

Hats off to the CTC - When an eight year old boy was involved in a collision with a car, the driver's insurers tried to blame the 'accident' on the carers of the boy because he wasn't wearing a helmet! The CTC leapt into action and yesterday claimed victory as Provident withdrew their case. On 24th May 1997, eight year-old cyclist Darren Coombs was involved in a collision with a car driven by a woman insured by **Provident Insurance plc**. Darren incurred severe injuries. Solicitors, acting on behalf of Darren made a claim against Provident alleging negligence on the part of the insured driver. Provident concluded that their insured driver was not at fault and rejected the insurance claim, counterclaiming that the carers of the cyclist were at fault for not equipping him with a cycle helmet. This move was called "a cynical attempt to claw back possible damages" and many cyclists cancelled their policies with Provident.

Italian Interlude

So what's the first thing you ask about when you visit close relatives who you don't see very often because they live in Italy. "Have you got a bike I can borrow?", of course! Well it wasn't quite like that but after a lot of double cheek kissing of relatives, and being introduced to the various cats and their histories, I began rummaging around in the garage. There were four bikes in various states of repair, but but with some cannibalisation and essential maintenance, I was off along the seafront of Rimini in a very pleasant 25C.

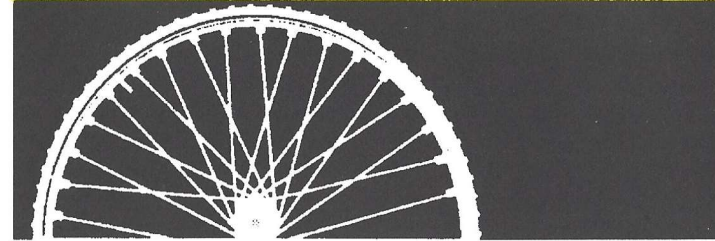
The terrain is very flat and cycling appears popular, especially amongst the over 30's. Early May is pre-season and there were no crowds so cycling along the prom caused no conflict with pedestrians. Pavement cycling seemed the norm, I even saw moped riders doing it. On the roads motorists seemed tolerant of cyclists and several times I saw mothers cycling along with offspring on the crossbar into the oncoming traffic. The other surprise was the almost complete absence of mountain bikes, in fact many of the older cyclists who congregated at the harbour on Sunday morning for a chat in the sunshine rode old-fashioned single gear types.

The old town of Rimini was an important staging post in the Roman Empire and still has many old buildings, but along the seafront there is now a ribbon development of tourist hotels and beach bars. *John Woodcraft*

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LEICESTER SPOKES



Spring
2001

Space Rockets Land on Riverside Way

The National Space Centre is due to open at the end of June located on Sustrans Route 6 which is a major backbone of the National Cycle Network. This means two landmark projects right here in Leicester and is a great opportunity to promote Leicester and cycling. I have already met many cyclists on Route 6 who were touring and specifically came through Leicester because of Route 6. With the Space Centre as an additional attraction we expect to see an increase in cycling activity along the route, and will be keeping a close eye on possible improvements along the Riverside Way (Route 6).

Simon Thomas

Inside:

Belvoir Castle Cycling Weekend
Recumbent Test Report
Tandem Virgins in Double Trouble
Shocker! and more...



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Linear Thoughts

One of the fun things about joining Spokes is trying out all sorts of different bikes, either those of fellow members, or bikes on loan from suppliers. Thus we found ourselves test riding a Linear recumbent for a couple of months. The Linear is a long wheel base, aluminium framed machine. We'd first tried recumbent riding at Spokesfest 2000, but this was our first chance to use one in earnest on the road, for shopping, touring and commuting.

Fitting - The seat and handlebars are easily adjustable. The seat is quick release, but the handlebars and steering column require allen keys. It took about 2 minutes to adjust the fit between myself (6ft) and Caroline (5ft 4in). It could probably be adjusted for riders a few inches taller or shorter.

Comfort - *Neil*: I found the bike very comfortable. The seat is well padded, and the mesh back leans backwards at about a 30 degree angle, giving a wonderful all round view. We had the bike in winter, and never rode more than 20 miles at a time, but I still found I was getting hotter than on a normal bike. This could be a problem in the summer. We didn't ride in rain, noting that the bike doesn't have mudguards. *Caroline*: The seating position is much more relaxing than on a diamond frame bike. I liked being able to see ahead in a wide angle view (although I couldn't always see over the hedges). One's back is well supported and at a comfortable angle. The new position (leaning back, rather than forward!) seems unnatural at first, but soon one feels quite at home with it.

Climbing - *Neil*: Hard work! However the lower gearing of production bikes would solve this problem.

Caroline: I definitely noticed the inclines more on this bike, and felt it more in my legs. There is a tendency to push against the seat so one feels it much more in one's whole body than usual.

