

## CAMBRIDGE LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 27

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Cambridge section had two well-supported rides in January and February but the first big V-CC event of the year is the North Road Section's Boot and Back in March, with just under 80 riders this year. It is also a good social event allowing us to meet many friends as the entrants arrive from far and wide. I remember the very first Boot and Back we attended when I drooled over one of those machines which looked just perfect to my eyes. It was a pale blue Bates which was on fixed with Harden 'Bacon Slicer' hubs and belonged to a prominent member of the V-CC who organises the flagship ride for lightweights in the UK. Even some ten years later I still covet that machine although I do have a Bates on fixed. I didn't think it was fair to build it as an identical replica of Terry's bike so I had it restored in the unusual colours of its first paint job. It has a bright red main triangle with yellow rear triangle and forks. I can sense that some people think the colour is not appropriate for the era but that is exactly how the original owner specified it. The beauty of the classic lightweight era is that there are no hard and fast rules as a customer could have the frame built to any specification he wished and then have it sprayed to his own design.

I also have a 1956 Macleans Super Eclipse which has its original mauve/purple paint job with black harlequin diamonds along the main tubes. This also attracts questions as to its originality but luckily I have the original letters from Macleans who contacted the painters for a quote and sent the price to the original purchaser who was a graphic designer.

Patricia also has a Hetchins track frame in a most unusual combination of colours (eau-de-nil, rust, and gold) and layout which people find hard to believe is original. It is however the original paint job produced by Hetchins for the first owner who was a mere lad (with generous parents!) and used it for track and roller racing. The lad must have known something if it was he who chose the colour scheme as it always attracts much favourable attention, especially from designers, artists and the like.

As club members we endlessly discussed frame dimensions and angles such as 72° parallel favoured by some massed start racers, 73° x 71° for time triallists, some of whom preferred 74° x 72°. More radical angles were specified for track frames, the steeper the track, the steeper the head angles, seemed to be the general rule. Angles then led to the matching fork rakes which were smaller as the angles got steeper. One hears about grumpy proprietors in the trade but back then I expect they had to listen to hours of this sort of thing from every customer coming through the door. On club runs and at club nights it was easy to spend hours talking about this subject.

We visited the **Bygone Bykes Classic Lightweight Show** at Shelf near Bradford for the first time this year. I don't think it will be the last though. We went up on the Saturday and stayed overnight so as to be at the show at about 8.30 am on the Sunday in April. We rented a Kangoo and took five bikes up for display. This year's theme was Italian bikes so I took my 57 Cinelli and my 1950 Frejus. I also took my Paris Tour de France as this show is a dedication to the League riders from the Yorkshire area and the Paris was built as a League racer. Patricia took her Carpenter and her Pat Hanlon, both built as road racers.

Derek Browne, the organiser, was himself a League racer in the 50's and we met many of the riders from that area, including Ken Russell who won the 1952 Tour of Britain riding on his own without a team against the best teams that the UK and other countries could muster.

I have said before that I did my early cycling in a Union club as there were no Leaguers in our area. The Union riders spent by far the greater time on the road riding in time trials and the League was regarded as the devil incarnate. Except by me and at least one friend who had a secret hankering for the League's way of life. We had been known to cycle a hundred miles to Coventry to join the Stonebridge Wheelers on their club rides. The difference between the two disciplines was as chalk and cheese and we loved the rides, which were like a road race in themselves, and the happy bubbly atmosphere. Of course we had to keep our trips a secret as we would be thrown out of the Union for merely associating with a Leaguer.

The Shelf show was a real walk down memory lane for me (and Patricia has been infected by my enthusiasm for the League) so she felt at home and at ease at once with all the people we met who made us so welcome.

As well as the Italian theme there was a stand devoted to Ken Russell with his Tour winning bike and a section for 'Bradford built' bikes. All the machines on show had been restored to their former glory and were just as they would have been when the pride and joy of their owners, all polished and gleaming in the sunlight. It is hard to remember that these machines would have been the only 'consumer' item any would have owned at that time and as such they would have had priority above all else – probably polished and put in the bedroom after every ride.



