

The "Camden Cyclist"

Feb/Mar '04 Newsletter of Camden Cycling Campaign

Camden
Cycling
Campaign

Web site at: www.greengas.u-net.com

Mailing list: CamdenCyclingCampaign-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Dates for your diary

Meetings: February 9th and March 8th

In the Castlehaven Community Centre, near the Stags Head Pub, Hawley Street, NW1 at 7.30 on the second Monday of each month. You can bring your bike inside.

March 8th: AGM and Paul Gasson leaving party

After ten years as our coordinator, Paul Gasson has decided to stand down by the end of March. We plan a party with the many people he has worked with over the years, but first there will be an AGM.

AGM 6.30 pm - note early start: A new coordinator and committee will be chosen. We will nominate, and if necessary vote on committee members. Please look at the list below as a guide to tasks that need to be assigned.

Party 7.30 pm: The party for Paul Gasson will be at 7.30 pm in the Stag's Head pub. Snacks will be provided. Members and friends are invited.

Feb 17th: Cyclists Breakfast 8-10 am A cyclists breakfast to celebrate the first birthday of the congestion charge, the main cause of the 30% increase in cycling in Central London in the last year.

Location: Byng Place, opposite the top of Malet Street.

Mar 13th Dr. Bike in West Hampstead 12-4 pm

Dr. Bike will be outside West Hampstead library (junction of Dennington Park Rd/West End Lane). A checkup for your bike with free advice. Contact James 7267 3585.

How members can help CCC

CCC is in urgent need of help from its members. We would like to get new people involved, either as committee members or by supporting our activities in other ways.

If you can help in any of the following ways, please contact Jane Boardman: 7794 9708, janeboardman@blueyonder.co.uk

- Web site update, maintenance and design
- Attend meetings on cycle facility planning
- Help with responding to consultations
- Newsletter - writing articles
- Events (e.g. breakfasts, BikeFest, stalls)
- Dr Bike/ cycle maintenance
- Ride organiser and leader
- Liaison with LCC, other boroughs, universities.
- Press: monitoring and getting letters written
- Membership and getting speakers for meetings
- Financial advice, applying for grants

END OF AN ERA

Former Management Committee member David Arditti writes about Paul Gasson's period as CCC co-ordinator:

Paul was a very experienced cycle campaigner by the time he took over as co-ordinator of our group. He had been in near the start of LCC, involved with the "direct action" campaigning that had characterised its early phase, and been Chair of LCC during a period when the organisation was moving towards its current "respectable" and respected position as cycling became a more mainstream political issue.



Photo: Lionel Shapiro

After stepping down as LCC Chair, Paul turned his energies to reviving his local group. I attended the first meeting he organised. What has always been his hallmark struck me then: he never told the group what to do, or what we should think. His style of leadership has been as a facilitator and energiser, who always wants to know what others feel are the priorities, and for every cyclist's opinion to be taken into consideration.

At first we did not have a name, nor a management committee, a constitution or regular meetings. Paul ensured that these soon followed. His commitment to the campaign was enormous: despite having a full-time job, and latterly bringing up a family, we all knew, from the e-mails, work on the website, the reports, consultation responses, designs and plans, policy papers, agendas etc., he produced, what an astonishing amount Paul put into the campaign over such a long period.

During his period as co-ordinator, Camden Council brought out its nationally ground-breaking walking and cycling plans, started to implement the most ambitious inner-city cycling schemes in the UK, and assumed the co-ordination of the London Cycle Network. None of these would have happened without Paul's work, and the council recognised his contribution through their "Outstanding Citizen" award. Through the same period CCC has been consistently one of the largest and most active LCC groups and one of the most high-profile voluntary groups in the Borough, and ideas we have promoted have had an influence on cycling policy London-wide and even nationally.

Paul passes on to his successor a very healthy campaign because of the energetic, intelligent, diplomatic and democratic way in which he has led it. He has our thanks.

Obituary: Brian Simpson

Richard Fletcher writes about Brian Simpson:

North London is a better place for Brian Simpson. He spent his working life in the family shop on Malden Road and built it into the thriving business it now is, an institution for cyclists in North London. He had belief and took risks to create the business.

