

Cycle History 10  
Proceedings of the 10th International Cycling History Conference



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## Proceedings of the 10th International Cycling History Conference

Nijmegen, the Netherlands, 22–24 September 1999

Edited by Prof. Dr. Hans-Erhard Lessing, Rob van der Plas, and Andrew Ritchie

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# Editors' Introduction

1990: Glasgow, Scotland  
1991: Saint-Etienne, France  
1992: Neckersulm, Germany  
1993: Boston, U.S.A.  
1994: Cambridge, England  
1995: Stellenbosch, South Africa  
1996: Buffalo, USA  
1997: Glasgow, Scotland  
1998: Ottawa, Canada  
1999: Nijmegen, the Netherlands

The 10th International Conference of Cycle History was another landmark in the unfolding of this ambitious enterprise, initiated in Glasgow, Scotland, by Nick Clayton in 1990. The hesitant youngster of previous years has now become a robust, healthy child, and the Conference goes from strength to strength, having now been held every year since 1990. The *Proceedings* have also been published every year, and under the expert supervision and considerable sacrifice of Publisher Rob van der Plas, now constitute an elegantly produced and important academic resource in the field of social and technological history.

The 1999 Conference was ably and efficiently organized by Gertjan Moed in Nijmegen, Holland, and hosted by him at his splendid museum, Velorama, one of the most impressive permanently displayed cycle collections in the world. Velorama, where delegates had the welcome opportunity for a hands-on examination of the exhibits, provided a fascinating historical reference point for the actual Conference sessions, which took place at Jonkersbosch, a tranquil conference centre on the outskirts of Nijmegen. Holland, with its extensive everyday use of bicycles and many miles of bicycle pathways, provided a fitting context for the Conference — including the possibility for a couple of delegates to become thoroughly lost on the bikeways late one night.

The Conference has now established a firm reputation as a forum where academics, bicycle industry professionals, and amateur historians alike can present and share their knowledge and historical insights into the industry, the sport, and the social impact of the bicycle, and 1999 was typically challenging and wide-ranging in its concerns. This year, happily, a large number of Dutch delegates was able to attend. Dr. Jacoba Steendijk-Kuypers spoke about the role of

the bicycle in women's emancipation in Holland, while Dr. Theo Stevens, of Amsterdam University, described the life and sporting career of the remarkable Dutch champion Mathieu Cordang. Dr. Adri Albert de la Bruh ze and Frank Veraart, of the University of Twente, reported their conclusions following a two-year study of bicycle traffic carried out for the Dutch government. Dr. van Hulten reminded his audience about health aspects of bicycle use, while Otto Beaujon, the editor of *De Oude Fiets*, raised the interesting point of the social control of technology as exemplified in the bicycle. Our host, Gertjan Moed of Velorama, gave a report on the first bicycle race track in Holland, which was in Nijmegen.

The Conference sessions were opened by Nick Clayton, editor of the Veteran Cycle Club's *Boneshaker*, who explored and criticized the many serious historical inaccuracies in the much-quoted exposition by Prof. Wiebe Bijker (professor of Technology and Society at Maastricht University) on the social construction of technology as applied to bicycle design. Clayton's devastatingly detailed expose of Bijker's historical inaccuracies, which could not be presented in detail at the Conference because of time constraints, is printed in full here. It is gratifying and significant that such a critique takes us, as special interest historians, into the mainstream of academic historical debate, and we look forward to a response from Prof. Bijker.

Jan Kr l k and Jaroslav Vozni k spoke about the Czech bicycle pioneer Kohout, the founder of the Czech bicycle industry, while Bruce Epperson looked at the later career of the bicycle tycoon Col. Albert Pope and his role in the American bicycle and automobile industries. Prof. Dr. Volker Briese, of Paderborn University, explored various conflicts within the German bicycle industry on the question of bicycle trade fairs.

Looking to the earlier decades of bicycle evolution, Alastair Dodds, from the Royal Scottish Museum, Edinburgh, spoke about early velocipedes in Scotland, and Walter Ulreich gave a fascinating account of the Erlach bicycle in Austria. Roger Street spoke about the bicycle step, a contraption to overcome fear when mounting the two-wheel velocipede; Prof. Lessing spoke about an early rail draisienne; and Lorne Shields described and quoted from some of the

rare cycling manuscripts which he has in his outstanding collection.

Returning to more recent times, Frank Berto spoke about the oil crisis and the American bicycle boom of the 1970s. Ron Shepherd described the life and achievements of Australian cycling champion Ossie Nicholson, and Andrew Ritchie spoke about "Mile-a-minute" Murphy and the quest for speed at the end of the 19th century. Scotford Lawrence examined the representation of the moving bicycle and rider in art, and Nicholas Oddy gave a wide-ranging review of historical attitudes to the collection and conservation of artefacts.

The Conference ended with a session on problems of restoration, with interesting contributions from Dr. Zita Breu and Dipl. Ing. Ulrike Rossmeissl, of the Vienna Technical Museum, and Stephanie Rothmund. Gertjan Moed received many helpful suggestions from his audience when he gave a humorously serious presentation of the difficult restoration and conservation issues surrounding Queen Wilhelmina of Holland's problematic Fongers bicycle, which is housed in his collection.

One of the highlights of the Conference was the chance for delegates to meet with Prof. Welleman of the Dutch ministry of Transport, who had been instrumental in devising and implementing the cycling component in the Dutch transportation master plan, at an evening round-table discussion. Packed into a small conference room, an impressively international group of delegates shared an animated and sometimes heated discussion about Dutch bicycle policy with a political figure in a position of great responsibility, and had the chance to compare the Dutch experience with that of their own countries.

The Conference began with dinner at Velorama, where delegates were entertained by Walter Ulreich's spoof on "Barbie and her bicycles," offered as a gift to Gertjan Moed, and ended with a splendid banquet at which the Dutch passion for chocolate cake and many different kinds of cheeses and creams was amply demonstrated. An entertainment followed, during which one or two delegates appeared in drag, several songs and recitations were given, and racing on stationary roller-bicycles produced a couple of slightly inebriated "champions."

We once again express our thanks and appreciation to Gertjan Moed for giving us the chance to see his wonderful collection, and for being our host. We look forward to the 11th Conference, which will take place in Osaka, Japan in August 2000, and is being organized by Frank Berto.

Hans-Erhard Lessing  
Rob van der Plas  
Andrew Ritchie

#### **Note:**

The titles of all the papers presented at the 1999 Conference, and the names and addresses of all presenters, are listed below. However, since not every delegate who presented a paper provided us with a written text, some papers are not published here. The titles of these papers are listed at the end of the Table of Contents. It is suggested that any historian or researcher who is interested in the subject of any of these papers contact the presenter directly.

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Lorne Shields	Unique Bicycle Manuscript Material of the 19th Century

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