



Wire Wheels

Warrington Cycle Campaign Summer 2008 Newsletter

Stuck in the mud, but no stick-in-the-mud:
a message from your chairman, Chris Mayes

Culcheth May Day

Bank Holiday Monday 5 May saw the Warrington Cycle Campaign (WCC) go to Culcheth for the first time. Your chairman arrived at the village green with the gazebo and display, and his heart sank; well, his feet did anyway, into about 15cm (that's 6 inches for imperialists) of mud! He quickly found an organiser (recognisable by being prepared and wearing wellies) who directed us to one of the drier parts of the field, where we set up our stand. The weather for a Bank Holiday was surprisingly co-operative, with only a light shower or 2 so the field got no worse and soon the crowds began to roll up for a thoroughly enjoyable day.

There was immediate embarrassment as all our early enquiries came from people living in Glazebury and we realised that Glazebury was not even featured on the Warrington Cycle Map that we were busily giving away. This is something that we must consider at the next Cycle Forum Meeting and try to get sorted for future editions of the map. There is space if we get rid of one of the pictures. We appreciate that Glazebury is not the only omission.

Lorries in Glazebury

One thing that the people of Glazebury were concerned about was the number of lorries using their main road and frightening cyclists off the road. They suggested that the lorries were going to one destination, an employer in Glazebury. This might be easily fixed if

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**Happy 10th
birthday,
WCC!
1998-2008**



we are able to meet the haulage company and ask them to let their drivers know that they need to be more considerate. Lorry drivers are professional people but probably have not even considered how it feels to be overtaken! I think it probable that they will be happy to modify their driving so close to base to give more consideration to their neighbours. The company may even be able to use their actions to negotiate an insurance premium reduction as did our local bus company!

National Cycle Campaign Network Conference

On 10 May, Rod King and Chris Mayes went down to Cambridge to represent the WCC at the National Cycle Campaign Network (CCN) Conference and AGM. Rod is on the committee and has worked hard with other CCN officers to produce a business plan to reinvigorate the national body. The AGM agreed the plan, and CCN is now to be rebranded as CycleNation amongst other changes.

Cycling Demonstration Towns

One of the presenters in the Cambridge Conference was Philip Darnton, the boss of Cycling England. He spoke about the way that money was to be awarded for the Cycling Demonstration Towns (CDTs), rewarding with some government cash those towns and cities who are pushing ahead the cycling agenda. It was with some relief that we learnt that Warrington was not successful in its bid to become a CDT. The relief is because it means that other bids must have been better than Warrington's. WCC actually (although rather grudgingly) supported the bid by Warrington Borough Council (WBC). It contained some reasonable goals on cycle training and town-centre access; and, as council tax payers, we really do not want to stop WBC getting money from central government. Predictably, however, WBC has blown the opportunity of getting this cash by putting in an unimaginative and lacklustre bid. Until WBC realises that it has to start putting real effort into giving its citizens and children back a town in which they feel safe to walk and ride, we are never going to get the benefits of improvements in our quality of life, our health, or a reduction in the pollution that we are producing as we sacrifice everything to the motor car.

The future: modal shift is required

Losing one government grant will be nothing when compared to losing Warrington's economic competitiveness to mainland Europe when the squeeze on cheap fuel for motor transport occurs. Cheap transport has been the underlying assumption of new-town planning and it has worked reasonably so far. The world is changing, however: almost every day, the media are running climate-change panic stories and it is only a matter of time before government (reluctantly) has to do something to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. One of the easiest ways of doing this will be by making fuel more expensive and governments rarely need

an excuse to increase our taxes. The towns and cities that have taken the opportunity to adapt and reduce their reliance on motor transport will have the competitive edge and Warrington has got to start acting NOW if it does not want to be left behind. WBC can justly take credit for improvements to the town's buses that it has achieved over that last decade, but it is now time to put the movement of people as pedestrians and cyclists at the hub of its policies. We have had the token policies giving cyclists and pedestrians priority in the past. Council officers, though, have been given the nod and the wink to ignore these and to get on and build roads for cars as usual. The world has changed; we are no longer in the 1970s and it is time to realise that roads are to allow people to go about their daily lives. Cars certainly have a part to play in our lives but we, as people, must reclaim priority on our streets, and WBC must seize the opportunity and provide more than a token effort to realise this. If they fail, Warrington will lose out economically.



