

LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS – 41

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I suppose we all feel that our bike collecting policy is the right one but I try to take a broad view and can appreciate other collectors' tastes. Our own collection is loosely based on the period when I started cycling in my early teens and we have machines from 1940s/50s/60s plus a few special bikes from later eras such as Patricia's Pat Hanlon which was built for her (PH) by Tom Board in the late 70s/early 80s. It was the last machine she had built, is very racy and was built up with Campagnolo components as it was originally as part of a complete restoration. In its final years PH had this machine mounted on a turbo trainer and used it to keep fit after she stopped riding on the road. Eventually she gave it to a lad across the road who wanted to start cycling, not realising that he really wanted a mountain bike. After a few changes of ownership Patricia swapped a Hanlon that she owned but was too large for her to ride, for this one which is a comfortable 19¼", and restored it to its original state. When she first heard of it, the frame was in primer in Mario Vaz's paintshop and the deal was done with it in this state so she was able to specify the finish - a glorious metallic purple as it was back in the days of its original ownership.

My later classic machine is a 1976 Mercian Super Vigorelli track machine currently built up as a 'fixie' with SPD pedals and some modern equipment. I have the option of cane sprints, alloy sprints, or 700 HP wheels depending on the likely road conditions I will be riding it in. This is my third Mercian, almost by accident and I can see it would be quite possible to build up a collection just from the Mercian stable as they have been building from 1946 to the present day and maintain an interesting catalogue of models, some with a retro feel. I used not to like the word 'Fixie' but now I find it useful to distinguish, say, a classic Ephgrave 'fixed-wheel' machine from something in the modern movement, a 'fixie'. So 'fixed' or 'fixed-wheel' for the classics, and 'fixie' for the new movement. I know the latter version drives some purists mad but it does have its uses.

Once one has embarked on a certain period for collection, it is quite hard to go beyond this especially if space is a constraint as it is in our case. We do have a policy of no bikes in the house apart from said set of cane sprints 'wintering' in a spare bedroom. Collections vary, I have seen collections of approaching a hundred bikes where the owner would find it difficult to get one roadworthy for a ride - this often seems to be the case in very large stables where the collector can't say no to anything offered, whatever the state and value. At the other end I have seen a large collection displayed in the manner of a good quality bike shop with machines ready to ride and some displayed on stands taking up to six machines. We have about thirty classics and every one could be taken out to ride at any time. I get quite edgy if there is a bike missing a vital component as when I borrowed some pedals from the above-mentioned Mercian to use on a hire bike in Italy. Just about the first thing I did on returning to the UK was to replace them, just in case. Some collectors have a couple of machines built up and then a selection of additional frames which they use to mix and match as and when they want a change. One such collector I know had his extra frames stored in the roof until they were brought down for a re-build.

On a visit to Germany a couple of years ago, we joined some enthusiasts in Bavaria and noticed that quite a few collectors had machines a decade or so newer than usual in the UK but what they had were classics of their era. I coveted a beautiful Colnago Master Olympic, probably not that old, with Campagnolo Delta brakes and a Shimano Dura Ace groupset. This bike was used for cycling in the Alps where the owner lived amongst the mountains, so good brakes and slick-working gears were a number one priority. Brakes are one of the major improvements between older and newer

machines and speeding down a mountain with GB Hiduminium is not recommended - I do remember that these were used 'back in the day' but I think most Continentals would use Universals with their compact and rigid calipers and later centre-pulls. Here, in Oberammergau I was also introduced into the world of classic Japanese machines by builders such as Zunow and 3 Rensho, the former specialising in very artistic paint jobs to rival those seen on some Colnagos. Following this strand on our return to the UK, I became aware of the kudos amongst collectors of 'NJS' stamped frames and components. This stamping is a requirement on any machine or components used in the world of Keirin racing in Japan where the frame builders are registered by the Japanese Keirin Association solely to produce classic steel frames with NJS accreditation. These are built up with every component NJS stamped, down to individual chain links. Such is the credence of such equipment amongst the 'fixie' crowd that it is imported into the UK by companies such as Tokyo Fixed Gear in London where favourites amongst those able to afford them are the frames built by Nagasawa, Cherubin and Ohtaki with custom-built frames in the region of £1200 upwards depending on finish, etc.

