

Spokes Competition 2014

My Memorable Moment *with a bike*

First prize – May Cruickshank

I am enjoying the freedom of being back on my bike after a long gap and am finding the confidence gained from the Ageing Well course I completed a year ago and the subsequent company and support of an enthusiastic group of new, like-minded cycling friends invaluable.

There have been many interesting moments during our regular cycles and recces in and around Edinburgh, so how to choose the most memorable? It has been: pleasing to recognise junctions on the bike paths and to learn how they interconnect; great to stay on the bike to the top of a hill that I know wasn't possible a year ago; pleasing to have been able to eventually release, unaided, a bungee cord choking the gear wheels as a result of having forgotten to replace it; difficult negotiating rivers of mud, ruts in a farmer's field and a closed gate at the end of a long and unfriendly track; good to experience the 'big scones' at Cramond; exciting to incorporate a train ride into the route and even more exciting to cycle over the Forth Road Bridge for the first time.

Most memorable prize, however, has to go to the search for a route from Swanston to Dregthorn which landed myself and a fellow cyclist in the middle of a firing exercise. She became very nervous and would not believe my assurance that the smoke was coming from blanks. The final straw came when a camouflaged soldier stood up and lowered his arm dramatically, prompting six previously invisible colleagues to run up the hillside towards the 'firing'. He reassured us that they were indeed blanks and that we were perfectly ok to continue. We decided nonetheless not to incorporate this section into our final group cycle route!

Second prize – Sara Rich Dorman

All under our own power

Last week my 3 and 1/2 year old son graduated from his childseat to the stoker seat of our tandem. Now when we go places, his big sister (7) rides her own bike, and he is thrilled to be the stoker.


It's immensely liberating to have us all moving under own own power (and to be able to carry panniers!).



