

bike week

16th 24th June

for more info go to
www.bikeweek.org.uk

The Great Manchester Cycling Campaign meets on the second Monday of each month, 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester. Followed by appropriate beverages at Wetherspoons (smoke-free) pub on Princess Street opposite Town Hall/Tourist Information Centre. Clean air and real ale at £1.38 a pint.

It's not really news, but the chance to have this kind of bike bling on the front page couldn't be missed. This little beauty was seen at the CCN do in Derby, more details on page 7
It is a collaboration between designer Paul Smith who it turns out has always been a keen cyclist and Mercian cycles - sadly this little track number will set you back a mere £2,800 so this picture may be as close as you get to one.



Following intense lobbying by thousands of cyclists and a high-profile campaign by CTC the Government has agreed to amend the Highway Code to improve cyclists' safety and to encourage drivers to take more care around vulnerable road users. In total over 40 rules in the Highway Code have been changed to the benefit of cyclists and will come into effect this summer. On hearing the news, CTC Director, Kevin Mayne, said: "The proposed wording now makes it clear beyond all doubt that cyclists are not obliged to use cycle facilities where it would be unsafe to do so. This is highly significant and very



welcome."
Rule 61: Cycle Facilities. Original wording laid before Parliament in March 2007:
Use cycle routes and cycle facilities such as advanced stop lines, cycle boxes and toucan crossings whenever possible, as they can make your journey safer.
The DfT is now proposing: Use cycle routes, advanced stop lines, cycle boxes and toucan crossings unless at the time it is unsafe to do so. Use of these facilities is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer.
Rule 63: Cycle Lanes. Original wording laid before Parliament in

March 2007:
These are marked by a white line (which may be broken) along the carriageway (see Rule 140). Keep within the lane wherever possible. The DfT is now proposing: These are marked by a white line (which may be broken) along the carriageway. When using a cycle lane, keep within the lane when practicable. When leaving a cycle lane check before pulling out that it is safe to do so and signal your intention clearly to other road users. Use of these facilities is not compulsory and will depend on your experience and skills, but they can make your journey safer



Love Your Bike – One Year On

Friends of the Earth marked the first anniversary of the launch of the Love Your Bike campaign on 30 March with 4 rides from Chorlton, Withington, Levenshulme and Prestwich culminating at Albert Square. 100 cyclists were met by Cllr Neil Swannick, Executive Member for the Environment charged with making Manchester the "Greenest City in Britain". Graeme Sherriff of FoE presented Neil with Stepping Up a Gear, a report summarising a year of LYB and the findings of a survey of people who don't currently cycle to work. Half of the respondents reckon that there's too much traffic on the roads, and a similar number don't cycle to work because of the lack of safe routes for cycling. Employers can do more to encourage cycling, as 3 in 10 complain about the lack of facilities for freshening up in the

workplace. Only 2 in 10 cited bad weather as the reason why they don't cycle.
Why I don't cycle to work:
Traffic levels are too high: 51%,
No safe route for cycling to work: 46%
No changing/showering facilities at work: 29%
Too rainy/windy/cold: 20%
Not fit enough: 18%
It's too far: 17%,
No secure bike parking at work: 8%
Takes too long: 8%

The message for Cllr Swannick and his counterparts throughout Greater Manchester is clear: cyclists need improved cycle lanes, safer junctions, quality bike parking, more consideration from other road users, better integration and access to public transport. www.loveyourbike.org

Planes, Trains and Bikes.....

Vincent Walsh leaves a small carbon footprint at Manchester Airport

Armed with a free rail pass the day began inauspiciously with the cancellation of my Northern Rail train from Mauldeth Road. My destination, Manchester Airport for the launch of the Cycling Strategy – for Northern Rail. Twenty minutes later I was sprinting through the interminable Terminal 2 to the Atlantic Suite, my bike secure to a Sheffield Stand outside the Cycle Centre.

Northern Rail manages 471 stations in the north and the East Midlands and runs 20 per cent of British railways under an 8-year franchise until 2013. They handle 75 million passengers each year with numbers increasing by 20 per cent in 2006. Part-owned by Netherlands Railways where one third of passengers arrive at a station by bike, NR's interest in cycling is not purely green but driven by the bottom line. "Many trains are full at peak time and the demand for car parking is not sustainable. There are commercial opportunities to grow our business by encouraging more people to cycle to our stations," declared Commercial Director, Jo North.

