

Velo Vision Sample Article

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If you have any problems or suggestions about the magazine in general, or this PDF article in particular, please email me at

peter@velovision.co.uk

I hope you enjoy the read.

Peter Eland
Editor and Publisher, Velo Vision

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VELO VISION AND VELO-VISION We weren't first with the name. Velo-Vision (note the hyphen) is a progressive HPV-friendly bike shop in Körten, near Bergisch-Gladbach, Germany, who also make their own recumbents. Velo Vision magazine is working in friendly harmony with Velo-Vision in Germany. Contact them on www.velo-vision.de

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Cover photograph: Racers giving their all at Cyclefest's Salt Ayre track.

Opposite: As the sun sets a Moulton rider competes in the fun hillclimbs at Cyclefest. Both photos by Peter Eland.

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SHOWS AND PLANS

This issue of *Velo Vision* seems packed with reports of shows, gatherings and rides: it's been a busy summer. And there's more coming up soon after this issue goes to press. First is the Cycle 2004 show in London towards the end of September, where we'll be on stand 205. All the details are on page 9. Then for the first time I'll be travelling to Las Vegas for Interbike, the main US bike show.

Alongside reports on these shows, we have a number of reviews already lined up for next issue. Barring last-minute hold-ups we should have two very different small-wheeled bikes to try: the Bridgestone Moulton and Airminal Joey. We're also promised reports from some of the first owners of the adult KMX and ICE Q low-cost recumbent trikes.

Meanwhile, I hope you enjoy this issue.

Peter Eland

PS We're now taking orders for 2005 Cycle & Recycle calendars, which will arrive from the US very shortly. As the many readers who have ordered previous issues will know, these make ideal gifts and are a fine bike-friendly way to plan the year. More details on our website, or see page 56 of this issue.



CYCLEVISION 2004

We report from CycleVision in the Netherlands, taking place for the ninth time this year and as fresh as ever...

CycleVision is many things to many people. For some, it's a pure racing event, in previous years hosting the European HPV championship, and this year the World Championship. It certainly attracts a strong racing contingent from across Europe, with occasional participants from further afield each year. The venue, an automotive test track, is ideal for high-speed circuits, and it must be one of the few courses which can accommodate the very large fields of racers who take part. Even the three-hour race had 113 participants, offering great spectator interest as the bikes streamed past. The colder and cloudy conditions were certainly easier on the athletes than last year's scorching sunlight, but did perhaps put off a number of day visitors, at least on the Saturday.

Many other visitors to CycleVision see the racing as an interesting spectacle, but not really the main attraction. Instead, they're there to check out the trade exhibits, talk to manufacturers, or just to look for bargains. Various manufacturers and dealers use CycleVision as an opportunity to clear out old stock, and it's a good place to pick up odd, rare items. For example, I spotted a large pile of the old-style Sachs disk brakes – I know some Greenspeed owners who, since these brakes were discontinued several years ago, have never found a replacement as reliable.

There's also a large test-track on hand to try out any model you're particularly keen on. A separate test track for children's bikes was an excellent idea to minimise the chaos.

Finally, there are the extra attractions: talks, a 'Flyke' demonstration (it's a micro-light aircraft based on a recumbent trike chassis), and much more.

What will the organisers come up with for the tenth anniversary event? We're looking forward to finding out! CycleVision website: www.ligfiets.net/cyclevision



PHOTO: hoverfiets.nl



AZUB BAGS ▶

Recumbent makers Azub Bike from the Czech Republic (www.azub.cz) were showing their ever-more-refined range of recumbents, along with a set of nicely-made and reasonably-priced recumbent bags (seen here attached to an Optima Stinger, not an Azub). They now have dealers in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, France and Finland, and are keen to extend their network. We hope to review one of their bikes for a future issue.

BIGCOGS ▶

There was nobody around to explain what the owner of this bike was trying to achieve with the extra-large chainring and sprockets. There may be some small efficiency benefit to using larger sprockets (as links of the chain must pivot through a smaller angle as they wrap round, and it is under less tension), but any effect would be negligible given that the bike uses a hub gear with its own, much more significant internal losses. Maybe there is a durability benefit? Increasing the sizes adds to weight, of course. Or perhaps it just looks nice?