Manoeuvrability - *Neil*: - I soon got used to quite tight turns, but never felt as comfortable in traffic and tight spaces as on a normal bike, partly because it is difficult to go very slowly on a recumbent. I also found the steering a bit 'twitchy'. The bike is not as easy to push as a standard bike, e.g. when walking through pedestrianised areas. *Caroline*: I found hill starts out of the question, not being able to push off the ground. It takes some confidence to get moving from being stationary, as it requires more effort to get one leg up and pushing in order to get going - a case of practice makes perfect. Sitting further back along the frame, and lower to the ground doesn't allow you to see beyond traffic next to you when stationary for example at a junction. Nor is it easy to look for traffic behind you. The bike does have a

wide turning circle. By the way - not a suitable bike to keep in the hallway!

Speed - *Neil*: The Linear was disappointingly unresponsive. It didn't seem to readily reward the effort put in, and I didn't feel I was any faster compared to my standard touring bike. I also noticed that Caroline was slower to cycle with when she was on the recumbent. This could be due to the weight of the machine. We definitely tried faster recumbents at Spokesfest. *Caroline*: Totally agree!

Luggage - It is very difficult to see how much luggage could be carried on this bike, as there is nowhere to fit a rack. It is also impossible to wear a back pack on a recumbent. There is a small pocket on the back of the seat, which could be used for a basic toolkit and drink for day rides. This meant we couldn't make much use of the bike for shopping trips or work journeys.

Lighting - It is possible to fit lights. A clamp is provided for a front light, and rear lights could be fitted to the seat posts. We fitted visibility belts to the back of the seat when out in foggy weather.

Gearing - Our example only had 7 gears. Therefore it was difficult to find the 'right' gear at times, and I could certainly have done with more gears at the lower end. However production models now come with 21 gears, which would make things much easier.

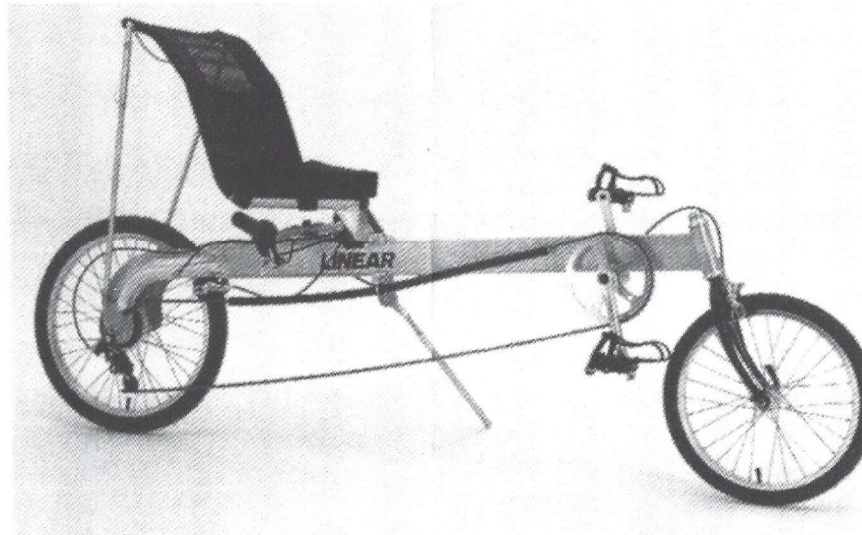
Fun Factor - *Neil*: This was a great bike to be seen out on, drawing admiring comments from passers by, particularly young boys out with their micro-scooter Christmas presents! We even had car drivers pulling up and getting out to engage us in conversation. There is no doubt that recumbents are great fun to ride. I'm not yet

converted for commuting, shopping or touring, but I'd certainly consider one for day rides and social events. *Caroline*: Enjoyed the experience, but need more practice - I would like to try some other models. If you ride a recumbent you have to be prepared to be noticed!

Neil & Caroline Talbot - February 2001.

Linear Bikes are imported by MicWic, telephone 01793 852484. MicWic also arrange test rides and weekends (for Linear and their own recumbents) in and around the Cotswolds.

Editor's Note: Linear bikes can now be supplied with lights, mudguards and racks to allow normal cycle panniers to be carried.



Events for 2001

Belvoir Castle Cycling Weekend 19th/20th May - a chance to explore the lovely lanes around the magnificent setting of Belvoir Castle. Saturday is for social rides and on Sunday it's the Alternative Transport Day and there will be a collection of unusual pedal powered machines for all to try. Camping available Friday, Saturday, Sunday nights.

Spokesfest Human Powered Vehicle Festival 2001 27th July - 1st August. Pedal car racing in Humberstone gate on the Saturday, free public come-and-try event on the Sunday, rides social events.

For more information call Simon on 0116 2299598, Roger on 0116 2781360 or visit the Spokesfest website on www.spokesfest.freeserve.co.uk

Spokes AGM Wednesday 28th March 6.30pm. Friends Meeting House, Queens Road.

We'll be talking about the summer ride programme, possible future campaigns, and what Spokes can do at Spokesfest 2001 for publicity. Come along and bring your ideas with you.

New Cycle Facilities Planned

Note - these are not definite plans...

Welford Rd / Palmerston Way - Junction to have Toucan crossing and advanced stop lines

Hinckley Rd / Carlisle St - Pelican crossing to be upgraded to a Toucan.

