

# NEWSLETTER

## APRIL 2009

Free to members



<http://uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign>

### EDITORIAL

#### **PENNY STREET BRIDGE JUNCTION: Five roads, three visions.**

##### **The current vision**

Northbound cyclists are squeezed between hard stone kerb and rolling tin. Pedestrians are corralled between carriageways like beasts behind metal pens. Endless queues of motorists hover impatiently on red, waiting to gun down to the next red just down the strip. Everybody scowls.

We are all controlled by colour coded lights which in turn are controlled by an uncaring computer in Preston. Traffic lights are the greatest gas guzzlers and most formidable fume-emitters of all, causing drivers to stop start, rev up brake down ad infinitum. There are at least eight sets around the gyratory alone. Consequently Lancaster city centre frequently exceeds safe statutory levels for atmospheric pollution, making a mockery of its status as an air quality management zone

Then there is the bombardment of signs and road markings: give way, keep left, turn right, no entry etc. Aesthetics apart, they all conspire to take away your sense of control and responsibility: they turn you into obedient but frustrated cyborgs. The current junction is not a place that sees much smiling.

##### **The City Council's new £250,000 vision**

Will cyclists and pedestrians be smiling after the council has spent a cool quarter of a million pounds of CDT money on the junction?

It will still be controlled by five sets of traffic lights and four crossings. Pedestrians will still be corralled between carriageways, only now they will be herded together with those cyclists heading south who emerge from Upper Penny Street.

For a new contra-flow cycle lane is planned up Penny Street from Marton Street. This will open up an alternative to the gyratory for

southbound cyclists and is welcome. However, on-street parking is to be retained in Penny Street forcing cyclists into the middle of the road and making them susceptible to the sudden opening of car doors.

Another benefit of the scheme is the introduction of four advance stop lines with very short stretches of cycle lane on their approaches. However, there is no new cycle lane that would encourage cyclists to use the A6 or South Road as a direct southerly route.

Also useful is the building of a short cycle lane in front of the entrance to the Royal Lancaster Infirmary which will legalise a very popular desire line through to Ashton Road. Ditto for the proposed right turn from Aldcliffe Road onto South Road.



*Desire line, aka pavement cycling, at the junction*

So the new vision is not without merit, but it is a very expensive and complicated piece of road engineering which will do nothing to iron out the staccato movement of the traffic or make it much easier or safer for pedestrians and cyclists to negotiate it. Penny Street Bridge will remain an unloved junction.

##### **A Monderman vision**

Hans Monderman was a visionary Dutch traffic engineer who dreamed up the shared space junction which is revolutionising the way traffic junctions are being designed. He has

been dubbed the Great Stripper for he removed all the controlling clutter from streets such as traffic lights and signage, leaving them, well, naked.

His junctions, which are to be seen quite commonly in Dutch and German towns, have also been installed in a few locations in England, including Brighton, Ashford and Kensington High Street. Forty more are planned, but Monderman doubted whether UK engineers had had the necessary training to do them.

Crucially, these junctions do work, in that a steady flow of traffic is maintained at a more leisurely pace. Slow speed is essential because nobody or everybody has a right of way, so crossings need to be negotiated with all other users. Nobody has the right of way by reason of size, speed or testosterone level.

Monderman argues that the greater the uncertainty at a junction, the greater the amount of care needed. This raises driver alertness levels to that of pedestrians and cyclists, forcing motorists to think for themselves rather than automatons obeying control signals.

What might a Monderman junction at Penny Street look like? It might have a slightly raised centre, surrounded by a variety of differently textured surfaces. The control signals would disappear, being replaced with more convivial street furniture, such as benches, trees, and chairs and possibly tables outside its two pubs.

As well as a transport space, the junction would become a social space, as it was years ago before the bully boy cars took over. A space that could make you smile again, certainly a traffic calmed space. Moreover, there is no reason why the whole nasty gyratory could not be Mondermanned.

You think I'm dreaming? Well just google in 'Monderman, shared space' and see for yourself.

Oh, I nearly forgot, the council is reconsidering its original vision.

#### Useful websites

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid\\_7180000/newsid\\_7188500/7188558.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1](http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_7180000/newsid_7188500/7188558.stm?bw=bb&mp=wm&news=1&bbcws=1)  
[http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1149084&action=show\\_pr&id=213885](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/index.cfm?request=b1149084&action=show_pr&id=213885).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Church Street

After 10 years of campaigning, two-way cycling along the whole of Church Street is to be legalised by May or June. If all goes to plan, a contraflow cycle lane will run up the southern edge of Upper Church Street, where the China Street crossing will be toucanised.

### Royal Lancaster Infirmary

Planning permission has been sought to create a route through the infirmary grounds linking Aldcliffe Road with Ashton Road.

### Gyratory's missing links

The missing links in the cycle lane around the gyratory are to be joined up by May or June this year.

Noteworthy are **King Street**, Lancaster cyclists' death and serious injury strip, and **Great John Street** which are to get *advisory* cycle lanes, rather than the much safer *mandatory* ones. These will vary in width from 1.2m to 1.8m, plus a 0.8m white buffer strip against the driving lane, to replace the current fading pink tightrope. Again lanes of *variable* width are less secure than ones of *fixed* width. Also a narrow, 1.2m only, cycle lane, is scheduled on the gyratory to run along its western edge from **Market Street to Church Street**.

What to do with the **Bridge Lane** stretch and **Rosemary Lane** is yet unresolved. The right-hand bend on the former may cause problems for cyclists being squeezed by large lorries overstepping the lane. The council alternative is a large bike logo in the left hand lane and no cycle lane.

Cyclists will leave the gyratory at the foot of **Bridge Street** to access the Millennium Bridge, or Luneside East via a new cycle lane on **Damside**

**Rosemary Lane** is narrow and installing a cycle lane would leave two narrow 2.6m vehicle lanes. The council alternative is to do nothing.