HOVERFIETS ▶

An extra attraction this year was the display of a human-powered hovercraft from a group of mechanical engineering students at the Technical University of Delft. The Hoverfiets can apparently hover quite satisfactorily for 30-40 seconds, but they're still working on a forwards propulsion system. There's plenty more information in English and Dutch at www.hoverfiets.nl

LA FLECHE ▶

The "La Fleche" (The Arrow) velomobile is not French as one might expect, but was built by Henry Bath from Amsterdam. It was, he says, based on the Vector racing trike. It weighs 32kg, is 3.5m long and is made principally from carbon fibre. Extremely impressive for a one-off, the level of finish rivalled commercial velomobiles.

[CYCLEVISION 2004]



CARVX ▶

We showed a picture of the CarvX prototype in issue 12, page 5. Their website www.carvx.com is now up and running, but it doesn't explain the 'big question', and one that was rather troubling designer Rob Crins when we met him at CycleVision. With his graduation just a few months off he'd designed himself into a bit of a corner. The bike looks fantastic, with full wishbone suspension, lean-steer and off-road styling. There's just a tiny problem – there's no connection between chain and drive wheels.



BACK-TO-BACK ▶

There were several back-to-back recumbent bikes whizzing round the track – it's a very aerodynamic arrangement and popular with racers. This machine was unusual in having the rear seat fitted out with handcranks. As in many such machines, each rider has their own drivetrain, and the frame separates in the middle for transport.



Although the drive is taken back to between the rear wheels, the double-wishbone suspension means that the axles and the shaft which supports the final drive sprockets will move relative to each other. At the time Rob was pondering using a system involving splined shafts and universal joints. We wish him luck!

CYCLING TO CYCLEVISION

It's always nice to arrive at a cycling event by bike, and the close proximity of the CycleVision venue to the channel ports makes this possible for many UK visitors, even those riding unusual bikes – as all sorts of cycle travel for just a nominal charge on the ferries. This year a group of five riders sailed from Newcastle to Ijmuiden on Wednesday night, leaving Thursday for the ride over to Lelystad. We took a more northerly course than the usual direct way, which is straight through Amsterdam and out the other side. The new route took us along the 23km dike which separates two inland seas, the IJsselmeer and the Markermeer. The amazing aquaduct which takes ships over the cycle path is impressive, but the profusion of midges made the riding unpleasant at times. On the way back we decided to give it a miss, and took the Amsterdam alternative.

RIGHT: Along the route was this lovely little ferry taking us across a canal – the fee for bikes was 45 cents (about 30 pence).



BELOW: Still a relative novelty for UK visitors, the profusion of wind turbines across the countryside always makes for a good photo opportunity. Although some object to them, in the flat landscape I felt the majestically-revolving blades added some welcome visual variety. Only when very close did we ever hear any noise from them. Here Ken Davison takes a windmill break.



CYCLING AT CYCLEVISION

With the main event taking place over the weekend, early arrivers could end up at a loose end on the Friday were it not for the CycleVision Rally – a 50km tour of the region. Participants could go at their own pace following directions, and answering questions on local points of interest. Some fun mini-time-trial loops were optional extras. A very enjoyable and friendly way to explore some of the history, wildlife and culture of the region, and get out on the bike for the day.



ABOVE: The 'Lucifer's Tongue' sculpture seems to float over one of the many flood control embankments. While motorists see it only at a distance of several hundred yards as they pass on a main road, the cycle track passes within metres. The identity of the artist – Ruud van de Wint – was one of the Rally questions.

MAIN IMAGE: Flevoland, reclaimed from the sea, is flat as a pancake. Nonetheless, wind turbines and electricity pylons can give a striking vertical contrast to the wide-open landscapes.



▲ KICKE SCOOTERBIKE

An interesting manufacturing process created the 'Kicke' child's scooter/bike, presented by Johan Malaihollo and Edwin Reijm and inspired by the Like-a-bike. They now have eight prototypes which they modestly describe as 'home-made'. Apparently the stainless steel sheet is first cut to its intricate shape by a computer-guided waterjet cutter, and then folded to a box-section before being TIG welded. Wheels were salvaged from an electric wheelchair. Handlebar parts are aluminium, and as the child outgrows the machine as a scooter, cranks can be added to make it into a proper bicycle.

