

Stroud Valleys
Cycle
Campaign
Newsletter

UPHILL

July 2006 No.25

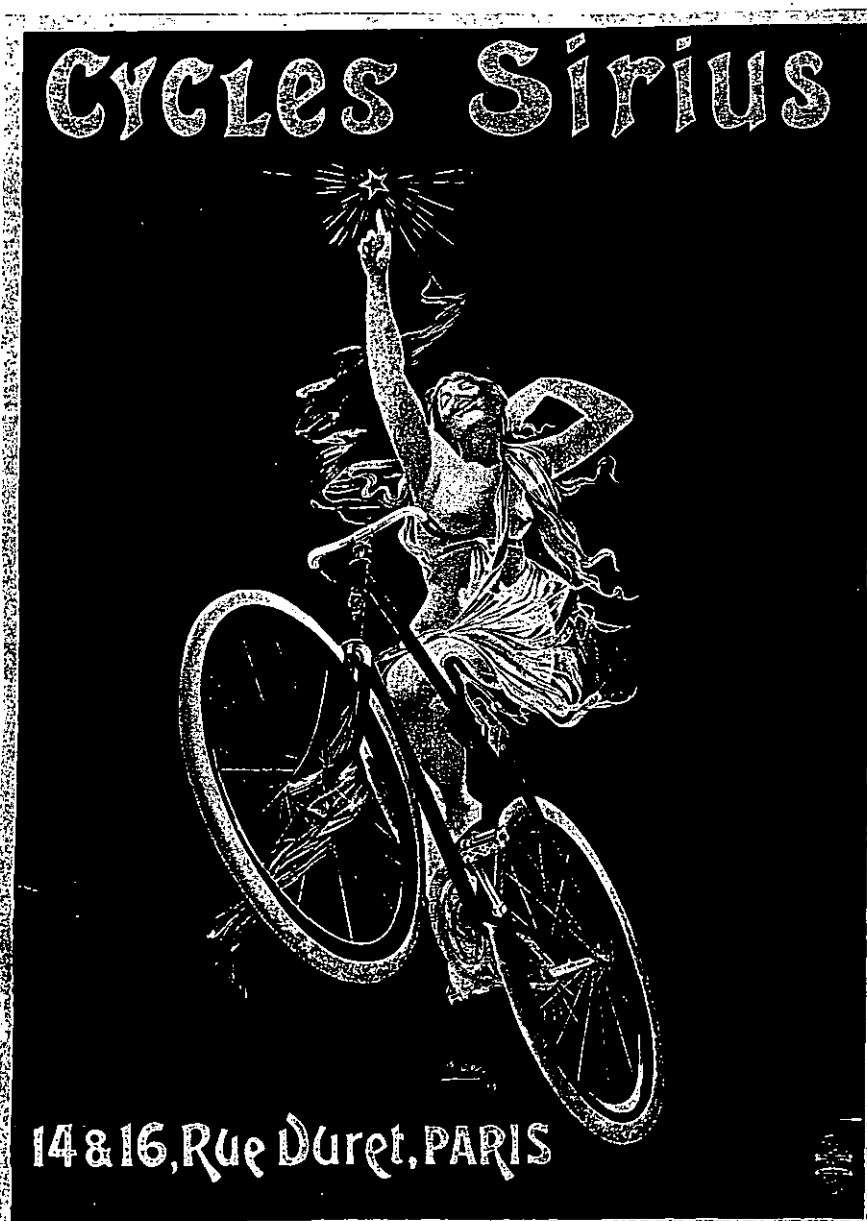
'Every time I see
an adult on a
bicycle I no
longer despair for
the human race'
- H.G. Wells

SUPER SUMMER SCORCHING SCOOPS

As the Tour de France came to its anti-climactic climax the sun shone so fiercely across the five valleys that Uphill's editors were glad to swap sun-screen for computer screen. SVCC is on the move though and inside you'll find news of:

