

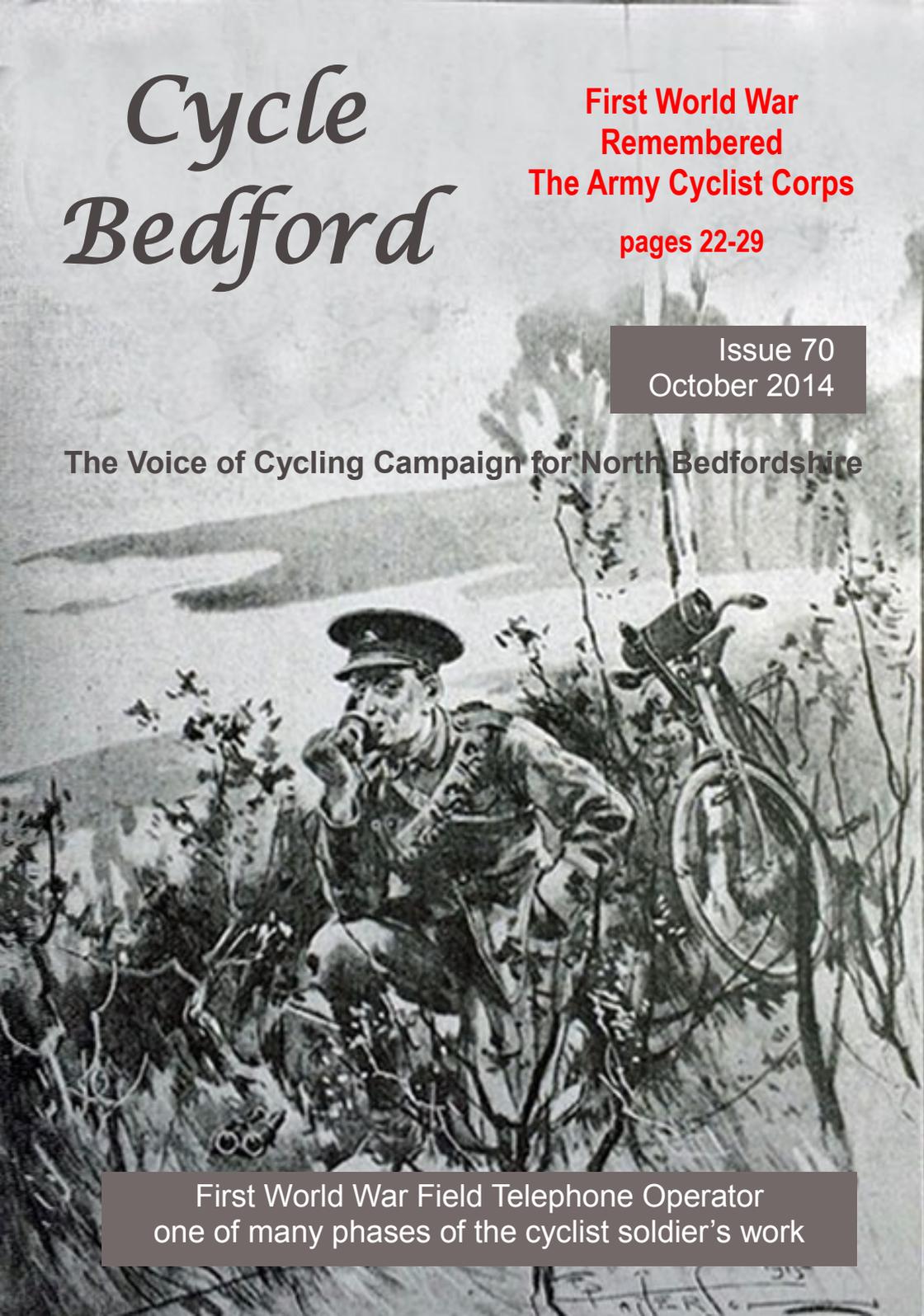
# *Cycle Bedford*

**First World War  
Remembered  
The Army Cyclist Corps**

**pages 22-29**

Issue 70  
October 2014

**The Voice of Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire**



**First World War Field Telephone Operator  
one of many phases of the cyclist soldier's work**

# CYCLING CAMPAIGN FOR NORTH BEDFORDSHIRE

*Founded 1992*

## **Committee**

Chairperson	Hazel Mitchell
Vice-Chair	Peter Blakeman
Secretary	Carole Blakeman
Treasurer	Neville Hobday
Membership Secretary	-
Other members	Veronica Brown Hywel Davies Richard Impey
Newsletter Editor	Peter Blakeman

E-mail: [ccnb@ccnb.org.uk](mailto:ccnb@ccnb.org.uk)

Website: <http://www.ccnb.org.uk>

Promotional website: <http://www.cyclebedford.org.uk>

## **Campaigning Representation**

CCNB is represented on the following committees:

Bedford Cycle Strategy Group

Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership Forum

and is a key stakeholder on the preparation and implementation of the:

Bedford Green Wheel

Bedford Stations Travel Plan

Local Transport Plan (LTP3)

It is affiliated to  (<http://www.cyclenation.org.uk>)

### **Bedford Borough Council Contacts:**

Cycling and Walking Officer - (01234) 276328

Bikeability (Cycle Training) - (01234) 228336

Highways Helpdesk - (01234) 718003/e-mail

[highways.helpdesk@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:highways.helpdesk@bedford.gov.uk)

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## New Members

We welcome new members: Sheila Humphries and Clare Buddle.

## Cover

The cover sketch has been reproduced from Issue No 1255 Vol XLIX of Cycling - The Military Cyclists' Journal dated 4 February 1915.

# Editorial

It is with great sadness that we have to say goodbye to our founder and Chair, Hazel Mitchell (page 5). She will always be remembered for her enthusiasm for cycling and her encouragement in getting the Borough on board, particularly during her year as the seventh Lady Mayor. We wish her and her husband Tony all the best in their new abode near their family.

