

Report from the 2006 International Cycle Show: London

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6th to 8th October saw the 2006 version of the annual Cycle Show, once again held at the ExCel Centre in Docklands, London. My crewmate Mark Jenkins and I were invited to attend again by Charlie Irvine of the Metropolitan Police. Who can resist the chance to gawp at shiny, expensive bikes and equipment and clothing? Not us, so we accepted the invite gladly.

The morning of Saturday 7th October saw us putting our bikes onto the train at High Wycombe and catching a ride to Marylebone, the main line station which is on the other side of London from our destination. On arrival, I asked, "Mark, you remember the way from last year, don't you?" to which he replied "Yeah, sort of. How hard can it be?" With my amazingly pathetic sense of direction and previous experience of Mark's good one, I decided to trust him, so we set off to cycle to ExCel. Eight o'clock on a Saturday morning is a good time to ride through London. Mark led us through Baker Street, home of the great Detective Sherlock Holmes, St. James Square and past the US Embassy, along Regent Street with its expensive shops, through Piccadilly Circus and Trafalgar Square, along the Embankment, passing that greatest of all prisons – the Tower of London, and on to Docklands. The journey took us 45 minutes with one stop as we both fancied that lifesaver of many a British police officer, a nice hot bacon sandwich; however, just as we were about to walk into the East End café we found, we observed that about 99% of the clientele already dining looked like they spent most of their 'free' time in the local cells so we decided to give it a miss!

Anyway, back to the matter at hand. Mark and I took a stroll round the show hall to get our bearings and locate the Emergency Services displays. Once again I found myself behaving like a kid in a sweet shop. I didn't know where to look first! The place was full of absolutely gorgeous bikes, components and clothing. I made a few mental notes of where to return to once we had got set up. We soon located our stall and were met by a couple of familiar faces, including Mike Surgett with whom we qualified as instructors. A few minutes were spent catching up on what had happened since our last meeting and getting a quick brief on what the focus of the stand was. This year Mike had obtained some assistance from Abus locks who had loaned a large range of cable, chain and U locks to demonstrate cycle security. Cycle training was also a feature, with literature relating to the scheme being promoted in London. Before we knew it opening time was upon us and we were in business.

Apart from the chance to get a look at the latest kit, one of my favourite features of this type of event is the chance for the public to get a look at us and our kit and to speak with us about what we do and why we do it. Once again I was not disappointed by the response of the people who visited our stand. Throughout the day hundreds of people stopped by for advice, information and a general chat. Police officers the world over will understand that more than a few 'War Stories' were told as well, each and every one of them a firm indication of the effectiveness (and fun) of Cycle Patrol. Another plus point for me was that I also got the opportunity to meet a number of cyclists whom I only knew from their internet activity on a couple of cycling forums I visit. Once again this year, the stand attracted police officers from around the country looking for advice on getting cycle teams up and running. As you would expect, we mentioned IPMBA at every opportunity, promoting it as an ideal source for information, references and training.

As the day progressed, both Mark and I seized every odd chance to take a closer look at some of the displays. I put my hands up to being a "roadie" when not at work and was drawn to the Colnago display where ProTour racer Eric Zabel of team Milram's bike was on display. Other road dreams were shown by DeRosa, Scott, BMC, Cervelo and Enigma (formerly Omega). Enigma produce titanium-framed bikes and I have long been impressed by the weight/ strength ratio of this material. There are mountain bikes also available in titanium. I would love to get my hands on a titanium framed police bike! An interesting development on the frame material front was shown by Johan Museeuw's distributor. Johan is a former Pro racer from Belgium. He has put his name to a range of composite framed bikes mixing carbon fibre with flax, a plant-based material. Apparently the combination of these two materials provides a lighter, stronger frame with a more comfortable ride.

On the component/ accessory side, Ultimate Sports Engineering (USE) was on site again. USE are manufacturers of a wide range of quality components and accessories and their website, www.use1.com, is well worth a visit. Part of their product range are Exposure lights (www.use1.com/exposure) some of which have previously been reviewed by Kevin Rogerson. These are LED based light sources which produce a good

strong beam of light. They are a self contained unit with the rechargeable battery housed within the light body – no cables to get caught up when on single track, etc. A new addition to the family of lights is the Joystick, a small unit about four inches long by about ½ inch diameter. This comes supplied with a small mounting bracket which will fit into the vents on your helmet, providing a head torch. I am hoping to be able to trial some of the Exposure range at some time in the future.

On the clothing front, Nazran, a manufacturer originating in Pakistan, which also now has offices in the USA, were showing some of their range of products. These included shorts, gloves and a neoprene face mask which would be ideal for really cold conditions. I had a lengthy chat with their on-site representative, Mohammed Arshed and, as a result, I recently received a pair of fingerless gloves and a pair of full fingered, waterproof winter gloves to trial. These are their police specification gloves and early impressions are favourable. The fingerless gloves are a good, snug fit and the gel pads in the palms do the work required of them. The winter gloves have so far proved to be very warm, in fact a little too warm for the mild winter we have experienced so far in this part of the UK. I can't wait for the real cold weather to set in so I can put these gloves through their paces. Once I've given the gloves a good few months of proper wear, I will submit a review.

There are two things as a cyclist that I hate to hear. The first is a motorist saying "Sorry, mate, I didn't see you" as I pick myself up from a crash. The second is that horrible hissing sound of air escaping from a punctured tyre. Repairing a puncture is a pain at the best of times, and one of the worst parts is reinflating the tyre. Some folk like to use CO₂ cartridges but, for those of us who don't use them, a good pump is a must. The Cyclaire pump (www.cyclaire.com) is a small unit complete with pressure gauge which acts like a track pump but packs like a mini pump. The main pump sits on the floor and is held down by your foot. The pump action is produced by pulling on a handle attached to a cord. In effect you pump whilst standing upright. It requires a lot less effort than a traditional hand pump and is capable of pressures up to 120 psi/ 8 bar.

Finally, on the safety front was a new style of light from Ideneon. These lights use electroluminescent technology which is reported to be highly visible but non-dazzling. The lights come as a pair and are fitted on other side of the helmet, raising the light source to a position where it is more visible to high vehicles such as trucks and buses. The light units are secure but detach in a crash so that, in the event of a helmet impact, the light does not cause neck injuring deflection. At the time of writing I could not access the website for the company (www.ideneon.com) but this could be my server preventing access. The product can be seen by viewing this page, though: <http://www.cycleshow.co.uk/page.cfm/action=Exhib/ExhibID=00195>. This product could potentially have good casualty reduction benefits and may be of interest to road safety officers. The reported retail price of the light is £34-99.

For me, the highlight of the day was bumping into Eddy Merckx, the legendary Belgian and five times Tour de France, five times Giro d'Italia and one-time Vuelta a Espana winner (amongst other things). He was at the show as part of the promotion for the London depart of the 2007 Tour de France. I shook his hand and had a very brief chat with him. You don't often get the chance to meet one of the world's sporting greats and Eddy is up there with the best of them.

After a long, tiring, but thoroughly enjoyable day it was time to go, and Mark's route-finding skills again proved more than up to the task. Fifty minutes later, we were back at Marylebone and waiting for the train back to High Wycombe. Even then, we were approached by families who had been at the show and wanted another chance for a chat!

If ever you should find yourself in London at the time of the Cycle Show, I recommend taking the time to pay a visit. Just leave your credit card at home.

Oh, and by the way, Charlie, if you need help next year, you know where to find me.

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