Marlborough Rd - Cycle gate to allow travel against one way system. Cycle route from Marlborough Rd to lights at York Rd (shared path) to allow access to King St from York Rd.

Great Central Way - Junctions with Marlow Rd, Evelyn Dr and Evesham Rd to be traffic calmed.

Gallowtree Gate - Cycle gate installed to allow travel against the one way system on Granby St to Bishop St. Could we at last be seeing the start of a cycle route along Granby St to the train station. It was noted that it would be a good idea to put money into consultation to see what would be needed to do this.

Leicester. To Evington Cycle Route - The final bits to be completed. To include crossing of London Rd at Holmfield Rd and also at Evington Rd.

Ned Rice

28/29TH Jul.

27-30TH.

Trepidation on a Tandem.

In a rash moment in the pub during a Wednesday evening ride Mark Ingle and myself thought that the AUDAX ride we had decided to do would be a greater challenge on a tandem.

As the allotted day was only a couple of weeks away we made arrangements to borrow the Spokesfest Orbit Tandem from Roger and we decided that before the ride we should take it out for a test ride.

If anyone is organising a management training course in team work then they should put tandem riding into the programme.

We agreed the drill in advance which goes like this.

Starting

Sit on saddle - Clip in right pedal bring to top of stroke - on the count of 3 push off and engage left pedal.

Riding

Tell the person at the back when you are going to do anything like slow down, change gear or direction.

Stopping

Well in advance shout slowing, stopping and left foot down.

This done we set off to Market Harborough (Peter S, Richard, Mark & Me plus a prospective member Norman) and by the time we got to Saddington we decided to change round with me going on the front. We agreed that this was the best format as Mark is taller so he could see over me to see where we were going.

Arriving at Leannes tea room in Market Harborough we felt a tad under dressed as we approached the sign asking us "to Wait to be seated". Peter suggested that we should go to the Church Hall which was more in keeping with cyclists. However they were very welcoming and the tea and cakes were excellent value at £2.00 per head (and that was for 1 1/2 teacakes each).

We had planned to have just a short ride however approaching Burton Overy at around lunch time was not the wisest of moves as we just had to go in and have the double egg and chips* (and a couple of glasses of water).



JOIN NOW! to help increase the lobbying and campaigning impact of *Leicester Spokes*

Name I wish to join/rejoin* Leicester Spokes.
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..... Email
†Leicester Cycling Map is published by Leicester City Council, produced by CycleCity Guides.
Data Protection Act: Your membership details will be held on computer

Bicycles Cure Idiocy Shock!

A recent Radio 4 programme entitled "The year 1901", said that up to that time people who lived in villages lacked mobility and tended to marry someone who lived down the road because that was as far as they could travel. They were following the example of their parents and their grandparents. This gave rise to a lot of in-breeding. The bicycle had already been invented by then, but at about £20 was too expensive for the ordinary working man. Then a process for making thin-walled steel tubing was developed and this led to the invention of "the safety bicycle", much like today's bikes. This was much lighter and cheaper than previous types and could be bought for only £4 to £5, within the reach of ordinary folk.

On Sundays people were now able to cycle to places 20 or 30 miles away and meet and marry partners from towns and villages that their parents could never have visited. Thus ended another great British tradition- the village idiot. It also resulted in country pubs being busier than they had been for the previous 50 yrs as they satisfied the thirst of the cyclists. This did not go down well with the churches, which were previously the meeting place for the local folk. Now they just cycled past on their way to the pub and Hell and Damnation. *(Just like a Spokes ride, really - Ed.)*

John Woodcraft

Having mastered the art of Tandem riding we set off from the start point on the Sunday at Haynes road on the start of the 102 KM Rutland and Beyond ride. (we being Peter S, Mark I, Richard, Neil Talbot and me).

It was a little damp but the main feature of the day was the wind which was in our favour in the morning as we headed toward Rutland Water allowing Mark and I to notch up speed of over 44 miles per hour. But in the afternoon we paid the price as it seemed to be either a full on head wind or gusting side wind.

Unfortunately Richard decided to take an early bath and kept us in touch with his progress back to Leicester by mobile phone. Now Mark learnt early on that he could go hands free, so when he wasn't taking phone calls he was doing his arm stretching exercises or worse still eating his sandwiches (did they taste nice Mark??)

We were up against the clock towards the finish and so Mark and I put our foot down. Anyway 4 Spokes Riders completed the event and we had a great time. The Tandem was great and would recommend others to take it out. On a technical note I would have found it easier on some of the hills if it had got a triple chain set as even the young legs of Mark on the back sometimes looked for a lower gear and unfortunately I had to tell him that's as low as it gets.

Ian Nightingale

**Editor's Note: Double Egg and Chips was invented and perfected in Burton Overy. Not many people know that.*

New Environment Centre Opens in Oadby

The Brocks Hill Environment Centre will open on Saturday 7th April and will be a visitor and education centre set in acres of newly-planted park and woodland. There's also a café open seven days a week so why not stop off next time you're riding past. If you've got some energy to spare try the pedal-powered generator and see if you can dry your hair with a bicycle.

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!*