

cycle

lifestyle

Professor
Robert Winston
on cycling

Electric Dreams

No Sweat!

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Credits & Acknowledgements

This issue of Cycle Lifestyle was made possible thanks to the generous help of: Adam Copeland, Alice Archer, Barclays Print, Dom Tyerman, Gareth Jenkins, Jack Carr, Jane Dent, Jon Haste (kolbillustration.com), Liz Harwood, Penny Boxall, Rebecca Watts, Professor Robert Winston, Tamar Levi and Ted Brown.

Page 7 illustration and front cover illustration by Tamar Levi
www.TamarLevi.com

Published by oldspeak publishing. All prices correct at time of going to press. All content © Ben Irvine.

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Foreword

Riding out ...

If you're anything like I used to be, you probably can't imagine cycling more than 20 miles in one go.



It was only when my friend pedalled all the way from Portsmouth to Edinburgh in a week, stopping over at my house and barely looking flustered, that I realised long distance cycling isn't just for long distance cyclists.

My first long ride – from London to Cambridge – was 50 miles of pure fun. Speeding down country lanes with fields, hedges, trees, farmhouses and clouds parallaxing all around me, I experienced a wonderfully rich feeling that's typical during a long ride: calm yet exhilarating; liberating yet grounding; proud yet humbling. Halfway through, as I sat on the grass to eat my packed lunch of cheese sandwiches, I felt perhaps the most contented I ever have.

These days I 'ride out' at least once a fortnight – out of town, out of my routine, out of my head, out of negative thought patterns, out of the way, out in the fresh air. Sometimes I ride out in company, which is such a pleasure, as Professor Robert Winston recounts in his fascinating interview on page 10. Other times I ride out alone. But, with nature all around, it's never really lonely. A few weeks ago I cruised for a hundred metres alongside two flapping barn owls scanning a hedgerow.

If you don't feel like getting out of the city, you can get out in the city. Wherever you are, a long ride can fill up your life like a huge sack of presents, with surprises and delights in abundance. Urban alleyways, canals, parks and backstreets stop being hidden from you; they become your hiding places away from the bustle of everyday life.

Cycle Lifestyle magazine aims to inspire regular people to become regular cyclists. In a city, cycling is the healthiest, happiest, quickest, simplest, cheapest and greenest way to get from A to B. But utility cycling is just the start. Many new cyclists soon start riding out for the sheer love of it.

Maybe one day you will too.

Best wishes,

Ben Irvine

Ben Irvine,

author of *Einstein and the Art of Mindful Cycling*
www.benirvine.co.uk

Cycling is healthy, green, free, fast and fun – no wonder people are adopting the cycle lifestyle in increasing numbers. If you want to be among them, here's our handy guide to getting started.

Choose a bike

There are different kinds of bike for different kinds of journey, so you need to choose the right bike for yours.

Road bikes ('racing' bikes) are designed to be lightweight, aerodynamic and fast, with handlebars that curl downwards and skinny tyres.

Touring bikes are sturdier versions of road bikes, designed for long distances carrying luggage.

Mountain bikes are designed for rough terrain, with knobby tyres, strong frames, a wide selection of gears, and often suspension.

Hybrid bikes offer a compromise between the speed of a road bike and the strength and gearing of a mountain bike. With smooth tyres and an upright riding posture that's good for visibility, they're a popular option for commuting.

Folding bikes can be folded away and carried like a briefcase. Useful for commuting, they can conveniently be taken on the train or bus. They have small wheels and fewer gears, and can be stored easily at home if you don't have much space.

Electric bikes are a more expensive option, with an electric motor offering assistance for getting up hills or on longer commutes.

Shed bikes are bikes that have been gathering cobwebs in your shed for years! Check them over before you get back on.

Then there are adapted cycles, tricycles, tandems, side-by-side cycles and recumbent cycles – making cycling accessible to almost everybody, including people with disabilities.

Check your bike

Before you set off you'll need to make sure your bike is safe to ride. Start with the following checks:

- Both brakes work well.
- Both tyres are pumped up (this will make your bike easier to ride as well as safer).
- The saddle height is correct (so that when sitting on the saddle your heel rests on the pedal with your knee very slightly bent). Also make sure that when adjusting the saddle height the seat post limit has not been reached (normally this is a marked band about 3 inches from the bottom of the seat post).
- The handlebars are tightened. Ensure that they cannot be turned with the front wheel between your legs, and that they do not move when pressure is applied from the top.
- The gears work smoothly.