- Bikes on trains
- How the Highway Code was decoded
- The Great Cycle Helmet debate
- Cycle map-making
- Bureaucrats and planners on the ropes
- Bob Dylan on two wheels
- Bike Week beans

And if you were lucky you saw a wonderful three-minute life of the great Beryl Burton on Channel Four. The UK's greatest ever women athlete (the UK's greatest ever athlete in our view) was properly celebrated. A cyclist through and through, she was not only a World Champion but a club cyclist and cycle tourist too. On top of that, she worked in a nursery growing Yorkshire rhubarb. A wheelèd saint.



WHEELS OF CHANCE • TOUR de FRANCE

BIKE BITS

TOUR DE GRUB

SVCC's 'Stroud Occasionals' are organizing an **easy-paced, flat** ride to The Ship, Framilode, on Saturday 2 September. Meet at Dudbridge, 10.30am. Contact: Carol Kambites, tel 762258. All cyclists welcome.

TWIGG'S ON THE LINE

In April, Stroud MP David Drew asked the Secretary of State for Transport what discussions he had had with the rail companies to seek agreed policies on the transportation of bikes on trains.

Derek Twigg, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, Department for Transport, gave the following written reply: 'As part of our ongoing commitment to bike and rail journeys I am discussing with our advisory body on cycling, Cycling England, how we might further encourage such journeys and will be reviewing this issue with the TOCs later this year. In addition, the franchise replacement process provides an opportunity to improve cycle facilities at stations, and to address the requirements of cyclists who wish to use trains. Bidders for new franchises will be asked to consider cycle-rail integration matters in their bid submissions.'

11,000 CYCLISTS CAN'T BE WRONG

Thanks to everyone who wrote to the Department of Transport and the Highway Code people to protest against the inclusion of a new clause that would have made cyclists liable to prosecution if they didn't always use the cycle facilities provided. The clause has been withdrawn after 11,000 representations against it were received.

EGG HEADS AND HEAD CASES

An article in the 24th March issue of the British Medical Journal (BMJ) argues that helmet laws don't work. Nowhere in the world has a large increase in the proportion of cyclists wearing helmets (brought about by legislation) led to fewer head injuries.

Australian statistician Dorothy Robinson reviewed data before and after helmet legislation in Australia, New Zealand and Canada and believes helmet laws discourage cycling and produce no obvious diminution in the number of head injuries. She says: 'This contradiction may be due to risk compensation, incorrect helmet wearing, reduced safety in numbers (injury rates per cyclist are lower when more people cycle), or bias in case control studies.'

She suggests that helmet laws are counterproductive and that governments should instead focus on meas-

You have nothing to lose but your chains



BIKE SHOPS: DON'T GO LOCO - GO LOCAL

Whether you want a new bicycle or your current machine serviced or repaired, support your local shop, where you can talk to people who really know their stuff.

Stonehouse Accessories Ltd: 18 High Street, Stonehouse, GL10 2NA, 01453 822881, email accessories@stonehouse.powernet-int.co.uk. For servicing, repairs, and all new bicycles and accessories.

Cytek: 59 Westward Road, Stroud, 01453 753330. As above.

Noahs Ark: London Road, Chalford, 01453 884738. As above.

Square Deals on Wheels: Farm Bungalow, Cowcombe Lane, Chalford (by Aston Down airfield just off the A419), 01285 760475, Internet shop www.sdeals.com. As above; lightweight specialists.

The Cycle Clinic: The Cross, Bath Road, Nailsworth, 01453 835200. As above; also secondhand bikes.

ures that lead to more effective drops in casualties, such as campaigns against speeding, drink driving, and failure to obey road rules. 'Helmet laws would be counter productive if they discouraged cycling and increased car use,' says Robinson. 'Wearing helmets may also encourage cyclists to take more risks, or motorists to take less care when they encounter cyclists.'

