

## LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 21

(May/June 2009)

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### **Ron Kitching Catalogues** (*Everything Cycling*) Steve Griffith

After Holdsworth's *Aids to Happy Cycling* the Ron Kit catalogues are probably the second most useful resource if researching component history in the post war period. However, there is a massive contrast between the two companies' approach. Holdsworth settled on the pocket-sized guide which they kept until the late 70's whereas the Ron Kit catalogues grew and grew until their nadir in the late 60's when they were over 200 pages of detailed information, an encyclopaedia of cycling...

Kitching's first catalogue in 1948 was very slim publication entitled *Ron Kitching 'The Riders Agent'*. Then he was working out of a retail shop in Station Road, Harrogate. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of firms were British, with only some of the clothing and tubulars coming from Europe (Belgium). Throughout the 50's the number of continental names increases at a dramatic rates, so much so that by 1963 British names were very much in the minority. Later names like TA, Zeus, Cinelli, and Alex became synonymous with Ron Kit. From the mid 50's the Milremo trade name appears (from the Milan San Remo road race)

Amongst manufacturers making badge engineered products under the Milremo marque were Lyotard, Super Champion, CLB, Christophe, and Phillipe. Milremo included some innovation especially in the areas of brakes and pedals: their centre-pull of the early 60's features an adjustable reach and is far more than just a copy. It's interesting to note that Kitchen seems to have disliked products he had to share with other wholesalers, e.g. Campagnolo and Mafac have a fairly short life with him .

The 70's reflect the shift to looking beyond Europe for new suppliers. In this era Suntour and MKS make an appearance. The last full catalogue is in 1983 - after this there was a move to make it purely mail order which didn't last more than a few years. The golden age was the late 50's and 60's, lavishly illustrated in many cases with Daniel Rebour drawings ( the Frank Patterson of technical cycle drawings). They score highly over the Holdsworth *Aids* in having far more technical and spec detail (if you want to know the detail of the different Mafac tool kits then the 1959 *Everything Cycling* is the place to look).

#### **Steve also notes:** Sourcing late 30's components

Having just put together a couple of late 30's bikes I have been reflecting on the ease of obtaining period components. I have divided into:

**Easy to source:** Williams C34, Brooks B17( nice to have an oval badge but who can tell if its worn), Pedals: Webb, Phillips doubled-sided, Lyotard 460 and MB23, BW ( plenty of BW freehubs around which take fixed sprockets) and British Hub Co hubs , Sturmey K, Standard Cyclo, period toe clips.

**Findable but take some effort:** BSA cranks and pedals, Chater sprint pedals, good Resilion brakes, Dunlop lightweight rims, Conloy rims, Marsh and other bars of the period , Williams C1200 and Chater cranks, Constrictor pedals, shockstop sleeving for bars

**Difficult to source:** Lam, Moniter and Conloy brakes, period alloy rims e.g. Fiamme, Simplex mechs, Chater headclips , alloy bars.

So the hardest parts to find are brakes. Resilion in good nick and that actually fit your forks are a rare find indeed. I have resorted to using a Phillips or Raleigh steel sidepull maybe painting black, with modern brake block material these work OK after a good disassemble and clean up. I would be interested in any dodges resorted to in order to keep that 30's look

**Couple of requests for information:**

1. Anyone know about bottom brackets stamped BWT which seem to be quite good quality?
2. Lucifer dating, could I have details of:
  - a. Any Lucifers with known bill of sale dates . Please provide the serial number ( letter plus 6 figures)and the model e.g.700, 800 or 900  
Details to griffith531@hotmail.com
  - b. Serial number and model numbers of Lucifers

**Lightweight News 20** had the following: "Talking of specifications, in January 1938 Chas. Holland gave details of machine he rode in Tour de France. It was 71/71 degrees with 22" seat tube and 22 1/2"; top tube; 42 1/4" wheelbase; 3" fork rake; 10 7/8" BB height. It had 27" wheels with 15/17 tied and soldered D/B spokes. Sometimes uses wood rims, sometimes alloy. Sadly, he didn't give the make of this machine but I bet someone out there knows what it was."

