

LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 14

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I have been doing some research into an article on the thirties track sprinter Dennis Horn. When studying past-editions of *Cycling* I realised that a lot of our readers who purport to live out the past eras of cycling



are missing out in at least one important aspect. No self-respecting sportsman was able to resist the charms of the advertising by Charles Atlas. Charles was a world famous body-builder who claimed to be able to turn us all into super-beings merely by taking a little of our hard-earned cash from us. His advertising pictured us as seven-stone weaklings on the beach having sand kicked into our faces by adonis-types running around with a beach ball. We were cowering on the sand as our girl-friends looked pittingly on. Take advantage of the C A programme and we would miraculously be transferred into mighty hulks well able to down-size those bullies around us.

Left: Picture of me (right) aged about 16 clearly showing the results of using the Charles Atlas system!

I was reminded of this when researching hundreds of *Cycling*'s to realise that the one advert which appeared above all others was for The Charles Atlas System. In confessional mood I hereby admit that I parted with some much-needed money and sent off for the wonder cure. When the answer arrived on my doormat imagine my disgust when instead of a multi-home-gym all I got were instructions to use his resistance system – the name of which escapes me. To give just one example from which you can imagine the rest, the first exercise was to put both hands together at chest height. Clench the right hand in the left hand and pull first to the right and then to the left. Whilst doing this the other hand pulled the opposite way to provide resistance. There you were with the real secret of achieving mighty manhood, all you had to do now was repeat these exercises at every spare minute and 'Bob's your uncle'. Those of you who wondered where I got my mighty physique from now know the answer. I think the keenest participants probably lasted about a week before succumbing to the inevitable boredom. The moral is, forget 'fettling' your favourite bike and start pulling and pushing.

We lived admiring Reg Harris, amongst others, and his every word was gospel to us. When Reg proclaimed that you were not fit unless you could pinch skin between your fingers and it should feel like tissue paper with no fat whatsoever this was what we aimed for. Somehow I managed to achieve this although still eating plenty, including a weakness for jam doughnuts. Maybe being a vegetarian helped – that was aping another hero Dave Keeler.

Researching the thirties I came across another couple of gems, both at big Herne Hill Track meetings in London. The first was the showgirls' race for the chorus girls' championship, which was won by the dancers. The other was a race for 'Nippies', the waitresses at Lyons Corner Houses (teashops, for those who don't know). This was won by the Leicester Square branch. They were on proper track machines, or at least they were posing with them for the photographers. Herne Hill at the time was doing a lot of soul-searching to find out why they were lucky to get a crowd of a thousand (apart from the Good Friday International Meet) whereas Fallowfield at Manchester could attract five to ten thousand.

Another, less frivolous, piece: "The move of Harry Dawes to Cambridge from Mansfield, where he was a miner, has puzzled many friends. It turns out that Harry, the prominent speedman, is to be an undergraduate at Trinity College, having won the Miners Welfare scholarship." This would have been a real culture shock for both parties, with the rather bluff Yorkshireman joining an elite institution.

Lugless/welded frames by Mick Butler: Welded frames fall into two basic categories. Sif-bronze fillet brazed or electronic flash pressure weld. I never did like the term welded and much prefer the term "Lugless". Welded and lugless frames were very popular with the French makers, especially on the pre-war Tour de France machines. Over here Raleigh made a welded frame back in 1924, which was of lugless construction and was acetylene welded. This bicycle was first exhibited at the 1924 Cycle Show and marked Raleigh's return to the lightweight market. They had pulled out of this market during the Great War.

A long time ago I met Harry Rensch and he told me he was the first to produce welded frames here in the UK. This was in 1935 after he had visited a cycle show in Paris where he had seen welded frames for the first time. He also told me this is where he got the design idea for the Rensch fork crown, I'm sure he said it was copied from the aluminium Barra but it might have been the Schultz. This conversation was after all a very long time ago. Anyway, Harry was the first here. Claud Butler was at least two or three years after with his Massed Start frame. Harry also beat Claud on welded brazed frames or to use Butler's terminology, "Bilaminated". Rensch were making these in 1938 and I am positive that Claud's bilaminated never came on the scene until after the war, Avant Coureur or Allrounder was his first model.

Now back to true welded lugless frames. Royal Enfield Unitize on their Bullet models and Dayton Amalgam models were produced by the American flash pressure weld system as a by-product of their war effort production. Both of these large factories had been engaged on war work and had this welding equipment installed during this period. So when peacetime returned and "export or die" was the British industry byword, they utilized this welding process to the full. Basically the tubes are carefully mitred, normally on a lathe and not by hand. They are then placed in the machines jig. A high electric current is then passed through the frame tubes at the touch of a button; this causes the tubes to melt at the joint due to the resistance there. As the tubes arc and melt pressure is applied to the joint. The process is very quick and the resultant joint requires no further cleaning or finishing. Frame production is very quick and consequently cheap compared to normal conventional bicycle frame making (brazing).

