



CYCLETALK

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AGM

CTCS held its AGM towards the end of January. John Taylor is once again the Chair. We have a new Vice-Chair - Mike Bonar from Lothians - who has agreed to chair the committee meetings. The 'Scottish Futures' Group continues to meet, but is making slow progress with ideas to develop CTC in Scotland.

Cycling for Women

In the Fifties thousands of women used cycles as their main means of mobility. Very few families had cars, and often the women didn't have access to them, so for shopping, getting to work and meeting children at school the bike was the way it was done. Now the majority of women have never used a bike (played on one possibly, but not used it as a tool). So the aim is that the first weekend in June CTC members make an effort to get other women out on bikes. Will you help in your local area with this - either with the DA if you are within reach of a local group, or on your own or with other cycling friends?

Cycle Forums

Is there a cycle forum in your area? If not, how do you communicate with your Council? Perhaps you find that direct personal contact between cyclists and council elected members or council staff works well enough. Those areas which do have a more formal arrangement with regular meetings usually find that they help to move things along, and that they provide a recognised channel to liaise not only when there is a crisis, but to be involved in consultation at early stages and for cycling organisations (not only CTC but also other campaigning and service organisations) to have input.

Having a Cycle Forum is a benefit to the Council as the Forum can be consulted by the Council and they get informed comment which can help them promote cycling. Responses from individuals and the media are not always helpful!

The Aberdeen Cycle Forum is relatively young (about 2 years) but already well-established, and meets monthly. It even runs a website so that ordinary cyclists can see what the Forum does for them.

The Edinburgh Cycle Forum is older and meets quarterly. It may be significant that the Aberdeen one meets in the evening, but the Edinburgh one at 09:30. The Aberdeen system is more convenient for cyclists (some do have jobs, they are not all retired!), but the Edinburgh one means that we can get a range of council employees there (Executive Member for Transport - who chairs the meeting, Planning Department, Cycling Officer, someone from t.i.e. who are promoters of the tram; often as many as 6 council staff from different departments).

The CTC Councillor would like to know something about the other Cycle Forums in Scotland - what they do, how they operate and how successful they are. He would also be interested to hear from any local group in an area which does not have a Forum which is interested in finding out more about how to work to set one up. Between us, those who have them may be able to give some advice.

Bookings are now being taken. Brochure and booking forms on the web at www.ctcscotland.org.uk/br2006

If you don't have web access, phone 0870 873 0061 and ask for one to be posted to you.

We are now starting to sort out the part-time jobs that will need to be done. We have had a few volunteers, but are now appealing for more. There are two main jobs (in addition to the toilet-cleaning ones!) for which we need volunteers:

Ride Guides/Leaders: The family rides will have a Leader and a back-marker. The Leader will act as a normal ride leader and keep the group together and make sure that the group is safe. There will not be unaccompanied children, so it's not too much responsibility. Preferably the Leader should be a CTC-Registered Volunteer Leader. If you lead club rides you will be registered. For the D and possibly the C rides we are looking for a Guide who can follow a route card and will ride a route, not necessarily at the front, and not 'managing' the group.

Stewards: We need people who will look after the doors at the social events. It's not just collecting tickets at the start, but also to ensure that we don't have more people in the halls than the regulations allow, and to satisfy fire, licensing and safety regulations.

Despite what you may have read in an earlier issue of Cycle, we are not offering a free week's holiday in exchange for an hour or so of work - it is volunteers we are asking for - but we will offer some small recompense for those who take a bit of weight off the shoulders of the Organising Committee.

If you can help with either of the two jobs above, please contact Mike Harrison (BR2006@CTCScotland.org.uk or 0131 554 7773) and details will be passed on to Betty Howard who has kindly agreed to coordinate the volunteers.

Bike Week - outreach

The same applies to Bike Week as to the Women's Weekend. It's meant to be PROMOTION to non-cyclists or occasional cyclists. We can have a good time as well, but it is intended to be an opportunity for outreach. So let's make sure that we organise Bike to Work events, Come-and-Try-it events, show people routes they can safely use so that the bike can be a means of transport for any of the family, not just a children's toy to be discarded when childhood is done. Yes and we can have a fun ride to a beauty spot or the beach and have a picnic or a barbecue. But remember, if we want to get new cyclists (and new members joining the club) it's no good having the picnic 25 miles away from the start. Most of us may think nothing of a 50-mile round trip in the middle of June, but it's no good for the uninitiated.