This year's Bike Week saw WCC organise 4 local bike rides. One advantage of this festival is that WCC can, for one week anyway, relax and think about riding purely for the pleasure of the experience. For 8 days we forget trying to sort out the mess that has been created for cyclists and pedestrians during decades of neglect as people and their quality of life have been ignored so that cars can go faster for longer distances.

Our Bike Week rides comprised a repeat of David Mitchell's popular Canal and Mosses Meander, and 3 great rides organised by Jack Houlston – from Orford to Pestfurlong Hill, from Winwick to Walton Hall, and a Mystery and History ride. All were well received, and we hope to include reports and photos in a future newsletter. I was privileged to participate in the Orford to Pestfurlong Hill, and Winwick to Walton Hall rides, discovering, through the latter, parts of South Warrington I never knew existed and only hope I can find again!

WCC hosts national conference

Our latest exciting news is that WCC will be hosting the Autumn 2008 CTC/CycleNation conference – provisional date 15 November. Planning is at its early stages as *Wire Wheels* goes to press, but watch our website for confirmation of the date, more details of venue and programme, and appeals for your help in organising this prestigious event.

Donations, please!

That almost ends the Chairman's rant for this newsletter except that talk of economics reminds me we are spending our reserves of money in producing the high-quality document you are now reading. If you can afford it, please do send us a donation (£5 is suggested) for campaigning in the coming year. Many thanks.

Enjoy your cycling this summer.

10 years ago

As we reported in the last newsletter, WCC is 10 years old this year. A sift through some of the original paperwork (preserved well by our well-preserved membership officer, Maurice Leslie) reveals this portentous statement from Ben Lukey:

'I've been so bold as to call [the first meeting] a "Warrington Cycle Campaign Meeting". I would like...our first act to be to decide our aims, and perhaps to think of a name for ourselves if we are to be an ongoing group.'

The rest, as they say, is history!

Best practice in cycle parking

There are many styles of cycle parking available. The best is generally thought to be the simple Sheffield (inverted U-shaped) stand. This gives good support, is secure, and has multiple locking points. It is cheap and flexible, and works for all styles of bike.

You can read about the quality of cycle parking Warrington Borough Council now expects in new developments at http://www.warrington.gov.uk/Images/Cycle%20Parking%20PAN_tcm31-22837.pdf.

It makes you think...

A thought for the day

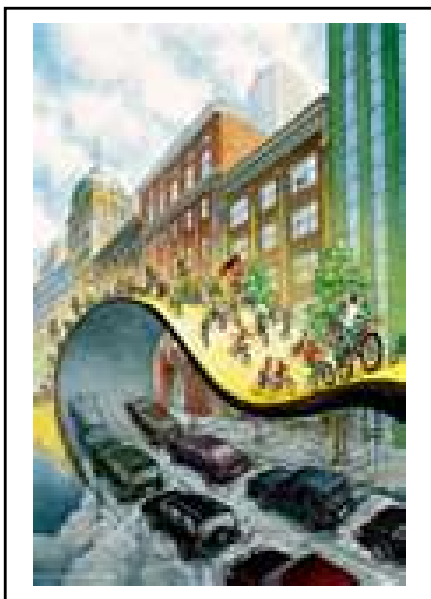
It is considered socially acceptable for a motorist to drive a car onto the pavement and park there blocking it. However, it is totally unacceptable to park a car on the road in such a way as to block the driveway access to someone's house. If manners reflect the health of a society, what does this reveal about our nation? (Chris Mayes)

A letter to *The Times*

Can someone please explain to me why some of us applaud the grace, talent and sheer guts of our world beating cyclists when viewed through a television screen, but despise, ridicule and hunt other cyclists when they display the same qualities through a windscreen? (Roy Spilsbury)

We're not stopping traffic; we are traffic!

