

EDITORIAL

Has the summer been and gone? How did we manage to get what will probably be the best 3 or 4 days of weather at the time of CTC's AGM? It was certainly frustrating to be sitting inside the Holyrood Hotel glancing out of the windows at the sun on Arthur's Seat on the Saturday afternoon, being convinced that the weather would not hold for the Sunday. We were wrong. I suffered the first sunburn of the year on Sunday and about 25-30 riders were out for the two rides provided, including local DA members and visitors.



The AGM itself was something of a formality – there was no dissension in the voting. This is not a sign of indifference or failure, but of careful preparation and planning. The main feature was the presentation of the Annual Report by Kevin Mayne where he outlined the progress the Club has made in the last few years and what still needs to be done now that we are halfway through the Vision2000 development plan. No doubt this will be reported elsewhere, but in the course of the meeting there were some references to the benefits and problems of the distinctiveness of CTC Scotland and the task of building up the other regional structures.

The Dinner began with, if not a bang, an alarming feature. Just as the MC was announcing that we should move from the foyer to the dining room the fire alarm went off and we had an unexpected 15 minutes of entertainment as 4 fire engines appeared to investigate. Shortly we were back inside, but about 30 minutes later there was a strong smell of burning came in through the open windows. This was never explained, but we had no further evacuations, and proceeded through the dinner, the speeches and the Prizegiving, which finished at about 11.30. Over 100 attended..

CTC Scotland

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Why are the Birthday Rides like the Olympics?

No it's not that you have to be super-fit, or that there's only one winner, it's the organisation and structure that I'm thinking of.

- Both involve a lot of participants who are there with a purpose – either to enjoy an experience or to win a prize.
- Both involve a lot of hard work for months or years prior to the event to provide the participants with the experience they seek.
- Both have become more difficult to manage in recent years as costs have risen, whether the costs are getting the right people to do the organisation and management or simple cash.
- Both have become more difficult to run because of issues safety and security – in our case things like Health & Safety with respect to camping and food, road safety for group riding and child protection, in the case of the Olympics the threat of terrorism.

The overall result of these issues is that both events are harder to run each year, and while everyone would like to host the events the hosting group or country is taking on a great responsibility.

In the case of CTC, it is the case that most DAs, certainly in Scotland, would find it difficult to manage the Birthday Rides. CTC Scotland has been discussing this, and at one time we were thinking of putting in a bid for the rides to be held in Scotland in 2005. We can't manage that timescale, but would like to bid for 2006. It would need the cooperation of more than one DA, although one might take the lead, so we see it as being a CTC Scotland promotion rather than that of a DA. While we have a lot of good areas for Birthday Ride events, finding place with suitable accommodation is more difficult. We also have to consider how far people will have to travel to get to the venue – while Buchan might be fine cycling territory, the folk from the Midlands might not be prepared to travel, and we probably have to keep that area to ourselves.

If you have ideas for a place which could be the centre for the Birthday Rides, please tell us. The main thing is a range of B&Bs, camp sites, schools or colleges which could be brought in for catering and/or accommodation

Web Sites

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

"Holiday Cottages" - Pat Harrow

The 'missing issue' had a piece about Club Huts. If you haven't got all your holidays planned, have you thought about making more use of huts owned by the DAs? Most are underused, and most DAs are quite willing to let members from other areas use them.

Several hostels run by the SYHA have been closed in recent years while the number of independent hostels has increased. Details of most of these are easy to find as there are a number of independent hostel publications or web sites.

I thought that CTC members might like to know the location of Huts where they can stay overnight. To use the cliché, use them or lose them! If we are going to have another sunny summer, then they sound great. If you know of any others whose whereabouts are not widely known, please let us have details for a future edition of Cycle Talk. If the ones below sound too luxurious, George Berwick can recommend some caves!