Ed: It will no doubt be considered sacrilege to push the quality of these frames when compared with our fancy-lugged versions.

SPEAKING UP FOR FRENCH HUBS - Steve Griffith

I have never understood the relationship between the most common French hub manufacturers. I refer to Normandy, Atom, Le Tour, Pelisser and Maillard. Most confusingly, I have seen more than one of the trade names on a hub box! Were they all original companies and then taken over and became one organisation?

I realise these are components which are often scorned by lightweight enthusiasts. I think this is because in the 70's and 80's they were pretty much the bottom of the market, both in terms of quality and price. I recall reading somewhere that Ron Kitching reckoned he made the most money out of all his products from selling Maillard hubs!

I would like to argue that from the late 40's to the 60's Normandy and Atom are products of quality appropriate on any lightweight of that period. Normandy seems to be exclusively large flange (one piece alloy) and the quality hubs have round cut outs and stamped on the barrel "Normandy". The poorer quality later hubs have slotted cut outs and "Made in France" stamped on the barrel. Early Normandy hubs look to my eye exactly the same as the BHC Racelite. Who copied who, or was there badge engineering ?

The period small flange Atoms are easily identified by having Atom engraved in script. These were some of the first French products to be imported after WWII. I have found references going back to 1947. Le Tour, both small and large flange, seem to have appeared in the early 60's, imported by Holdsworth again. The large flange is identified by round cutouts. These are of superior quality.

Maillard is most associated with freewheels. They seem to have taken over as the main hub trade name in the 80's with Pelisser being the poorest quality, often 3 piece hubs. Maillard were taken over by Sachs in

the late 80's.

Atom also marketed pedals of similar quality to Lyotard. I have seen double-sided and quill pairs. Atom pedals are identifiable by the wide slot across the dust cap.

So next time you are at a jumble don't just reject a wheel or hub because it is stamped Normandy or Atom have a closer look. (Steve would welcome any information on these companies)

Steve Griffith also asks: Have any LN subscribers ever had the need to have a custom chainring made up? Perhaps for that ultra-rare 4-arm TA crank used by Kobet in the tour or a 6-arm Colnago. I recently had a couple made up by a small company called Highpath Engineering. They can make pretty much any chain ring or rear sprocket, any PCD, any size, any cutout design. Quality is superb but alloy only.

They also do crank shortening and re-tapping pedal threads. Contact details 01570 471071 or try a search for Highpath Engineering.

When I thanked them for sending my cranks we got in conversation about freewheel quality. They explained how about 10 years ago they would improve Sachs freewheels so they indexed properly and improved the quality of the freewheel itself. At a trade fair they met Monsieur Maillard who made the freewheels for Sachs. He was not interested at all in this and wouldn't accept any criticism of his product. Not long afterwards, Sachs were taken over. An interesting comment on why the French component industry disappeared - refusal to accept that they had to change to survive.

Steve also has a request: I am researching the history of Resilion and I am looking for information specifically on the brakes, not just technical but also human interest stuff. Also does anyone have a post-war catalogue?

Roger Langworth - I remember some time ago in Lightweight News you related that you had had trouble with lug lining. One of your suggestions at the time was to use a rigger (a fine brush with extra long bristles). I don't think you printed a follow-up saying whether you had great success with it. I wonder if my own experiences are of interest:

I have struggled with lug lining myself for quite a while. I've used a lining pen, available from art shops, which although easy to use and produces good quick results, is not permanent. I've used Humbrol modeller's enamel - too sticky and if thinned is not opaque. I've used cellulose paint from an aerosol sprayed into the lid to form a pool to dip the brush in, but it dries too quick. I've tried all the different brushes from watercolour size 000 to "riggers" and "swords". Finally I think I have found the solution. It all comes down to the Paint. It has to be opaque, it has to be the consistency to flow without running, and it has to stay wet enough to wipe it off or adjust it. The paint is Signwriter's paint. Very expensive but worth every penny. It was a revelation. Not only did the paint go where I directed it, I was also able to back track, stop and start at will even in the middle without spoiling the line. You could also easily wipe it off and repaint. It was my first success and although not perfect it encourages me to try again. I used a brush: sorry I did not get on with the rigger, it was OK for straight lines but I couldn't handle it on the curves. I found the best brush was a watercolour size 0 although maybe a 00 for very fine lines. I also found that you need to keep the brush loaded, almost to the point where it is about to drip off the end. Another aid for those whose hands are not as steady as they used to be is a "maul stick" which is simply a piece of wood about a foot long with a little mop of cotton on one end, which you use to brace your brush hand. I hope your readers find my experience useful. For information:- The paint I used was One-shot-enamel and I bought it online from a company called Paints4u. <https://www.paints4u.com/Default.aspx>.

