

# NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2010



Lancaster and District Cycle  
Campaign

Free to members

[www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk](http://www.lancaster-dynamo.org.uk)

### EDITORIAL

In April 2011 Lancaster's CDT (Cycling Demonstration Town) funding will end, and in the current economically austere climate we are unlikely to receive future funding, thus Dynamo was informed by Peter Loker, the chair of the CDT Steering Group, at the meeting in May.

So how do we satisfy our rising cycling expectations in times of sinking funding?

Firstly, Lancashire County Council is in the process of writing its Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the next decade, 2011-2021, and it needs pro-cycling input from the public. (See John Leach's, 'LTP and Fear of Accidents' below for details.) Just to give you some local context, Liverpool City Council is devoting a whole third of its LTP budget to cycling, and Dynamo believes Lancashire should aim to match that. While the bypass-building obsessives at County Hall are unlikely to be so generous, they are open to persuasion via their LTP3 Forum website/questionnaire. <http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/questionnaires/runQuestionnaire.asp?qid=352404>. So, log on and have your say.

Secondly, a lively, local '20s Plenty Group', supported by Dynamo, has been formed, which is campaigning for a default 20 mph speed limit throughout residential roads in the district. It will only be effective if it gets wide grass roots support from not just cyclists but pedestrians, residents and motorists. So investigate the website and find out how you can help achieve this crucial road safety initiative: [www.20fornorthlancs.org.uk](http://www.20fornorthlancs.org.uk).

Lastly, it will not have escaped your notice that over the last 12 months much cycling infrastructure, in the form of new cycle lanes, advanced stop lines, Toucan crossings and cycle contraflows, have been installed in the city centre, and there is more to come. So the impermeable and cycle-unfriendly nature of the gyratory area that has been the long-standing deterrent to many aspiring cyclists is

now history. What's needed now is for local cyclists to start using it more regularly and in greater numbers, until a critical mass of silent two-wheelers persuades local motorists that cycling is the best way to get around Lancaster. Heaven forbid that Lancaster should become the new Milton Keynes: great infrastructure but nobody uses it.

### NEW CITY CENTRE INFRASTRUCTURE



*The staggered Toucan across the gyratory at George Street adjacent to the police station. Hoods have now been removed and the lights are synchronised with Dalton Square signals.*



*The wide cycle lane rising up St John's Street on the eastern side of the gyratory keeps the Hummers outta your spokes.*



Three cars waste no time in illegally parking in the new contraflow on Lower Church Street.



The Stonewell crossing is soon to be widened and Toucanised so cyclists will no longer need to dismount to cross the gyratory.



Pedestrians on the contra flow up North Road haven't quite got the hang of the arrows and signage, although look at the narrowness of the pavement compared to the road.



Yes, two way cycling on Church Street, and at any time. But where are all the cyclists?



Learn new local names, such as Dolphinlee Bridge, from the detailed signposts, like this one at Ridge Bridge.

Lancaster City Council's CDT website:  
[www.celebratingcycling.org](http://www.celebratingcycling.org)

## LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN AND FEAR OF ACCIDENTS

The third local transport plan (LTP3) for Lancashire is being drafted. It is a joint exercise with the two councils for Blackburn and Blackpool. These are unitary authorities but are joining with Lancashire to create this strategic plan.

All future transport, including road, developments will be influenced by this document, so although it appears as a dry bureaucratic process it is important to ensure that it at least has a vision of the future where we can move around freely. The plan covers the period 2011 to 2021 but will be implemented in three-year blocks.

The rhetoric in the policy background papers appears encouraging but the devil will be in the implementation and resolving some of the ambiguities. The Lancashire web site sets out the transport vision and principles, as follows.

"Transport in Lancashire will have a key role in helping to make Lancashire a great place to live, work and play.

"Transport will help in building a sustainable future, based on the principles of connectivity supporting a competitive economy and meeting the needs of Lancashire's residents. This will mean changing travel behaviour to support a lower-carbon economy, and movement networks that are safer, more secure and more supportive of thriving communities.

"Transport in Lancashire will respect the following principles:

- The importance of Lancashire to the North. It generates some 20% of Gross Value Added of the Northwest region, with a population of 1.4 million and almost 700,000 jobs.
- The distinctiveness of Lancashire. It has large areas of outstanding countryside and coastline, a strong cultural identity and a sense of place that complements the more urban offer of Manchester and Liverpool.
- The diversity of Lancashire. It is a mix of urban and rural, remote and connected, with areas of prosperity and acute deprivation."

How respecting acute deprivation as a principle eludes me, but I believe it demonstrates that the people developing this plan need all the help they can get.

The goals for transport are described as follows.

"Transport in Lancashire will support the following outcomes:

- Competitiveness and growth – we will manage and improve transport as one of the elements to enable Lancashire to attract new jobs, tackle the 'productivity gap' and secure a strong economic future.
- Climate change – we will reduce carbon emissions from transport to enable Lancashire to play its role in contributing to UK carbon targets.
- Equality of opportunity – we will build strong communities by enabling the people of Lancashire, particularly the most vulnerable in society, to access education, employment, health and public services.
- Health, safety and security – we will tackle the negative impacts of mobility by reducing accidents, improving personal security, promoting physical activity and improving air quality.
- Quality of life and natural environment – movement in Lancashire will be managed to support improved quality of life in our towns, through tackling noise, reducing severance and creating liveable communities. We will respect Lancashire's high quality natural environment."

The background papers indicate that the economy will be supported by:

- Maintaining and improving the condition of the transport network.
- Reducing congestion and delay by improving network management and promoting alternatives to the car.
- Requiring good accessibility and effective travel plans for new development.