Sustrans Director John Grimshaw arrived breathless from surveying NCN Route 6 in Bury to congratulate NR on their breakthrough document. "The home to station journey is hugely important. I urge all Train Operating Companies to stop investing in car parks and instead embrace the Safe Routes to Stations programme." Allegedly, the Chair of Chiltern Railways owns five Range Rovers and bans bikes at Bicester station fearing they will scratch parked cars. "In contrast, Northern stations can be beacons of good practice, a foundation for our Connect2 Lottery bid which will be decided by public vote later in the year," said JG.

The NR strategy has several elements. A Cycle Users Forum meets three times a year at Huddersfield, Safe Routes to Stations will be signed, "Welcome to Cyclists" maps will be issued from trial locations, storage will be a mixture of Sheffield stands, lockers, compounds and CCTV depending on the size of the

station. NR intends to develop Eco-Stations pioneered in Lancashire offering bike hire and maintenance. On board, NR do not impose a blanket ban on bike carriage at rush hour but allow conductors discretion to carry a minimum of two bikes and a maximum of four at all times. Class 321 electric trains offer two pairs of double spaces. The new Pacer stock will provide flexible space. There are no advance reservations. The bike section will be clearly signed on the inside and outside of all trains. Rail staff are encouraged to cycle to work with the assistance of a low cost purchase scheme. Storage is available for NR office workers based at their York headquarters.

David Robinson recognised that NR had inherited a mixed bag of rolling stock but urged covered bike racks and clear train signage. As CTC North West Councillor, based in Chester, David reiterated the CTC call for a minimum of 4 places on existing stock and 6 on new stock. He noted that other TOCs are less cycle-friendly, particularly "the wretched Pendolino" beloved of Virgin.

Northern is keen to boost business through cycle tourism by promoting bike trails close to stations, signing links to the NCN, selling packages of single ticket plus bike hire and strengthening links with Community Rail Partnerships such as the Penistone Line. Discounted rents will be offered to social enterprises wishing to establish bike hire in station premises. The Caldervale Line (Manchester Victoria – Halifax – Bradford – Leeds) will be a Cycle Route of Excellence. Full of free buffet, my return rail journey was smoother, accompanied by a couple on their last leg home to Bolton with a tandem which had carried them over the Andes. Room enough for all our bikes – but not their giant carbon footprint.

The 16-page Strategy document is a good succinct read and available from Head of Government and Community Strategies paul.salveson@northernrail.org

What are your cycling experiences of Northern Rail? Email: pothole@gmcc.org.uk



P.S. A Tale of Two (non-Northern) Stations Manchester Piccadilly and Sheffield are separated by only 40 minutes but light years in terms of their support for cycling parking. At Manchester, managed by Network Rail not a Train Operating Company, you can choose between windswept exposure on

Station Approach or obscure covered darkness on Fairfield Street. Across the Pennines the Midland Mainline managed Sheffield station provides plenty of covered platform parking. Outside a spectacular fountain-lined concourse offers a traffic-free ride into the city centre.

27 April 2007

Dear Stagecoach

At 14 40 hrs today the 15 bus reg T 178 MVM passed dangerously close to me twice on the B5214 Crofts Bank Road in Urmston. I challenged the driver who did not deny passing very close, responding that I should be in the cycle lane. I tried to explain that there are many reasons why it is impossible or dangerous for a cyclist to always use a cycle lane. This one was blocked at many points along the road by parked cars (see photo). At the speed I was travelling (20 mph) it was appropriate and legal for me to maintain a road position to avoid weaving and discourage dangerous overtaking.

It is inexcusable and disrespectful for your driver to risk injury to vulnerable road users in this way. The incident shows serious shortcomings in the driver's competence and professionalism. Please assure me that all your drivers will

be reminded of the law regarding cycle lanes. In addition please confirm you will be arranging additional eye tests for this driver. Richard Alderson

3 May 2007

"Dear Mr Alderson, "I regret that you have cause to complain about the actions of one of my drivers and offer my apologies for the obvious concern caused. We will trace the driver involved and he will be interviewed regarding this matter. We will impress on him how vital it is to ensure that his driving is to the standard demanded by Stagecoach at all times. All our staff receive extensive training and thankfully complaints of this nature are very rare. As a precautionary measure, I also intend to arrange for a plain-clothes Company driving examiner to monitor the driving standards of the staff concerned in the near future." Chris Icely "Depot Operations Manager."