*I was right, Mark Stevens replied straight away:* Hello Peter, the bike Charlie Holland rode was a Raleigh. They brought out a Factory replica to commemorate called the "Charlie Holland". I was told this by Eddie Mundy of the RTTC who has one, if he is still alive. It had been back to Raleigh's in the 1960's and resprayed but the old transfers were not available. I wonder where it is now?

**A useful hint from Eric Watts:** For working on old freewheels I have cut an old hub down, just leaving the thread & one flange. I have cut two sides off from the flange , which fits into the vice. I used an old steel hub as it is tougher and doesn't get chewed up by the vice. I use this hub for cleaning blocks too as well as for removing sprockets - a long soak can make sprockets easier to remove. It also makes rebuilding freewheel bodies easier too.

**Chris Aspinwall** responds to the piece in L News 20 re. chain lubrication: Firstly WD40 is not a lubricant, it is a solvent. It is good for freeing up stiff links but not as good as immersion in diesel or paraffin and left for several hours. Have experience of GT85 and not impressed with it as a chain lubricant. I only keep a tin for spraying the openings of PVC double glazed window units which tend to stick after a period of time. It quickly becomes ineffective here because of the damp weather - we receive a lot of 'liquid sunshine'. Another more effective solvent for cleaning and penetrating seized threaded bolts etc is 'Brunnox' which I get from local Motor Factors. Cheaper than WD40, made in Germany and works a treat. Will even clean surface corrosion off Dural.

I agree with your comments about oil. Attracts dirt and becomes a grinding paste which speeds up wear. I also agree with your comments about dry lubes being superior. The one I find which is quite effective as a chain lubricant is 'Purple Xtreme' which goes on easily and doesn't colour the chain. I have to re-apply more often than recommended by the manufacturer because of exposure to the 'liquid sunshine'.

On the subject of freewheels I again use a dry lube 'Makt Lube' which has been very effective. It purges water, rust etc. from the freewheel bearings. It sprays on like a liquid and then sets. I use several applications spaced over time to build up the amount of lubricant. Sadly my stock is now exhausted so I will try and get something else suitable. I used to buy my lubricants from the CTC shop. I know Bike + do a good range as the CTC have switched to Wiggle. I use Weldite red cycle grease for hubs, traditional bottom brackets etc. and buy this from Chain Reaction Cycles as a lot cheaper than Halfords who sell it in their 'Bike Hut' range.

I also use Halfords' Copper grease to fit alloy stems, seat posts etc. A liberal application in the neck of the seat tube and steerer tube before applying a very thin layer over the quill of the stem or seat post before insertion. Has a double benefit because it stops water penetration as well as stopping the

component seizing. However, this should be redone every year as part of the regular maintenance of the machine. I also use this when fitting sealed bottom brackets particularly on the fixed cups. Never had a problem removing one later. The old adage about a 'a stitch in time' is very true.

Chris adds: Lubrication is a subject which vexes many cyclists particularly if you use the bike a lot. Older hubs/bottom brackets with traditional cup and cone bearings need to be regularly checked particularly if you live in wet part of the country as water will soon penetrate. I learned a long time ago from bitter experience about the advantage of regular maintenance. I can only recommend what I have used without problems but if you live in a drier part of the country water might not be such a problem.

Still on the subject of lubrication, **Peter Brown relates:** My 1951 Hetchins came complete with a frying pan in which Arthur, the original owner, used to boil his chain in thick engine oil. I tried it on the hob top and was soon told where to take my pan and chain as the kitchen filled with blue smoke! I also have his touring oiler which is a little brass oiler, originally stored in the butt of a British Army issue Lee Enfield 303 rifle along with the pull-through.