If you are unsure then take your bike to the nearest bike shop for a quick service. When you buy your bike from a shop you can expect them to help you with these checks.

In decent weather there's no need to wear special clothing any more than there is for a walk to the shops. You can even cycle in smart clothes, so long as you're comfortable. Just make sure your clothing is neither too baggy (catching in the chain) nor too tight (restricting your pedalling).

Accessorize

Some basic accessories are essential:

- Lights. By law you must have a front white light and a rear red light when cycling at night, and a rear reflector and pedal reflectors at all times.
- A lock. Spend as much as you can afford to get a stronger lock (or indeed multiple locks). Always leave your bike in a well-lit and busy place to deter thieves.

Re S

Ready, Steady, Go!

Other accessories are really useful:

- A bell. You'll find pedestrians appreciate an early, gentle warning of your presence if you're on a shared path – a couple of tinkles when you're still 10 metres or so away works well.
- Mudguards. These will help keep splatters off your clothes.
- A rack and panniers. Panniers are bags that attach onto a rack at the back of your bike, which enable you to be unencumbered while riding. The next-best option is a rucksack because this keeps your arms free. Never dangle bags from your handlebars.
- A pump and a spare inner tube or puncture repair kit. Punctures are rare, but it's good to be prepared.
- It's not compulsory to wear a helmet to cycle, but many people choose to – especially in bad weather when the conditions can be more hazardous. If you do, ensure that your helmet is of good quality and properly fitted.

Plan your route

Preparing a good route is essential for cycling, but luckily it's one of the most fun parts. There are lots of helpful resources, including:

- Transport for London cycle guides. You can order them online at www.tfl.gov.uk.
- LCN+ maps. These can be viewed online at www.londoncyclenetwork.org.uk.
- Local Authority maps. Contact your local council offices to find out more.
- Google maps. An especially useful resource which uses the Google map interface is www.bikehike.co.uk. You can interactively plot your route onscreen and find out gradient and distance data.

- www.cyclestreets.net – a journey planner for cycling which allows you to type in your start and end destination locations and suggests a route for you.
- A good old-fashioned A to Z!

When you plan your route you should aim for:

- Quiet roads or roads with cycle paths
- Low speed limit areas
- Parks and open spaces which allow cycling

And you should avoid:

- Very busy junctions
- Large and fast roundabouts
- Dual carriageways
- Routes heavy with lorries
- Pavements. It's illegal to cycle on the pavement, unless it's signed as a shared-use path for cyclists and pedestrians.

If any of these are unavoidable, you can always get off and push!

Stay safe – the Sustrans guide

Tips for cyclists on roads

- Ride in a position where you can see and be seen.
- Beware of vehicles turning left.
- Make eye contact with other road users, especially at junctions – then you know they've seen you.
- Signal clearly at all times.
- Follow the Highway Code – don't jump red lights and don't cycle on the pavement unless it's a designated cycle path.

beginner's guide

- Consider wearing a helmet and bright clothing, especially in towns, at night and in bad weather.
- In wet weather watch your speed as surfaces may be slippery and it will take you longer to stop. Also avoid turning across man-hole covers or areas with lots of yellow/white lines on the road. The rain makes them especially slippery.
- Go easy on the front brake. In wintery conditions, try to shift a little more emphasis onto the rear brake by placing your body weight a little further back and squeezing the front lever more gently. It's much easier to control a sliding rear wheel than a front one.
- Consider getting some cycle training. All London's boroughs provide free or subsidised training.

Tips for motorists

- When turning left watch for cyclists coming up on your near side and don't cut them up.
- Give cyclists a wide berth when overtaking.
- Dip your headlights when approaching cyclists.

- In wet weather, allow cyclists extra room as surfaces may be slippery.
- Cyclists and motorists are equally entitled to use and share the same road space.