John Wayne aka Richard Alderson rides shotgun with Stagecoach 15



4 May 2007

"Chris "I am glad that you are taking this matter seriously. However I have a couple of concerns. You state that staff receive extensive training. Is this regular and examinable with minimum standards? Are they routinely re-tested? In Manchester we can learn from other areas. Warrington Cycle Campaign has collaborated successfully with Warrington Borough Transport. Log onto www.warringtoncyclecampaign.co.uk to download the leaflet Bus Drivers and Cyclists in Harmony. This would be an excellent addition to your safety awareness training. Richard

9 May 2007

"Dear Mr Alderson, "I am in receipt of your recent e-mails regarding our driver training programme. All of our drivers have to complete an extensive training programme when they commence employment with the Company. Training is a continuous process throughout their employment. All have to complete NVQ qualifications. Drivers are also continually assessed by mystery shoppers, these being Stagecoach officials travelling on random services. If we have any concerns then the driver will be assessed by a qualified examiner. "We will take on board(sic) your comments regarding the Warrington Cycle Campaign. "Chris Icely "



Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's a pedalling paramedic.....



Ian Shortman was relaxing briefly in some March sunshine at the back of the Midland Hotel. There were still eight hours left of his twelve-hour shift as a paramedic patrolling Manchester city centre. During quiet periods Ian retreats into a corner of GMEX – preferable to McDonalds where his presence alarms the cholesterol-heavy customers.

pair of lungs - and camp for two weeks. "Every day is different. Last week I was treating people blown over in the gales," he said. Like other emergency vehicles Ian is permitted to jump red lights but his ear-splitting sirens will ensure no one dares to bar his way. "Unlike a motorised ambulance drugs are not carried on the bike for security reasons."

Ian rode ambulances for many years before he was offered the opportunity to train as a pedalling paramedic in York. "I cannot take my bike home but collect it at the start of each shift from the station close to Manchester Royal Infirmary. I work three days on, then another paramedic takes over." Appropriately Ian has occasionally sought urgent mechanical assistance from Bicycle Doctor.

Currently the only other Greater Manchester town centre covered by a cycling paramedic is Bolton where the initiative took time to be accepted. "My counterpart was dashing to a call through the precinct when he was ordered to dismount by an over-zealous traffic warden. He ignored the warning and kept going."

In his four panniers Ian has enough equipment to deliver a baby, re-start a heart, oxygenate a

Being a registered nurse I was hopeful of riding shotgun with Ian on one of his shifts. However his manager rejected my request, perhaps doubting my ability to keep up with him.

Car-Free, Care-Free but not Child-Free.

Vincent Walsh wrote:
Yesterday (30 April) we were towed back from Staffordshire..... Our 1992 Nissan Supreme is terminally ill, needs a new clutch/body and is due to meet its Maker (in Japan). Do not intend to replace it. We both commute by bike and clock up less than 5000 motoring miles per year - mainly on holidays and trips to relatives. Would welcome advice and personal experiences on car sharing and car clubs. The Future is bright, the future is Car-

Chris Jones wrote:
I have been sans car for about two years now and find it good and bad. Good because I feel healthy and like I am doing the right thing, but bad as it's expensive to hire cars (I know over the year it's cheaper but it's just a shock as you hand over the readies - budget £100 per weekend) I have not had much joy with car clubs as they seem just as expensive as car hire but more restrictive. Supermarket shops are few and far between which is again good but more

drive...(sorry)
Personally I think the ideal would be grouping together with four others and getting a car between you - one week each, split bills. Just got to find four people in similar circumstances and not fall out when the clutch goes...

Charlotte Bathurst wrote:
I know of a few websites where you can advertise for lifts needed but have never used them in the UK. I've recently moved to Vancouver and there is a really good website here called Craig's List where people are always looking for and offering lifts. We've used it a few times and have never been let down. We're at the stage where we really would like a car for weekends as public transport is horrendous anywhere outside of cities in British Columbia but we are loathe to buy a car to leave it sat outside our house five days a week whilst we cycle to work. We've just started putting feelers out to see if there are any families who have a second car that is just used during the week by a parent commuting to work, and then is just sat unused outside the house at the weekend when all the family use the first car. DfT have published a few papers: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/transportforyou/roads/planning/promotingcarsharingandcarclu6188>

