

CAMBRIDGE LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 28

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Terry Pearce gives us plenty of notice that next year's Reading Lightweight Ride 2011 will be a week later than normal on May 22nd, and the theme will be the 'H' ride, Holdsworths, Higgins, and anything else beginning with H.

Editor: I looked at Readers' Bikes on the website under 'H' and came up with:

Harry Hall, Pat Hanlon, R O Harrison, Jack Hearne, Hetchins, Higgins, Hill Special, Hilton Wrigley, Hobbs, Holdsworth and Hurlow so you should be able make the grade this year. I'm sure Terry will let you ride though even if you don't have an 'H'. Patricia and I have six qualifiers to choose from so it's decision time again. Perhaps wait until we've finished the Christmas pudding though!

Steve Griffith passes on the following useful information:

Tired tyres? (The 26 x 1¼" problem)

I have been on a couple of VCC rides recently where people had problems with this size tyre, either susceptible to punctures or poorly fitting on the rim. Both problems are I think caused by the lack of decent quality tyres in this size. Most British lightweights built before 1950 are made for 26 x 1¼" (597mm). It is becoming increasingly difficult to get new tyres in this unique British-only size. A few years ago I stocked up on some Michelin Sports (zigzag tread amber walls). Never particularly puncture proof and prone to side wall cracking, my stock finally ran out.

Looking out for a replacement I was pleased to find that apart from cheapo rubbish nylon tyres there are still two options:

Schwalbe all black approx 35 mm wide

Raleigh (under the trade name Cheng Shen) again all black, slightly narrower, and pretty hard wearing. This is the one to get. Try your local Raleigh dealer as that is how I got some in 2008. They are both pretty OK with most 26 rims although the Dunlop Light Alloy are very difficult to get on and off as they are so shallow. This applies to any tyre.

Inner tubes are less of a problem unless you need Woods valves. Both the above companies do a Presta valve tube easily available on the web.

On some frames built for 26's it may be possible to use 700c (622mm) which would reduce brake clearance by 12.5mm but raise bottom bracket height by the same amount. Whether this is viable or not depends on frame geometry. I tried this with a 1946 Macleans which reduced the excessive clearance to something acceptable and I prefer a higher bottom bracket anyway! For period close clearance brakes the best option is the CLB /ALP Hi Life or early versions of the Weinmann 500.

I recall reading that during WW2 cyclists spent a lot of time looking after their pre-war quality tyres - maybe we now need to do the same with those precious 26" quality tyres. By look after I meant storing out of sunlight and not leaving deflated on the bike !!!

Ed. Remarks: I was on the ride which prompted this piece from Steve and the body of the tyre tore away from the beading wire, exactly what happened to Patricia last year when using these cheap Taiwan tyres. We managed to get back to the start by inflating a new tube lightly, having secured a lot of cable ties around tyre and rim. On the ride in question we had no ties with us as both Patricia and I were on tubs and travelling light with spares and rim tapes. Patricia is slowly converting some of her 26's to tubs with this problem in mind. If you have problems obtaining Raleigh or Schwalbe I know Mick Madgett carries them in stock. For inner tubes we use 26 x 1 mountain bike tubes which most shops stock and they are not too fat.

Pat-on-the back quote from the States: "Peter Underwood, whose web site is an amazing insight deep to English Classic Cycling History and Club racing in the 40's 50's 60's and a dedication to those who rode & built, who pushed for cycling excellence in Great Britain - what an inspiration!!"

We have had an enquiry from Warren Meade (bicyclepassion@bigpond.com) in Victoria, Australia about this track frame used in the Melbourne Olympics and left by its owner in Australia at the end of the racing. The unique identifying detail is this seat stay bridge. The owner is trying to identify the frame which could be from any country of course.



On a recent ride someone (I think it was Chris Harrington) was saying how he had thought that fixed-wheel riding would just about die out with the demise of all us old-stagers. He was amazed to see the revival of the fixed wheel amongst the youngsters of today. London is a hotbed of the 'Fixie' craze as it is now known. There is also a fashion cult amongst the fixie crowd and it is not uncommon to see riders out on Sundays resplendent with tweed jacket and trousers and the new stylish breed of cycling shoes. A women's fashion scene has also evolved, with clothing designed to allow the working woman to cycle to work on her fixie yet still look stylish and normal when she arrives at her place of work. Haven't yet seen a judge in full regalia complete with wig but it is early days yet!

Cambridge may well be the second city as far as the fixed craze goes. I regularly ride in and out of the city centre (about 10 minutes) and almost without fail see at least half a dozen riding fixed. There is also an overspill into the revival of bicycle polo and inter town tournaments are being arranged around the country. Cambridge held one over the last bank holiday weekend. A national event was held at Manchester recently with 37 teams entered. Before the fixed-wheel craze, the

one remaining bicycle polo team had no one else to play against having to make do with matches between their own teams.