In remembrance of this year's 100th anniversary of the start of the First World War on 4 August 1914 part of this issue is devoted to The Army Cyclist Corps and in particular the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalions in which many Bedfordshire people were enlisted (pages 22-29).

The war was described at the time to be '*The war to end all wars*'.

The Army  
Cyclist  
Corps  
remembered



If not cycling  
this winter  
borrow books on  
cycling from  
your local library

Utility cyclists are usually a hardy bunch of individuals who continue to cycle all through the winter. But with the coming of darker nights and the prospects of cold and wet days, a few, and many leisure cyclists turn to other modes of transport and relaxation to wait for the next spring and summer cycling seasons. What better time to borrow books from your local library and spend some winter evenings reading about cycling and other cyclists (pages 20-21).

Cycling and cycling infrastructure (pages 6-9 & 13-15) has continued to grow over the last few months. This is not only good for business but also creates happier and healthier places in which to live and work.

# Farewell - Hazel Mitchell

Dear CCNB Members,

I have tried to write this in different ways, but can't find anything better than just to say "goodbye" and "thank you". The CCNB was begun in 1992, and has grown in its spread of contact in the community, its professionalism through the production of maps, books and newsletters, and its attendance at so many public events from River Festival to celebration of National Bike Week in the old Civic Theatre and having important speakers at our AGMs. Another vitally important role has been the setting up in 1994 of the Cycle Strategy Group where cyclists and local authority officers have met, worked very co-operatively, and cyclists have offered sound guidance to those with decisions to make about routes, signs and major plans.

We also have been pretty successful at holding delightful summer socials in both Clapham (originally that of Dick Hutchins) and Carole and Peter's garden in Bedford, with a Christmas dinner at the Bedford College tower block restaurant.

There have been so many good people, and worthwhile activities, that it is impossible to record them all here.

So - here I am having to admit to both advancing age (and loss of energy through Parkinson's Disease) - and to top it all - our move hopefully in November to live near our son and family in Keynsham, between Bristol and Bath. Everyone responds with the comment that this is a lovely part of the country, which we already know well from having lived there 1967-1971, and visiting our family over the last 13 years.



It has been a privilege and pleasure to be involved in so many aspects of cycling, and to have chaired a committee with almost 100% attendance throughout the last 22 years! I trust that the work on behalf of the cyclist in and around Bedford will continue with support and guidance from the Campaign.

My warmest best wishes to everyone, with thanks for a shared and wonderful experience of the value and enjoyment of one of the best forms of transport ever devised - Hazel

*Hazel as Mayor opening the  
Bromham to Bedford cycle route  
on 20 April 2001*

# Union Street Roundabout Improvement

The Bedford Union Street roundabout has a history of accidents involving cyclists so when the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2013 requested bids for grants from its Cycle Safety Fund it was an opportunity for Bedford Borough Council to submit a scheme and eventually be one of the lucky few to be awarded a grant.

The junction is one of the busiest in the borough and is on 'The Avenues' on-road cycle route from the north and north east residential estates of Brickhill and Putnoe. It is used on a daily basis by 550 cyclists (200 off-road), mainly commuters to the railway station and students to the schools and colleges on a north to south route in the morning and a south to north route in the evening. The south arm only, Union Street, currently has sections of on-road cycle lanes.

The main criteria for the scheme was to improve conditions for cyclists and pedestrians without reducing vehicle capacity.

The approved design has been based on a continental style roundabout with tighter geometry and enforced lane discipline. This is expected to slow down vehicles entering the junction and should improve cyclists safety by avoiding conflict due to last minute lane changes.

For pedestrians and less confident cyclists a zebra has been constructed on each arm and the paths around the roundabout converted to dual use.

Current regulations stipulate that cyclists can cycle across zebras if there is a dual use path on either side but unlike pedestrians must give way to motor vehicles. The DfT is currently consulting on a new form of segregated crossing similar to a Dutch style crossing which will allow cyclists to cross with a right of way over motorised vehicles. A decision on this will be taken sometime next year. In the meantime this has been allowed for in the design.

The design has resulted in some negative publicity for a number of reasons, particularly from a few non-Bedford resident cyclists and motor cyclists. The project was delayed by a few months and finally started on 21 July 2014. As of 1 October 2014 (publishing deadline) it was nearly completed with just signage and off-road markings still outstanding.

CCNB realises that the scheme is not exactly the same as a Dutch one but in view of current English highway regulation restrictions, the available resources and highway land available in the area it is a reasonable design.

Obviously only the future will tell if the right design choice was taken. CCNB (as well as the Borough) will be monitoring the junction closely to see it achieves its objectives of improving cyclists' safety as well as encouraging more and new cyclists to use this popular route.



*Union Street arm virtually completed (1 October 2014)*



# Bromham Road Double Mini-Roundabout

At the beginning of July 2014 the double mini-roundabout in Bromham Road at its junctions with Shakespeare Road and Ashburnham Road was resurfaced. At the same time the opportunity was taken to make the junction safer for motorists, pedestrians and cyclists.

For pedestrians this has meant improved crossing points on the east and south sides (there is already a Zebra crossing in Shakespeare Road on the north side). Although the west side has a significant number of people crossing Bromham Road, particularly school children from the railway station to Rushmore and Bedford Modern Schools, the highway land width on this side has not allowed a similar treatment to be made as the south carriageway has to be wide enough for buses and lorries to safely turn westwards from Ashburnham Road into Bromham Road.

For cyclists the cycle lane on Bromham Road approaching the junction has been given more emphasis by additional markings to encourage motorists not to stray into the lane. The original layout had encouraged vehicles to form two lanes at this point thus cutting up cyclists approaching this area and had been a complaint in several previous cyclist surveys. In Ashburnham Road a cycle lane was introduced from The Finches to the junction to guide cyclists into the correct position to safely cross the junction as well as letting motorists know their possible presence. At the request of CCNB a slight build out was added immediately north of The Finches to prevent motorists turning west from cutting up cyclists going north about to cross to the middle of the two vehicle lanes (the original carriageway layout had a long taper up to the junction).

