

LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS - 2

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Lightweight News - 1 seems to have been a success judging by the number of congratulatory messages we received. Particularly satisfying is the number of Marque Enthusiasts who have, and intend to, contribute articles which by their very origin will be of interest to us. We do get requests to allow reproduction of items from the newsletter, mainly from cycle clubs and groups. As we are all on the same side I am happy for them to do this. I will assume contributors do not object to this unless they notify me when submitting copy.

One of the problems encountered in producing an online newsletter is that of download time. Dial-up connections can take a long time to download a document compared with Broadband (no I'm not selling it!) which is usually a minimum of 20 times faster. If you find that L News is taking just too long for you to cope with then I could produce an individual copy with fewer images as they tend to add a lot to the overall time even though I minimise them as much as possible. I did send a pre-publication test copy of Edition 1 to someone with dial-up and he was quite happy with the time it took, let's hope you were too. Cambridge Lightweight News was usually of four pages whereas we can expand now if enough copy is sent in. One advantage of being online is that there are no restrictions to length other than the aforementioned download time. For the same reason, the images produced in L N are reduced in size, so, if there is an image you would like to study in more detail just email me and I will send you a larger original as attachment to email.

As I said first edition of L N resulted in contacts with several of the V-CC Marque Enthusiasts and I can see from their response that they will feature regularly so I shall abbreviate the title to 'M E'. Another frequent abbreviation is 'L N' for Lightweight News.

If you have a machine that you are particularly proud of then please send an image or two with a specification of the build and any other background information: an online version of wandering round the bikes at the pub lunch stop on an organised ride. If you don't send them in you may have to look at our bikes yet again! When I photograph our machines I always include a close-up of the drive components - I have done this ever since John Spooner sent N & V a set of images of his machines which I still look at years later.

A few days before Christmas the newly published V-CC *Lightweight Cycle Catalogues-Volume 1* arrived and I must say we were delighted with it. It is published by the John Pinkerton Memorial Publishing Fund and a grand job they made of it. Thanks to all who were involved.

Hints and Tips:

Ed: When fitting brake levers to handlebars I always used to line up the brake levers from the side and consequently spent ages bending down and dashing back and forth to get them level. Then I saw someone just lay a round tube across the tops of the hoods and then line it up with the tops of the bars as seen from the front. Using this method you can check the level even as you adjust the levers.

David Palk: Brake block availability - Fibrax have very recently discontinued the old 'Made in England' Fibrax 269 blocks and shoes. Their relatively large size made them perfect for early calliper brakes, such as GB Standard (Hiduminium), Lytaloy, Doherty, Strata, etc. One closed end could be skimmed off for a totally authentic look. The rubbers were very soft, so braking was good on steel rims, and alloy rims were not abraded. They have been replaced by an inferior imported (Chinese?) alternative which uses the same description, part number and similar packaging, but is not so wide. Some shops may still have old stock. Get the originals while you can.

Handlebar tape - 1) Have you ever bought old alloy bars that look really nice, but on removing layers of ragged cloth tape you discover a horror of white powder and deep pits or even holes? I know I have. Painting or lacquering the area of your bars to be cotton-taped should prevent this happening in future.

Sweat is highly corrosive (saline and acid). It can cause serious corrosion to aluminium, and steel, very quickly.

2) Adhesive cotton tape is not now easy to get in a good range of colours. Fabric shops sell herring-bone cotton 'webbing' that looks very similar, but without the adhesive backing. I recently bought light green for £1.20 per metre. Dark brown, cream and white - which could be dyed - were also available. Smear the bars in contact adhesive (Evo-Stik, fantastic stuff!) and wind the tape on whilst the glue is still tacky. The top end can be secured with a dab of PVA glue.