In terms of reducing carbon emissions some challenges are noted:

- High level of carbon emissions from transport
- High dependency on cars for personal travel
- Movement of goods required to meet the population's preferred lifestyles
- The distance travelled to access or deliver goods and services
- Effect of extreme weather patterns on the transport system

Whilst there are five strategic objectives listed, which are:

- Develop and maintain an efficient and sustainable transport system
- Increase use of public transport
- Encourage people to adopt active travel
- Promote the use of more efficient vehicles and vehicle operation
- Adapt the transport system to withstand the impacts of extreme weather

You might be forgiven for thinking that this heralds a new age of cycling. However, when I attended a presentation about LTP3 at the CDT steering group it was mentioned that three of the objectives of the LTP are:

- Reduce crime;
- Reduce the fear of crime;
- Reduce Road Traffic Accidents( RTAs).

When I asked about reducing the fear of RTAs the response was a blank look. I stated that many people say they do not and will not cycle because it is too dangerous. This is about perception or the fear of accident. We will need to inform transport planners that this concept will need to be recognised and acted upon if we are to achieve the modal shift in transport and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

John Leach

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## **NORTH WEST CYCLING PLANNING SEMINAR AT LANCASTER TOWN HALL, 6-7-10**

Attending as the keynote listener, Dynamo reports that the seminar's aim was: how local authorities can best promote cycling in times of economic austerity when big cuts to public spending on transport are looming.

Chairman, John Whitelegg, somewhat paradoxically, claimed that such times in fact provide a good opportunity to promote cycling as it yields a bigger bang for your investment buck than any other mode of transport. He cited Copenhagen, where 37% of the modal share of city journeys are by bike, and they are aiming for 50%. (Manchester, a comparable city, has 0.6%.) The Danes have shown that while every mile cycled saves the city 14p in health benefits, accident prevention, hospital treatment, clean air, etc., every corresponding car mile came at a cost. This sort of argument, he said, should be a no-brainer with planners trying to manage shrinking budgets.

There is also a need to 'paint the big picture' to the decision makers, he added, quoting the

German experience, where CDTs were invented. Towns such as Rosenheim have only achieved a 20% cycling modal share by reducing motorised traffic as well as improving cycling facilities. In other words you will not achieve a critical cycling mass by infrastructure, cycle training and promotion alone. In Lancaster this would mean measures such as reducing car parking spaces by 50% say, closing the gyratory to private motorised vehicles and having dedicated, car-free, school cycle routes.

As if to prove Professor Whitelegg's point, the three morning presentations from council officers and CTC reps' in different Lancashire towns - Lancaster, Southport and Blackburn - described the improvements to cycling infrastructure, training and publicity that their obvious hard work and dedication had achieved, but, alas, without the big increase that is needed to achieve a critical cycling mass.

Rachel Scott for Lancaster, an original CDT, (see below, Rachel Scott reflects) talked about a 25% increase in cycling over nearly six years. This figure, despite being the official Cycling England (CE), figure is quite problematic. Firstly, the actual methodology for counting is not that reliable. The electronic counters only count those using main cycle routes not the roads. On-road counting is done only once a year, which naturally is very weather dependent.

Secondly, there is no reliable base figure for 2005 from which to get to a 25% increase. In any case the original stated target was a 100% increase.

Thirdly, the way Lancashire County Council and CE choose to count in terms only of absolute numbers of journeys tells you nothing about modal share, which is the most useful statistic by which to assess change in cycling numbers.

All this is not to deny that cycling numbers have not increased in Lancaster since we won our CDT status, but on any measure they are way short of the 800% that our chief medical officer for Public Health is asking for, or indeed levels on parts of the continent where cycling has a significant modal share. The issue of numbers also raises the important question of what is the appropriate level of aspiration in cycling terms for cities such as Lancaster?

Although Southport is one of the new CDTs it already has a clear plan about the way cycling should be promoted: chiefly at the tourists, to

reflect its new, self-styled title, 'Classic Resort'. As a result bike hire schemes have been established on the esplanade as well as in all the major hotels to encourage tourists to explore Southport's new leisure routes from an open air saddle rather than a claustrophobic tin box. There may be a lesson for our own dear, local 'Last Resort', but currently Morecambe probably doesn't have the same volume of long-stay tourists to justify bike hire on a grand scale, and unlike Southport it does have a major through-road unzipping its heart.

Currently and admirably, Southport is also trying to boost its 3.8% modal share of bike trips to work by demand managing its car parking spaces.

Interestingly, the Southport CDT team inherited a local high school, which, without any input from them, boasts an almost Dutch level of pupil trips by bike: 25%. Meanwhile, just across the road at the sister school, Birkdale High for Girls, it is 0.6%!

Blackburn, as Lancaster used to be, is girded by a ring road which protects its retail fortress from pedestrians and cyclists. Unlike Lancaster or Southport it does not have CDT status. However, Robin Field of the CTC tried to demonstrate with images of cycle infrastructure of Blackburn town centre that if you have strong political will and enthusiastic local campaigners these barriers to cycling can still be broken down. I wasn't convinced.

Summarising the morning, the chair made the point that Lancashire has more road traffic casualties than the national average. This stimulated a discussion on how road danger can be reduced. Solutions fell into two categories: driver training and road engineering.

It was pointed out that in Germany, for example, learner motorists are taught that cyclists wobble and do fall off, so it is necessary to give them extra room. Moreover, on the continent the burden of proof in collisions between motorists and cyclists is on the driver to show that s/he was not at fault, unlike the UK where the claimant - usually the cyclist - shoulders the burden. Adopting this continental law in the UK would certainly make the motorist more careful.

