

LIGHTWEIGHT NEWS – 42

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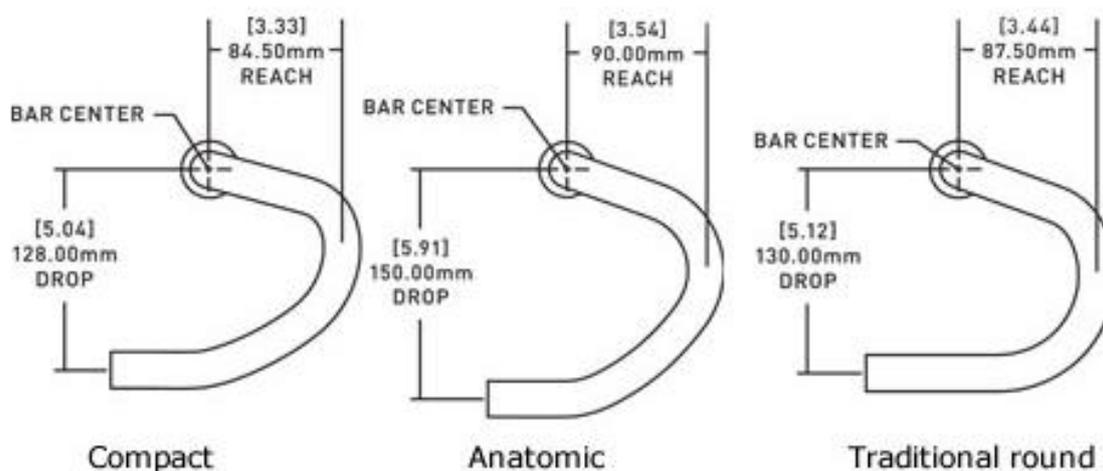
L'Eroica Supplement. Since the last edition of *Lightweight News*, we have both been to Italy to take part in this year's L'Eroica which is based in the Tuscan village of Gaiole in Chianti. We have written up the story of the trip and it is published as a [Supplement](#) to this edition.

One of the big changes in cycle component design over the last couple of years has been in the handlebar/brake lever positioning which is good news for me as I suffer from what I think is a bit of arthritis in my right thumb and any jarring makes it quite sore by the end of a ride.

Usually after about 20 miles on a 'classic' bike with Maes type bars say, coupled with GB or Universal levers I am trying to keep the area between thumb and forefinger away from jarring whilst resting in that angled gap between the levers (probably without rubber hoods) and the bars.

Wearing my other hat, I ride two modern bikes throughout the year, one a carbon Colnago which goes out on nice sunny days and the other a titanium Van Nicholas which is fitted with guards for when there is some wetness in the air and/or on the road. Both have Shimano groupsets. The Van Nicholas is coming to four years old now and was fitted with current equipment at the time and I thought the lever/bar configuration was an improvement on slightly earlier bikes, the bars are Anatomic (see image below).

However, by the time I bought the Colnago which was acquired as a complete bike, compared to the other which was built at the shop to my personal specification, there had been quite a step-change in this area. Bars were now known as 'Compact' and Shimano had changed the lever shape to suit. This resulted in a really flat resting area with no 'hook' shape in which to rest your thumbs, this new shape can be seen in the left-hand image below, my earlier bars in the centre.



Most of the 'classic' bars are similar to those shown on the right. To see how this affects the overall shape when the levers are fitted see:

<http://ruedatropical.com/2009/03/road-drop-bar-geometry/>

This small change made a big difference to me as it seemed to take the pressure off the area where I feel soreness in the hands. It also gives more scope to change position slightly when riding which again eases the stress on the joints. I have seen the new grip position described as 'more like shaking the hand' which is a good description as I found out when, after reading this, I asked Patricia to shake my hand one evening - she thought I had gone mad or at least extremely formal in my old age!

I realise how effective these changes are when I went back to the Van Nicholas after a long spell on the Colnago. The difference is so great that I am considering changing the bars and levers on the Nicholas to match those on the Colnago. Normally I would do this without thinking considering the amount of time in my life I spend on the V N through the winter. The only reason I am still thinking about is that the STI levers are about the most expensive piece of kit in a groupset, some £250 if I am right.

RESOLVING THE CONFUSION: INTERCHANGEABLE FRENCH MARQUES – Atom, Normandy, Pelissier, Exceltoo, Maillard, Le Tour, and Spidel.

By **Steve Griffith**

I have long been confused about the relationship between these names, never quite clear if they were in fact separate companies or just trade names for the one company. Regarding hubs I had thought it was quite simple: Atom were small flange, Normandy large and Maillard a name used in the 1980s. Imagine my confusion when I saw at a cycle jumble a freewheel box with all three trade names on it (Fig. 1). Also I have seen Atom hub boxes which also carry the Maillard trade name. Where do the other names, for example Le Tour and Pelissier, fit in? I have also seen other similar French hubs but with different names, such as 'Sprinter' and 'Perrin'. This article is a bid to resolve the confusion regarding these trade names for pedals, hubs and freewheels.