In both cases the council have only **the one** alternative, whereas there are others: reclaiming road space for cyclists by closing one of the gyratory lanes to vehicles. Don't expect it to happen.

## Morecambe-Hest Bank route

As well as the surfaced cut-through from the canal towpath to Rushley Drive, the toucan crossing on Coastal Road has also been completed. This provides an off-road route between Hest Bank and Morecambe promenade.



*Leaving the towpath towards Rushley Drive*

The scheme also includes something to gladden a cycle campaigner's heart: priority for cyclists and pedestrians as you cross a (very minor) cul-de-sac.



*Priority across side junction*



*Toucan crossing: cyclists going downhill use the on-road cycle lane; cyclists going uphill use the shared-use pavement*

## Centros Inquiry

Following successful lobbying against the Centros scheme on grounds of totally inadequate cycle provision and the loss of existing cycle routes, Dynamo has been asked to present its case at the Planning Inspectorate's inquiry into Centros' called-in application at Lancaster Town Hall, on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> June, at 10 am.

## New CDT work place travel officer in post

We belatedly welcome Matt Moran our newish (3 months in post) work place travel plan officer. Judging from his comprehensive and enthusiastic report at the recent CDT steering group meeting, he will have much to inform you in the next edition of the newsletter, as he has agreed to write a job profile. Thank you Matt.

---

## THE HOT DEBATE

***Should Lancaster City Council spend £25,000 of CDT money to host a stage finish of this year's Tour of Britain?***

**Where do you stand?**

**The case for . . .**

Rumour has it that this September a stage of the Tour of Britain will finish in the Lancaster district. Rumour also has it that the privilege of hosting a stage finish of Britain's biggest bike race will cost the City Council £25,000. This cash may well come from the Council's Cycling Demonstration Town purse. The CDT project is meant to promote cycling. So we must ask the question, is spending £25,000 on

hosting a stage finish of the Tour of Britain a good way to promote cycling?

The answer is obvious. Yes, of course it is. This kind of support for cycling is long overdue, and exactly the kind of thing which we need to see much, much more of. There are two key aspects to my case. First and more negatively, I'll quickly review how money is currently spent on (supposedly) promoting cycling. Then, second and more positively, I'll reflect on the potential for cycle sport to promote cycling.

Although only a tiny fraction of the money it gives to prop up motoring, the UK Government now spends money on cycling. But how does it spend this money? There are two main ways, cycling infrastructure and cycle training. Cycling infrastructure can be good. In our district, some is truly excellent (for example, the Millennium Bridge and the off-road route from there to Morecambe; and many of the recently installed contraflows and advanced stop lines). But even here, in a cycling demonstration town, some infrastructure is awful (for example, the 'cycle-friendly improvements' to the roundabout near the Midland Hotel in Morecambe, and much of the recently implemented cycling provision on pavements). Good infrastructure might encourage more people to cycle; bad infrastructure almost certainly doesn't, and quite possibly does the opposite. Good or bad, cycling infrastructure is expensive. And even the very best cycling infrastructure in the UK rarely does what needs to be done – take space away from the car, and give it to other means of moving around. We should stop throwing money at it.

One reason the provision of cycle training has been increasing is because it's recognised that if making everywhere safe for cycling is too hard, then you need to improve people's individual capacities to cycle safely. We move from a failed structural solution ("let's make cycling safer"), to an individualised response ("let's teach people how to cycle safely"). The easiest people to teach how to cycle are young children. The rhetoric is 'they matter most' ("teach them to cycle young and they might cycle for life", "competent child cyclists might be less likely to drive later in life", and "cycling kids can influence their families to cycle"). The reality is that young school children are sitting ducks, the easiest group to reach. And the big problem is this: you can teach 9, 10 and 11 year old children to cycle. But it's almost impossible to keep them cycling as soon as they hit secondary school. Teaching young children to cycle is very, very different from

increasing the numbers of people moving around by bike.

I'm not saying that good cycling infrastructure and appropriate cycle training don't matter. I am saying that they're limited and – as currently conceived – often fallible and a waste of money. In response, our cycling promotion portfolio needs to grow bigger, broader and more complex.

Sport matters. It is part of our culture. We learn and grow through sport. Watching sport, we find heroes, people we wish to emulate. Through them, we find ourselves. As a teenager in the early 1980s, I loved following the Tour de France on Channel 4, and going into Birmingham to watch the Kellogg's city centre criteriums. Domestic pros like Malcolm Elliott and Joey McLoughlin, and especially the continental pros – Robert Millar, Phil Anderson, Sean Kelly – were heroes. Their exploits taught me about life. More recently, Chris Boardman's finest, last hour as a professional – when he broke Eddy Merckx's hour record on Manchester's velodrome on 27th October 2000 – ranks pretty highly among the best hours of my life too. These cycling legends animate cycling.

Cycling is about far more than riding a bike from A to B in order to get to work, school or the shops. I hate it when people see cycling as simply utilitarian. Policy makers tend to see cycling as about utility – and thereby drain the beauty, the breadth, the joy, the very life out of cycling. Cycle sport breathes cycling. Cycle sport is about bikes and the love of bike riding, but it is also about life. Cycle sport breathes life into cycling, and stops it becoming one more bureaucratic, moralistic project intervening big-brother style, pushing people to live differently for someone else's sake. Cycle sport has the capacity to move people in a way which professional promoters of cycling do not.