*A display of some of Peter Brown's frames at Shelf*

There was a short ride organised during the show and at 11am Derek took the hardy ones for a spin round the hills of the area – fantastic fun, just like being with the Stonebridge Wheelers again. After

lunch in the hall, there followed an auction in aid of the Dave Traynor Fund and soon it was time to pack up for the journey home – 160 miles each way and well worth the effort. We both agreed it was one of those weekends when everything went perfectly. Derek had shown us his collection of superbly restored bikes and on Saturday we had a walk along the canal to Hebden Bridge, which is a place I always wanted to visit.

Sadly we didn't have time to make it to Pennine cycles nearby in Bradford, a continuation of the Whitaker and Mapplebeck/Pennine story, which is told on the website along with entries in Reminiscences and Ken's story in Classic Riders. Several of Derek's machines are included in Readers' Bikes.

If you have no interest whatsoever in modern machines, skip the next eight paragraphs.

The story of the new Colnago climaxed a few weeks ago when we travelled to Maidstone (DNA Cycles) to pick up a CLX 2.0 in red and white – exactly what I wanted. Not all bike shops are known for their customer service but I must say I was more than impressed with their shop and staff.

I had explained my problems relating my needs size-wise to the new measurements produced by the advent of sloping top tubes. I wrote that I thought I may need a 57 but hankered for a 54 (nominal 58). I had to have access to a machine to double-check the set up – I didn't want to have a lot of spacers stacked on the head set, or to have the stem sloping upwards. Having said this I have found that a gentle upwards slope doesn't look bad on a frame with a sloping top tube as it follows the line. This is good because if, in deference to advancing years, I have to flip the stem at some time it will still look OK.

Over the past few weeks or even months I had approached several Colnago dealers with some simple questions regarding sizing. I explained what saddle height I wanted, length from seat to bars and seat set back and finally distance in height from saddle to bars. I tried to convey that I really wanted to buy a bike but needed a few checks before I could commit myself to a certain size. One of the dealers runs a professional racing team but, along with the others, I never got a definitive reply. Maybe my language skills are not up to much I thought. I had to do this by phone and/or email as there are no dealers in our area. However, when I spoke to Dave in DNA he took the measurements and phoned back a few minutes later to say that the 54 gave a perfect fit with no modifications needed. Thank you I said, I will be down tomorrow to pick it up. Dave said that it would be pre-serviced and ready for me to take. Took a train from Cambridge to Maidstone, loved the bike and handed over the money – that easy. The bike needed a few add-ons and the staff were superb in supplying and fitting whilst we had a coffee across the road.

You may remember that Mick Madgett explained in the last CLN that the main measurement to take account of these days is the top tube, or apparent top tube length. This has proved to be right in this case as I was nervous about the thought of a 54 in case it looked too small, but it was the one with 58 top tube as are my other modern machines.

I have wanted a Colnago for most of my life but with one thing and another never quite got round to it. The top-of-the-range machines are no doubt fantastic to ride but they are constructed from tubes bonded into lug-like carbon pieces to produce an amazing racing set-up. I had however taken a liking to the flowing lines of the monocoque mainframe and thought I may have to go for the Bottecchia Octavio until Colnago introduced the CLX.

My very simple experience of carbon fibre relates to some twenty years ago when sailing was my main pursuit and carbon fibre was being introduced to top echelon equipment and boats. As I understood it, there was a simple way of building with carbon fibre which entailed coating the carbon fibre with resin and applying it to the mould. The more expensive method known as pre-preg (impregnation) entailed applying the resin and then running it through rollers to remove the surplus. The much lighter fibre/resin was then introduced to the mould. This took a fine judgement as there had to be just enough resin to bind the fibres but no extra. The CLX is pre-preg which is something I was looking for.

Some lay-ups were done on basic jobs with simple weave cut to fit the mould. A more expensive way was to 'tailor' and map the weave to suit the stresses expected. A further factor is when the materials are 'sucked' into the mould by vacuum as opposed to 'gravity'. All of this explains why you get two frames looking the same but one costing much more (and is lighter and stronger) than the other.

