

BICYCLE

HELEN PIDD

FOR MY MUM AND DAD

PENGUIN

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BICYCLE

HELEN PIDD

Love your bike: the complete guide to everyday cycling



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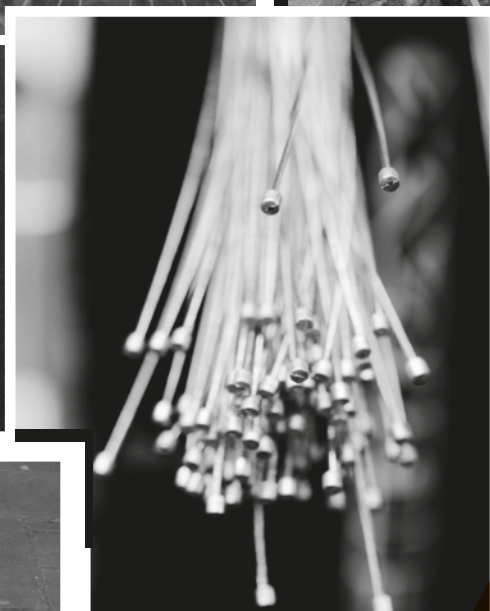
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1. WHAT DO YOU PRIMARILY WANT TO USE THE BIKE FOR?

↘ If you cycle, you are not at the mercy of bus routes, train timetables or road-works. A bicycle doesn't experience delays when there are leaves on the line. It doesn't stop operating at midnight. It never runs out of petrol. It can take you where you want, when you want, and you always know what time you'll arrive.

2. IT WILL SAVE YOU MONEY

↘ If I relied on public transport to travel the four miles to work and back every day, I would spend over £1,000 a year. If I drove, the bill for petrol, tax, insurance, parking and an MOT would come to at least that amount – before I'd even factored in the cost of buying a car. By comparison, even if I treated myself to a swish new bike every twelve months and had it properly serviced twice yearly, I would still be saving a lot of money.

3. IT'S A GREAT STRESS RELIEVER

↘ Arthur Conan Doyle wrote, 'When the spirits are low, when the day appears dark, when work becomes monotonous, when hope hardly seems worth having, just mount a bicycle and go out for a spin down the road, without thought on anything but the ride you are taking.' After a bad day at the office, getting on your bike and pounding the pedals makes everything better. If I have a tough decision to make, I go for a ride. I always have a much clearer perspective when I'm done.

4. IT'S SUPER EFFICIENT

↘ As a human-powered way of getting from A to B, cycling is much less work than running or walking, and way more fun on the downhills. You use around 20 per cent of the same energy to cycle a mile as you do to walk it.

5. IT WILL MAKE YOU FIT

↘ Start cycling regularly, and you'll have a healthier heart, stronger lungs, a firmer bum and much lovelier legs. Unlike many other forms of physical activity, riding a bike is suitable for people of all levels of fitness.

6. IT'S EMPOWERING

↘ Whether it's mending your first puncture, completing a charity bike ride or making it up a steep hill, cycling is a great confidence booster. It is also a political force for good. The suffragettes cycled, seeing the bicycle as a key tool in the emancipation of women. In the Minneapolis Tribune in 1895, Ann Strong wrote, 'The bicycle is just as good company as most husbands and, when it gets old and shabby, a woman can dispose of it and get a new one without shocking the entire community.'

7. IT'S GREEN

↘ If we don't want our children to swim to work in the future, we're going to have to cut back on carbon-spewing forms of transport. Bicycles are one answer. Meandering down country lanes and exploring new territory by bike is so much more enjoyable than getting a 'cheap' flight to an airport hours away from where you actually want to go, at a far higher price than advertised.

8. IT CAN CARRY YOUR BAGS

↘ A bicycle can be quite the packhorse. With the right panniers, you can transport far more shopping than you would ever manage on foot. Add a trailer, and you could move house.

9. IT WILL SHOW YOU NEW THINGS

↘ Travelling by bike rather than by car, you experience the world differently. The view from the saddle is much better than from behind the wheel. Not only can you travel along towpaths and through forests closed to cars, but you can smell the flowers and hear the animals and birds as you go.

10. IT CAN TAKE YOU ANYWHERE YOU LIKE

↘ Riding a bike doesn't just free you from the tyranny of public transport, it also offers almost endless travel opportunities. Whether you want to cycle to a country pub, over to a friend's house or across continents, the only thing that will hold you back is your legs.

FROM THE VELOCIPEDE TO THE VELODROME: A POTTED HISTORY OF BICYCLES AND BICYCLING

1817 Baron Karl Friedrich invents the *draisienne* or hobby horse, the first practical attempt to use two wheels for personal transport. The machine has no pedals, but is propelled by the rider sitting astride the central seat and taking exaggerated steps along the road.

1839 Scottish blacksmith Kirkpatrick Macmillan invents a bicycle-like machine that is operated by the rider pushing up and down on pedal-like 'treadles', which he uses to cycle the 71 miles from his home in Dumfries to Glasgow. He fails to patent his invention and many others develop his design and take the credit. (NB: some people insist none of this ever happened and that the whole Macmillan story is a hoax.)

1861 Frenchman Pierre Michaux develops a more sophisticated pedal-driven bicycle, the velocipede. Velocipedomania begins. Indoor riding academies, similar to rollerskating rinks, become all the rage in large cities.

