

# BIRMINGHAM Cyclist

The newsletter for *push*  bikes



**Push Bikes wins lottery funding to  
produce family-focused cycle route guides** see p.3  
**30 years of Push Bikes** see pp. 6-7



If you would like to help make the newsletter happen, please contact any of the Newsletter team.

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Newsletter Team: David Little, Michael Groll

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## View from the Chair

In September Push Bikes celebrated its 30th anniversary, a fact that all involved in supporting the organisation over the years can be justifiably proud of. On pages 6 and 7 there is an article which catalogues some of the highs and lows of Push Bikes' early days. In those days cycling wasn't very high on the political agenda (too put it mildly) and issues such as climate change and obesity were yet to appear on the horizon.

Now cycling is more relevant than ever as part of the solution to these and many other modern problems. Importantly it's starting to receive the attention and funding that it needs. There is still of course much work to do, especially here in the Birmingham area.

The past few months have been continued to be busy with another well-attended cyclists' meeting taking place, a regular stall set up on the High Street in Birmingham City Centre, a joint-working agreement with South Birmingham PCT and the news that a bid we made for lottery funding to produce a series of ride guides has been successful. Have a peaceful Christmas and keep the wheels turning in 2010!

John Bennett

*Front cover picture shows a cycling family in Sutton Park (likely to feature in one of the Push Bikes' route guides in development at the moment).*

## Cycling and Health

South Birmingham Primary Care Trust has entered into an agreement with Push Bikes to support a series of rides in Spring 2010 being held to encourage their staff to cycle. Also, with the encouragement of the PCT, Push Bikes will be working with community based leaders in Kings Norton to hold short rides for the local residents.

John Denley the PCT's associate director of public health said: "We recognise the health benefits of cycling and are eager to work with organisations that promote this form of exercise. Push Bikes, being a community based organisation that encourages and promotes cycle use is an ideal partner in this task."

John Bennett, chairman of Push Bikes, responded "We want to make these rides enjoyable and stimulating so that people will continue to cycle as part of their regular commute or exercise. We will also be looking at bike maintenance, and training where necessary."

Help needed! Any member that is willing to help in any way with the planning or running of these activities should contact Push Bikes at our address or email:

[secretary@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

We hope that this venture will be a success that leads to other ways of enlarging the cycling activities in the city; your involvement would be most welcome and, we expect, stimulating.

John Bennett



*Staff of South Birmingham PCT and Push Bikes set out on a ride to launch the joint cycling project.*



### ACTION POINTS

This symbol indicates items where readers can take action such as writing or emailing

**Cycle Route Guides:** Push Bikes has secured funding under the lottery's 'Awards for All' community based project to produce a series of 10 different cycle route guides. Push Bikes will print leaflets by Spring 2010, make them available at libraries, and on our web site. They will cover districts all over Birmingham.

The grant will pay for A4 full colour leaflets and web-based files giving detailed directions, sketch maps and points of interest, refreshment, parking, etc. They will cover different districts across the city with links between individual routes.



## LOTTERY FUNDED

However your local knowledge and help in developing ideas for routes would be much appreciated.

The routes should be of varying length (between 3-10 miles), based on quiet roads, paths, and parks; they should be suitable for all cyclists including families with children. The routes to be included are to be decided by Push Bikes' members. We want to make them interesting, accessible, and varied. We need ideas from any member who can suggest either a complete route (circular preferred, or short linear out and back), or any stretch that appeals to you and that might be incorporated into someone else's suggestion.

Please don't hesitate in sending any suggestions (by email, GPS, sketch, or written description). If you leave contact details we can then clarify any queries.

Push Bikes believes that this project will encourage more people, particularly families to get on their bikes and enjoy cycling away from busy traffic. It is your chance to make it happen. Please help!

Details on the project are also provided on the website at: [www.pushbikes.org.uk/projects/routes.html](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/projects/routes.html)



## Hagley Road / Lordswood Road traffic signals

Push Bikes highlighted difficulties for cyclists in the amount of green time was too short when crossing Hagley Road from Lordswood Road to Bearwood Road. Birmingham City Council have now investigated and report that it seems that the intergreen period was a bit short. The intergreen is the interval between the end of green for one phase (the various movements allowed in turn) and the beginning of green for another phase. This

time has been increased now and so cyclists should have enough time to cross before traffic on the Hagley Road starts moving again.

## Cycling Strategy being rewritten

In his annual report to the Council (meeting 3 November), Councillor Len Gregory (Cabinet member for Transportation & Street Services) says "The Cycling Strategy has been reconsidered in the light of the detailed responses received and is being rewritten for adoption next year."

Push Bikes is seeking an explanation from the City Council of what is happening to the cycling strategy.

## Cannon Hill Park: to segregate or not?

One of the most popular cycle routes in the city passes through Cannon Hill Park. The 1.8 metre segregated cycle path, marked by a painted white line on one side of the surfaced 'roadway' running along the rise on the far side from the lake, is intended to separate cyclists from the pedestrians and occasional vehicles that pass along the roadway.

But, over the years, general 'wear and tear' has inevitably taken its toll and the line has disappeared for substantial chunks of its length. And, of course, even where the line is still visible the 'segregation' is largely ignored or not even known about by pedestrians. This is, of course, a common problem in Birmingham and many new cycle paths are being marked for shared use. So, as some sections of the 'roadway' are now without a line after resurfacing, should the line be replaced or remaining lines removed and the entire roadway width designated for shared use?