Mark Stevens (Gillott M E) writes: "To anyone who knows, or suspects, that they have Duralumin parts for Lightweights as early as 1930. Can I please have details of whatever parts have survived? I was alerted to this by Bob Reid on the Classic Rendevous site who has found a patent application for FB (Fratelli Brivio) Q/R hubs with 3 piece construction, that is steel barrel and alloy (Dural) flanges dated September 1931. This predates Tullio Campagnolo's Quick release patent by 2 years. The point being that the patent description mentions the 3 piece hubs REPLACING earlier one piece all alloy items! Now I know Aluminium has been around a long time - Napoleon Bonaparte had an all aluminium dinner service - rarer and more valuable than gold at the time, but bicycle bits from this metal that early must be very rare. I, for one, would like to see them and know who made what components. I have never seen a Williams 'Dureel' crankset for instance. Bob is doing some excellent detective work and is sending all Campagnolo's patent applications and drawings to Chuck Schmidt of Velo Retro for inclusion in his 'Catalogo Campagnolo'. This currently has reprints of all known catalogues from No 11 (1952) (which I borrowed from Bill Gray before he died and copied to Chuck who didn't know of it's existence) to No 18 (1984). The new edition will be massive! So if you have anything ancient and Aluminium, no matter how decrepit, let's see it, please."

Peter Stray (Mal Rees M E) is keen to acquire (for his own use) a 22" pre-1953 Mal Rees frame/complete machine, ideally in original finish. He also has a 1930 Selbach racing trike which he would like to exchange for a 22" 1945-53 classic lightweight frame/complete machine. Patricia has a 21" 1951 Mal Rees which had been owned by one person from new. It is a beautiful machine, very well built with Nervex Professional lugs. Ted, the husband of the first owner used to call into Mal Rees to watch it being built - he had owned one of his own as well but unfortunately it has gone to that bike shop in the sky.



Alvin Smith (Paris, F H Pratt and Major Nichols M E) sent in this image of an early post-war Simplex gear changer for identification. (He couldn't find it in Dancing Chain 1st Ed). As Father Christmas had dropped the 2nd Edition down our chimney we found it on Page 149. In 1946 Simplex had produced the single pulley Champion du Monde. In 1947 they introduced a second pulley to improve chain wrap. This is the changer Alvin has (in his strong-box I hope!). In 1948 the gear was refined and modified to become our old favourite, the famous Simplex Tour de France.

When we were at L'Eroica (name dropping again!) I noticed that some of the 30s machines had a small rectangular leather bag attached to the bars approx. 9" x 9" x 4". They were complete with a top cover and strap rather like a miniature saddle bag. Some had a round hole in the top with a bidon neck protruding through. I was recently looking at a picture of Francis Pelissier taken in the 30s with such a bag. The caption was '.....before the days of wing nuts, and when goggles, fat spare tyres and spare rations in a handle-bar bag were the order of the racing day'. Rations, not make-up then.

Chris Barbour from the New England Section writes that, with the help of webmaster Martin Hanczyc and the blessings of Mercian Cycles, he has a project to record pre-1970 Mercians online:

http://genetics.mgh.harvard.edu/hanczyc/mercian/mercian_homepage.html

The genesis of this undertaking was his acquisition in 2002 of a pair of Mercian frames from the 1950s. In correspondence with Bill Betton and Grant Mosley at Mercian he learned that records no longer exist for frames built prior to 1970. Through inference he has concluded that his frames are a Campionissimo and a King of Mercia but evidence of serial number practice in the 1950s does not allow, at the moment, for a conclusive dating of the KoM, which may have been made in 1959 or 1957.

During renovation of these two frames by Mercian Chris corresponded extensively with Jane Smith, Director, who with her colleagues has made great strides in recording Mercian history on the company's new web site. Compilation of documents and images for the lost years in the record seems the sort of work where the V-CC might lend a hand says Chris, "it plays to my interests as a librarian, and Jane and Martin have given their kind support. Mercian is keen to learn and record information of their early years, and Jane has sent me images of early machines brought in for renovation".

The intention of the Mercian Cycles Register is to complement, rather than duplicate, information of the Mercian web site. The Register, for instance, will provide space for more photos than the company's gallery. All information about owners and locations of machines will be kept off-line.

Chris invites Lightweight News readers to send photos, frame numbers, and related information of pre-1970 Mercians they own, or know of in the possession of club mates and neighbours. Contributions will be most gratefully received. (Details are in V-CC Yearbook).

Tony Tomkins from Salford offers another solution for rustproofing frames. It is called Scottoiler FS365 which comes in a container with a trigger spray. The best place to get this spray is from a motor bike dealer. Scottoiler on 0141 955 1100 will tell you dealers in your area. They have a website www.scottoiler.com and it tells you that Motor Cycle News has voted FS365 as the best anti-corrosion agent available. Tony also points out that WD40 was used for this purpose on the Atlas rocket programmes.

