

LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 24

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A few weeks ago I had a phone call from James Grundy in Connecticut in the States who told me that Les Ephgrave had given him some photographs back in the early 60's, would we like to use them on the website? The next day he sent the images which turned out to be really stunning pictures taken professionally at the Aveley Works. Some were of an exhibition which Ephgrave had installed on the upper floors of the building, the others were taken of staff building frames. We have uploaded these images on the website under Classic Frame Builders, take a look if you haven't already. James was also able to give us accurate information on the dates and frame numbering of several Ephgraves he handled during the sixties. This was particularly useful as the register held by Peter Holland was a bit short of solid information for this period.

Shortly after this we held the Ephgrave Ride here at Cambridge and attracted several of the marque, all No 1's but including just one No. 1 Super. Peter Holland, the marque enthusiast, joined us and was a great source of knowledge as usual as he was brought up in London during the later years of the Ephgrave era. I rode my 1952 No. 1 and Patricia took her 1950 No. 1, both on gears as we used the hilly route this year.

We also uploaded a piece in 'Reminiscences' about **cycling in the Bristol area** during the 50's – another welcome contribution from the States.

There is another fascinating contribution in Reminiscences from Tony Bobbet on **cycling with the Actonia**

In September we took part in Martin Vincent's '**Red Kite**' ride which was held in the Chiltern lanes around his home near Henley-on-Thames. Martin rode a newly restored straight-stay Experto Crede and his brother rode the 1969 all-chrome Magnum Bonum Hetchins which Martin inherited from his father. We decided to make it a mini-Hetchins ride so I took my 1959 Magnum Bonum and Patricia her 1970 Spyder/Swallow, luckily they were both on gears as there were several tough (for me!) hills on the ride. They were joined by an Ephgrave Italia, a Paris Galibier, and a Frank Lipscomb. Martin organised the ride at the last minute so had to circulate details without using the *V-CC News and Views*. Next year he promises to publicise the event more widely and we hope other riders will take the opportunity to cycle in this fantastic area, and yes we did see many Red Kites. This must surely be one of the most successful examples even of re-introducing creatures into the wild.

We made a weekend of it by visiting the Henley Rowing and River museum on the Saturday where we learned about the history of rowing on this famous stretch of the Thames as well as viewing some good paintings and an exhibition of calligraphy. Highly recommended restaurant/cafe as well which you can visit even though you don't go into the museum – if it was in our area we would use it regularly as a tea stop on our rides. As it is we use the Horse Racing Museum and the National Stud along with a selection of garden centres and a few cafes. Luckily more and more garden centres open on-site cafes as the tea shops and cafes of old close down; if this were not the case it would be a case of thermos flasks I think!

To get some more points in the annual 'Nerds' competition I have been cataloguing the details of chainsets and freewheels on all our bikes and then compiling a table of the available gears! One purist on the recent Red Kite Ride explained that he was over-gearred for the hills but wouldn't fit anything smaller than a 48T chainring as it just didn't look right – he is right up to a point as in the 50's even double chainrings were 48/51 or 47/50 and the most commonly-used single chainrings were 48. Patricia's frames are so small that she can get away with smaller rings but with my 24" frames one has to try and achieve a balance between lower gears and looks; Peter will understand as the years take their toll! With a reasonable sized outer ring one can hope to camouflage the smaller inner, if only it was that easy. The gears of the time such as the Simplex Tour de France would just about cope with a five-speed rear and a front with the contemporary three-tooth difference; much more than this and the gear just won't cope with the chain take-up. Ironically using the Simplex with the pulleys upside down increases the range by a couple of teeth but don't expect the style police to miss this move. Having said that the question of getting the Simplex pulleys the right way round seems to baffle many. This is because the right way looks less likely than the wrong. The way to check this is to examine the side plates either side of the pulleys. In one area only there is a raised 'lip' on the outer plate; this lip is designed to push the chain up onto the larger sprockets so it must be at the top.



Our next ride in late September was one not demanding gears, viz. the **Thanet Ride** which runs from Bristol to Bath and back using a Sustrans cycle path constructed on the old railway line. This ride celebrates the Thanet cycle which was built in Bristol and is easily identified by its bottom bracket which is suspended between the seat and down tubes in the fashion of an aeroplane engine (*see image left*). The two tubes carry on past the B B and come to a point below it. The lugs on some models have a 'T' cut into them and some machines have a matching stem. I don't have a Thanet so took my fixed-wheel R O Harrison Shortwin which also has an unusual B B mounting for comparison. Patricia rode her Bates BAR with sprints, Burlite brakes and 5-speed Simplex.