1868 An article in *Once a Week* on 21 March 1868 describes Paris as being 'inflicted with a serious nuisance: velocipedes, machines like the ghosts of departed spiders, on which horrible boys and detestable men career about the streets and boulevards'.

1869 'Velocipedists are imbeciles on wheels!' declares French newspaper *Le Gaulois*.

1870s The ordinary, aka the penny-farthing, comes into circulation.

1884 The modern bicycle as we know it starts to appear on the streets with the invention of the Rover 'safety' bicycle.

1888 John Boyd Dunlop invents an air-filled inflatable tyre.



1894 The first bicycle couriers open for business in California when a railway strike halts mail delivery for the San Francisco Bay area.

1896 American civil rights activist Susan B. Anthony says, 'Let me tell you what I think of bicycling. I think it has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world. I stand and rejoice every time I see a woman ride by on a wheel. It gives women a feeling of freedom and self-reliance.' Tessie Reynolds, a feisty sixteen-year-old, scandalizes the UK by riding a men's bicycle from Brighton to London and back wearing 'rational' dress.

1898 Lady Harberton, the founder and president of the Rational Dress Society, tries unsuccessfully to sue the landlady of a pub in Surrey who refuses to serve her while she is wearing her rational bicycling gear.

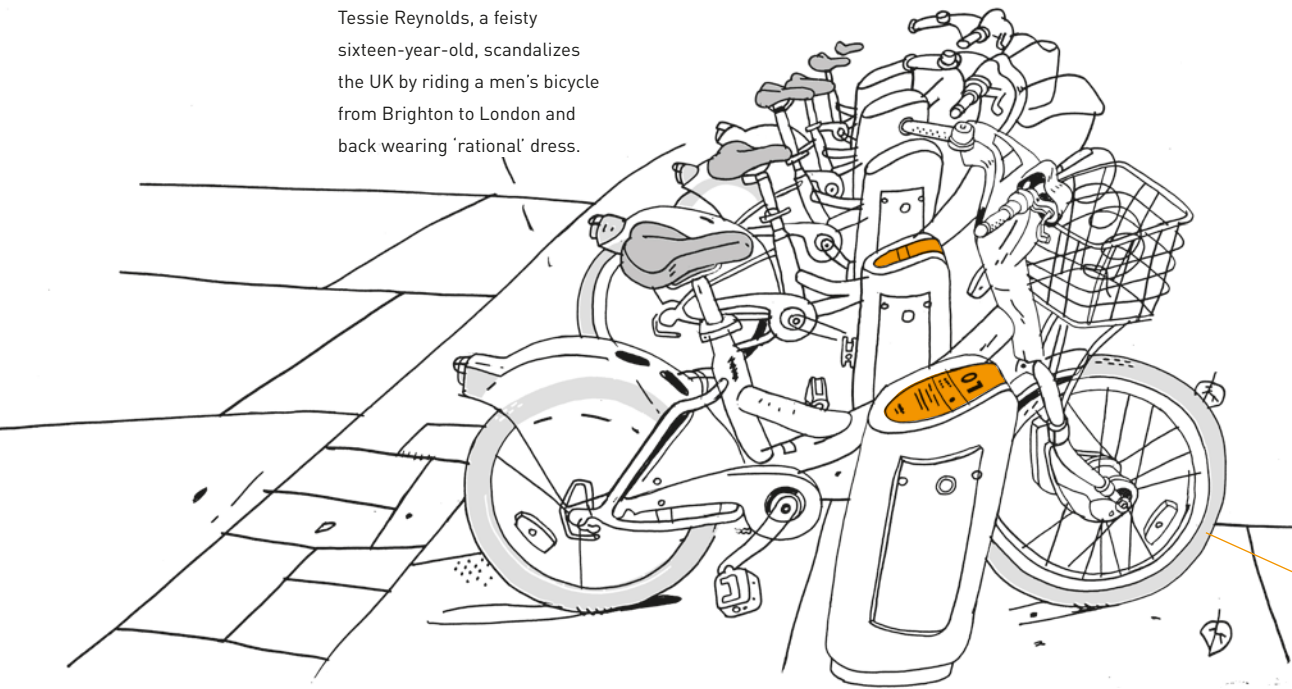
1903 First ever Tour de France held.

1930s Bicycling experiences a boom during the Depression; by 1936, there are an estimated 11 million regular cyclists in Britain.

1968 Raleigh invents the Chopper.

1973/4 Cycling is a beneficiary of the energy crisis, when several European countries ban Sunday pleasure-motoring, leaving the roads free for bicycling.

1980s Cycling shorts become fashionable off the bike.



1981 Specialized's Stumpjumper becomes the first mass-produced mountain bike.

1993 'The Flying Scotsman' Graeme Obree sets world record by cycling further than anyone else in an hour on a bike he built from, among other things, a washing-machine part.

1995 Work starts on Britain's National Cycle Network.

1999 Lance Armstrong wins the Tour de France less than eighteen months after his last chemotherapy treatment for testicular cancer.

2005 Lance Armstrong retires after winning his seventh consecutive Tour de France.

2007 Paris launches a city-wide bike-rental scheme, the Vélib'.

2008 British cyclists dominate the Olympic velodrome in Beijing, winning fourteen medals, including eight golds.

2009 Manx racing cyclist Mark Cavendish becomes Britain's greatest Tour de France rider, winning six stages.