



'Camden Cyclist' Newsletter: Oct/Nov 2002

News for cyclists from the Camden Cycling Campaign (LCC), London.

Newsletter editor: Meade McCloughan

Camden Cycling Campaign next meets on Monday 14th October and Monday 11th November, 7:30 pm at the Castlehaven Community Centre, Hawley Street, NW1 (with secure indoor cycle parking).

Many of you will have read the interview in the previous issue of London Cyclist with Jenny Jones, GLA member and the Mayor of London's Road Safety Ambassador. Jenny has very kindly agreed to come our November meeting (Monday 11th) and talk more about her brief and road safety strategies in general. Particular issues of interest include: education and publicity; enforcement versus engineering; traffic police resourcing; Community Safety Strategies; motorbikes in bus lanes.

As mentioned last time, the June CCC meeting was treated to a fascinating presentation by Chief Inspector Ian Brooks, one of the Metropolitan Police's five Traffic Area Commanders, and a cyclist himself. He had recently commissioned new research on cycle related collisions. 421 such collisions within the Metropolitan Police area during 2001 were analysed by a specialist police investigator. Out of the 421, in 169 (40%) blame was attributed to cyclists. Of the 421, 19 (4.5%) caused a death, and of these 19, 12 (63%) were attributed to cyclists (underlined below):

The breakdown of the 19 fatal collisions is given below, number followed by cause

4: cyclists riding off the pavement

3: another vehicle turning left

2: cyclists disobeying a STOP or GIVEWAY sign

2: cyclists changing lane injudiciously

1: cyclist overtaking on the offside in judiciously
1: drunk cyclist

1: cyclist emerging carelessly from a private drive
1: cyclist overtaking on the nearside in judiciously
1: in judicious opening of a car door
1: vehicle driving too close to vehicle in front
1: vehicle disobeying automated traffic signal
1: another driver/vehicle factor

The statistics are a little unclear in that the fatality may not always be a cyclist: the figures relate to cycle related collisions, and so any injury/death may be suffered by someone else (this is particularly apparent with the non-fatal collisions, e.g., cyclists failing to stop at Zebra crossings). Other figures relayed by CI Brooks give a different picture, in particular, the 60% of cyclist fatalities in 1999 caused by left-turning lorries.

The figures were initially surprising, but on reflection less so: there is a lot of bad cycling about. In one way, they are reassuring: if you cycle sensibly, and in particular never ride along the inside of a lorry, you should be OK. (It would be more worrying for good cyclists if a higher proportion of collisions were caused by motorists.)

It was pointed out that in nearly all cases, even where cyclists are at fault, what turns collisions into casualties, and serious ones, tends to be dangerous traffic speeds. Creating a safer environment on the roads is just as important as improving cycling standards.

Crime and Punishment

One of our members has just proven that cyclists can fight back against cycle theft, using the Police and the courts, not physical reprisal or 24-hour guard of the cycle.

On 12 August at Highbury Corner Magistrates' Court, Costa Louca (39, male) was convicted of "going equipped" (with a large bolt-cropper) for burglary or theft. He had pleaded Not Guilty to the charge, but the Judge accepted the evidence given by a key witness in preference to his.

Louca was arrested on the Regents Park Road after an alert and suspicious passing cyclist noticed something odd about his presence near a locked cycle outside North

Bridge School, and stopped to observe more closely. In the event, the cycle was not stolen but the cyclist's suspicion's were strengthened to the point that he rang the Police and offered them the chance to arrest someone "going equipped", as it appeared he was carrying bolt-croppers.

The Police were (surprisingly to some cynics) keen to hear more, so the cyclist stayed on the 'phone, trailing the suspect and maintaining a running commentary to the Police Controller, as the suspect wandered around the area, popping in to the gardens/drives of sundry premises along the way. Two police officers arrived on foot (soon followed by two patrol cars) and intercepted the man, who was found to have a pair of bolt-croppers wrapped in black plastic.

Because Louca had not actually stolen nor (prove-ably) attempted to steal anything, the cyclist's evidence was crucial to achieving the conviction of "going equipped".

THE POINT: In less than twenty minutes, a suspicion was validated and resulted in arrest and later a conviction. The witness kept a fair distance from the offender and was never in danger of confrontation with the offender. The Police are much more interested in rapid response if they can be confident that the offence and offender are likely to be around when they arrive on the scene. property offences attract them a lot! Crucially, though, they need witnesses who both report and then can cope with the tedium and hassle of going to court to give evidence.

Sentencing of Costa Louca is to take place on 24th September. Other offences he has been convicted of and for which he will also be sentenced include receiving stolen goods, theft, possession of drugs and possession of a blade.