



## Editorial

I could never understand why it is thought necessary for a cyclist to wear a helmet but not a pedestrian or car driver. I could not imagine what factor made walking or driving any safer. I also questioned how wearing a helmet made a cyclist actually safer?

A recent letter in the *Financial Times* July 8 2008 intelligently addressed these issues. Malcolm Wardlaw, who wrote the letter published a report in 2002 called 'Assessing the Actual Risks Faced by Cyclists'. He concluded in this report that on-road cycling is a low risk form of travel in the UK. There is no greater risk to cyclists on UK roads than there is to drivers and pedestrians. Therefore, if helmets are to be promoted, they should be promoted for all road users!

As to reducing head injuries, Wardlaw quoted from the *British Medical Journal* where it was reported in 2006 that there was 'no discernible reduction in serious head injuries admissions data in those countries with sharply rising helmet use'. Helmet wearing only appears to significantly help when cycling becomes actually dangerous such as when off-road or in countries where there are fewer cyclists.

## Chairman's Ramblings

It's been a busy and very interesting summer so far. The new Spokes stand has attended five events so far, with many more booked. We have been in contact with the universities and colleges in Canterbury who are looking at more environmentally sustainable transport policies. In October we have also been invited to attend the National Trust's Big Green Day, a two-day event at Chartwell House, in Westerham, once home to Winston Churchill. We have gained new members and met up with existing members and old friends as well. More importantly the stall has given us the chance to talk to people and fly the flag.

With rising fuel prices many people have decided to reduce their reliance on the automobile and take up cycling. I have spoken to two families at events who have sold the family car and are now using a mixture of public transport and cycling. I wonder how many more are doing the same? Others are reducing their car usage and supplementing it with cycling. Cycle shops are reporting a marked increase in sales and yes, there does seem to be fewer cars on the roads and more cyclists! I've also noticed that there appears to be more people using public transport. Just one little thought and one that I hope those in local government will act on, "where are people going to park their bikes?" Alas cycle parking provision in our area is poor; too few cycle stands and often badly placed. Perhaps we will start to see ranks of Sheffield stands or similar, where the once proud automobiles once parked?

Recently our friends in Sustrans sent me a marvellous article. The full article is much too long for the newsletter, but please read the last paragraph from it below!

4/10/1975 R.E. Williams wrote in the B.M.J.

"Our descendants will look back on a time of some difficulty for *Homo Sapiens*...an originally privileged subgroup of the species failed to adapt. They came to believe that they could not move any distance unless they were carried, either by their cars or some other propulsive aid. They ceased to do any significant muscular work, and by one of those strange twists of history they became in the end the prisoners of the machines which were to have set them free...this pitiable creature was known at first as *Homo vehiculo constrictus* but...he came to be called simply *Homo constrictus*...all future races of mankind descended from the other more active subgroup-*Homo se propellens*. This advanced human primate was clever, keen, and cultured. His archetype in many societies was the cross-country runner. He walked or went on a bicycle, and he survived."

Steve Fawke

## The Medium is the Message

"What you see is what you get." Sounds good, just like, "Does what it says on the tin." Or does it?

Modern society is conditioned by what it sees and hears. Those who have tried to explain this sometimes come to an untimely end. Socrates was a case in point. Plato explains his predicament in the 'Allegory of the Cave,' in, 'The Republic.'

Imagine a dark cave where prisoners are chained to face a wall since birth. They cannot turn their heads or move their limbs. Behind them, high up, is a fire. This provides most of the light. Behind them and the fire is a walkway on which others hold objects up, projecting shadows on the wall from the light of the fire. They cannot see this so these shadows become their reality. The only other light comes from the entrance to the cave. This is very diffused. Outside, in the sunlight, people walk along a road talking. All the prisoners hear are echoes of these sounds and the voices of the people holding up the objects.

The prisoner's solution is to get up and walk out of the metaphorical cave and then go back and explain reality to the prisoners. When Socrates did that in 399BC he was forced to drink hemlock. That changed Plato who wrote it down in an attempt to explain it. Hence the 'Allegory', the Cave is our mind.

We are still in this predicament today, 2400 years later. All the infrastructure of our built environment is dedicated to the car. The car is 'reality' and the 'prisoners' are drivers trapped on the M25 in vast jams, unable to move forwards or backwards. The 'shadows' are what we see through the windscreen. We move forward looking in our rear view mirror.

'The specialist', wrote Marshal McLuhan, 'is one who never makes small mistakes while moving toward the grand fallacy.' As we move into an era of petrol at possibly 200\$ a barrel, the car manufacturers, traffic engineers, Jeremy Clarkson, the later day 'shadow projectors' have a lot to answer for.