▼ VALVE LIGHT

Arpad Szölze from Szeged in Hungary had come to the event as part of a European tour. He was riding a unique machine: he told me it was built by a local maker who had only built one recumbent before, and it was given its marvellous snakeskin paintjob by a motorcycle company. He'd been busy trying out the commercial recumbents on offer at CycleVision, but declared himself still reasonably satisfied with his machine. I had a brief ride myself, and while not the most efficient of machines with its high riding position, mid-drive and fat tyres, it handled excellently. A nice



detail caught my eye: the tyre valves were fitted with small LED lights for extra visibility at night.



▲ TREADLE BIKE

Kelsey Bower, visiting CycleVision from the USA, tries out a reciprocating drive system brought along by Rien de Kloet. He told me that he'd fitted the system to his Optima Rider trike as an experiment and for fun – and although it did sort of work, it wasn't a great success. While such a system might offer benefits when building a faired bike (because you need to leave less clearance for the feet) it didn't feel 'nice' at all, perhaps because of the abrupt change of direction of the legs at the end of each stroke. The system used an extra driveshaft under the seat onto which were mounted two freewheels. Spring-loaded chains from each treadle ran over these, and an extra sprocket took the drive back to the rear wheel. The copper pipe projecting forwards is to support a small pulley: a cable runs over this linking the two footplates to ensure left and right movements alternate, just as they would with a conventional crank.



PINO CHILD CRANK ▶

Among the exhibitors were Hase Bikes, and they had a neat accessory for their Pino tandem to demonstrate. The front rider on this bike is in the recumbent position, the rear rider (who steers) is upright. This makes the front seat a very versatile platform, and it's a popular machine for child-carrying and special needs use as well as just for touring. The latest gadget is for families who might want to swap between an adult and child rider on the front, without excessive workshop time to change the bike over. It's a set of child's cranks which simply clamps onto the front boom behind the existing set of (adult) cranks, disturbing the chainline only slightly and using quick-release latches to attach. Just remember to set the two sets of cranks parallel!



▼ **VERSATILE**

This striking 'roof' for the Versatile velomobile was created by owner Wim van Wijnen, who some may recall as the inventor of the 'Flevo' mid-steer system. The front 'fin' is for appearance rather than for structural purposes.

Unfortunately just a few days before the show the Versatile's manufacturers,



Flevobike, had announced that future machines will be 2000 Euros more expensive than before – so the price is now 7800 Euros including VAT. This news came too late for Issue 14 of *Velo Vision*, where we had an extensive road test of the Versatile and several other velomobiles. Flevobike say that the price increase was inevitable when they took a close look at their manufacturing costs for the ten machines they've produced so far.



▲ **VREDESTEIN HPV**

Dutch tyre makers Vredestein were showing this slick 'HPV' tyre – it should be a very easy-rolling, high quality design and available in the popular 20" (406) size used on many recumbents. They're still working on adding extra puncture protection, and it's expected to sell for 25 Euros when launched around April next year.



◀ **TILTING FASTFWD**

Aiming to combine the best of bicycle and tricycle was this three-wheeler from Bram Smit – who also makes the FastFwd range recumbent bikes and trikes, some for children (www.fastfwd.nl). The two rear wheels are linked together so that the bike chassis can tilt just as it would on a two-wheeler – and the steering at the front is again just like a normal bicycle recumbent. Indeed, it uses the front end of the FastFwd separable low racer. The intention is that while retaining the dynamics of a bike, you gain the extra safety benefits of an extra wheel on slippery surfaces, for example.

I must admit I didn't find it an easy machine to ride, but then I'm not really used to low-rider recumbent bikes anyway. Other onlookers had more success when they had a go, and came back with smiles.

One other noteworthy feature on this bike is that the rear wheels are constructed using disks of Nomex composite – this sandwiches a 'honeycomb' structure between two stiff skins to form a very lightweight and strong plate.



▶ **A NEW WAY TO STEER**

Almost still warm from the welding torch, this unpainted prototype was built to test out a new type of steering geometry, with the steering axis tilted just back from vertical above and ahead of the front wheel. Designer is Bauke Muntz, whose work has featured heavily in our previous *CycleVision* reports (in *Velo Visions* 3, 7 and 11). I think the idea is that the steering axis is in line with the tension run of the chain, so pedalling won't affect the steering excessively. This allows a compact front wheel drive layout to be used without requiring the rider to master the bend-in-the-middle 'Flevo' type of steering (which many find more or less impossible). It also avoids the sharp bends in the chainrun and noisy chain pulleys which other front wheel designs employ.