For about an hour, a small group of 'stakeholders' from Birmingham City Council, Sustrans, Parks Management and Push Bikes stood next to a section of line, debating informally (at this stage) the 'pros and cons' around the issue, which turned out to be amazingly complex to resolve, and we certainly did not do that, or try! Cyclists, pedestrians, blind pedestrians, all were known to have views, sometimes conflicting within each other when it came to the 'shared or segregated' debate.

The city council will likely hold a brief consultation among stakeholders in 2010 and while the Cycling and Walking Team Leader, Graham Lennard, considered that no solution would satisfy everyone it was important that whatever was finally decided would be 'defendable' to anyone who continued to object.

Graham Hankins



## Pedestrian refuges and traffic islands



Cycle Infrastructure Design



The Department for Transport published *Cycle Infrastructure Design* in October 2008, a guidance document for highway engineers and planners. In each newsletter we are selecting a design issue that may help in understanding how to design infrastructure for cycling. The complete document is available at: [www.dft.gov.uk/cyclinginfrastructuredesign](http://www.dft.gov.uk/cyclinginfrastructuredesign)

These measures make it easier for pedestrians to cross the road, discourage overtaking, and in some cases, encourage lower speeds. However, refuges and islands in particular can create hazardous pinch points for cyclists. If they are introduced and it is not possible to provide a cycle bypass, the width available should either be sufficient to allow vehicles to overtake cyclists safely, or narrow enough to discourage overtaking altogether.

If a cycle lane passes through a pinchpoint, it is recommended that it is at least 1.5m wide and mandatory. Where there is insufficient room to provide a mandatory lane of this width, an advisory 1.5m cycle lane should be considered.

A minimum gap of 4m is recommended unless additional features to significantly reduce vehicle speed are incorporated. If the approach to the narrowed section is not direct (e.g. at chicanes) or significant numbers of HGVs or buses are expected, it is worth considering increasing this number further.



Lifford Lane, close to the city's refuse disposal site. Width between kerb edge and refuge approx. 3.25m: cyclists could be brought into conflict with motorists.

It is known that many cyclists want to travel into the city from the west, but find riding along the carriageway of the Hagley Road very intimidating. For much of its length as it approaches the city it is a 40mph dual-carriageway with intensive vehicle use at most times of the day. Yet the pavements (also known as footways) on both sides are wide yet little used by pedestrians. So Push Bikes has been calling for Birmingham City Council (BCC) to provide for legal 'shared use' cycling along the footways. As an alternative, we have suggested contra-flow cycling along the Harborne Road, which runs south of the Hagley Road and substantially parallel to it, but is one-way into city after the Augustus Road / Chad Road junction. BCC assessed the viability of these two proposals and met with Push Bikes and other stakeholders to discuss.

It was agreed that provision of (on-carriageway) cycle lanes on Hagley Road was not possible: the running lanes were too narrow and traffic flows too high. For shared-use on footways it was felt there were too many interruptions at side-road junctions and driveways. So it was agreed that the Harborne Road alternative would be the best way forward. Contra-flow cycle lanes were not felt to be feasible due to carriageway width and 'sight lines' to junctions. Permitting cycling along the north footway might be an option, but there were safety issues again: street furniture, blind exits from driveways, crossing junctions etc. Discussion continued and both parties appreciated each other's view while still wanting to 'do something'. John and I noted BCC's concerns and Graham Lennard assured us that the idea was still 'on the table' and was indeed 'work in progress'.

A few days later, John and I went surveyed the north footway of the Harborne Road ourselves and felt that many of the problems raised were not insurmountable: much of the footway was quite wide and even in the few places where street furniture reduced this, the footway was straight so a cyclists and a pedestrian would be in full view of each other so, in our opinion, 'common sense' should reduce any safety issues.

Similarly where there were 20 consecutive 'blind' driveways where an emerging vehicle would have no view of pedestrians (or cyclists) until level with the boundary wall. Again, no 'sensible' cyclists should be riding that close to the boundary walls and would see the 'nose' of any emerging vehicle anyway. We also suggested that cyclists could use the large central 'island' at the Chad Road junction to give a clear view of vehicles rounding the corner on the approach to the junction. Augustus Road and Woodbourne Road are also parallel alternatives so, for increasing cycling, this scheme is 'doable'.

We have put our suggestions in a letter to Graham Lennard, for which he has thanked us. I assure the membership that it is definitely 'to be continued...'

Graham Hankins



## Cyclists' Meeting 2009

Push Bikes' first attempt, last year, to call a public meeting of cyclists in the city resulted in a packed room at the Midland Institute. This year on 22 October we had a huge room at the Council House, but would we be so successful? For the past few months the Push Bikes' committee had been distributing postcard flyers, telephoning and arranging speakers, and contacting the local press.

Yes we were! Every seat filled, with some standing again. The format was as in 2008 with presentations and a Q&A session. Huge maps were provided to mark issues that the visitors considered needed attention to improve their cycling experience and safety. It was good too that Councillor Dave Radcliffe managed to fit in two meetings on the night to be on hand to open proceedings. Councillor Radcliffe also chair of the Cycling Advisory Group suggested that this could be an annual event.