Alex Bailey wrote:
"No experience of car sharing or clubs but I'm sure others will have. Though I have a drivers licence (of which I am proud) I have never owned a car (of which I am proud). "I use a taxi when I have something really heavy to transport, though I could and might get a bike trailer. I once hired a car to visit relatives at Christmas time (clocked up about 1000 miles in a week). Other than

that I hired a man and a van to move house from London to Greater Manchester in November which cost £270. Owning a tandem has been useful for carrying the occasional lightweight big item. I just strap the item to the back of the frame and ride like I was riding a solo bike. I travel by train everywhere more than ten miles and by bike for journeys less than ten miles (the vast majority of journeys). On my town bike I have low rider front racks in addition to the rear pannier rack. This means four panniers carrying eight bags of shopping. With supermarkets open all day/night it is easy to shop. Yes, it really is very easy to live without a car - despite what car owners will tell you.

John Broderick wrote: "I've never looked back from car non-ownership since Enterprise rental started their (permanent) weekend specials - £12 per day for a smart new Corsa www.enterprise.co.uk I've also seen that WhizzGo have cars stationed in Manchester now, although I've never used them. Good for short periods but more expensive for a weekend. Not sure how much either would cost for a longer holiday however. "Michael wrote:

Do either of them offer cars that run on biodiesel or are otherwise (a bit) green??? One would hope that WhizzGo does but I can't see it mentioned on their website.

John Broderick wrote:
I don't think either do especially, but the small cars on offer are pretty green - especially if they're substituting for an older, larger, poorly maintained vehicle. Driver behaviour also has substantial influence on efficiency. Here's some interesting work on the benefits of reduced motorway



Free.....?????

Oli Lougheed wrote:
The car club running in the city at the moment is a superb service, not cheap for long weekends away but great for occasional runs to supermarkets, DIY. www.whizzgo.co.uk For longer weekends away requiring a car I use Salford Van Hire- you can usually haggle a price for a small estate that fits four people and four bikes at around £60 a weekend "

expensive. I work long hours and can rarely get to proper shops. Weekends - they are the kicker for me/us - no more camping in Wales, trips to nice pubs... That said I have discovered Edale (I ride back, get train out) and we are making more of Manchester. I recommend hiring the small vans that Salford Van Hire rents rather than cars - they are less fussy than others about minor scratches so I don't pay the extra ££ insurance waiver, diesel so fairly economical and fun to



Pictures :A participants artwork for a bike flag to promote the Bike IT scheme and Cycle Derby's marketing.

speeds by Aberdeen University <http://environment.guardian.co.uk/travel/story/0,1929658,00.html>“ On 2 May Vincent Walsh wrote: Thanks for all the advice about living without four motorised wheels parked permanently outside the front door. We are leaning towards trialling WhizzGo for occasional daily runs and car hire for hols. Neglected to mention that the “we” includes two 3-year-old girls who are not yet addicted to private motorised transport. Therefore I would welcome any additional insights from car-free families. “Polly Low wrote: I’ll be interested to hear how things work out with WhizzGo, since I’m thinking of signing up myself when I get back to the UK. I’ve had an excellent experience using the car-sharing scheme here in Washington DC: the firm here is zipcar.com (who’ve made it over the Atlantic, but only as far as London). They have a massive number and range of cars (including hybrid ‘Prius’ models to keep things more eco-friendly; people carriers for times when the whole family’s on the move; trucks because Americans like driving trucks...) -- one thing the WhizzGo site seems coy about is exactly how many cars they’ve put at each of their locations. Hope the experiment turns out well!“Alix Otten wrote: All the best for your car free future and just to add that I never had a car but we had good holidays. I used to take mine cycling in Derbyshire and Yorkshire Dales, staying at youth hostels. Not at age 3 admittedly. If you find a good place like the seaside you don’t need to travel about that much.

Charlotte Bathurst wrote: One other which has literally just arrived in Vancouver is zipcar.com which is also in other cities in the US as well as London. Much to our delight we could use a Vancouver membership to hire cars in any of these cities which is perfect for us considering how far our families our spread and the need to escape when visiting them. Doesn't look like they are in Manchester yet, but probably worth keeping an eye on

So what happened next.....?

Enterprise offers a 72-hour weekend Corsa deal for £42. Too good to be true? Yes. They do give you a lift from home to their garage in Ancoats but when you arrive you are invited to pay £10 extra per day or face an insurance excess of £600. Despite an excellent no-claims record I coughed up – increasing the weekend cost to £72. (Fuel for 300 miles added £20).