It's not difficult to find problems with cycle sport. There's the drugs issue, for starters. Then, many participants in cycle sport undoubtedly spend lots of money on kit and drive many miles. And in the past it's tended to revolve around white men. But things are changing. The sport is cleaning itself up. Local, grassroots cycling is vibrant. British cycling is producing female stars in abundance. Bike riders have the capacity to inspire. We ignore them at our peril. Are people inspired by an advanced stop line? Perhaps. By learning to ride more assertively? Possibly. By seeing Nicole Cooke win Olympic Gold in a last ditch fling to the line, or Sir Chris Hoy picking up

BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2008? Maybe. I certainly reckon cycle sport is worth a shot, and all told, £25,000 out of a £3 million purse isn't actually giving it that big a shot, is it?

So I'll applaud our Cycling Demonstration Town team when they allocate this money to the promotion of cycle sport. The Tour of Britain will bring cycling to the heart of our district like never before. If you won't go to the stars of cycle sport, they will come to you, right here to where you live, work, shop. My kids and I will be there, at the finish line. We're learning some of the sport's big names – Cavendish, Millar, Wiggins, Thomas, Cummings – and will be looking out for them. We'll also be down at Salt Ayre, over the coming years, taking part in local youth cycle sport. We will of course keep riding the roads and tracks of the district, as well as further afield. Because we love it. We'll go to Manchester's velodrome, maybe to the London Olympics, on to the continent. All the time we'll be living, breathing, promoting cycling.

It's likely to be contentious among those who think that A can lead to B (a new bit of red paint, or more cycle training, can simplistically lead to more cycling), and those who think the business of boosting cycling has nothing to do with pleasure, pain, beauty, fanaticism, desire and emulation. But the world is more complex than these people recognise. We cannot simply sanction cycling; we need to breathe life into it. Cycling promotion needs to create, and then feed off, a diverse and democratic cycling culture. So for cycling's official promoters to fund cycle sport is an obvious, sensible but nevertheless brave move. Well done to Lancaster City Council when you make it.

**Phil Legit**

\* \* \* \* \*

### **The case against . . .**

Although we might think we choose to use one form of transport over another rationally and independently, in fact we're all influenced by the way our society constructs ideas about cars, trains, bikes, etc. When people think about getting from A to B, their thinking is influenced by wider cultural attitudes towards how we travel. Attitudes to cycling in Holland, for example, are very different from those in Britain. The way British society thinks about the bike is generally negative; although there are many exceptions, cyclists are not normally treated with the same respect as car drivers. This isn't a conscious thing – most car drivers wouldn't say they think badly of cyclists per se

- but the deep-rooted view of bicycles is that they are a nuisance, an obstacle to the efficient comings and goings of the car.

This view is built up from a number of different cultural ideas about bikes: they are for children, they are for people who can't afford cars, they go too slowly, etc. One of those ideas is that cycling is a wonderful form of exercise, but not a practical form of utility transport. Bikes are good for your health, but they don't have the same right to the road as cars do. Cycling, in other words, is a recreational activity. Of course, thinking about something as a sport doesn't automatically mean that we don't take it seriously – think about motor racing and cars. But if the general cultural view is already one that subtly but powerfully denies the legitimacy of bikes as road vehicles, then the danger is that promoting cycling as a sport simply strengthens this position. This is all very subtle; people don't consciously think this way most of the time. But just as we stereotype people without realising it, so we stereotype modes of transport, unaware we are doing so. Promoting this race would be to reinforce the view of cycling as a game, a hobby, as recreation, not as a viable, legitimate way of travelling.

And, if there are some people who *are* inspired to see cyclists in a more positive light, what will their image of cyclists be? Maybe some people will be more accepting of the hi-viz persona, racing along at twenty-five miles an hour, but won't this hurt still more the image of the everyday, humble, utility cyclist? At an inquest into the death of a cyclist killed by a car recently, the coroner allowed a car driver to make the claim that the woman killed "wasn't a 'proper' cyclist"; the fact that she wasn't wearing lycra and a helmet somehow made the car driver's actions more acceptable because of the powerful but unarticulated view that, really, the cyclist shouldn't have been there in the first place. Her status as a road user was already diminished as a cyclist, but it was weakened still further by being juxtaposed with the image of the 'acceptable cyclist'.

Moreover, a recent court ruling even declared cyclists who are injured when not wearing a helmet, even when the accident is accepted to be some one else's fault entirely, "only [have themselves] to thank for the consequences". This ruling has been widely criticised: Bernard Jenkin, MP said: "The judge is clearly not a cyclist and he's exhibiting all the prejudices of someone who does not regularly use a bicycle."

The question here is: what will the promotion of professional cycling do to alter these sorts of prejudice? My fear is that it will in fact strengthen, rather than challenge them. Set against professional racers, the daily cyclist becomes an even greater target for negative opinions.

Finally, we need to ask what is likely to encourage people to get on their bikes. What message does promoting cycling as an arduous race send to people who are already convinced cycling is too much like hard work? Again, maybe some people, eager for their daily adrenalin rush, may decide cycling to work is a good way to get it; but do these people make up anything like the majority of people we want to encourage to cycle? I doubt it. Surely we want to normalise cycling, to demonstrate it is not only safer, but also a whole lot easier than most people think. We need positive images of normal, utility cycling; not a new stereotype about cyclists as equipment-laden sports stars.

Over the last half century, the cyclist has been literally and metaphorically pushed into the gutter. So a big part of promoting cycling needs to be promoting a different cultural understanding of the cyclist. Using racing – or other forms of entertainment cycling, such as Trial Biking – to promote cycling simply reinforces many of the negative views of the bike – as toy, not transport – that have made cycling an increasingly marginalised activity. And now a new stereotype – the 'proper' cyclist – threatens to help push the daily commuter still further down the hierarchy of the road. As we have seen, this is even seeping into the legal system, and may well do so a great deal more in the near future. The more this view of the proper cyclist grows, the stronger the view of the unacceptable, slow cyclist will become. If this sort of prejudice can be enshrined in law, just think what this means for the way car drivers look upon – and therefore treat – cyclists on a daily basis.