After chair John Bennett had welcomed and thanked everyone, he introduced the speakers and reminded the meeting that there were maps of the city at the back of the room for everyone to add comments about their own routes. Push Bikes Membership Convenor, Neeraj Maholtra stated that changes to cycling can happen in Birmingham with a stronger 'Push Bikes' but that we were 'skint', so could everyone please visit the membership table at the end of the meeting!

Two police officers gave their perspectives on cycling, cyclists and the law, cyclists and drivers and latest accident statistics. The guests spoke interestingly, frankly and acknowledged that the standard of driving was dropping and that possession of tax, a driving licence and insurance was for some just an 'optional extra'! After several questions from the floor, chair John Bennett introduced the main speaker, Graham Lennard.

Many people who cycle but do not take an active interest in cycling may believe that Birmingham does very little for cycling, a view shared by some of Push Bikes' own members. A shame then the whole city could not have seen Graham's presentation. Using a slide show Graham covered just about every cycling initiative and development in which the city council was involved. The campaigns that Push Bikes was specifically pushing: Hagley Road, Lordswood Road, Belgrave Middleway, Warwick Road, the canal towpaths were all up there on the screen plus Connect2, National Bike Week 2010, cycle training, Sustainable City bid et al. Now Birmingham is, physically, a big place and there is not a huge number of Council staff employed to develop cycling, so Graham received a deserved round of applause at the end of the presentation. Graham is clearly a busy man who in addition to handling all this finds time to answer queries from Push Bikes!

The evening was also a time for questions from the floor with no prompting needed! There were calls for more cycle lanes, making roundabouts safer, improving canal towpaths, more secure cycle parking at rail stations, established destinations as well as new developments, more contra-flow in one-way streets, increasing use of 'cyclists crossing' signage and filling dangerous potholes. The panel responded to these as favourably as they could, with a few provisos.

BCC did provide cycle lanes at various locations, but it was clear that not every road in the city would ever have a cycle lane along its length. Roundabouts were felt to be tricky for cyclists, who dislike the detour and delay to use controlled crossings. Cycling specific infrastructure was provided where practicable but it was agreed there was no substitute for competent cycling, with training if needed!

I fully agreed with that: public roads are an adult environment, needing experience of other road users' behaviour. Nobody can (legally) just get in a car, without training and drive it; but they can just get on a bike and ride on the road. Children can receive 'Bikeability' training, but this is, in my view, far too perfunctory for riding on road and few adults take advantage of national standard training, even though it is available in Birmingham.

Main road cycling produced similar comments from the floor and Graham acknowledged the need to provide agreeable cycling conditions, pointing out that the cycling map indicated minor roads alternatives suitable for cycling. Cyclists also dislike one-way streets: BCC provide marked contra-flow lanes where practicable, but contra-flow cycling simply through signing is an option if traffic speeds and flows are low, e.g. part of Hurst Street.

Graham Lennard reminded all present of the pothole reporting telephone number (see back page of this newsletter) - enter it into your mobile phone.

Thanks to all who attended, the Push Bikes committee and Cllr. Radcliffe for opening. But special thanks are due to Graham Lennard for providing a magnificent room, and for amiably, but also strongly when needed, responding to the questions on the night.

Graham Hankins



*Audience at the cyclists' meeting at the Council House*

## Push Bikes, the first 5 years

In the autumn of 1978 Geoff Mead was doing a radio documentary on cycling for the BBC. He interviewed Tom Pettitt, recently arrived at Friends of the Earth - FoE - Birmingham. In discussing the problem of cycling in Birmingham, they realised a cyclists action group was required. With others, including Alison De-Reybekille and Jon Evans, the **Birmingham Cycling Campaign** – BBC - was set up.

After a slow start they decided to relaunch as Push Bikes in the summer of 1979.

*Summer 2009 was our 30th anniversary.*

A local press article in August brought in members of the public, including me, to the first monthly meeting on Tuesday 11th September - a warm sunny day.

The first edition of the newsletter - a double sided A4 stencilled single sheet – came out in November 1979 and highlighted the lack of consideration for cycling in the West Midlands County Council's 10 year structure plan.

*Plus ca change!*

Sunday cycle rides were held from the earliest days. Our workshop and bike bits stall began to be operational (padlocks 49p!) and in 1980 a jumble sale in St Martins in the Bull Ring and raised over £300. A successful cycle maintenance course was run through the Workers Educational Council. John Colebrook was the tutor.

The city council planning department asked us for our views on parking facilities, major junction improvements, ways into the city centre etc. We recommended using the Five Ways subways and ways across the inner ring road. We suggested suitable cycle parking sites for the Snow Hill to Wolverhampton railway.

A meeting with Councillor Dick Knowles, then chairman of the City Planning Dept, seemed to have been very successful - we later realised that, despite what he said about their consideration for cyclists, it resulted in little practical benefit.

In 1981 we were allowed our own space in the FoE's Allison Street office for a table, filing cabinet, wall space and library - instead of Tom Pettitt's desk.

Inspired by the London to Brighton ride, which then had 5,000 riders, we held the first Great Midlands Bike Ride - GMBR - on Saturday 6th June 1981. It started in the city centre and went to Stratford and back via Lowsonford along a figure of eight route. The CTC helped and the Sport Council sponsored us.

*Over 1000 riders turned up.*

The paid-up membership went up from about 50 to about 70.