Car Clubs are widespread in North America. Here they are growing. WhizzGo has centres in London, Leeds, Liverpool, York, Southampton and Brighton. Their strap line is “the easy alternative to car ownership – a car when you want one.”

Comparisons are difficult because the overall charges include fuel whereas with traditional car hire you add your own. With Pay as You Go an hourly rate of £4.95 gives you 30 free miles per day, sign up to a package of £25 per month and get 60 miles per day for each hiring. The table is a crude attempt to summarise the features of each option.

Three days after our Enterprise weekend the family travelled from Rusholme to Ashton-under-Lyne.

Printed bus timetables and public transport maps are available at libraries and travel shops. GMPTE also offer a Journey Planner phone helpline 0870 608 2 608 or a website: <http://nw.aimwebsites.co.uk/> I logged on, typing in my journey day/hour plus home and destination postcodes. I was provided bus times, plus an allowance for walking between the two stops. The outward journey on buses 53 and 219 in mid-afternoon was smooth and as predicted in 50 minutes.

	Traditional Car Hire www.enterprise.co.uk	WhizzGo Car Club www.whizzgo.co.uk
Joining Fee	No membership (returnable deposit of £100)	£25 for Smart Card (returnable deposit of £125)
Minimum period of hire	24 hours	Hour
Basic 24 hour charge	£14 (special weekend offer)	£63 (includes 60 miles free)
Fuel	Add your own	Included in overall charges
Mileage Allowance	None	60 miles free per day
Initial Access to Vehicle	Office hours	24 hour access
Normal Insurance Excess	£600	£250
Breakdown Cover	Roadside recovery	Roadside recovery
Extra Driver	£7 per day	Single £15 payment
Collecting vehicle	Company collect/deliver to home address	Make your own way to on-site collection point

The return was problematic in the rush hour taking 80 minutes, including a wait for 20 minutes beside Alan Turing Way. No shelter, no rain (fortunately) the girls amused themselves blowing dandelion clocks. By car it would have been 20 minutes. The cost: two Day Savers totalling £7.40 (the children went free.). As the email discussion suggested the best option is to come to an informal agreement with a neighbour or friend who does not need (one of their) cars every hour/day of the year. Increasingly house-

holds have two, three or even four cars – witness the number of front gardens that are being tarmaced. A good source of information on the cost of motoring is an AA website: http://www.theaa.com/allaboutcars/advice/advice_rcosts_petrol_table.jsp The annual running cost of most cars (including depreciation) is a minimum £2000 – before you add fuel. We anticipate using the car 20 per cent of the time – there-

fore will contribute one fifth of the total and add our own fuel. The owner remains responsible for maintenance arrangements. Clearly the lack of a car continuously on the doorstep stifles some forms of spontaneity. We will need to sit down with our sharer to plan weekends away and holidays but these problems are not insurmountable. The car owner will benefit financially and we will not be totally reliant on commercial car hire and the vagaries of public transport. Yes, the future is bright, not orange but

Tomorrows Cyclists

GMCC sent one of its younger (under 50) members to attend the Cycle Campaign Network spring conference where the theme was getting young people onto their bikes. Alex Bayfield reports from Derby

This twice-yearly gathering of UK cycle campaign groups serves as a morale booster to keep them campaigning for the next six months inspired by ideas sharing and discussion.

In the morning, Bella Stewart of Cycle Derby reported on the progress of Derby as a Cycle Demonstration town, focussing on teenagers cycling to school. Bike It Officer Dave Clasy continued with great passion in the same vein. Next year’s plan is to encourage more of Derby’s 16-25 year olds onto their bikes with midnight rides, cycle dating and lomography among their campaign ideas. Andy Salkeld described cycling

initiatives in Leicester including BMX demonstrations in the forecourt of a local cinema accompanying screenings of the film BMX Bandits. He also spoke about Leicester’s work with professional photographers to build up an image archive showing contemporary cycling. The morning concluded with talks from Bike IT co-ordinator Mike Madin and from Bicycology, a radical grass-roots campaign who last year “cycled from London to Lancaster.

In the afternoon Helen Ross Public Health Development Manager from Derby Primary Care Trust delivered a presentation on the health benefits of cycling and John Stubbs of Nottingham University Geography department reminded us of the need to direct cycle campaigns towards car users. The conference closed with a short talk by CTC’s Roger Geffen stressing the importance of challenging the proposed new Highway Code.

