

## LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 10

(July/August 2007)

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**'also incorporating news from the Lightweight Group of the V-CC'**

**Sunday, September 9<sup>th</sup> – Cambridge Section – Ephgrave Lightweight Ride.** This year we are using our 'hilly circuit' for the Ephgrave Ride.

Start at 10am at Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station Car Park – just off Junc. 10 of M11 at its intersection with the A505. Leave A505 at signpost 'Whittlesford/Shelfords' – then shortly take 1<sup>st</sup> Right SP 'Station'. (This railway station bisects the road – we use the side nearest Duxford Air Museum/M11. If you end up in the other half of the road it is no problem if you don't mind crossing the line by footbridge but there is not much parking there.) Car park is £1.00 for the day on Sunday.

This is a hilly ride (by Cambridge standards - about 30 miles, either be fit or have gears! Last year it was done on fixed with no problems but we all know what a toughie Tom Jeffery is!).

We will have lunch at the excellent Ickleton Lion where they serve everything from sandwiches to full roast. Sorry but no coffee stop or toilets at the start.

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***Mercian Ride:** On September 30th Chris Barbour of the New England Section, USA and Martin Hanczyc hopefully with Irene Franco from Venice, are planning a visit to Cambridge UK. Chris and Martin run the pre-1970 Mercian website so we are organising a Lightweight Ride for them with a Mercian theme. Other makes of classic lightweights will be welcome of course to join in the fun.*

**Sunday, September 30<sup>th</sup> – Cambridge Section - Mercian Lightweight Ride** Meet at 10am by the village pond/sign on the crossroads at Comberton (B1046) some 7 miles from Cambridge. There is a lightly used wide road, Green End, where it will be possible to park.

*For Comberton leave M11 at Junction 12 onto A603 towards Sandy, i.e. away from Cambridge. In app ½ mile fork right onto B1046 through Barton to Comberton (in all about 3 miles from M11).*

We have planned out the route and it is different to all of our other rides. It will start in Comberton, some 7 miles from Cambridge, and take in Kingston (coffee stop), Bourne, Great Gransden, East Hatley, Croydon, Arrington, to lunch possibly at Wimpole Hall (NT). After lunch through Barrington, Haslingfield and Harlton back to Comberton. Even we were amazed what a super run this is with loads of interest on the way, and we live here. I have two Mercians and will loan one probably to Martin if he comes. It would be nice to loan one to Chris, who is a competent cyclist, as evidenced by New England ride reports. His size is around 23".

As Mercian are one of a few classic 50's frame builders who are still building to this day (Pennine are another) we will encourage Mercians of any age as they are all part of the real-life history of the marque. This was a feature of our 'Paris' ride last year and is was fascinating to 'contrast and compare' through the years. Do Mercian still produce the Vincitore? If so we may be able to see them alongside my '54 Mercian with Vigorelli lugs which evolved into the Vincitore. I will also bring a rare 1953 welded Mercian.

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The Publisher Peter Whitfield (Wychwood Press) has just published a book, *12 Champions*, which gives a great insight into the lives of 12 well-known cycling champions from the UK. It includes: Eileen Sheridan, John Arnold & Albert Crimes, Ray Booty, Frank Colden, Les West, Martyn Roach, Phil Griffiths, Sid Barras, Alf Engers, Ian Cammish and Beryl Burton. Even if some of these riders didn't ride in your main period of interest you will find their stories are interesting. Peter Whitfield has also published *The Condor*

*Years* (not many left I'm told), a book of cycling cartoons by Johnny Helms, and *Eileen Sheridan: A Cycling Life* – a photographic record of Eileen's life. These books are all available from Bibi Bugg (V-CC Club Sales Officer), 71 Rectory Lane, Breadsall, Derby DE21 5LL

**Bradford's bikes and builders in the late Forties and early Fifties – Part Three**  
'or such bits as I can remember' by Jim Shaw (Cambridge)

**Star RC**

This was an elite breakaway from Bradford RCC and I only remember the names of Stan Hill and Laurie Kitchen. What I do remember though is a crazy 'training ride' they undertook in one weekend from Bradford to Brighton and back. It made the local paper, and was a disaster.

**Bill Sugden** and the professionals.

Ken Russell mentioned his great friend Bill Sugden, one of the 'good guys'. Bill was one of those many whom one knew fairly well from riding alongside when clubruns merged, or from teastops and the like.