Engineering your way to safety included the Mondrianism or 'Naked Streets' approach which puts responsibility back on to road users to take care rather than reducing them to automaton slaves to traffic signals. A solution

which CE recently rejected with regard to Lancaster's Penny Street Bridge junction, a name which incidentally now seems a little under value, as £250,000 of CDT money was spent on the new complicated junction. A further proposal was 'Give way to cyclists' signs at all cycle lane intersections with roads, again a measure that has not been introduced in Lancaster.

Caroline Holden from Lancashire County Council started the afternoon session with 'What's going on elsewhere in Lancashire'. With a miserable annual cycling budget of £100,000, boosted to £3 million by handouts from the lottery, REMADE (reclamation and management of derelict land), developers and Sustrans, half of which goes to Lancaster, the answer, despite a very graphic presentation, is not a lot.

This was followed by Rod King's most persuasive case for default 20 mph speed limits in all residential zones. As the man said, in terms of improved road safety and quality of street life, calmed 20 mph areas are a no brainer. This probably explains why Lancashire was not on his lengthening list of authorities who are embracing '20 is plenty'. Instead, Lancashire is running three small-scale pilots in Morecambe's West End, Burnley South and a small area of Preston. Schemes designed to fail, as a necessary condition of getting motorists to comply with a default 20 mph speed limit is that the area extends widely enough to include the homes of the very motorists who will be driving in it, otherwise they find it hard to perceive the benefits and are resentful about having to slow down.

Last up was Richard Smith, a former Lancaster Uni' alumnus, who shares the distinction of being the co-founder, together with the ed' in 1995 of UCAN, the university cycle action network. He now works for Living Streets, the rebranded Pedestrian's Association, which has a long list of successful campaigns under its feet, which include: the driving test, pedestrian crossings and 30 mph zones. In the past the PA was not always accommodating to cyclists but now it recognises that the real antagonist is the motorist and their policy is to work with cyclists to reclaim the streets from motorised traffic (see [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)).

The final session was a walkabout inspection of Lancaster's new cycle infrastructure.

Ed

## **RACHEL SCOTT, FROM THE CDT TEAM, REFLECTS ON ITS ACHIEVEMENTS**

Well we are now in our final year of the Lancaster with Morecambe Cycling Demonstration Town (CDT) project, and it's certainly been an interesting 4½ years.

Along with Gary Bowker – our cycling engineer - I've worked on the project since we first put in the bid to become a CDT back in the summer of 2005. At the time we had no real idea what to expect from the project.

I've certainly had fun working on the CDT (even though that seems to be frowned on in some quarters, after all work isn't meant to be fun). At times it's been disheartening, frustrating and tiring, but on the whole it's been an interesting experience.

One thing I've learned is you can't please people all of the time – or in fact some of the people any of the time. What one cyclist views as essential, another sees as a complete waste of time. Not to mention the amount of time spent dealing with 'complaints' about pedestrian/cyclist/motorist interaction. I'm afraid that there are still some cyclists out there that really aren't doing us any favours – running red lights, riding aggressively around pedestrians etc. Although on the whole most people do find the increase in cycling a positive thing – I guess they're just not as likely to call or email to tell us.

It's great seeing so many people enjoying all the various aspects of cycling – for instance the Learn to Cycle sessions for children aged 4+ have been really successful, allowing cycling on the Prom has worked really well and all the hard work put in by the CogSet parents and coaches has really paid off. [See Salt Ayre Cog Set: a parent's approach below.]

Monitoring really is a tricky thing, everyone just wants to know how many more cyclists there are, but it's just not that easy – even for our expert colleagues at Sustrans.

I certainly feel that there are more cyclists around these days – although I try not to count people on my way in to Morecambe any more – and the data that came out last year showing a 25% increase in cycling locally was positive.

However I think there is still a long way to go before cycling is taken seriously as a valid mode of transport and a way of creating healthier communities.

Recent physical activity studies have shown a 'significant' increase in the proportion of people doing any cycling in the last year (this was repeated across all the CDTs but the increases were only 'significant' in Derby, Lancaster and Exeter). Results for Lancaster show that the percentage of people doing any cycling rose from 25.9% to 30.1%

There was also a corresponding decrease in the proportion of people classed as inactive and an increase in those classed as moderately inactive and moderately active.

The links between cycling and health are stronger than ever, as numerous strategies and policies will tell you, however it's still difficult to translate this into real action from all the relevant agencies.

We've still got our fingers crossed that we will get funding from somewhere to continue the project in some form – so watch this space.

Rachel Scott

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## **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

Dear Editor

I've just finished reading my autumn copy of the Dynamo Newsletter. I always read it I love it. It's a little biased towards cycling and cyclists, but no matter. I also read The Racing Post and that's biased toward horses.

It takes me a long time to get through the excellent publication. Rather like my cycling, I am a slow mover, careful and considerate. Ed, I was devastated to read in your 'Door to Door Ride'. That Woodies came under the list of "many things that often disfigure our countryside". I don't know if you meant, Woodie or the building!

I am distraught, we have served the community, and especially the cycling fraternity now for layers, reviving many with our renowned bacon butties, and extensive range of hot drinks, along with a few comforting words of encouragement on those wet & windy days.

I do hope you will take time to visit us on your next Crook o' Lune ride. Let's see if we can refresh your love of Woodies.

Yours unseated.