Vincent Walsh gets into Bed with EBC – just another bike shop?



Bonnie Prince Charlie reached Derby the last time the Scots invaded England in 1745. It looks likely that the latest Celtic incursion will sweep towards the capital of the (currently) United Kingdom. Last year it was Leeds, this year Manchester, in the growing empire of the Edinburgh Bicycle Co-operative, established in 1977. EBC claims the biggest bike shops in all its five cities – the others being Aberdeen and Newcastle plus its home base. Why not Glasgow? “It would be like the Pope opening a rosary shop on Belfast’s Shankhill Road,” explained a helpful Scot.

Kate Webster is a Bolton lass from a strong biking background. Her retired father cycled to work as a Head Teacher in North Man-

chester - sadly no other teachers followed his example. As Promotions and Marketing Manager Kate was at the Rusholme store, overseeing the birth of the new EBC baby. She explained the co-operative nature of EBC, “The 66 staff are equal members. On the first anniversary of joining the organisation, employees receive a share in the business which entitles them to receive an equal slice of the annual dividend.” For co-operative, do not read Marxist, “Pay reflects market rates and the need to recruit and retain staff.” Opening on the first day of spring 21 March the Rusholme store had 6000 visitors in three days, Edinburgh needed a week to record that many. EBC claim to occupy a niche in the market between Halfords and the traditional corner bike shop targeting social

classes ABC 1 (posher people).

Alex Bayfield was promoted from Leeds to run the new Manchester operation. His daily commute is heroic - suburban Yeadon to Leeds Central and onwards to Piccadilly – his bike accompanying him all the way. He sees little of his new baby son and is considering relocating to Huddersfield. One of his staff cycles in from Walkden, another walks downstairs from his Opal flat above the shop.

The arrival of EBC in our midst has not been universally welcomed in the cycling fraternity. Unlike other local bike shops EBC do not give discount to members of bike-minded organisations either local or national. Instead they offer a one-off single 20 per cent discount on purchases made in the first two months of operation. Kate chooses to spend her promotional budget on high profile events such as the Greater Manchester Youth Games and summer camps in deprived parts of the conurbation.

“If we get too close to them, are we perhaps risking upsetting the bike shops that do give discounts?” Ted Lawson warns. “An organisation doesn’t get to EBC’s size without being very commercially minded. It can be useful to have a big friend, but if we collaborate with them, we have to make sure that we’re not jeopard-

ising existing relationships.” “Chris Trueblood is also wary, “I attended the Marketing Cycling conference at Bolton. EBC had a slick stand, the medium is the massage with their products. The revolution may not be motorised but there are conflicting agendas. Will their champagne opening move cyclists into social or political action? ““““No, no, no” was Doug Briggs response to EBC’s request to take out an advert in Pothole.

Is all cycling good cycling - and always and everywhere to be encouraged? Even those sponsored charity rides from Manchester to Liverpool, London to Brighton, Machu Picchu to Lima where motorists drive to the start and end point with bikes on their roof racks? Retailers assure me that all this razzmatazz generates greater bike sales - but more cycling? Evidence shows that the percentage of all UK journeys made by bike is falling - despite sheds, cellars and garages bursting with bikes. Some purchases are made by parents. Our parks are full of children on bikes with stabilisers wearing helmets. How meaningful/useful to our cause are these children cycling across grass overseen by nervous parents? Will they grow up to cycle to school, to work? “How can the Edinburgh Bicycle Co-operative aid campaigners efforts to make the roads of Greater Manchester more attractive for (new) cyclists?



Barca by Brompton

It wasn't easy to find the race. The website had a "map", but when you clicked you got a row of numbers. Google wasn't much help. I rang Brompton and they gave me a number, which I texted.