The following day we were in the **New Forest** for Peter Darling's ride starting at the Fighting Cocks P H which was doing coffees and breakfasts from 8am no one started the ride hungry. This ride had a few steep hills along the way so it was back to gears again. I had my Mercian and Patricia was on her Flying Scot.

This left just one travelling ride for this year, the Hampshire section's **Fishbourne Finale** event which always attracts a good turnout – about 30 riders this year. Another flat ride so I managed to get out on my Bates Vegrandis on fixed at last after three attempts this year had failed. I was reminded how nice this machine is to ride and how much I enjoy fixed-wheel riding. Patricia took her late-seventies Pat Hanlon which was Pat's own machine and beautifully built for her by Tom Board. It has a 19" frame and is equipped as Pat had it with all Campag gear and sprints.

Women's frames: As a general rule the rarer a frame is, the more you have to pay for it. One exception to this is in the world of women's open frames which are about as rare as you get. Having said this many of the top builders did produce these frames for women to ride in the 40's and 50's. The reason for the small uptake is that many women of the period rode frames built in the same triangular format as that used for men. A good proportion of club women raced and this is why they went for the slightly stiffer concept of the men's frame. To be honest quite a few were riding their husband's hand-me-downs, both the frames and the components. Many of the remainder bought

triangular frames as they were so much in the majority in the club world and were generally regarded as superior.

There were, however, a small number of open frames produced by builders such as Claud Butler, Hetchins, Bates, Rotrax, Hobbs and many others. Although men's frames were hand built there was a certain amount of repetition in their building but when it came to open frames each one must have been a real one-off job necessitating special lugs, tubing and jigs, if used. Sadly, this didn't result in small frames with short top tubes for the shorter rider as builders were very conservative and wanted the frames to conform to their norm which resulted in a 21" top tube or apparent top tube no matter how small the frame. Nowadays, without the constraints of lugs, it is easier to get round this but that is another story.

We have noticed that each of these frames we come across has a very high quality build, I guess only the top builders within the company would be allowed to take on this demanding project so different from the run-of-the-mill jobs. In the main the format would be for a second 'top tube' to run parallel with the down tube. Sometimes this was supplemented by extra 'chain' stays from the seat tube to the rear ends as on the Claud Butler 'Avant Coureur' - 'Lady Lightweight', not always the case though. The Avant Coureur was the top model in his range of open frames, some being welded. It is thought that in the early 50's Claud Butler was building some 50 open frames per year. A number of builders used twin small-diameter tubes for this 'top tube' and they often ran from the head to the rear end resulting in what we now know as the 'mixte' frame.

The open frame construction creates a few problems with the build-up of the complete machine; one is the cabling to the rear brake which needs a reversed cable ending allowing the cable to approach the stirrup from the bottom rather than the top. Makers of mass-produced open framed machines were able to create these in sufficient numbers to be economically viable but the small quantity makers wouldn't find it so easy. The second problem could be around the positioning of gear levers and cabling for both derailleurs and hub gears. In the case of the latter this was made slightly easier by the use of handlebar trigger levers.

Rob Head says, I am in NZ on my laptop looking at the website "Classic Lightweights" and reminiscing on my cycling past. I looked through all the pictures and saw much that brought back those happy racing days, especially a picture of Vic Gibbons. I could never understand why he often raced with a Sturmev Archer gear, mind you he was fast and he and one Ron Jowers were always locked in combat.

I owned a Paris when I first started to race, was attending the Camberwell Art School at the time and one lunchtime wandered round to Gillott's shop to dream, and saw a "track iron" in the window, a beautiful magenta colour. I fell in love at first sight, so went into the shop to ask how much. It had apparently been built for some Aussie guy who never came back for it, the mug, anyway £22 later it was mine.

