

SPOKES holds regular rides on the first Sunday of most months. Everyone is welcome, including non-members. Children under 16 must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

● We aim to integrate bikes and trains by starting and finishing our rides at or near railway stations.

● We have taken every care to ensure that ride details given here are correct at time of printing but you may wish to check with the leader by phoning before travelling.

● You are advised to wear protective equipment, such as a cycle helmet, and wear warm clothing in cold weather. On longer rides, there will usually be refreshment stops but please bring a drink and some food with you. You should ensure your bike is in a safe, roadworthy condition before setting out.

● SPOKES and its members accept no liability for any accident or loss – please note that you attend a cycle ride at your own risk.

● Details of East Kent CTC rides from Lorna on 01304 832492, South Kent CTC, from Mick on 01233 625414.

● Kent section Veteran Cycle Club rides, contact Dave on 01892 722584. For East Kent Cycling Club rides contact Jack Cole on 01843 592577.

● White Cliffs and Romney Marsh Countryside Projects regularly organise cycle rides throughout South Kent. Call 01304 241806 or 01303 274806 for details and ask for a comprehensive guided walks leaflet.

SPOKES GREEN TRAVEL EVENING  
Wednesday 5th December

Pfizer Transport and Planning Manager John Elliot will discuss how Pfizer has reduced traffic around its Sandwich site and encouraged staff to leave their cars at home. The Environment Centre, 5t Alphege Lane, Canterbury, 7pm for 7.30pm.

Williams and Mick Ritchie 0208 3015428.

**A TOUR OF TUDOR KENT**  
Sunday 2nd December

A ride with a difference! This will be new cycling ground for most of us. Meet at Hillendborough Station at 10.30 for a less than twenty miles tour of some of the Tudor landscape and buildings of Kent. Stops enroute as usual. Full details from ride leaders Ray Williams and Mick Ritchie 0208 3015428.

**ELHAM VALLEY FIREWORKS**  
Sunday 4th November

A pre winter warmer. Join Tim (and perhaps Gail & Joshua) for a pleasant but possibly chilly ride through Elham valley and surrounding country. All country lanes with some hills once we get out of Canterbury. Meet at Canterbury West Station at 10.45am for approx 25 miles of scenic Autumnal views and Pubs with log fires. Picnic lunch for the brave or eat at the pub. Details Tim 01227 367422.

**MARSH MEANDER**  
Sunday 3rd February

Join Chris Anthony for approx 20 miles of pleasant riding around the marshes. Should be quite easy going with only a few slight hills. NB the Rides Coordinator's definition of slight is final and not negotiable. Meet at Ashford station at 10.30am. Further details from Chris on 01233 630142.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM HERNE BAY**  
Sunday 13th January 2001

A circular tour from Herne Bay to Whitstable to Canterbury then to Forde/Whitstable and back to Herne Bay. Meet at Herne Bay Station at 10.30am or at Whitstable Station (London side) at 11.30. If you wish you can join us at Canterbury (approx 12.30 at Julie's Cafe, North Lane) or even at Fordwich at 13.30! We should be back at Herne Bay no later than 4pm. My guess is twenty four miles in total. Details from Tim 01227 367422.

**WESTHANGER CASTLE**  
Sunday 31st March

Advanced notice of this ride which will include a guided tour of Westhanger Castle. Numbers will be limited to 25 on a first come first served basis. Contact Sheila Webb for further details on 01227 738296.

**RIDES AND RIDE LEADERS**

We need your help for Spring, please do not leave it to the usual volunteers because the more leaders we have the greater variety of rides we can offer. If you have any ideas please call Gail or Tim on 01227 367422.

**Did you keep your promise to join us?**

Very so often a cyclist contacts Spokes with a tale of woe. Somehow, somewhere they have been involved in an accident, fallen down a pothole, been hit by a car or worse. They start by saying they are not Spokes members, but can we help? We always try our best, asking if they are CTC members. But then if they were they wouldn't contact us in the first place. They tell us they have taken the car number, may even have a witness but the mobile number the driver gave never answers when they ring and the police aren't really interested. So what should they do?