*Bromham Road looking west*



*Ashburnham Rd looking north*

# Kempston West Infrastructure

Kempston Rural Lower School's new site on the corner of Martell Drive and Ridge Road opened in September 2014 at the start of the school year.



To aid pupils coming from the new Kempston West estates under development a toucan crossing has been provided in Ridge Road adjacent to the school. This connects with a new four metre wide dual use path running behind the houses in Hill Rise to link with the end of the current off-road network at the entrance to Hastingsbury Business & Enterprise College

To the north side of the school the path has been opened up along Martell Drive, as yet with a temporary surface, to link with the dual use path adjacent to The Bury and Cemetery Road.



This means that it is now possible to cycle completely off-road from the Western Bypass bridge across the River Great Ouse as far as the Marsh Leys warehouse estate. It is hoped that over the next twelve months the current end of the route over the river will be linked to Great Denham and the riverside route to the town centre when the route through the new Great Denham Country Park is created.

## A4280/A6 Link

The go ahead has now been given for the construction of the final stage of the Western Bypass - the A4280/A6 link from Bromham Road to Clapham Road. It is expected to start by the end of the year with an opening in 2016.

When completed it will have a cycle path along its whole length, an underpass for the current cycle path from Bromham to go under the road just north of the new roundabout at Gold Lane and a wooden bridge across the new road halfway between Bromham Road and the railway line. The latter will serve the new country park to be constructed between the new road and the River Ouse and will be similar to the one which was built in 2008 across the A507 Ridgmont Bypass.



*Wooden Bridge carrying a bridleway across Ridgmont Bypass*

## Cycle Parking Design Guidance Adopted

The new Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities containing Cycle Parking Design Guidance was adopted by Bedford Borough Council on 10 September 2014. The document replaces the Bedfordshire Cycle Parking Guidance of 2006.

# Cycle Response Unit

This year, 2014, St John Ambulance celebrates ten years since the founding of its life saving Cycle Response Unit (CRU).

The CRU is made up of dedicated and highly trained volunteers, each riding a specially adapted mountain bike carrying essential equipment such as a defibrillator, oxygen tanks and triage equipment.

Highly manoeuvrable, and able to beat the traffic in even the busiest and most congested streets, the CRU is environmentally friendly and can often respond to an emergency much faster than an ambulance.

Over the last decade it has provided life saving first aid at hundreds of events, one being during 'The Women's Tour' which came to Bedford on 8 May 2014.



*St John Ambulance tent and bicycles on The Embankment in Bedford during The Women's Tour on 8 May 2014*

Unfortunately in the East of England Ambulance Service Area which includes Bedfordshire, the CRU at present is only available in the town centres of Norwich, King's Lynn, Great Yarmouth and Hunstanton.

For details visit: <http://www.cycleresponseunit.co.uk/>

# Mowsbury Park New BMX Area

It is now seven years since a small BMX track for children was opened next to Putnoe Woods in Mowsbury Park by Councillor Pat Olney (see Newsletter No 49 (October 2007).

During this summer a new larger more challenging track has been constructed just north of the existing one on the site of the disused Bedford Borough Council nursery.



*View looking west*

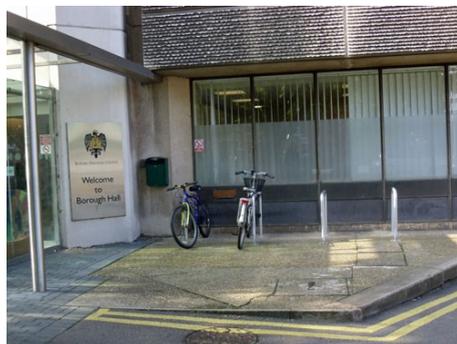


*View from entrance*

# Cycle Stands

## Borough Hall

Several years after approving the installation of additional cycle parking stands outside the entrance to Borough Hall two sets for visitors were finally installed in June 2014; one set of 'Sheffield' stands under cover for 8 bicycles in front of the entrance and another for 8 bicycles replacing the original two 'Sheffield' adjacent to the entrance.



## Woodlands Park

Cycle stands have been installed next to the changing rooms of the new Woodlands Park sports area ready for environmentally friendly players and visitors when the football pitches are ready for use.



*14 lonely 'Sheffield' cycle stands waiting for customers*

# Bedford Midland Station's New Cycle Stands

Two additional sets of double decker cycle parking stands were installed at Bedford Midland Station in late July 2014 complementing the set installed in November 2013.



*70 double deckers  
replacing 36  
'Sheffield' spaces  
in old area*



*44 double  
deckers  
replacing 26  
'Sheffield'  
spaces alongside  
entrance  
passageway*

There are now a total of 528 cycle parking spaces; 504 in the station area and 24 in the Borough's Ashburnham Road car park.

Since the start of the First Capital Connect franchise on 1 April 2006 to the end on 13 September 2014 the number of spaces has increased from 320 to 504, an increase of 58%, although over the last four years, even with the introduction of 158 double decker spaces, it has only increased from 456 spaces, an increase of just 11%.

Wednesday 2 July 2014 saw the highest number of commuters to date parking their bicycles at the railway station.

# Bedford St John's Station's Cycle Stands

June 2014 also saw the introduction of four 'Sheffield' cycle parking stands in the Melbourne Street car park next to the passageway to St John's Station, the first for this popular station for all stations along the Marston Vale Line to Bletchley.



## Castle Lane Cycle Stands Obstruction

Over the last few months the 'Sheffield' stands next to the entrance to The Higgins have been obstructed by a number of waste bins. The Borough have been notified.



*Stands blocked*



*Stands in use in 2013*

# Clapham FP24 Upgrade Application Fails

Eight years after CCNB submitted an application to the then Bedfordshire County Council for Footpath No 24, the track between Hawk Drive Brickhill and Green Lane Clapham to be upgraded to a 'Restricted Byway' the application and appeal have been dismissed.

