

## Cycling England Demonstration Town

Derby has been awarded funding as a Cycling England Demonstration Town; expect big changes in the next three years. One of the first actions was an East Midlands Cycling Event. An ongoing East Midlands Cycling Forum is being put together now, with representation from seven East Midlands towns. Some observers expect more planning for cycling to originate on a regional level in the future. Step forward if you are interested in campaigning, and offer to represent Leicester at this meeting.

## Cycle Training - Air Today Bike Tomorrow Project

Bikes 4 All is a project initiated by Environ (but now organised by Groundwork Leicestershire) which coordinates cycle training of primary school children. Other partners in the project are Cyclemagic, Sustrans Bike IT, and the Council Road Safety Team.

Accompanying the training, each child receives a recycled bicycle, formerly destined for a Leicestershire landfill, and a new helmet if they don't already have one. So far, five schools have received training for 10-11 year olds. A few of us from Spokes received training-for-trainers as part of the project and volunteered to help teach. All the trainers were supported and

## 2006 Cycling Diary of Events

### 16-17 September Cyclemagic Festival

From [www.cyclemagic.org.uk](http://www.cyclemagic.org.uk)

Cyclemagic are organising a new event at the popular Abbey Pumping Station Museum, including a Saturday ride, film show, Tall Bike Gathering, cycling history exhibition, and special needs cycling show. Further details from [www.cyclemagic.org.uk](http://www.cyclemagic.org.uk)

### Ongoing:

Leicester Off Road Club - Friday night rides are aimed at all riders of any age. Sunday mountain bike rides take place every 3-4 weeks. These are usually around Leicester, meeting at Groby College at 8.30am.

If anyone wants to find out more about the club they can contact Dave North on 0116 291 4147 or [Norths.mob@ntworld.com](mailto:Norths.mob@ntworld.com)

mentored by folks from Sustrans and Cyclemagic who had taught in schools previously, as well as York City Council Road Safety Education Team who are seen as one of the leading cycle training groups in the country. Alongside the developments from Bikes 4 All, there are many more bike racks at city schools, organised through Sustrans Bike IT project and the City Council, alongside striping and development of the Safe Routes to Schools.

## Cyclemagic

Cyclemagic continue to offer cycle skills training to adults alongside a diverse programme of building interesting bikes, building bikes just right for their riders, roadshows, and recycling bikes.

*For those who don't know, Cycle-City Workshop is a monthly meeting of people with an interest in cycling in the area, convened by the city Cycling Officer. At the meetings, we discuss many aspects of interest to cyclists: city planning, promotion of cycling, projects, and general annoyances.*

*Report provided by Elizabeth Barner*

## BikeBUDI

The BikeBUDI scheme is simple and free to use. It simply matches individuals with others cycling the same way so they can ride together. The matches are displayed in both table and map format, allowing the user to easily find the most suitable people.

The idea is not just to help current cyclists to find a bike buddy but also to encourage individuals who may be concerned about cycling to give it a go. By putting experienced cyclists in touch with those willing to give it a try we hope to reduce some of the usual reasons for not cycling.

[www.bikebudi.com](http://www.bikebudi.com)

Leicester Cyclist is the official newsletter of Leicester Spokes.

For membership, ride information, and further details visit the Spokes website: [www.leicesterspokes.org.uk](http://www.leicesterspokes.org.uk).

Mailing address: c/o Voluntary Action Leicester, 9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN

# LEICESTER CYCLIST

for cyclists in and around Leicester

Summer 2006

## Cycle-city Workshop News

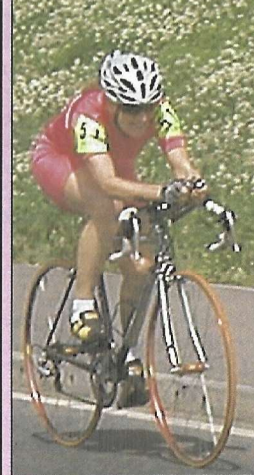
The city centre will be torn up for some time to come due to a mass of development. Plans for the Shires redevelopment have been pored over extensively at the Workshop. We hope there will be some reasonable bike parking and bike routes at the end of the mess.