Every cyclist should be a member of the CTC, which will provide legal advice and possibly legal aid in the case of an accident. Spokes cannot do this. We are a purely voluntary group running largely on goodwill and enthusiasm. We think every serious cyclist in East Kent should be a member of Spokes which was set up to promote cycling in East Kent. We have been very successful, but the more members we have, the greater our voice. So if you contacted us over the last few months with a plea for help which we gave and a promise to join, have you done so yet?

CTC, 69 Meadow, Godalming GU7 3HS www.ctc.org.uk

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## Young cyclist wins crash case against insurance bully boys

In our summer issue 28 we reported the case of Darren Coombes who was severely brain damaged when he was hit by a VW Golf while riding in a cycle lane on the Isle of Wight in May 1997.

The driver denied responsibility and Provident, her insurers, initially threatened to counter sue Darren's parents and the child minder looking after Darren.

They claimed Darren should have been wearing a helmet and should not have been unsupervised. Judge Anthony Thompson QC heard the case at Winchester Crown Court brought by Darren's parents on behalf of their son in October. Originally the police had refused to prosecute.

There were two eyewitnesses, a van driver and a pedestrian. The van driver said Darren had cycled into the main carriageway and into the path of the car. The judge concluded that the pedestrian was telling the truth when she said the car had struck Darren after drifting into a bus lay-by next to the junction from which Darren had cycled. Although the police said her evidence did not "fit in" with their view of events the judge clearly did not believe them.

The judge said it was "extremely strange that (the driver) did not see the bike before she heard the collision...and it is extremely difficult to place great reliance on her evidence that the impact was on the carriageway." Of the van driver he said, "his account today did not tally and was at variance with the account given in his statement after the accident." He said the pedestrian was "a reliable witness whose account was the most cogent." The judge dismissed most of the police evidence as "opinion evidence" and refused the defence leave to appeal.

After the case, Trevor Coombes said: "I am dumfounded. This proves we have been telling the truth all along. Why should big companies be allowed to use bully boy tactics like this?"

"Cyclists always get it in the neck and as a professional coach driver I know how vulnerable cyclists are. Hopefully now they will be safer on the roads. I'm glad it's all over. Now we can concentrate on looking after Darren and making sure he is financially secure for the rest of his life."

The case reached prominence through the CTC and the national press when cyclists besieged Provident Insurance with complaints and threats to take their business elsewhere. The CTC have set up the Cyclists' Defence Fund to fight just the type of adverse legal precedents Provident Insurance tried to bring about.

Thanks to all Spokes members who wrote to Provident Insurance on behalf of Darren.

SAM WEBB

To advertise in this newsletter, please call Tim Perks on 01227 367422, email [gaileyrichardson@cs.com](mailto:gaileyrichardson@cs.com)

**Julie's Cafe** Breakfasts, lunches, snacks, grills, sandwiches, hot & cold drinks, eat in or take away

**The Den**  
12 North Lane, Canterbury, (opposite car park)  
Open Mon to Fri 6.45am-3pm  
Saturday 6.45am-3pm  
Sunday 8.45am-3pm  
Plenty of room to put your bikes down side of shop  
Tel 01227 781528

**The Fordwich Arms**

King Street, Fordwich, Canterbury  
Tel 01227 710444  
Sue & Sean O'Donnell welcome you to a traditional English pub serving good food and cask ales  
Beer garden A la carte restaurant  
Welcomes cyclists to the smallest town on the longest route