Jonathan Wood reflects on his experience of Critical Mass



Having turned my attention to studying Critical Mass recently, I decided to join the monthly ride in Manchester on 29 February. When we mix in cycle campaigning circles, the demographic of white elderly eccentric men [ahem, Ed] does little to build confidence in the future health of cycling advocacy. But a Critical Mass ride brings out the young radicals who want to ride together because they can. It has no leaders. There are a few general rules but that's it. According to the manual (the very entertaining *Critical Mass - Bicycling's Defiant Celebration*, edited by Chris Carlsson, AK Press, 2002 – the cover picture's on the left), Critical Mass cannot be defined or ascribed motives or messages: it is what you see in it. Its great

benefit is that it breeds cycling radicals and activists. It constitutes the opposite end of the spectrum of activism to the cycle campaigners who do the proxy work of the Institute of Advanced Motorists in their 'Stop at Red' campaigns. Whilst beyond the scope of this piece, I think the latter campaigning constitutes supplication; no movement for social change in history has ever achieved change by trying to make itself likeable.

I went straight from work, wearing office work clothes. After a brief browsing visit to Harry Halls, I got to the Central Library just before 6pm. There were 3 of us. We exchanged pleasantries and I realised the others were earnest young men of the type who would be dependable in difficult circumstances, who might fit well into HM special forces if they weren't instead engaged on the right side of the struggle for a better world. The meeting time was 6pm but the last of 50 or so arrived nearer to 6.30pm. Novices were gathered together and instructed with the ideal that we were to smile and wave and not take up more road lanes than we needed. It was not to last, although the militants were probably not the novices. I was the only one in a suit, and I enjoyed the plaudits for *Crap Cycle Lanes* although it was evident that the messages of CycleNation were not generally known: these were people who ride bikes, not the knowledgeable cycle campaigners I'm used to.

We set off from the Library down Cross Street and then clockwise through the east side of the city back towards Piccadilly. It was an exhilarating experience, riding slowly with a large pack of cyclists, with a Boombox in a bike trailer towed by Martin playing, amongst other music,

The Smiths. At junctions where the light changed with some of us across, riders would 'cork' the junction to allow safe passage for the Mass. In some places young men would lean on their car horns, only to be met with a cacophony of bicycle bells from people wearing signs such as 'Honk if you like bikes!' Some pedestrians cheered, some swore at us, and one radical thinker shouted 'Pay road tax!' (which might be an irritating comment since most of us do pay – we hold driving licences, but choose to ride instead). Having set off late, we'd missed the heavy homebound traffic, but by taking over the Mancunian Way up to its junction with Princess Road, we encountered a lot of traffic and led a procession of vehicles at about 12 mph up to the roundabout, which we rode around twice. Where a gap opened in the Mass, occasional vehicles raced through. I was reminded of a story of a Mass in America where an SUV driver managed to get past, stop, get out and shout 'What the hell do you think you're doing?', to the reply 'We're riding bicycles.' He got back in his car.

Riding on the big road was a creepy experience – at the same time weird and exhilarating, to take over the dual carriageway, and nobody behind us honked. One of the notable points where the motorists didn't express frustration was here where they would normally be going fast, or occasionally crawling due to a crash brought about quite often by human error at excessive speed.

Of course, the ride was in the dark, on a windy, squally night, with most of the traffic gone home, so little opportunity to hand out flyers. After about 2 circuits of town, taking about an hour, we took over Oxford Road heading south towards Rusholme and the after-ride party. By the university, we'd stopped for a pedestrian red light, to be overtaken by a young man in a hatchback shouting abuse. He went through on red and cannot have known for sure that there was no pedestrian on the crossing, an immensely careless act. The bike messengers chased him down 2 sets of lights and about half a mile later surrounded his car to explain to him that his behaviour was beyond the pale. I believe he was suitably chastened and sent home with plenty to reflect upon. My co-riders said that was the worst act by a motorist during the Mass in recent memory.