[Comment: It is important that as Spokes members we do not get complacent about what will be delivered for cyclists. The City is undergoing unprecedented levels of private development and we need to be proactive to make sure planning applications are cycle

friendly and they get implemented without watering down facilities that make the city easier for cyclists and reduce car dependency. If you see planning applications, read them, take notes, ask questions, make formal objections. Plans should be on display at B-Block, New Walk Centre. If you need help or support, come along to the early section of the Cycle-city Workshop when we look at plans (from 3:30, one Tuesday a month), or Patrick Davis of Sustrans has kindly agreed to take questions and help guide through the process: [davis@crowbrook.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:davis@crowbrook.freeserve.co.uk)]

(cont. on back)

## Rieta's Racing Ride



Rieta Simmonds, a longstanding Spokes member and ride leader, qualified for the Women's National 25 mile Time Trial Championship, held at Princethorpe College near Coventry on Sunday 4th June.

A group of Spokes cyclists led by Philip had an early start, riding to the venue to lend support and cheer her on.

Rieta was very pleased with her performance, finishing with a time of 1:14:17, a minute, and 20 seconds faster than her previous time; that's an average of over 20mph!

It was a warm sunny day, and a great day out for the cyclists, both competitors and supporters!





**Y**es pun lovers, it's time to ask why after a series of TV documentaries warning that the weather is getting so hot and dry that in 20 years time the polar ice caps will have melted, and although Londoners will have to develop gills, here in the Midlands we will be riding camels in a desert – yet on the recent Spokes weekend in the Wye Valley it rained almost continually for three days.

Graham had booked for 18 of us to stay at the youth hostel in Welsh Bicknor just south of Ross on Wye; and on the Saturday morning we had an easy two hour drive down in the dry until we turned off the A40 and passed thro the village of Goodrich to find the half mile lane leading to Welsh Bicknor.

The YHA website warned of a steep narrow access to the hostel and they weren't exaggerating. It was a deeply potholed and barely single width crumbling track down the side of a heavily wooded steep-sided valley to this former Victorian rectory, set above 25 acres of grounds alongside the River Wye, with views of the edge of Forest of Dean on the opposite bank and the nearby Victorian Church of St Margaret with its very individual architecture which was glimpsed and mentioned in the recent TV showing of the world's first colour film made by Claude Friese-Green on his 1926 tour of Great Britain.

The Wye was perhaps 100 yds away; and the intervening YHA parkland was available for camping and there were a couple of large permanent Red Indian Tee Pees which could be hired.

## Wye oh Wye oh Wye

by John Woodcraft

Two of our number had opted to arrive on the Friday night and camp, which was a decision they came to regret because there was a continuous downpour through the night which penetrated everything.

We arrived in late morning, unpacked our bikes and joined the others to set off back up the side of the valley and down the other side of the ridge into another valley of the same river which loops snake-like in this area.

We rode through a developing drizzle on a surfaced tourist trail by the river which was a fast flowing and swollen 50yd width, muddy brown from the previous two weeks of heavy rain. Bill commented to me on a spectacular rock he momentarily glimpsed through the tree canopy high up on the ridge but since the rest of group were fast disappearing into the trees ahead we didn't investigate further. Looking at Graham's map later I think he might have seen Symonds Yat Rock.

After about ten miles of fairly level riding we arrived at the outskirts of Monmouth and turned left on to the busy rain-washed main road to Chepstow. Luckily we only stayed on this for three miles before turning off on to a steep climb to the village of Newland where we refreshed with real ale and up-market bar snacks in the pub garden. By now the rain had stopped and we were off to a photo opportunity at Coleford (pictured below) and then into the Forest of Dean along surfaced tracks in the company of other cyclists and walkers and eventually came to a welcome tea stop and bike hire cabin at a crossroads deep in the forest.

On then for another three miles under the trees until we dropped down into Upper Lydbrook village. Then another two miles and along the valley side opposite Welsh Bicknor to where we crossed the river via a dodgy looking footbridge which was part of a derelict railway bridge and then along a short rough track back to the hostel.

In view of the remoteness of the hostel, we had elected to eat in the hostel restaurant which was staffed by very obliging young women. By chance it was my birthday and Mark had also recently had his but we were both very surprised after the meal to be each presented with a

candled birthday cake made by our multi-skilled leader Graham. Are there no end to his talents? Despite my age I managed to blow out the thirteen candles spelling Happy Birthday in one breath and at the same time splatter wax over the cake, the table, and nearby wineglasses, and I was picking wax spots off my own tracksuit top several days later.

Next morning the rain was unrelenting so several of us decided to explore by car, although a small expedition of masochists got on their bikes and rode off thro the rain (see box below). Even Rieta, who doesn't give up easily, opted to go walking!

In Chepstow, an old town which is on the Severn Estuary, we paid our £3 and in the rain walked round the very large ruined castle with its walls built into the banks of the river. After lunch the rain abated; and we drove back stopping to look at Tintern Abbey and nearby antique and book shops.

