embroiled in a domestic incident and witnessed a musicians' dispute.) Hear how we climbed the Healy Pass, visited the Murphys Pump, negotiated the dreaded Gap of Dunloe and swam in the natural harbour on Clear Island.

Poster Campaign

Following the 'Summer of Cycling' Photography Competition, Leicester City Council has launched a poster campaign using the winning entries, including one by Spokes member Christine, whose equipment can currently be seen on display on a one square metre poster on the piazza outside the Phoenix. Don't try and look at this while driving past!



Details of the campaign can be found at www.leicester.gov.uk/cycle-city

Leicester Cycle Heritage

Cyclemagic, the community based cycling organisation, has been awarded £38,500 by the Heritage Lottery Fund towards its unique Cycle Heritage Leicester project. Match funding for the £95,000 two-year project will come from Leicester City Council and Leicester Museums. Cycle Heritage Leicester will highlight the important part the city has played in the social and sporting development of cycling.

Wheelie Record

A penniless student who took out the front wheel of his cycle after he got a puncture has broken the world wheelie record.

Martin Lasak, 21, who started riding on one wheel because he couldn't afford to fix the tyre, completed a 30-mile wheelie.

It took him two and a half hours to wheelie between Vradiste and Kopcany in western Slovakia. He said the bike repair shop wanted too much money to fix the inner tube!

Source: Rise, 4 Sept 2004

Wednesday night rides – the myth's dispelled???

Three years ago I moved from Manchester (initially on a temporary basis) and was looking for a cycling group to go out with in the week. Visiting a local bike shop in Oadby (it was about two years before I discovered that there was more to Leicester than Oadby) I got the number of someone in Spokes who to my delight told me that they did mid week rides. When the list arrived there was one ride on the whole programme. Anyway I turned up, and said at the end of the ride that if anyone wanted to go out the next Wednesday then I would be there.

A couple of people did and after having a winter "lay off" the first year found it was hard to get people back again so from then on, we continued through the winter.

In the early days I just happened to go on a Sunday ride and met two ladies who said "oh you are the one who does those long fast Wednesday night rides". As I had never

seen them before It was obvious that they had fallen foul of the rumour mill.

So to put the record straight. We always go at the pace of the slowest rider, we generally make the rides up on the night to take account of the fact that some of the regular members might not have been out for a few weeks, and will see what the weather is doing. The length will therefore vary but can be 15 or 20 miles but its generally a steady pace.

We have been known to split the groups and send some of the quicker ones off on a longer route and then meet up at the pub (which by the way is one of the key features)

At the height of the Summer last year we had 32 people out on a ride and regularly get 12 to 14. So if you've not tried it there really can't be anything to put you off.

Ian Nightingale

Shires West Cycling

The Shires Shopping Centre, is due to be extended. This new development called Shires West, has been watched closely by the cycling fraternity. The original Shires development was highly controversial, not only from the cyclists point of view, by the loss of the public right of way at the south end of New Bond St., thus leaving the only northerly direct access to the City Centre Clock Tower against the one way system on Churchgate.

Recently a number of cycling representatives met with the Shires West Developer and City Council Officers to discuss cycling access around the new development.

Up until this meeting it was understood that cycling facilities would be provided around the circumference of the newly expanded development, conceding the demand for access through the planned open air Plaza area.

However it transpired that the City Council had guided developers as to what schemes are practical, in particular two-way cycling throughout Church Gate could be too difficult to implement.

Taking each road around the entire Shires Development:

- High-street is to be pedestrianised, however the City Council intention is to prohibit motorised vehicles, with the recommendation to allow two way cycling at all times.
- East Gates, as now, cycling would be prohibited during busy times, however it was conceded that the current confusing road signs for cyclists needs "tidying up".
- The Developer is looking into two-way cycling in High Cross Street, but if this is not possible Free School Lane and Shires Lane could be used instead, which was preferred by cyclists. However the Developers are concerned over the expected high pedestrian use of Shires Lane.
- Vaughan Way between High Cross St and Causeway Lane is to have a shared use path.