The party was great and I returned on the train after a most invigorating and revitalising evening amongst the inspiring bike people of Manchester. I will return with more comrades.

I am a critical mass!

When just one man turned up for the Stuttgart Critical Mass ride, a policeman asked him what he would do if no-one else arrived. 10 minutes later, no-one had but undeterred, Michael Humphries proclaimed in his best German: 'Ich bin eine kritische Masse!' and completed the route with full police escort.

Fave facility: Sainsbury's welcomes careful cyclists

Webmaster Pete Owens chooses his favourite
'facility of the month' from our website



In their eagerness to compete for the spending power of Southwark's cyclists, Sainsbury's have provided this convenient short cut for cyclists wishing to shop at their store at Dog Kennel Hill, East Dulwich.

From a letter to *The Times* (11 May 2008)

'Trying to solve congestion by building new roads is like trying to prevent obesity by buying bigger trousers — why not get cycling instead?'

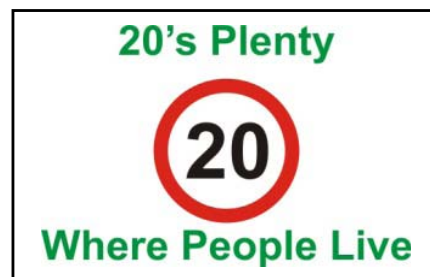
Roger Geffen,
Campaigns & Policy
Manager
CTC, the national
cyclists' organisation

Cycle responder group

Thanks to WCC member Alison Williams for letting us know that Cheshire St John Ambulance has set up a cycle responder group. Alison reports: 'We are all fully trained first aiders and the bikes carry full emergency kit including oxygen and defibrillator. We attend public gatherings where we are on hand to administer first aid in an emergency. The advantage of being on a bike rather than in an ambulance is the speed at which we can respond in a crowded situation. Also we can follow runners or walkers over rough terrain.'

20's Plenty by 2010

Major campaign launched for all towns and cities to set 20mph as the default speed limit for residential roads by 2010



With Portsmouth already the first city in the country to implement 20 mph on nearly all its residential roads, this is being followed by Norwich and Oxford who have decided upon similar proposals. At the same time, many other local authorities are considering how they can use the recent changes in government guidelines on setting speed limits to allow them to do the same on their residential roads without using physical calming.

By focussing on residential roads for 20 mph across the whole authority and leaving arterial roads to be set at higher speeds where the traffic authority deems it safe, this scheme maximises the benefits for all road users on the streets. With most residents being within 1/3 mile of an arterial road, then journey times increase by just a few seconds at most.

As it becomes clear that the vast majority of people in the UK want 20 mph limits for residential roads, 20's Plenty For Us (www.20splentyforus.org.uk) is calling on all communities to press for 20 mph as the default in their local authority for residential streets. It wants to see the majority of councils making this move by 2010.

In order to highlight this, 20's Plenty For Us is adopting 20th October (20/10) as a day of action for communities to bring to their councils' attention the benefits to quality of life which come from this move. Rod King, founder of 20's Plenty For Us said: 'Lower speeds have only a marginal effect on journey times, yet create a quieter street with less pollution and far greater safety for vulnerable road users. At 20 mph our streets become community public spaces where all road users can benefit from equitably interacting and sharing the road. Most people support 20 mph for residential streets and we now need local authorities to respond to that demand and changing culture to provide a safe environment for their children and adults to walk and cycle as well as drive.'

A Transport Research Laboratory study of 250 20mph zones across Britain found that crashes fell by 60%, child casualties by 67%, and average speeds by 9mph.