On the Monday morning, we were greeted by notes put under our doors by the hostel staff to say that the track to the hostel could not be used until further notice due to movement caused by the torrential rain the night before. Thankfully, the track was deemed okay, and we packed and vacated the hostel by the regulatory 10am, but left our cars in the hostel car park while we rode back up the ridge and

followed a country lane route to the old market town of Ross on Wye which is about six miles distant.

En route we took a slight detour to check out nearby Goodrich Castle and then the rains started again. In Ross we parked our bikes in the paved area under the shelter of the 350 yr old two storey Market House [www.wyenot.com/market.htm](http://www.wyenot.com/market.htm) which is apparently still in use but luckily not on Mondays. We managed to find a café that didn't look too posh for a group of wet cyclists and after a brief look around the attractive old centre we were off back towards Welsh Bicknor only to be caught by some more heavy downpours. Back at the hostel car park it was time to remember exactly how I had previously managed to dismantle and fit two bikes and two people's luggage inside the back of my Fiesta, but this time the bikes were coated with fresh wet mud. We spent most of the next two hours on motorways driving through some of the worst spray conditions I can remember and I was very relieved to see the sign for the M69 and Leicester. Just don't talk to me about droughts. □

*On this weekend, there were no less than three instances of bikes partly coming detached from roof cycle racks, which highlights the importance of ensuring that cycles are properly secured to car racks to ensure that they arrive undamaged.*



**O**n the Sunday, as the planned canoeing was cancelled due to the weather conditions, whilst most in the group opted to instead go sightseeing in cars or go walking, a small group of us led by Peter decided to cycle that day despite the rain and weather forecast.

It was very wet, though the weather was warm; and since we all had wet weather gear, we kept dry and had a lovely ride; though our gloves had to be wrung out every now and then, and overshoes weren't entirely effective at keeping our feet dry!

However, other people didn't seem want us to stay dry, and at one point on the ride Philip was drenched from head to toe by a passing black classic MG sports car.

Before lunch, we had the mother of all hills, an ascent which seemed to go on for miles, spectacular views were the reward.

When we stopped for lunch at a cafe in Tintern, who else would we bump into, but a meeting of classic MG car

owners, and no, we didn't let air out of the tyres! It was still raining when we finished lunch, but Liz shared some dark organic chocolate, which buoyed our spirits, and off we went.

Soon after lunch, the sun came out and it turned out to be a perfect end to the ride. As we approached the hostel via the railway bridge, we decided to stop there and have a little picnic and soak up the sun (photo below). Mark I.



THE ACHIEVERS: (from left) Mark Ingle, Peter Simmonds, Liz Scarborough, Christine Keene and Philip Draycott.



# Q&A

with John Woodcraft  
Membership Secretary

## At what age did you first start cycling?

Probably aged about 8 or 9 yrs. We lived on a council estate with privet hedges and I remember falling into them as I tried to learn to balance. Nowadays if I saw any child doing that into my hedge I would want them ASBO'd.

## What was your first bike?

A hand-me-down single gear ex-railway bike from my grandfather. I remember re-painting it with Humbrol in the small bedroom which I shared with my brother. The smell was intoxicating.

## What was/is your favourite bike?

A 1970s Hercules with an SA 3 speed hub bought secondhand in about 1990. It was very reliable once I had overhauled the hub gear. It did cause a certain amount of derision when I first took it on Spokes rides a few years later but it proved itself in solo rides across muddy fields and even on a trail over Dartmoor but eventually a knee problem, unconnected with cycling, convinced me to get a bike with DeRailleur gears, which also made me more socially acceptable.

## What has been your most memorable ride?

Probably the Spokes trip organised by Christine, to stay in a YHA near Daventry in 1998. It was only about 45 miles but with my luggage on the back of my Hercules it seemed quite strenuous. We were a mixed group but all had to sleep in one bunk-bedded family room about 12' x 10'. That first

To enable members to get know Spokes' committee members better, every issue we will be asking a member a set of questions.

This issue Ian Nightingale puts the questions to John Woodcraft, the current Leicester Spokes Membership Secretary.



night I felt very claustrophobic surrounded by eight comparative strangers in room slightly bigger than my normal bedroom but while I was thinking that perhaps I would have to sleep in the corridor suddenly it was morning and time to get up.