Tips for cyclists on shared-use paths

- Don't go too fast – it can intimidate others.
- Use your bell to let others know you are approaching, but don't assume they can hear or see you.
- Give way to others and always be prepared to slow down and stop if necessary. Remember to say 'thank you' if they let you pass.
- Keep left or on your side of any dividing line.
- Be careful at junctions, bends or entrances.

Tips for other path users

- Keep your dog under control.
- Keep to your side of any dividing line.

Find out more from Sustrans at www.sustrans.org.uk – or just phone a friend who cycles.

No Sweat!

Five ways for cyclists to beat the heat

1 SLOW DOWN. If you don't want to sweat when cycling, you should put no more effort in than you would if you were walking. Your effort on a bicycle will carry you up to five times the distance that the same effort would if you were on foot. To enable you to slow down, allow a bit more time for your journey. If it's a commute, get up 15 minutes earlier, or carry out some of your morning tasks the night before – lay your clothes out ready, make your lunch, pack your bag, and so on. Slowing down will not only help you avoid sweating, it will make your ride much more relaxing.

2 PERSUADE YOUR BOSS TO INSTALL SHOWER FACILITIES. Employees who cycle to work are happier, healthier and more energised. They are good for businesses. So businesses should be good to their cycling employees. Moreover, installing shower facilities is an investment that can encourage more people to cycle, leading to a workplace that's less stressed and more productive (not to mention more environmentally-friendly).

3 CARRY DEODORANT AND WET WIPES. It's hardly rocket science, but if you don't have shower facilities at your work, or even if you do, then a quick wipe-down and a spray of deodorant on arrival is sufficient to freshen you up after you ride. It's worth noting too that, in extreme heat, everyone gets sweaty. If you come prepared as a cyclist, you're likely to be the most fragrant person in the workplace.

4 CHANGE YOUR T-SHIRT. If you think you are likely to sweat on a particular cycle journey you could try replacing your t-shirt afterwards (obviously you'll need a bag in which to carry a spare t-shirt and pack the used one away). If you feel like investing in some proper kit, you can buy cycle clothing made of special fabrics deliberately designed to lift sweat away from your body (this is called 'wicking').

5 INVEST IN AN ELECTRIC BIKE. Electric bikes require a fraction of the effort of normal bikes, while providing virtually all the benefits of cycling. They're also amazingly fun to ride.