Tony, an ex-Leaguer, tells us that he moved to Manchester in 1948 with a Belgian racing bike equipped with a pre-war Simplex single-roller gear and a Brampton chain. None of the cyclist he met had seen a 3/32 chain. Tony says that they were available on the Continent but he doesn't think they were imported here until around 1950. As he says, all racing men here used fixed and it was only the easy-riders and family tourers using gears. The Granby catalogue image brought back memories for him of using sprint carriers to go to races. He says that there was some massed start racing here pre-war but it was confined to places such as Brooklands and Donnington race tracks.

He also remembers the difficulty in obtaining parts forty or fifty years ago and says he knew of dealers ordering ten sets of hubs but only receiving one – exports came first. He couldn't even buy Cycling in Manchester at periodicals were 'zoned' and newsagents could only sell magazines from their zone. What Tony doesn't say is when he started cycling, I wonder how many pre-war rider/readers we have..

Peter Beavan is desperate to get hold of an axle for his Harden gear-sided hub. Ideally 175mm but if he gets a 165 he could do an exchange. Peter is building a Paris Galibier and has been stuck for months – help put him out of his misery and do the Editor a favour as he will bring the completed machine to our Paris/Rensch ride in May.

Alex Von Tutschek sent in the following about wheels for our restored 1945-1960 Classic Lightweight cycles:

"Some years ago it suddenly dawned on this slow developer that the very easiest way to assemble a classic cycle was to first concentrate on matching the chosen frame to a date correct pair of suitable wheels. To that generation like myself (who spent many a happy hour with our noses pressed up to our local lightweight cycle shops windows) the equipment therein was etched forever in our memory. It has occurred to me that this knowledge cannot now be gotten as easily and that a few guiding words may well help my fellow enthusiasts. What I am intending with this listing is to give a guide as to what are the most suitable combinations bearing in mind what you are most likely to be able to source.

A. Wheel diameter. It is my observation that of the frames that we find nowadays MOST of those built before 1950 are built for 26 x 1 1/4" wheels and MOST after were built for 27 x 1 1/4" wheels. I know that 27" wheels were introduced pre-war and am surprised regularly by finding frames built in the very late 1950's that take 26" wheels. Whichever size they were built for there was invariably clearance for mudguards too. Very few frames were built without mudguard clearances and they would mostly have been pure track frames. These rare items can be identified by having no drillings for any brakes. An observation is that many of the frames built for 26" wheels are now being ridden with 27" wheels (or "sprints" or modern smaller wheels in them), these show a reduced mudguard clearance.

B. Rear dropout width. Most frames are either 110, 115 or 120mm wide and this defines what you can do with gearing. Basically 110 is for a single speed machine, either free or fixed-wheel. 120 mm is perfect for five-speed freewheels which are freely available and suit most machines from our chosen era. 115 is best suited to 4-speed and the available choice of derailleur gears from the 1940's might guide you towards using 4-speed even in a 120 frame too. Remember with a common Regina freewheel you can create a four speed 3/32" block by removing the smallest overhanging sprocket..... very easy!

Also remember that you can use one of the period Sturmey Archer hub gears, as these fit into a 110mm wide frame this enables gearing to be easily used on a single-speed frame.

C. Choice of hubs. Whilst there were many hubs available in times gone by some were fairly obscure (Powells, Shellwins, Coventry Ultralite etc) and some imported ones aren't easy to find (i.e. Simplex). This is what you are likely to find:-

1. Airlite. Introduced in the mid 1930's and the mainstay of the lightweight scene.
2. Postwar the large flange Airlite Continental was very popular. Most suitable for 1945-1965 era.
3. Bayliss & Wiley in both large and small-flange look very similar to Airlites. 1945- 1960
4. Hardens. Most are drilled large flange with annular bearings. Available variations are a rarer small flange version, un-drilled large flange (now known as Bacon Slicers), most of these are single fixed but a rarer gear-sided only also turns up sometimes) Also the Harden Flyweight large flange only and with cup and cone bearings. These later are surprisingly available in two distinctive versions. 1946-1956
5. Blumfields. An alloy hub available in large and small flange. Have grease nipple in the centre of the barrel and quite attractive engraved makers marks. 1946-1959
6. FB and Gnutti (almost identical), small flange imported Italian hubs turn up, the large flange version is much rarer. Chrome barrel and alloy flanges. I can't help wondering if Airlites are copies of the FB as this hub as this too was freely available before 1946-1965
7. Campag Gran Sport. Very similar to both of the above (were they all made by FB in the beginning, surely someone must know?). More easily available in both small and large flange. 1955-1962