- Church Gate from Vaughan Way to St Peters Road is to be made two-way for cyclists.
- The remainder of Churchgate for two way cycling is not considered practical by the City Council, due to the very narrow section near the Clock Tower end.
- After some pressure, the Developer stated he would look at cycle access in the Plaza area, but this is being seen sceptically that this will be rejected anyway. Besides our previously agreed stance was for two cycle access to be allowed all around the Shires Development. There was some criticism that Developers in general were not allocating sufficient space for cycling routes, hence the excuse that cycling in heavily pedestrianised areas cannot be achieved.

In summary, two way cycling around the Shires Development, still seems to be on the cards, however it is disappointing that Church Gate is not to be redeveloped under a 106 agreement with the Developer (i.e. planning consent is given on condition that a developer also improves transport facilities).

Greg Puczylo, Leicester Spokes Secretary

Sunday Rides

Even though the summer is nearly over, the Sunday ride programme continues, with rides confirmed for 3rd and 17th October; at 10.30am from the Quay, Western Boulevard. Future rides are pencilled in for 31st October, but check the website www.leicesterspokes.org.uk or ring (0116) 254 8751 nearer the time.

Other Cycling News

Bike Recycling

Environ is launching *Bikes 4 All*, a project which takes unwanted bicycles and refurbishes them for people in the most deprived wards of Leicester. *Bikes 4 All* can be contacted on (0116) 2460048 / e-mail. thudson@environ.org.uk, and further details can be found on www.environ.org.uk

For the benefit of those who were unable to attend the Leicester Spokes AGM on 20th April 2004, here is an abbreviated version of the minutes.

Officers Reports

Secretary: Greg attends City and County Council meetings which discuss future plans and bids for funding. Despite our opposition the Upperton Rd Bridge replacement scheme was now a done deal and the bridge would be replaced by a ground level road with a light-controlled crossing at the Gt Central Way junction. Greg had got the Council to agree the provision of a left turn cycling lane into St Albans Rd (off London Rd).

Membership Secretary: John said that current membership stood at 85 (88 last year).

Greg said that increasing our membership would give our group more clout with local government and their plans. It was suggested that we should more widely publicise our rides in *The Link*, and *Leicester Mercury*. It was agreed that we should continue our annual sub of £14 to the YHA for group membership. This gives a discount if a group (min. 6) uses one of their hostels.

Treasurer: Ned circulated printouts showing income of £736 and expenses of £302 for the last year. This gave an improvement in our funds of £434. In addition he said that the Treasurers Account contained £722 and the Deposit Account £996.

Newsletter: Members were asked to be more forthcoming with contributions. The reduction in the no. of copies from approx 1,100 for public distribution last year, to 120 photocopied to members this year, had reduced our expenses from over £200 per issue to £20 not including envelopes and postage. It was pointed out that we must find alternative methods of publicising the group as a result of the change. It was stressed that the three issues of the NL per annum was the only method of keeping

those members without email, in touch with what was happening in the club.

General: Greg was concerned we were not pro-active enough in cycling politics. After criticism that the proposed new Shires development had no facilities for cyclists, Greg & Ned said that cycle racks were planned and that they had been consulted during the planning procedures but because of the size of the building and the expected large number of pedestrians in the open areas we could not expect to get a cycle route through the middle.

Newsletter Survey: Only 4 replies received. 2 thought the subs too low, 2 ok. Some thought the rides too long and too fast, several wanted cycle maintenance classes which possibility we are now investigating.

Rides etc: Peter Simmonds praised last year's cycling holiday in the Dolomites organised by Philip, and mentioned the Summer Camping Taster Weekend which he and 18 others enjoyed at Hinckley last year. He is organising a cycle touring holiday in South West Ireland this year. He paid tribute to the lan for the Wednesday rides and John for the Sunday rides.

Elected Officers: Chairman – Andy Tokeley, Secretary – Greg Puczylo, Treasurer – Ned Rice, Membership – John Woodcraft, Ride Leaders – Andy T, Mark I, Peter S, Philip D, Ian N, Liz S, Ned R, John W, Rieta S, Graham W, Chris K, Norman D, Patrick C. Ordinary Committee mems— Peter Stanesby, Elizabeth Barner

Insurance: Members were reminded that affiliation to the CTC this year cost Spokes £30.50 (last year £28.50), and Organisers Liability Cover was £62.50. This does not insure individual members against claims from 3rd parties. For this cover members are advised to either consult their household policy details or join the CTC at cost of £27 pa.

who ask to be included on this separate "Active members" mailing list. If you would like to be on this list or haven't been receiving emails recently then please notify jl.woodcraft@which.net Also don't forget to notify John when you change your email address.