The Journey Up

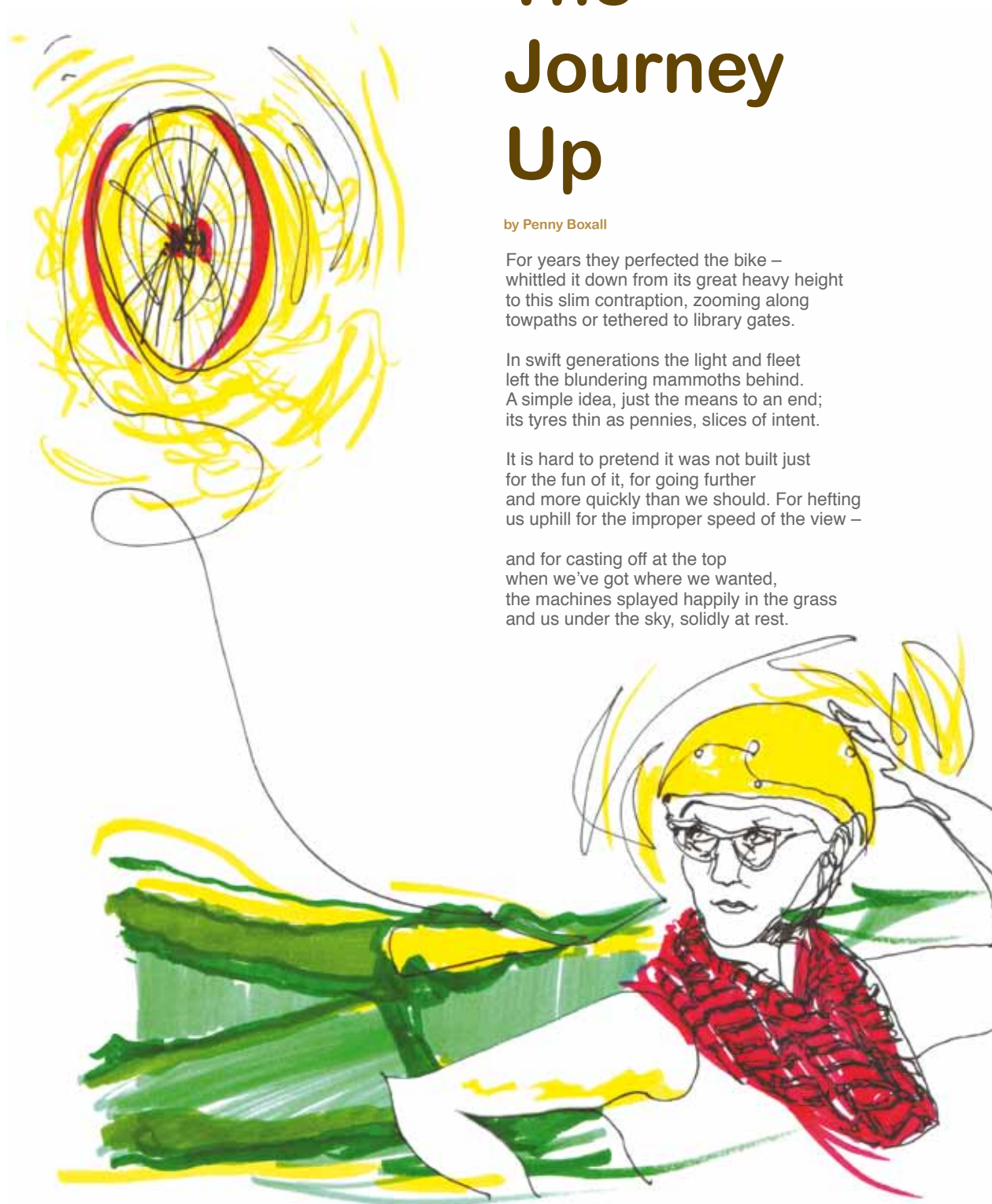
by Penny Boxall

For years they perfected the bike –
whittled it down from its great heavy height
to this slim contraption, zooming along
towpaths or tethered to library gates.

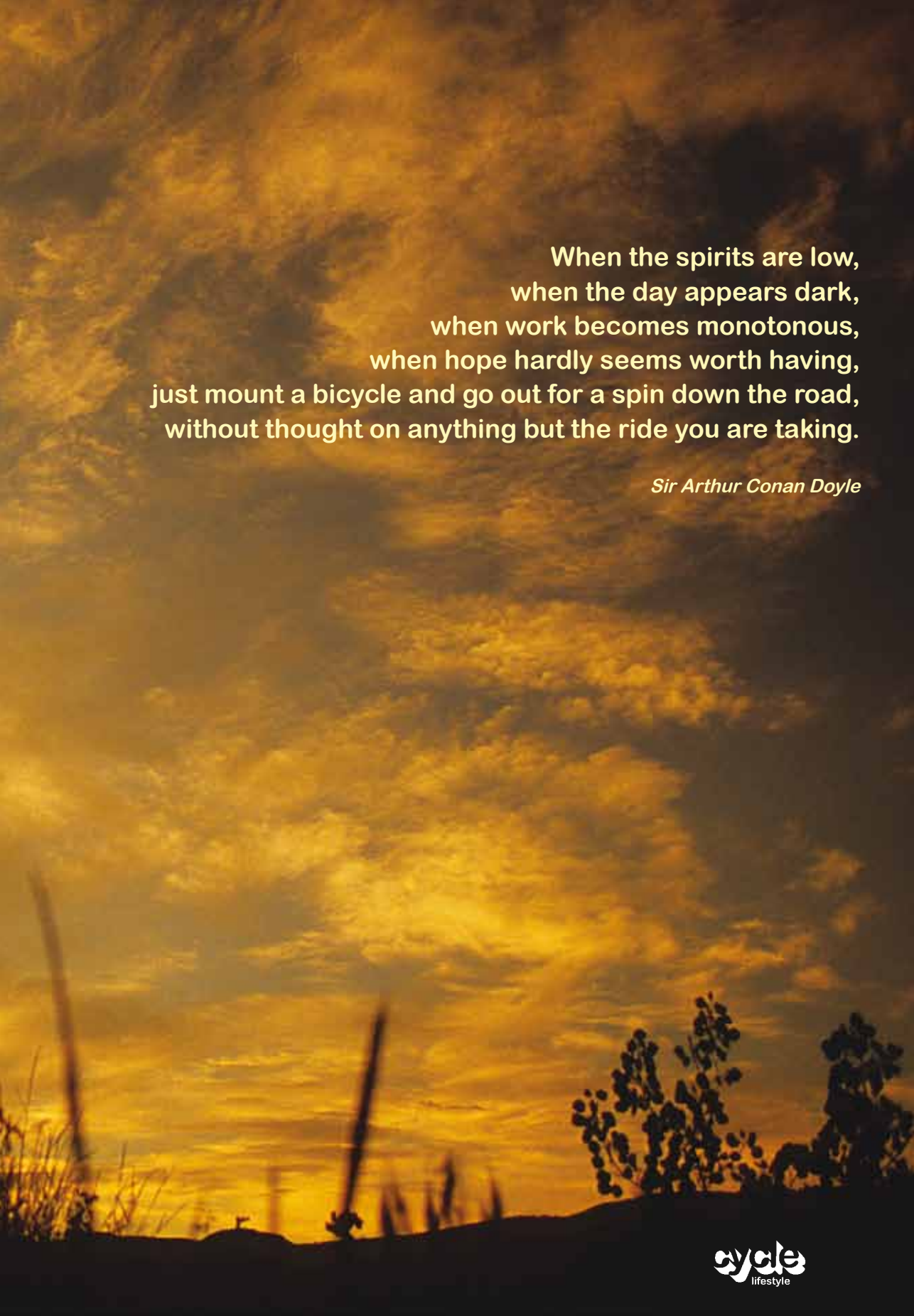
In swift generations the light and fleet
left the blundering mammoths behind.
A simple idea, just the means to an end;
its tyres thin as pennies, slices of intent.

