

## Group Rides Guidance Note

The main object of group rides is to have a safe and enjoyable ride in company. Riding in a group gives you the chance to mix with people who enjoy cycling, a chance to make new friends and ride to places (via roads) you wouldn't visit on your own. Riding in a group will also teach and improve cycling skills. Group riding can also increase your level of fitness.

**When cycling in a group safety for yourself, your riding companions and other road users is paramount.**

This guidance note is aimed at people who are new to cycling in a group. Hopefully, by reading this they will have some idea of what to expect and won't feel quite such a newcomer. That said, there may be some new information here even for the experienced rider. If I have used terms you don't understand, come out on a ride and someone will be happy to explain.

### Things to take:

I suggest you take the following with you.

- Toolkit, comprising:
- Spare inner tubes (I carry 3) with valves that are suitable for the type of rims you're using, especially if you are using deep section rims
- A pump that works or some means of inflating a tyre after a puncture. If you are using CO2 cartridges make sure they are full ones and you aren't packing the empties.
- Tyre levers.
- A puncture repair kit, just in case 3 inner tubes is not enough (it always has been for me so I'll keep packing the repair kit).
- I include a 3 inch piece of old tyre, it can patch up a large hole in a tyre to get you home.
- A multi-tool with Allen keys, screwdrivers etc., Lifu and Park do a good range.
- Chain rivet extractor, there is no way I know of repairing a snapped chain without one.

The above seems a lot but it takes up very little space and doesn't weigh too much, it will easily fit into a small bag under the saddle.

### Also take:

- Mobile phone for emergencies.
- A small amount of money for the tea stop and emergencies.
- A full water bottle and may be some food depending on the length of the ride.
- A racing cape.
- Some form of ID.

### Before setting out

- Check your bike is working properly. Particularly:
- Tyres are in good condition, not worn to the canvas or full of cuts, you're far less likely to puncture a tyre which is in good condition.
- Chain is oiled and in good condition.
- Brakes and gears work.
- Working lights (only if the ride will take place in the dark eg mid-week winter training)

Sadly, punctures are an inevitable part of cycling.

If you don't know how to repair a puncture ask one of the experienced riders to show you, it's not difficult. But it would be best to do this at the clubroom rather than at the side of the road, in the rain, in the middle of December when it's cold.

Also, make sure you can get your tyres on and off the rims. Some makes (Continental for example) have a reputation for being on the impossible side of difficult in this respect.

Often the Saturday ride will be decided in the week and details posted on the club Forum. This gives you the chance to check where you're going well in advance.

Mudguards are not compulsory for winter rides but are greatly appreciated, especially by those of us who wear contact lenses.

### At the meet

Stone Wheelers Cycling Club DO NOT have ride leaders.

The rides are quite informal and relaxed. The more experienced riders will tend to take charge. Less experienced riders are expected to heed the advice offered by the more experienced.



Before leaving everyone should be made aware of the route, where the cafe stop is, how the ride will be conducted and at what pace the group will be aiming to ride.

Saturday morning runs meet at the clubroom at 9am and leave at 9-15am. The ride is between 50 and 55 miles with the aim to average 17mph.

The ride will be to a café usually with a different return route.

Every effort is made to keep the group together so it will be run at the pace of the slower riders and the group will stop to wait for dropped riders. The group will stop for people with punctures or other mechanical problems - assistance will be given but don't automatically expect someone to fix your bike for you.

If you don't intend completing the ride let everyone know. Sometimes people only have time to ride for an hour say or don't want to stop at the café - please let everyone know so they're not looking for you.

## IT'S A GROUP RIDE NOT A RACE.

Save the racing until you are wearing a number.

Group rides are ridden two abreast except when it is necessary to ride single file due to the road or traffic conditions.

There will be a call of "line up" when the group needs to change from two abreast to single file.

If it's your first group ride or you think you might struggle at 17mph for 50 odd miles, sit on the back of the group and don't take a turn on the front. Nobody will mind and it's better to sit on than be dropped and everyone have to wait. It is much easier at the back of the group than the front as you are sheltered from the wind and use less energy.

The group should ride at the pace of the slowest rider but it is up to them to give a shout of "easy" before they get dropped. The riders on the front will not know that riders at the back are struggling and looking behind you when riding in a group should be discouraged as it can easily lead to crashes.

The most likely place for the slower riders to be dropped is on the hills. So the group should ride at a steady pace and keep together. The alternative is to ride at your own pace and stop at the top of the hill for a general re-groupment.

Ideally, the group should remain compact without any gaps between riders. If you let a gap open you'll only have to close it later and all the time you're using up energy. More importantly you make it harder for those behind you and they are the ones likely to be struggling most.

A compact group takes up less space on the road and make it easy to be overtaken which is safer for the riders.

In a group don't brake suddenly or harshly, people behind are likely to crash into the back of you.

Don't sit up suddenly and freewheel this has the same effect as braking - and potentially the same result.

Try to ride in a straight line, don't suddenly move to the left or right (difficult with the disgusting state of British roads I know), such movements tend to be amplified down the group and can cause crashes.

Riders should call out hazards in the road; parked cars, on coming traffic, grit on the road, mud etc.

All the time everyone should be trying to make the ride safe, comfortable and enjoyable.

If you decide to turn off, turn back or leave the group please let everyone know, we don't want to be looking for riders that have decided to go home.

### Training rides

Group training rides are similar to Clubruns but faster - sometimes much faster.

The aim is to get everyone to a higher level of fitness - very high in some cases - and doing that hurts (if it doesn't you ain't doing it right).

All the skills you employ on a social group ride will be used on a training ride plus a few more.

At the meet it should be clearly stated that this is a training ride and how it is to be conducted. It is likely that dropped riders will not be waited for but there may be other provisions for them such short cuts, cut throughs on a circuit, laps out on a short circuit.

Like clubruns the route should be described along with the target speed (although this may be "as fast as we can manage"). It should also be decided if the group will be riding through and off or just in twos.

If you have never ridden through and off before please, please sit on the back of the group and watch what happens.

Only join in when you are sure you can do so safely.

Cycling in a group like riding a bike in the first place is a skill that needs to be learned and practised. It's not difficult but can be a little daunting the first time. Once you can do it you don't forget how and it is very rewarding.

If you need advice just ask one of the experienced riders, they will be delighted that you think they are worth asking.

### Dealing with Accidents & Injuries

**The club DOES NOT provide first aid cover or medical support on group rides.**

In the event of an accident the group will do all they can to assist any riders who have suffered injury.

Riders who have pre-existing medical conditions that require special treatment must take precautions to ensure that information about their condition can be easily found by the emergency services or other medical professionals in the aftermath of an accident or the onset of the medical condition.

One way of doing this is to wear a MedicAlert bracelet or pendant containing a telephone number which any doctor can ring to find out about your medical conditions. To find out more, contact your GP, or contact MedicAlert Freephone: 0800 581 420 <http://www.medicalert.org.uk>.

All riders taking part in group rides should carry third party insurance. This is available, at a very reasonable rate, through Stone Wheelers' Club Membership of the CTC. All riders taking part in group rides do so at their own risk, Stone Wheelers Cycling Club and its officials accept no liability.