Loch Earn Hut

This four bunk hut in woods on the south side of Loch Earn is available to members of some other Scottish DAs. It contains very simple facilities with basic sanitation and no heating. The water supply is not drinkable. Not as bad as it sounds, but better avoided in the midge season! For more details and booking, contact Fife and Kinross DA, c/o Margaret Berwick, Midcraigs, Balmerino, Newport-on-Tay, DD6 8RN. Phone 01382 330217.

Ben Ledi Hut

Is sited on forestry land overlooked by Ben Ledi on the shores of Loch Lubnaig about six miles along the cycle track from Callander to Strathyre at Stank. The hut sleeps eight people in three dorms (2x2 bed dorm, 1x4 bed dorm). There are radiators fitted in all rooms and the hut is fully double glazed. The central area has a full kitchen and dining area. Cost is £5 per person per night and at present electricity is included in the price. Duvets are provided but you will need a hostel type sheet liner. We think the hut offers a simple but comfortable base to explore this area of Scotland. To book either contact Glasgow DA, Ronnie Chard 01389 976 4120, William Dickson 01698 827976, e-mail dickson82@msn.com or Angus Walker 0141 637 8966.

The Cyclists' Bothy (Bell's), Morham, east of Haddington.

Great cycling country! Aiming to open for overnight stays after completing the shower and WC extension. There is no parking for overnight stays. For further information contact Rupert Sherwood, 01620 895752 or 01620 890113 or mail@bothies.com

Albert Watson Memorial Hut (beside A701, 10k south of Broughton)

For £3 a night you can stay beside the Quilt Burn near Tweedsmuir, with a friendly pub about half-a-mile away. Self-catering. Gas cooking, coal heating, basic sanitation. Newly-installed running water supply (shared with adjacent cottage) – boil before drinking. Duvets provided, sheet sleeping bags needed. Twelve beds in two rooms, plus small 'Leaders Room' – or is it for the snorers or the ones with smelly feet? Living-room and Scullery.

There must be at least one adult CTC member in the party. Phone Ashley Watt (0131 440 1495) for more details and to book.

Campaigning

How well does your Council do? Provision on-road (whether by cycle-lanes and advanced stop lines etc. or just by making roads safer for cyclists), provision off-road (maintaining alternative routes, keeping paths free of standing water and mud etc.), maintaining road surfaces (most of the accusations that cyclists 'wobble all over the place' is because they are desperately trying to avoid buckling their rims in the many untreated pits in the road).

Your local Right-to-Ride rep can help when you have an issue. If you do write to either your Roads Engineers or Planners or your local Councillor, please copy your letter to the R-t-R person. On major issues, CTC will usually make a response at the appropriate level which will be the result of careful consideration. You can say that you are a member of CTC when you write with a suggestion or complaint, but please don't give the impression that you are making an official CTC response; this can be counter-productive.

A current example is the consultation which has just been issued by the Strategic Rail Authority "Cycling Policy". If you use trains in combination with a cycle, whether you cycle to the station and then get the train to work or tour taking your bike on the train to get to the touring area, you may have comments on what is currently missing. There will certainly be a CTC response to this, but you can make your own contribution. The document is available at www.sra.gov.uk

The SRA's objectives, set out in the draft cycling policy, are to:

- Encourage passengers to cycle to stations, especially as an alternative to driving;
- Encourage train operating companies (TOCs) to take into account the wider benefits of cycling when considering investment in cycle facilities and rules for carrying cycles;
- Encourage the provision of appropriate cycle parking facilities at stations;
- Continue to allow TOCs to determine appropriate facilities for carrying cycles on trains, to reflect specific circumstances; and
- Ensure clear information is available on facilities and rules for the carriage of cycles on trains

The SRA's aspiration is to see cycle parking facilities at all but the most lightly used stations within five years. The draft policy says TOCs should promote the carriage of cycles on off-peak trains. During the peak, carrying cycles should be left to the TOC's discretion, depending on circumstances such as passenger numbers. The carriage of compact folding cycles should be promoted on all services, the document says.

Your R-t-R Rep...

Do you know who it is? If not, contact John Taylor (01556 670395) or Peter Hawkins (0131 443 6712) to get names and contact details.