It is hard to pretend it was not built just
for the fun of it, for going further
and more quickly than we should. For hefting
us uphill for the improper speed of the view –

and for casting off at the top
when we've got where we wanted,
the machines splayed happily in the grass
and us under the sky, solidly at rest.







When the spirits are low,
when the day appears dark,
when work becomes monotonous,
when hope hardly seems worth having,
just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road,
without thought on anything but the ride you are taking.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Professor Robert Winston... on cycling



Have you ever thought about going on a long bike ride? It's an activity that many people might associate with nerdy males wearing lycra and shades, but the pleasures of long distance cycling are the same for everyone. The Genesis Research Trust organises female-only cycle challenges in some of the most thrilling places on Earth, to raise money for research into conditions that affect the health of women and babies. Ben spoke to the charity's Chairman, Professor Robert Winston, about his experiences joining in with these cycle challenges, his thoughts on female cycling, and his views on how to make cycling mainstream.

on the benefits of cycle challenges for women...

A lot of the women want to get fit, a lot of them want to lose weight, a lot of them are on programmes like Weight Watchers and so on. We have women from the age of 16 up to about 70. There's a massive camaraderie. They form friendships which are very, very strong, and although they have to raise quite a lot of money for the charity a huge proportion of the people who do it come back for another ride. Some come back for six or seven rides. So we have a regular clientele who really enjoy the whole spirit of the thing. They enjoy the fact that it's women only and the fact that they get to re-meet people and to go to strange places in the world, like Sri Lanka, China, South America, Cuba, Egypt or Israel – all over the world, really.

on training for long distance cycling events...

We expect the women to train. We try to help them to train. We have training weekends for them, and that starts usually six months before the event.

on his involvement in the charity rides...

I go on these cycle rides for charity because I think it's a massively good cause, and I enjoy the company of the people I cycle with.

on his longest cycle ride...

We did one leg of a ride down the Suez Canal. Some of it was off road and it was about 143kms. That was quite a tough day actually – temperatures of about high 80s, low 90s, so quite a significant trip for most of us.

on his favourite cycling experience...

