

# Cambridge Lightweight News

(Edition 56 - March/April 2015)

Editor: Peter Underwood

Cambridge - Tel: 01223 565036

E-mail - peter.underwood(at)tesco.net

[www.classiclightweights.co.uk](http://www.classiclightweights.co.uk)

The first question in Geoff's Annual Trivia Quiz asked: "When did the UCI first introduce world title events for women?" and the answer: "1958 - Three events: road race; individual pursuit; match sprint."

Derek Browne contacted me to say that coincidentally he had been doing some research on this subject, especially relating to the Yorkshire women in the team (Derek lives in Yorkshire as you may imagine). He sent in this picture of the England team for the championship which was held in 1958 on the motor racing track at Reims in France. One of the team was Barbara Harris, the first wife of Albert Hitchin, and later the wife of Wes Mason. She was one of three Yorkshire riders in the team: they were Eileen Cropper, Barbara Harris and Dorothy Johnson. You may remember the other three riders, who were from the South of England. Sheila Clarke married Billy Holmes, the Hull rider who held the 25-mile competition record and went on to become a Milk Race winner, and a team mate of Albert Hitchin in the Falcon team.

Derek added, the only frame I can make out amongst the riders is the bike of Barbara Harris. It is easy to discern the Bob Jackson head badge. Interestingly, all the riders are using G.B. Coureur brakes.

Below is a photo of the team on the Reims Motor Racing circuit and an image of the sprint for the remaining podium places. Barbara is seen finishing 6th in the sprint and 7th overall. The winner, Elsy Jacobs from Luxemburg, had made a successful breakaway and finished some three minutes ahead of the field.



Left to Right: *Eileen Cropper, Joan Poole, Molly Swann, Shelia Clarke, Barbara Harris and Dorothy Johnson*



*Sprint for second place*

How things change - girls' team seen at The Bike Show 2015



**You may have read here** that we live in Cambridge and have no car, using bikes, trains and aircraft for holidays. As well as owning various lightweights I also have a bike I use as a town/shopping bike. It is a Falcon (I believe Black Knight) which has straight 'all-rounder' bars with a wire basket on the front and a carrier on the rear. It has some rather nicely engineered metal mudguards with 'eye bolts' to secure the frame end of the stays and a five-speed derailleur gear. I bought it from a psychiatrist who lived across the road and who had no further use for it - sadly he died a few months later, having suffered Alzheimer's for some time, so I never managed to get a history of it as his wife obviously had other more pressing concerns.

However, he had told me earlier that he owned it from new and had many enjoyable years riding it locally as well as some touring. Until recently I had never felt any real affection for this machine and just considered it to be a work horse which I contemplated replacing should something more suitable come along. It doesn't make sense to spend too much money on a town bike as they are locked and left for long periods of time with the danger of being targeted by bicycle thieves.

The wheels are 27" HP and a few weeks ago I bought a pair of 27 x 1¼ Panaracer Pasela tyres for one of my fixed-wheel machines. On fitting them I realised that they just looked wrong and I should have purchased 27 x 1⅝". I thought I might as well fit the wider tyres to the Falcon and while I was at it I replaced the Weinmann centre-pull brakes with a pair of Universal 58 side-pulls. I was absolutely amazed at the way the tyres completely changed the handling of the machine: overnight it became a joy to ride and rolled more freely so now I look forward to every trip I make on it. The tyres I replaced were actually older 'period' tyres, I assume. The braking improved no end as well but the big change came from the tyres and it brought to mind the way tyres affect the handling of a machine. Patricia never got on with her Bates for years but a change to tubs turned it into one of her favourites. 27" wheels restrict the options of tyres as only a few companies produce tyres in this size and most of mine are Continental or Panaracer. The Continentals have a steady secure feel to them and the Panaracers feel spritely and livelier.

For several years Patricia and I rode at the annual V-CC Herne Hill track day on one or other of my dedicated track bikes fitted with period sprint wheels and tubs. I was happy circling the track and swooping up and down the banking with complete confidence. Herne Hill doesn't have the steep banks of a modern indoor track but they are steep enough to need some respect. One year I decided to take another machine for a change, equipped with HP tyres rather than tubs. I was amazed at the difference and how insecure I felt whenever riding high on the banking. In the end I gave it a few laps around the bottom of the track and then gave up. To me this was another example of the importance of those few centimetres of contact between the rubber and the ground.