The money being thrown at cycling in recent years may seem like a lot, but for the task ahead of us, it is a tiny sum. We need to think wisely about the way that money is spent. For the reasons I've given, I'm not convinced giving money to this race is a good idea in any case, but with limited resources, there surely has to be a more constructive way to promote the sort of cycling we really want to see.

**Max Headroom**

## **CRITICAL MASS; A LANCASTER MASSER EXPLAINS**

Lancaster experienced its first 'official' Critical Mass in January 1995, although there had been numerous rides of a similar nature before then. For the next two years the Mass was a regular event, commonly attracting as many as sixty or seventy cyclists. Then for no one single reason, the regular rides stopped, and for the next decade, it was only a sporadic event, usually held to coincide with some wider protest.

Then, last year, Critical Mass once more took to the streets on a monthly basis; from August until February (excluding December) a new group of cyclists began meeting at Dalton Square before taking to the roads en masse, just as so many Lancastrians had done more than a decade before them. This revival has temporarily paused, for a number of reasons, but the hope and expectation is that April will see the ride start again, and that once more Critical Mass will become a regular feature on Lancaster's streets.

Things have changed since the early days. The Mass has been much smaller than it once was, with an average of fifteen cyclists. And, partly because of this, tactics have changed too. The ride has weaved in and out of the one-way system, usually heading up to the Pointer roundabout, then veering left after the canal bridge as it comes back into town, heading along to Dallas Road. And after another stretch of the one-way system, it's gone up to the Ridge, along Ullswater Road and Moor Lane, ending either back at Dalton Square, or at the St Leonard's Gate car parks. And when the ride does head onto the one-way system, it occupies just one lane. Finally, the Mass now leaves at 6.15, when much of the rush hour traffic has passed.

The relatively small size of the group has in a way forced this change in riding style, because people have felt less confident in taking the entire road for such a long stretch (of space and time). But this change in riding may also reflect changing attitudes about what Critical Mass means.

For some, Critical Mass is about disrupting the flow of cars; in doing so, it disrupts not only a physical process, but also a cultural one; the car's right to the road is challenged and the car/bike hierarchy is temporarily reversed. But this approach has appeared too confrontational to many, who feel cyclists

should be winning car drivers over to their side, not alienating them.

Whilst there are undeniable problems with alienating such a large section of the public as 'car drivers', supporters of the Mass have argued that, ultimately, cyclists *are* in conflict with cars – and their drivers – on a daily basis, and that this fact cannot be ignored. Something has to give.

Cars intimidate cyclists, forcing them to ride subserviently, as they learn to keep out of the way of 'real' traffic as much as possible. Cycle campaigners – including cycle instructors – argue that cyclists, in order to be safe, need to reassert their right to ride *in* the road, not at its edge.

Critical Mass, amongst other things, is an attempt to address this, to reclaim the road for cyclists. Although the Mass itself is only one brief ride a month, it helps create lasting changes to the way we think about the way we cycle, and drive.

For some Lancastrians, the question has now become: is there a way of doing this effectively, without pandering to the demands of car drivers to be absolutely unimpeded as they speed through our country's roads, whilst at the same time trying not to antagonise car drivers in a way that is detrimental to cyclists? Clearly, there is no response that will please everyone, but that has never been the intention. But by leaving slightly later, thus avoiding the majority of the rush hour, and by cycling through residential areas as well as the one-way system, the Lancaster Mass has struck a pretty good balance. The riders feel empowered whilst on the ride – and some of this stays with them in the month's cycling between each ride. And, by cycling through residential areas, the Mass has been seen by a new audience. . . car drivers – when they're not in their cars! Critical Mass is a convenient target for car drivers, already stuck in traffic, to vent their frustration – but more and more people are recognising that cars really are problematic, and that something pretty radical needs to happen soon, to save our cities, to save our sanity, and of course to save our planet.

When people aren't stuck in their little metal boxes – when they become people again, not just car drivers – they see cyclists, and the Mass, in a different light. It becomes easier to see them as a celebration of a different, and better, life, instead of as an obstacle to simply speeding through this one.

Cyclists need to reclaim their right to the road, and doing that inevitably means taking some of that space back from car drivers. The only way we can avoid stepping on car driver's toes entirely is by staying in the gutter. Critical Mass urges us to come out of the gutter, and, yes, step on a few toes; but it does so, not to antagonise, but to demand - to demand back what cars have taken from us, to remind everyone of the current injustices of the road, and to say, not with arrogance or anger, but most certainly with conviction; We are not obstructing Traffic, We *are* Traffic.

**Matt Wilson**

*See interview below on the man often dubbed one of the founders of Critical Mass.*

---

## **CHRIS CARLSON: DYNAMO INTERVIEWS AN OUTLAW BICYCLIST**

Chris Carlsson is one of north America's most important radical intellectuals. One of his main interests is cycling, and cycling's capacity to change us, and the world, for the better. In the early 1990s, he was a key figure in the creation of San Francisco Critical Mass, the world's first and perhaps its most successful. The monthly San Francisco rides attract thousands of riders, and have helped to transform the streets of San Francisco into a much more cycle-friendly environment. The recent re-emergence of the bicycle as an important mode of urban mobility in the US has been charted in a couple of new books – Harry Wray's *Pedal Power: The Quiet Rise of the Bicycle in American Public Life*, and Jeff Mapes' *Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities*. But back in the 1990s, Carlsson was already analysing the revolutionary potential of urban cycling.

Chris last came to Lancaster ten years ago, to talk about *Shaping San Francisco*, a radical community history project. He returned this Easter as part of a UK tour to promote his latest book, *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners Are Inventing the Future Today!* His very well attended talk at The Dukes marked the start of this year's Bike Film Festival, and what a great way it was to start! Chris's interests are much broader than cycling, encompassing the various practices which are together contributing to a 'silent revolution'. But members of Dynamo caught up with Chris after his talk, and asked him to

wear his cycling hat whilst he answered a few of our questions.