Nowadays, Italian bikes have a certain kudos for the 'tifosi' and are collected all around the world including the UK, America and Japan. On our recent visit to Italy we went to a popular and favourite route for the weekend cyclist in the area of Gabicce Mare. On both weekends there we rode along the 'Panoramico', the high, undulating, coast road with fabulous views of the Adriatic, where there is a constant stream of riders in both directions. Here it is possible to see an A - Z of all things classic in Italian bikes from the latest top-of-the-range Colnago, Pinarello and De Rosa (to name but a few) down through the ages to earlier classics such as the Master Olympic, still with glistening paintwork and chrome. The coffee stops are a delight for anyone with an eye for a classic.

I know a collector in the UK with just about every Cinelli Super Corsa ever produced among his array of Italian classics. I have two Italian bikes, one a 1957 Cinelli Corsa (I gave up waiting for a Super Corsa) with all Italian componentry which I plan to ride at L'Eroica this year. This is complemented by an all-carbon Colnago with Shimano Ultegra equipment which is a real joy to ride. They brought out the Dura Ace version some time after I bought mine.

While I am sure that the earlier carbon Colnago team bikes were fantastic to ride I never found them pleasing to the eye as the main triangle was built up of carbon tubes with rather clunky looking carbon 'lugs' bonding them together. The rear triangle was also bonded into the 'lugs' and was renowned for its stiffness and lightness making the frame very lively. I however wanted a carbon monocoque main triangle built with pre-laminated carbon and was considering buying a Botteccia Octavia when I saw a Colnago CLX 2.0 displayed at a bicycle show in London, I fell in love with it and eventually managed to find one to buy. It was a cheaper version at the time but now I see that there is a monocoque frame available amongst the top ranges

An eternal Colnago classic is the Master or Master Olympic with its fluted tubing and often sold with artistic paint jobs. The Olympic is rare as the Olympic committee objected to the use of the name by Colnago and it had to be dropped soon after its introduction. Colnago still make the Master with its trademark fluted Gilko tubing, chrome headlugs and rear stays with the option of steel or carbon forks. In various forms the Master has been a collector's delight over many years.

Several Italian builders are producing retro models but mainly with the 'fixie' single-speed rider in mind and this sort of thing is popular amongst the hipster community around the world. They probably grace many a penthouse apartment as a piece of art when not being ridden around the city.

We had to miss out on some rides this year but managed to get to Peter Lowry's annual Hobbs Ride in Somerset. As we had rented a car we made a weekend of it staying in Wells, close to the start, and visited the Abbey on Friday and then spent part of Saturday in Glastonbury making the climb of Glastonbury Tor on foot. Peter had a good turnout as usual and, in spite of an earlier forecast of bad weather, we had good conditions for the whole ride. The forecast for heavy rain had made me change my mind about using cane sprits on the Hobbs so I went on HPs (clinchers) instead which was a shame as it would have been ideal for the canes come the day. Patricia rode her 1948 Hobbs Superbe with a Simplex Tour de France 5-speed rear changer and Competition front changer.



Image of Glastonbury Tor - can be Googled for more information



Image from last year's Hobbs ride - yours truly on left with L'Eroica top

I was on single-speed fixed with a BSA 5-pin chainwheel as a change from the ubiquitous Chater-Lea. There was a rather nice, all-chrome 1951 Roy Clarke Hellenic-style frame on the ride and it was said

by the owner that Clarke had worked for Thanet at some time in the past, hence the Hellenic configuration. We were in a part of Somerset not that far from Bristol - home of Thanet (and the Thanet Ride).