**GMBR at Stratford 1981**

Push Bikes surveyed all canal tow-paths in the West Midlands County, Five Ways and the Snow Hill to Wolverhampton railway line. 300 replied to a survey of cyclists at Birmingham University. ►

## Push Bikes, the first 5 years

► The main problem reported was poor road surfaces followed by junctions. On 2nd March, 1982, 50 of us took part in a demonstration of cycles - riding from Alison St round the city centre. We had press, radio and local television coverage.

1982 also saw the publication of the first edition of the guide "Cycling in Birmingham", 750 were sold in a few months. The police were reluctant to allow the 1982 GMBR to take place along dual carriageways except under controlled conditions! When we realised that they could not stop us we went ahead with our own route anyway.

***1,000 turned up. It was started by the Lord Mayor and sponsored by Halfords.***

On October 16th, a cold damp Saturday afternoon, we held another demonstration - from Chamberlain Square around the main shopping centre to County Hall where we handed in a petition to Councillor Len Clark, Chairman of the West Midlands County Council's Highways Committee. The petition called for 1% of the highways budget to be spent on cyclists. *Mr Clark made an encouraging speech which proved to give false hopes.* We were a little embarrassed by our lack of numbers - about 80.

Push Bikes sponsored the first PhD in cycling - David Davies started his course at Aston University in September and published "Cycling Policy For The West Midlands". It detailed four possible cycle routes: Moseley to City, Moseley to University, Selly Oak to City, Acocks Green to City.

Push Bikes joined the County Council's Highways Advisory Committee.

In 1983, the monthly meetings were still on a Tuesday but moved to The Wharf so those who were addicted to nicotine could take part.

Public meetings were held to set up campaign groups in Solihull, Coventry and Wolverhampton. Push Bikes subtitle then became the West Midlands Cyclists Campaign Group as we were a county wide organisation.

The Push Bikes holidays: camping in Youlgreave in The Peak District, in the IVC farmhouse near Barmouth and in Herefordshire. This weekend was followed by a week's holiday.

A campaign began to try to change the regulations to allow cycles across the Belgrave Middleway at Gooch Street - we had a demonstration where we rode across repeatedly - we got little media coverage and a passing police car took hardly any notice.

***This junction is still a problem for cyclists 28 years later!***

In 1984, Push Bikes presented well researched objections to the City Centre Plan Public inquiry, these lead to significant changes.

Rob Green and Mike Ginger, wrote the first few of a planned 25 leaflets of West Midlands Cycle Rides to be published by the County Council.

We held a commuter race: the cyclist who used the main road and the one who used a recommended side road route beat both the motorist and bus passenger.

Over the five years, Push Bikes held many successful leisure activities but we were primarily a campaign group.



**City centre demonstration 1984**

Looking back from 1989 we can see that we put a lot of effort into designing proposals for crossings, routes etc. and presenting them to the authorities. While they seemed to be enthusiastically accepted at the time, eg Five Ways, they often went through several phases of acceptance and rejection.

**By the end of this period pessimism began to set in - very little was showing for all our efforts. While some road schemes being built were planned before the cycling policy was implemented but the policy seemed to be given only lip-service when current planning was being undertaken.**

This article was adapted from John Pitcock's original published in Push Bikes 1990 newsletter.

Many thanks to John for drawing it to our attention & supplying the photographs.



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#### Bike it Birmingham

What an amazing first year! I started in February 2008 and my first task was to choose 12 Bike it schools for Birmingham. This was no easy task, with over 400 schools to choose from. But with the support of School Travel Plan, Travelwise and Road Safety teams we were able to select our first 5 schools. They started in May 2008 and the remaining 7 schools started in September 2008. All 12 schools have fully embraced the Bike it project and had a go at a wide range of activities. Most schools have run their first cycle to school day and based on these successes have run whole cycle to school weeks. Children and parents are so keen to have a go at cycling that you rarely see less than 30 bikes on a cycle to school day. In fact, on Perry Beeches' first cycle to school day, the cold and icy January morning still got 108 'bums on saddles'. 6 out of the 12 schools didn't have any cycle storage in place, so before we could provide any cycling opportunities we helped them install some secure cycle parking. There are a wide range of activities

to choose from as a way of encouraging more children and parents to cycle to school. The list is endless and forever growing with new and creative ways to enthuse, empower & sustain.

Rachel Hallett, Bike it Officer (Birmingham)



#### WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE FUTURE NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL *INSTEAD OF BY POST?*

Sending your newsletter as a Portable Data Format (PDF) attachment would save us considerable postage and printing costs. You could still 'take it with you' on the train or the beach by printing it out. Reducing our postage and printing costs would really help our finances - so if you would be happy with an e-newsletter instead of a printed copy please tell us by emailing:

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## AFFORDABLE CYCLING HOLIDAYS

If you dream of riding through the snow-capped Himalayas or the tropical jungles of Asia but thought it was out of your price range then think again. Red Spokes offers affordable cycle tours to the more remote areas of the World. With prices that are considerably cheaper than our well-known competitors, there has never been a better time to ride off and broaden your horizons.