**Someone recently** raised the question of bi-laminated lugs in an email. It is a subject I have talked about to so many people, including frame builders past and present, and no two people come up with the same procedure for the process. Some say the frame is brazed up and then the laminates added, which raises the question - how do they get into the corners where brazing leaves a rounded join between the tubes?

Others say that a tube - let's say downtube - has a laminate brazed on. Then the head tube is inserted and brazed into the laminate left proud from the first operation, as if it were a lug. Then a further laminate is brazed on the head tube and the top tube inserted and brazed into this, and so on until you get a main triangle. This seems to be using the laminates as lugs but I didn't think they would be strong enough for this. Some frames are laminated at every 'corner' of the triangle while others have bi-laminates at the head for decoration and the bottom bracket and seat cluster are simply brazed. Using the method of progressing around the triangle as described above takes away the strength of a brazed frame with added laminates and makes one wonder at the built in rigidity of this method.

Among the many tales related by Ken Jaynes was one that he had a regular order for fancy laminates from a customer who then added them to welded Peugeot frames. I never got round to asking how they were fixed as I assume the buyer was not a framebuilder. If this was the case I guess Araldite (a two-pack glue sold in the UK) was the answer. This was said to go on in a town about twenty miles from Cambridge which puzzled me as I never saw these frames for sale. Perhaps they are

masquerading as Paris frames as Ken said that he produced bilaminates for 'Spanner' Rensch, the owner of Paris, in his time.

**A sideline to bilaminates really but I have just acquired** a Gillott Fleur de Lis (sic) as you will well know from other writings and Mark Stevens, the Gillott V-CC Marque Enthusiast, told me that the lugged and bi-laminated versions of the F de L are identical except that the lugged has extra windows in the lugs which you can see here clearly highlighted by some very smart lug lining,



If you have, or see, a Fleur de Lis without these windows then it is a bi-laminated model. Both versions (and the differences) are mentioned on page 8 of the 1952 Gillott catalogue on our website at

<http://www.classiclightweights.co.uk/catalogues/gillott1952-cat.html>

I had looked at the catalogue many times without noticing this slither of information. The catalogue is from 1952 and the model shown above is 1957 so the two versions were on offer for many years. It does raise the question as to why one would opt for the bi-lam when the lugged was more decorative, as the catalogue states. Usually the bilaminates are more decorative than lugs. I imagine the thinner material (I assume) makes it easier to cut and file into extreme shapes.

**By a big coincidence, when restoring the Gillott** I heard from Lorraine Bishop who is Harry Carrington's daughter. Harry worked for A S Gillott from 1929 and eventually went on to manage the company before taking over on the death of Arthur Gillott. Lorraine said:

I am looking to purchase little bits of memorabilia relating to Dad. It would be good to pass down some little bits to my daughters....they adored their grandfather and treasure their memories of him. It would be good if they had other memories of his small success.

Apart from little things like Catford Cycling Club ties and obviously his gold medal for services to the Club I have very little. I will never part with either of these things and especially his medal.

Dad was a stubborn man and could be very cantankerous in his later years. He was not really sentimental and he actually ended up giving away badges and transfers to friends or old customers who wrote to him when they were restoring old frames.

As far as I am aware dad went to work for Mr Gillott in 1929 although I remember hearing from someone that it may have been as early as 1926. Whichever year, certainly cycling became his life's

work. He eventually took more and more responsibility as Mr Gillott grew older. When Mr Gillott died Dad owned 49% of the business. He was left the remaining 51%. Obviously, and which is well documented, he finally left the business in 1966 after many arguments with Edwardes.

My brother was born in 1951 and I was born in 1954. The business was very successful and dad was always very busy.

One of my earliest memories is watching him hand build the wheels for each bike....although other early memories are sketchy. We lived in Southampton Way in an extensive apartment over the 3 shops. The corner shop was a showroom. The middle shop was the main shop and the third was the workshop. The apartment was above running the length of the 3 shops. We often went with him when he visited the other shops.

Our own personal bikes were hand built by Ron Cooper. I don't think we realised how lucky we were and certainly didn't appreciate it as children. My brother rode everyday and competed until he went to University and rode a bike until he died in 2005.

I would like to put the record straight over dad's record books. I know there are many stories about him destroying them when he had to sell to Edwardes. This is totally untrue. They went with him to Edwardes and there they stayed. If they have now been destroyed it was not by him.