The same applies to titanium frames where some use standard titanium tubing and the others use a cycle-specific lighter tubing.

We have quite a busy **spell of rides** coming up now with two on the first May bank-holiday, on Sunday at Steyning – The Bluebell Ride and the next day near Henley – The Red Kite Ride, hilly but good fun. A couple of weeks later is the annual Reading Ride at Theale – never to be missed. The following weekend, 23 May is our own Meridian Lightweight Ride here in Cambridge. On June 6<sup>th</sup> we organise another ride in Norfolk starting at Castle Acre and the weekend after that is the Bates Weekend near Bedford so our classics will get a few outings, hopefully in decent weather.

In July we are taking a cycling holiday in Germany in the Black Forest, Bodensee (Lake Constance) and Garmisch Partenkirchen, finishing up with a ride with German classic bike enthusiasts from Oberammergau to the Wieskirche.

## **Hybrid Gearing**      Steve Griffith

I think most of us would agree gearing is the most interesting aspect of a cycle and many of us have devoured Frank Berto's *The Dancing Chain*, the magisterial hymn to gearing!

Hybrid gearing has a special interest for me, representing in many cases the keen rider's solution to gearing problems not supplied by manufacturers. Probably the first hybrid gearing solution (although our esteemed editor wouldn't been seen dead on one of these) was the addition of a 3-speed hub gear to a Sunbeam with the two speed bracket gear, giving a range of about 60".

However, it is the rear derailleur/hub gear combination that is most usual. (You can run a hub gear with a front mech but this also requires a chain tensioner so is less popular). It was the English touring club cyclist of the 30's and 40's who pioneered the use of hybrid gearing. Typically this was a Standard Cyclo with a Sturmey 3 or 4 speed, usually the clubman's choice of the FM or AM. By careful choice of cogs e.g. 17/24 with a 44 t front, 5 or 7 evenly spaced gears from 40 to 90 could be obtained (there is normally one overlapped gear). Sturmey warned against having too low bottom gear on the grounds of excessive torque!



*Bob Damper's hub gear/derailleur combination on a Gillott Spear  
Sturmev Archer FW 4-speed with Cyclo 3-speed conversion, 16-19-23T, giving 12 speeds; Cyclo Benelux  
derailleur mechanism; gear range 31.7 - 86.4 inches.*

The Sturmev splined driver can fit up to 3 cogs and for many years 2 and 3 cogs were made by Cyclo. These were made in a huge range of sizes (normally 1/8) e.g. I have seen 14/26 and at the other end of the scale 19/21. I was always puzzled by the point of the latter until it was explained to me that used in combined with the unloved AW you can get 5 evenly spaced gears of about 10 " apart .

In the 50's and 60's Cyclo marketed a Sturmev conversion kit which comprised an Mk7 mech and lever plus the conversion cogs either 2 or 3. You can of course use ordinary SA cogs back to back but it may take a bit of fiddling to get the spacing right.

The Cyclo Standard is ideal for a hybrid set up as it fits on the chainstay and can change over 14 cogs at one go if you want the maximum range. However, it is heavy and one of the main drawbacks of all hybrid gearing is that it makes wheel removal difficult. You can use other mechs but they need to be designed so the travel can be limited. I have found the Campag GS ideal over say a 17/24 range. The whole beauty of the hybrid gearing is you design your own solution..... One bike I saw had 24 gears ... a FW with 3 cogs and a double changer on the front!

**Editor (Peter Underwood)** is looking for a pair of alloy GB wingnuts for front wheel to match a rear pair on his Rotrax.

Considering selling his Hobbs Raceweight after the Hobbs ride in August (or before if arm twisted). As seen in Reader's Bikes on Classic Lightweights website, but with Brooks B17 Narrow instead of Wrights saddle and with conventional Airlite front hub. (Also available as single speed fixed wheel with 26 Conloy rims with 15/17/spokes tied and soldered on Airlite LF D/F hubs)£700 Collection only or delivered to certain events by arrangement.

Also looking for an early Campag Record front changer (not with the extended cable stop) and have a Gran Sport 'Matchbox. Front changer to exchange.