Gosh, that's really tricky. I think, of all the rides I've done with the group, the ride we did through Cambodia and Vietnam was one of the most interesting. We went to Angkor Wat and we saw the temples. It was pretty phenomenal scenery, the accommodation was good, and the women were fun to be with. It was a nice ride. I don't know if it's my most exciting moment in cycling but it's certainly one that I'll remember.

on how cycling challenges can change women's lives...

I think quite a lot of the women who come on our trips would argue that it really has changed their lives, and I think they really mean it. It is a very uplifting experience because they meet a lot of women who have benefitted from the sort of work our charity does. They've had various problems in pregnancy or they've lost a child, or they've had a series of miscarriages, or a damaged baby. Many of our women have come from very ordinary walks of life, never met people very far from home, and certainly never been to an exotic country before, although they do feel very safe.

The whole notion of it being women-only is quite important. There's no competition – I mean, I can't compete, I'm much too feeble on a bike anyway! – so on the whole I think they feel unembarrassed. They feel surrounded by the warmth of other people and the security we offer in these parts of the world, and on the whole that's one of the secrets of our success. That plus the fact that it's a very, very worthy charity. The money we raise goes to hugely important causes, which benefits women and pregnancies and babies all around the world.

I think that's why our women often do say "this has changed my life". And it's usual for a large proportion of the women at the end of the ride to be in a mixture of absolute laughter and joy and tears. I mean they cry – it's quite an emotional thing for them.

on cycling and pregnancy...

I think one's got to be a little bit careful about falling off a bike if one is in advanced pregnancy – I mean that would be stupid – but I think for most women to cycle during pregnancy is absolutely fine, and I think should be encouraged.

on doctors prescribing cycling...

I think that's going a bit far – encouraged yes, prescribed no.

on cycling in the rain...

There's something quite remarkable about cycling in heavy rain. There's a feeling of glorious isolation. I've enjoyed doing that very much across Regent's Park or Hyde Park.

on cycle lanes...

I think cycle lanes are a major initiative which it would be good to see. At the moment the cycle lanes we have in London, for example, often peter out in the middle of a bus lane or some other place where

there's traffic. Other countries do a much better job than we do in this respect.

on confrontational cyclists...

Some bikers seem to think they're doing battle with people who are driving motor cars. They forget actually many drivers ride bikes as well and are looking out for cyclists' safety and want to try and help bikes.

on a Tube-style network of cycle routes in London...

That would be a very good thing – I would approve of that very much.

on the future of cycling...

You know scientists, if they're wise, never predict the future!

To find out more about Genesis Research Trust cycle challenges, visit www.genesisresearchtrust.com, email genesisevents@imperial.ac.uk or call 020 7594 2158.



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Give it a Go!

How I got back on the saddle

by Alice Archer

The affordability, the exercise, the mood-enhancement, the convenience – there are many reasons why people take up cycling again after a lengthy break. 'Training for a triathlon' is not usually one of them. But that's how Alice Archer – who originates from the Blackpool area and moved to London after university – got back on the saddle, and rediscovered cycling's many benefits...

You get a whole different perspective on London when you're contemplating it while perched on top of two rotating wheels.

Over the past few months I've learnt many new things about my beloved adopted city. Firstly, it has a lot of canals. Secondly, people do sometimes give you that Lake District-style, "hail-fellow-traveller" nod of acknowledgement. And, thirdly, it can actually be quite a relaxing place to get around, even in rush hour.

It all started when, inspired by the battling Brownlee brothers during the London Olympics, and by the need to rectify some post-wedding overeating, I signed up to do a triathlon.

It was a bold move, as I had neither a bike nor the inclination to run. But I have since embraced the challenge wholeheartedly, and have developed a smug expertise on the technical things that only us triathletes know about – like open water performance swimming goggles, tri-bars, energy gels and Camelbaks.

Most importantly, though, I have been re-acquainted with an old friend of mine – the bicycle.

I'd dabbled in cycling before. At university it was the standard way to get around. And it was cheap. Then, during a short stint living in a cycle-friendly part of London, I would ride my way through the quiet, narrow streets of Islington, on my way to and from town where I work. But since moving east, having the Bow Flyover and the A12 to contend with has meant that – and I am ashamed to say this – the bike has been left to rust in the shed.