The application was made on the basis of cyclists having used the route for more than 20 years and was allowed following the passing into law of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which amended Section 53 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The route is the remaining part of the old carriageway built for the Clapham Park Estate more than 100 years ago which started in Kimbolton Road (next to the existing Lodge) and went between the two sections of what is now Falcon Avenue, past another Lodge in Hawk Drive and then to Green Lane in Clapham. Clapham Park House is not directly on the route but is accessed from it by a triangular loop.

The requested change in status was to allow the route to be promoted on cycle maps as a legal cycleway. The route is a more enjoyable, attractive and safe route than the busy main road alternative. It has been used for more than 50 years by cyclists of all ages to commute to work and school as well as to the riding school in Green Lane, church services (when the convent was open) and for visiting the north Bedfordshire villages for leisure purposes.

In December 2013 Bedford Borough Council rejected the application on the basis of signage at three specific points of time which they claimed showed a lack of intention on the part of the landowners over a full period of 20 years to dedicate the way to the public. These were:

**1968** - Little Park Farm end - 'No Entrance, No Horses, Cars, Cycles or Dogs'. No signs of any kind seen (even for the footpath) since this time.

**1975** - Mid way at junction of route to house 'Private Land'. This sign was not actually on the route but was taken down immediately to avoid confusion with FP24.

**1998** - Green Lane end - 'Private Road - Parking Prohibited'

CCNB immediately put in an appeal to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) but this was dismissed on 18 June 2014 by The Planning Inspectorate on behalf of DEFRA.

Both reports however confirmed that there was evidence of the public having used the route with bicycles over a period of more than 50 years.

In 2009 the Bedford Borough included the route in their Green Wheel project masterplan as a future section of an outer route from Brickhill to Bromham via a bridge over Clapham Ford.

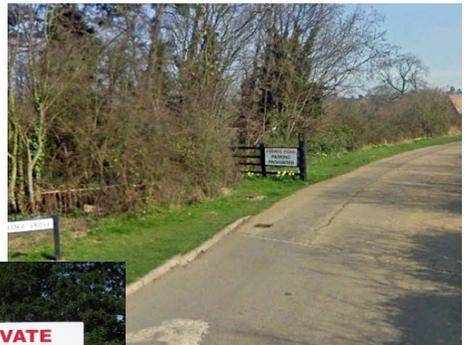
In October 2011 one of the landowners placed notices on both ends of the route stating that no cycling was allowed.

## History of Clapham Park Estate

- 1600-1862 Owned by Lord Ashburnham who had possession of the Manor of Clapham.
- 1862-1938 James and Frederick Howard, founders of J and F Howard Ironmongers at the Britannia Works in Bedford (now a development site In Kempston Road, opposite the South Wing Hospital), jointly bought a large part of the estate from the 4th Earl of Ashburnham in 1862 and established a model farm there, farming the land under new scientific methods. In 1872, James built Clapham Park House, a Victorian country house in an Elizabethan style standing on the high ground to the south of Clapham Wood. It was around this time that a carriage drive was built from Green Lane in Clapham to the house and joined it to the road (Hawk Drive) which existed from (Little) Clapham Park Farm to Kimbolton Road. James died in 1889.
- 1939-1945 House in hands of Ministry of Supply and used as rehabilitation centre for the Forces.
- 1946-1958 Convalescent Home for Manor House Hospital.
- 1970s-1985 Convent for The Holy Ghost' Order of Nuns.
- 1985-1996 Planning applications for wide range of uses.
- 1996- House sold to present owner and split into apartments and 14 dwellings built to rear. Part is currently a B&B.



↑  
*Track from Hawk Drive after renovation by Bedford Borough in 2009*



↑  
*1998 sign at Carriage Drive end*



←  
*Sign put up by landowner in 2011 as result of application and Green Wheel proposal*

## Cycling Anecdote - Bill Tordoff

I'm a Luddite at heart: I believe that I can live happily without the use of any of the devices which have been popularised in my lifetime. These include the motor car, the Skype telephone, the microwave oven and the mobile phone, the latter because the only person that I want to talk to is my wife, who is usually behind me, shouting instructions from the stoker's seat of our tandem.

However, in spite of this, I was persuaded some time ago by the aforesaid stoker to purchase and carry a simple model which might come in useful in an emergency 'one of these days' when we were apart.

Its use eventually became necessary one cold day last December when I was on the last lap of a solo ride to the Emmaus Village in Carlton. I should tell you that I had only recently bought this so-called 'hybrid' bike to replace the Carlton Corsair 531 tubing drop-handlebar tourer with fancy lugwork and gear-change on the down-tube which I had bought from Watson Cairns in Leeds in 1980 for £135. As a self-confessed Luddite, I have to admit that it was a modern device - the handlebar-mounted click-style gear-shift, instead of the hard-to-find down-tube type - that persuaded me to buy the new bike.

These solo rides were, as my wife pointed out, the very occasions where the mobile phone would be useful in an emergency, and before I set out I had put it in the nearside rear pocket of my cycling top, I should also tell you that the cold weather made my nose run.

Anyway, as I was cycling up towards the Emmaus on the Turvey road in Carlton I took out the handkerchief from the offside pocket, then yelled in alarm as the bike suddenly collapsed under me onto the road. Stiffly I rose and stared at the prostrate machine, to see that the handkerchief had dropped onto the chain and been whirled round until it jammed in the derailleur gear and forced the bike into a startling and painful stop.

I pulled the bike off the road and realised that, by good fortune, I had fallen exactly opposite a bus-stop with a timetable showing that a No. 25 bus to Bedford was due in 30 minutes.

So I wheeled the bike up to the Emmaus and left it with them, promising to return for it the next day, then took the bus home, where my wife was surprised to see me without the bike, and persuaded my son-in-law to return with me the next day to pick up the bike and take it to Transition Cycles to mend, So, the day had ended more happily than it might have done.

"But what about your useful mobile phone?" I hear you cry. Well, the truth is, I had broken it in my fall, so I couldn't use it after all. Still, I've bought another simple one, which I take religiously with me on all my solo rides, safe in the conviction that it will come in useful one day.

# CCNB Events

## Putnoe Library

CCNB had a small exhibition in Putnoe Library over three weeks in June (including Bike Week). The event was an outstanding success with many residents taking the literature available to help them start or continue to cycle.