Woodie (Duke of Halton)

*I can assure the reader that it was not a personal attack on the self-styled Duke of Halton rather his ducal snack bar which generates an awful lot of motorised traffic and that includes cyclists who pile their bikes onto the roof rack. The ugly scene in the car park around Woodies disfigures the otherwise beautiful dell that it is the Crook o' Lune.*

Ed

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## **SALT AYRE COG SET: A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE**

I like cycling, so I guess it's natural that I want my kids to like cycling too. Luckily they do, so far! But I also want my kids to be good, confident cyclists, and to meet other children through cycling. Which is why I'm a big fan of Salt Ayre Cog Set.

Every Saturday morning from Easter through until Autumn, Bobby (age 9) and Flo (7) can go down to our fantastic local cycle track at Salt Ayre for two hours of cycling fun and games – fun and games which give them a healthy dose of fresh air and exercise, improve their cycling skills, and take place in a social environment made up of kids of all ages from across north Lancashire and sometimes even further afield, all professionally supervised by a dedicated team of adults.

All kids are welcome, whatever their level. The Club currently has around 100 members, and depending on the weather there might be anywhere between around 30 and 60 turn up most Saturdays. The kids are organized according to age and ability, so they're challenged without being put off. A typical session includes some group riding around the cycle track, and the development of good technique through tackling obstacle courses. The kids learn to ride with others, and to maintain control of their bikes under different circumstances. Meanwhile, I can either hang around, watch and muck in, or else nip over to Asda to do the shopping (and have a quiet cup of tea)!

Both Bobby and Flo's desire to get up and go cycling on a Saturday morning varies. But as other parents will recognize, enthusiasm can be a fickle thing at this age. Personally I'm very happy they've got the opportunity to ride with other kids on a Saturday morning, and I hope that, as they get older, they'll continue to see cycling as something they want to do. But even if they don't, they're still learning a set of skills which will last a lifetime.

They have also been riding some time trial races. These are organized by Lancaster Cycling Club, and have really been boosted by the participation of Cog Set riders. They take place regularly from April to September on Salt Ayre cycle track. Because this is off road, children of any age can ride, and Bobby and Flo have started out doing the 2 mile time trials (whilst mum Sue often does the 6 mile race, and I do the 10 mile). Next year Bobby will probably step up to the 6 mile distance, and eventually I hope they'll both have a go at the 10 mile race. With all ages riding and numbers growing rapidly, Thursday evenings at Salt Ayre have quickly become a great social cycling occasion.

Saturday mornings can be such busy times. The kids have activities galore from which to choose, time-pressed parents have shopping and 101 other things to do, and then sometimes – especially when the sun's shining – it's nice to forego organized activities altogether, and simply have a day out, whether on or off the bike. With all these potential alternative ways of spending Saturday mornings (not to mention TV and computer games!), Go Ride clubs like Salt Ayre Cog Set have pretty stiff competition! So it's great that the kids don't have to go every week – they can drop in and out as circumstances and enthusiasm allow.

And Cog Set isn't just about Saturday mornings from Easter to September. The Club also organizes a whole range of other activities, taking place throughout the year, such as trips to Manchester Velodrome, mountain biking weekends, family rides and other social events. Although we don't even try to get along to everything that's going on, we're always made to feel very welcome when we do. And it's great to have an activity which we can sometimes do as a family, but which the kids can also sometimes do without us. And girls are as welcome, and are definitely as enthusiastic, as the boys!

To find out more about the Club, go to: <http://www.cogset.org.uk>.

Dave Horton

### **DONE WITH YOUR NEWSLETTER?**

Don't just put it in the recycling bin. Leave it somewhere for others to read it – waiting rooms, your staff room at work.

## DOOR TO DOOR, LOCAL RIDES

### 1. Perambulations upon my Velocipede

#### Lancaster to Dent

A great ride through country lanes, to Kirkby Lonsdale then along quiet back Lanes to Barbon, then over a high pass to Dent. Head from Lancaster to Halton. Take the high road through Halton (as in don't turn off right to Caton at the roundabout). Continue along the road to Kirkby Lonsdale, passing the Red Well Inn and through Newton, Whittington and Arkholme. At Kirkby Lonsdale, turn right and immediately left across the pedestrianised Devil's Bridge. Admire the shiny motorbikes then cycle straight across the road and into the car parking area. Take the steep little lane at the back of the parking area and follow the first available lane on the left, a few hundred metres past the campsite. Keep on to Casterton, passing around the back of the village church and turning left to head past the school. Now keep on going to Barbon along country lanes and past an impressive manor house, then over a short stretch of moorland. At the end of this road turn right and head steeply uphill over a pass to Dentdale. On arriving at Dentdale after a very steep descent turn right to get into Dent proper. Just past the museum on the left side of the road is an excellent cafe.

#### Options

- a. Return along the same route

About 5 hours in the saddle for a return trip.

- b. Return via Hutton Roof

At Kirkby Lonsdale head along the main road for about one mile, signposted to the M6, then turn off left to Hutton Roof. Return via Capenwray. Stop off at the Dive Centre to watch the funny frog men. Head on through Over Kellet, stopping to admire St Cuthbert's. The author is a proud graduate of Wilson's Endowed Primary School at Over Kellet.

- c. Return via Ingleton

Matt Oppenheim

### 2. A lazy loop around the Loyne Bridge

In terms of terrain this 45kms, northward route begins fairly flat, gets hilly in the middle and flattens out for the home straight. In terms of major route ways, it follows the

Preston to Kendal canal on the way out and the Lune valley on the return. In terms of energy, a large bowl of muesli and a banana usually do the bizz.

