



CYCLETALK

Produced by CTC Scotland

a part of the UK's national cyclists' organisation

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John Taylor – an appreciation

John died on 13 July this year, at the age of 79, after a long battle with prostate cancer. He was one of Scotland's best-known and longest-serving cycle advocates, active as a volunteer for CTC for over 25 years and, until recently, still seeking and promoting innovative cycle projects.

Nationally



At the national level his main contribution was to represent cycling interests in the development of the access legislation, which came to fruition with the launch of the Outdoor Access Code in 2005. John continued as the cycling representative on the National Access Forum to monitor the legislation and the Code in operation, and secured that representation on behalf of CTC, fighting off competition from a number of other cycling bodies. These latter are still involved however, thanks to John setting up an advisory group to which all can contribute.

Still at national level, John was instrumental in establishing what is now CTC Scotland, in the days when regionalisation was not conceived, and long before Scotland had its own parliament. CTC Scotland worked well enough for other regions to look to it as a model.

Locally

At local level John fought tirelessly for cycling in Dumfries and Galloway, and in 2003 established the 'Discovery' rides, aimed at local people and those who cycle little, to discover local places of interest by bike. He did a lot of historical research in the process, and cycled thousands of miles to work out the best routes.

As recently as 2008 he was involved in setting up the 'Wheely Easy' rides, short guided rides to inspire novices to 'have a go'. Those who have organised such rides know how hard it is for an experienced cyclist to go at the snail's pace of the novice – a true sign of dedication!

To co-ordinate local cycling activity, John was a founder-member of the Galloway Cycling Group, and steered it to become an independent Member Group as Dumfries and Galloway CTC, which now has its own website.

KM Rally

John was also a founder of the KM Rally, which began officially in 1990 as KM150, a celebration of 150 years since Kirkpatrick Macmillan invented

his bicycle, but John took part in a pioneering ride the year before, KM149, and even a KM148! And he has been one of a very small committee running the Rally ever since, bringing hundreds of tourists to an area excellent for cycling but so little known.

Influence and outreach

John was not only dedicated, but organised and efficient, and had a way of persuading people by sheer persistence and determination, and a great enthusiasm for all things cycling. He was influential both within CTC Scotland and with external organisations, from SNH to the Forestry Commission to the local cycling officer. He was a member of the Rough Stuff Fellowship long before most of today's mountain bikers were a twinkle in their dads' eye. From 1991 he was employed by the Forestry Commission (his former employer) to co-ordinate cycle trails in Dumfries and Galloway, and this established around 200 miles of cycle routes. The work he put in has done much to bring off-road cycling in Scotland to what it is today, a significant leisure industry and a source of income and jobs in remote rural areas.

He celebrated his 70th birthday by riding the End to End, and characteristically didn't just do it for himself but raised substantial sums for local charities. For his 75th, he worked out a Scottish 'end-to-end' (Mull of Galloway to Cape Wrath) and rode it. His contributions to CTC and all things cycling were recognised officially in 2005, when he was nominated Volunteer of the Year for Scotland, and went on to win the National Volunteer of the Year Award.

John and the Future of CTC in Scotland

His greatest ambition was for CTC to have a professional (ie paid) presence in Scotland, to bring us into line with bodies like the Ramblers and the Horse Society. He argued, correctly, that Scotland is more than a 'region' but a nation with its own Government and legislation, which requires more than just a voluntary presence to be handled properly. John said his regret, when he knew the end was near, was that he would not see the arrival in the autumn of a Bike Club cycling development officer and the other options for professional CTC workers in the pipeline, but he took comfort from knowing that all his groundwork was coming to fruition.

John's achievements are all the more remarkable in view of his long-term hearing problem (he never complained), and recently, family problems which would for anyone else have taken all their time and energy, but which John fitted in without let-up of his work for cycling. He combined this with several other interests – choral singing, and gardening, at which he excelled as in so much else.