Position	Entries in positions 3-15 [NB - there were prizes only for the top 11]
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>Jamie Thin</p>	<p>Platform 11</p> <p>It is the start of the school holidays and we're all off on our family holiday to France by bike and train and ferry. There is a bit of tension and excitement in the air. It's a relief to get to Saturday morning, lock up the house and head off on our bikes.</p> <p>Waverley station is a buzz with people. The access has been changed and we can't cycle down, so in the end we have to jump off and push our bikes down the narrow pavement. Still, nothing can dampen our spirits. I check the departure board for the 9am London train .. Platform 11.</p> <p>Suddenly I get this violent flashback like a grainy BBC drama - Platform 11 , it's 1992 - I am catching the train to Coventry with my bike, I walk to the guard's van pushing my bike - the guard stops me - "the rules have changed no bikes on this train!"</p> <p>I see red - no warning - it was the aggression in the guard's voice, half a sneer, like finally cyclists have been put in their place. I grit my teeth, breathe deeply and walk to the front of the train. This is the last straw.</p> <p>I don't think, I just act. I jump down onto the rails in front of the train with my bike. Get out my bike lock and chain my bike to the rails in front of the train! There is a short silent pause. Nobody was expecting that!</p> <p>I pull myself back onto the platform, and I'm promptly arrested by the police.</p> <p>Fast forward to 2014, and the friendly guard helps us with our bikes. No sign of the police. I am slightly furtive, just in case someone recognises me!</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>David Ivory</p>	<p>[Age 7]</p> <p>My memorable moment was the first time I cycled to school on my own bike.</p> <p>I had to do lots of training as I was used to cycling on a tag-a-long, not on my own bike. This involved practising the route at the weekend and looking at the road for cars behind me and at junctions. It is two miles uphill so I had to get my legs stronger to go fast enough.</p> <p>I like cycling to school as we get there faster and I enjoy it. I felt very proud. I was confident because I knew what to do and so I enjoyed it. I hope to cycle to school a lot in P4.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>Kathleen Brotchie</p>	<p>It's Friday and our annual training course is being held at Fairmilehead. My usual journey to work is a 20 min cycle from home in Corstorphine. But cycling to Fairmilehead? Well that must surely take at least one and a half hours and there are all those extended hauls uphill. And I'm the wrong side of 50.</p> <p>But the alternatives - sitting on buses stuttering their way through rush hour horror or sharing a lift in a car through gridlocked streets and the Gogar roundabout in stasis - do not appeal. Both promise a long and tedious start and finish to the day. So decision made. Its the bike.</p> <p>And the challenge is exhilarating. The landmarks on my route come and go and the hills are tough but never too long. Then it's the long anticipated grind up Comiston Road. But in reality the gradient is gradual and it's just a steady progression. And then I'm there.....20 mins too early and the only bike on the rack!</p> <p>And the end of the day? Well I may have arrived a little flushed and overheated. But when I leave I'm cool, real cool. Waving to my colleagues, I weave past the snarled and steaming cars trying to leave the venue, past the long queues for the buses and I'm off. Down Comiston Road, freewheeling most of the way, then cutting away from the traffic through the back streets of Morningside. 10 mins later I have Corstorphine Hill in front of me. I'm virtually home.....and the weekend has started!</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>Euan Renton</p>	<p>My memory has a huge number of memorable cycling moments, nearly all positive, that make a selection for the competition tricky.</p> <p>Two of the best local ones involve tunnels and how they not only get you from A to B in an unusual way for a cyclist but also mark a transition from one environment to another.</p> <p>One is the Rodney St tunnel with its impressive lighting, path surface and lovely stone lining. On my first visit, I whizzed down the ramp from Scotland St, passed through Scotland Yard, into the tunnel and then on into the wonderful green corridor network in the north of the city. Somehow the change from built up urban environment to a green apparently rural one happens suddenly and almost like magic.</p> <p>I think the transition is even more dramatic at the Innocent Railway tunnel. I had been cycling for many years in Edinburgh but had never heard of the tunnel. The first time I went through it the whole path from the Engine Shed down to Musselburgh was a complete and very pleasant surprise. I would have cycled over the tunnel, travelling though the park hundreds of times but had never imagined there was another route hidden below.</p> <p>The downhill entrance tucked in next to the houses is so easy to miss but when known, the view (the light at the end of the tunnel) is hugely intriguing. The gentle downhill as you go through it is great for the "free" ride that cycling can provide but the best bit, especially the memory of that first time, was emerging into the full light and heat of the sun from the cool shade of the tunnel, with a mountain on the left, the path ahead and greenery all around but no buildings to be seen. One minute you are in the middle of the city and the next you are not. Wonderful. If only cycling out the city in any direction was that easy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">7</p> <p>Ken Morrison</p>	<p>The first Pedal on Parliament</p> <p>I knew I couldn't stay for this first event, so I decided to cycle to the top of middle meadow walk and cheer it on.</p> <p>What an inspiring experience!</p> <p>Apart for seeing more friends than I realised I had, it was the variety and enthusiasm of the crowd that was infectious. Different genders, generations, classes, races, clothing types, bikes, trikes, and best of all, everyone had a smile on their face! There must be something to this cycling lark if it brings out the best in people.</p> <p>And, although everyone was going uphill at this point, there was no doubt that the momentum was unstoppable.</p> <p>A moment to treasure; and for me, the moment cycling moved out of the quirky lane into the mainstream: safer and stronger because of that.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>Angus Ivory</p>	<p>[Age 9]</p> <p>My IMAGINARY memorable moment was when me and my family were cycling to Waverley Station from Newington 2 miles away.</p> <p>It was very different to normal. The bike lanes, all the way there, were clear of cars and all the buses and lorries were being considerate by leaving enough space and driving at 20mph max speed. All the other cyclists were smiling and waving at us. Along the route there were no potholes or broken glass. At Waverley there were lots of good bike racks but we passed them to get on the train with our bikes to our destination.</p> <p>It was such a nice journey that it was as if it was a dream!</p>

<p>9</p> <p>Jane Waters</p>	<p><u>My 222nd cycle from Aberlady → Gullane → Aberlady this year. It inspired me to reflect on everything there is to see and experience between Aberlady and Gullane. How rich is life on a bike in East Lothian!</u></p>
<p>10</p> <p>William Ivory</p> <p>[no prize as household has prize already]</p>	<p>My commute to work involves cycling from Newington to Leith via the Commonwealth Pool (4.5 miles / 7km). I often see cars early on in this journey and again near the end, reminding me just how efficient it is to travel by bike, but had never been able to let any of the drivers know what they were missing.</p> <p>One morning however, I noticed one car just ahead of me at the lights by the Commonwealth Pool, and then I saw it parking right outside the office block where I work in Leith. I couldn't resist approaching the driver to let her know that she could have made her journey by bike in exactly the same time. She was surprised to say the least and her expression made my day!</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Katharine Wake</p>	<p>Girl Power</p> <p>A borrowed bike with attachment for a child, a fine day, and my six year old niece and I had had a great trip to South Queensferry. The ride out had been companionably taken up by an in-depth interrogation about the gears. The destination had delivered, too – a trip on the 'Maid of the Forth', with seals and seabirds to wonder at. Now it was time to go home.</p> <p>Most routes out of South Queensferry involve an uphill start, and I had witlessly picked the steepest. I pedalled hard, changed gear (no comments from sleepyhead behind this time), noticed the extra weight as I puffed and strained. Clearly, we were going to grind to an ignominious standstill any second...</p> <p>And then it happened, a turbo charge boost from behind, and the laden bike was miraculously transformed into a high-performance vehicle. My niece had started pedalling for all she was worth, and in no time we had cruised up that hill.</p> <p>Each time I struggle with a hill now, I wish for a vigorously pedalling child behind me – and feel happy to have shared a memory across the generations. A new link in the chain, perhaps?</p>