As vegetarians, we were spoiled for choice in Glastonbury as several cafes and restaurants were meat-free and the others had several options open to us. For those who don't know, Glastonbury is the spiritual home for New Age travellers, Arthurians, and followers of witchcraft. So far I haven't caught Patricia wearing a pointed black hat or riding a broomstick: maybe she is waiting until I have re-built her Donohue as a winter bike.

Steve Griffith has produced this interesting piece on the CTC Cycle Improvement Silver Plaque

In 1924 the CTC decided to institute an annual award for the greatest contribution to cycle design. It was introduced in an editorial in the May 1925 *Gazette*. A committee of many of the leading CTCites of the time was set up. At first this comprised G.H. Stancer (editor *CTC Gazette*), Fitzwater Wray (pseudonym Kuklos), B.W. Best (editor of *Cycling* until 1929), Frank J. Urry (son of John Urry whose CTC column *Notes of a Nomad* he took over in 1929 on the occasion of his father's death), H.W. Bartlett (the leading cycle historian), A.G. Banks (a CTC official), F.T. Bidlake (father of time trialling). The committee reviewed developments over the past year and if they felt it justified made an award. There was also a note that it could be awarded to a non- British company although in practice this never happened.

It is worth noting that some years there was no award, something which in 1928 brought strong criticism from the cycle trade who felt this was a bad reflection on them. (See *CTC Gazettes* for June and August 1929 when Stancer responded to the criticism from the cycle trade who in one article seem to be suggesting that by not giving the award the CTC was suggesting cycle design had reached its final state!). What a contrast with today - it would be unthinkable for say a major literary prize to decide there was no book worthy of the award!!

In 1925 the first award was made to F.W.Evans for their quick release rear drop out. This might seem an odd choice today but it was a big issue at time. A number of companies (including Selbach, Constrictor and Chater Lea) sought to devise a swift way to remove the wheel and to be able to swap over the cog (most riders were using a double sided hub, either double fixed or fixed/free) and put back without having to spend a great deal of time adjusting chain tension.

In the citation in the June 1926 *Gazette* the reasons for making the award were given as follows:

“ the practice of constructing rear wheels with a cog either side to provide two different gears, and an arrangement to permit the wheel to be removed and replaced almost instantly ... has been widely followed for a number of years. Mr Evans adaptation is exceptionally ingenious ... an arrangement of different sized washers in contact with unusually disposed chain adjusters (one being outside and the other inside the fork end) renders the position of the wheel upon replacement automatically correct both to chain tension and centrality in the forks.”

The same article also commented that there was in fact little choice:

“it must be confessed that a close expert examination of the year's progress in design, construction and equipment revealed comparatively little advance.”

The full list of winners is as follows:

Year	Award	Comments	References in CTC Gazette
1925	F.W.Evans quick release rear drop out	With the advent of forward facing horizontal drop outs, the modern quick release and derailleurs simply not necessary. Fitted to most Evans machines of the era and a useful identification guide	April 1925 p100 June 1926 p189 award ceremony
1926	Saxon hub cone locking device (fig 3)	Ensured easy adjustment of the cup and cone hub and no possibility of it coming loose. Achieved by serrating the outer face of the cone with the inner face of the washer	June 1927 p186
1927	Constrictor company for the use of Conloy metal	Applied to their extensive range of rims e.g. the snake models; Boa, Asp, Cobra made until the late 60's. For some the acme of quality	July 1928 p234
1929	Resilion cantilever brake	Although complicated and fiddly to set up provided excellent braking especially for tourists and tandems and set the standard in the 1930's	May 1930 p164 December 1930 p438
1931	Perry expanding hub brake	Not their more well-known coaster brake but a lever applied hub brake	June 1932 p170
1933	Dunlop Sprite tyre	Described as the ideal model of lightweight tyre, both hard wearing and responsive	May 1934 p177
1935	Reynolds 531 tubing	Has proved the test of time, still the mark of a quality machine	June 1936
1937	Bayliss Wiley Freehub	Not a success found to be heavy and prone to axle breakage but the for- runner of the freehub found on nearly all machines today. Originally a French idea from earlier in the 30's	April 1938 p137
1939	Sturmey Archer 4 speed hub FM model	Lead to the four speed series FW ,FC and FG of which the FM was a great favourite amongst club riders .Made until 1963	March 1940 p59 & 63 advert by Sturmey mentioning the award
1946	Chater-Lea Rattrap pedal	Chater-Lea had been making pedals for a long time before this. This first post war model was praised for its effective seal and easy lubrication points. Oddly for such an award winning item, in 1948 the CTC reported that Chater had improved the design as the original pedals were found to be not very free running in operation	May 1947 p147 June 1948, picture of award ceremony

NB Years missing indicates there was no award.