Think about it, nearly all of our canal towpath cycling is done on the western side of the canal, following in the hoof and boot tracks of long-dead barge ponies and bargees. However, by cutting through the Ridge Estate, along Ambleside Drive on the low side, you get a rare, if short chance to ride the eastern side before rejoining the canal over the stone Dolphinlee Bridge. If you look carefully at the underside of the arch you can just about make out the indentations left by the soles of the bargees' boots as they lay on their backs, like dying flies, booting the barges through the bridge, while the ponies were walked around it.

The last time I did the ride it was an early Sunday morning in late May, and as well as the St George's Cross car flags and window drapes that were blooming all over the Ridge – with nationalistic echoes of another country some 75 years ago – so were the pink and white Mayflowers. 'Nare cast a clout till May is out,' is apparently a reference to the flower rather than the month, and it was true to the adage: warm enough for shorts and a single top.

Back on the western towpath for a short stretch, we pedal past the steep slopes of the golf course that in the absence of any golfers were turned into toboggan runs during the big winter freeze.

Then we proceed over our magnificent, Grade 1 listed, 200-year-old aqueduct with its crumbling, 200-year-old towpath surface. Way below, early morning scullers are downsized to pond skaters as they slide under the arches behind a v-shaped bow wave.

Here we leave the canal, turning right towards Halton before turning first left up Kellet Lane. The gradient is just steep enough to allow for a mobile inspection of the roadside bluebells and pink campion. It's this brief period of the year when the trees are really in their pomp having just unfurled their virgin leaves of deepest green.

Turn first left at Four Lane Ends to enjoy a spectacular view over Morecambe Bay. White cumulus clouds are poised over the distant hills reflecting the light back down, which picks out Grange over Sands in remarkable detail – in winter often you can't see further than your front wheel.

Turn first right at Ancliffe which is a wonderful single-track lane crusted with cow shit and grass down the middle, and hedges low enough for views of fields and copses. It's also answers to 'Rabbit Valley', a name which was bestowed by Holly, the 10-year-old daughter of Pat Strachan, a founding mother of Dynamo on an early Friday Feast back in 1996.



*'Rabbit Valley'*

At the point where this charming, rural lane narrows, as it approaches Bolton-le-Sands, a 30mph sign has been planted. I always feel a tad disconcerted to think that Rabbit Valley is actually derestricted for speed and that 30mph is considered safe by Lancashire County Council road safety team for this residential section of track that is a tight squeeze for a single modern vehicle.

At St Mary of the Angels, guarded by its cypress sentinels, turn right and rejoin the canal just beyond the Packet Boat pub.

This section of the canal, the Mount Pleasant Curve, certainly fulfils its aesthetic promise as it slides gracefully between its wooded eastern slope that gazes across at neatly maintained, back garden walls of local stone.

Leave the canal through the children's play ground in Carnforth. Turn left as you emerge at the main road into Carnforth and take the first right. Once up this short steepish climb you are into the big country with massive views over the Pennines. It's an easy roll down and under the M6 until you are reunited with Kellet Lane once again, where you turn left and follow the signs to Borwick Hall.

The hall's café and delightful gardens used to be open to the great unwashed in the summer – I recall a large peloton from Lancaster's last Cyclefest in 2004 recharging there – now it is only open to private groups. So it's a coffee

flask stop on the grass triangle right in the centre of Borwick, all the better to admire the mature beech trees.



*Mature beech trees at Borwick*

Instead of taking the low road right, take the narrower high road left through Priest Hutton.



*Follow the sign to Priest Hutton*

In our path ahead are four spring lambs who block the track. On seeing us they turn and trundle off, packed tightly in a solid line of four, as if they have coats of velcro rather

than wool. It's a hilly little loop that brings you back down to the low road. From the lowest point, just before Capernwray Church, it's a steady 2km climb up to Lords Lot Wood.

There's a short staggered crossing of the B6254 before the payback roll down on autobahn grade tarmac through the tidy village of Gressingham, where the local church is also flying the flag for our boys. In fact, it's 'steering only' all the way to the Loyne Bridge.



*Snow capped Ingleborough from the B6254*

From the safety of the parapet refuges we watch the troglodytic swallows arrowing back into their bankside caves with all the unerring accuracy of one of Jockey Wilson's tungsten and feather missiles. Having deposited the pay load into squeaky little beaks, they launch themselves on another sweep of the Lune's peaty surface hoovering in their next course of winged invertebrates.



*A refuge on the Loyne Bridge*

In the shallows a statuesque heron, whose feet and lower legs had seemed set in concrete, lurches forward to impale a silvery, wriggling kebab-fish on its killer spike.

The return half of the loop is a series of steps up the northern flanks of the Lune Valley, and

very pretty it is, too. Pedal back the way you came for 200 metres before taking the left fork up to Eskrigg. A word of warning about the loose sheep dogs in the first farm. So far more bark than bite, but we usually carry a dog dazer just in case. Mind you, having only used it once, and that on a Greek farm dog, with inconclusive proof that it works, a pocket full of stones or a squirt of the old bidon might be all you need to pass safely.



*The Lune at the foot of Monkey Gill*

As you climb the single track lanes the views over the lazy meandering Lune get ever bigger, and today the fleecy cumulus clouds are dappling the fields of mopsided Friesians and woolly backed Blackfaces.

Beyond Aughton there is a short stretch to do on the Halton Road before sheering off left down the track to Monkey Gill. At the bottom of this 16% descent turn left and leave the road at Woody's Nibbles. Nip through the car park and the fumes of sizzling pig corpse, before dropping down to the Millennium Path at Halton Bridge. From here it's flat cycle path all the way back into Lancaster.