I realised something was up when my web usage overtook my TV watching (in time spent per week) which happened I reckon about 18 months ago. Now I guess I spend about 10 times more time on the Web in an average week than I do watching TV! Just to prove that all that surfing (and emailing and....dare I say it..... work?) is not entirely wasted, here's a fairly random list of favourite Bike websites:

www.leicesterspokes.org.uk

Clearly the Mother of all websites; Features has a handy guide to riding in Leicester, our current ride guide, an invaluable list of teashops around the county and plenty of illustrated reports of our bike tours abroad and in the UK (Most of the Fun, None of the Sweat)

www.cyclingplus.co.uk/forum excellent forum on hundreds of topics, most of which are to do with cycling. Approach with caution, can be highly addictive!

www-math.science.unitn.it/Bike

"The Trento Bike Pages" everything and more to do with international cycle touring. The best armchair bike read ever. Tours from Alaska to Tasmania, via China, the Sahara and Peru with loads of photos. For some obscure reason, it's hosted by the Maths Department of a Northern Italian University!

www.sheldonbrown.com

Just sweeps you along, a kind of giant bike encyclopaedia. Lots of info on bike parts and maintenance, bike humour, a massive bike glossary etc etc etc. Lying down in front of a train must feel a bit like this.

www.rsf.org.uk

The Rough Stuff Fellowship, founded in 1955 by the folk who invented off-road and mountain biking. Terrific UK route information if you really want to get the best out of your mountain bike, from people who clearly love their sport.

www.unicycling.com/muni

Mountain Unicycling – it does what it says on the tin. Clearly bonkers and includes subpages on unicycling on snow and unicycling down giant sand-dunes! No.

www.ctc.org.uk

Perhaps this is better if you have member's access. Seems rather lifeless otherwise when compared with other sites. Rather disappointing for the website of the UK's largest cycling organisation.

Surfing

www.procycling.com

Mainly for info and stats on the big road races

www.bikeit.eclipse.co.uk/cyclingprelycra

"Cycling before Lycra" - pure nostalgia. A beautiful site full of faded old b&w

photos of cycling in the 30s and 40s in the far North-West of England. Constructed by a loving (adult) son as a tribute to his cycling parents. The world of fixed wheel bikes, "pass-storming" and Thermos flasks. If it doesn't bring a tear to your eye, you're made of titanium alloy. Unmissable.

news.bbc.co.uk/sportacademy/hi/sa/special_events/cycling

The BBC Sport Academy seems to exist primarily to teach young people on line about various sports. The cycling section is excellent and includes a clear if basic explanation of Olympic track cycling. One day you too will be able to tell a Keirin from a Madison, plus the finer points of the Group Pursuit.

http://www.adventuresportsonline.com/pre_ride.htm

Helpful, clear pre-ride checklist. Even has an illustration of the difference between a Presta valve and a Schrader.

http://www.adventuresportsonline.com/bikecklist.htm

From the same people, an exhaustive list of everything you might want to pack for a bike tour. Believe me, you don't need it all.

Of the retail sites, everyone has their favourites but here are a couple (absolutely not endorsed by either Leicester Spokes or this author)

www.parker-international.co.uk: well known for bargains

www.ribboncycles.co.uk: ditto but perhaps aiming at more quality products

www.wiggle.co.uk: comprehensive, perhaps aimed mostly at mountain bikers.

Finally, I will endorse these next folk. They've always answered my queries promptly and their own-brand bikes get excellent reviews everywhere: **www.edinburgh-bicycle.co.uk**. The site is also packed with useful info, including an ever-increasing number of rides (mainly, but not entirely, north of the Border).

Hope you enjoy the above, but remember - surfing's not half as much fun as cycling!

Philip Draycott

WHITEHAVEN TO TYNESIDE SPOKES TOUR

The Sea to Sea Cycle Route is the flagship of Sustrans long distance routes, having won a global award in 1996. It is a wonderful route through the Northern Lake District and over the Pennines, beginning on the Cumbria coast at Whitehaven or Workington on the Irish Sea, and finishing in Sunderland or Tynemouth on the North Sea. In mid May, George Brown, Richard Norris and Graham Wheatley cycled the 'Coast to Coast'; Graham reports on that tour.