The same issue of the journal also carries a rebuttal by four academics who are among the strongest advocates of helmet laws and who themselves have written some of the most influential papers that support these. Hagel et al assert that 'Robinson's opposition to helmet laws is contrary to published evidence on the effectiveness of bicycle helmets. At least six independent studies have reported a protective association between wearing bicycle helmets and head injuries.'

However, the nub of Hagel et al's argument is that less cycling resulting from laws is not necessarily a bad thing. Acknowledging for the first time publicly that helmet laws cause many people to stop cycling, they suggest that those who do so may take up in-line skating (!) or other exercise instead. They appear to be unaware of the obesity epidemic!

This is the first time the BMJ has given so much space to research that suggests that helmets don't work. Letters published 2 weeks later and 34 'Rapid Responses' to date on the BMJ website overwhelmingly support Robinson and suggest that there may be growing scepticism about the uncompromising approach of Hagel and colleagues. Another peer-reviewed study this year adds to the controversy, having found no significant benefit from helmets in San Diego; four UK reports in the past year have concluded the same.

Will this make governments and the medical profession think again? The UK government has so far voiced no opinion. And the BMA is currently sticking to its view that the 1999 Cochrane Review on helmets (dominated by its authors' own research and the subject of extensive peer criticism) provides all the evidence it needs to push for a helmet law.

CYCLE MAP WORK HOTS UP

Tony Partridge follows the yellow (and all other colours) brick road

Our preliminary work on the cycling map for the Stroud district has made real progress and we are ready to start the actual mapping work. Here's where you come in – we would like as many members as possible to become involved and help us complete the map.

Our views on presentation have changed since we last reported to you:

We shall now use contour lines and darkening shades of beige (to indicate increasing height above sea level) to help people decide whether a route is hilly or flat.

We have decided to use five different colours to indicate the 'cyclability' of a road. This move from three to five grades fits in with other local cycling maps in Cheltenham and Gloucester. The colour-grade of a particular road will reflect the ability and experience a cyclist is likely to need to cycle on it. This has a relationship with the levels in the new national cycle training standards.

Here's the Convention

We have chosen the concept of 'green is safe is easy', and then worked our way through the spectrum of colours!)

Green: Quiet roads with little traffic and low traffic speeds. Generally suitable for all cyclists, including beginners, Level I. These might be non-distributor residential streets or country roads which 'lead to nowhere!'

(A very quiet country road, but which had sharp blind bends, might need upgrading to Yellow.)

Yellow: Through routes with moderate traffic and low speeds. Suitable for Level II and Level III cyclists, and perhaps Level I at less busy times.

(Country roads which are not main routes might be Yellow. Shopping streets and industrial areas would probably be classified Yellow as minimum due to the complexity of the traffic environment.

Orange: Busier roads, including A or B roads, where road design does not lead to excessive speed. Few HGVs. Road width allows safe overtaking of cyclists over the greater part of its length. Suitable only for Level II and Level III cyclists.

(Since the speed difference between motorised traffic and cycles is a potential danger factor, orange roads might have a max speed of 30mph or 40mph. Undue narrowness or bendiness might mean an upgrade to red.)

Pinky red: Busy principal roads, perhaps with many HGVs, perhaps 50 to 60mph speed limits. Road width restricted, leading to increased risk from overtaking vehicles. Traffic speed high relative to road width with drivers less willing to cede right of way to cyclists. Complex junctions. Suitable for Level III cyclists and some Level II.

(Very wide principal roads, where there is ample room for both cyclists and motors, might be considered for downgrading to orange.)

Deep red/purplish: Very busy roads, with 60 or 70mph limits, with frequent HGVs. Motor vehicle-orientated road design, such as use of slip roads, large roundabouts. Restricted lane width. Suitable only for Level III cyclists.

(Typical of this classification would be fast dual carriageway feeder roads, virtually non-existent in our district!)

In Addition...