Dick Follows

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## **DOMESTIC TOURING SECTION**

### **Manifold destiny in the Peaks**

Dovedale is described by Ruskin as, 'An alluring first lesson in all that is beautiful'. The neighbouring Manifold valley is, in my less august opinion, at least its equal, as I discovered on a late May cycle ride into the Staffordshire Moorlands. It was all the more delightful for coming as a complete surprise given a very uninspiring starting point: the former Waterhouses station (where cycles can be hired) which is across the road from the Lafarge cement works. The new works is at

the bottom of a seemingly never ending descent from a ridge on the Weaver hills. Almost in free fall, I passed the old cement works and quarry. Pretty it ain't. In fact, it's bug ugly and big with it, but, I suppose we should be grateful that we don't have to import cement, at least not yet.

From the station there's a short run along the old railway track bed, followed by another alongside the A523 (it runs between Leek and lovely Ashbourne) and then instant bliss as the cacophony of the HGVs is left behind. It's like someone's pulled an acoustic curtain across behind you. Amazing what a couple of interlocking spurs can do. I met no-one else for nearly an hour.

The cycle track runs for over 8 miles to Hulme End on the bed of the narrow-gauge Leek and Manifold Light Railway which operated between 1904 and 1934. It transported dairy products from the valley to the main railway south of Waterhouses but you can't imagine it ever paid for itself. As the aphorism goes: too late for the heyday; too early for the nostalgia. As for the track surface, it is suggestive of valiant, but not yet quite triumphant, moles but it's traffic-free, apart from one section from Swainsley tunnel to Wetton Mill, where the track was shared with a solitary mail van.

The Hamps valley is dry in the spring and summer and the river-bed and banks are host to a plant that I can now name – the wonderfully guttural butterbur. It has big rhubarb-like leaves and the stem made me think of an orchid which has massively overdosed on steroids. Its leaves were used, in times of yore, to wrap butter in. Fortunately in similar, but more delicate, profusion were the pink campion and yellow archangel, the decorous member of the nettle family. But perhaps I should save my greatest eulogy for the steep, thickly wooded hillsides rising up in all their pristine green glory. And, oh, have I mentioned the silence? Oxymoronically tangible. I paused frequently to let my stomach articulate what I was feeling: mmmm...definitely blackcurrant jam on a thickly-buttered crusty loaf.

The Anglo-Saxon sounding Weag, the local outlaw's eponymous bridge, is a comfort to those of us who haven't yet accommodated ourselves to the Norman subjugation; and some of the caravans – eerily quiet in a field at the confluence of the north-flowing Hamps with the south-flowing Manifold, seemed to pre-date the conquest, too.

Wetton Mill is where the Manifold goes subterranean and looks old enough for Weag to have dropped down from the trees to steal the wherewithal to make his own loaf. Shame about the branded parasols – even the word is wrong for the setting.

Swainsley tunnel added further expense to this railway folly. It was built in order to shield the lord of the manor from the intrusion of noise and smoke from the trains. I don't know how the laird felt about its acoustics but they're really spooky. However, when it came to finishing off the track worker refuges either side of the tunnel, the railway constructors were cheapskate. As a consequence there are bare rock strata to gawp at, in my case, in pitiable ignorance.

The verdigris-coated spire emerging from the trees at Ecton intrigued me. In fact it was sprouting from the roof of the local mine manager's house: the extravagant Castle Folly. The nearby Ecton Hill was once renowned for having had the deepest and richest copper mines in the whole of Europe. Perhaps Sellafield will look this innocently beautiful one day. Naturally the Duke of Devonshire appropriated most of the lucre, though it seems some of it found its way to fund the magnificent buildings at Buxton.



*The magnificent Manifold Valley*

For the last mile or so to Hulme End, the valley widens out and possibly loses some of its spell. Its former station building is exactly what those of us of a certain age glued together from an Airfix kit. The very welcome café is, unfortunately, in a new shed at the end of the line, built with support from the European Regional Development Fund. The food is great, but of course Eurosceptics may have problems digesting it.

Ruskin, no enthusiast for the impact of the railway on the landscape, probably wouldn't have approved. But I think that it is the most sublime couple of hours that I've ever spent on a bike. And my stomach is both demanding and discerning.

Tim Hamilton-Cox

## Cycling on Colonsay

It already seems ages ago, but earlier this year we spent a wonderful week on the wee Scottish isle of Colonsay. It was a bit of a Lancaster invasion to be honest, with somewhere between 60 and 70 of us travelling up, and scattering ourselves across various holiday cottages on the island, which felt to me like Scotland in miniature – a bit of everything, including simply superb beaches, all within a very tight – and remarkably cycle-friendly – space.



*Flo leading the climb*

You never really know quite what to expect – in terms of cycling – when you're going to a place for the first time, do you? We were hoping the island would be cycle-friendly, but we didn't know for sure that it would be. So was it? Mainly 'yes', with a little bit of 'no'.

'Yes' in that there's basically only one single-track road which forms a circular route of perhaps eight miles, and which has a couple of short spurs – to north and south – off it.

These roads are very narrow, and drivers of motorised vehicles almost invariably go relatively slowly (rarely exceeding 20 or perhaps 25 mph), and take considerable care. And there aren't that many motorised vehicles anyway (although probably a lot fewer than normal the week that we were there – one of the ferry workers commented that he'd never seen so many cyclists boarding the ferry .. it was great, I think we really did resemble a carnival procession!).