There would appear to have been no award after 1946. I have found reference to several reports of CTC council meeting the late 1940's when it was decided there had been no development worthy of the award. I find this rather odd considering some of the developments of the time e.g. GB Hiduminium brakes, Harden hubs, Lytaloy components, to name but a few. Clearly these were not viewed as meeting the standard by the committee. In 1951 the CTC held a competition to design the ideal touring cycle (a committee with input from members) which was then built by BSA in very limited numbers.

Reviewing the winners it is clear that a number have stood the test of time and can be regarded as an improvement by any standard, this applies to Conloy metal, Reynolds 531, Sturmey 4 speed hub. Others have just been superseded by other advances, e.g. the Evans drop-out and Resilion brakes, but at their time were significant. It is significant that no award was ever given to a derailleur; did this reflect the prejudice against out of line chains held by Bidlake and some of the others? Looking back, the importance of the award is that it provides an indication of what was important to the cycle tourists of the time.

References

CTC Gazette as in the above table

Cycling 14th March 1945 has a summary of all the plaque winners in an article about the future of cycle improvement

News and Views no. 277 letter by Ben Sharp on the Plaque

Bill Ives asks: Does anyone out there know anything about Ron Kitching frame numbers? I have a Geoff Clark c.1969. As you'll know from Derek Athey's piece, almost nothing is known about who built for GC. Derek tells me it's not a Woodrup-built frame and Jackson and Pennine both tell me it's not one of theirs. The cycle is equipped almost exclusively with Milremo components. The lugs are Bocama. Drop-outs and fork ends are Zeus. Milremo, Bocama and Zeus all appear in Ron Kitching's 1980 catalogue and Bradford is not far from Harrogate, leading me to wonder whether the frame might have been built by R K. The frame number on the steerer tube is 8123.
Email - Williamhenryaaa(at)aol.com

Vernon Liddell - has, surplus to requirements, two small flange Airlite hubs. One is a 24 hole rear fixed, and the other is a 28 hole front. I also have a rear q/r spindle and lever and one Airlite hub box for small flange. The two hubs are brand new and have never been built into wheels. They are also mint and original. All the parts are correct, even the locknuts! The q/r lever and spindle parts are used, but in very good condition.

These three articles I would like to exchange for a Large Flange rear, 32/36/40 hole fixed, or geared. It must be unused, N.O.S. in mint condition and complete with box.
Email: vcl(at)spamcop.net

Jack Taylor tandem for sale: Rick Wilson at Cambridge has a double-gents Jack Taylor tandem for sale. This is a last minute entry as we go to press, so not many details. TA cross-over chainsets, matching rear carrier.
Email: rick(at)bicycleambulance.com