Deadline for copy for CycleTalk is the 1st of Jan, Mar, May, Jul, Sept, Nov. Contributions from individual members as well as Rtr and Local Groups reps is welcomed [by email of words and/or pictures].

the funeral



Peter Hawkins sent this message to regular KM Rally-goers

If you haven't already heard, I'm sorry to tell you that John Taylor died on Monday 13th July. John was, as you know, one of the main organisers and indeed, founder of the Rally, for the 20 years of its existence, and as well as organising it he often led rides and contributed slide shows.

For those who did not hear in time or were not able to attend, I will tell you a little about the funeral, which was a remarkable experience.

John had chosen a 'green burial', at a designated site about 4km north of Kirkcudbright. It was suggested that those attending should ride from the town in procession (on bikes, in suitable clothing), which over 50 of us did, with a further approx 20 people going up by car.

The site was marked only by the name of the farm (Glenley) at the road entrance, which took us along a farm track over 1km in length, quite steep, and rutted. The weather was awful - heavy rain and wind. The track took us over a hill and into a wild valley, with a few trees but mainly open. The grave was ready-dug with the coffin resting over it. There were no buildings around, nor shelter of any kind. We parked the bikes nearby and walked up to the grave, gathering round the celebrant, a woman called Erica from the Humanist Society.

She spoke of John's life, of his interests, his enthusiasm, his optimism, and some of the contributions he made, especially in the cycling world. It was a very interesting and moving speech. Then Brian Curtis spoke for a few minutes, on behalf of CTC Scotland, again mentioning what John had done in founding CTC Scotland, and in paving the way for the Cycling Development Project which eventually became the government-funded 'Cycling Scotland'.

The coffin was then gently lowered into the grave, which, beneath the thin layer of soil, was solid rock.

We were then all invited to the family house, near Castle Douglas, for refreshments, and went in procession back to Kirkcudbright.

I'm sure John would have been delighted with everything about this ceremony - the site, the speeches, and the sight of so many cyclists all sharing the chance to say farewell. But not the weather!

The ceremony was attended by people representing not just cycling but some of the organisations on which John had represented us - Kevin Mayne, Director of CTC, had come up from Guildford; Iain Findlay, director of Paths for All, was there, as was John Mackay from SNH and Peter McCormick from the Sustainable Travel Unit of D&G Council - an indication of the respect in which John was held.



Gathering II 3rd Oct 2009, 10:00-16:00
Stirling

open to all CTC Members to guide future of CTC
Scotland

if not already booked phone 0131 448 0930 or
email secretary@ctcscotland.org.uk

Tribute to John Taylor: from John Foster

"Keep Going Strong"

My memories of John Taylor go back to the summer of 1992. I tried to book a place in a cycling holiday that John was organising, only to be told that by then the holiday had been cancelled due to lack of uptake. However, always ready to suggest alternative arrangements, John offered me B & B in his own house.



Thus I found myself being the guest of Florrie and John for five or six days. I observed at first hand John's commitment to all things cycling and his love and care for the natural environment. I noted his untiring effort, his tenacity and dogged pursuit of his objectives to improve cycling facilities.

I enjoyed the warmth and calm of the household and the contrast between Florrie and John: while they seemed to be total opposites in character they made a happy combination. John, of course, introduced me to some of the best rides in Dumfries and Galloway and pointed out on the map places of interest I may have otherwise peddled past. On a couple of occasions he accompanied me on the route, sharing his knowledge and enthusiasm.

Since then, coupled with my admiration of John for his untiring efforts and willingness to put himself forward (always more effective in his presentation than appearances at first led one to hope), I have always regarded John as a friend and over the years have kept in touch. In sending the occasional card John would usually sign off with the words: **"Keep going strong"**.

Perhaps that was his motto. Hopefully, the rest of us still left to pedal more miles will make it our own and help John's efforts to bear fruit.

We can all keep John's legacy alive at Gathering II in Stirling on 03 Oct