*Utopia finally gets a location: Chris's cover design for his latest book*

Chris advocates a style of cycling which might be considered controversial. Red lights are to be negotiated with care, but not necessarily obeyed. He is very sceptical of helmets. He's clear that cyclists should always be respectful of others and, for example, give way to pedestrians. He is equally clear that the principle of cycling promotion should be the reallocation of road space away from cars and towards cyclists and pedestrians, to make our cities much more agreeable, peaceful, happy places.

Chris agrees that Critical Mass might not be needed in Amsterdam or Copenhagen as much as it is in north American or UK cities, but it still makes sense in those kinds of cities with strong cycling cultures, because it offers a mobile social space in which people can meet and interact free of the market. For him, Critical Mass is not just about cycling, it's about building communities too. Cyclists are able to interact with their environment much more effectively than drivers, but cyclists deliberately riding together, in the same time and place, that much more so.

This is one of the most refreshing aspects of Chris's take on cycling. He doesn't talk the policy-speak of the UK's institutionalised cycling promoters. He is far less interested in

pollution, obesity, health and congestion than he is in social interaction, excitement and pleasure. For him, cycling is about feeling a buzz, having fun, making friends. This became clear on Easter Sunday when, coming back from a beautifully sunny bike ride to Glasson Dock, we asked him the best places he'd ever ridden a bike.



*Chris, 'I'm a big fat guy'*

"I like riding through the middle of Manhattan in heavy traffic. I like bombing down the hills of San Francisco, radically and dangerously. And I had a great time rolling through Rome, chasing a guy named Paolo Bellino on his fixie with no brakes. I was riding a bike with coaster brakes, and it was insane but a totally gratifying experience - the middle of the night, going through Rome, going by the Forum and the Coliseum, just the layers of history just making my head go nuts, thinking about all that stuff! So I'm always looking at history and geography at the same time as I'm cycling, and really appreciating that. I love the places that have most variations and density."

We ask Chris to describe his perfect bike. "Very upright! I like to sit up high and sit up straight. I've had some back injuries, so being able to sit up straight is my preference, in general." Essential accessories? "A strong rack is absolutely essential. A very solid, well made hub on the back, because I put tons of weight on the back, and I'm a big fat guy, so I bounce along and break hubs like you can't believe, so I have to get the best ones out there! And on my rack I want panniers. And you need a bell, that's essential. And lights. I believe strongly in being well lit."

We ask Chris what proportion of all urban journeys could be made by bike. "Oh, probably 70%, more, 80% even. Most urban journeys are within a very small distance, and don't require carrying lots of stuff.

The way shopping has evolved, people tend to take their car and then fill it up. But if you knew you were going every day, on your bike, then you would just get what you need every day, or every other day. My bicycle, I characterise it as a Cadillac pick-up truck! I can carry ridiculous amounts of stuff on there. I go to the Farmers' market on Wednesday and load up on stuff, then I go to the Co-op grocery store and pile on loads more stuff, so I have panniers and a giant box, and bungee cords if I need to add more stuff. Anyone can do that."

So Chris Carlsson's vision is clearly about urban cycling, but an urban cycling of pleasure much more than utility. His vision is of cities in which people are much more genuinely free – free from the constraints of unfulfilling work, free from cars, free from the oppressions of cities as we know them. His ecological, democratic, liberated city is full of people on bikes, but not going to work so much as going to the allotment, to friends, to cafes, sharing, building a culture together. It's a world in which pleasure is on the up. It's a most wonderful vision and we hope that, when Chris next returns to Lancaster, we'll be further along the path to achieving it.

**Dave Horton**

---

### **THE SKETCH: Sideways impressions of my first Cycling Demonstration Town Steering Group Meeting at Morecambe Town Hall, on 6 April**

I learned two things. One was of the existence of a shadowy, all-seeing, all-controlling figure called The Network Manager. To paraphrase DH Lawrence: in all matters of local highway importance, please approach the supreme authority, aka The Network Manager. After the meeting, the Network Manager's aura was somewhat dispelled by learning that it has adopted the rather quotidian alias of 'Martin Porter'. It doesn't really fit the image of the blacked-out, stretch Hummer, buzzing with hi-tech monitoring equipment, patrolling the streets to keep them safe for motorists, bearing TNM's motto: 'Facilitare vehiculare'.

The second thing that I learned is that a highways engineer on attachment to CDT, was

unaware of the city council's cabinet policy to see the Thurnham Street car park upgraded to the 'Southern Interceptor Car Park' with a direct access from South Road. (Giant mechanical grabs will reach out over the carriageway to remove, or 'intercept', vehicles which The Network Manager detects are using the gyratory solely to access car parking spaces nearer to the principal shopping area. A laudable idea but unlikely to survive the onslaught of those pesky civil carparkertarians.) This is seen by the bat-visionaries on the cabinet as a means of reducing traffic on the one-way system. The re-engineering of the junction of South Road, Thurnham Street, Aldcliffe Road, etc. will invalidate much, if not all, of the planned, and very expensive, makeover to render the junction more cycle-permeable. Anyway, my dictionary defines permeable as 'yielding passage to fluids'. Yikes, I'll stick to negotiating it off the saddle.

It's going to take more than pots of the council's red, tuftytex paint to calm Penny Street junction, and it was suggested by a campaigner to implement a 'Monderman junction' here. The Dutch traffic engineer's Times obituary in 2008 says: 'Hans Monderman pioneered the concept of the "naked street" by removing all the things that were supposed to make it safe for the pedestrian - traffic lights, railings, kerbs and road markings. He thereby created a completely open and even surface on which motorists and pedestrians "negotiated" with each other by eye contact... His maxim was: "If you treat drivers like idiots, they act as idiots. Never treat anyone in the public realm as an idiot, always assume they have intelligence".'