I then had to have a set of sprints for it and found a pair of Wolber wooden ones down near the Surrey docks and purchased them, can't remember how much for. The only problem was they were a bit too small for the tubs I bought so they kept rolling off the wheels, bit annoying when trying to race. Eventually I had to sell them and buy a set of Fiamme sprints with Campag hubs. I took the Gillott to Cyprus when in the RAF and raced there until my demob when I came home and soon moved to NZ. Sadly I left my bikes with my Mum and never saw them again. Tragic. Anyway, thanks for the happy memories from the website.

As described above by Rob, the Gillott is identical in specification and colour scheme to those used by Norwich A B C in the early 1950's.

Paul Arnold is Secretary to the Trust of the **National Cycle Collection** and tells us that they are approaching a difficult financial period for the Museum. The collection rents the premises and has to cover insurance, electricity, rates etc etc. They will be losing their Curator in 2010 (retirement) and the only feasible route they can see is to employ someone and pay them a wage (the present incumbent does it for free!). The bottom line is that they already run at a loss even without factoring in wages. They are currently organising a couple of fundraising activities but these are becoming problematical. The collection has just put an initial bid in to the Heritage Lottery Fund so fingers crossed there. You can become a Friend of the Collection for £12 for the individual or £18 for 'Household' The Trust does have a good selection of classic lightweights in the collection. Part of the "friends" package is a magazine which comes "quarterly" and has reproduced articles and information about what they are up to. Details from the website www.cyclemuseum.org.uk or contact Paul on 01384 292355

It is some years since I last went to a **National Bike Show** but recently we went to Earl's Court to see what was new in the world of cycling.

Very soon I realised that the whole make-up of the show had shifted towards the road. Last decade the show was predominately focussed on mountain bikes and BMX with the odd road bikes here and there. At this year's show there was still a goodly selection of BMX machines but the big difference was in the road bikes. There was just about every make of carbon road and time-trial machine on display but the major shift was in what is now the ubiquitous 'fixie' or what we knew as fixed-wheel machine. There is now a complete genre of these machines from the custom-built versions to those introduced by major manufacturers not wanting to miss the boat. Makes such as Bianchi, Colnago and De Rosa had 'retro' models, many of which were the modern incarnation of the fixed wheel machine.

There is even a spin-off fashion industry which provides clothing for the new breed.

Readers will know that my initiation to the world of cycling was at a time when virtually every serious cyclist used fixed wheel. I must have ridden tens of thousands of miles on fixed, using it both for time-trialling and club riding. Somehow this initiation instilled a feel for fixed wheel riding which never goes. When I returned to fixed after decades on more modern machines with gears, it still felt a natural thing to do. Funnily, if I ride with gears in a group and just one other rider is on fixed, I feel as if I am riding fixed as well and am amazed when I actually freewheel. This seems to suggest that the fixed phenomenon is contagious and maybe should be reported to the World Health Authority.

The new 'fixie' comes in a variety of styles, some have 'cow-horn' bars whilst others have straight bars of various widths; one even having a short straight stubby wooden version. Wheels come in a variety of guises with the wooden rim making a comeback in both sprint and high pressure format. These are made in Italy and Mick Madgett sells them at his shop in Diss. Colour coding is the name of the game and rims, chainsets, saddles and even chains come in a variety of shades. Frame colours are quite different too with panels on all three main tubes quite common. There were several variations of a very pale grey/green which is obviously next year's shade so don't be seen with anything else.

My 'fixie' of the show was the Demon Frameworks model, made in Southampton by Tom Warminger. His frame was beautifully finished and was using the modern version of the Nervex Professional imported from the States. Rather than having the lugs lined, the frame was finished in cream with the lugs contrasting in brown – the paintwork was immaculate. Rob's aim is to revive

the art of superb frame-building in this country and any lover of fancy lugs should look at his website www.demonframeworks.com under Custom Frames>Lugs, I think you will be as amazed as I was.

Vince Jenkins:- Is on the lookout for a 23-24 inch Ephgrave frame, ideally as a project. A wish would be for a No. 2 - lollipops and all.

You can contact me on my mobile 07881 512 889, as well as my personal e-mail, deepblue.fathoms@btopenworld.com

Front mechs – by Steve Griffith

Considering the amount of ink spilt over rear mechs it is surprising how little is written about the front mech. Maybe this is because being simpler they are seen as somehow less interesting. Looking at quite a few bikes it is surprising how many front changers are incorrectly fitted. The key to successful changing is as follows:

Height - the outer cage needs to be only one to two mm above the outer chainring teeth

Alignment - the cage side plates should be parallel to the chainring when viewed from above.