And the little bit 'no'? Only, really, that – via an otherwise sensible and glossy leaflet explaining how to conduct oneself properly whilst moving around the island – someone (and how representative or not they are of a wider mood I cannot say) is spreading the suggestion that people on bikes should dismount whenever a car approaches. Thankfully most people sensibly ignore this piece of nonsense, but I suspect there's a small minority of 'locals' who want to institute a hierarchy of road users on the island with cars placed uncritically at the top, and that these people therefore feel that they have some kind of right – even duty – to push past and very mildly intimidate the beautiful people riding bikes. But I must stress, this seemed – in our experiences there – to be only a very minor tendency, and almost always when we encountered people in cars, they reduced their speed or stopped completely, pulled over and gave us space, smiled and waved cheerily, and seemed perfectly happy that we chose to stay on our bikes and continue to cycle in their presence! (Although of course, we did also ourselves pull over to let cars past when it was polite and/or sensible to do so ...)

With the hope that conditions would be good for children's cycling, we decided that Bobby and Flo should have their own bikes there, so that they could really experience and enjoy riding independently on the roads. To reduce our usual mild anxieties about getting our bikes on the trains (Lancaster to Glasgow Central, then a walk to Glasgow Queen Street and another train to Oban), and so that we only needed to book two bike places, Sue and I decided to take folding bikes (Bromptons, borrowed for the week from work).

(For non-British readers, there are lots of issues around booking bikes and taking bikes on trains in Britain, which I'll maybe talk more about at some point – though, for the record, we always take our bikes on trains in the UK and have never had a major problem in doing so, although that doesn't stop us worrying – and indeed worrying – and taking appropriate action – could be one of the reasons we've

never had a major problem ... That said however, our friends Anne, Martin and William took their bikes on train following the one we took from Lancaster to Glasgow – somehow or other there were five bikes booked onto this train, one more than is officially permissible; rather unbelievably, this ‘problem’ resulted in the whole train being delayed for 40 minutes, lots of heated discussions between the train’s manager and driver, and finally, a stressed-out Anne, Martin and William being upgraded to first class and receiving complimentary breakfasts.)

So, cycling proved a great way to move around Colonsay. And how wonderful to see all our mates doing likewise. Unless someone out there knows better, I’d say that it’s perhaps as close as we get in the UK to somewhere like the glorious, almost utopian Dutch island of Vlieland, which we went to a few year’s back, on which bikes absolutely rule.

It was of course particularly wonderful to see all the kids experiencing such freedom by bike. Watching them cycling around so happily really forced the unhappy realisation of how constrained are their independent mobilities back home in and around Lancaster.



*Tour de Colonsay starting line.*

One of our Lancaster mates, Jon Mills, had arranged a football match earlier in the week. On Easter Monday perhaps 50 of us took to the island’s golf course, next to the little air field, split into two teams, and frantically kicked a ball around in storm force winds for an hour or so, with a final score of 3-2, golden boy Steve Archer scoring the winner (I hope to hear about that for years to come, over countless pints in countless places, Steve!). It was an absolute hoot! So, taking Jon’s lead and nicking the kids’ felt-tip pens, I created and put up a colourful poster on the noticeboard of the island’s store. It announced the ‘Tour de Colonsay’, one lap of the island’s road circuit, with a prize for all

children who managed to complete it. After all, for little legs on little bikes with little wheels, eight miles is quite a long way, and the circuit involves quite a few rises and one pretty tough climb.

I had no idea whether anyone would show up, but it felt like doing my little bit for cycling promotion on the island. Fortunately, at 2 o’clock on Thursday afternoon the weather was fine. A few Lancaster friends came out, perhaps in solidarity more than anything, but it was also lovely to see many other people come along to take part, and we had a very enjoyable, convivial and relaxed ride.

So all up, Colonsay is a great place for cycling. Probably not if you’re a roadie, keen on getting in the miles; the opportunities for cycling on this little island are definitely limited, on the road anyway (there’s considerably more potential for MTBing). But for kids it’s really, really great. Meanwhile one of the tasks for those of us keen to boost cycling is to go to such places and not only to enjoy them as a break from the norm, but to use them as opportunities for reflecting on – and then working towards – making them the norm.

Dave Horton

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## OVERSEAS TOURING SECTION

### Greece on a Brompton . . .

Not something I would ever have considered feasible until I tried it, but last winter we treated ourselves to a couple of folding Brompton bicycles with all the add-ons: low gears (6 of them!), titanium bits, four little wheels on the pannier rack so that the folded bikes could be wheeled along easily. They still looked like toys, but a short tour persuaded us that they were nevertheless suitable for grown-ups.

Then we decided to go to Greece in the spring, to Kalamata where we used to live. There aren’t many flat bits in Greece and on some of the islands the concrete roads can be maliciously steep, but on the Peloponnese the gradients are generally 10%. They just go on like that for a long way. Full-size touring bikes are the obvious choice, but with one thing and another we can’t cover the distances we used to, so we like to have some form of public transport to fall back on. There are railway lines from Patras to Athens and Patras to Kalamata, but the first was being upgraded

with a rail replacement service in operation (where have I heard that before?), and I got contradictory reports about taking bikes on the latter. Comfortable Mercedes coaches serve the Peloponnese, but they don't take full-size bikes. And, just to complete the difficulties, we wanted to travel by train and ferry from Lancaster to Kalamata – not a journey which can be done in a straight line if you want to take bikes.



*St Pancras, ready for the Eurostar to Paris*

Roll forward the Bromptons. With minimal luggage and covers on the folded bikes, we negotiated the Eurostar to Paris, cycled to the Gare de Lyon mostly on cycle lanes (which disappeared as soon as we got to the maelstrom of the Place de la Bastille) and stowed our bikes in the luggage parts of trains to Italy. We were getting quite practised at it by the time we reached Bari. For the ferry to Italy, we allowed the Bromptons to re-assume their bicycle aura and parked them in with the cars.