Note. Of these hubs you have a better chance of finding Airlites and Campag in QR versions, the latter quite easily. Also, as more good English fixed hubs turn up than gear versions, remember that it is possible to convert fixed to gears but that it is more cost-effective to do two or three of them at the same time. AvT can advise.

D. Choice of rims

1. Dunlop "Special Lightweight." The most common sporting rim of the sporting cyclists. Chrome-plated steel and prone to rust. Warning, whilst re-plating is possible, acids tend to get trapped within the voids and rust re-appears too soon, should you be thinking of going this route why not keep the original rust instead of having later non-period rust? 1945-1965
2. Dunlop "Stainless Special Lightweight". As above but rarer, the 40h rear is prone to cracking around the spoke holes, check carefully. 1946-1955
3. Dunlop alloy turn up occasionally and look very attractive. BEWARE. There is a very shallow well in these rims and getting a tyre on (even a Dunlop) can be difficult. Getting one off after a puncture on a ride can be a nightmare. I know, it has happened to me. 1946- 1955
4. Weinmann Alesa. The most easy and economical option. Early ones from the early 1950's have different engraved markings and no dimples around the spoke holes. The latter are a perfect choice and the former an acceptable one. 1950-1970
5. Constrictor (both the hollow Asp and the solid versions), this crescent shaped rim is the pretty choice of the era and this rider's choice. Very tough but are never truly "true" as the riveted joining piece affects this. 1945- 1960
6. Alumite. A very attractive an unusual shaped rim that you might have a chance of finding. 1946-1955
7. Fiamme (Italian) and Mavic (French) sprints. Don't forget sprints. Fiamme sprints have been on the British scene for a very long time. 1948-1965

8. Wood sprints. Most of what we find are French made America Fairbanks imported into Britain by (and marked) Constrictor.1945-1955

E. Spokes. Virtually all road wheels in Britain were 32 in the front wheel and 40 in the rear. Again most of what you will find in Britain will be 32/40. NOTE, classic wheels look good with 15/17 gauge spokes. If you want your classic lightweight to look as if it has moped wheels in it use common 14/16 spokes. This is the most common error in today's restored machines. (I do know that thicker spokes were used in heavy touring machines and tandems and by those with a fuller figure etc)

F. Matching hubs with rims

The following is a personal opinion as to what goes better with what.

1. Small flange hubs look better in 26" wheels but if you must have large flanges the smaller "large" flange Blumfields look best. Also the small flange Powell hub has quite large "small" flanges but these are not an easily found choice.

Blumfields look superb matched with Alumite rims

Hardens look good matched with Constrictor rims.

FB, Gnutti and Campag work well with Fiamme / Mavic or Weinmann Alesa rims

Any of the English hubs go well with wood rims...but small flange is best.

2. Suggestions of poor matches

Campag, FB, Gnutti with Constrictor wood and alloy rims.

Hardens and Blumfield with Weinmann rims

Note. The dates here are only estimates as to when these rims were freely available. In the 1940's there were serious shortages that improved towards the end of the decade."

Alexander von Tutschek . Feb 06

(Ed – it is traditional to build wheels 4x with 40 hole rims and 3x with 32 hole rims)

Bryan Clarke - A DATE WITH PAT HANLON

"When Peter Underwood bought a 1973 Pat Hanlon several years ago it prompted me look at my own example, purchased from John Pavey in the mid 1990s. I knew nothing about the model nor date – only that when built up it was one of most delightful bikes I had ever ridden. With distinctive lugs, a 39 1/2" wheel base and angles of 73 degrees parallel it was designed I supposed for time-trialling or road racing but handled comfortably on the poorest of road surfaces offered up on many an English country lane.