- We would use a dark green to indicate off-road cycle paths.
- Only routes legally able to be used by cyclists will be coloured (e.g. motorways will be white and unemphasised)
- Various cycle facilities will be marked
- We shall indicate shared-use pavement routes
- We shall indicate on-road cycle lanes

What's Next?

We need lots of willing helpers to use their skill and judgement to classify every road in the Stroud District according to its cyclability. We have a supply of greyscale Ordnance Survey maps, and lots of coloured pencils ready for action! We are looking for volunteers to work in pairs (in our trials we found that discussion helped the classification process) and cover maybe a particular part in the District. In an area you know, you will probably have a fair idea of how a road should be classified, but you may need cycle it anyway to confirm your feelings.

Please let us know if you'd like to help. Contact Nigel (tel 834679; nigelstanton@yahoo.co.uk), Sheila (tel 762233; sheilaodriscoll@hotmail.com), or Tony (tel 822451; tony.partridge@virgin.net) and we'll arrange a meeting in September so that we can all agree a plan of action.

PARISH COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE – RESULTS

Sheila Booth puts a spoke in the planners' wheel

As a result of some disappointing and astounding planning decisions made by the District Council (for example the failure to require a cycle route through the new housing development on the Stroud College site) we decided that we needed to promote the development of a District Cycling Strategy which would encourage a more positive approach.

We therefore devised a questionnaire about the needs and difficulties of cycling and sent it to all 52 parishes in the District in mid-March. We had a fantastic 52% response. We tabulated the replies (see next page). In general what the questions were is obvious, but if anyone would like a copy of the questionnaire please contact me. Not surprisingly the main concerns of parishes are the poor state of the roads, and the speed and volume of traffic. Other things that came up were the need for improvements in cycle parking, building more cycle lanes and better lighting.

The District Council is going to follow up our work by re-sending the questionnaire to the parishes which did not respond. In the meantime we have written again to the responders with a copy of the results so far, and asked them to show on a map the roads in their parish which have inadequate surfaces, potholes, ruts, broken edges, etc, etc. We are going to send these on to the Highways Authority for – we hope! – an immediate response.

TOWARDS A CYCLING STRATEGY FOR STROUD DISTRICT

PARISH/TOWN COUNCILS SURVEY April/May 2006

	Are residents concerned about:				Do residents:				Need for Council			District / County Strategies		
	Road safety	Health	Environ-ment	Traffic noise	Feel safe walking & cycling		Wish to cycle more often		For: - school shop work		leisure	other	Yes	No
					Yes	No	Yes	No						
Alkington	1		1			1		1					1	
Berkeley	1	d/k	d/k	d/k	d/k			d/k					1	
Cainscross													1	Unable to answer other questions
Chalford	1		1	1		1							1	
Cam	1	1	1	1		1		d/k					1	
Cranham	1	1	1	1	1			1					1	
Coaley	1	1	1	1	1								1	
Dursley(maj of 9 replies)	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1		1	
Elmore	1	1	1	1		1		1			1		1	
Hardwicke	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
Hillesley & Tresham														
Hinton	1	1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	1	
Kings Stanley	1	1	1	1		1					1		1	
Kingswood	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
Miserden	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
Nailsworth	1		1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
Owlpen		1	1			1			1				1	
Randwick	1		1	1		1							1	
Standish	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1		1	
Stonehouse	1	1	1	1		1		1				1		
Stroud	1	1	1	1				1		1	1	1	1	
Uley	1	1				1		1				1		
Upton St. Leonards	1		1	1		1							1	
Whiteshill & Ruscombe	1			1				1		1	1	1	1	
Whitminster														Doesn't wish to participate
Woodchester	1	1	1	1		1		1		1	1	1	1	
Wotton Under Edge	1			1		1					1		1	
Totals	27	23	16	20	19	3	18	15	2	10	8	15	23	

NB. Most of the unanswered questions were because councils felt that they did not know

52 questionnaires sent out on 17.3.06. On 15.5.06 27 had been returned.