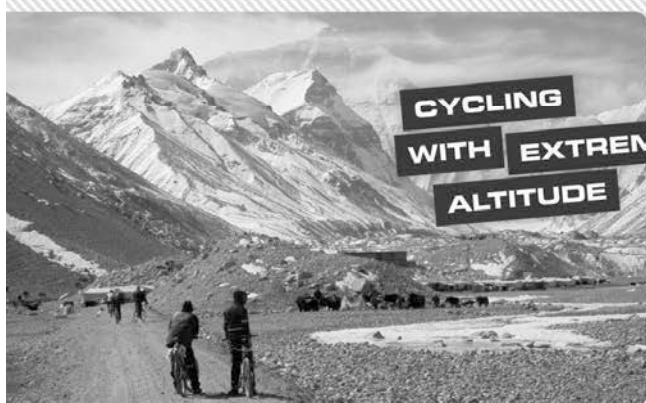
We offer a wide variety of trips to entice adventure seekers. Many cyclists start in Laos, the south-east Asian gem which is Red Spokes most popular destination. Highlights of the tour include:

- Witnessing an enchanting country taking its first steps in the modern world
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- A spectacular boat ride down the mighty Mekong River
- Discovering Luang Prabang, a World Heritage Site crammed with exquisite temples

### LAOS ADVENTURE TOUR



### CYCLING WITH EXTREME ALTITUDE



The most extreme challenge offered by Red Spokes is an epic 1,000-kilometre journey across the roof of the world. Cyclists traverse the backbone of the Himalayas, from Lhasa in Tibet to Kathmandu in Nepal. This is one of the world's great rides and a must for adventure cyclists. The main attractions of the tour include:

- Exploring Lhasa, the mystical capital of Tibet, home to world-famous Potala Palace
- Cycling to Base Camp Everest via 50 (yes 50!) hairpin bends
- Completing the world's longest downhill ride
- Conquering five high-altitude mountain passes over 5,000 metres

Red Spokes has a reputation for developing trailblazing rides in parts of the world untouched by tourism. Our tours of remote Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan provide a fascinating insight into ex-Soviet Central Asia.

As well as giving cyclists a life-changing experience, we are committed to "putting something back" into the communities we visit. In Laos Red Spokes has funded two new schools and provided safe drinking water in the village that is home to our guide Khen. The same ethical cycling concept has been extended to projects in Tibet and Peru.



### CHARITY

### WORK

### WEEKEND & DAY RIDES



Why not try a short UK tour or one of our day rides? Our ever popular London to Brighton route is a great starting point. For a modest £15 (including lunch) you can join a great mix of people, both those considering their first Red Spokes trip and others who've been on many of our tours.

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Visit our website [www.redspokes.co.uk](http://www.redspokes.co.uk) to see more of the countries we visit including Peru, Chile/Argentina, Kerala, Vietnam and India



## Push Bikes' Rides

## Push Bikes' Rides

### Keeping up to date

It's best to check the Rides forum:

<http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/bb/> - on the website for the latest details of rides. The Rides forum is information only ie if you have a question or want to let us know your coming – always wise, if you're delayed we can wait – email [pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:pbrides@pushbikes.org.uk). You can also use this address to subscribe to the Rides mailing list which sends an email a week before Sunday rides & on the Monday before the Wednesday ride.

### Sunday Rides

Usually meet at Kings Norton Railway Station car park, 10.15am for 10.30am start although this varies.

### 24 January 2010: Kinver take 2

Meet at Black Horse in Northfield at 10.15am for a 10.30am start. Lunch will be taken at the 'Vine' pub on the canalside. Total round trip of about 40 miles.

### 21 February: Pootle ride

James Le Grys will lead a ride from the MAC, meet at 10:00 for a 10:15 start. A gentle 10-15 miles, averaging 10 mph and returning to the city centre around midday for a coffee.

### 24 March: Belbroughton

Meet at Black Horse in Northfield at 10.15am for a 10.30am start for a ride to the Hollybush Inn on Stour-bridge Road for lunch.

### Wednesday Evening Rides

Meet at the MAC at 7:45pm for a 8:00pm start, though can be earlier if people have to be up early the next day. The rides list is on the forum.

All Push Bikes' rides are free, open to members and non-members and are undertaken at the rider's own risk. Please ensure that your bike is roadworthy, has good brakes and working lights. Wearing high-visibility clothing will improve your safety by making you more conspicuous to other road users. If you have doubts about wearing a helmet, wear one. Ensure it is in good condition and is a proper fit. It may help protect your head should you have an unscheduled dismount. All participants are expected to take great care and observe the Highway Code. The organisers do not accept responsibility for loss or damage to personal property, for personal accident or injury, or for any public liability.

Further advice on ride participation and changes to the rides programme can be found on our web site at:

<http://www.pushbikes.org.uk>

Details can be obtained from Nick Wattison on 07837 414236 on the day of the ride.

## Committee

Chair:	John Bennett
Secretary:	Graham Hankins
Campaigns Coordinator:	Howard Boyd
Treasurer:	James Le Grys
Rides Co-ordinator:	Nick Wattison
Membership Convenor:	Neeraj Malhotra
Webmaster:	David Little
Newsletter Editor:	Michael Groll
Membership Secretary:	Ann Griffiths

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B5 5TH

Telephone: 0121 632 6909

E-mail: [secretary@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:secretary@pushbikes.org.uk)

As we are a voluntary organisation, the office is not manned on a regular basis. The most effective means of contacting us is by e-mail.

We hold meetings on the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 19:30 including: 19 January, 16 February and 16 March.