DAY 1: THE START

It was a fair morning and I met George and Richard at Leicester Station. On boarding and after accidentally pressing the emergency button and exchanging pleasantries with the driver who said something like "Get off the train!", we were on our way to Birmingham for a connection to Carlisle followed by a further connection to Workington. Former Spokes member Bob greeted us on the platform at Workington and then led his first ever Spokes ride to Whitehaven.

Bob took us to his place, where he plied us with a generous serving of homemade vegetable curry and homemade wine.

Shortly after we followed him to the Shepherds Arms at Ennerdale Bridge for a few pints of real ale and to be entertained by a group of Morris Women dancing in the street.

DAY 2: THE LAKES

A beautifully sunny morning we made our way into the Lake District. With the bikes loaded up with camping gear as well as spare clothes and waterproofs to cover us for any eventuality, some of the hills were rather strenuous, and on more than one occasion, getting off and walking seemed the only course of action.

Richard seemed to be struggling the most, probably due to the amount of provisions he was carrying in his panniers, i.e. packets of biscuits, bunches of bananas, cereal bars, Kendal mint cake and so on.

The scenery that surrounded us though was

absolutely stunning, and at the 32mile mark we passed through the town of Keswick, but decided to press on a little further before stopping for lunch, this we did at a town called Threkeld.

After a pint and platter we continued to make good time despite the terrain, and reached Penrith (55 miles) with the intention of booking the return train home on Friday. Unfortunately we were met by a very unhelpful station clerk, who after we had persuaded him to find out the times and cost of the return journey, told us he stopped taking bookings some 45mins prior.

After a meal of cod and chips, and a chat with the female fryer who was helping us to find a camp site – which I must add are very few and far between – we carried on to a small town called Melmerby, two miles off our route, but the only place in miles that had a pub.

Time was rapidly approaching 9pm and things were getting a little desperate regarding finding somewhere to pitch a tent. Several suggestions were made such as a farmer's field, by the side of the road, and even a pub garden. We had a drink at the Shepherds Arms and got chatting to the landlord who told us of a caravan site in a small village called Ousby a further mile & half down the road.

After a quick phone call we set off once again. The owner of the site had offered us the use of an area of land in the centre of his site free of charge but with no amenities provided. At this late hour it was an offer not to be refused.

By now it was beginning to get dark and we eagerly set to work erecting tents that prior to this adventure had never been used.

DAY 3: THE NORTHERN PENNINES

At 7.30am we set out to tackle the Pennines.

The first climb soon after leaving the campsite took us to the top of Hartside 1903ft; it took us no less than an hour to reach the top at an average speed of 4mph. All we could do was dream of the cup of tea that awaited us at the café at the top, but of course it was closed, so it was another cereal bar, drink of water and a photo shoot, the latter made all the more difficult by the force 10 gale which was practically blowing us away.



Thinking back now if it hadn't been for that tailwind, I don't think we would have made it to the top. After a 15min rest came the descent, a 10 minute drop with speeds of 35-40mph – exhilarating. The next 20 miles were indeed very hard, the weather had turned rather inclement, and with the very slow up hills, made up for only by the white knuckle down hills we soldiered on.

It wasn't until we reached Allenheads (90miles) we managed to get something warm in our bellies, it was now 11.30am, as we stared at the menu in the café window, all were in agreement – it had to be the all day breakfast.

Realising we were making good time and that we would finish a day earlier than anticipated, we decided to find somewhere to camp early, safe in the knowledge that the final section would be all downhill. We reached the town of Stanhope and after making enquiries at the local information bureau about campsites with little success, B and B was looking very inviting.

The b&b meals were huge and after a few pints we retired early yet again. The next morning we made our way across the eastern edge of the Pennines towards Tyneside. □

For more details about Leicester Spokes, please visit www.leicesterspokes.org.uk



Or write to
Leicester Spokes, C/o VAL,
9 Newarke Street,
Leicester, LE1 5SN

EDITOR'S NOTE: Articles and letters are welcomed, and contributions can be sent to the above address or e-mailed to markingle@fastmail.fm. Articles in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Editor or of Leicester Spokes. – Temporary Editor, Mark Ingle

Letter to the Editor – Life After Spokes

There is life after Leicester Spokes, but it's a long haul back to sanity!