At the same time, Peter came into possession of a copy of Pat Hanlon's 1967 catalogue, which revealed that my frame was an 'Ultralite' model, identified by the style of the lugs. However, the lug pattern on Peter's frame could not be found and must mean that the model types had changed or simplified by the time it was built in 1973.

In the mid 1970s Pat's shop changed address, a victim of a new housing development in South Tottenham. The move took her from 175 High Road, N.15 where she had been since 1963, to smaller premises at 77 Bowes Road, Palmers Green, N.13 on London's busy North Circular Road.

However, she had started out a few doors down from 175 at 179 High Road in 1959 and by April 1960 had unveiled three road and track models under the names 'Del Premo', 'Bianchi' and the 'Cresta' in the pages of the Sporting Cyclist. In July that same year these designs were confined to the track models whilst ambitiously introducing four new road models under the names 'Sapphire', 'Flamingo', 'Swallow' and the 'Club'. Clearly these models had changed by 1967 to the 'Professional', 'Ultralite', 'Criterium', 'Giro', 'Courier' and 'Club' as well as a model described simply as a 'Track/Time Trial Model'.

The frame number on the Peter's 1973 model was 203073 and this suggested that a year of build existed as part of the numbering system in common with a great many frame builders from Claud Butler to Gillott. The 'Ultralite' frame number was 82068, which offered me 1968 as the year of build, but also alluded to some sort of straight sequential numbering system being used for the first set of numbers. If taken at face value, it suggested that on average, 242 frames were being built each year over the five year period between the two models; surely too many for a relatively small establishment. What was needed were more examples to test the hypothesis. Help was at hand in the shape of a bike owned by Graham Brice.

Using the lug pattern as a guide, it showed Graham's frame to be a 'Professional' model, a combination of fancy lugs, contrasted by sleek 'Cinelli' style sloping forks and shot-in stays. For the lightweight enthusiast there can be no finer looking machine. The previous owner told Graham that the frame dated from 1968, but with the number being 103069, implied that it was made a year later if my assumptions were correct. It is curious that a zero appears just before the assumed date on all three frames and an alternative explanation is that this could have acted as a space after the total build that year. Whatever the outcome it seems clear that the last two digits at least represent the year of build in each case. No doubt more examples will help unravel the exact truth. In fact, Mark Stevens owns what is thought to be Pat's own 19½" frame which is simply stamped with the number 82 to add to the confusion. Both the 1973 model and my 'Ultralite' have fastback stays, a popular feature on time trial bikes that survived well into the 1980s. All four models have customised or hand-cut lugs.

Pat Hanlon started out as a wheel builder for Macleans during WWII, for which she was to become supremely expert and best known. It was a difficult business to enter for a woman at a time when only men were employed as mechanics. It is thought that from 1964, Tom Board built a large proportion if not all the frames and worked at the back of the shop in Tottenham after first leaving Macleans when they closed down in 1962 and then Fred Dean. It is said that he continued to build her frames until 1979. Hopefully I will be able to make contact with him in due course to verify these details. At present it is not known who built the early models. The shop remained open until 1983 when Pat retired to live in Majorca: she passed away in December 1997."



Graham's 1969 Professional



Bryan's 1968 Ultralight



Peter's 1973 Hanlon

I am indebted to Graham Brice, Mick Butler and Peter Underwood for their assistance in researching this article.

(Editors note – I have more images of all these machines showing great detail including the amazing lugwork on the seatstay bridge of the Professional. They can be mailed to you on request. The paintwork on my machine is original and has a two-coloured seat panel in Blue/Yellow. The frame was built for a member of Rosslyn Ladies CC and these are the club's colours. It also has a 40 + transfer which can be seen in the above image. We are happy to loan this 21½" machine to any member wanting to ride in a Cambridge Section Event.)

The Bath Ride Saturday 20th May (Note change of venue – not now The Malmesbury Ride as advertised) - To complement the Reading Lightweight Ride on 21st

"This ride is offered for those coming from afar for the ride tomorrow, why not do the two rides and make a weekend of it? Meet at my house in Bath from 9.15 for 10.00am start before which refreshment will be offered. 30 miles through wonderful empty countryside (to the south of Bath) with a good pub stop too. As a show of our hospitality please note that a bottle of good French Champagne will be given to every single rider. It must be drunk in our company but it's not obligatory to accept. Please phone to confirm your presence." Alexander von Tutschek