Until now! I borrowed a shiny, cared-for bike from my mother-in-law (it's a mountain bike, but it does the trick) and have spent the last few months discovering new places, new routes and a surprising number of friends who are up for a weekend ride.

And it's great. Canals have become a regular feature. They're not as scary as roads, and fewer stops and starts mean they're great for training. They can also be quite beautiful, in that industrial kind of way, especially when experienced in the mornings.

On Regent's Canal, you feel a sort of solidarity with the other cyclists, as though you're all part of a secret club, watching the city as it stirs and wakes up. There's something very calming about seeing smoke rising from canal boats as someone makes a cup of tea to start their day.

"You get a whole different perspective on London when you're contemplating it while perched on top of two rotating wheels."

I've also learnt that cycling can easily be slotted into your day without too much disruption, and can actually be extremely sociable. Just a few weekends ago, I enjoyed a day out on the bikes for a friend's birthday. We met up in Angel for a coffee, then hired 'Boris Bikes' to ride around North and East London, stopping off anywhere we thought looked nice in the sun. The whole day's hire cost us a mere quid each.

So, as the big race approaches, I will fit in a few more rides, get the energy gels stocked up and pray for nice weather on the day. After that, who knows? I might even buy myself a new bike.

The joys of parenthood and cycling

by Gareth Jenkins

On Thursday morning, my darling baby daughter was crying because she didn't want to eat her pear and rice breakfast (I can't say I blame her really). Being a terribly good father, I attempted to console her by putting her on my shoulder, and she swiftly puked all over my shirt. Nothing unusual there. 'Well I can't go out to work without washing that off', I thought, so I washed it off and thought no more of it.

Unfortunately, fate had decided that I was going to have one of those days. And when you have one of those days, even cycling gets in on the act.

My ride in to work began pretty ordinarily. It was a bit wet and rainy but nothing much to worry about. And then I rode over a particularly juicy pigeon carcass.

Unlike the pigeon, I was absolutely fine, but my bike incurred a small puncture. Not a problem... puncture repair is easy! Usually. When I balanced my bike on my leg and gripped the wheel I suddenly realised I was covered in pigeon guts – all up my sleeve and all over my trouser leg. Luckily, I had some wet wipes with me. I scraped off what I could and mashed my roll-on deodorant firmly into the fabric so that I didn't smell like a pre-cooked turkey dinner when I turned up to my work training day.

When eventually I got to the venue I was a little late, so I had to get a bit of a rush on. I pulled up to a bike rack and swung my leg over my bike, but in my haste my shoe caught the saddle and I slipped over and whacked my elbow on the ground. I won't repeat here my exact words as I felt the cold of the wet pavement seeping through my clothes, but basically I talked to myself about how my day was going and how on the whole I was unhappy with it.

I limped into the building safe in the knowledge that at

least I wasn't covered in baby puke and pigeon guts as I had been earlier.

Why was it, then, that I suddenly became aware of a group of people pointing at me and laughing? Having a wet mark down the side of your trousers and shirt surely isn't that funny? Well, it turns out that when I whacked my elbow I had whacked it onto a rain-soaked Belgian bun that someone had dropped then written off and left there. It was stuck in its entirety to my elbow, glacier cherry and all.

Now, even though you hear a lot of negativity about cycling in the news, they don't tell you you're going to get laughed at for having an unexpected pudding on your arm.

But they also don't tell you that cycling is all worth it. I'll love my baby no matter how many times she pukes on me. And I'll ride my bike no matter how many times it causes me to get covered in pigeons and patisseries. Well, maybe I'll ride it in a wetsuit.



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Electric Dreams



Why e-bikes are the future of urban transport

by Ben Irvine

Wow. I've just had the most fun I've had since I was a kid. And, in the process, I've experienced an epiphany about the future of urban transport.

With three meetings to attend in different parts of the city, adding up to a 30-mile round trip, I was reluctant to sit on public transport for several hours. And as for driving, I knew I could probably pogo-stick faster.

Cycling was the obvious option, to get me out in the fresh air, seeing wonderful sights whizz by. But these were especially important meetings, without much time in between each, and I didn't want to be at all tired and flustered when I arrived. So I decided to get a helping hand.