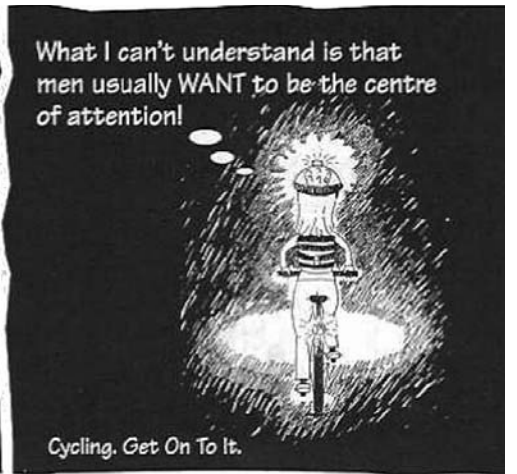
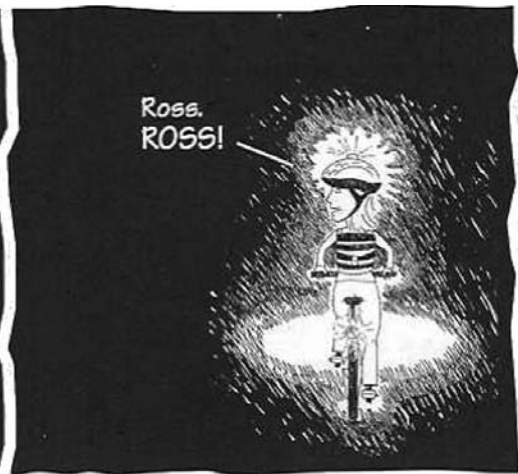
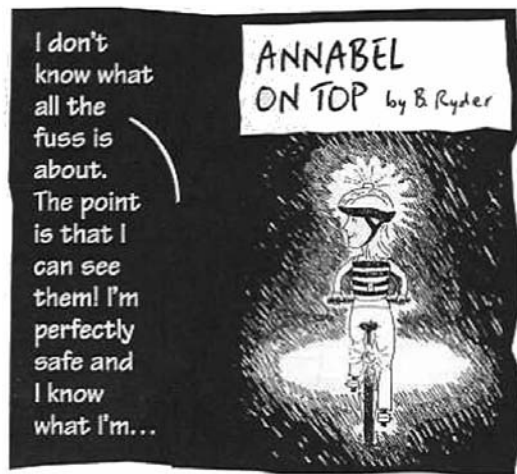
**The Coastguard Pub Restaurant**  
[www.thecoastguard.co.uk](http://www.thecoastguard.co.uk)

Between the bottom of the hill and the deep blue sea

A warm welcome to cyclists in Britain's nearest pub to France.

Near the end of route 16

**St. Margaret's Bay**  
Tel: 01304 853176  
**LARGE BICYCLE PARK - FREEHOUSE**



## The dark – it's the place to be seen

**T**reat darkness with respect and you can still get about on your bike and even learn to enjoy it. Understanding different types of lights and clothes can help you survive.

### Lights – you can never have enough!

A good dynamo system on your bike means that a light is always with you. If you have a regular commute, so know how long it takes, the powerful rechargeable lighting systems are very good – they are so bright you need to be careful not to blind oncoming traffic and you can see the road clearly where there are no street lights.

Simple battery lights aren't suitable for regular use.

LED lights – Great as backup to the main

lights but not for use on their own – if you want to be 'naughty' and use them in the flashing mode make sure you have other lights as well.

To meet British standard, and therefore be legal to use on its own, the red light must be clearly visible from the sides as well as the rear.

### Clothing – make it bright!

Fluorescent yellow shows up well at dawn and dusk but not in the dark. For that you need reflective areas which catch the light from other vehicles. Consider investing in a Spokes hi-visibility waistcoat - see ad on back page. Running shoes which have reflective patches on the heels work well in showing the up and down motions of your feet to say that you are a cyclist.

### The bike – as reliable as possible

Your bike should not let you down, make sure it's in good working order with good tyres and brakes and keep it like that all winter.

You may find you get to like riding at night – it can be very peaceful under the stars, your senses become heightened and all kinds of wildlife can be encountered – but these are more likely to be summer pleasures to look forward to.

## News in brief ...

### Bike Week 2002

The provisional dates for next year's National "Celebration of Cycling" are 15th to 23rd June, with Bike2Work running for the whole week. Further details will appear on [www.spokeseastkent.org.uk](http://www.spokeseastkent.org.uk)

### Webnews

As we go to press KCC's new cycling website has been given a selected airing and sent out for comment. Initial views are that it is excellent and it will provide a considerable boost to cycling in East Kent. It will be linked to [www.spokeseastkent.org.uk](http://www.spokeseastkent.org.uk)

### The National Walk to School campaign dates for next year are:

Summer Walk to School Week: 20th-24th May 2002  
International Walk to School Day: Wednesday 2nd October 2002  
Autumn Walk to School Week: TBA but likely to be same week as the International Event.

## Operation allows Mike to get his leg over once more!

I just could not get my leg over', my days of cycling were at an end. At 58 I was planning on at least another 20 odd years. This was three years ago and my trusty tourer was consigned to the garden shed – for ever, I thought.