<p>12</p> <p>Helga Rhein</p>	<p>Being chatted up!</p> <p>I was cycling home from work at 7 pm, entered Princes Street in the West, heading towards the East, when I was asked by another cyclist whether I wanted to come with him to the Princes Street Gardens Dance that same evening. He was older than me, and i was in my 50's but I said "no" and now could still kick myself for that. Because being chatted up doesn't happen that often anymore, especially on a bike!</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Margaret Hanson</p>	<p>I will always treasure the moment my daughter learnt to cycle, the wobbly movements gradually becoming smoother and more confident; the radiant smile on her face as she threw back her head and laughed with the pure joy of it.</p>
<p>14</p> <p>Louise Humphreys</p>	<p>Not a 'fair weather cyclist' and why would I be?</p> <p>Scotland doesn't bring the best of weather at times (or most of the time?!) so getting out at all times of the year is important to me – even in snow! I work in Edinburgh but love getting out on the bike in the evenings and weekends. Living by Arthur's Seat gives me a great opportunity for a wee cycle after work but I also love heading out to the Pentlands on my mountain bike.</p>  <p>This photo was taking whilst training for the World Champion Solo 24 hour mountain bike race (which is coming to Scotland this year). Sounds scary and it probably will be (it's my first big endurance race) but I just started cycling in Edinburgh commuting by bike and back a few years ago and built up from there.</p> <p>So... as I mentioned getting out in all weathers is important to me and leaving from my door steps allows me lots of time on the saddle. As long as I'm prepared for the weather, cycling in all conditions can be really enjoyable and comfortable. Coming back to a warm shower and a hot meal makes it all worth it.</p> <p>I love this photo because it represents me - Scottish biker who loves cycling in the rain (because if not she wouldn't get out!).</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Margaret Hanson</p>	<p>In 2005 as part of the Make Poverty History campaign, I was one of a group which spent a week cycling from the Houses of Parliament in London to Edinburgh, which was the focus of the campaigning during the G8 meeting.</p> <p>Just outside the city our numbers grew to over 200 as local cyclists joined us for the final leg into Edinburgh. My heart swelled as our mass ride, all in white tops, approached the city, with the castle on the skyline, and hope in our hearts for good decisions from world leaders for debt cancellation, trade justice, and more and better aid.</p>

UNPLACED ENTRIES

[in random order to fit the pages]

Picture the scene: a residential street, West Edinburgh; fine morning, 8.45am. I'm riding along, dressed, as usual, in ordinary clothes, no helmet, no high-viz (though I like to make sure I am visible). Coming the other way, a middle-aged woman, likewise dressed in ordinary clothes, no helmet, no high-viz.

She smiles at me. I smile back.
She says 'good morning!' I say 'good morning!'
And we both continue on our merry way.
How civilised, I think. How very civilised!
And you know, such an exchange would be far less likely in any other mode of travel. If we were both in cars, it would be highly unlikely. Even on foot, it would be quite unlikely.

Why? It's because, I believe, cyclists form an identifiable and visible minority, and hence, a sort of brotherhood/sisterhood among participants; a feeling of "we're in this together". Pedestrians, in towns and cities at least, are too numerous for such identification - you may remember 'Crocodile Dundee' in New York, who, being fresh from the country, flouted the city rule of 'keep your head down,' and tried to greet every single pedestrian who passed - with humorous results.

He should have been on a bike, he'd have got a much better reception!

My memorable moment this year was taking my wee pug puppy, Coco on her first real adventure by bike. Here she is pictured in her 'Cocomobile' in Holyrood Park. She was only three months old and we were practising for cycling to Pedal on Parliament from Leith. I wanted to make sure she could make the distance from Leith to Meadows on the back of my bike, and she was as good as gold.