Mandatory doses of Mogadon for all drivers approaching the junction (and immediate interception in a southerly direction) might as well have been proposed and the effect on the assembled council officers would have been the same: indifference with knobs on.

The other gyratory cycle-permeability schemes – toucan-crossings of Quarry Road/Spring Garden Street; Spring Garden Street/King Street; Chapel Street/Rosemary Lane – are due to be facilitated and/or installed in the current financial year. A cheaper less complicated alternative of 'cycling zebras', was proposed. Dynamo would secretly like to see the city look like a wild-life safari park and rebrand as 'Dynosaurus'. However, that idea was ignored with a veneer of resigned tolerance. Well, at least the lackeys of the driving bourgeoisie don't seek

lamp-post revenge on those of us seeking to subvert roadway power relations.

The Great Subverter was present to try officers' patience with the idea that school travel plans were fit and proper matters for CDT discussion, given that Christ Church and Ridge primary school travel plans explicitly discourage cycling. The former won't even encourage walking (presumably when unaccompanied) because of road safety issues. A pox on the unorthodox, officers seemed to mutter. Fortunately the resilient GS has a very resistant constitution and pointed out that surely our officers knew that travel plan problems should be 'fed' into Highways Planning? The grass is much longer there, especially when these schools have opted not to be 'BikeIt' schools. Ah, but that's because of the road danger. As every three year-old knows, going round in circles quickly makes you dizzy.

A seasoned cycle campaigner expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of salting of pavements and cycle tracks during the worst of the winter, while major roads were well treated in advance. Very obviously, he has no idea of the cost of vehicle repairs these days, as reflected in motor premiums. Ye gods, these cyclists will be asking for a blanket 20mph limit next. Oh, they already had done earlier in the meeting....you'll know the response by now.

From the region of the Chair it was clearly implied that we are approaching the completion of the infrastructure (should we take that as a subtle message that the M6 link with its associated cycle path really isn't going to happen?) as he issued a call to identify the ideas which CDT should focus on in order to market cycling better. That will be the subject of a separate CDT meeting, now scheduled for 11 May.

The new-ish workplace cycling officer, gave an extended listing of progress on the cycle policies and practices of the (all public-sector employer) partners in the 'key workplace' cycling scheme. Watch out for the secure cycling shelter outside the castle. It's presumably the only place that inmates will be allowed to smoke. He says that he's trying to create a cycling culture within the city council. (Recently, at the full council budget meeting, a councillor offered up the subsidised parking for councillors as a budget saving, you know there's something stirring . . . except that suggestion was completely ignored by everyone else.)

I came away with my head still resonating from the intonations of a rogue dalek which had strayed into the chamber. "Evaluate! Evaluate!" Apparently it belongs to Cycling England.

**Tim Hamilton-Cox**

---

## **FILL THAT HOLE! IT'S SO EASY TO DO . . .**

Following the relatively long spell of cold, icy weather earlier this year, the potholes on my route to work seemed to have proliferated, and deepened, and expanded. Some of them were like enormous craters, in a sea of craters – holy fish, it was a craterscape out there! Suddenly, I felt like I was riding the backroads of some remote country, where good tarmacadam is a real luxury.

Now to some extent, I tend to treat pots – and the art of dodging them - as part of the cyclist's lot. But one night, riding home from work in the dark, I hit one hard and only just managed to keep my bike under control (strangely enough, it seemed to be by completely relaxing my grip on the handlebars that I managed to stay upright – funny what you do automatically, when you have to, isn't it?). If you're wondering where it was, this particular pot – on Piccadilly just west of the Booths crossroads - was part of a much bigger area of badly damaged road surface, around which –if surrounding traffic are against you - it's sometimes impossible to skirt.

This close shave, and the realisation that there were suddenly a lot more pots around, on which other cyclists might come a cropper, caused me to stop and think.

Riding a route twice a day means I've become relatively familiar with it, but what about those people riding these roads less often – they're presumably much more likely to hit a pot hole they don't know is there. I've got a reasonably good front light, which illuminates the road with all its faults, but what about those cyclists who get by on a flashing LED with the capacity to illuminate diddly-squat? And what if someone who's only recently got onto a bike hits one of these craters? That's unlikely to win them over to cycling is it? Worse, hitting a pot is potentially very, very dangerous – not only might you fall, but the anyway potentially serious consequences of such a fall become much worse if another vehicle were to be involved.

But the poor Highways Authority, how can they possibly be expected to know about these proliferating potholes? They can't keep a constant eye on all the routes which we cyclists use. Those of us out on the roads, negotiating the streets and their surfaces, are clearly best placed to see, and to report on, what's going on. We're the patrol. So we should tell them, the Highways Authority, of the problems we find.

So that's what I did. Via CTC's Fill That Hole website, it's so extraordinarily, beautifully, simple to do. You just go to <http://www.FillThatHole.org.uk/> and follow the easy-to-understand instructions. It really is easy, and you get a great surge of satisfaction when a little flag appears on the map, right where you remembered the pothole to be! In fact, so much did I enjoy the act of reporting 'my' pothole (yes, you even develop, through this process, a sense of ownership over individual potholes – how weird and wacky is that? And it's free!), I did it twice – another huge pothole had suddenly emerged, slap bang in the way of any cyclist riding against the flow of motorised vehicles on the new Brook Street contraflow, near Aldcliffe Lane. Because it's so easy to get squeezed along there (heaven forbid the idea of removing car parking space to create some room for cyclists!), this pot could sometimes be pretty impossible to avoid. So I reported that one too.