## What was the most unfortunate incident that you had on a bike?

This was not but could have been a most unfortunate incident. It was on the same trip as above when we cycled to Northampton for the day to watch a hot air Balloon Festival. Afterwards, when we

returned to our bikes, which we had locked to a metal crash barrier several hours earlier, we were accosted by a man who said he had found a key in the grass and wondered if it was ours. It was the key to my D Lock! I might have had to cycle back with a crash barrier on my shoulders.

## What piece of legislation would you bring in if you were minister for cycling?

It should be illegal for women in revealing clothes to walk near cycle paths on busy roads.

## What other hobbies do you have?

Avoiding housework, salsa dancing, listening to jazz.

## On Date Line how would you describe yourself?

Insensitive, irascible, impatient, interfering, intolerant, but kind to cats. □

On Easter Monday, a number of us met to ride out to the Hallaton Bottle Kicking. We rode to Great Glen, then the back road to Kibworth, Tur Langton, Cranoe, Hallaton. Returned by a more northerly (and hilly route) Tugby, Tilton on the Hill, Kings Norton, Stoughton.

I'd led a previous ride a couple of years ago to the Bottle Kicking and had missed another one in between; this time we had an excellent ride with patches of rain, though the main

reason for writing this is what happened during the two hours or so we stopped in Hallaton!

When we arrived, the pipe band (*bagpipes? in rural Leicestershire? perhaps best not to ask why*) was just finishing a performance on the green by the Buttercross, so like all good cyclists we went to the pub. But the Bewicke Arms was closed, with just a very packed beer tent on their car park.

Some riders, like all good cyclists, hadn't read the ride details so had brought no food. The usual "*herding cats*" sequence followed with various people deciding to go off and forage for lunch ..... or then deciding not to etc etc.

A parade, led by the pipe band, started more-or-less on time (*there was a timetable*) from the pub at the top of the village, with three big,

rugby-player type lads at the front, each carrying a small, painted wooden barrel at arm's length above his head (*quite a strenuous thing to have to do, as was obvious*). Also carried in the procession was a bag of bread rolls ("*penny loaves*") and a big, specially baked, decorated

meat pie (the Hare Pie). Various people were in medieval dress; and the village by now was very crowded.

The parade ended at the church steps, where the pie (*called Hare Pie but apparently for many years now made with beef*) was cut

up and most of it thrown to the crowd (*not sure what happened to the penny loaves*). This bit was called the Hare Pie Scramble and was very lively! A fair amount of the pie was put in a sack (yes, this is all true) to be used later.

The three wooden barrels (called bottles because they were "*field bottles*" ie what people drank from when they were working in the fields) were paraded to the Buttercross where they were carefully decorated with red, white and blue ribbons. Two of the barrels contain beer and the third, for some reason, is solid wood.

Then we all walked out of the village in a great crowd (*a fairly boozy crowd it has to be said*) to Hare Pie Bank which is a ridge between the villages of Hallaton and Medbourne.

## Hare Pie and No Rules

(or at least very few)

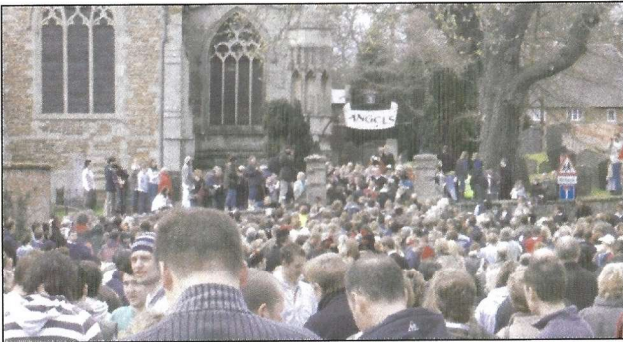
by Philip Draycott



• Arriving at Hallaton



Then It All Began. It starts in a slight hollow in a fairly ordinary corner of a field some way from the road (apparently the position of an early Christian chapel and probably a pre-Christian site before that). The remaining Hare Pie was spectacularly hurled from its sack across the fields. This certainly helps the feeling that this has links to pre-Christian rites to secure the fertility of the growing season to come. Hence it takes place each year in the Spring. Also the Hare has always been a deeply mystical animal in English pre-Christian beliefs (and is possibly the original of our current much safer and less pagan "Easter Bunny")



• **The hare pie scramble**

One of the barrels (bottles) was thrown in the air, it landed on the ground. This was done a second time, it landed again. When I saw this for the first time a few years ago, I'd thought nothing much was happening so I'd moved in to get a really close look. Not this time! I notice there are people sitting in the trees. The bottle goes up a third time and this time All Hell breaks loose. About 200 (maybe 300) men (and a few brave women) hurl themselves at the barrel and the "game" begins for real.