Then I set off for Waterloo and the first leg of my trip to Barcelona and the Brompton World Championship 2007. It had been a frustrating morning. The Hayward Gallery was closed, as was the recommended veggie restaurant. At least the South Bank had been in brilliant sunshine. Boarding the train was not quite the stress fest that it had been the Christmas before, when hundreds of fog bound would-be flyers descended on the Eurostar at the last minute and the train left 45 minutes late. I discovered to my delight that I was the man in seat 61. (See below) There were two posh blokes in front of me who were practising up their French in preparation for a daring raid on Paris bars after the rugby match. We got to Paris on time and I found

the Gare d'Austerlitz from which the sleeper to Barcelona was leaving at 8pm. Then I rode around the middle of Paris, along the Seine, here and there, looking at the sights and enjoying the bike lanes. They are continuous and largely ignored by pedestrians, although when I did ring my bell and say "Attention velo", they did immediately get out of my way and apologise. It helped that I was in holiday mode and that Paris was quite vernal that day. There are lots of cyclists in Paris. They often ride horrid old boneshakers and wear really elegant clothes. In my three-piece suit and tie, the required get up for the Brompton race, I felt like part of the scenery. The sleeper was quite comfy but overheated and I had a headache. I



Rod King has direct experience of EBC, "I used them whilst doing the End to End in 1997 and certainly rate them as an excellent shop. At the same time I am rather concerned at their marketing. Looking at their catalogue I note that of the 60 photos of people cycling, every one of them is wearing a cycle helmet. Most are young, fit and healthy. I am not sure that this is the right approach to promoting "Cycling for All". Whilst targeting those most likely to spend a fair amount of money on a bike, it may be counter-productive to the development of cycling as a transport alternative for all."

Our mole at EBC gave a view from the shop floor, "Staff knowledge is mixed, with those brought in from other stores

being experienced, while those newly recruited are learning on the job. Refreshingly, we're not on commission so there's no hard sell. The workshop is particularly good - we're willing to work on bikes bought elsewhere or fit components provided by the customer. The favoured way of expansion for EBC seems to be to take over an existing local bike shop. One of our senior managers told me that competitors' incomes have risen in all previous EBC expansions. Those in Manchester that resisted EBC advances are obviously confident about the future."

At about the same time Tony Blair was announcing to the Frinton Labour Club that ten years was long enough in Downing Street Robbie was leaning across the counter at 68 Dickenson Road declaring, "I will go on and on....." Robbie is a founder member of Bicycle Doctor, the workers co-operative established in the cellar of a Rusholme commune in 1981 by Rob Raikes. The membership of the collective has changed over the decades. Bike Doctor's monopoly as the only co-op in Manchester has now been ended by the arrival of EBC

Quizzed on the impact of their new big brash neighbour the doctors were circumspect, "Too early to say, another bike shop is not a bad thing. It may grow the general business. Their style is

entirely different. Our customers like something distinctive." Staff headhunted from Harry Hall are rumoured to be already disillusioned.

While EBC boasts its lack of car parking Bike Doc is happy to offer customers the chance to park at the front door. Having doubled shop size in 1994 Bike Doc has no plans for further expansion nor to open on the traditional day of rest, "Sundays are made for cycling not selling" was the chorus. Unlike EBC the Docs do not offer mail/web order but their website acts as a shop window attracting visiting customers from all over the northwest. Contrary to popular belief the doctors are not all Chorltonites. Some cycle further than the EBC staff. Record holder is Rich who

clocks up 40 km each day commuting from his Royton home.

There's a pleasing irony that EBC has set up shop in a former Jaguar showroom. Can we look forward in South Manchester to a Bicycle Kilometre to match Curry Mile? Rob Raikes hopes so, having counted six bike shops within a one-mile stretch of a Copenhagen street.

As Ms Webster ran to catch her lift back to Scotland she promised an invitation to the posh Manchester opening, "Cup cakes washed down with champagne, balloons for every bairn, meet Jason Queally." Where next for Kate? Will EBC arrive in London before the Olympics? "Let's say 2017", she replied cautiously.



swallowed two paracetamol and booked myself quickly onto the first sitting for dinner. I sat with an English couple and a Spaniard who spoke no English. We used up our four and a half words of Spanish in polite conventionalities and then got on with our meal in English. There was a white table cloth, lots of knives and forks and glasses and the food was not half bad. I hoped that half a bottle of Rioja and a brandy on top of the beer I had had before dinner would settle me for the night. Unfortunately they didn't. It seems that the money has gone on the TGV in France at the expense of track maintenance and the train wobbled through the night, making it very difficult to sleep. My cunning masterplan of arriving in Barca, refreshed and

breakfasted was not looking so good, especially as I opted for the dining car breakfast, which though fairly generous, was accompanied by the sort of coffee the French call "café noir" or "jus de chaussette". (Sock juice) Nobody seemed to know quite where Barcelona Francia station was in relation to the rest of the city, but when I got out onto the street, a lady pointed out the way to the Rambla, which was not very far away, especially on a bike. I dumped my bag at the hostel and got directions to the Avenida Diagonal at the end of which the race was to take place. On my way I ran into some Brompton riders, guessed they were racing too and rode down with them. There were 170 or so participants in