You will be aware that I have long harboured the view that you are solely responsible for my present infirmity and had it not been for your insistence that we 'press on' to the public house in Shearby on that infamous Wednesday evening during Bike-Week 2003, I would not suffer my current physical impediment. On behalf of your readers, please allow me to elaborate....

The ride itself was quite typical of a Spokes ride, but to a complete stranger, I couldn't help but be struck by the friendliness and camaraderie of fellow cyclists. I did not know it at the time that this display of sociability, whilst being offered unconditionally, concealed the glee of yet another potential 'round-buyer' at the local pub.

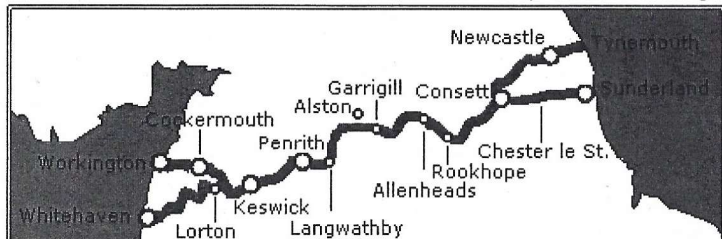
In any event, I returned home long past my usual retirement time that fateful night and after consulting my onboard computer, I could not believe my eyes.... Had I really cycled 35 miles?

Dropping my saddlebags at the door, I painfully climbed the stairs and collapsed, exhausted on my bed. Reflecting on the experience of the ride, a wry smile took hold of my face and I vowed never to go again. As the smile broke out into a hideous giggle and then developed into a full-blown burst of laughter, I attempted a 'deep-floor-pelvic-thrust' exercise in an attempt to register pain in my nether regions. This was all to no avail, I'm afraid, and I found the only way to achieve solace was to sink into a deep, pitiful slumber.

Despite my oath never to join Leicester Spokes any future bike-rides, you will be aware that my addiction to adrenalin forced me to become a keen cyclist with the club for almost a year. You are also aware that I have struck up an ongoing, enduring relationship with many of the club's members.

At my new home in the Lake District, as I look over to Great Gable, Green Gable, Kirk Fell and Pillar, I am reminded that there are compensations!

B Rider Esq.(aka Bob)



Lanzarote is an excellent island for cycling; the weather is warm and dry, the roads are mostly quiet and most of the roads are very smooth; in fact, better than roads here in the UK.

On the north side of the island near La Santa village, away from most of the tourists, is a sports resort which caters for those who want something a bit more energetic than lazing on the beach. Apart from having sports facilities on site, guests have free use of equipment such as cycles, which saves having to transport one's own equipment... but enough of the advertising blurb!

Club La Santa lends out three types of bikes: racing, mountain bikes and 'normal' bikes with seven speed hub gears, which we found most impressive for leisure cycling (shame they're not popular here).

Although Club La Santa provides a booklet with details/directions of a number of rides of varying distances/ difficulties, it is sometimes nicer to cycle in a group and it also saves having to map-read. There are three types of road bike tours organised: beginners, intermediate, and advanced. I chose to go on the intermediate tour, which is a distance of about 40-50km

For the tour, Cannondale racing bikes, are provided, though a couple of serious cyclists/triathletes had brought their own bikes. I don't

LANZAROTE Tour



Lanzarote provides an ideal cycling destination.

have a racing bike at home, and compared to my normal bike, the Cannondale felt very quick and responsive, though the ride was a bit hard on poor road surfaces.

The rides have two ride leaders, one at the front and back of the group. Rules are simple; one must cycle no more than two abreast, and not go ahead of the ride leader. It is the law that

one must wear a cycle helmet, and the position of the brakes are reversed compared to British bikes.

The supplied bikes had no speedometers, but I would guess the average speed was around 20-22mph. This may seem very fast compared to a Spokes ride, but one has a light, fast bike and there is no need to carry extra weight such as clothing, locks, etc. Inner tubes, tools and pumps are brought by the ride leaders.

Unlike on Spokes rides, there is no stopping to have snacks or drinks; the faster riders wait for the others at the top of the hill but continue on when the slowest person has arrived.