Each team (it's Hallaton vs Medbourne) tries to carry the barrel over one of two streams that lie between Hare Pie Bank and their own village. There are three barrels because the result is best of three. Sounds OK? Well, there is no limit to the size of the teams, though there are so many injuries each year that it has been suggested that there should be a limit on

numbers, but perhaps that wouldn't be the point. There are no boundaries to the area of play; it can and does spread over all the available fields and also there is no way of knowing who is on which side, except by which direction they seem to want to carry the barrel! Many people are in rugby shirts (local clubs plus lots of Tigers shirts) but there are no team colours. Apparently (according to the display at the small local Museum which we'd visited at lunchtime) the only real rules are no weapons, and that the barrel mustn't be carried in a vehicle! It's all just a huge, rolling, violent scrum which sways one way then another, various people limp out hurt (then usually turn round and rejoin) and sometimes a player breaks free with the barrel and attempts to sprint across the fields, over gates and through hedges towards their village. But carrying a fairly heavy barrel slows them down, so they're usually caught, the scrum gathers again and so on. It appears to be very violent and much enjoyed!

The first written record of all this was in the 1700's when it was already described as an ancient tradition, though it was somewhat different from nowadays (visit the Museum for more details, or various websites). So it does appear to be a genuine survival, not a revival, and also linked to the various versions of early village games which survive in Britain (often with no limit to team size and played between neighbouring villages on feast days) which eventually led to modern football. As a great British curiosity, the whole strange thing is much recommended, don't miss it next year!

We watched fairly amazed for a while then happily rode home. At the end the victorious team drinks the beer – which must be pretty unpalatable and shaken up by then!

Oh, and I think Medbourne won .... or was it Hallaton? □



• **Happy Spokes cyclists, though some pictured went without lunch!**

## Bottle-kicking

Source: Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Bottle Kicking is part of the ancient Leicestershire custom that takes place in the village of Hallaton each Easter Monday. It is a day of Sweat, Blood and lots of Beer.

It starts with a parade through the Villages of Medbourne and Hallaton with local people carrying a large hare pie and the three "bottles" (small kegs or barrels- two of which are filled with beer, one 'the dummy' solid wood making it lighter).

The pie is blessed by the Hallaton vicar before being cut and parts thrown to the crowd for the "scramble". The rest is placed in a sack to be carried up hare pie hill.

Next the barrels are taken to the Butter Cross on the village green to be dressed with ribbons. (The butter cross is a conical structure with a sphere on top, used for keeping butter and cheese cool when the village was a market town.) Here the Penny Loaves are distributed to the crowd, as was the pie.

It is worth mentioning here that this custom started when two ladies of the village (Hallaton that is) were saved from a raging bull by a hare which started, distracting it from the charge. They showed their gratitude - to God for sending the hare (the hare got a bit of a raw deal in this) by donating money to the church on the understanding that every easter monday the vicar would provide a hare pie, 12 penny loaves and 2 barrels of beer for the poor of the village.

It appears that the villagers would fight each other for the beer and at some point people from Medbourne (the next village) stole the beer, causing the Hallatonians to club together to bring it back to their village, thus beginning the village on village rivalry that still exists today. Newcomers often side with Medbourne on the grounds that they have to take the barrels further and through hedges- this is not a deliberate bias on the part of Hallaton- it's just because it was not intended to be a game.

There are virtually no rules to the Bottle Kicking- at 2pm the hare pie and barrels are tossed on the same place, a dip at the top of hare pie hill (possibly the site of an ancient temple) and after they have been thrown up three times the men pile on. The aim is to get the barrel across the river to your village by any means possible, it is played as a best of three. oh, and Gentleman's rules says no studs- steel toe caps are fine though.

Generally the scrum resembles something between a ruck and a maul, at the same time, with about 100 people. When the barrel breaks out and the scrum moves on there are usually a few men left lying on the ground and broken ribs are not uncommon.

Generally all kickers have several pints before joining in and people join and leave the scrum as they please, often to grab a quick drink from their family/friends who are close by with rucksacks of beer and water.

There is a hardcore of families from each of the two villages whose men fight it out from start to finish and for whom this day will bring shame or pride for the following year. (The winning village gets to keep a barrel on display in the pub while the losing village gets the brightly coloured dummy to hide away in a cupboard somewhere.)