The Try Cycling in Edinburgh rides have never done more than 14 miles round trip (one coming up at the end of March is only 6 miles) and with a lunch stop take about 4 to 5 hours. And if you are doing rides like this, get helpers who appreciate the pace and intention. A club member who is impatient or pushing the punters too hard can do a lot of damage. Yes, you have to encourage - persuade people to use gears, somehow get over the idea that to make a bike go you do have to expend some effort and chivvy people along, but there are ways to do it, and ways not to do it.

CTC Scotland

Sec: Isobel Fletcher, Secretary@CTCScotland.org.uk, +44 (0)141 663 0289

Web Sites

CTC Scotland: www.ctcscotland.org.uk
Cycling Scotland: www.cyclingscotland.org

Eats, shoots and cycles

Edinburgh cyclist Peter Hawkins was invited to spend the day on a pheasant shoot in Royal Deeside – all in aid of mutual understanding

Scotland's access legislation, which gives the right to roam responsibly virtually anywhere, is now a year old. Although some problems have surfaced, fears that the legislation would provoke widespread conflict between user groups and landowners have not been realised.

To promote mutual understanding, the Access Officer for the Scottish federation of landowners, (the SRPBA), has initiated a series of one-day events pairing landowners with user groups.

The first of these was to pair cycling with pheasant shooting. A cyclist would spend the day with a landowner on a shoot, and the landowner would accompany the cyclist on a bike ride. Their mutual impressions, and observations and thoughts on access and any problems arising, would be written up by a journalist, and published in the weekly 'Scottish Farmer'. This is how it turned out:

1 Expectations

Impressions begin with expectations of the event. Picture a bitterly cold day, bright sunshine, little or no wind, hard frost on the ground. Days like this are ideal for cycling; you keep warm with the exercise, and when you stop, you go into a cafe or pub.

But what would shooting be like? How active would I be? Would I be marching across hillsides, or standing around hoping not to freeze? Would it be open country, exposed – or forest or woodland? Hilltops, or sheltered valley?

Pheasant shooting as a sport seems not to arouse the sort of controversy found with hunting. Personally, I'm quite partial to a road-kill pheasant in good condition. This is game for taking home, hanging, plucking and enjoying 3 or 4 tasty meals from.

2 Activities of the day

We met up in a warm office. Malcolm the owner of the estate, Dick the journalist, Janice the SRPBA Access Officer, and me. Taken out onto the estate in very battered jeep whose doors were frozen and wouldn't close, we discovered the shooting moves around the estate during the day, each session being called a 'drive'. This is picture postcard country – surrounded by River Dee, undulating, pastoral, with remnants of ancient woodland on former river banks.

Beaters scare the pheasants out of the woods, birds fly across open ground, shooters (referred to as 'the syndicate') stand in line. If the front line misses, the back guns have a second chance. Pheasants come out in droves. The guns crash, echoes reverberate round the hills. A few birds fall, most fly on to live another day.

After the first 'drive', the syndicate produce a bottle of hooch and pass it round. On a cold morning that's the bit I like. I don't often start my drinking at 9.30 am though.

We lurch off in the jeep to the second 'drive', which happens to be right next to a public road, albeit one with so little traffic that nothing passed in the half-hour we were there. This time we couldn't see the guns but had a good view of the beaters, working in line across open ground. They put up fewer birds than before. I found out later that Kevin, who organises the shoots and is a man of great skill, experience and charm, always tries to start and finish the day with a rewarding drive and puts the leaner ones in between.

We all meet at the steading for a coffee generously laced with Bailey's. I could get used to this life!

On to the third drive, where we visitors are put with an individual gun. Not many birds, so plenty of time to talk. My shooter, Cameron, tells me lots about what's going on and is very happy to field all my questions.

After lunch back at the Office, Malcolm, Dick and I do the cycling bit. We ride about two miles along a very minor road to Potarch, a hamlet beside the Dee, all part of the estate still. Potarch has a huge 'village green' (quite unusual in Scotland), a hotel, a lovely bridge across the river, lots of woodland, rapids, all very picturesque. In the summer, it's a honeypot. We discuss the access problems this causes.

We return via forest tracks, quite rugged in parts, much hillier than the road. Malcolm explains about plantations and regeneration of the forest, reversion to natural woodland, problems keeping deer out. Why don't we see any deer? Well the estate has some very efficient stalkers for one thing!

As we reach the Office at dusk, the guns are still blazing away in the distance.

Impressions

I discovered how much organisation and skill is required to set up a successful shoot. From rearing or procuring the birds, providing cover for them, choosing locations for the shoot, the layout of the guns, the need for backup in form of beaters and pickers-up – the latter, with a mob of dogs, go round collecting all the fallen birds.

