

# I would much rather be a BIRD than a MAMIL

Finally, years after everyone else on the planet, **DICK LUMSDEN** has succumbed to the cycling craze, but refuses to go anywhere near Lycra

**T**he rise in cycling in the UK has been nothing short of phenomenal in the last few years, fuelled by back to back wins for Britain in the Tour de France and unprecedented success for GB in the London 2012 Olympics.

There are now, apparently, millions of cyclists out there on the roads of Britain, young and old alike burning up the miles and the calories.

Like many of you reading this, I've driven past thousands of them and been secretly envious of their seemingly effortless pedalling, their speed and just being out in the open air.

But I have never been envious of the multi-coloured Lycra.

I can appreciate the practical nature of the multi colours – all the better to be seen by short-sighted motorists – and I guess the Lycra keeps everything together in a kind of streamlined way... but it's not a look I expect to see in a mirror any time soon.

Even though last week Mrs Lumsden and I finally arrived late at the cycling party and treated ourselves to a brand new bike each, I will most definitely not be turning into a MAMIL (middle aged man in Lycra). I shall most assuredly be staying a BIRD (bloke in regular dress...or, more likely, bloke in real desperation).

If you've ever seen one of these kids' entertainers squeezing balloons into animal shapes, that's what my rather less than svelte body would be like in a Lycra outfit. Squeezing everything up from the bottom would give me a pair of shoulders like Hercules and I'd be too top heavy to cycle anywhere.

However...forgetting the Lycra for a minute and getting back to the bikes. I mean, how hard can it be to get out there and cycle? Well, actually, either I am a complete wimp, or it is a lot harder than it looks.



■ Though he has just acquired a bicycle Dick Lumsden is not into Lycra... yet.

Pictures: SU ANDERSON/PA

my way out to the end of my drive I discovered that stopping and getting off was none too easy either.

Day 1 of our cycling adventure saw us pedal for about a mile and a half along a flat country lane and back – and I was terrified the whole way. We were only passed by two cars, but I was wobbling so much I had to get off and stand on the grass to let them overtake.

Changing gear was a nightmare (even though it was dead flat) as my glasses have varifocal lenses and I couldn't read what gear I was in without leaning way forward and tipping my head back – thus increasing the wobble factor substantially.

I'm sure it will get easier with practice, unless I fall into the path of a giant agricultural vehicle first.

All the statistics say cycling safety has improved greatly in recent years. Better bikes, better helmets, better awareness... but first you have to learn to ride right?

My whole reason for getting a bike was to try to stave off the gentle slide into marginal obesity and try to do some kind of regular aerobic exercise. Based on Day 1 my heart rate was certainly up, but not because of the rate I was pedalling, more out of sheer terror.

The Government keeps telling us about how fat we are all getting as a nation. Predictions are that within the next 20 years, 60% of all adults in Britain will be obese. And yet, according to CTC, the national cycling charity, there are more than 20 million people in the UK who claim to cycle at least

once a year – and three million who cycle three times a week or more.

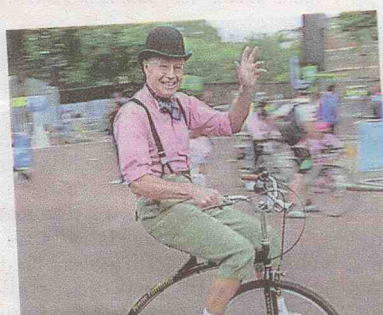
Either most of these occasional cyclists are going very slowly while eating a chocolate bar at the same time, thus actually increasing calories as they go, or uncommitted cycling does nothing to make you healthier.

Of course, it is my intention to do it properly (without the Lycra) and to get out there at least a couple of times a week and have a decent stab at getting the blood pumping.

I've even bought a little gizmo to park the bike in so that I can cycle for miles without actually leaving the garage. It is fully my intention to build up gradually to the point where I can sit on the bike, in the garage, on a Saturday afternoon with BBC Radio Suffolk, listening to full match commentary of Ipswich away matches.

I figure that is likely to be a whole lot safer than dicing with death on the roads and being laughed at for not wearing Lycra. I'll keep you posted.

■ Dick Lumsden is managing director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views



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