After the battle is lost and won, the kickers and spectators descend back into the village. Those who have proved themselves in the fight by a good run/ carrying the bottle across the river etc. are helped up onto the top of the butter cross (which is about 10ft high) and the opened keg is thrown up for them to drink from before being passed around the crowd. An evening of drinking late into the night with 'friendly banter' between the teams concludes the day.

Bottle Kicking was continued through the world wars by the women of the villages who still occasionally get carried away and try to get too far into the scrum. To my knowledge it has only ever been cancelled due to the foot and mouth crisis, although in the 1700's a rector tried to ban the event.

### NEXT ISSUE:

**Please forward any contributions (photos, articles, letters, news, etc) to [markingle@fastmail.fm](mailto:markingle@fastmail.fm)**



# Abbreviated Minutes of 2006 Spokes AGM

held on Monday 24th April at Friends Meeting House

## Minutes of AGM 2005.

Copies of these were available and were accepted as being a true record .

## Officers Reports

Secretary/Membership Secy. John reported that 24 members were recruited on special deal of £1 at Abbey Pk Festival last year but none had since participated in club activities. Apart from these there were currently 58 paid up members compared with 68 last year. Treasurer. Ned said that income exceeded expenditure by £204 over the year to 31.01.06. Total balance in our Cheque account is currently £1269 (last year £927), and in our Deposit a/c £1039 (£1017). The improvement in our financial position was partly due to some generous donations, but mostly to the elimination of previous printing costs of 1000 copies per issue of our freely distributed Newsletter. As most of these were thought to be wasted we changed to an issue of 100, photocopied to members only.

## Election of Officers

Peter Simmonds resigned from webmaster. All others re-elected unopposed.

Chairman: Andy Tokeley

Treasurer: Ned Rice

Secretary/M'ship Sec. John Woodcraft

Webmaster: Andy Mackintosh

Committee: Liz Scarborough, Christine Keen, Philip Draycott, Ian Nightingale, Mark Ingle (Newsletter Ed), Tony Grayson. Others would be co-opted as necessary.

## Recruitment of new members

Ian Nightingale agreed to investigate producing Spokes business type cards to

hand to other cyclists encountered by members. It was suggested we try to get Spokes info into the "Link" magazine which is distributed to all City households. A change of policy was agreed on emailing of ride info to members. In future this would be a opt-out list instead of an opt-in list as currently. It was hoped that this might increase the numbers on rides.

## Spokes Newsletter

Mark Ingle has volunteered to continue as editor. Various members present agreed to provide material for the next issue asap. with Liz and Tony agreeing to assist.

Spokes financial support for promotion of Cycling There was a discussion on how best Spokes could achieve this and Ian proposed to investigate opportunities for doing this which also gained publicity for Spokes and brought in new members at the same time.

Camping Weekend. Peter Simmonds sent a message publicising a cycle/camping weekend that he was organising (now 1st, 2nd July) at a site near Coventry at Wolvey, distant about 25 miles from Leicester.

Website It was suggested to the new webmaster Andy Mack, that material older than say 18mths should be archived from main pages. He was also asked to update the list of tea rooms since several had closed.

Sunday Ride Leaders John W asked for volunteers to lead future rides.

AOB Christine showed a form for reporting to the Police, of bad driving by motorists who had endangered cyclists. This was unlikely to lead to a prosecution but if the Police subsequently questioned the motorist this might cause them to be more aware of cyclists.

*the remainder only when it was dark. They found that those using lights at all hours were 30 per cent less likely to be involved in an accident. The figure rose to 40 percent in the summer months.*

With the number of cyclists I see at night without lights, perhaps in the UK it would be better to concentrate on getting cyclists to wear bright/reflective clothing and use lights at nightb . -Ed

## Lights in Daytime?

Christine Keen forwarded a newsclipping from a national tabloid (Daily Mail, May 22, 2006), reporting that 'cyclists who use lights in the daylight cut the risk of an accident by a third, according to a Danish study.

'Danish researchers examined the accident records of 4,000 cyclists. Half were asked to use lights round the clock,

*I often have more ideas than I have time to carry through. I thought I would share a few that could become on-going projects, and ask for feedback from other members. If you are interested in any of these, either in participating or organising, please let me know as I'm happy to coordinate. Email is my preference: barnere@hotmail.com, but please feel free to phone: 0116 282 4977.*

## Elizabeth's Project List

by Elizabeth Barner

*Website for people looking to commute together / learn routes*

Often cyclists feel safer on the road when we feel visible, and visibility can be improved by people riding together.