Cyclists in the late 40's and 50's were a single-minded lot who spent hours discussing frame dimensions. Angles, frame sizes, wheelbase and fork rake were discussed ad infinitum. I recently spoke to a friend about an Ephgrave frame he purchased in the 50's and which I now own. He told me off the top of his head, some fifty years on, that he had two Ephgraves, and you can tell which is which as the fork rake on one was $\frac{1}{4}$ " longer than the other at $2\frac{1}{8}$ "!

Some adverts and catalogues from this period can be very informative about these matters whilst others just named the models and gave a few vague details. In the 50's, Carpenter offered a machine for the longer time trials (think 12 and 24-hour) and massed-start racing. It had 72° parallel angles with $10\frac{1}{2}$ " bottom bracket and $17\frac{1}{2}$ " chainstays producing a wheelbase of $41\frac{1}{2}$ ".

Their Road/Path frame was offered with the option of $74/72^\circ$ or 73° parallel, $11\frac{1}{4}$ " bottom bracket, to give height for fixed, and a wheelbase of $40\frac{1}{2}$ ". The pursuit-specific model had 73° parallel. Similarly Ephgrave offered 72° parallel for massed-start and 73° parallel for track.

Gillott's 1952 brochure was very technical showing fork and rear ends along with fork profiles. They also had a diagram showing how to measure a frame. Their track was offered with 73° parallel, $1\frac{3}{4}$ " fork rake and $11\frac{1}{4}$ " bottom bracket. The all-round clubman was offered $73/71^\circ$ and again 72° parallel for the mass-start rider. The tourist was offered 71° parallel with longer fork rake for a 'soft' ride, easy to keep on line when riding a heavily loaded machine. They even went on to show how to design machines for both the taller and shorter rider. The first had 73° head and 70° seat to help with the longer top tube, $2\frac{3}{4}$ " fork rake and $41\frac{1}{4}$ " wheelbase to keep the proportions even. For the shorter rider the angles were reversed with 72° head and 74° seat to give a shorter top tube and also shorter fork rake and wheelbase.

Holdsworth (1960) recommend, for the average rider, a 22 or 23" frame with 73° head and 71° seat angles with $22\frac{1}{2}$ " top tube. For the taller rider, the same angles with a 23" top tube. The smaller frames come out at 72° head and 73° seat, again to attain a shorter top tube. Of course when juggling with sizes and angles the wheelbase may remain constant so fork rakes have to be adjusted and the fork rake dictates the head angle. Some riders would present the builder with a set of dimensions which just didn't add up to a rideable machine. Some builders gave these suggested dimensions in their catalogues, hoping to add a little sense to the debate.

To summarise, massed-start riders are offered 72° parallel with a lower bottom bracket (no fixed wheel riders here).

The recommended track set-up was 73° parallel but they did state that this was ideal for pursuiteres and would help to keep close to the inside line. Many track machines for UK tracks, shallower than the Continentals, had 74° head and short fork rake (the two go together) so as to give easy manoeuvrability. Machines for the steeper tracks could have 75° head.

In 1958 Mercian offered a new Vigorelli for time trials and pursuing, again with 73° parallel angles coupled with a $10\frac{5}{8}$ " bottom bracket height and $1\frac{1}{8}$ " fork rake. With sprints and silk tubs this machine weighed in at a respectable 16lb 13ozs.

From this we can see that the builders were recommending 73° parallel for pursuit, $74/72^\circ$ for track sprinting, etc. and 72° parallel for massed start racing. This left the time triallist, and most people racing were in this discipline, with a choice, hence the eternal debates. Many had track frames built

with track angles and fork rake and they may also have used this machine for both time trials and track racing (probably with mudguards to go to work as well). Some went for the pursuit option for the same reasons. If the rider was lucky enough to have a choice of two machines, he may have opted for a mass-start specification for the longer events such as 100-mile, 12-hour and 24-hour events. This probably left quite a percentage who thought they knew better and came up with a specification they thought would beat the system.

We have been through all this to get a small frame for Patricia, 43cm (17") seat tube and 47cm (18½") sloping top tube. We went to several conventional frame builders with the project but they just couldn't 'see outside the box'. Eventually Paul Donohue, a well respected modern builder realised what we were talking about and produced a perfect frame. He had previous experience as he had built the track machines for juniors at the Manchester Velodrome. The short top tube was possible by the use of short 155mm cranks. It amazes me how many so-called women-specific small frames are supplied with exactly the same 170 cranks as those suitable for a 6' rider.

In another aspect of my life I spent several years windsurfing on the waves of Cornwall and used to have custom boards built several times a year. I would opt for the builder/professional rider's choice of design which would slowly evolve with time and experience. Just as in cycling, many potential owners would approach the builder with 'crackpot designs' and as often as not the builder would build what he thought was right anyway. I used to wonder if frame builders used to do the same except that it is easier to measure steel triangles than the curves of a surfboard. We had different boards for very high winds and waves, slightly more buoyancy and lift for lighter winds with large waves, and even more for light winds with small waves. The fourth would have sufficient buoyancy to float the rider and the capacity to manage very large sails for flat water sailing with medium to light winds. Not that different from cycling today.