The opportunity to get to know him better came at the Sports Day of one of the Wharfedale villages and through Bill I discovered the world of the professional grass track rider. Up came the usual bike races and Bill was desperate to ride but for some reason hadn't got his bike. Would I lend my road bike? I took a lot of persuading but Bill was pleasant and capable. At the start he and a local collided, to my alarm, but all was well and Bill finished second. The winner was on a track bike and in conversation told us that he and a closed shop of other unlicensed pro's made a good living in the summer by riding at the numerous Miners' Galas all over the North, where big money was involved, both on and off the track. Empty slots were filled by riding the village shows. Bill Dodds of the BLRC Bradford Co-op Velo, and a real live wire, liked the idea and took his track bike to a few of these but after a win or two was politely invited to stay away. I was sorry to see from Ken that Bill died in 1990. Definitely a Mr Nice Guy.

**Geoff Clark**

Another Bradford frame builder who might easily be forgotten. He was another of the Bradford RCC seniors like Whitaker & Mapplebeck but still racing very actively. Small, lightly built, wiry and quiet - a real gent - but, once on the bike, determined. He won the gruelling Warsaw-Berlin-Prague 'Peace Race' on his own - without team or support. His frame-building came fairly late on in my time, and I don't know where the workshop was, nor anything about his output. I hope those who were around then can tell us but the main thing is that he mustn't be forgotten.

**Some final oddments**

Three pieces of equipment which appear to have been unique or very rare in my orbit, two from Walter Greaves and one from Geoff Whitaker. I wonder if they might have been reps' samples.

KP Alumlite rims. When I wanted a new pair of wheels built Walter Greaves produced these. They had the normal braking surface then a raised centre which stiffened the rim, shortened the spokes, and lifted the nipples away from the tube. The wheels were undoubtedly stiff but looked so clumsy, and I was all for elegance, even at the expense of function. I never saw any others, and soon sold them on. They were sensible and would look quite at home on a modern off-roader.

Dunlop moulded rubber saddle. We all used to cosset our Brooks saddles and try to protect them from the wet, especially that thrown up from the back wheel. Leaguers did *not* use mudguards except in the winter. One day Greaves produced this dark grey object which was like a B15 and a mite heavier. It had the usual frame underneath and saddlebag loops which were all moulded in. Of course it laughed off rain, needed no attention at all, and wasn't always trying to get back its original shape – *i.e. flat*. I used it for years and years and years, until it got beyond saving, but I never saw or heard of another, nor met anyone who had.

Bartali brake levers. One of the finest devices known to non-climbers. Geoff Whitaker pulled them out one day. They were cast aluminium and chunkier than GB's, being fairly broad across the front and nobbly, not the usual smoothly rounded. The nobbles fitted the fingers but the real clincher was the full-width hook

under which you curled a finger when climbing. They came without callipers and were magic. I never saw any others and had no option but to throw them sadly away when they eventually fell to bits. *Jim Shaw*

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In L News 9 I mentioned an unusual set of GB brakes which had nipples at both ends of the cables.

**Bill Ives** replied:

Re your odd GB brakes mentioned in LN9. I have a pair exactly as you describe with nipple rather than clamp fitting for the cable. They have GB Sport stamped on one side and Hiduminium British Made in smaller script on the other arm.

They are attached to a 1950 Humber Beeston Tourist which was Raleigh's attempt at a Lightweight high end tourer. The Humber has a 531 frame (same as a Lenton) and the equipment is alloy everything. Dunlop LA rims, Sturmey alloy bodied FM, alloy seat pin, bars, stem. Even the pedals and mudguard stays are alloy ! I am sure the brakes are an original fitment so that would date yours to about 1950.

I was told some years ago that these brakes were never sold over the counter - they appeared as original equipment on various Raleigh brands. I can't confirm this but if true it would explain their relative rarity. It would be interesting to know if any one out there has, say a RRA or Lenton fitted with them.

**William Corbett** from California asks:

I was hoping you could help with any information on a bike that I have that too me is sort of a mystery. I don't really know much about these but did read a little on your Bates website page.