To my surprise, the very next day, on my way to work, they'd both been fixed! The power of the threat of being sued for damages can be quite a spur to action. Looking at the website, it's clear that not all potholes are fixed so soon after they've been reported, and I don't really understand the process from a pothole being reported to it being fixed – presumably it varies a good deal, and the rapid attention 'my' potholes got is not the only story.

My pots hadn't been brilliantly fixed, just patched (like mending a puncture), but the road maintenance crew had done a sufficiently good job to render those stretches once more safe for cyclists. And, it is really satisfying, to think that my easy actions had so quickly resulted in an improvement to our local cycling infrastructure, and – potentially – had helped prevent an accident-otherwise-waiting-to-happen. So I went back onto the website, ticked a little box to say that the holes had now been filled, and filled out my own little box, to say a very well deserved 'thank you' to Lancashire County Council for getting on the case so quickly.

So, next time you see and/or almost disappear down a pothole whilst you're out riding the mean Lancashire streets, you know what to do. Log onto FillThatHole and get it sorted out!

**Dave Horton**

---

## **WILLOW LANE: TRAFFIC CALMING IS NOT WORKING**

One thing I find more annoying than no cycle provision at all, is cycle provision that is designed so badly as to actually inconvenience a cyclist or even endanger them.

There was a classic case at a roundabout in Morecambe several years ago which I negotiated on my daily commute from Carnforth to White Lund.

If I held my road space on the roundabout and used positive cycling techniques I would have to give way only once. If I used this cyclists' "provision" to tackle the roundabout I would have to give way 9 times. What was even more unreasonable was that one of the cycle paths around the roundabout had a huge chestnut tree in the middle of it, a mature perfectly healthy tree that had stood for a year or so before it was cut down, leaving a large and hazardous stump in the middle of the cycle path instead.

I am pleased to say, since then things have improved quite considerably. Now the district has Bike-it schools, bike buddy schemes, repair and maintenance courses, and a nationally recognised cycle training scheme, rather than the awful Lancashire County-run Passport to Cycling that rarely managed to get children beyond the school gates and onto the road.

However, when an authority gets a large sum of money – by cycling standards anyway – they tend only to spend it on new infrastructure and ignore stuff that is already in place but woefully poor. The one in particular that I wish to bring to your and the council's engineer's attention is the so-called traffic calming in Willow Lane, Lancaster.

Whoever designed it had not studied carefully anything on cycle provision engineering, and most definitely does not cycle themselves. The Willow Lane design is lethal. Firstly, it incorporates pinch points, which granted do (in some cases) provide a narrow escape route but this usually runs into parked cars.



*Pinch point and, dangerously positioned cycle lane on Willow Lane*

The worst point is at the Marsh end of Willow Lane, where there is no escape route through the pinch point that is usable when cars are parked, as they often are.

Secondly, the marked cycle lane (see image) is far too close to parked cars and even the outside border is not safe from an opening car door. It really has not been thought through correctly. This infrastructure pre-dates Lancaster's CDT status, but doesn't improvement of existing works come under the project's remit? If that is so then it needs attending to. Because one thing is for sure; and that is that the road is now more hazardous for cyclists than before. Moreover, the 20mph speed limit the scheme is meant to enforce is simply not working.

I don't mean to denigrate Lancaster's status as a CDT, but I think it is only fair that informed cyclists have the chance to point out what has been done incorrectly, and this information is used to show other towns how things should be. This way we avoid the situation of towns across the country applying gallons of white paint to the roads, claiming they've done their bit but actually achieving nothing for cycling.

Why not send any details of bad facilities to Dynamo, that way we can provide the CDT with the information.

**Steve Andrews**

## **A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

This winter, for the first time in 25 years, I have gone on holiday without packing shorts or cycling tights. I have discovered citybreaks – holidays where you wear normal clothes and

don't get sweaty or out of breath. In order not to make the break too traumatic, however, I didn't abandon bicycles entirely: I simply hired them when I got there. And instead of cycling tights, I packed long johns (and was I glad of them!).

First stop was Paris in the middle of December. I'd heard about the Vélib bike hire scheme and I'd noted a suggested itinerary from Montmartre to Notre Dame that I fancied trying out. So we caught the train to London, walked from Euston to St Pancras and caught the Eurostar to Paris. I'd booked a nondescript hotel near the Rue de Rivoli, and on the first morning we set off to find our nearest Vélib station. Since they are never more than a stone's throw apart (300 metres is the official claim), our nearest one was round the corner. Registering (and guaranteeing a credit card deposit of €150 in case of non-return) required help from a passing Parisien who was returning his bike, but it was straightforward enough. We knew enough to ensure that we checked over the bikes before deciding which one we wanted to hire (loose saddles and flat tyres are a particular problem), and off we pedalled.



*Our local Vélib station*

The bikes are sturdy, good quality and regularly maintained and serviced. They have three speeds, a hub brake and a small basket on the front. There's no lock – the pricing system discourages you from keeping the bike, but to return it to a Vélib station once you are no longer cycling. The first half hour is free; the second half hour is €1, the third slightly more, and then it goes up to the maximum of (I think) €4.

Cycling in Paris is not as bad as it sounds. There are cycle lanes on key tourist routes and some cycle contra-flow lanes, and we had a cycle map of the city. Drivers are reasonably considerate. As ever, we avoided anything that looked particularly daunting. Cycling along the Seine to the Eiffel Tower was tremendous; you have to stop every few metres to admire the vistas afforded by this most planned of European cities.

And, yes, we did other things besides cycling, but the Dynamo newsletter is not the forum for a description of the Musée du Moyen Age. But both were great.

Inspired by Paris, I decided on Amsterdam in March. (Long johns a blessing again.) Train to Newcastle, then the overnight DFDS ferry to IJmuiden. The ferry company runs buses from Newcastle station to the docks, and from IJmuiden to the centre of Amsterdam, so everything was very convenient. I'd booked a small apartment just outside the centre in an unfashionable and very Dutch street. I'd noticed in Rotterdam last year that residential streets are equipped with bicycle racks outside houses and that they are crammed with bikes. (You would not want to leave your posh touring bike there – they are for the paint-scratched bikes that get a daily hammering.)