Side to side adjustment - the limit screws should be set so the mech will operate without rubbing the chain except in the extremes, small /small and big/big, which should not be used.

I have found careful bending of the cage at the front to assist in eliminating rubbing by the chain.

A bare wire set up is preferable as the cable inside the short outer will rust very quickly.

If you are using a small outer e.g. 44T or less you may find the tail of the cage is too long and will foul the rear mech cable. Try to find a mech with shorter cage or re-route the cable under the bottom bracket

Judging by the number of right hand cranks I see marked by the front cage many cyclists do not set these gears up correctly. Even with cranks such as TA which have a small distance between crank and chain ring it is perfectly possible to set up a front mech without rubbing. You need to avoid using a modern front mech which will usually have a wider cage at the rear than front (of course *Lightweight News* readers would never dream of using a modern mech on a period bike).

Mech models - The classic Campag record design copied by most other manufacturers should provide excellent shifting up to an 18 tooth range. If you are using a triple (age catching up ?) then I recommend using a Simplex or Huret with the deep back plate which is an excellent aid to shifting up. The Campag Grand Sport (matchbox) is only really effective up to about 12 teeth. Campag did not really change their next mech design until the late 80's, there being very little difference in terms of performance between the Record, Nuovo Record, Victory etc. The Simplex Prestige front (the one with the plastic band and red dot) is based on an obsolete design; it only shifts up to about 10 teeth difference and after a while the plastic will crack. I rate Huret front mechs highly for solid reliable shifting and most have that old fashioned look. Unlike rear changers the higher priced front are not necessarily the most effective. I find the models with steel side plates far better than those with alloy as the latter can flex and cause poor shifting. When buying second-hand check for bent side plates, excessive wear on inner plates and weak springs, reject if any of these are present.

Barry Southall's bicycles and spares at Biddle & Webb's Auction at 1300 on Friday 6 November 2009.

Alvin Smith gives us details of the sale of Barry Southall's effects on 6 November – details at bottom of table. Barry was a member of the V-CC

Alvin has some photographs which he can forward to anyone who gets in contact with him.

alvin.smith@btinternet.com

The Paris, Planet and one Major Nichols are up to "Peter Lowry" standard. (Which is good – Ed.)

Lot no	Item	Description
655	Paris Galibier bicycle	Paris Lightweight Cycles Frame 3367 21½in With SimplexTdF 5 speed sprocket and TA double with simplex rod on special band on clamp. Beautifully refinished gold /blue fades exhibition standard
656	Planet Pintail Plus bicycle	22 in Refinished Black. SA 5 speed hub with 2 sprocket and Simplex derailleur and TA double chainwheel.. Hand painted graphics and wonderful enamelled head badge, 95% mint
657	Major Nichols bicycle	22½ in Light blue original 85% mint Nervex Pro lugs no frame number.visible West Brom. Prob 1960s frame
658	Major Nichols bicycle	22 in Original Gold finish Road Frame 91602. All Campagnolo equipment 98% exhibition quality
659	Major Nichols bicycle	22½ in Gold finish Durban Road Frame 11090 with unusual cotted BB, Built as fixed wheel
660	Unknown make bicycle	Good quality 1970's frame with Williams alloy chainset and Shimano 600 gears
661A	Major Nichols Frame only with fittings	Frame 91402 22¼in Red enamel by Mercian but never built up. Last frame ever issued by MN and given to B Southall as a gift in 2006 99% exhibition quality
661	Two quality frames	Major Nichols White 21 in Touring with canti bosses and Maes/M Kint alloy bars and 22 in Original finish Avant Coureur Claud Butler
662	Four large boxes spares	Including Williams alloy splined chainsets, special made items, Mudguards. Selection front forks
663	Miscellaneous frames and wheels/NOS sprint rims	Black Viking? 21 in frame with wrapover stays. Path racer 531 frame and forks MN 8312 frame but no forks. Damaged Dawes frame Four front triangles of frames (unpainted) given to Barry and part of stock from Major Nichols shop prior closure.

Biddle & Webb Ltd can be contacted at 0121 455 8042. Salesroom Icknield Square, Ladywood Middleway, Birmingham B16 0PP