The bike is a Bates and reported to be a 1937. The fellow who had it passed away some years ago so verifying info through him is now impossible. He stated the bike was ridden at the 1936, 37 or 38 Six-day in London which was the Wembley 6. It was ridden by Torchy Peden the Canadian rider. The bike appears to be all original with the black paint (dull in colour) and gold lug lining. It is interesting that the bike appears in rig cond and race battered but no transfers of any kind.

As a six day collector I do know that many of the racers during the period would never ride with the names of the bike etc. on the frames as it was sort of a secret not to let anyone know what you were racing on. Plus Torchy Peden always rode CCMs so this would make sense not to let the Canadians or others see him riding something else like a Bates. But I know these were secrets and who better than to let the famous Torchy Peden represent your new model of Bates to prove its superiority on the track.

This bike has the wood rims with the Airlite track hubs not flipflop (Double-sided) BSA cranks, adjustable stem etc. I believe that at one time someone changed the saddle as it now has a narrow Brooks sprinter.

I noticed that an early Bates is listed as a 1938 with U8827. This bike is VO 7756 which I think would make it earlier at 1937? and also being the Volante Track model I believe.

Does anyone have any information you could share with me?

I also have about 20 other track racers from 1890s to 1960s. Pollard (1959), R.O. Harrison (Badged 1951) and many others.

**Ed.**

I was reading an item the other day on Classic Rendezvous and the writer explained how, as a youngster, his father had bought him what was intended to be his pride and joy: a brand new Wearwell sports bike as sold by one of the local cycle shops. The story that followed must have been acted out in so many homes in the 50s. The boy started to go out with the local cycle club and within a week or so had removed the mudguards, the derailleur gears and the rear brake. The machine was then fitted with a fixed gear (probably without locknut!). The 50s must have been littered with distressed parents who had seen their sons do this to a carefully chosen machine which would have cost a lot of money by standards at that time. The next step would be to replace components with 'gen' new or used items as and when afforded and later to purchase, perhaps a second-hand, lightweight frame. Thus accomplished the rider would be able to hold his head high when out with the club. The whole process then would begin again as he upgraded the components yet again on the lightweight frame and eventually saved enough, or used credit offered by a dealer, to purchase the frame of his dreams. So many people never quite achieved the level of machine they wanted in those days and can be seen now as 'Last of the Summer Wine' look-alikes but on the restored machines of their long passed dreams. (*Guilty me-Lud*)

**John Yates wrote in the ECCA Newsletter:**

A Tiny Bit of Cycling History, I rode my first open event in 1952 and it was won by a very young Billy Holmes. He has gone on to greater things in cycling but not me. In recent years I have started a collection of cycles and because of my general interest I have looked for machines with a history. Pride of place must go to the belongings I acquired with the help of Dick Spanton from the late Vic Gibbons (*see image at end of newsletter*).

I have the two frames and a lot of equipment he used during his glory years between 1951 and 1955. I can't make them go as fast now but still ride them with their GB bars, stem and brakes and the wheels: Fiamme track sprints on Airlites. The frames were built by Les Ephgrave and badged Rory O'Brien.

I still ride the Ephgrave Italia which Bill Thorncroft used in the 1953 season. He had problems with it in the Catford 24 but still did 430 miles. Also I have an ex-Rod Walker Gillott which must have visited as many pubs as it did miles in the 1960s. I can still ride it and avoid stopping at the Viper! Talking of the 60s, a Rory O'Brien which Christine Smith rode in anger had been put out to grass - left outside with a plank over the saddle - she gave it to me and was amazed to see what a bit of tender loving care can do.

Staying with the ladies, Di Emery has passed on to me the 1977 Rondinella which was her last racing mount. She tells me it was the first frame that Vic Edwards built using a jig. With it I have a copy of all the paper work Vic did in connection with the order. On a more sombre note I have the Rondinella (1981) which the late Fred Disney rode in his last Eagle 50 in 2002. Fred also had a Hetchins frame which I acquired: a 1952 Nulli Secundus which Hubert Piens tells me was originally owned by Alan Meyers.

As a contrast to the racing scene I have a touring machine owned by the late Alan Emery and built in 1964 by W B Hurlow. Bill Hurlow had built for Holdsworth and Condors. This frame has brazed on pannier carriers with rear lamp fittings, a dynamo boss with tunnels for the wiring.