SB 15.5.06

HOT LINES REDUCE ROAD RAGE – WE HOPE

Potholes: Ring Gloucestershire County Council on 01453 822193 and report the location; the pothole should be repaired within the next working day.

Litter/glass on cycle path: Ring Stroud District Council on 01453 754403 (Lisa Samak).

Glass on roads: Ring Stroud District Council, Environmental Contacts, on 01453 754424.

BIKE WEEK 2006

Nigel Stanton recalls a week of pedalling pubs and provinder

The Campaign organized three local rides to fit in with Stonehouse Wheelers and CTC rides so that there were rides on all nine days of Bike Week.

On Thursday evening six riders led by Nigel Stanton set off from Dudbridge heading for Frampton on Severn. The route went via Stonehouse, Stanley Downton, Frocester, Coaley, across the A38 at Cambridge and along the towpath of the Sharpness canal to Frampton. The evening was breezy but pleasant and cycling through the Severn valley at that time of the year is a treat. Our destination was the Three Horseshoes at Frampton but there was no food available there, so after a drink, we moved on to the Bell at the top of the green. After duly refreshing ourselves we headed back via Whitminster and alongside the A419 to Dudbridge.

On Friday evening by way of a contrast five riders, led by Sheila Booth, started from London Road carpark around to the cycle path at Rodborough and onto Nailsworth. From Nailsworth the group rode to Avening and collected another rider and rode to Nagshead, Hampton Fields, Minchinhampton, Pinfarthings and on to the Black Horse at Amberley. It was a glorious evening and we sat in the garden eating and drinking and looking across the Severn valley to May Hill.

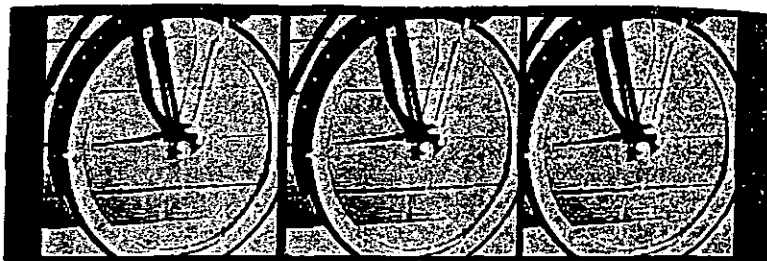
On Saturday Carol Kambites led thirteen riders from Dudbridge along the cycle path to Ebley and then on through Kings Stanley, Frocester, Coaley, Cambridge and Slimbridge to Shepherds Patch, where we had lunch. The day was fine and sunny and the lunch stop by the a busy Sharpness canal was very pleasant. After lunch we rode along the canal to Frampton and then on to Whitminster and back to Dudbridge.

THE FREEWHEELIN' BOB DYLAN

Two icons united by two wheels across two centuries

The Russian stuff on the shelves had an especially dark presence...there was a book by Count Leo Tolstoy, whose estate I'd visit more than twenty years later – his family estate, which he used to educate peasants. It was located outside of Moscow, and this was where he went later in life to reject all his writings and renounce all forms of war. One day when he was 82 years old he left a note for his family to leave him alone. He walked off into the snowy woods and a few days later they found him dead of pneumonia. A tour guide let me ride his bicycle.

From *Chronicles Volume One*, Bob Dylan, 2004.



NEXT SVCC MEETING

Wednesday 6th September at 8pm.

Sheila Booth's house

45 Bisley Old Road (762233).

ALL WELCOME

This newsletter is published by Stroud Valleys Cycle Campaign, c/o 45 Bisley Old Road, Stroud GL5 1LU, tel 01453 762233, email ckambites@fsmail.net. The Cycle Campaign works for better cycling facilities; membership is only £5 pa, £7.50 for couples, £2.50 for unwaged.