I think Coco likes being chauffeured around Edinburgh by bike as apparently she just spends the time watching the world go by... She's a bit of a slow walker, and quite small, so it's easiest to pop her in the Cocomobile for many destinations.



[Age 7]

This summer we cycled from our house to the canal. We went to pick some blackberries to make jam. We managed to pick enough for at least 10 jars and a bit. I remembered it because it was my first proper cycle ride on the road with my Dad.

Last September I took part in a Sustrans organised ride from Newcastle to Edinburgh. A memorable moment, and one of the highlights of the trip was when we crossed over the watershed of the Moorfoot Hills into Midlothian. The weather was great and the view over the Lothian coastal plain was superb.

I was the only Edinburgh-based cyclist on the trip and the other participants were impressed by how good Lothian (and indeed the Borders) are for cycling. The picture shows myself at the viewpoint with the Pentlands and the coastal plain behind.



Moving into our flat and getting a new bike.

We live dead centre and are lucky to have easy access to so much that the city has to offer and some amazing views!



It was the morning the Edinburgh greenways officially opened back in 1997 and the feeling of euphoria, mingled with breathless disbelief, at having the liberation of an open road ahead on my commute to work. There was almost a feeling of guilt as I sailed past the stationary cars stacked up in the outside lane. Were we cyclists really to be allowed all this space? No longer would we be squeezed into the gutter by marauding traffic and robbed of any dignity as road users. This, I thought, had to be a major step forward for cycling-kind.

At the time it definitely was progress, after years of seemingly shouting in the wilderness for measures to help promote cycling in the city. But sadly, it wasn't long before that bright new dawn was shattered as the first buses and taxis snarled up behind me, unable to overtake safely in the confines of the green lane. Stress levels rose once more and the gutter beckoned again. Oh, well. Cycling heaven in Edinburgh was going to be a long time coming after all, but the struggle for it would continue!

My memorable moment was cycling along the canal towpath in Edinburgh as it goes over the aquaduct over the Water of Leith, just as a canal barge went slowly over the aquaduct. It's an amazing place with the river, road and railway below you, and great views to the Pentlands.

There is something special about seeing the canal boat as it crosses over above the hurly burly of road and rail. A narrow boat seems to share something of the peace and quiet of cycling: most unlike the noise of road and rail!

Showing an early interest in two wheels, our 14 week old bearded collie puppy has his first trip out on the Brompton.

Soon, he will enjoy running beside the bike along the Kilspindie Road. In a few months time he will be upgraded to a comfortable ride in the bike trailer along the coastal road to Gullane Beach – relaxing for him but harder work for us!

2014 marks my Mum's 30th year of cycling with beardies. I look forward to continuing the tradition with our new dog.



Advanced Chat-up Line

Norman said bicycles could never be sexy. There was the possibility of snuggling up in the intimate private space of a Ford Consul with its generous red leather bench seats or the obvious suggestive possibilities of straddling the throbbing heat of a 750cc Norton Commando. A pushbike might be clean, quiet, efficient and cheap but it's not sexy, it's chilly, hard work, earnest and slow. It could not feature in any possible romantic narrative.

But Norman had not lived long enough to see the introduction of the Advanced Stop Line, and its accompanying Bike Reservoir Zone. Had he still been out on his aluminium Viscount he would have reconsidered his argument.

Most days on my way to Little France I would pass a nurse on an old, steel, dark green Philips with a basket and full chain guard. Every day her terrible hiccupping pedal stroke (a worn cotter pin) would spoil my peace. I had shared the reservoir zone with her a few times and I had met her eye, I said 'I liked her rod brakes' (I hate rod brakes).

I formed a plan. Next time at the Advanced Stop Line I would mention the cotter pin. The time after that I would be ready with a ball peen hammer, and a ring spanner. I would slip in a new pin, tap it home and tighten it solid. After that we'd be doing through-and-off together as sweet as Torvil and Dean.

Maybe Norman was right, next time I saw her she stopped short of the bike reservoir in a new (retro) Fiat 500 with red seats.

My memorable moment was returning to the house on my folding bike after doing the shopping. Unfortunately, I can't have fastened the handlebars securely enough, and I had the alarming problem of the handlebars starting to slide gradually down. Fortunately I could still steer and managed to slow down before the bike became completely unrideable.

However, I did have a full basket hooked onto the handlebars. As these slid down, the basket caught on the front mudguard, tipped up and scattered the contents all over the road. My (not very sympathetic) family could only stop and laugh as they watched me sink into a lower and lower 'racing' position on the bike, followed by the shopping being scattered far and wide.