*Add interest to the foreground of your photos at a stroke!*

Once in Greece, the Bromptons were perfect. They allowed us to go wherever we wanted, and they were easily parked in hotels overnight. On our second day we attempted (without luggage) a 15 km climb that had been a regular ride 15 years ago. We set off assuring each other that we would just see how far we could get . . . and we kept on riding! Once we got to the top and the old café, we did an extra few kilometres to revisit the highest point of the road between Kalamata and Kardamyli. Like the rest of that coast, it was as beautiful and breathtaking as ever.



*Ready to roll downhill to Kardamyli*

After that, there was no stopping us. The next day a Greek friend drove us and our luggage back up the road and dropped us off at the top. We had overtaken a French racing cyclist as we drove up, and he was still behind us as we started to freewheel downhill. Inevitably he caught up with me (I spent as much time taking photographs as cycling), and the surprised expression on his face as he overtook a woman in a skirt with hardly a hair out of place was a picture.

We even discovered that some cycle provision had appeared in our absence. Cycle lanes had recently appeared in Kalamata, and there was a brand-new cycle path from the popular resort of Stoupa to the quieter Agios Nicolaos. The latter was probably for the benefit of tourists who want to do a little bit more than lie on the beach all day – but who is to quarrel with that?

We spent a few days in Kardamyli. At first we simply stuck to the bikes, going up into the hills and coming down again, or along the coast and back. Then we became more adventurous: we caught the 8 a.m. bus from Kardamyli to Itylo and cycled back. No fools, we knew that Itylo was a great deal higher than Kardamyli! It felt like cheating at first, but the long downhill at the end of the day swept away all my scruples.



*Cycle path from Stoupa*

We spent a wonderful fortnight rediscovering the coast between Kalamata and Gerolimenas on day trips. Between us, the Brompton and I managed most of the climbs (we were defeated by a headwind once and had to complete the last kilometre side by side). The bikes fitted easily into the luggage holds of the local busses, so we were able to extend our rides beyond what would otherwise have been possible. We were an object of curiosity in most places, but it was all of the friendliest kind. The first question was always how much the bikes had cost.



*Ready to board the bus*

The only panic was coming back at Bologna station. We were due to catch the overnight train to Paris, but it was delayed and the

platform number was not displayed until the train was almost in the station. Sprinting to platform 10 with a folded bicycle and luggage is not recommended, but it's a lot better than spending a squalid night at the station.

And those four little wheels on the pannier rack were a blessing in at the Gare du Nord in Paris, where luggage trolleys are as rare as tailwinds on sunny days.

So, the question is where to go next with our new toys!

Patricia Clarke

### **From a foreign correspondent: Dubai Drydock**

I'm back working in the oil sector. Naturally I have started a Dubai Drydock chapter of Dynamo. Everyone uses a bike to get around the docks - there are thousands of single speed Indian and Chinese bikes.



*Dubai Drydock cycle park*



*Sprint finish to the canteen, with Matt in orange in the gruppetto*

Matt Oppenheim

## SO, YOU THINK YOU KNOW HOW YOU RIDE YOUR BIKE

You've probably been riding your bike since you were knee high to a dust cap, and while I'm not doubting that you know how to ride a bike, knowing how you ride is a different matter.

In the 1950's mathematicians thought they could describe any human activity with a neat elegant formula and the Hungarian chemist and philosopher, Michael Polanyi, duly produced a formula for how we ride a bike. Here goes.

'In order to compensate for the given angle of imbalance ( $a$ ) we must take a curve on the side of the imbalance, of which the radius ( $r$ ) should be proportionate to the square of the velocity( $v$ ) over the imbalance  $r-v^2/a'$ . There.

Even for those of a mathematical bent who understand the formula, using it alone would not enable you to actually ride a bike. There is a lot more knowledge that we need to have in order to do so. This knowledge is stored in our muscles, nerve pathways and synaptic connections, knowledge that we do not consciously have access to, sometimes called tacit knowledge, as opposed to explicit knowledge that we can access. To define it further, let's call it somatic tacit knowledge since it is stored in our bodies.

But balancing while moving on a bike is only a part of being a bike rider, you also have to negotiate it through busy roads of traffic. Obviously you would not last long out there if you didn't know the rules of the road and didn't know what the signs meant etc, in other words if you didn't have the explicit knowledge. But do we need any tacit knowledge for dealing with cycling through traffic?

Well, it's worth stating the obvious that you are not out there alone but mixing it with thousands of other road users who have similar basic aims as you do: namely to negotiate the journey safely and efficiently. So on a bicycle you spend much time avoiding collisions, positioning yourself safely and so on, much of which requires knowledge that is not published in the highway code or elsewhere, in other words tacit knowledge. Have you ever heard someone who has narrowly avoided collision say something akin to, 'I've no idea how I did it'.

Unlike somatic tacit knowledge this type of knowledge is a two way street between you and other road users, your safety depends on a shared or collective tacit knowledge that is not written down anywhere and you would be hard pressed to describe it to anyone.

Moreover, when you cycle in another country, for example, you realise that you need to adjust your cycling not just to the different rules of the road but also the collective tacit behaviour or conventions of the new environment, which you must acquire at once if you are to prosper. This collective tacit knowledge has a mysterious quality, not only because we don't know how we acquire it but because it's not our property but something we borrow and share for the time we are on the road.

Never let anyone tell you that riding a bike is as simple or mundane as falling off a log.

I would like to thank Harry Collins for his inspiring article 'Like Riding a Bike' which appeared in New Scientist, 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2010.

Ed

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