Both Maillard and Exceltoo existed before the Second World War¹. The curly M preceding the name stands for Maurice (Maillard), the founder. Their small flange one piece duralumin hubs were imported into the UK in the late 1930s. At this time hubs were usually all steel, or more expensive, a steel barrel with alloy flanges such as British Hub Company's top of the range Airlite. The one piece alloy hub was a significant advantage, being rustless, lighter and a stronger construction. Exceltoo, imported by Fonteyn and Co (who also handled Simplex), also made steel hubs, these being 50% cheaper than alloy ones. According to advertisements the Exceltoo hub featured ground cones and screw in cone covers – post war every hub maker, including Campagnolo, adopted cheaper press-in cone covers.

Atom appeared soon after 1945 making hubs and freewheels and these were imported into Britain from the late 1940s. The core Atom product was their small flange one piece alloy hub, both with solid axle and later with quick release. The front hub was made with a distinctive step flange at the ends of the barrel. Up to the late 1960s the hubs were marked *atom* in script; after this the name was stamped, together with a month and year. Small flange Atom hubs were for much of the 1960s and 70s the cheapest branded hubs you could buy. Nevertheless, they are quite serviceable and were widely used.

Atom also made pedals from the 1950s to the late 70s, offering a range of reasonable quality alloy pedals, the most common being a doubled side rat trap, similar to the Lyotard 460D, and a higher quality series 600 quill pedal, fitted to Carlton and similar higher end sports bikes in the late 1970s. If not marked Atom they can be identified by the name on the dust cap, or on earlier pedals by the slot across the diameter of the dust cap.

Atom also made drum brakes for tandem use and in the 1940s a 'grande flasque' hub, incorporating two large riveted-on flanges lightened with a concentric set of holes. Both pre- and post-war, in response to the demand for large flange hubs, a number of manufacturers, such as British Hub Co and Prior, another French company, used up their existing stocks of small flange hubs by riveting on a pair of large diameter flanges.

Atom's freewheels initially used the same two-dog extractor as Regina, but then in the late 1960s moved to using a 2cm diameter splined extractor, which was a great improvement, though there was a drawback on some hubs, where it was necessary to remove the locknut to remove the freewheel. Atom freewheels were supplied in close ratio 3, 4 and 5-speed versions (Fig. 2).

Normandy hubs appeared a little after Atom and only seem to have made with large flanges.² The 1950s versions with round cut-outs are identical to the BH Company Racelite, which appeared in the mid 1950s. At the end of the 60s the design changed from round cut-outs to slotted ones. From the mid 1970s the barrels were stamped with the year of manufacture, providing a very useful dating guide. For quick release they used a separate black plastic wing nut similar to Simplex. In the 80s these hubs were initially marked Maillard and then Maillard-Sachs.

Normandy freewheels are distinctive in using a very large diameter 24 splined remover (3cm) which was a very positive innovation, as there was no risk of the extractor shearing and damaging the freewheel. This design also has the advantage of clearing the locknuts on all hubs, thus not requiring the axle to be removed. Some of these freewheels use a 3cm two dog extractor but these are the exception. They are credited with being the first company to make this innovation. I have found Normandy freewheels very durable and hard wearing. They are usually dated with the year stamped on the rear of the body, and have wide ratios with the largest cog ≥ 24 .

The Normandy large flange hub design also appears in the 1950s and 60s badged as Porthor and as Exceltoo. Both would appear to have been separate companies at this point. Exceltoo called their large flange all alloy hubs 'Super Competition'. They also made a small flange three piece hub. The latter brand reappeared in the 1970s with copies of the later slotted design, but oddly spelt Excelto.

At some point during the 1960s Atom and Normandy were taken over by Maillard. They were based at Incheville, France, and effectively became the parent company. Maillard became very successful in the 70s and early 80s, producing huge quantities of hubs and freewheels, which became standard original equipment used by many of the large manufacturers, such as Raleigh and Dawes, for their sports bikes. During this time large or high flange hubs became very fashionable hence the huge numbers of Normandy hubs you still come across. In the USA Schwinn had Maillard make them hubs which are marked 'Schwinn approved' some with an attractive three sided cut out. Ron Kitching had hubs made under his Milremo trade name that were direct copies of Atom and Normandy products. Le Tour was a trade name used from the mid 60s to the late 70s, again for copy hubs.