Peace Pledge

I dropped out of the college in 1981 and got a cash job with On Yer Bike Couriers. I got £3.50 per job and £1 if a client kept me waiting more than ten minutes. I had a black Acme whistle and rode a secondhand 531-Viking with cheap replacement forks and a cut down Brooks-Pro saddle.

A day was pumped full, racing off lights, through gaps, overtaking jams, cutting through the back way. I would fight back, banging on the roof just above the driver's head, catching cars and escaping down one-ways, or jumping a curb to snick into a lane.

Riding between lanes of buses and taxis, sliding through where there was no space, a sudden shift in traffic saw me caught between a Leyland bus and a Black Cab, another move in the traffic and my hands were trapped onto my drops by the two converging vehicles. I panicked my hands away, just in time, my gloves still stuck in place on the bars.

It might have been then, or after being chased the wrong way down a one way rat-run in the driving sleet by another bullied middle management trainee looking for a fight, that I made a non-aggression pledge, I didn't join Spokes straight away, but my decision probably saved a broken collar bone, maybe worse. I vowed to put my energy into campaigning and rhetoric, not roof banging and invective.

I still liked to race the traffic, but playing David and Goliath with the transit vans and buses, as a way to make £30, had lost its glamour.

Seeing this fully loaded Edinburgh Fringe performer is proof that if you put your mind to it you do not really need a car, whatever the load.



Every time I pass the counter up from Middle Meadow Walk is a memorable moment reminding me of the huge number of journeys made by bike in Edinburgh.



Camping at sunset by the beautiful coast after cycling from Edinburgh to Gullane!!

This photo was taken after an enjoyable cycle after work one summer's evening. The sunset was spectacular over the sea and an evening I will not forget in a hurry. Cycling from Edinburgh along the coastline is one of my all time favourite cycles although the options in the Lothians are endless.



A friend and I had cycled to the Climbing Centre at Ratho, and were returning home along the canal towpath on a pleasant March day.

As we reached the outskirts of Edinburgh, I was taken by the approaching skyline of the city and Arthur's Seat, and a beautiful sky.

Next moment, I seemed to veer slightly towards the canal -and NO I didn't go in! -but in correcting my wee wobble, my left foot came off the pedal and shot forward, as I sharply turned my front wheel to the left. This all happened in a split second, but I felt something snap inside my left foot, and as a consequence fell off the bike! My left foot had inadvertently been twisted between the frame and the front wheel, as I corrected its direction!

As I lay on the towpath, I said to my friend "I think I've broken my foot"!! I then felt a bit woozy -though not in pain!! and kept repeating "I'll be alright in a minute!" While my body was adjusting to the shock, some kind people, passing from the local Sykes Call Centre, took my bike there and locked it up, as well as calling an ambulance!! By the time it arrived, I was able to stand and hop up a bank to reach it.

Several A&E hours and Xrays later , my gut feeling was confirmed - I had snapped three metatarsals in my left foot!

After six weeks in a Moon Boot, and an extra few weeks to get more mobile, I 'll never forget the thrill of getting back on my bike to cycle round the block!!

One of my best moments is just being part of the cycling community - YOU ARE MY TYPE OF PEOPLE. I get a warm fuzzy feeling when I think of myself as a cyclist.

The moment I remember most, on my bike, is crashing on the tramlines on Princes St in early-2013.

Most obviously, I still get an occasional sharp pain on the point of my elbow, where it hit the road hard. More happily, it is also responsible for the nicer, newer bike I now have - the crash finally sent my trusty old stead to a better place (The Bike Station).

Of the incident itself, I distinctly recall 3 things:

- Helplessness - the road layout and traffic conditions meant I had little choice but to take the line I did.
- Relief - a bus was following me. I got away lightly. On reflection, I do think cyclists have a lot to thank Lothian Buses for in general.
- Gratitude - another cyclist saw me go down and stopped by to see what help he could give.

The message? Treat the tramlines with extreme care. These days, I avoid them if I can, and I'll also get off my bike and walk across at times. Much as I love my bike, I need to be in one piece to ride it.

I'd set off from Edinburgh early one summer Saturday to update details for the Spokes Midlothian map. After Straiton, Loanhead, Bilston and Roslin, by late morning a refreshing cup of tea was well overdue, but I was then in Rosewell, a village of two distinct halves and not a single café. Resigned to a water-only drinks break, I suddenly spotted a church hall sign offering 'teas'. I gratefully wheeled my bike to the door, where a local assured me it would be quite safe. My city-trained bike-locking instincts suddenly seemed rather paranoid.