'We are calling for all local authorities to introduce 20's Plenty by 2010, and 20 October each year will become our day for community action.'

***Crap Cycle Lanes* continues to fly off the shelves**

This book, inspired by the Facility of the Month feature on our website, continues to sell well. We sold 4,661 copies from the first print run of 5,000 before Christmas, raising £1,051.19 in royalties. Rod King presented this sum to Shivaji Shiva of the Cyclists' Defence Fund at the CTC Annual Dinner in Stormont, Belfast on 26 April (see photo below).



10,000 more copies have now been printed and distributed to bookshops. Here's what a couple of Amazon reviewers thought of our masterpiece:

'This book evaluates many cycle facilities in Britain for safety and ease of use. Facilities featured include lanes 6 inches wide, 10 feet long, blocked by a phone box, ending in the middle of a busy junction, or just have a sign designed to decapitate unwary riders.

'On a more serious note, it highlights how poor cycle facilities are in general, and supports the Cycling Defence Fund [sic].

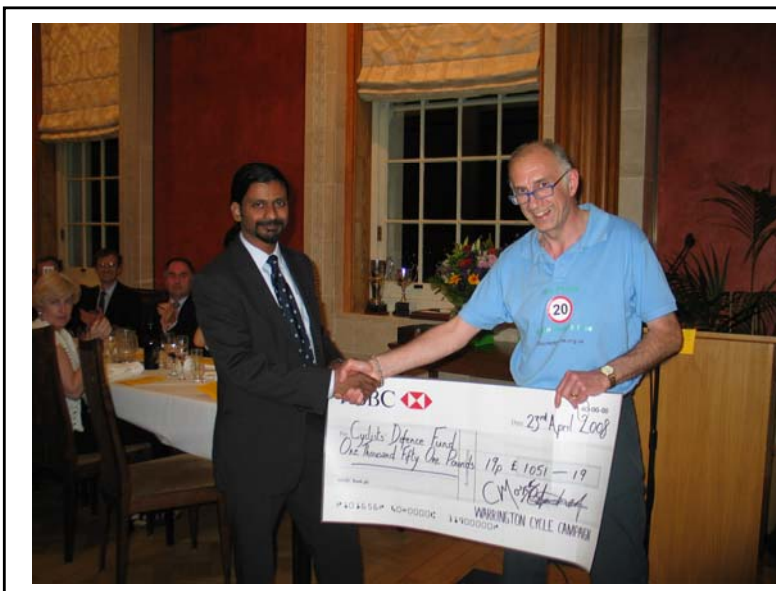
'This book is a must for all cyclists and road traffic engineers, and anyone who wants a laugh.' (M Dann)

'Very amusing book showing extreme examples of poor cycle facilities.

'Sadly if you cycle in British cities regularly you will have come across

cycle paths along similar lines where local authority transport departments have not consulted cyclists, tried to save money or added in cycle facilities as an afterthought. This book could be distributed to local authority officials and councillors as an example of what to avoid as it details all the main problems.

'Only slight annoying thing about the book is the American spelling used.'



(Lukee, London – not our own Ben Lukey, we presume) [Think the Big Apple must've gone to our head, Ed.]

Cycling and Health

In the last newsletter, we mentioned this excellent report produced by Cycling England. And we promised we'd publish various interesting facts and figures about cycling and health in future issues of *Wire Wheels*. Here Jonathan Wood presents some selected facts and figures that we hope you'll find interesting.

Safety

One of the barriers to taking up cycling is a perception of the physical danger posed by motor traffic. However, the real risks are minimal and, the research suggests, are outweighed by the health benefits by a factor of around 20 to 1.¹ It may be more risky to your health to be sedentary.

A commuter cyclist riding for an hour per day at moderate pace burns 3000 calories per working week of 5 days. This is equivalent to the energy in one pound of gelatinous off-yellow cellulite body fat. Therefore, eating at the same rate and not doing the cycling, you would gain 3.5 stone per year, and eventually end up with strangers trying to help you back into the sea on a family trip to the beach, having mistaken you for a beached whale.