We have attended a few rides since the last newsletter but each has been wet or cold or both. The gods were kind to us for our own Meridian Lightweight Ride on 23 May when it was dry and the sun shone all day. As a result we had a turnout of 34 riders. The ride is held on quiet roads but we still split the group into two with Mick Madgett taking over the second. Patricia could have lead but she was acting as sweeper being in telephone contact with me at the front. Such is the age of technology. If I had an i-phone instead of a conventional phone we could have emailed each other along the way!!! Initially we had booked lunch for approx. 16 but upped that to 20 when we saw the weather forecast. Come the day we had to phone the Ickleton Lion from the start to change it to 34. Luckily they are the kind of owners who take this sort of thing in their stride and we arrived to find a table set across the lawn for all of us and we were all eating within half-an-hour. Sadly, we only know of one place in our region who would do this and even supply a wide variety of meals from sandwiches through light meals to a complete Sunday roast.

The ride went well with everyone enjoying the day out in spite of a couple of punctures along the way and we had a great selection of machines including Bryan Clarke's Bianchi with Paris Roubaix. I rode my Ephgrave road/path on fixed and Patricia rode Pat Hanlon's machine built for her by Tom Board. It is kitted out as Pat had it with all Campag equipment.

A week later we organised a ride in Norfolk but a combination of bad weather forecast and a clash with another event meant that we were down to 5 riders. In spite of this we had a good ride, I took my Hetchins and Patricia her Flying Scot. We are doing a ride for classic bikes in Bavaria in July and this was a shake-down for the Hetchins as I had lowered the gearing a bit (in lieu of my pensioner's bus pass).

Next up was the Bates Weekend which was held not too far from Cambridge and is always a good weekend. On the Saturday I took my 51 Bates Vegrands with its distinctive paintwork of bright red main frame and yellow stays and forks. It raises a few eyebrows but is an exact replica of the original paint job. One rider at the event must have been impressed as he said he would like to copy it. The bike is built as a typical 50's time trial bike with fixed wheel on Harden 'Bacon Slicer' hubs in Conloy Asp rims. Chater chainset and pedals and Brooks Swallow saddle, stop watch in clip and the obligatory bell. Patricia took her ivory Bates BAR with 5-speed Simplex 'Tour de France' on sprints, also with Chater chainset. We felt we were well up for the 'His and Hers' trophy but just to make sure we took matching Pennines to the Sunday ride, both 1964 but not the same colour so we lost points on that score I'm sure. We could have clinched it easily but I just can't persuade Patricia to knit matching bobble hats.

I seem to be acquiring noises in rear wheels, one of my Hardens has started the rot. The annoying thing is that I had recently changed the bearings and installed an expensive pair of Swiss ones. I took them apart a few days ago, added more grease and re-assembled but the 'grating' is still there. Maybe I will wash out all the grease, dry the bearings and re-grease to see if that helps. I wonder if some grit had got into the grease when I was assembling – sadly I don't work in sterile conditions. Now I have a 'clicking' noise from an Airlite, again I eased them apart and added more grease to no avail. I guess it is a complete strip down and replace the balls – these things never happen on the easier fixed hubs and the freewheels always make for a longer job.

I am adding details of Patricia's Picnic Ride – this is not a lightweight specific ride but it got missed from the *News and Views* Calendar. While I am at it I will add details of our Ephgrave Ride, which is of course for lightweights.

Sunday 1 August Cambridge Section - Patricia's Picnic Ride Approx. 35 undulating miles. Meet at 10am by the village pond/sign on the crossroads at Comberton (B1046) some 7 miles from Cambridge. There is an adjacent wide road, Green End, with room to park. (We may be able to use the village hall car park in Green End). 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).

The coffee stop will be at Waresley Garden centre and the picnic lunch (bring your own picnic) will be in the garden of Ray Miller's house in Little Gransden with a rare chance to view his collection of over 30 pre-WWI machines.

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Sunday 12 September Cambridge Section – Ephgrave Lightweight Ride. This year we are using our 'hilly circuit' for the Ephgrave Ride of about 30 miles, however it has been ridden on fixed with no problems. Other class makes welcome of course.

Start at 10am at Whittlesford Parkway Railway Station Car Park (£1 for day) – just off Junc. 10 of M11 at its intersection with the A505. Leave A505 at SP 'Whittlesford/Shelfords' – then take 1st Right SP 'Station'. This railway station bisects the road – we use the side **nearest** Duxford Air Museum/M11 (SatNav will take you to the other side). Lunch at the excellent Ickleton Lion. Sorry but no coffee stop or toilets at the start.

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Dave Cropper from Huntingdon (tel: 07731 424882) would like to get hold of a Clarke's of Harrow road frame, 23 or 23½", to replace one he had in his youth. Please ring him if you can help.