## Almost the Longest Day Ride

For the fourth year, CCNB, in conjunction with CTC, held an evening bike ride along National Cycle Network Route 51 to Willington and back on 'Almost the Longest Day' - this year Wednesday 18 June 2014. The event attracted 13 members on what turned out to be a glorious warm evening.

## Summer Social

CCNB's Summer Social on Saturday 5 July 2014 was held in the garden of your Editor's house with 22 members attending. The event with strawberries and cream was again a tremendous success after putting Plan B into operation for the first 30 minutes due to an early shower.

# Your Local Library - Cycling Inspiration and Resources - Sue Thornton

Bedford Central Library has all sorts of useful, interesting and FREE resources for cyclists. Books and OS maps can be borrowed and the library's website, the [Virtual Library](#), provides free access to a range of cycling related information – from local cycling history to the latest cycle transport news.

You can [search the catalogue](#) on the Virtual Library for maps, guides, and books, or drop in and see what's available. Have a browse around the "Out and About in Bedfordshire" section on the second floor where you will find leaflets, local guidebooks & ride books, plus free copies of the *Cycle Map Bedford and Kempston* to take away.

Cycling magazines from around the world are available to read online for free through the Virtual Library's e-resources [PressDisplay](#) and [e-Magazines](#) links. We also have *Cycling Weekly* available for a one week loan as well as the CTC *Cycle Magazine* in our reference section.

Bedford Central Library has a wealth of local history resources. The Heritage Library is open on Tuesdays from 9-1 and 2-5 and the local history section in the main library is accessible during normal opening hours. Find out about [Dan Albone](#) and Ivel Cycles of Biggleswade, browse [local newspapers](#), [photographs](#) and [newspaper cuttings](#) in the Local History Collection, and find both the *CCNB Newsletter* from 2001, *Bedfordshire Cyclist* from 1979-1994 amongst our periodicals.



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**G. C. G'NAPP & CO.,**  
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151, Midland Road, Bedford.

*Advert from Bedford Standard 30<sup>th</sup> October 1896*

A page providing information about using your bike to get around can be found under [transport](#) on the Virtual Library. Find links to [www.cycle-route.com](http://www.cycle-route.com) which lists no less than 92 cycle routes and mountain bike trails in Bedfordshire and [www.cyclestreets.net](http://www.cyclestreets.net), a UK-wide cycle journey planner system. If it's the bike not the route that is the issue we have a range of repair manuals, and if it's the rider rather than the bike which is proving the sticking point we also have some excellent guides to getting fit!

If you're looking for inspiration there's an ["On Your Bike" booklist](#) on the Virtual Library, and here are 5 books recently enjoyed and highly recommended by Sue, Library Assistant and keen cyclist:

*Domestique: the Real-life Ups and Downs of a Tour Cyclist* Charly Wegelius

"the gritty reality – what an insight!"

*Great British Bike Rides: 40 Classic Routes* Dave Barter

"iconic rides; fantastic attention to detail in the descriptions"

*Take a Seat: One Man, One Tandem and Twenty Thousand Miles of Possibilities* Dominic Gill

"taking sharing to the next level makes for excellent travel writing"

*On the Road Bike* Ned Boulting

"a slice of British cycling history, in Boulting's charming and people-centred style"

*Lost Lanes: 36 Glorious Bike Rides in Southern England* Jack Thurston

"the slow movement comes to cycling: rides to savour"

Happy cycling!

Bedford Central Library

### **Web addresses of references highlighted:**

Virtual Library - <http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/cgi-bin/bedford-cat.sh>

Search the Catalogue - <http://vpoint.culturalservices.net/bedford/>

Press Display - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.beds\\_libraries/online\\_resources\\_pressdisplay.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.beds_libraries/online_resources_pressdisplay.htm)

e-Magazines - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.books\\_reading/emagazines.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.books_reading/emagazines.htm)

Dan Albone - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.digitised\\_resources/biggleswade\\_digitisation\\_people\\_albone\\_about.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.digitised_resources/biggleswade_digitisation_people_albone_about.htm)

Local Newspapers - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local\\_studies/newspapers.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local_studies/newspapers.htm)

Photographs - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local\\_studies/photographs\\_and\\_prints.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local_studies/photographs_and_prints.htm)

Newspaper Cuttings - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local\\_studies/newspaper\\_cuttings\\_where.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.local_studies/newspaper_cuttings_where.htm)

Transport - [http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.gateway/transport\\_forms.htm](http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/webingres/bedfordshire/vlib/0.gateway/transport_forms.htm)

Cycle Routes - <http://www.cycle-route.com/>

Cyclestreets - <http://www.cyclestreets.net/>

'On Your Bike' Book list - <http://virtual-library.culturalservices.net/cgi-bin/vlib.sh?enqtype=RLIST&rlist=479&doc=doctype.inf>

# First World War Remembered

## - The Army Cyclist Corps

Monday 4 August 2014 marked the centenary of the start of the First World War, a war without parallel eclipsing all previous wars by the scale of its destruction - said at the time to be the war to end all wars.

May we never understate or forget to show our appreciation of our forebears making the ultimate sacrifice they have.

A bicycle was an ideal means of transportation as it was comparatively lightweight - it could be carried over obstructions - and as well as being ridden could be loaded with equipment and pushed. It was particularly well-suited for conveying despatches, guerrilla action, patrols and reconnaissance. A motorcycle was faster, but a bicycle was silent. Cyclist units therefore played a big part in the early stages.

The Army Cycling Corps started in England in a voluntary capacity around 1885 and were believed to be known as Rifle Volunteer Corps. In 1888, the 26th Middlesex Rifle Volunteer Corps became the first cyclist battalion and it remained the only one until the formation of the Territorial Force in 1908, when three existing infantry battalions were converted to cyclists, and six totally new cyclist battalions were formed. Four more battalions were formed between 1911 and 1914, one of which was the **Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion**. Until 1914 the battalions were used largely as coastal patrols.