*(I assume Peter doesn't take the Lee Enfield on V-CC rides – Ed. However, in Italy, on L'Eroica Ride some of the riders had shotguns which they fired into the air from time to time. They were playing out their part as characters from Don Camillo! Not recommended on UK rides.)*

**David Orr** who now lives in Australia gives us a hint I hadn't thought of (probably because luckily I never had any of these problems):

I have two Osgear shifters here in Australia. I must admit, when I put one on for nostalgia's sake it makes me appreciate modern gears. But the Osgear had two advantages over the old telescopic shifters. If the gear cable broke or the nipple pulled off (not uncommon in those days) the shifting fork just ran on the spokes and did no damage. You could stop and unhook the spring on the rear shifting fork and then the chain could be put on any of the sprockets to continue your journey.

He also added some detail to the Pennine pump story on the website. He tells us: "I grew up in Stockport and cycling was my "Open Sesame" to a world beyond that town. I was a Leaguer and along with others formed North Cheshire Velo and we belonged to the Manchester section of the BLRC. This was in the 50's and we saw the start of the "Tour of Britain" series sponsored by the *Daily Express*.

I had a good friend called Roy Mitchell who had a custom built racing frame and light engineering business on Hillgate in Stockport. He didn't get enough orders to earn a living building frames so the light engineering side of his business kept him going. I used to do drawings for him (I was a draughtsman) and also do machining part-time.

One of the products I helped make was the Pennine CO2 pump. I machined the spiked nozzle that penetrated the CO2 Cylinder, used a fly press to close the end of the Aluminium tube before machining the plastic sleeve grooves and the closed end. Then punched the 'L' slots for the handle plus all the other operations to final assembly. So that is where the pumps were made.

Roy had served his apprenticeship with L H Brookes in Manchester, had a brother Eric, who rode as an independent with (I think) ITP Pools and he (Roy) also manufactured many parts for the lightweight cycle frame makers. A partial list would be:- cable eyes, gear lever bosses, seat stay ends, built-up rear brake bridges, CO2 pump bosses, drinking bottle bosses and gear cable pulley assemblies. He supplied such as Dawes, Viking, Claud Butler and Pennine Cycles to name just four, with these products.

I have lived in Australia for over 40 years and still ride my EA Boulton which has a Roy Mitchell CO2 pump boss (but behind the seat tube, about three inches below the seat cluster), brake bridge, drinking bottle boss and gear lever boss.

**Peter Underwood adds:** It is amazing how information pours in from all over the world as a result of users accessing the website. David had come across the Pennine Pump page which we recently put up and lo and behold we get it from the horse's mouth (or would it be the kangaroo's mouth) just how and where they were made from the man who actually did it!

More on fixed-wheel, another of my obsessions. On our Wednesday rides we often climb the hill out of Dalham in Suffolk. It is one of those hills when suddenly everyone stops talking and gears steadily drop lower and lower. There is a sharp left hand turn over a bridge at the bottom which means that there is no chance for a run at it. This hill is part of a Newmarket club's sporting time-trial circuit and I was amazed to learn that a local hot rider took it using a 110" fixed wheel. When I rode in the 50's we used about 66" fixed during the winter and then upped to 72" for the early-season events, hence the medium gear events traditionally held at this time of the year – there is still a National Medium Gear league. Some riders these days manage to do 25-miles in well under the hour. Mick Madgett who organises Medium Gear events tells us that Zak Carr's *average* pedal rate when he did his 53.40 worked out to about 130rpm; he was on a single freewheel when he did this, so was revving as fast as he could for as long as he could, then freewheeling a bit to recover. (A sort of extreme interval training!!). Tony Doyle did his 56.30 in 1980 on a 72" fixed, so had to keep pedalling at over 100rpm all the way.

Back to the 50's. As the season evolved, the gears steadily got higher up to 81" which was used for 25 and 50-mile events. Some of us mere mortals dropped again to 78" for 100-mile and 12-hour events.

These days, from time to time, I ride 35 – 50 miles on a fixed at a steady rate and always feel quite tired the next day and the hamstrings tighten up. I suppose the answer is to get more fixed miles in. I find it comfortable on the less hilly V-CC rides but would really struggle with a fast club ride.