Yes and I have several other machines, some with less well known background, but the main thing is that I ride them. As a challenge to myself this season I am riding as many evening club 10s as possible each on a different machine. I have done six so far and hope to get up to about twenty by the end of August.

*John Yates 05/07*

**Alvin Smith** recently promoted a weekend symposium on Major Nicholls and he produced the following clothing. If you want to promote your Major Nicholls ownership please contact Alvin on 01568 770327

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## *It wasn't that easy* – The Tommy Godwin Story' by Tommy Godwin

A review by Peter Underwood:

As we were at Herne Hill in early June where Bibi was present with the V-CC publications it seemed appropriate to purchase *The Tommy Godwin Story* since he was a rider who made his name in track racing.

Having been brought up during WWII I always find the social history relating to this period and the years soon after quite fascinating. In 1932, aged 12, Tommy returned to England with his family from the States due to the Depression. His father, who could be described as sports-mad, had ambitions for Tommy to be a top sportsman and straight away started a severe training regime for him with this in mind. Having dabbled in several sports, including boxing, it was some time later that they found that cycling was to be the sport of his choice.

Needless to say, this book provides a great insight into what was going on in the world of cycling from the mid-1930s until 1995 when the book finishes. It also manages to paint a history of social conditions at the time, especially in the earlier years. One thing the reader will learn is how difficult things were in those days. The book not only depicts how hard Tommy was driven by his father but also how hard life was for most in the UK.

Throughout it gives a deep insight into the world of cycle racing, warts and all. Believe me, there are plenty of warts – you may revise your ideas of some of your heroes after reading this! As well as revealing a lot about the sometimes murky world of track racing it will leave you in no doubt as to how badly the sport of cycling was managed and organised during this period. As TG was based in Birmingham this book gives a slightly different perspective in that he was an outsider when competing in the London and Manchester areas.

Tommy predominately raced on the track throughout his competitive years and he specialised in the longer track races, being almost unbeatable at five and ten mile events and winning outright, amongst other trophies, the Muratti Gold Cup, the BSA Gold Column and the BSA Gold Vase, he was many times National Champion and a double Olympic medallist.

In the book there are images of Tommy with the gold trophies he won outright on the track – after reading this book you will feel that one should have been awarded to his wife, who kept the family and business going for years in spite of suffering a serious bout of consumption at one time. The support she gave to him in his quest for success qualifies her as a martyr, I feel.

Tommy gave up competitive cycling in 1953 and then went on to put something back into the sport with administrative help, coaching and managing UK teams. Still one gets the impression of a man trying to bang his head against a brick wall built by the racing establishment. His efforts to set up serious and properly funded training and the opposition he faced are unbelievable now, but that's how it was.

Some of the above remarks could seem slightly negative but I read the book in record time as I found it hard to put down and my knowledge of the UK racing scene is a lot fuller thanks to it. More than just a book about one man's career, it is a fascinating record of the cycling world in that period.

This is another excellent publication by the John Pinkerton Memorial Publishing Fund of the Veteran-Cycle Club and well worth the £15 price tag. Cheques should be payable to 'Veteran-Cycle Club' for £15.00 + £1.50 P+P and sent to: Bibi Bugg (V-CC Club Sales Officer)

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**David Hardy** [davidhardy526@btinternet.com](mailto:davidhardy526@btinternet.com) tells us that he has a very rare Sid Mottram headbadge. It is rare as most Mottrams had a transfer on the head tube. If anyone is genuinely restoring a Mottram he would consider letting it go. He doesn't want it to go to someone whose idea is to sell it on. David is also giving us some details of the Kier Hardy CC to add to our pieces on the left-wing cycling clubs.

**Dave Davey Cycles** – Bryan Clarke and Steve Griffith are wanting to do some research on Dave Davey and would like to hear from you if you know anything about his cycle workshop or shop. Obviously they would like details of any Dave Davey machine you may own.

**Nick Hando** says:

At the weekend I was told a tip for cleaning and polishing chrome. It's so good (miles better than Autosol) that I just can't keep it to myself, so here it is...

Use ordinary kitchen foil, scrunched up and wetted (very important), and rub the area to be polished. Magic! Try it, you'll see....



*Vic Gibbons riding one of his Les Ephgrave built Rory O'Brien machines in 1953.  
(see piece by John Yates above)*