David Hinds remarks on an item in L News 13:

Re. cyclists eating two dinners in an evening: I remember arriving at a cafe in Eastbourne for breakfast after a 1950s night ride with the Catford South London CTC Section and one of our members "Big John", a war time paratrooper, asking, "what's on". The cafe owner then went through the list:- bacon, sausage, egg (all forms), beans, fried bread, black pudding, toast, porridge, bread and marge, marmalade, tea, coffee;

John replied "I'll have it". Austerity minded cafe owner "have what?" John "all of it!", John had learned in the previous decade that, if it was on offer take it.

Barrie Portas: I enjoyed the latest newsletter: The article on the 1950s, it reminds me of around 1954, when I was about 13 years old. There was a second-hand Dayton Roadmaster for sale in a local taxi office window for £5. I tried my best to raise the money but to no avail, I might as well tried to save up for a Rolls Royce. I already had a Hercules roadster which was new to me in Christmas 1952 (*no doubt bought by well-meaning parents! – Ed.*), with rod brakes but of course there was no way in those days of putting dropped bars on, which is what I always wanted. I did later manage to buy a Yellow Dayton the same as the one in the taxi shop window albeit over 50 years later.

When I was 15 in 1957 and left school and got a job as an apprentice plumber, on a wage of £2.5s a week. When I was 16 I got a rise to £3 a week. The local lightweight shop had a Wearwell Mountain King, new but shop soiled. The second in the range to the 'Tour of Britain'. The price of the Mountain king was £29 15s. which I paid for on weekly instalments. So I went every week with my payment book on a Saturday afternoon as most of us worked Saturday morning as part of the 44 hour week. - I am still looking out for one of these, although I did find a cheaper version of the same era. All the best. Regards Barrie.

The editor wants either a pair (32/40) or especially a rear Dunlop alloy HP 27" 40-hole rim to build up a Sturmey ASC gear for one of our machines. Also looking for a good condition pair of Brampton B8's as I have a pair of the rare Brampton cranks fitted to my Hobbs and it would be good to match them to some same-make pedals. Peter Underwood Tel: 01223 565036
E-mail - peter.underwood@tesco.net

Toni Theilmeier tells us that there will be an event in Germany:
14 June in Bramsche near Osnabrück, NW Germany. Our club will tag a ride for pre-1984 racing bikes onto a big century/randonee event, so there will be refreshment stops every 25 km or so. There will be a sag wagon, also a choice of 43, 75, 105 and 153 km rides in a slightly hilly countryside. For those who will come over from the UK or other far-flung places I will organise a weekend of cycling. There will be another century close by on the Saturday (don't yet know where, but there mostly is). There will hopefully be a cycle jumble if people bring stuff; if Americans come there will also be a swap meet, plus a little parc fermé exhibition of the old bikes (all three of them, a clubmate's, my son's and mine...) before we start. It's the first time for us, so don't expect more than you will be able to bring - parts, bikes, fun.
toni.theilmeier@t-online.de

Guy Stretton contacted us via the website:

"I'm trying to find out some information on a bike I've just been given. It's an Alan Richards track bike, I'm new to road bikes and know very little about them. My grandfather only knows a little about its history. He tells me that Alan Richards was a rider and shop owner from somewhere in Birmingham and may have had links to Major Nichols. I'm very interested to find out more about my bike." The outcome of this was that Robin Walker identified it as a Rotrax Vel d'Hiv track frame – late 40s early 50s. A good result as the Vel d'Hiv is a real classic which most of us would love to own. Thanks Robin.

Keith Hellon keith362@gmail.com is looking for 2 x transfers for head and seat tube of a 1946 Macleans he is restoring – can anyone help out?

Peter Beavan has a 24" Paris Galibier he would like to swap for a Mal Rees Rameles, ideally 23½".
peter.beaven@bbc.co.uk

Freddie from the Isle of Wight highlyselassie@yahoo.com is looking for a 24.5"/25"/25.5" ctt 1940's/50's bicycle, decent condition original paintwork/period components, forward facing dropouts, full length mudguards, standard geometry (i.e. not ultra-short chainstays), British or French tourer would be preferable.

Freddie asks about a frame he has acquired: The frame I have is a 24" road/track frame(not drilled for rear brake), has nervex fish tail lugs with the lips intact and what I believe is a haden fork crown(two crescent

shapes facing toward each other with a point in the middle and triangular window cut-outs). The original paint has been removed, but there is the number 2588 stamped in the bottom bracket.
highlyselassie@yahoo.com

Aidan Searle, Bristol - I am looking for a classic road path/track frameset such as Gillot, Ephgrave, Bates, Hetchins etc, or marque of similar interest. At least 23". I already own a '59 Mercian but now looking for something from one of the great London builders. A.J.Searle@bristol.ac.uk