

## **Rules and Etiquette for riding in groups**

The Club, which was founded in 1922, just loves cycling. We have an enviable sporting reputation, locally, nationally and even internationally, plus many off-the-bike social events.

We also offer group rides to cyclists of all abilities, in and around Maidstone and the Weald. It is to those group riders that this leaflet is addressed.

We want riders to gain maximum enjoyment from their group rides whether highly energetic or social. All riders do so at their own risk but experience shows that adherence to these rules and etiquette will create the safest possible environment in which we can all enjoy our cycling.

The rules and advice incorporate long standing practices and will be familiar to all experienced riders. Whilst they have been drawn up to help members who have never ridden in a group we would like everyone to make a point of reading and following them.

We have taken the opportunity to include items of general advice that may help new or relatively inexperienced cyclists.

### **Safety and Risk Management**

All riders take part in the group runs at their own risk. Those risks can never be totally eliminated but can be minimised by following this leaflet in the spirit as well as the letter.

Club officers will be happy to offer general advice, to help you interpret these rules and have been asked to ensure that they are followed at all times. They will politely point out any deviations to the rider(s) concerned and seek compliance. If they believe that a rider's conduct is putting others at risk they have the authority to exclude the offender from the group run and will subsequently report the circumstances to the committee who may wish to take further action.

Consider your own insurance needs. In particular ensure that you have Third Party (Public Liability) insurance that covers you whilst cycling. Although this is not a legal requirement, the current "sue everyone for everything" attitude makes insurance essential. The Club has such a policy to cover claims against the Club and its officers but it does not cover individual riders. You should consider joining either the Cyclists Touring Club or British Cycling - membership includes both Third Party insurance and free legal assistance should you need to claim against someone else.

## Warning Calls when Riding in a Group

**These calls and signals are universal to all experienced cyclists - please use them at the appropriate times**

### **“Oil Up” (or “Car up“)**

There is a vehicle coming up behind the group

### **“Oil Down” (or “car ahead“)**

There is a vehicle approaching towards the front of the group

### **“Single out”**

A call from riders at the back of the group when a vehicle is unable to pass the 2 abreast column safely. This call must be relayed forward by everyone to ensure that the move to single file is executed quickly and safely. The standard procedure is for the outside rider to drop back behind the inside rider. The call “single out” alerts everyone to the need to slow up and create spaces in the inside file.

### **“Clear” and “Oil on Left/Right”**

This call lets following riders know at junctions, when the group is joining or crossing another road, whether or not the road is still clear. If the group cannot stay together the first ones across ride slowly until the others catch up.

### **“Pothole”**

Any pothole that could cause a rider to fall. If possible indicate where it is so that following riders can steer away from it and not into it. Do this by either pointing or adding to the call **“on the left (or right).”**

### **“On the Left/Right”**

A general warning of some kind of hazard - usually parked cars or pedestrians.. For hazards on the left an alternative warning is to put your left hand behind your back, pointing to the right, away from the hazard. Give way to pedestrians - they can feel intimidated by cyclists just as we sometimes feel intimidated by motorists.

### **“Stopping” and “Slowing” (or “Easy”).**

If you brake without letting those those behind know your intention they can easily run into you

### **“Puncture”**

Let the others know and they will wait while you repair it. (You will probably be given help).

### **“Horse(s)”**

The group is about to pass horses and special care is needed. Pass as widely as possible. Make sure that both the horse and rider are aware of your presence and if you are approaching from behind call out. Pay attention to any request by the horse rider - they know the temperament of the horse and its likely reaction to a group of brightly clad cyclists.

### **Finally**

Let others know if you are unable to keep up, have a problem or have decided to leave the group.

## General Etiquette

Ride steadily. Keep a steady line and constant speed while in a group. Any sudden change is magnified as it reaches riders at the back and so can have dramatic consequences.

No racing. The Club holds many competitive events in which you can race to your hearts content, but please not on group runs.

Do not overtake the leader. If you have to, then do not push your way back into your original position but rejoin at the back of the group as soon as possible.

Ride two abreast where it is safe to do so but always be prepared to single out when necessary. Ride immediately behind the rider in front - do not overlap either forwards or sideways. Overlapping forwards gives you no chance to avoid the rider in front if he swerves or falls, and overlapping sideways results in the group presenting a three abreast profile. Never ride more than two abreast.

When approaching a hill anticipate the gradient and change gear in good time. Missing a gear change on the steep bit can bring you to a sudden halt - not a good thing for the riders behind you!

Ride safely at all times. Follow the requirements of the Highway Code as they apply to cyclists and guidance from your leaders.

Treat members of the group and other road users with courtesy. Acknowledge with a wave courteous behaviour by other road users. (Many oncoming motorists will slow down or stop when they meet a large group of cyclists, whilst others allow the whole group to join or cross a major road).

Do not "wave through" a following vehicle that is waiting to overtake - let the driver make this decision. This will avoid the risk of being held responsible if the overtaking results in any form of accident.

Do not react to bad driving incidents with gestures or provoke retaliation. Remember a road rage motorist has a one ton weapon!

Ride with the group which best suits your ability. It is usually better (and less embarrassing) to start low and build up. If in doubt the officers will be happy to advise. It is sometimes nice to try an easier group, especially if you are a bit off colour. It is considered bad manners to hold back a strong group when an easier group is available.

Visitors and potential members are welcome to try the rides free of charge but should apply for membership after a maximum of four rides.

## **Helpful hints for new cyclists (and a useful reminder for the more experienced)**

If you do not currently take regular exercise and/or are in any doubt as to your health, please consult your doctor before starting. Some general fitness is necessary so you might find it useful to try a short ride on your own, to check your fitness and familiarity with the bike, before joining a group.

Don't try to push yourself too hard, particularly on the hills. Ride up at your own pace - walking is allowed but nice low gears are better! In either case the group will wait at the top.

Carry personal details - name, address, contact phone number and some money.

Carry drinks and food, even on short rides. The food can be some form of high energy bar to get you to the next café stop.

If you have problems or decide to leave the group then tell the leader.

Well behaved children are welcome provided they are accompanied by a parent or other responsible adult. Children aged 16 and 17 may ride with parental approval and will otherwise be treated as adults.

Wear cycle specific clothing if possible as it provides a better level of comfort and practicality. It doesn't have to be lycra - there are now casual style tops and shorts designed for cyclists. A brightly coloured jacket or jersey makes you more visible to other road users. Carry a waterproof jacket, not only for the rain but also to give an extra layer if you have to stop with a puncture and cool down. A club jacket or jersey will help to publicise the club and also make you very visible.

Carry enough tools to get you out of everyday problems like punctures or nuts or bolts working loose. It's easier to change an inner tube than it is to repair a puncture at the roadside (especially if it's cold or wet). Carry two spare inner tubes, tyre levers, a pump and spanners / allen keys to fit as the minimum. A puncture outfit will also be needed in case you get more than 2 punctures.

Helmets and mudguards are optional. Both perform useful functions - only you can decide if you want additional protection against head injuries. Mudguards prevent you getting wet and dirty and also reduce the amount that you deposit on the rider behind.

Keep your bike in good condition and replace any worn out parts. The group will help if something goes wrong but will not be best pleased if the problem was caused by poor maintenance. Keep a close check on your tyres which should be fully inflated, especially the one on the back wheel as it's always out of sight. Look for bulges or cuts as well as the actual tread depth and pattern.

Remember that just as we tend to notice only the inconsiderate or bad drivers so other road users see poor behaviour by some cyclists. Make sure that you do not provide ammunition to the anti-cyclists lobby.