I learnt a lot about estate and land management and related access issues, as well as about shooting.

As for access issues, there was essentially no conflict of interests here between users and landowners. There are very few walkers or cyclists in the area, which is remote. A potential conflict might arise from the need for relative silence during a drive, and for user groups not disturbing the birds before the beaters arrive.

We discussed whether the landowner should put up temporary signs warning

DATC/Audax

The Scottish Audax season got under way with the Tour of East Lothian with its usual weather - no risk of participants becoming dehydrated or suffering from hyperthermia. For the uninitiated, an Audax event is not a race, but a personal challenge. You ride a route with various control points and for each control point there is an earliest time at which you can check in (so you can't go too fast) and a latest time (so you don't dawdle). This means that as long as you don't plan a lunch stop of an hour and a half but keep a steady speed with short breaks it's not much different from one of your ordinary rides. Of course if you go on a 200k or longer Audax, the average speeds are set a bit higher.

The DATC includes all kinds of events of which Audax is only one. They can be cycle orienteering, off-road participation events, Hill-climbs and several others. One aim of the DATC is to encourage people to go to events away from the home patch. Basically you get points for being there and taking part. You get bonus points for events away from your local DA. You are encouraged to do a range of different events (and that includes Audax events of different lengths) as if you repeat one type of event you score one point less for that than you did for the first one.

At the end of the year there is a winner. In 2005 the Crawford family wiped the board as far as Scotland was concerned.

Here is what's on offer in April and May in Scotland (DATC and Audax)

- Apr 09 Galashiels 170k (Paddy's Springtime Challenge) and 200k (Moffat Toffee)
- Apr 16 Forfar 100k (Scone the flat way)
- Apr 23 Forfar 100k (Kirkmichael & Glen Isla)
- May 07 Forfar 200k (Deeside Loop)
- May 21 Forfar 112k (Braes of Carse)

In addition there are other Audaxs which are not also DATC events

- Apr 02 Dalmeny 210k (Kingdom of Fife) and 107k (Twa Wee Counties)
- Apr 22 Dalmeny 415k (Go Forth to Firth)
- Apr 30 Alloway 150k Kirkpatrick Macmillan
- May 13 Beattock 400k (Ower the Edge)
- May 27 Traquair 304k (Broggie Braes)

of a shoot in progress. This however would be difficult, because there are so many locations during the day, because walkers might come from any direction, and because there are so few users that conflict is unlikely. In any case it would be obvious to a casual walker or cyclist that a shoot was in progress, and any member of the party could shout a warning if needed.

Malcolm told us more generally about access problems on the estate. These arise mainly at Potarch, which in summer suffers litter, erosion of the river bank etc. He has a management deal with the Council to help with clearing up.

More generally, we agreed that access problems, such as occur, have always occurred; the new legislation hasn't changed things much, or not yet anyway. And the solution to any conflict is basically the same as ever – *courtesy* and consideration on both sides, and a willingness to *communicate*, eg to explain to a user about the need for silence, or in the case of stalking, for them to keep away from that area for a short time. Successful access can be summed up as the three C's: **communication, courtesy and co-existence**.

We also agreed that most users, even regular outdoor types, tend to be gregarious and not inclined to explore on their own. This means they stick to well-known and well-tried routes. So although the forest tracks we cycled would make excellent mountain bike trails, the chances of meeting any actual riders there are minimal, simply because it's not an area that's known about. Landowners would have to put in a lot of effort to attract bikers, if they wished to, and as the Forestry Commission already provide excellent facilities at small cost, there is little incentive for others to enter the market.

We also noted that conflict, when it arises, is as likely to be between different user groups as between landowners and users. An example would be pedestrian/cyclist conflict on paths, especially in urban areas. Again, the three C's apply.

Conclusion

This was a limited exercise in mutual understanding but it opened up a wide-ranging discussion of many access issues relevant to the current legislation.

Peter Hawkins campaigns on behalf of CTC (Scotland) and CTC Right to Ride for better cycle facilities. He is also an active member of 'Spokes', the Lothians Cycle Campaign, where he works on planning matters, and is involved with production of the dedicated cycle maps of Edinburgh and the Lothians.

He represents cycling on West Lothian Access Forum (including membership of the Steering Group), and on Edinburgh Access Forum. He is also a member of the Edinburgh Cycling Forum.

He has published a book of cycle rides in Edinburgh and the Borders, a Cyclists' Guide to the Tweed Cycleway, and an introductory 'Edinburgh for Cyclists'.