Brian was born in Queen's Crescent and went to Haverstock School but was evacuated with his brother to Wales during World War II. He left school at 15 to take a job in a piano factory but remained there for just six months before a job in the cycle shop, then called Howard Clark and Sons, became available. Howard Clark had two cycling shops and when he retired, left one to his son and offered Brian first refusal on the Maldon Road shop. So Brian sold his house in Wood Green in 1972, bought the shop, changed the name to Simpsons, and moved the family to the small flat above. The family shop developed from there and expanded to take in the site next door, which is the business we know today.

Until his death he could often be seen in the shop on Malden Road, and you knew he was immensely proud of the shop and the values it stood for. He had ageless enthusiasm and energy, and was proud of the fact he cycled in from Highgate, although he admitted he took public transport on rainy days. He knew his products – the reputation of the shop rested on continued good products at fair prices. He only sold what he recommended. He teased his sons Dean and Scott from time to time on small things and there was a healthy banter in the shop. The local kids came in and out, sometimes just for air, and you knew the shop was part of the local community.

Dean and Scott developed the building of bespoke bikes using Bob Jackson frames. These bikes carried the initials BTS with "Simpsons" on the frame. And very good bikes they are. Brian could never accept we were giving him free advertising: on more than one occasion the insignia has caused favourable comment at traffic lights. In the summer of last year, the third family bike was ready (for our daughter) and Brian had Jane and me parading in Malden Road outside the shop while he took photos, delighted with the three bikes with their BTS logos.

Brian will be sadly missed, but we are the better for knowing him. Our sympathy to Maureen, Dean and Scott.

More delays to SLL east of Judd Street

Plans for the eastern section of the Seven Stations Link still await committee approval. The committee needs to see the results of monitoring traffic queues at Bedford Way and Woburn Place junctions. But monitoring is delayed by an absence of working traffic signals. The responsibility for installing and commissioning the traffic signals is with a branch of TfL called Traffic Technology Services (TTS).

Due to delays by TTS, the traffic signals are not yet commissioned. But Camden officers now hope that the results of four weeks of monitoring will be ready for the Camden council committee meeting in March. The plans were finished last June and the date has been postponed several times.

It could help if CCC members would write complaining of the slow progress in proper completion of the commissioning of the traffic signals. In the first instance, they could write to their ward Councillors.

Talk by Kevin Mayne of CTC



Photo: Lionel Shapiro

Camden and the national context for cycle campaigning

KM said that although we have shared objectives, CTC's objectives are more recreational than those of LCC. Over the last 10 years, more CTC members cycle to work – a shift from purely recreational cycling. CTC's campaign emphasis is on training, social inclusion and health, rather than infrastructure.

Who is cycling: Journeys by cycle in the UK (2%) much lower than in many other European countries, e.g. Germany (11%). In the UK, children cycle more than adults – but not all cycle use is for making journeys. Other countries demonstrate that where many children cycle, then many adults do too.

Training and education: Safer Routes to School initiative. Training works, but only 14% of training is on the road. People think they are learning to do something dangerous.

Conclusion: Most cycling is not about making journeys. Perception of danger. Parents don't cycle. Cycling not normal.

What can we do? Stop building poor facilities. Train young and adult cyclists to national standards, decouple cycling from road safety, link it to health, enjoyment and travel. Improve infrastructure, advertise on-road leisure cycling.

Some points from the discussion

LCC considers infrastructure to be very important, whereas KM argued that cycle routes will never go from door to door and that children age 10-11 should be trained to cycle on local roads, but walk the main roads – child training is a future investment, but it is hard when the parents don't cycle.

KM: When cycling exceeds 4%, the roads become safer for cyclists – unfortunately segregation takes cyclists off the roads. CCC agrees with KM on supporting 20 mph limits in residential areas. KM pointed to Graz as a good example: it has four main roads and all the rest is at low speed. Within this context, cycle routes become redundant.

KM: When cycling is used to make journeys, bike-parking is needed and cyclists need to be taught about cycle security.

Compulsory cycle helmets for under 16s

It may soon be an offence for an adult to allow a child under 16 to cycle without a helmet. The Bicycle Helmets Initiative Trust has drafted a Private Member's Bill, sponsored by Eric Martlew MP. The second reading is on April 23rd. It could become law unless the government opposes it. Please write to ministers David Jamieson and Alastair Darling and your own MP. CTC has a useful summary of arguments at:

www.ctc.org.uk/resources/Campaigns/0305_CTChelmetpromo8brf.doc