To this end, I have

thought about establishing meeting points for people who commute around Leicester. I think meeting points could allow people new to cycling or to the city learn routes from those more experienced; offer sociability to commuters who might otherwise be solitary; and give cyclists a visible presence on the roads.

I'd like to talk to others who think this might be a good idea, or the basis for one, and to anyone who has suggestions for where to go from here:

Would the Spokes Website be a good place to establish meeting sites? How can we welcome new people who have questions about the easiest ways to get around the city and might like an initial guide? How can we reach other cyclists who know those routes?

If you are interested or have skills to share, please get in touch.

*Editor's Note: Also see news snippet on BikeBudi on back page.*

## Providing cycle parking

As part of making the city nicer for cyclists, Spokes offered cycle parking at a couple of events in the city last year. Also, could use some new members. Not that you aren't all wonderful, but the more people we are in contact with, the more opinions we hear about cycling in the city, the better we are able to answer questions put to us by city planners regarding the provision that best serves the casual cyclist in the city.

Cycle parking is a great place to meet new members. If you would be interested in volunteering, or know of an event at which you would especially like to have cycle parking, again, please let me know. With a show of interest, I would be happy to approach organisations about providing a bike baby-sitting service at events.

*Above are some of my thoughts. If you have ideas, please send them to the newsletter or by email. This feels like a vibrant time. Let's do what we can to improve cycling in the area by pooling our knowledge and ideas.* □

## Maintenance classes

One bright Saturday recently, I took my bicycle on the train to London. Riding across the city, with so many bus/bike lanes was exhilarating and very, very easy. It comes with my absolute recommendation. After the fall of night, the temperature drop of over 10 degrees and the rain, the puncture on Pentonville Road was the pits. That's where I learned that neither of the pumps I was carrying succeed in delivering air to the innertube. Back on the train, I learned that I had little black greasy circles all over my cheeks where I had checked whether the pumps tried to deliver air. I had a seat to myself, but...

Since I moved to Leicester, I've been interested in attending bicycle maintenance classes. I find that every time I attempt to change brake pads, adjust something such that the gears ALWAYS change when I push the little levers and NEVER change gear abruptly, throwing me onto the handlebars; really, any time I need to reattach the rear wheel, I end up taking my bicycle to someone with more knowledge and possibly infinite patience in order to fix (or correct) the last bit. I firmly believe that if my knowledge were greater, my patience would not have to be so stretched.

So, I have found people who have equipment, space and expertise to offer cycle maintenance classes, and I'm wondering if anyone else is interested. This would not be just a one-off session, but a series of classes to cover basic maintenance.

Please let me know:

- If you are interested
- What evening would be best for you, or if you would prefer a weekend
- What you would be prepared to pay per 2-hour session.

This last is just a guide so that I know what is reasonable to negotiate



## Mini Review - GPS Navigator

by Mark Ingle

I have never been particularly good at navigating, and maps are fiddly to work with when cycling, so I thought it would be worth getting a GPS navigator, which I could also use in the car. Cycling and walking specific GPSs are available, but because they do not store all the maps in memory, they can be quite inconvenient to use.

A colleague at work demonstrated his TomTom One (car) navigator, which is at the bottom of the range, and costs just over 200 pounds. I was impressed. However, the screen was very small\* and its shape does not lend itself to bicycle use, not to mention the lack of a cycle mounting bracket. TomTom have since come out with a newer range of navigators with larger wide screens though at much higher price points.

Then I saw an advert from Aldi supermarket for a Medion Navigator (MD 96800) for £170 and as this came with a bike mounting kit, I thought it could be ideal for me.

### Hardware - Screen / sound

The Navigator comes with a decent sized screen; in bright sunlight it can be difficult to read, though most have this issue. The volume of spoken directions is surprisingly loud and adequate. Assuming it gave good directions, one could even have it in a bar bag or coat pocket and hear the directions.

The Navigator comes with a useful transparent plastic rain cover; and as mentioned earlier, a bike mount is included. Unfortunately, the bike mount leaves a lot to be desired. It uses the same bracket as the car mounting kit, but the unit itself is only secured to the bracket with a spring clip; this may be suitable on smooth roads, but I was sufficiently concerned that it might become an expensive paperweight that I have not used the cycle bracket and instead it sits under the plastic enclosure on the top of my bar bag.