Sam Webb

## New emergency medical service delivered by cyclists

David Latham, Spokes member and our CRU man in Canterbury, ready for action



A new Cycle Response Unit (CRU) was launched by South East Coast Ambulance (SECAmb) on Monday 23 June 2008. There are currently four cyclists in the unit. One stationed in Canterbury, one in Whitstable and two more on duty in Brighton.

Our working hours vary between 8am to 6pm or 9am to 5pm. We carry various pieces of equipment on our bicycles including a defibrillator so that we can attend to calls of a life threatening nature. This also helps us meet response targets.

Early indications are favourable. Fewer ambulances have been required. This has meant that there are more available ambulances to respond to calls of a higher priority. The bikes also offer a lot more flexibility in accessing difficult locations. This demonstrates SECAmb's commitment to treating patients appropriately as well as reducing our carbon footprint.

In Canterbury and Whitstable the CRU can be seen around the town centre but we have answered calls outside this area often within two to three minutes. We have already received many positive comments about the service. One call at a sheltered housing scheme prompted the manager to write a glowing letter of praise to SECAmb after a rider arrived within three minutes when one of its residents sustained a fall.

The trial for this scheme is to run until the end of November this year.

David Latham  
Canterbury/CRU rider

## NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS NEWS

- ◆ **The SPOKES AGM** will be at The Friends Meeting House on October 8<sup>th</sup>, starting time 7.30pm. We have two guest speakers this year: Jon Shelton of The Kentish Stour Countryside Project and Cllr. Daniel Ellis, Canterbury City Council's, 'Champion for Cycling'.
- ◆ **Sturry Road Park & Ride access road revised**  
Several months ago Andy and Sylvia McNally brought to the attention of the Spokes committee Canterbury City Council's plans to construct a new access road to the Canterbury's Sturry Road (A28) Park & Ride site directly from Sturry Road itself. The planned route bisected the Canterbury-bound cycle lane nearby to the existing Park & Ride bus pickup point. As a result cyclists would have had to look almost completely back behind them to see whether there is any traffic approaching with the intention using the access road and, if so, stop in only a few metres. Naturally, Spokes objected to the planning application on the grounds of safety.  
Recently we were advised that a revised design has been submitted for planning approval. This design moves the off-road cycle lane further from the main road and gives cyclists a better viewing angle to look for traffic before crossing the new access road. We believe that this is an improved design.  
If you learn of similar schemes that may jeopardise the safety of cyclists then please be sure to let us know.
- ◆ **Cycle parking**  
Residents of Canterbury will no doubt have noticed the new Connection housing development taking shape over the last few months. Recently some residents have been moving in to some of the newly-constructed properties, and thus there is now public access to part of the site. As a result I recently visited it with a GPS to collect mapping data for the new additions to the city (see my mapping article in this newsletter). I was pleasantly greeted with a road where there are six Sheffield stands at every building entrance and a further 30 Sheffield stands in a small courtyard.  
Also, staff, students, and visitors to the University of Kent's campus may have noticed the new secure cycle storage facility outside Eliot and Keynes colleges. Members of UKC's bicycle

user group (KUBUG) recently surveyed their campus for all of the cycling facilities to be placed onto the university's campus map (Pictures of the above mentioned cycle parking facilities can be seen on our website).

Spokes have recently discussed with other organisations about their cycle parking and it is clear that they are realising that people commuting to work & their place of education by bicycle is a reality, and that cyclists expect a secure and sheltered place to park their bicycles.

Small amounts of bicycle parking were included in the new King's Mile development in the city centre. However, we believe that much more is required, as is demonstrated by the numerous times we've visited the city centre to find that all available bicycle parking spaces are already being used. Why not let us know where you think new bicycle parking provision is required most to aid your day-to-day bicycle usage?

### ◆ Volunteers Wanted

As we are doing more canvassing and campaigning we need volunteers to help with our new stall. Volunteers are needed to help set it up, talk to people and hand out information leaflets etc. Hopefully by the time you read this we will have added a new events section on the website. So if you can spare a few hours or would like more information please contact the Chairman.

### ◆ Chartham to Canterbury Cycle Route

We are still waiting for the outcome of the nature survey on the proposed Chartham to Canterbury route. Please check the Spokes website for the latest news and information.

### ◆ Newsletter

A digitalised version of the newsletter is on the website. Articles that we can't get on the paper version of the newsletter appear here, as do colour photographs etc.

### ◆ Spokes Members

Congratulations to Graham Urquhart and Nicola Stalker on managing to elope from Scotland to get married in Canterbury. We thought it was usually the other way round? Best wishes for the future from all of us!