Maillard began to innovate in the late 1970s, producing first the Normandy-badged Luxe Competition and 600 series. Then the 700 Professional ranges (Fig. 3, 4 & 5), a top of the range series which included sealed (annular) bearing hubs and alloy freewheels, the Course range. The alloy used in the latter was simply not durable enough and these have a very short life. There were

also aerodynamic pedals, the CX series which required special toeclips. Other pedals included Campagnolo copies with both black and silver quill cages. Hubs were also produced in red, blue and gold and also under the name of Perrin-Maillard and Pelissier (not Pellisier). I assume Perrin and Pelissier were both trade names Maillard had bought up.

In 1982 they introduced the Helicomatic hub (Fig. 6) which by use of a proprietary freewheel thread facilitated removal of the freewheel with only one light tool. The prime advantage was to enable gear-sided spokes to be easily replaced on the road without needing workshop tools. The remover is a very light flat tool that can also be used as a bottle opener (Fig. 5)! Although it gained some adherents – mainly cycle tourists (it was fitted to the Dawes Galaxy for a short time) – it lost out to the freehub as developed by Shimano a few years later. The Helicomatic is, I think, a good example of a solution to a problem (that of broken spokes) which did not tackle the root cause of that problem, that is, badly built or overloaded wheels. During my research I found a website devoted to the Helicomatic hub, The Helicomatic Museum³ and was surprised by the variety of different hub made in this design (about eight) until it was phased out in 1988. This website advises against using the hubs on the grounds that you will not be able to get spare parts.

Spidel was not a manufacturer but simply a name adopted by a group of French manufacturers for high-end groupsets, in order to compete with those being marketed by the large manufacturers such as Shimano and Campagnolo. Maillard, Mafac, Simplex and Stronglight were the major companies initially involved in this venture.

DEMISE

In 1980 (date according to Velo-base) Maillard were taken over by the German company Sachs who had bought a number of other French companies, including Huret and CLB. The last all-Maillard product was the 'Diabolo' hub, incorporating a fatter barrel design for the emerging mountain bike market. After take-over products were initially marked Sachs-Maillard, but this ceased by the end of the decade and the trade name was lost. Essentially, screw-on hubs became a rapidly declining market with the rise to dominance of the Shimano Freehub (freewheel integrated in the hub using cassette sprockets). Screw-on hubs were now the hallmark of a cheap machine and Sachs-Maillard couldn't compete in this market against Far Eastern competition.

Some comments on quality: the earlier hubs are greatly superior to the 70s product in terms of alloy used and quality of cones. For a quality 70s era bike it is worth seeking out the Competition Luxe range, as the cones and races are of a noticeably better standard. Standard Maillard cones can often be identified by the fact they are black and have a double concentric circle. The sealed bearing 600 and 700 series are of first rate quality.

So in conclusion there were a number of independent companies in the 1940s and 50s. Gradually they were taken over and Maillard became the dominant company. Until the end of the 1970s the main trade names were Atom and Normandy, but these were dropped in the 1980s, with Maillard becoming the sole trade name until the early 1990s when Sachs dropped the name.

SUMMARY OF PRODUCTS

| MAKE | HUBS | FREEWHEELS | PEDALS | COMMENTS |
|------|---|--|---|---|
| Atom | Small flange solid and q/r 1950s to 80s. Earlier ones have trade name in script. Range of threading gear only, geared and fixed | Up to 5 speed 40s to 60s, small splined remover. | Range of pedals both quill and double sided identified by the slot across diameter of dust cap. | Quick releases have both Atom and Maillard names on them. |

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|-----------|--|--|--|--|
| | and double fixed. | | Atom 600 quill are a 70s product fitted to some Carltons. | |
| Normandy | Large flange solid and q/r, 40s to early 80s. Earlier hubs have round cut-outs, later ones slotted. 70s hubs have date on barrel. In 70s made the Luxe Competition a higher quality model, q/r only identified by red or gold cone covers & decal in red/gold on barrel. | Identified by the very large (3cm) diameter splined freewheel remover. Popular in late 70s with tourists for their wide ratio blocks eg 14 to 32/34. | No. | Some of the first Continental accessories to be imported after WWII Quick releases are sometimes marked P1001, rather than Normandy. 50s/60s hubs identified by round cut-outs and by stamping of name: "Normandy". |
| Exceltoo | 1950s large flange Super Competition model plus small flange all alloy and 3 piece hubs. | No. | No. | Also spelt Excelto, later hubs direct Normandy copies. |
| Pelissier | Both large and small flange, being copies of Atom and Normandy, plus some cheaper 3 piece steel hubs and tandem drum brakes. Used in the 80s for cup and cone copies of the 700 series. | No. | No. | Trade name disappeared in the late 70s Pelissier made high quality products in the 30s and 40s, bought out in the 50s. |
| Le Tour | Both large and small flange mid 60s and 70s. | No. | No. | Large flange are Normandy copies, earlier ones slightly better quality. Originally imported by Holdsworth. |
| Maillard | Replaced both Atom and Normandy in the early 80s. Hubs are generally dated year and month. Hub barrels have gradual curve to the flanges unlike the stepped design for the Atom. | High quality freewheels. Series 700 & Course both steel and alloy. | 1980s high quality pedals including a Campag copy and some with sealed bearings, series 700. | Hubs very widely used on sports bikes by big manufacturers. Q/rs often marked P1001 or M. Maillard on one side and M.M Atom on the other. |

