

# Opinion Letters

**THIS MONTH** SECONDHAND BIKES, FROZEN DRIVETRAINS, EASY CHAIN CARE, POST-WAR TOURING, AND MORE



Max bought this hybrid for £45, then spent less than £35 fixing it up

## Letter of the month

### N plus zero

I really enjoyed reading the article regarding "N plus zero" in your Feb/Mar issue. Shiny bike syndrome is something we can all suffer from. In 2016 I spent over £500 on a new bike, the first new bike for me in more than 12 years. It was a well known and supposedly quality brand.

It turned out to be rubbish: over the course of a year I replaced all of the drivetrain, all of the brake and gear cables (the originals snapped), and most of the spokes in the rear wheel. It no longer resembles the bike I bought, and my son now has it.

Last October I picked up a tired Claud Butler Nexus, which I spotted on an online selling forum for £45. I replaced some components and converted it from a quill to a threadless stem. This was not expensive. All of the parts were supplied by a discount retailer (Bankrupt Bike Parts).

I now have an utterly reliable, nippy and comfortable bike for less than £80. In the times we are in when cash is likely to be stretched, it makes sense to give your bike a second look or check the small ads and dig out the tools before replacing it with this year's model.

Happy hunting!

**Max Bigham**

### Win a Green Oil bike care kit worth £64.99

The letter of the month wins an Eco Rider Deluxe set, courtesy of Green Oil. Green Oil's plant-based lubes and cleaners are fully biodegradable and contain no PTFE. The kit comprises: Green Oil Wet Chain Lube; Ecogrease; Green Clean Bike Cleaner; Clean Chain Degreaser; FSC Drive Chain Brush; two Bike Armour cable-rub protectors; an EcoRag; a reusable plastic tub for water or storage; and some seeds to grow your own food! For details, or to order Green Oil products, visit [green-oil.net](http://green-oil.net)



## Get in touch

**LETTERS** are edited for space, clarity and, if necessary, legality. The Editor reads and acknowledges all members' letters but publishes only a selection and doesn't enter into correspondence. Feedback for the next issue must arrive by 29 April. Please include your membership number.

**WRITE TO:** Cycle, PO Box 313, Scarborough, YO12 6WZ or email [editor@cyclingsuk.org](mailto:editor@cyclingsuk.org)



### Frozen freewheels

Thank you for the tip about frozen freehub pawls in Feb/Mar issue. Last week my mountain bike freehub failed catastrophically 20 miles from home in the South Downs National Park. No amount of hot water or wee was going to fix this problem. It was the cable ties through the cassette and round the spokes trick that saved the day and a 20-mile walk.

**Rob Hill**

Seventy years ago I had a paper round, requiring the use of my bike in all weathers. Occasionally the freewheel froze, threatening to make me late for school. In desperation I once bought a twopenny box of matches, struck a bundle of about ten together, applied the flame to the freewheel, and was soon on my way. As was once said about the derailleur: simple, brutal – but it worked!

**Bob Caldwell**



### Chain letter

Regarding the letter from Mark James titled "An unclean chain" in Cyclopedia in the Feb/Mar issue of Cycle: I would advise that the chain quality makes more difference than any cleaning regime.

In real-world testing over several years, we have found there to be a big difference in wear rates between cheap and more expensive chains. The brand of chain does not seem to make a huge difference; the model of chain within each brand's range does. For example, we have found that the Shimano HG71, Sram PC870 and KMC X8.93 can all achieve approximately twice the mileage of an HG41, PC830 or Z8.

In contrast, we have struggled to observe very much difference in wear rates between a clean and dirty chain on a commuting bike. We normally advise commuting customers to give their chain a quick wipe with a rag before applying new oil, but no more in-depth cleaning than that.