The official Army Cyclist Corps (ACC) was formed in 1914 absorbing a number of pre-existing cyclist battalions, from the Territorial Force. More cyclist units were raised during the war, but these all wore the ACC badge whereas the pre-existing units wore their own distinctive unit badges. Fifteen cyclist battalions existed on mobilisation in August 1914.

Cyclists were initially excited by the prospect of exclusive cyclist battalions, enlisting with their friends and fellow riders. The first cyclist units went overseas to France and Flanders and to Gallipoli in 1915.

In the early days, military cyclists proved their worth, and there were numerous reports of their bravery in the British cycling press. But trench warfare forced the reassignment of soldiers from cyclist units to infantry units, and though bicycles were still used extensively throughout the war by all sides, there was less need for actual cyclist units.

By the end of the war in France and Flanders, the cyclist battalions had been reformed and the count was still 15 English with a New Zealand,



*Badge of honour:  
WWI Cycle Corp badge*

Australian and Canadian Corp added making 18 in total. During the First World War operations, cyclists often found themselves in unfriendly and difficult terrain and had to give up their mounts. Based on that experience the British Army found no long-term role for cyclists. The Army Cyclist Corps was disbanded in 1919.

It is not possible to know exactly how many military cyclists there were in the First World War, but it is estimated that at least 100,000 British soldiers used bicycles in some capacity and at least 150,000 French and Belgians.

In 1914, the British army had 14,000 men in cycle regiments and battalions, increasing to 20,000 by the end of the war. When the Americans entered the war in 1917, they shipped 26,407 bicycles with them to France although they did not have any established bicycle corps.

## Cyclists' Duties

Examples of Initial duties which befell cyclists:

- Scouting

In Belgium, British and German cycling units actually engaged each other.

Early Anglo Belgian armoured trains carried Belgian cycling troops on board to scout away from the railway line.

It was German cycling units that first made contact with the Russians pre- Tannenberg.

The Italians had cycling troops used as a mobile reserve to plug holes in the line in the case of an Austrian break through.

- Courier work

Cyclists were used to cycle down communications trenches. This was particularly important when the security of the trench telephone system was found to have been compromised by German Moritz receiving stations

- Security patrols

The canal system in both Britain and France could have been very vulnerable to sabotage and was regularly patrolled by cyclists.

## Training Manual

The British Army's Cyclist Training Manual 1907 (as revised 1911) was replete with items as how to salute while standing by, sitting on and riding the bicycle, drill movements such as "Ground Cycles", "Take Up Cycles" and "Stack and Unstack Cycles" and helpful advice on care of bicycles such as "Bicycle tires should be wiped with a damp cloth after a march, so that all grit, which if left might cause a puncture, may be removed" (still good training advice today).

## Main Bicycle Types Used

Three main types of bicycle were used by the British army during the First World War:

### Military Folding Bicycles

In Great Britain, they were mainly built by BSA (see photograph below) and Phillips, to a specified pattern. Other styles were built in Austria and Russia as well as by Peugeot in France and Bianchi in Italy.

### Civilian Roadsters

The majority of bicycles used were normal roadsters. Military accessories were available from Terry, Brooks, Gamages or individual manufacturers. A rear carrier was the most common accessory. Front carriers and rifle clips were often fitted. The most essential items were an inflator pump and a tool bag containing basic tools and puncture repair outfit.

### Military Roadsters

Many of the top manufacturers such as Royal Enfield (see opposite), Rudge-Whitworth, Humber, Raleigh and Swift also offered militarised versions of their civilian roadsters. These were generally single speed machines; usually with more robust frames, that is, if the company also made a tradesmen's bicycle, that frame would be used for the military machine, wider 1¾" wheels, without a chain case but with various combinations of military fittings added.



*Men of the Lancashire Fusiliers (Cyclist Corps) with BSA folding bicycles which can be folded and hung on their backs in one and a half minutes*



*1918 Royal Enfield Military Bike*

**Footnote**

BSA (Birmingham Small Arms) Company continued to manufacture bicycles until 1957 when this part of the business was sold to Raleigh.

Royal Enfield produced bicycles at its Redditch Worcestershire factory until it closed in 1967.

## The Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion

As a result of the 1908 Army reorganisation, Huntingdonshire lost its Volunteer Territorial Battalion and had to contribute to two companies of the 5th Battalion The Bedfordshire Regiment.

In 1913 the idea was put forward to the Huntingdonshire Territorial Association to form an independent Huntingdonshire Territorial Cyclist Battalion. This was approved and led to the go ahead by the War Office in February 1914.

A number of NCOs and men from the two Huntingdonshire companies of The Bedfordshire Regiment were transferred to the new battalion. Eight companies were formed with headquarters in Godmanchester; two local and one in St Ives and Somersham, St Neots and Kimbolton, Ramsey and Warboys, Yaxley and Farcet and two in Fletton, Stanground and Peterborough. The Regimental Band was the original civilian Fletton Victoria Prize Band.

The Battalion had its one and only Annual Territorial Camp in Skegness in July 1914.

Within days of returning War was declared on 4 August and the Battalion was mobilised and sent by train to Grimsby with 550 Officers and men to patrol the coast between Scarborough and Grimsby. The Battalion was moved to Scarborough in 1916 and to Whitby in June 1918.

A second Battalion of cyclists was quickly formed and in October 1914 also sent to Lincolnshire for coastal guard duties.

In the spring of 1915 a Third Battalion was authorised but unable to reach full strength was disbanded and the men recruited shared between the other two Battalions.

After two years of training and coastal patrols the majority of the First Battalion were drafted to France on 28 July 1916 to serve in a reconnaissance role and like all those who followed them, were rebadged to other Regiments. The Huntingdonshire cyclists were never able to fight as a unit outside the UK and eventually men with no Huntingdonshire affiliations were drafted into the two Battalions.

With the end of the War on 11 November 1918 (Armistice Day) the 1st Battalion was stood down on 14 April 1919 and the 2nd Battalion on 12 December 1919. A year later it was reconstituted as the 5th (Huntingdonshire Battalion) the Northamptonshire Regiment.

