

I'm in with the in crowd

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By [Gavin Aitchison](#) »

I DON'T like cyclists. Cycling is fine in principle. I just don't like "cyclists" as a collective.

They are a nuisance to motorists. They creep up in silly places at junctions, fail to signal before turning, and invariably run red lights.

As a pedestrian, they're just as bad, treating pavements as an extension of the road.

And then there's that smug cyclist attitude. The elitism that comes from knowing they're quicker than the pedestrians, fitter than the motorists and more eco-friendly than anything imaginable. Cyclists – yes, every single one of them – have a sanctimonious 'better than thou' mentality, viewing any car driver as a close accomplice of Satan himself.

Cyclists also nod at each other. It's bizarre. Two people with no connection, other than that they both happen to be using a fairly basic mechanical invention, will nod as they pass one another, as if they are the best of friends. Perhaps it's a mating signal; there can surely be no other explanation.

And then there's the absurd clothing. The lycra shorts and tops, the ungainly helmets and those ridiculous trouser clips. Why, why, why?

The whole thing is preposterous.

Or at least, it was. Until last Friday. When, to my own complete shock, I became a bloody cyclist.

It all happened rather suddenly. I was visiting my parents in Edinburgh when they said they had a spare bike in the shed if I wanted it.

Well now. I could do with getting a bit fitter, and it would be useful to be able to get across town a bit quicker now and again.

And York is now an official Cycling City, after all. I've written countless stories about how City of York Council is investing in cycling facilities, to make it easier, safer and generally more appealing.

So, despite having ridden a bike only once in the past nine years, I said yes, stuck it on the train, and brought it home with me.

And suddenly, like Saul on the cycle-path to Damascus, I was converted.

I dug out the toolkit and adjusted the handlebars and brakes. I bought replacement batteries for the little speedometer. And then I set off. Down Fulford Road, across Millennium Bridge, across Knavesmire and down towards Selby.

My word, it was fantastic. I'd completely forgotten how enjoyable cycling is. Before I knew it, I'd done ten miles. Followed by another 17 on Saturday, and another eight on Sunday, and I was loving every minute of it.

And, I don't mind saying, feeling a little smug. Why, I was quicker than the pedestrians and getting fitter than the motorists. And it was unimaginably good for the environment, of course.

Not that it was all plain sailing. There were a few hairy moments when inconsiderate and incompetent motorists clearly weren't paying attention at junctions.

And my attire wasn't exactly apt. My woollen jumper acted much like a Venus fly-trap, so I may have to buy some specialist clothing if I carry this on. And my trousers nearly got caught in the chain a few times, so perhaps I should get some of those clever little clips too.

But aside from that, I'm converted. I'll tell you what – if you see me out and about, why not give me a nod? It seems the done thing among us cyclists.

SOME Government body or other has said schools should ditch that age-old spelling rule: i before e, except after c. Quite right I say.

It says a lot about our species and our weird society that this heinous rule has held such weight for so long when it's clearly neither useful nor accurate.

It really is the height of idiocy that it has ruled as sovereign in so many classrooms without sufficient justification. My neighbours and I all agree that trying to apply such foreign logic and scientific rules to spelling simply pulls a veil over pupils' eyes. It's time for a seismic shift.

So well done to the conscientious civil servant who seized the initiative on this one. I wonder if their name was Sheila? Or maybe Keith?