**Jake Voelcker, Bristol Bicycles**



## Post-war touring

Being somewhat long in the tooth myself, Val Higgs' article in Travellers' Tales evoked memories of post-war start-up cycling – 1946 for me. But what about legendary CTC tour leader Bob Kemp, whom I am sure Val was well acquainted with? Bob was actually taking a tour (in Switzerland, I think) when war was declared.

Eileen and I went on several of his tours in the '70s up to his last one in 1982 (Austrian Byways). Bob's organisational ability and detailed itineraries were outstanding. He usually included a bit of rough-stuff. One memorable occasion in the Dolomites was from Misurina over the Paternsattel (2,457m) to the Drei Zinnen hut. An unforgettable journey! Another one was in Switzerland from Leukerbad in the Rhône Valley over the Gemmi Pass to Kandersteg. The bikes went up in the cable car. It was out of this world.

There will never be his like again.

**Peter Holyoake**



## Tool station

In the foothills northwest of Marbella in a region called La Quinta there is a wide range of tracks for mountain bikes. At the approach of one of these I came across this device to assist riders. The box provides a pump and a range of tools. What a great way for the local administration to support cycling!

My road bike is resting against the box as this was the end of my ride – the track was too rough for this style of machine. To get this far I rode up a very steep road on my bike, past luxury apartments. The sign said it was 13% but at 7kph in 34/27 it felt steeper!

**Derek Mitchell**

## Everyday cycling

I'm writing to add my support to the call for articles on everyday cycling. More please! My husband and I always cycle in normal clothes when riding locally. It gives the impression that cycling is an everyday part of life. When shopping we put on a coat and shoes and get on the bike – no need to think further.

I'm glad that the new Highway Code changes give cyclists more protection, hopefully reinforcing what should have been the norm anyway: that we all look out for each other. As for the usual moan from motorists –

"They're not taxed/insured" – nobody said that in the '40s and '50s when virtually everybody cycled.

**Carol Attewell**

## Obituaries

Are published online at [cyclinguk.org/obituaries](http://cyclinguk.org/obituaries). Contact [publicity@cyclinguk.org](mailto:publicity@cyclinguk.org)



## Photo of the month

### Real cycling

Years ago I read a poem in Cycling World magazine by Brian Forster. It included the line: "She may not ride in time trials or do many miles each day, but she is just as much a cyclist and long may it stay that way." This image of my daughter Emily cycling in St Peter's Park, Little Eaton, Derbyshire, reminded me of it.

**Michael Wallis**

## CYCLING UK FORUM

Get immediate feedback from other members at [forum.cyclinguk.org](http://forum.cyclinguk.org). Here's an abridged extract from a recent thread: [cyclinguk.org/uphill-vs-headwind](http://cyclinguk.org/uphill-vs-headwind)



### UPHILL VERSUS AGAINST THE WIND

**simonhill:** Is the effort you put into cycling uphill the same as that for cycling against the wind? It sounds like a simple yes, but is it?

**Jdsk:** The dependence of power on speed is very different: for climbing it's proportional to speed but for air resistance it's proportional to the cube of [air] speed.

**peete:** In my twenties at 9 1/2 stone the odds were definitely stacked against me into the wind. Now in my fifties, 12 stone and less fit to boot, it's pretty even.

**jb:** Hills come to an end in less time than it feels and usually with a downhill on't other side. Riding into the wind can, and usually does, last for three quarters of the ride.

**nirakaro:** Getting up a

challenging hill gives you bragging rights; riding against the wind is harder to quantify, and talking about it just sounds like whingeing.

**ossie:** I don't mind spinning up a hill but a headwind is just miserable, especially when touring with panniers. My absolute worst case was beating into a northwesterly gale from Rotterdam up to the ferry at the Hook.

**thirdcrank:** A big difference is that hills are dependable where the wind isn't. Riding up a hill is money in the bank, or at least pedalling effort converted to potential energy. Wind speed and direction are largely a matter of luck,

**geomannie:** Just back from battling for 20 miles into a 20mph headwind. Give me a hill any day!