Alexander Ware from Berlin writes:

I'm an Anglo-American cyclist living in Berlin, Germany since 1990, and I'd like to build up a classic racing bike that has something to do with the dream bikes I had in my youth (I was born in 1965). This would be either a Raleigh Professional from the late 70s, or a Raleigh Team 753 also from that era.

OR, and this is why I'm writing to you, a John Spooner frame. Why? Because my grandparents lived in Worthing, West Sussex, and I used to go round to John's shop when I visited every summer, and I was THIS close to ordering a frame from him in circa 1982 and unfortunately never did.

I'm not a collector as such, but this would be my third and last road bike (where have I heard that before - Ed), Serotta: main road bike & Battaglin: fixed are the others I need a c.62cm frame, as I have long legs. There's a picture of a 1982 Spooner on your CL website, it's beautiful. That's what I'd like!

I really don't know how one goes about finding something as specific as the frames mentioned above other than cruising eBay every so often, especially if I'm not in the country, but I'd appreciate it if you could give me any tips. And if you could give Mr Spooner my regards (he does not know me) and forward this to him, I'd be very grateful.

Thank you very much and I'm glad you enjoyed your trip to Bavaria a few years ago, as written up in your latest Classic Lightweights newsletter.

Alexander, email alex@archimation.com

(John has had a series of 'minor' heart attacks recently but is hoping to get back on his bike soon, even if just for a ride around the village. We all wish him well, he is a great fellow and Patricia and I always drop in to see him if we are in the area. Along with his wife Wendy we always have an interesting chat about bikes and cycling over a cup of tea and a cake.) He is one of the collectors who really knows what he is talking about, having been both a serious road racer and a frame builder.

It has also been interesting to follow a thread on the London Fixed-gear and Single-speed Forum where a proud owner of a John Spooner track frame has restored it and built it up as a fixed-wheel machine. It has had many complimentary remarks made about it.

The best laid plans.....I have just carefully polished a pair of steel, cotted 5-pin cranks which look very like BSA but there is no 'BSA' logo or the 'stacked rifles' logo on them. I didn't think that they had been replated. There is no trace of the 'Williams' logo either. However, they do take the conventional 5-pin bolts with a threaded 'collar' inserted from the outside of the chainring and the washered bolts from the inside. They had been fitted with a Williams ring and I wanted to make up a BSA set as I am very fond of the look of these chainsets, especially since Peter Lowry gave me a master-class on how to fit the rings to the cranks correctly, i.e. with the 'S' opposite the crank. I had a BSA chainring put by for this very purpose and was excited at the prospect of building up the set. However, when I looked closely at the ring I realised that instead of having five larger-diameter holes for the collar, the ring had small-diameter threaded holes similar to an early Williams ring where the bolts are threaded through from the back of the cranks and straight into the ring. The cranks, of course, have to have smaller diameter holes for this. The chainring is in very good condition and if anyone happens to have one of the type I need and are willing to do a swap, I would be very pleased. I am also looking for a toggle chain for a Benelux gear.

Peter Underwood - *email address at top of page one.*

Ephgrave No 1 for sale. 23 inch Seat tube; 22 inch top tube. This was my late father's pride and joy. He bought the it new around 1950, though the accompanying components have changed over the years, and pretty much rode it every day up until his sudden death earlier this year. Wheels feature Campag large flange hubs with Mavic rims, Shimano gearing and Universal side pull brakes. Sensible offers considered, but most important to me is that it goes to someone who will cherish it as he did. Please contact me, Dave Taylor at dkaylor222@gmail.com for more information, pictures and/or to arrange a viewing. I live in Upminster, Essex.

Stop press: From Brian Wilkins - after reading the article on LIPSCOMBE CYCLES which I bought from Frank and Rita Lipscombe in 1970, and operated alongside the BRIAN WILKINS shops in Harlesden

and Gidea Park, Romford . The shop was compulsory purchased by the local council in 1979 and the business transferred to Epping in 1980 as CYCLESPOET EPPING. I continued building a few frames until closing the business in 1989 and moving to France where I still live and ride my original bikes four times a week! I still have a box of BRIAN WILKINS transfers available if anyone has need .
Email vsdemerck@yahoo.co.uk