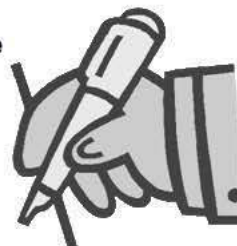
## Useful Numbers

Birmingham Cycling Officer	0121 303 7485
Solihull Cycling Officer	0121 704 8291
Sandwell Cycling Officer	0121 569 4021
Sandwell Potholes	0121 569 4129
Birmingham Potholes	0121 303 6644
Smoky Diesels	0121 789 7999
Emergency Line	0121 303 4149

Beacon Road Club	John Hitchcock	0121 427 5590
CTC N. Birmingham	Harry Child	0121 353 5814
CTC S. Birmingham	John Bennett	0121 459 9319
Royal Sutton Cycling Club	Bill Jinks	0121 681 7401
Concorde Cyclists' Club	Denis Feasey	0121 747 6420

## Write To Them!

One of the most effective ways of influencing policy is to email or write directly to your MP and / or councillor. Even a small number of voters contacting their elected representatives powerfully amplifies Push Bikes' direct campaign actions.



Locally this might be a problem with a poor cycle path, blocked cycle lane, speeding traffic, lack of cycle parking, potholes.

Obviously, no-one expects a flurry of action in response, but it will be noticed and if enough voters express similar concerns there will be some result. Don't be put off by a form letter response.

If you would like to raise an issue with the Council, British Waterways etc, either:

contact Push Bikes by email/phoning us: if the issue is already active, we can update you, help with the details or raise the issue directly with the Council.

or, copy your email/letter to Push Bikes.

Who is my MP/councillor?

The website [www.WriteToThem.com](http://www.WriteToThem.com) will find them if you type in your post code.

Alternatively a template letter specific to Birmingham, which you could adapt as you wish, is available on our web site ([www.pushbikes.org.uk](http://www.pushbikes.org.uk)).

## Membership Application Form

I/we \* wish to join Push Bikes December 09  
Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address (inc. Post Code) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Mobile Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Work Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

I/we \* enclose one year's subscription:

Individual, waged (£11) .....  
Individual, unwaged (£5-50) .....  
Joint/Family (£14-00) .....  
Voluntary donation (optional) .....  
TOTAL ..... £ .....

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I heard about Push Bikes from \_\_\_\_\_

I/we \* would like to help by: (✓)

( ) Letter writing ( ) Helping on Push Bikes' stall ( ) Organising activities for Bike Week  
( ) Review ing plans ( ) Writing articles for Newsletter ( ) Setting up a Bicycle User Group  
( ) Leading rides ( ) Assisting with New sletter ( ) Newsletter/leaflets distribution  
( ) Newsletter stuffing ( ) Other \_\_\_\_\_

\*Delete as applicable.

P.T.O.

## Members' Discounts From:

Bike Shop	Location	Exceptions
Scott's Cycles (see advert p.9)	Hall Green	bikes
Action Bikes	Rubery	bikes
CBC	Northfield	bikes
Bike Pro	Bearwood	none
Fletchers Auto Store	King's Heath	none
Harborne Cycle Surgery	City Centre	none
Red Kite Cycles	Harborne	none
Sprocket Cycles	Shirley	bikes
(see advert p.5)	City Centre	none





# Members Pages

- Welcome
- Fun & games
- Travels on a Dahon
- Pootlers ride anyone?
- 20mph zones in the press

## Welcome to the Members' Pages

The following four pages are for Push Bikes members and aren't included in copies handed out to the public. Perhaps a minor benefit of membership?

The real reason for members' pages, this time, is to try out some ideas for revamping the newsletter. Subsequently, it could be somewhere we can discuss issues which experienced cyclists are comfortable with but can be problematic for those thinking about cycling – the recent deteriorating safety statistics are a good example.

We can also include more personal & entertaining material, such as Ann Griffiths account of acquiring a folding bike.

*It would be great if we could create a forum for members to join together to promote cycling in Birmingham. The Family Cycling Routes & PCT Get Cycling projects are good examples of things members could join in with.*

Last spring I was amazed at the number of people cycling in ones and twos along the Rea Trail. It would be great to develop the Pootlers' rides, along the lines of the FoldSoc Origami rides for our members – photos at:

<http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/origami/meriden1108/>.

Finally, John Pitcock's article shows how active members were in the 1980s – 1,500 people came on the Great Midland Bike Ride, the photo shows the rest stop at Ullenhall.

The second is of the mass cyclists' demonstration in 1984 and shows a march to the Town Hall – note the escorting bobbies and the children with placards!.



Ullenhall stop on the GMBR 1983



Demonstration in the city centre 1984

*We, the people, can still do it in 2010?*

But things have changed.

## Monthly Campaign Meetings

Currently, the meetings are mainly devoted to the committee tasks required to run Push Bikes.

The members who have popped in have made some interesting and valuable points, but we worry that they've been a bit bored by the committee work.

If members & others thinking of coming to a meeting

emailed us (or left a message) to tell us about any items they'd like raised, it would help us organise the meeting.

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at the Friends of the Earth Warehouse, 54-57 Allison Street, Digbeth, and start at 19:30. The next quarter's meeting are on: Jan 19th, Feb 16th & March 16th.

Please don't be put off by the above, come along & join in.

## Pootler's ride anyone?

Winter overtook our plans for a Pootlers' Ride before Xmas.

The next ride will be on 21/02/10 from the MAC, along the canal to Minworth via Spaghetti Junction and back by road.

The current format of the rides is:

- meet centrally at the MAC at 10am for a 10:15am start.
- 10 - 15 miles, preferably off road or on quiet roads.
- return to the city centre for refreshments.

This leaves the afternoon free for those with family commitments. Having said this, we didn't leave the Mailbox until 2pm after the Loopy ride!