*Bicycle and car parking for residents*

Everyone (it seems) cycles in Amsterdam. We observed the rush hour traffic in our street as we ate breakfast. They were more bicycles than cars. Imagine that! And such a variety of bicycles. Given that using and parking a car is not easy in Amsterdam, many people do without one of their own. That means that the

Bakfiets is a favourite: a long-wheel-base two-wheeler with a kind of wheelbarrow at the front where you can carry children (up to 3 small ones, it seems) or your weekly shopping.



*A bakfiets with cargo*

We borrowed our landlady's bikes and set off, wary of tramlines. There is cycle provision absolutely everywhere and nobody wears fluorescent clothing or helmets. In a way, however, it was more difficult than Paris: I'm used to having cars all around me and I know how to cycle amongst them, but cycling amongst scores of cyclists is rather different and you have to get used to it.

And, like Paris, Amsterdam is tremendous for a visit (although quite different in terms of ambience and size).

So . . . I'm thinking of Antwerp next.

### **Useful websites**

Paris:

<http://www.en.velib.paris.fr/>  
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/travel/2008/oct/18/cyclingholidays-ethicalholidays-paris>  
<http://www.paris.fr/portail/viewmultimediacument?multimediacument-id=62163>

Amsterdam:

<http://www.amsterdam.info/>  
<http://www.bedandbreakfast.nl/index.php?lang=en>

**Patricia Clarke**

---

### **OBITUARY: ROB BROCK, R. I. P.**

Last month cycling lost a great advocate and inventor. Rob Brock, a highly entertaining and larger than life character sadly died at the young age of 44. Although not from the district, he visited many times and many reading this will have met him.

He is perhaps known to most in the cycling fraternity as the creator of the Brox (a human powered 4 wheel utility vehicle.)

His invention attracted the media and he made a few TV appearances, both with Mathew Kelly and on Blue Peter where he came out with some timeless "Brockisms", such as, "It's pointless using a Transit to deliver a box of eggs", and of his Brox, "It runs on milk and Cornflakes."

It was the Brox that brought him to Lancaster. First as a trader, displaying at the sadly now discontinued CycleFest, to which he would return many times, sometimes in convoy. On two particularly memorable occasions with a musical accompaniment in the form of the "Boom Brox", and a 'One Less Car Cycle Taxi', both fitted with powerful stereo systems.

At the re-launch of the Brox he even arranged an evening for Dynamo members to "destruction test" the new Brox at St Martin's. I can safely admit now to damaging the bodywork on one of them while "off-roading" on campus. )

Finally, his great sense of humour, friendly outgoing personality and constant stream of one-liners will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

Cycling has lost a great friend, rest in peace Rob.

**Steve Andrews**

## PRIZE WINNING COMPETITION

Simply, identify **Alan**, to claim the star prize of unlimited tyre air, as used in the Tour de France, for a whole 12 months.

It's a such a gas, man!!!!

- Choice of three pressures: spongy, firm or brand new relaxed diastolic
- Pollution level of choice: Gyrotory (Lancaster), Mersey Tunnel or super strength Athenian (modern) city centre, aka nefos.
- Choose your favourite colour: exciting grimy gray, tastefully transparent or everybody's favourite: naughty see-through
- Valve compatible: Presta, trumpet and bloody bicuspid.

Please state your preferences on your entry form.

*'The summer term was due to start on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1926, which was, it so happened the day of the General Strike. 13 year-old Alan had heard on the ferry from St Malo, that only the Milk Trains were running, but he felt confident he could cycle the 60 miles west from Southampton to Sherbourne.*

*'At 11 am I found a bike shop and bought a map for 3 shillings. Noted Sherbourne on it. Left at 12am. Had lunch 7 miles out, 3s 6d. Continued for 3 miles to Lyndhurst, bought apple, 2d. At Beerley 8 miles on, pedal was a bit wrong – had it fixed, 6d.*

*'Undulating roads all the way over Downs to Blandford. Lovely ride through New Forest and over the moor into Ringwood and finally along the flat to Wimborne.*

*'Arrived Sherbourne late, streets full of people who had struck.'*

Clues, for younger readers only, as to Alan's identity. Those over 65 please look away now.

- Enigma
- Computers
- Poisoned apple

## DYNAMO COMMITTEE

Rob Bee, social secretary		
Paul Bradbury, without portfolio		
Patricia Clarke, membership sec	63641	<a href="mailto:patricia.clarke60@btinternet.com">patricia.clarke60@btinternet.com</a>
Claire Duplock, without portfolio	33146	
Dick Follows, newsletter editor, CDT rep	63641	<a href="mailto:dick.follows@btinternet.com">dick.follows@btinternet.com</a>
Dave Horton social secretary	845448	<a href="mailto:d.r.horton@lancaster.ac.uk">d.r.horton@lancaster.ac.uk</a>
Tim Hamilton-Cox, treasurer, CDT rep	843353	<a href="mailto:timhc@fsmail.net">timhc@fsmail.net</a>
John Leach, CDT rep	822398	<a href="mailto:john.leach@zetnet.co.uk">john.leach@zetnet.co.uk</a>
Ian McCulloch, without portfolio		

- Write to Dynamo at c/o 123 Scotforth Road, Lancaster LA1 4JN
  - Email Dynamo at [dynamocycle@btinternet.com](mailto:dynamocycle@btinternet.com)
  - Website [uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign](http://uk.geocities.com/dynamocyclecampaign)
  - Annual membership: £5 waged, £2.50 unwaged
- The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Dynamo committee. Let us know if you would prefer to receive the newsletter by email in future.