I just couldn't get the hang of riding this machine, but as the picture shows, Danny Siepman of Zephyr Ligfietsen (who distribute *Velo Vision* in the Netherlands) managed to steer a reasonably steady course. It'll be interesting to see what comes of it, though, after some further development.



FRISKING A FOLDER

When Stephen Hall visited London's Houses of Parliament, Brompton in hand, he knew security would be strict...

I'm one of those people who works a long way from home and relies on public transport. Taking a normal bike on my usual train route is just about possible, but a major hassle, but I do often need local transport at the end of my journey. The answer was obvious – get a folding bike. But, I thought, they look so horrible, have child's-bike wheels and I'd look like an idiot... so I held out until I couldn't take any more.

I was in London one day in April, and passed by a bike shop near Tower Bridge. They had a bunch of folders, so I wandered in. The Birdy was lovely but way too expensive so I was advised to try a Brompton. A bright yellow demo bike was whisked into view, swiftly unfolded, re-folded, and unfolded again. It took less than 30 seconds to fold the thing – and into a very compact package. I was impressed, even the chain was tucked out of harm's way. So the man said "Go take it for a ride", and I did.

To my surprise it really wasn't that bad. The 100psi tyres rolled smoothly, the handling was quick and responsive, and even the brakes worked OK. The riding position was upright but comfortable, and there was just enough suspension on the rear end to take out the worst of the bumps.

The Brompton was actually quite a nice little bike. I went back to the shop, bought a black one, and 20 minutes later it was ready for me. As soon as I left the shop a chap in a suit came up and asked me all about the bike. Two more people did the same within five minutes. Blimey, this is getting as much attention as the recumbent, I thought, as I pedalled west along the South Bank cycle path.

In due course I arrived at Westminster, where I was due to attend a meeting in the Houses of Parliament later that afternoon, and I asked a policeman where I could park the bike. "There's parking for bicycles in the underground car park over there" he said, so I duly followed his directions and found the racks.

At this point I engaged brain and remembered I didn't have a lock with me.

Well, it's a folder. I wonder if they'll let me take it inside? So back again to the House.

I stopped outside the public entrance, folded the Brompton to its smallest size, got out my letter of invitation and boldly strode up to the door. Two burly policemen looked at me suspiciously from under the low peaks of their caps. Cradled in their arms, but casually pointed right at me and my Brompton, were the matt black snouts of Heckler and Koch submachineguns, the lenses of the underbarrel torches gleaming.

"Er, hello," I said. "Is it alright if I bring my bike in with me? I haven't got a lock to leave it outside."

Hmm. You could read their minds. Was this bike full of plastic explosives? Did the frame tubes conceal a small nuclear bomb? That's when I remembered that I had flash cards for teaching myself Arabic inside my bag. Oops.

The officers conferred for a moment and evidently decided I didn't look too much like a suicide bomber. "Well sir, if it will fit through the security screen you can leave the bike here" one of them said, pointing to a small side-room. I was escorted up a short flight of stairs to an airport-style X-ray machine, where the operator eyed the Brompton nervously. Luckily, it passed through with barely a wobble.

I too was frisked, passed through a metal detector, and my bag searched. There was a raised eyebrow at the Arabic cards but as a bearded scientist with a folding bike I was deemed not to be a threat to their Lordships and was allowed in.

I left the Houses of Parliament a couple of hours later to catch the train home. The policemen on duty were different but were expecting me and after collecting the bike I was quickly ushered out.

Outside, tourists pointed at me – and as the Brompton did its unfolding routine a flurry of digital cameras captured the moment for posterity. You can imagine the scene back at home: "...and here is an eccentric Brit with his strange folding bicycle". I was even wearing a tweed jacket. But proper shoes at least, not sandals.

On arrival at Waterloo everything was totally straightforward. No arguing with railway employees, no begging to get the bike on the train. Just that 30 second fold, tuck behind the seat, and no hassle.

Now all I need is an affordable folding recumbent trike...



Stephen Hall