### Cycle Artificers

The men who were used to maintain all of the cycles in all three of the Battalions were called Cycle Artificers. It was their job to ensure that all of the machines were serviced and in 'tip top' condition. They were all serving members of the Huntingdonshire Cyclist Battalion and specially trained in their trade.

## Cycle Allowance

It was reported that each man bringing a bicycle to camp in good condition and complete with two brakes, mud guards, carrier, lamp, bell, pump and repair outfit would receive the following allowance:-

If present in Camp for 8 days £1.

For every day over 8 days 1/6 per day, making a maximum 15 days of £1 10s 6d.

No cycle allowance can be drawn by men who are less than 8 days in Camp.

Bicycles will be inspected by a Board of Officers after arrival in Camp, and any found not to be complete as above, and not in sound or efficient condition will be rejected, and no allowance will be paid for them.

Bicycles which have handlebars dropped down low, or which have the top stay of the frame sloping downwards to the front will not be accepted as rifles cannot be attached to them and they are otherwise unsuitable.



*A group of Huntingdonshire Cyclists at their Skegness camp before the war in July 1914 (thanks to Martyn Smith)*

*Information for this article has been obtained from a number of websites including the following from which further information can be obtained:*

<http://oldbike.wordpress.com>

<http://www.bendigobug.org.au>

<http://www.huntscycles.co.uk/>

<http://www.godmanchester.co.uk/featured-articles/17-organisations/hunts-cyclists/34-the-huntingdonshire-cyclist-battalions-1914-1919>

## The Huntingdon Cyclists' Poem

A number of poems were written about The Huntingdonshire Cyclists' Brigade but this one in 1914 was written by the Rev K D Knowles, Chaplain to the 1st Battalion.

We come from a little county,  
But we muster a thousand men,  
Recruited in town and village,  
And away from the flat bleak fen;  
We patrol the Eastern coast, sir,  
We are the boys who do not shirk  
Though the wind blows stiff  
Yet we guard your cliff,  
For that is the Hunts. boy's work.

G. N. R. to Grimsby,  
Bicycle up to Hull,  
Pedal on to Hornsea,  
A forty-five mile pull,  
Ride up north to Filey,  
Or ride down south to Spurn,  
We'll do our job for a daily "bob,"  
But we've more than our pay to earn.

We're bred from the old Fen stock, sirs,  
Which oft times fought with Montagu;  
We're hewn from the self-same rock, sirs,  
Stern old Oliver Cromwell knew;  
And throughout the two Battalions  
You'll not find a father's son  
Who will bring shame  
The old fighting name  
Of the lads of Huntingdon.

G. N. R. to Grimsby,  
Bicycle up to Hull,  
Pedal on to Hornsea,  
A forty-five mile pull,  
Ride up north to Filey,  
Or ride down south to Spurn,  
We'll do our job for a daily "bob,"  
And the fame that we mean to earn.

The poem and others can be seen under  
<http://www.huntscycles.co.uk/poetry%20new.htm>

## Cyclists' National War Memorial

Cycling had been an important part of the First World War and also for those returning and it was felt in 1919 that something should be done to commemorate those cyclists who had not returned. Money was raised following a letter in the Cycling magazine for a memorial. Due to its location in what was believed to be near the centre of England, a site was chosen on the village green at Meriden in Warwickshire.

The memorial, a 30 foot high obelisk, faced with 32 tonnes of Cornish granite, was unveiled and dedicated on 21 May 1921 by the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Birkenhead, in the presence of more than 10,000 cyclists from all over England. The inscription on the Memorial reads:

TO THE  
LASTING MEMORY  
OF THOSE  
**CYCLISTS**  
WHO DIED IN THE  
**GREAT WAR**  
1914-1919



*National Cyclists' Memorial dedication in 1921 (CTC)*

The Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) has organised an annual service during May since this time.

A second plaque was added in 1963 for those cyclists lost in the Second World War.

This year's service marking the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War took place on Sunday 18 May. The service was blessed by the Bishop of Warwick and a new plaque unveiled in honour of those who had been lost in conflicts since 1945.

# Pavement Cycling Update

In the last newsletter ((Issue 69 - June 2014) the reasons why people cycle on pavements were put forward, namely: safety - inconsistent signing - not aware of law - lack of training and unsociable behaviour - and what can be done to minimise pedestrian conflict and encourage more cyclists to use the road - better infrastructure - training - responsibility - speed limits.

Since then letters in the press, both locally and nationally, and social media continue to reprimand cyclists for riding on the pavements but very rarely drivers of motor vehicles that are regularly seen to be driving and parking on pavements. It is quite obvious which is likely to have the more serious consequences.

The Government's Minister for Cycling, Robert Goodwill, has recently confirmed the long standing advice about when fines should and should not be issued for cycling on the pavement. This was based on the guidance given in 1999 by the Home Office minister Paul Boetang, for police to issue Fixed Penalty Notices for pavement cycling:

*"The introduction of the fixed penalty is not aimed at responsible cyclists who sometimes feel obliged to use the pavement out of fear of traffic and who show consideration to other pavement users when doing so. Chief police officers, who are responsible for enforcement, acknowledge that many cyclists, particularly children and young people, are afraid to cycle on the road, sensitivity and careful use of police discretion is required."*

London Cycling Campaign Chief Executive Ashok Sinha has said in relation to this guidance:

*"Our advice to cyclists is to respect pedestrian comfort and safety at all times when cycling, and be aware that you could be fined if you cycle on pavements, no matter what the minister says.*

*Our request to the police is to target enforcement on motor traffic offences, which do most harm to cyclists and pedestrians."*

CCNB believes this is exactly the right approach to take. Cyclists should be fined for riding on the pavement if they are dangerous or in any way disrespectful to those on foot. The best way to stop people cycling on pavements is to do what was said in the original article.

# Bedford Town Centre Transport Study

JMP Consultants have been asked by the Borough to carry out a study into the transport network in the town centre, including cross-town and cross-river movements and the potential to build a new bridge at Batts Ford with a view to improving the town's traffic congestion.

