

Summer is *here*

CTC Northampton talk to your local magazines about welcoming new riders after a century of cycling



You want some exercise. You have a bike. But you don't know where to cycle, and you don't want to do it alone. This is where cycling clubs come in – clubs like CTC Northampton, which after a century of existence is still going strong, meeting for regular rides around Northamptonshire and working to improve conditions for cyclists in the town.

“We organise club rides on most weekends of the year, catering for a range of abilities,” says Phil Johnson, the club's Secretary. “We also get involved with local cycling issues, commenting on new road projects and other plans that affect cycling in the area.”

CTC Northampton is part of the national cycling charity and campaign group Cycling UK. Why “CTC”?

“Originally, we were known as the Cyclists' Touring Club,” says Phil. “A few years ago, the national organisation changed its name, when it shifted from being a club, to a broader based charity working on behalf of all cyclists. We decided to retain the letters CTC, which have a local history and identity. But we also strongly support Cycling UK's mission to broaden the appeal of cycling in everyday life.”

“We aim to be an open and friendly group, and we regularly welcome new riders. If you are looking to join a group of keen and friendly cyclists of varying ages and ability, this will be the club for you,” says Phil.

One of the club's notable achievements was to produce the first comprehensive cycling map of Northampton. “This was spear-headed by one of our members, John Cutler, who organised members to rate every street in the town for cycling comfort and traffic levels. The County Council provided support and produced later updates of the map.”

John Crick adds that “Many people who start cycling for leisure gradually start cycling for everyday trips to work, to school and to the shops. 40% of car journeys in Northampton are less than 2 miles, which can often be done by bike. Reducing car journeys lowers air pollution, reduces congestion, helps towards our carbon-neutral target, and makes the town better for everyone.”

According to Phil, the club rides every weekend, typically alternating between shorter Saturday rides and longer (but slower) Sunday ones. “On Saturdays we usually have two groups, a Moderate group that rides 30 to 40 miles, and a Brisk one that rides about 5 miles further. We all meet at the same coffee stop to enjoy the craic and return by early afternoon.”

Sunday rides are typically a bit longer, and slower. “Whatever the ride, no-one will be left behind, and we encourage anyone who has cycled on a road before to come with us!” says Phil.

Rides normally start at 9.30 am from various meeting points around the edges of the town, which are publicised on the club's website, blog and Facebook pages.

“In early July we will run our very popular Guy Barber ride in aid of the British Heart Foundation. There will be two routes of 50 or 100 miles to St Neots or Cambridge. We are also looking at organising an overnight ride to a location further afield than usual. Sprinkled among our regular road rides there is the odd off-road ride for anyone looking for an opportunity to get a little muddier than usual.”

The club has an active website, blog, Twitter and Facebook feeds, as well as its own email forum and a Strava club.

Phil was keen to pass on some comments by recent participants in CTC Northampton rides:

“So glad I found CTC. A fantastic group of cyclists offering very varied and interesting routes. Combined with Northampton Social Cyclists, CTC gives me fantastic ride options. I particularly like the fact that although it is an extremely well-run organisation it does not seem to take itself too seriously and manages to maintain a fun element. May you go from strength to strength, and I look forward to many more rides with you.”

“Thank you so much guys, yesterday was amazing made even better by great bunch of guys, I was letting my wife know about it when I got home, but I look forward to the next ride.”

“You'll not regret starting cycling with a group” Phil enthuses. “It's the best way to see the county, get fit and make friends at the same time.”

Check out ridewithgps.com for more routes, there is a huge range to choose from. From the shorter 15 mile routes to 100 mile routes and many inbetween. This website helpfully shows the elevation of each route to help you pick the best one for your ability.

If you'd like to get involved, go to the club's website www.ctc-northampton.org.uk and have a look at the Calendar, or contact Phil or other ride leaders using the details there.



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