Hopetoun House

Some good news – the Blue gate at Hopetoun House has now been modified so that cyclists can get through as well as pedestrians. This opens up, after three years of closure, an east-west route parallel with, and not far from, the Forth estuary, giving access from S Queensferry out to West Lothian. Avoiding Hopetoun Estate altogether would mean a very circuitous route and a lot of unnecessary hills, so we have always been adamant that the Estate route be re-opened to us.

The modifications were delayed while negotiations took place to determine the route through the Estate. The Trust, who operate the House, don't want the public through the grounds immediately surrounding the House, because they want to charge for entrance. But cyclists are mostly not interested in the House and just want a right of passage through the Estate, as we have in fact had for as long as anyone can remember, until the route was barred 3 years ago.

It has now been agreed that cyclists can an alternative and quite ancient carriage way, which keeps within the Estate but avoids the Trust property. But this requires modifications to another gate, the so-called Quarry Gate, which is now barred by a kissing gate which is too tight for a cycle.

Fortunately the Trust have agreed that cyclists can use the existing route past the House, on an interim basis until the Quarry Gate is made passable.

Events

The racers, the Audaxers and the DATCers will have their season planned – for some it's an event every weekend – but what about you and me? Do we ever go out to cycle with other people? Many members never join in Club Runs, and indeed there's no compulsion to, but I would like to suggest to them that if they tried it, they might find something they would enjoy. There's a whole range of activities both locally and nationally, and something to suit all tastes – easy club rides, harder club rides, taster rides for beginners, discovery rides (going somewhere on a bike to see something or do something), weekend Bike Bus trips, challenge rides, charity rides, youth hostelling weekends, organised tours, cycling rallies, cycle festivals. May to August is the prime time for all of these. Look in Cycle for the national (UK) lists, here for Scottish events, your local DA newsletter, and bike shops and libraries for other events which will include the many which are not CTC-based. Don't forget registered Bike Week events at www.bikeweek.org.uk.

Please support events. Try something new yourself. Take your neighbours and relations out on a bike ride. Take them along to easy beginners events. Get your kids out (with or without helmets!) and go along with them yourselves. And don't forget to tell them about CTC. It's the National Cyclists' Association – for all types of riders.

Photographs in this issue are all of the AGM and AGM Rides.

A830 at Arisaig

The Executive have published plans for upgrading an 8km stretch of the A830 Fort William to Mallaig trunk road, east from Arisaig. The road will be straightened and widened. The good news is that the plans include a cycle track beside the road. The bad news is that the old, scenic, winding, delightful, wooded road is to be grubbed up. This has already happened north of Arisaig, where a formerly charming road has been turned into a completely characterless and charmless means of getting from A to B. Albeit the grades are easier, but much of the new road is in cutting so there are no views.

CTC Right to Ride are objecting to the proposals on grounds of loss of the present amenity. We believe most cyclists who use the route are tourists, who are not in a hurry and would much prefer the quiet, wooded and scenic old road over its noisy and featureless replacement. Surely this is, or could be, a prime tourist attraction, where people could come and enjoy some leisure cycling in an unpressured and idyllic surrounding. It raises the question as to what Scotland is about. Is it about getting through it as fast as possible, to go somewhere else, or is it about enjoying the experience of the journey?

Ranged against us we have the Trunk Roads Division, who want the old road destroyed so they won't have the responsibility for maintenance, and SNH, who claim the area is environmentally sensitive. Though it's hard to see how the passage of a few cyclists could damage the environment, and the width of the road will reduce naturally as vegetation regenerates, leaving only enough room, maybe less than a metre width, for those who will use it. In any case, surely the environment has to be balanced against the importance of tourism to the economy, and the environmental gains of eco-friendly tourism such as cycling. And how can the bulldozing of a new road, and the extra traffic it will undoubtedly bring, be squared with ecological sensitivity? Should we not rather be introducing measures to reduce the traffic using the existing road? Just imagine the howls of protest that would create!