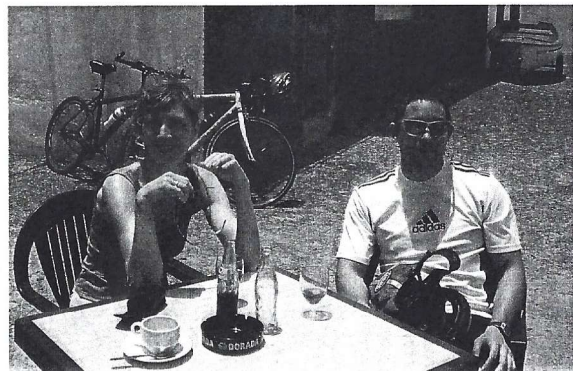
When one is on a fast ride, it always seems to be the case that no sooner has one got the water bottle out of the cage, then either a corner needs to be negotiated or brakes need to be applied! Learning from past experience, I used a CamelBak handsfree drinking backpack, which I found both convenient and safer, though perhaps unfashionable!

On the ride, we took the steady climb to Tinajo, heading towards the Montanas del Fuego. The route was interesting and provided varied views, along with the odd Manrique mobile sculpture.

On the way back to La Santa from Tinajo, there was the option to go racing as fast as one wanted, except through towns. Because most of this part of the route is downhill, it made quite an exhilarating end to the ride, though it meant one was exhausted by the end.

Comparing notes with other riders at the end, most found it challenging and enjoyable with some ready to try the advanced ride.

Mark Ingle



No tea breaks on the cycle tour, so we (Valerie pictured on left) had to take our own breaks!

BEER for the Boys

Despite mild or was it bitter protestations from the ladies we explored and eventually found that it was being held in the modern brick pavilion on the local sports ground where five-a-side football competition was being held as part of the Gilmorton Festival.

Indoors we were amazed to find a range of 25 types of Real Ale on sale together with various filled rolls. So the first instalment of our lunch was taken lying on the grass outside in the sunshine sampling "Old Hooky" whilst the ladies had the compensation of watching men with muscled legs running around in shorts.

After an hour I decided that if I consumed any more real ale I might lose my ability to map read so we carried on with a short pause while I mended a thorn puncture, undoubtedly acquired on the previous track.

Despite the beer and the conflicting advice and critical gaze of the others, the puncture was soon mended, and we rode on to our original advertised destination of Ullesthorpe Garden Centre which sells an amazing range of things to put in your garden, and also plants. But more importantly to cyclists the café, which has a pleasant outdoor seating section, sells excellent cakes and snacks.

Out of there and a left turn back into Ullesthorpe and on to Frolesworth, Broughton Astley and Cosby with some nice views over the countryside to the west. Through Whetstone and back on to the GCW and so back to the Quay. We couldn't have asked for better weather. Distance: 32 miles.

John Woodcraft.

Of course it wasn't planned as that when on a bright sunny day we rode out from the Quay and along the Great Central Way on Sustrans Route 6.

This route eventually crosses the meadows behind Winchester Ave, over the Blaby bypass at the light controlled crossing into Blaby and forked left for Countesthorpe. We then turned off left to follow the scenic diversion of Route 6 round the back of Blaby thro the older parts and alongside the cemetery before rejoining the cycle path alongside the main Countesthorpe Rd. On past the Community College and to Willoughby Waterleys.

Out of the village we ignored our usual right turn to Ashby Magna and went straight on down what the map showed as a 2.5 mile long public right of way. Deceptively this started off as a metalled lane but after half a mile it became a rough track and then an even rougher one with high dried mud ridges caused by tractors. This made things very difficult for Ned on his three-wheeled recumbent and he often had to stop to lift his machine out of the ruts.

More worryingly the track progressively reduced in width till I thought he might have to dismantle his machine and give us all a piece to carry. Unsurprisingly there was no traffic on this route and there was some very nice countryside to be seen, but it is not suitable for recumbents and would be very muddy in wet weather.

We came out in Gilmorton and immediately saw a sign advertising a local Beer Festival.

Name _____

Address _____

PostCode _____

Email _____

Data Protection Act: Your details will be held on computer

Membership extends to June 30th 2005

I wish to join/rejoin Leicester Spokes

£12 Family

£8 Waged

£4 Unwaged

Donation £ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED £ _____

Please make cheques/postal orders payable to **Leicester Spokes** and send to:
Leicester Spokes c/o VAL, 9 Newarke St. Leicester LE1 5SN