Last month we had our first visit of the year to the Hampshire Section of the V-CC which we always regard as the spiritual home of the lightweight movement in the UK. The first ride on the Saturday was in North Hants and comprised a handful of riders which by a strange quirk included three R O Harrisons, two of which were Shortwins. This was by pure chance as Shortwins are amongst the rarest lightweights.

During this ride there was a loud bang sounding like a rifle shot. Patricia's tyre had split along the wire beading for about 3 – 4". Phil Wray who was riding with us knew the answer. Wrap binder twine found lying around the countryside around the tyre and the rim and then inflate just enough to be rideable. Disconnect the front brake - we had a spare tube with us. He explained that it is a good idea to carry some cable-ties with you to use. We do that now. The wheel was 26" and the choice of racy looking tyres is restricted to some rather rubbishy Far Eastern specimens. Schwalbe do a good quality touring-style tyre but they look a bit bulky on a lightweight. She made it to the nearby lunchstop and from here we made alternative plans to get back to the start.

The following day's ride started just outside Chichester where there was a turnout of well over twenty riders, all on fantastic examples of the classic lightweight. I rode the R O Harrison on fixed H.P.'s with Chater cranks and pedals and a Swallow saddle. Patricia rode her 1945 Bates BAR with Simplex 4-speed Tour de France, Chater cranks and Brooks Swallow saddle (on tubs this time so no problem there). As is the norm on these rides, everyone was on a really interesting machine and many of the classic makes were being ridden. We had a great day with refreshments at the start and finish at the Roman Palace, Fishbourne, plus a lunchstop in a marina on the Hants. Coast.

We organised a ride here at Cambridge on 5 April and although it was not a lightweight specific ride, nevertheless we had a good turnout including a 39 Hobbs, 58 Holdsworth Hurricane, 54 Condor track, 07 Bates Hellenic, 62 Hobbs Blue Riband, 48 Raleigh RRA, 53 Ephgrave, 69 Macario, 55 Rotrax ladies, 53 Mercian, 70 Hetchins, 39 Claud Butler USWB tandem, 38 Pollard, 70 Joe Hancock, 64 Gillot Tour de Bretagne. The ride was mainly in the well-groomed horse racing, breeding and training

area of Newmarket.

**Bryan Clarke needs a couple of 26" HP rims 32/40:** "I don't mind what they are as long as they are good condition. I am able to make an exchange if suitable as follows - NOS 32/32 Mavic Argent 10 sprint rims - very light but plain alloy, 36/36 later Fiamme road style sprints used but braking surfaces untouched. Used fairly good NISI 36/36 sprints, labels intact have serrations on braking surfaces like San Giorgio. I also have a 700c HP on Maillard hub - single fixed with lock ring unused, made for Winter riding." [ClarkeSharman@aol.com](mailto:ClarkeSharman@aol.com)

**Stop Press:** I have just received a copy of a book on the Tour de France to review but I realise that our next issue is out very close to the race. You may be familiar with Graham Watson, well known as a brilliant photographer producing fantastic images of the Tour and all things cycling.

Using his inside knowledge gained from covering the Tour over some 31 years, he has produced *Graham Watson's Tour de France Travel Guide: The Complete Insider's Guide to the Tour*. If you are thinking of planning a trip to the Tour yourself then this book will help you avoid any pitfalls and at £17.99 could save you money in the long run.

It is a comprehensive guide to the Tour with information on each region, hints on where to sleep, where to eat, getting around, and how to see the race to best advantage. His insider's hints on reaching the popular spots in the Alps and Pyrenees will be invaluable. Obviously the book is beautifully and copiously illustrated with Graham's photographs and he offers thirty five pages of professional but practical advice to photographers on capturing the Tour with a camera from the prologue to the finish in Paris.

It should be available from all good bookshops or direct from [www.cordee.co.uk](http://www.cordee.co.uk).

The layout of the book is very clear and helpful and it is hard to put it down once you have started to explore its 304 pages with website details and information on hotels, restaurants, trains, car and bike rental, tourist information and much more. Even if you never make it to France I can recommend it as a guide to the modern Tour and its legendary figures.