Osteoarthritis had a firm grip on my life, my close friends now became a walking stick, whisky and paracetamol, supplemented with memories of cycling the Ring of Kerry, the Tarka Trail in North Devon, the tow path of the Kennet and Avon canal and the annual Great Dorset Bike Ride. My dream of cycling to Provence in France, was still a dream.

The inevitable happened last September, I had a total hip replacement. Amazingly, shortly after that, the stick found a new friend and I forgot how to spell paracetamol, however whisky is still my friend, but most important, I excavated my tourer from the shed. What changed everything

was a letter from my old cycling buddy who had the same operation as myself and was cycling again without any difficulty. After swapping notes about support stockings, stitches, zimmer frames and district nurses, I made a concentrated effort to 'get my leg over' again. Not before researching step through shoppers, Bromptons, Moultons even mountain bikes but I decided to stick with my old tourer.

After a few painful movements, 10 months after the operation, I succeeded in getting my leg over my friendly old Brooks and off I wobbled. I quickly remembered how to sort my gears out and in about an hour I felt that I had never been away from my bike for three years, but I had to get fit again. I think it's time to dig out my French maps again.

MIKE WEAVER

## Going Dutch – flat routes but look out when wind blows

**W**e decided to spend our holiday cycling in Holland so there was not much planning that went into the trip. A guide book we did buy before we left said there were lots of books detailing cycle routes in Holland and available in English, so we didn't worry too much about the route.

We just checked on the internet to see what sort of areas people chose to cycle around but when we got there we found no books in English on cycle routes and not even so much as an English/Dutch phrase book. It was a good job everyone spoke English.

Everyone knows Holland is flat, but we

were unprepared for just how flat, the only inclines being on the approach to a bridge or along the coastal sand dunes. Everything else is totally flat. Ideal countryside I hear you say, but they didn't build all those windmills without a reason, and when the wind blows there is little to stop it. Holland is wonderful for cycling though, with dedicated cycle tracks and cycle traffic lights in towns.

We cycled from Leiden to the Island of Terschelling in three days including crossing the 19 mile Afsluitdijk dam, one of the musts for a cyclist. We would thoroughly recommend Holland to anyone contemplating it.

TERRY CROFT

## CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

### A hooligan by no other name

**Q**uestion: What do you call a vicar on a bicycle? Answer: A cyclist. This old schoolboy catch-you-out illustrates something that irks all responsible cyclists.

The low financial outlay and lack of any competence test or compulsory insurance means that almost anyone can become a cyclist, and long may it remain so.

Unfortunately, this is a double-edged sword. While very few people are excluded from joining the cycling community, it also means that there are few effective mechanisms for controlling irresponsible cyclists.

These are the people who ride on pavements, ignore "Pedestrian Zone" time restrictions and ride without lights after dark. With

very few exceptions, they are men, mainly young men. For them, the bike is a stage between being a pedestrian and being able to drive. When they can legally hold a driving licence, the same people are likely to turn into motorists who have two bald tyres, one headlight and no insurance, because they are irresponsible by nature.

Does anybody call for cars to be banned from roads where pedestrians have been knocked down by motorists? Why then do we have to suffer bans on cycling because of the actions of irresponsible cyclists?

So, what do you call a hooligan on a bicycle? A hooligan.

ANDY MCNALLY

**HOP POCKET** Tel (01227) 709866  
Free House Your hosts – Rich, & Beth  
Bossingham Nr Canterbury Kent CT4 6DX CTC approved

Excellent home cooked food, real ales, country wines.  
Open all day Sunday by prior arrangement

**CHANCE INN** Open Daily 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.  
GUSTON Bar snacks, tea, coffee.

On Signed Route 16 near Dover.

**Telephone 01304-206162**

Pre-booking advised for groups.  
Cyclists welcome – cycle parking rings provided by SPOKES

**Spokes needs your support**

If you would like to join Spokes, please complete the form overleaf and send it with your subscription to:

**SPOKES, The Canterbury Environment Centre, St Alphege Lane, Canterbury CT1 2EB Tel 01227 457009.**

The centre is open Tuesday to Saturday 10.30am to 4.30pm. Good food, drink and lots of useful resources and information.