Having test-ridden a few electric bikes round small circuits at various cycle shows, I knew these were canny machines. But I'd never properly put one through its paces. I got in touch with my friends at the Electric Transport Shop, and they generously lent me an electric Brompton. To say I felt unworthy of such a magnificent machine is putting it mildly.

The three-gear bike came equipped with a 36-volt battery tucked away inside a pannier on the handlebars. The battery was connected to a throttle that powers the machine up to 15 miles per hour. The bike's range – the distance it can cover when throttling – was around 20-30

miles. The idea is to try to conserve power by throttling only when it's most useful – for instance, when pedalling uphill and off bends, and when accelerating.

Feeling like a kid in a sweetshop, I throttled like there was no tomorrow. The sensation was quite astonishing. It was like riding a moped, only, despite the slower speeds, it seemed faster – perhaps because the bike was comparatively so small, light and manoeuvrable.

I found myself grinning the entire time – especially enthusiastically when I saw the astonished faces of bystanders and other cyclists as I rocketed away from traffic lights much faster than they expected! The extra oomph made the experience a little more seat-of-the-pants than riding my usual clunker. That said, I actually felt safer on the e-bike. Being able to spirit myself along so swiftly meant I could slot in better with the flow of traffic, or nip away from congestion double-quick.

I arrived at my meetings totally relaxed, without having broken sweat and not in the slightest bit tired, despite having burnt quite a few calories. In terms of the charge cost, my round trip worked out at about 10p. Yes, you read that right: 10p. To charge the bike, you just detach the battery (very easy to do – it takes half a second) and plug it into a small power pack that connects to a mains socket. You don't have to drag the bike indoors or anything like that. The battery charges fully in about four hours.



The Peddler

A day in the life of an urban cyclist

by Adam Copeland



Very recently the Peddler (or if you prefer, "I") has (or if you went for the second option, "have") experienced a modern phenomenon which I regret to report appears to be spreading to cycling. That's right. I'm talking about hugging.

Once, a nod of the head or a simple handshake would suffice. Perhaps, on extra special occasions (say the start of a darts match or a long marriage), you might even try both. But today, apparently that isn't good enough. No, the only form of greeting considered warm enough for the 90s (or whatever decade we're up to now) is the hug.

And yes, it has even reached cycling. While waiting at some traffic lights the other day, a friend I hadn't seen for a while rolled up alongside me, said hello and then lent over to initiate a hug.

Now, the mechanics of hugging are awkward enough when you have both feet planted on the ground, creating a solid 'hug foundation'. But incorporate two bikes into this clumsy dance and the whole sorry manoeuvre is about as elegant as a drunk ostrich giving birth to John Sergeant on a burst waterbed. (And if you saw that episode of Planet Earth, you'll know just how clumsy that is. Attenborough could barely watch.)

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying hugging can never be justified. Terry Waite, for example, would have been well within his rights to embrace his wife and children after being freed from four and a half years of captivity at the hands of violent radicals. But even then, I suspect he would have dismounted from his bicycle before lunging in. And he certainly wouldn't have tried it at a busy city-centre intersection.

I'm sorry, but in my book, cycling just isn't a suitable set-up for a hug. In fact, it gets me down so much, there's only one conclusion we can draw: I probably need a hug.

The only downside of my trip was that I ran out of power about five miles from home and had to pedal normally from there. For such a long round trip I should have charged the battery halfway through, which would have been easy to do at any of my meeting venues. Yet, in a way, running out of power made the last five miles even more enlightening. Experiencing the difference between an e-bike and a regular bike showed me how revolutionary e-bikes really are.

Electric bikes are to normal bikes as normal bikes are to no bikes at all. Just as the invention of the bicycle multiplied the energy efficiency of individual human beings to a level way beyond anything known in nature, the electric bike multiplies the energy efficiency of normal bicycles to an incredible new level. Truly anyone, no matter how unfit, could cover thirty miles on an e-bike. And whereas a fairly fit person could ride a normal bike, say, for a 20-mile round trip five times a week, realistically the experience might become draining after three or four working days.

E-bikes are for cyclists and non-cyclists alike – which is to say, for everyone.

www.ElectricBikeSales.co.uk

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