Starting at the MAC meant most of us who came on the Loopy ride had a short journey to get to the start, which might be why we came.

Starting in Shirley, King's Norton etc would give us much better access to the countryside but if one had to ride from Moseley would nearly double the length of the ride.

On the other hand, people living in Kings Norton have the same problem with the MAC start.

There is an argument for keeping it simple, ie one starting point, but the alternative of a starting rides from MAC, Kings Norton, Northfield or Shirley in rotation might allow more people to participate. We could arrange for a group to start at 9:30 from MAC for a 10:15 start at Kings Norton.

Refreshments: the Mailbox was very pleasant but it meant a rather late lunch. The alternative would be to

stop during the ride at a cafe or pub or bring sandwiches. If we stick to 10-15 miles at 10 mph the ride the morning tea break would be before 11am.

Should we do some of the rides during the week? The Thursday Beacon RCC ride from Tardebigge are well attended, so there might be a quorum for a Tuesday Pootlers ride.

The ideal is have a group working together to share developing routes and leading rides. The group could also kick start the Cycling Routes and PCT projects.

### *Tell us what you want.*

There's an online form at <http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/members/pootle> or you can write to Push Bikes at the address on the back page.

The questions:

1. How long should the rides be in distance and time, assuming approximately 10mph?
2. Where would you like to start from? Would you be prepared to start earlier to ride 5 miles to the 10:15am starting point?
3. Should we stop for refreshments half way round? If so, cafe, pub, sandwiches in the park?
4. Would you prefer the rides to be on, say, the third Sunday of the month rather than varying?
5. Where should we go?

The first Pootlers' ride is the basis of the first ride added to the Cycling Routes Project. A good Pootlers' ride is an ideal family cycle ride: join in and give us the benefit of your experience.



Route leaflet 1992

5	3				8	5		
8	4					1	2	
		7		5			4	8
			1		5			3
		9		4		7		
5			6		2			
7	8			1		6		
	1	6					5	2
		4	3				1	7

Easy

## Sudoku

Fill the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9.

The solution will be posted on 25/12/09 on the website at:

<http://www.pushbikes.org.uk/members/sudoku.html>

5	8			3				
3						8	4	
		9	5				6	
		3		1				
7			3		4			2
				6		4		
	2				1	3		
	6	8						7
				9			5	4

Medium



# Travels with a Dahon

Ann Griffiths

I had got heartily fed-up with all the ifs and buts of taking an 'ordinary' full-sized bicycle on the railway, so when the tax office wrote to me, telling me that instead of my owing them money they actually owed me some, I thought I'd put all of it towards a new folding bicycle.

I decided, mainly on the shopkeeper's advice, to go for a Dahon Vitesse. There were, for me, two important criteria, lightness of weight and ease of folding. I think the bike is a little heavier than I would have liked at just under 15kg unloaded (if I'd chosen one that was much lighter, I was told, I'd have to pay a lot more) but the folding is a dream.

**How much?** Altogether it cost me in the region of £600 which is the sum I've insured it for. I wanted a few bells and whistles added, apart from the 'real' bell that was already on it. I needed a bottle holder, as I get quite thirsty, even on short rides and even going at the slow speed I do. Another item I find necessary is a carrying rack and I had to buy special narrow rear panniers (quite expensive).

The tyres are 20 X 150 and have a good deep tread; I'm told they're puncture-resistant (no tyres, sadly, are puncture-proof). I've also had slime injected into the inners so they're hopefully even less likely to puncture. I pondered the easiest way of carrying a pump but was told that my worries were unnecessary; a pump is concealed in the saddle stem. The handlebar grips are good and the saddle comfortable; I don't ask for any more. Like the vast majority of folding bikes, so I'm led to believe, it comes with its own stand, so it can be folded and unfolded easily. The chain is enclosed in a cover. I wondered what I should do if the chain comes off and was assured that it doesn't. I've had lights put on, and marvel at how much lighter in weight they are than when I restarted cycling fifteen years ago.

I like a computer when I'm cycling because I find it invaluable when navigating and had to have an electronic

one, again quite expensive.

**Folding:** there are five steps, very simple to perform, and I don't think all are strictly necessary if I'm in a hurry. First, the handlebars twist back on themselves, then the handlebar stem folds downwards. There is a fold in the middle of the bike, so the front portion folds back on itself and the two wheels are parallel. The bike came equipped with a special tape to keep them together but I prefer to use a bungee lead. The saddle post retracts and can be easily lowered or raised and the pedals flip through 90 degrees. Altogether the operation takes some 3-4 minutes, at the most.

**Carrying things:** One pannier stays in place when the bike is folded. The other I put into a very light nylon rucksack (folds and goes inside the pannier when out of use) and goes on my back. It carries things I might need on the train journey. I try to carry the minimum I can – drink, sandwiches, light waterproof jacket, lights and head torch, mobile phone and map(s) and compass.

**Exploring:** So far, I've only done rides that don't need a change of train, and there are plenty to choose from. I've also only done circular rides although travelling by train lends itself to linear rides. Living in the south-west of Birmingham, I find it easier to get eastwards by train than by car and there are certainly fewer hills going east of the West Midlands than there are in places such as the Welsh Borderlands.

A very pleasant 33 mile cycle ride from Haddern was an excellent introduction to the joy riding a folder. It was easily accessible from Birmingham using the Chilterns line from Snow Hill or Moor Street. Details should be on the website rides page soon.