A UK study of non-exercisers who agreed to take up cycling on at least 4 days a week found that the greatest benefits were near the beginning of the intervention, and the more the volunteers cycled, the fitter they became. Body fat was also significantly reduced among most of those of the volunteers who were overweight or obese at the outset (59% of volunteers). The extent of the fat loss, typically 2–3kg of fat mass over the period of the trial, meant that they should have achieved a change in energy balance, making it easier for them to control their weight while they continued to cycle.²

The study also reported attitudinal changes which included perceptions of wellbeing, self confidence and tolerance to stress, which all rose. In addition, the reporting of tiredness, difficulties with sleep and a range of medical symptoms declined. I hope none of that is news to any of our readers, except the point about changed energy balance is interesting.

Social support and inclusion

High levels of motor traffic can increase the extent to which people are cut off from essential facilities and services, including shops, health facilities, parks and friends and family. Ease of access to friends and social support is important as social support networks are known to protect health, with one study showing that a lack of social support can

increase mortality from coronary heart disease by up to 4 times.³ So high car dependency is a 'double whammy' for your heart.

Increased play and activity opportunities for children

While the Department of Health recommends that all young people should participate in physical activity of at least moderate intensity for one hour per day, research notes that 40% of boys and 60% of girls do not undertake this on most days of the week.⁴

Risk to other road users

An important note with regard to the balance of risks and benefits from cycling is that cycling is an extremely safe activity in terms of the risk that cyclists present to other road users. Only around 3–7 third parties are killed per year in fatal bicycle crashes, compared to 1,600 third parties killed in fatal car crashes. This is an important issue for public health professionals, who should be considering the impact of transport policies on overall public health. (Call me old-fashioned if you like, but it seems to me that when 'public health professionals' are effectively encouraged to drive to work by getting staff car parking as a matter of course, transport mode choice is probably not going to drive them to cover the barricades on behalf of other people. Hopefully I'm wrong, perhaps they're far more energetic and passionate than they have so far shown?)

Cycling England describes itself as the 'independent, national expert body charged by Government with delivering programmes that get more people cycling, more safely, more often'. I describe it as a quango; we should beware of reliance on officially sanctioned advice. Let's get out and give them something to talk about!

References

- 1 Hillman, M. (1992). Cycling and the promotion of health, PTRC 20th Summer Annual Meeting, Proceedings of Seminar B, pp. 25-36
- 2 Boyd, H., Hillman, M., Nevill, A., Pearce, A. and Tuxworth, B. (1998). Health-related effects of regular cycling on a sample of previous non-exercisers, Resume of main findings
- 3 Greenwood, D., Muir, K., Packham, C. and Madeley, R. (1996). Coronary heart disease: a review of the role of psychosocial stress and social support, *Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 18, pp. 221-231
- 4 Department of Health, (2000). National diet and nutrition survey: young people aged 4 to 18 years. The Stationery Office, London.

Dates for your diary

- Provisional date for the **CTC/CycleNation autumn conference**: 15 November. See our website for more information as it emerges.
- **WCC meets** once a month at 7.30pm, at the Quaker Meeting House, Warrington. All members welcome! See our website for dates.
- **Warrington Cycle Forum** meets monthly too: its website is about to be updated and will then include future dates. Please visit <http://www.warrington.gov.uk/warringtoncycleforum/>.

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Visit our website at

<http://www.warringtoncyclecampaign.co.uk/> for lots more info and cycling-related links!

We've decided it's more practical to publish our newsletter every 4 months (instead of quarterly) – in March (Spring issue), July (Summer), and November (Autumn/Winter).

What topics would you like to see covered? Would you like to write for us or contribute some cycle-related news or info? Email Sarah at newsletter@WarringtonCycleCampaign.co.uk with your views and ideas.