His work was his life... Gillott was his life. He certainly would not have done anything to prevent old customers acquiring vital information regarding their bikes. When he eventually left in 1966 he was not the man he was as he had seen a great name destroyed by sharks.

For many years he distanced himself from the cycling world but over time the love of his life crept back in and he became consumed by cycling again. It was good to see. It stayed that way until he died in June 2007.

Enduring memories of dad was the continual talk about cycling and bikes. Thankfully we all loved the sport and in fact still do.

Dad spoke little about Gillotts in his later years although he remained an active member of the Catford Cycling Club and became president for three separate terms. I may be wrong over this and it was just one term which was extended over several years.

I would welcome other memories and pointers on where I might be able to obtain such memorabilia.

I am currently living in Peterborough and have done for many years. Dad ended his days here also. He moved here in 2004 when his eyesight started to fail. Mum had died in 1983 and there was nothing more to keep him in London and I was never going to return there and neither was Chris (my brother). He also wished to spend more time with my daughters, his granddaughters.

I hope you may find some of this information helpful and I would certainly welcome any other information that this letter may unearth.

Lorraine Bishop

**Andrew Mc Allister** - I was vaguely "into" cycling as a kid in the late 70's but never anything too serious. I took it up again at age 47 and am now in my third year of racking up the miles.

Some friends and I were discussing where we got our bikes fixed back in the day – I had a cheap 'Universal' bike from Woolworths and Geoff Clark was the shop we took them to for maintenance; he was downright condescending about my bike, rightly so and refused to work on its many ailments. Reading your piece on your website brought back memories and little did we know back in the day that he was a bit of a legend, both as a rider and builder. This is similar to where I now live – Bingley, West Yorks. There is a small cycle shop in the town called Keith Lamberts (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Keith-Lambert-Cyclesports/102488956510803?fref=ts>) and I don't think half the population know who he is/was. I still see him riding regularly up in the Dales and he looks in great shape for his years. I believe he is still involved with British Cycling too. Youth? Keith, Sid Barras and the likes of Geoff Clark would have been the forerunners to today's Wiggo and Froome, but without the fame and fortune. I doubt Sir Bradley will need to open a bike repair shop when he retires.

Anyway, as I got back into cycling a couple of years back, I subscribed to *Cycling Weekly* and the very first issue I got had an obituary to Geoff, so I am guessing he passed away late 2012. You also say he had a shop on Arncliffe Terrace – this was the one me and my friends used, so I can confirm he was still there in 1978 as that is when my Dad finally got me my Woolworth's bike. It was a lovely shop back then – I don't remember him moving to Thornton but it wouldn't surprise me as the Arncliffe Road part of Bradford (close to where I grew up) became very run down.

#### **I need to dispose of my late father's bicycle.**

It has been in the family since he bought it new just after WW2 and I am unwilling to just throw it on the skip as we clear out his effects. Would anyone be interested in the bike either for parts or as part of a restoration? I do not want any money for it, just the satisfaction that it will go to a good home.

I believe it was one of the first alloy frame bikes produced (more likely to be welded steel. Ed.). Original frame in poor condition, original four speed simplex derailleur gear, original chainset and pedals. It appears the aluminium mudguards are missing, as are the wheels with their alloy hubs - annoying because as a lad in 70's I spent long hours with the wet & dry and buffing them up to an acceptable condition. I rode from mid to late 70's before my Dad reclaimed it. I live just south of Dorking. For more details contact  
John Titchmarsh : jtitchmarsh@aol.com

#### **Graham Kerr informs us:**

I shall be commencing Saturday morning rides for classic lightweights. I propose to start monthly on the first Saturday of the month. The ride will start from Broadbridge Heath village centre (RH12 3LY), nr Horsham in West Sussex, just off the A24, 10am prompt, and will be about 30 miles or so, not too hilly but not exactly flat with an estimated average speed in the region of 14 to 16mph. As course dictates there might well be a short stop at a café. The machines should be as L'Eroica, Retro Ronde, eg clips and straps, exposed cables the usual old stuff. As for dress, well that is up to you, come along in the latest Rapha kit or plus fours – your choice.

Graham Kerr at [graham@kerrhouse.co.uk](mailto:graham@kerrhouse.co.uk)