From inside came the clink of crockery, the babble of conversation. As I crossed the threshold the whole room suddenly went deathly quiet – every face at every table turned towards this sweaty 'foreign' apparition in cycle gear in the doorway – tea cups paused in mid air, biscuits fell from shocked fingers – little kids looked up from the floor with mouths agape. A perfect moment to deliver a memorable funny line – but I was too tired and thirsty and could only mumble with embarrassment.

I was rescued by the minister who, in a voice of authority, welcomed me in, thus breaking the tension. I was guided to a table – the friendly babble of voices resumed. While refuelling with cups of tea and home-baked scones (all free!) I talked about Rosewell with elderly residents and was even invited to comment professionally on a huge map of the village lying on the stage. To conclude my Memorable Moment, I discovered there was only one coffee morning a month – luckily I picked that exact day and time!

Watching the bike counter go in



My memorable moment was when the 7-year-old child I was looking after was run over by a cyclist outside Peter's Yard. Luckily, despite some blood, injuries were superficial. Public park or main road?

My worst moment on my trike was when I fell off and a very nice man from SPCA leapt out of his van and picked the trike off me, picked me up off the ground, to which I stupidly said, but I'm not an animal, and he said, oh yes you are!

One bright, chilly February morning I set off cycling from Edinburgh to Ormiston via Musselburgh and the Pencaitland Path. The roads were cleared, but outside the city recent snow was lying quite heavily in the fields and, as I soon found, the Crossgate-hall car park, which was also cross-hatched by uncyclable frozen-hard tyre ruts. However, from the entrance I could just see a short length of the path itself and, to my relief, it seemed snow free.

To the left was a narrow margin of undisturbed snow so I walked in that, pushing my jolting and slithering bike across icy hummocks. I almost got round but, blocked by bushes, was eventually forced across the frozen ruts. Slipping and sliding, I reached the deceptively undisturbed snow on the opposite verge, only to plunge ankle-deep into icy water lying in a channel below. Shivering and cursing, I finally squelched to the clear section of path.

Alas, I found that the first fifty metres was the only part that was snow-free; some freak combination of wind and snowfall had lured me in. The rest of the path that now came into view was covered in deeply rutted icy snow which, despite several tries, I found as uncyclable as the car park. I was trapped, with no choice but to retrace my steps. After another brief outburst of embarrassing language I slogged back through the semi-frozen swamp, by which time my feet could not have been any colder or wetter. Furious on-road pedalling the rest of the way soon warmed me up again and I began to see the funny side of it. This Memorable Moment certainly makes for amusing re-telling when comfortably dry!

(B)Icarus

We had been training all summer for this – my best friend and I gingerly lifting hands off handlebars, overcoming wobbles, measuring success by counting lampposts passed riding no-handed. Day after day we had honed our developing skills, and now, following my sister as we whizzed out of the village, I was as confident as any Tour de France stage winner, balancing the bike like a pro.

Downhill next, before the rise to the neighbouring farm – and with the wind whistling through my hair, the invincibility of childhood intoxicated my brain, suggesting a new and irresistible challenge: riding no-handed *and* standing on the pedals... BANG!!! A split second of turmoil and gravel and grass verge and sky, and I lay gasping with the shock, my poor bicycle faithfully beside me, wheels spinning in the air.

My knee only really started hurting after the cautious and unsteady ride back home. It was a gash to be reckoned with, meriting a fine bandage to show off at school. I rarely notice the scar these days, but the memory of those wonderful childhood odysseys is undimmed, and my enthusiasm for exploration by bicycle has never been extinguished.

We often hear that few stolen bikes are recovered by the police. Well, I am one of the lucky ones!

A good many years ago my locked bike was stolen from the lobby of my workplace in Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh. I discovered this at lunchtime when I had been intending to nip out by bike to do some errands.

By chance the local police station in those days was just round the corner in Buccleuch Street, so I went straight there. To my amazement the officer said, "I think we've already recovered your bike." A totally memorable moment!!

An alert officer had seen someone 'suspicious' pushing a bike along the pavement, had asked them a few questions, and quickly realised that it was a stolen bike.

Sadly, a few years later the same bike was again stolen, despite being locked inside another Edinburgh University building. Another memorable moment - but this time a rather less happy one!

Now I try to cut the chance of losing my bike, and raise the chance of recovering it, by using the advice on the Spokes website security page - it could just avoid another painful memorable moment.