The Folding Society run similar rides for folding bikes on the second Saturday of each month. You don't have to have a folder to come: it's a good way to try out various folding bikes if you're thinking of getting one. See <http://www.foldsoc.co.uk/> for details.

## In the Press

### Portsmouth 20 mph experience: cyclist & pedestrian casualties down

In March 2008 all residential roads in Portsmouth, bar arterial routes, were given a speed limit of 20 mph. Preliminary details of the results reported at "Portsmouth - Britain's First 20 mph City" Conference, 29th September 2009 are on the 20's plenty for us website at <http://www.20splentyforus.org.uk/portsmouth.htm>

*But what was very significant was the fact that in those streets where speeds previously were 24 mph or above then a huge 7mph reduction in mean speed was recorded. Whilst casualties also fell by 15% and total accidents by 13%, more time will be needed to*

*establish statistically significant collision figures.*

*However, the presenter noted the changes in child and elderly casualties in before and after numbers :-*

	Children 0-15	Elderly 70+
<b>Pedestrians</b>	-4%	-25%
<b>Passengers</b>	-22%	-25%
<b>Driver/rider</b>	-9%	-36%
<b>All</b>	-8%	-31%

### ► Portsmouth 20mph experiment

The other feature of the Portsmouth 20mph zones is that they don't have speed humps. Humps don't slow SUVs or vans which can straddle them at speed. As Graham pointed out in a recent newsletter, they're no fun for cyclists either. Not having humps is excellent.

However, David Hembrow reports that, even in Holland, as drivers get used to 30kph limits they break the limit more often & casualty rates rise, though they are still well below pre -30kpm limits. As the recent Parliamentary report highlighted, effective traffic policing - examples are France and Australia - could increase compliance with speed limits and reduce injuries.

Given the likelihood that the public funding for roads, especially cycling facilities, will be reduced to keep the bankers on bonus, perhaps the the Portsmouth experiment is the only realistic way of making cycling safer & more attractive?

This is in stark contrast to the DfT figures for spring 2009 which "showed" a 19% rise in deaths & serious injuries of cyclists compared to the same period in 2008.

Interestingly less severe injuries only rose by 10%. The figures for motorcyclists were 5% and 2% respectively.

The Independent reported that:

A DfT spokesperson said: "Provisional estimates for a single three-month period should not be taken in isolation, and the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on the roads each year has fallen by 31 per cent since the mid-1990s."

Which of course didn't stop alarmist headlines. This may well turn out to be a random variation due to the short sampling period. Also, how up to date is the denominator - the number of cyclists/miles cycled? Did the recession lead to more inexperienced cyclists on the road?

The DfT also reported that car traffic increased by 1 per cent compared with summer 2008, light van traffic rose by 3 per cent and heavy goods vehicle traffic fell by 7 per cent.

In the long run even a 19% rise of a small risk of death is far outweighed by the proven health benefits of cycling in reducing cardiovascular problems, cancer etc.

## Effect of 20 mph traffic speed zones on road injuries in London, 1986-2006: controlled interrupted time series analysis

In the December 10th BMJ, researchers at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine reported that:

*"The introduction of 20 mph traffic speed zones in London has reduced road injuries by over 40%. The greatest benefits were found among younger children and in the numbers killed or seriously injured."*

The study compared police data on road casualties between 1986-2006 in areas with 20mph zones with adjacent areas without.

**In the new 20mph zones, there was a 41.9% reduction in those killed and seriously injured (KSI).**

The comparison with adjacent areas allowed correction factors which may have changed over time. The sample was large so the result is reliable, i.e. 95% certain that the reduction was between 36% and 47.8%. Indeed, the casualty rates in the adjacent non-20mph areas fell slightly by 8%.

Another interesting observation was that **the reduction was greatest for young children**, especially for death & serious injury and less so for minor injuries. This is a common finding in 20mph zones and reflects the fact that being hit at 20mph substantially reduces the risk of KSI compared to being hit at higher speed.

The lower risk of 'accidents' overall is, presumably, due to drivers, cyclists & pedestrians having more time to

observe & react to unexpected circumstances at a slower speed. There was no evidence that casualty rates in adjacent areas had risen, as might be expected if the cause of the reduced KSI was due to cars avoiding the 20mph zones.

All in all a very thorough analysis.

The study also found that there was a large reduction in car occupants injuries: a win win all round.

### %Reduction in KSI

	20mph zones	adjacent areas
<b>Pedestrians</b>		
all	32.4%	4.3%
0-15	46.2%	5.3%
<b>Cyclists</b>		
all	37.6%	-2.1%
<b>Car occupants</b>		
all	61.8%	24.4%

The report can be viewed at

[http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/339/dec10\\_3/b4469](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/reprint/339/dec10_3/b4469).

Which suggests that the Portsmouth figures will, as numbers increase over time, be an accurate reflection of the value of 20mph zones.

\* not a racy title but a really solid piece of work.

Thanks to Ann for sharing her experience with her new folder & James Le Grys for the Sudokus. John Pitcock's article shows how different the noughties are from the eighties when 1500 people just did the GMBR. Now a ride for 150 people would require real organisation,

significant resources & working with the Police, Councils etc?

It would be really helpful to get some feedback by emailing [tell\\_us@pushbikes.org.uk](mailto:tell_us@pushbikes.org.uk). David Little