Three years ago we (cyclists) lost a stretch of old road in similar circumstances, the A86 at Laggan, which could have made an attractive off-road alternative. We don't want it to happen again. We hope to persuade as many parties as possible to send in objections before the 6 May deadline, but if the issue isn't resolved in our favour we shall ask any concerned cyclists to write to their MSPs. If you want to find out the latest news on progress, try the CTC Scotland website.



Update on access

The Access process grinds on to what we assume to be its inevitable conclusion, i.e., the announcement of the date of enforcement. By *next* CycleTalk, we *could* have it!

Things are happening though. For a start, hopefully the last consultation on procedures will have finished before you read this, that being the ministers' guidance to local authorities and national park authorities. It is to be hoped that all the amendments that we and others consider necessary will not hold things up again.

The other thing which should have happened by next issue is that the Scottish Outdoor Access Code will have been ratified by parliament. The way will then be clear for the enforcement date to be set. When the latter happens, there will be a mighty communal sigh throughout the land! – notwithstanding that that date will not be until at least November.

Access departments, whatever they might be called by your Council, are busy places. They are digesting all the guidance from government, SNH, lawyers, etc, to get their staff in place and trained. Most of them are making initial moves towards the establishment of their Local Access Forums. This is where we come in, and we should be gearing ourselves up too. That means many members, not just the top activists, for *all* the

access forums need us. If you feel that you could fill a vacancy, give us a shout! Or, rather, give your Council a shout; they and we will provide you with all the information you require to represent cycling, as CTC should.

The *National* Access Forum is being reconstituted. It will be 25 strong, including six users' organisations representatives. Cycling has been given a slot to itself, and you will expect and be pleased to hear that CTC has won that. All other cycling organisations can choose to be "corresponding" members, receiving all the papers, and probably having the chance to belong to sub-groups. At present, I am CTC's person and I have to keep in touch with the other groups.

Crunch time really is coming! E.g., locally, I have asked for maps on which to plot all routes which I know of which are traversible with a bike. I will categorise them according to present state, required treatment and prioritised urgency. Again, a real challenge will be to try to see that cycling is represented in local consultations, of which there will be hundreds throughout Scotland. Auditing the results will be another task. Even if we had paid staff in Scotland, all that work would still fall to volunteers to do. So, please, if you possibly can, lend a hand to help give Scotland the finest and most extensive rural cycle networks in the world!

Highland Bus News – more details soon

Rapsons are considering formally permitting bagged bikes on their express coach services linking Inverness to Fort William/Thurso/Ullapool.

Five local buses on Skye will be fitted with racks for up to 2 bikes.

On the Inverness-Durness service Tim Dearman carries bikes but he does need prior notice as he removes some seats to create the space.

NEWS... NEWS... NEWS...

WORK BEGINS ON NEW LAGGAN BIKING CENTRE (21/4/2004) Construction work has begun on the new mountain bike trails planned at Strathmashie Forest, near Laggan in Inverness-shire.

<http://www.forestry.gov.uk/news/115D03C7ED711619780256E75002F0F0C>

For the Diary

June 6 (Sun)	Scottish Vets from Stirling. All 3 rides are registered as DATC events. Details at www.CTCScotland.org.uk or from Peter Hawkins 118/1 Stenhouse Cresc., Edinburgh, EH11 3HU
June 12-20	BIKE WEEK
July 31-August 7	Birthday Rides – Great Longstone (Derbyshire)
August 20-25 (Fri-Wed)	Grampian Rally. Application forms by sending a S.A.E. to Cindy Blackmore, 57 Leslie Rd, Aberdeen; 01224 484891 Forms are at: www.ctcgrampian.org.uk

Details & booking forms for the Scottish Vets & Grampian Rally – go to www.CTCScotland.org.uk to read and download

All possible effort is made to ensure that facts in this newsletter are accurate. Please tell the editor of any inaccuracies – it's too late to correct what's in print, but most information is repeated on the web and can be corrected there.

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