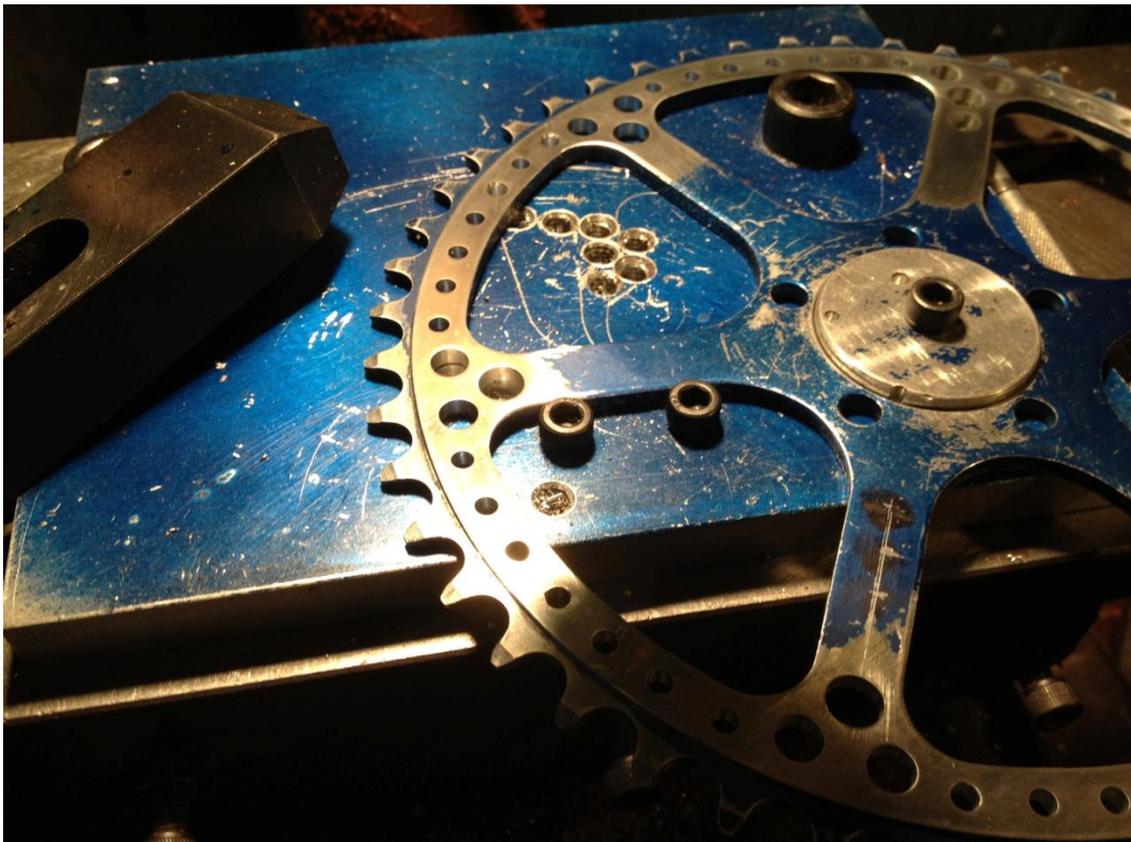
FOR SALE : 1947 Hetchins Super Special frameset (24 known to survive), 22" seat tube, 22.5" top tube. Super rare seat tube transfer (have new replacement), complete with original Chater Lea headclip and C L chainset plus NOS chainring and domed alloy seatpin, has "fish tail" rear dropouts & cast metal headbadge. Would benefit from restoration (in my opinion), lack of time and motivation (due to bereavement) means this frame is for sale - it has never been on the market before: in my family from new.£650.00 ono.

ALSO: **Campagnolo Nuovo Tipo hubs** (large flange solid axle), 32h/40h , for a block/freewheel were built up but never used on a bicycle, therefore almost as new. £75 (inc UK postage)

Contact John Foster for further details email jsfc4d(at)aol.com

Stuart Henderson (Grand Rapids USA) is restoring a pre-war Claud Butler frame with track ends: "The serial number of the fork matches the serial number of the frame (4111250). The rear seat stays will need to be replaced. Hopefully I can have a frame builder of note here in the States do the repair work. I am trying to replicate the tubing decal from photos posted by Mark Stevens on Flickr. The frame has a Southern V-CC decal. Perhaps with this information you'll be able to track down a previous owner who may know more about it than I do. I plan on restoring it to mint."
Email: jlh822@gmail.com

Stuart is drilling a chainset and brake stirrup à la Alf Engers, to go on my 1976 Mercian track bike, more details of this 'drillium' exercise in the next edition of Lightweight News.



Work in progress on the TA chainring - holes to be drilled down the arms and then stage one completed