# Safer Lorry Designs Update

In the last newsletter (No 69) it was reported that the European Parliament in April 2014 had approved a EU directive for safer lorry designs to be converted into national law.

In July 2014 the supermarket chain Sainsbury's launched in London a delivery lorry designed specifically for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians. The safer lorry will be introduced onto the streets of London shortly with a plan to introduce them nationwide over the next five years.



Safety features include:

- Cameras and video technology to give the driver 360 degree vision of the road around the vehicle
- Proximity sensors to alert the driver to other road users such as a cyclist or pedestrian
- More indicators along the sides of the vehicle to let cyclists know when it will be turning left
- Side guard extensions and reflective infills to stop cyclists from falling under the vehicle
- Side lights to give the driver more visibility during the hours of darkness
- Warning sticker to alert road users they are in the driver's blind spot
- A loud warning signal when the tail gate is being lowered.

# Hastings and St Leonards Cycle Views

A 3km off-road cycle track runs along the upper promenade between Hastings old town and West St Leonards in East Sussex. It is a part of National Cycle Network Route 2, a long distance cycle route which when complete will run from Dover in Kent to St Austell in Cornwall.

At the Hastings end it starts near to the Jerwood Gallery, a gallery of contemporary British art which opened in 2012, set in amongst the old fishing huts in The Slade.

The Gallery houses the Jerwood foundation's Collection of 20th and 21st Century British art including works by Sir Stanley Spencer and LS Lowry.



*Jerwood Gallery  
Hastings*

*Marine Court  
St Leonards*



At the West St Leonards end it passes the Marine Court, designed as a beached version of the Cunard cruise liner, Queen Mary.

The building was opened in 1937 as the largest block of flats in the country. Today the building looks a sorry state of its former glory.



*'Heart Belongs to Hastings' sculpture with 2010 fire damaged pier in background*



← *Knitted bike*



## London Cycle Hire Anniversary

July 2014 marked the four year anniversary of Transport for London's Barclay Cycle hire scheme. The scheme, the second largest cycle hire system in Europe, now has 10,000 hire bikes across the capital with 19,000 docking points available over 700 docking stations every 300 to 500 metres.

More than 31 million hires have been made since its introduction with this last summer seeing over one million hires a month.

For details of the scheme including up to the minute information visit <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/barclaycyclehire>

## Paris Cycle Hire Scheme Addition

Not to be out beaten by the London scheme Paris has launched the world's first bike share scheme - P'tit Velib - for children between the ages of 2 and 8 years old.

The scheme consists of four types of bike including no-pedal balance bikes for very small kids and bigger ones with and without stabilisers. They are currently available at four green and pedestrianised locations in Paris.



The Mayor of Paris said that because good habits start early he wanted to familiarize the young in the use of more environmentally friendly transport at the youngest age.

For details visit: <http://blog.velib.paris.fr/en/ptit-velib/>

# Cycle Safety Report

Over the period November 2013 to March 2014 The House of Commons Transport Committee took evidence from a range of people and organisations on cycle safety particularly in cities and towns. The public were asked to share their views on what central and local government could do to improve cycling safety; and on the feasibility and desirability of segregating cyclists from other road users. The report on this work was published on 18 July 2014. The summary stated:

“In 2013, 109 cyclists were killed, and 3,143 were seriously injured in road accidents in England, Scotland and Wales. An increase in the number of people cycling in the past decade may mean that these figures hide a decline in risk of cycling, as the proportion of cyclists killed or seriously injured per journey falls. This, however, is no comfort to the families and friends of cyclists who have lost their lives, nor does it improve the perception of risk around cycling. We are clear that there is far more that can be done to improve the safety of our roads and to encourage more people to cycle.

Reducing the dangers faced by cyclists on the road - including poorly designed junctions, aggressive driving and unsegregated, narrow cycle lanes - will mean thinking about the kind of communities we want to live in. Our roads must be safe for all who want to use them, whether pedestrians, cyclists, motorcyclists or cars. Infrastructure projects should consider cycling from the earliest stage, with road design treating cycling as a valid form of transport, rather than as an afterthought. There is no one-size-fits-all solution that is right for all our villages, towns and cities, so we call on local authorities to work with cyclists and local residents to develop and design ways of making roads safer.

We repeat the recommendation in our 2012 Report for greater political leadership. The Prime Minister's support for cycling must be demonstrated by a steady and planned increase in the funding for cycling, which should reach £10 a head by 2020. The Department for Transport can and should do more to promote a culture of mutual respect and safety among all road users by, for example, increasing the availability of cycle training, amending the driving test and reducing risks associated with HGVs. Above all, as we stressed in our 2012 Report, improving road safety requires a cross-departmental effort. We are concerned that this has not yet materialised. We look forward to a clear commitment, backed by a timetable for action, on making our roads safe for all users.”

The full report can be downloaded from:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmselect/cmtran/286/286.pdf>

## CCNB Christmas Dinner

25 Restaurant @ Bedford College.

**Wednesday 10 December 2014**

A booking form with the menu details will be sent shortly to all members.

See <http://www.ccnb.org.uk/diaryb.html> for other events

### Local Cycle Rides Contact:

CTC - North Beds Section - (01234) 219148

# Cycling Campaign for North Bedfordshire



### Our Vision

To see Bedford as a

**'Town of Cyclists' & 'Cycle Friendly Communities'**

### Objectives

- ◆ To promote, encourage and support cycling as an important means of transport and recreation.
- ◆ To encourage consideration of the needs of cyclists in all aspects of transport planning and management, access issues and recreational use.

### Membership

Please contact us if you have any cycling issues or better still, consider becoming a member to give us added weight in our discussions with the relevant authorities. Write to:

**Membership Secretary, c/o 15 Dove Road, Bedford, MK41 7AA**

including your name, address, postcode, telephone number and e-mail address (if available) together with your subscription.

Single £3.00 (£13 for 5yr); Family £5.00 (£22 for 5yr)