the "race", all wearing jackets and ties, some more exotically attired. Some were obviously in earnest, with shorts and cycling shoes. Others less so, nursing hangovers from the previous night's hospitalities. Someone said "go" and we all went, off round the 1km or so circuit, then they said "stop" and "that was a practise lap" and then we did it properly. My aim to be the picture of elegant insouciance evaporated when there were people to race. I went for it and had a good time. I didn't do particularly well, but not that badly either. Afterwards the people I rode down with invited me to join them for a drink and we spent a nice hour chatting over beer, crisps and olives. I had the rest of Saturday and all of Sunday until the train back. I had a

whole bottle and slept like a plank, proper coffee & croissant in the bar before Paris. After more bicycle exploration, I got the train to London, where I had time to go to Tate Modern and "do" the Karsten Holler slides and the Gilbert & George exhibition, before the train to Manchester. I certainly could have saved a lot of money by flying and staying one day, but I enjoyed the whole trip. I felt as if I had actually travelled. I didn't have to worry about what the airport baggage handlers were doing to my bike. I didn't have to spend any time at all in airports. I will do it again. Train info from The Man in Seat 61 www.seat61.com
Rob Raikes



MCR Dropouts Bike Polo Team "are a random group of cyclists that like to ride around in Platt Fields Park after a small football occasionally whacking it through the other teams goal and often crashing into each other or just falling over ourselves. We play at Platt Fields twice a week: Wednesdays at 6pm and Saturdays at 2pm, in the pitch behind the basketball courts. We also have an open practice after Critical Mass (CM meets at 6pm every last Friday of the month at Central

Library). Everyone welcome to come along to any practice! Photos show the training session in March prior to Manchester Dropouts taking on Oxford on 14 April (result unknown). The Bicycle Polo matches were part of I bike Manchester an annual exhibition and festival to celebrate the bicycle in Manchester organised by cyclists for cyclists. This year was the first ever and took place from Friday 30th March to Friday 20th April 2007 www.ibikemcr.org.uk



ideal wear on a summers evening too... the gmcc gilet

The GMCC's answer to someone that wants to be seen for all the right reasons - its own bespoke designed, Manchester made gilet and is still available among others from Will's Wheels, Harry Halls, and Bicycle Doctor of course. Sizes



range from small to extra large (I'm a 40" chest and the large fits comfortably over a denim jacket). They can also be ordered by e-mailing your details to gilet@gmcc.org.uk. The gilet is made out of breathable waterproof

fluorescent orange fabric with reflective strips front back and sides with a mesh rear panel beneath a removable rear panel. It'll keep you quite dry when raining and keep a bit of heat in on the way home at dusk over a T-shirt .

Local authority contacts

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WIGAN	Damian Garner	01942 404061	damian.garner@wigan.gov.uk

Bike Shops offering discounts to GMCC members

A1 Cycle Spares -

0161 998 2882
414-416 Palatine Road,
Northenden

A6 Cycle Warehouse,

0161 248 5400
752-762 Stockport Road,
Longsight

Altrincham Bike Shak

0161 929 9355
10 Oakfield Trading Estate,
Oakfield Rd

Bardsleys Cycles

0161 432 4936
482 Manchester Road, Stockport

Bicycle Doctor

0161 224 1303
68-70 Dickenson Road, Rusholme

Eddie McGrath Cycles,

0161 748 2733
31 Station Road, Urmston,
Trafford

Hirts Cycles

0161 794 2000
60-62 Chorley Road, Swinton,
Salford

Ken Foster's Cycle Logic

0161 881 7160
374-6 Barlow Moor Road,
Chorlton

Manchester Cycle Exchange

0161 748 2532
1 Brook Terrace Barton Road Davy
Hulme

Bennetts

0161 969 1818
172-4 Northenden Road, Sale
Moor

NW Mountain Bike Centre

0161 428 3311
249 Stockport Road, Cheadle

Skidmores Cycles

0161 624 5912
37 Union Street, Oldham

Withington Cycles

0161 445 3492
26 Burton Road, Withington

Pothole is the newsletter of the Greater Manchester Cycling Campaign. Although the views expressed herein are not necessarily those of the GMCC

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