### User Friendliness

Compared to say the TomTom range of GPS navigators, I found the Navigator quite unintuitive. It is 'Windows-powered' which seems to be another way of saying that the user interface has not been well thought out, though once you get used to its quirks, it does the job adequately. A stylus is provided for input though there are a few buttons which operate the most common functions. As it's so inconvenient to keep on taking out the stylus, providing your fingers are small enough, you

can use them instead! Like the desktop version of Windows, the Navigator crashes, though not frequently enough to be annoying.

### Mapping

The Navigator has options for cars, motorcycles, bicycles, etc. When routing for cycling is selected, the Navigator does avoid the largest roads, but still seems to like busy roads. One can get by this by adding intermediate points to the route.

Oddly, the Navigator does not think that one way streets apply to cyclists (perhaps it expects the cyclist to get off and walk!).

No mapping is perfect, but by and large the mapping with is provided by Navteq, is pretty good. An example of an error I've spotted is that according to the map, there is no route from Burton Overy towards Carlton - some of the road just seems to be missing!

### Battery Life

The battery lasts a couple of hours, though on a longer ride this may not be enough. There is no auxiliary battery pack, but as the input voltage was 5volt, with a few bits from Maplin, I managed to make my own auxiliary battery pack using four rechargeable AA cells for less than a pound.

### Summary

The Medion Navigator is a useful tool at a good price; however, it is let down by clunky and unintuitive software. Although a bike mount is provided, this seems to be more a token offering.

Unfortunately, I can't find any other alternatives at this time that are more suited for both cycling and car use. There is the TomTom Rider which is designed for motorcycle use and is rugged and water resistant, so you would think that it would be ideal for bicycle use; however, the price at £400 is very steep and TomTom doesn't see cyclists as a potential market as there is no option for a bicycle mount.

The TomTom navigation software can be purchased for some Palm and Nokia (Symbian) phones along with a bluetooth GPS receiver; this may be worth considering for occasional use, though the small screen size is a drawback.

With technology moving so fast, hopefully in the next year there will be a suitable GPS navigator at a reasonable price that does all I need. □

# THE COUNTRYSIDE AND RIGHTS OF WAY ACT 2000

by Andy Tokeley.

This act has progressively covered the English countryside; late last year, it was completed. Leicestershire is in area seven [west], but Rutland is in area eight [east].

So what does this act mean for us?, what exactly is 'open access'? Does it mean we can just go where we like regardless of whether public rights of way exist or not? Can we stride across the countryside towards the horizon-just like the 'crow flies'? ... well in a word no!.

The act refers to registered common land, 'open country', which basically means-mountain-moor-heath; and down, and 'dedicated land', which is land given to open access by the landowner.

We can find out where these areas of open country are by visiting the Countryside Agency's website at [www.countryside.gov.uk/access/mapping](http://www.countryside.gov.uk/access/mapping) and follow the links to the particular area we're interested in.

This however highlighted the problem we have in Leicestershire, the website works by allowing us to feature an area and by following the colour coding it tells us whether it is 'open access' land or not; if the map comes up in yellow then it is but there are several other colours as well which describe various restrictions.

The trouble is that wherever we go on the webmaps of our county they are displayed in monochrome. When I checked with the Countryside Agency what this meant, they replied 'there's no access'. This is because Leicestershire, like so many other counties, is as we all know, intensively cultivated, it's either arable or is for grazing stock, or private woodland which puts it out of bounds to us unless a public right of way

already exists. If any areas do become accessible then we must remember that they can only be explored ON FOOT, yes no riding of bikes [or horses for that matter] in these new areas.

Is there then anything for cyclists particularly for those of us who enjoy 'off-roading'? Well to find out I pedalled up to County Hall one Friday to ask about 'definitive maps' &

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'permissive paths'. Unfortunately Friday is not a good day to find the right person in, is it, and this Friday was no exception; the person I needed to speak to was not available.

I did however get to meet a very helpful man in the highways dept who did his best to help me. I gave him the track through 'Gopsall Park as an example. many cyclists have used this track over the years without, as far as I know, any particular problems; but it has never been a public right of way. Is it now? I asked, but his

considered reply was no! it's still not. I gave him a few other examples but the answer was still the same - no!. I asked about old disused railway tracks.. surely these must be now available to us, but the answer was still the same - no!; I came away very disappointed.

The Ordnance Survey will be showing all 'open access' areas on it's 'Explorer' series of maps when new editions are published later-on this year, so it will be interesting to see if any significant areas of open access are included in the county.

In the meantime if we want to explore new areas we'll have to go to the 'Peak District' or the 'North York Moors' or the 'Lake District' or similar areas to get the best out of the new legislation, so it's on with the hiking boots and go north!. □