



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 12 Summer 2010

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Swansea cyclists bump into Boris

CTC's Wednesday ride on 28th April was in London and, guess what, who should we meet but Boris! The group had stopped near London Bridge to fuel up on wine gums. He declined the offer of one but came over and chatted to us; asked where we had come from and apologised that we weren't allowed to cycle at this spot. We all shook his hand before going our separate ways.

Read all about this memorable ride in Jan's article on p. 5. She is on the left in the photo.



Note Thursday 24th June in your diary. CCS's Head of Transportation will unveil their cycling policies and attempt to answer your questions. See p.8.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by mid August.

Editorial

Again we have a variety of contributions and – at last! – a letter (on p. 4).

No apologies for yet another article focussing on the September *Gower Cycling Festival*. This has taken up a huge amount of time and effort, in particular by our energetic Chairman. As he indicates on p. 3 more help will be needed so I hope you will respond.

A major concern is the lack of interest in the monthly rides we are providing. There was only the leader and me on the 15th May ride despite a perfect day. We know there are lots of near beginners and returning cyclists who need these short rides to gain confidence, so could we have some support please? The next is on 5th June. (See p. 8)

The article on p. 7 by Bill Gannon is I hope sufficiently controversial to get you reaching for your pen (or mouse). (Note: the views expressed in articles are those of the authors and are not necessarily endorsed by *Wheelrights*.)

—o0o—

David Naylor

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City Centre News

Cycle parking

Recognising the need for secure cycle parking in the City Centre the Council have now identified two covered car parks in each of which a car space is to be given up to allow the installation of five Sheffield stands, thus providing parking for 10 bikes. These are located within the field of view of CCTV cameras and in one case also a manned kiosk.

The chosen car parks are the one across Oystermouth Road from the Leisure Centre adjacent to the footbridge and that between Wellington Street and the new bus station. Both are Council car parks. The cycle stands in the former will have access from the footbridge (which should be converted to shared use). In the latter they will occupy a spot close to the manned kiosk.

The possibility of using the multi-story park adjacent to the railway station was considered but ruled out as it was felt that more convenient cycle parking could be provided in front of the (revamped) station.

Boulevard

It came out at a recent *Cycle Forum* that it is to be simply “Boulevard” and not “European Boulevard”. *Wheelrights* hope that this is for brevity rather than to signal that it will not aspire to European standards.

It also came out at the *Cycle Forum* that as its design will take some time advance funding should be available to provide a cycle route parallel to and south of the Boulevard before the main work starts. *Wheelrights* are working with the Council to identify a suitable route. We welcome this, particularly as it will include the link along Oystermouth Road to the foreshore path west of the Civic Centre for which we have long campaigned. However there is concern among our members that this might be at the expense of a boulevard design which fails to cater for non-motorised users – something a boulevard should do to be worthy of the name.

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Cwmafan's Portrait Bench

On 1st May the opening of a section of Sustrans Connect2 route from Cwmafan up to Pontrhydyfen was celebrated by the formal unveiling of the portrait bench featured in the photo.

It is located half a mile up the path from Cwmafan. The formalities started with two songs sung by a male voice choir in the Community Centre and then a large crowd of walkers and a few cyclists (most of whom appear in the pic.) made their way to the bench. There were speeches from Richard Burton's brother and the local MP, Hywel Francis, amongst others.

The 'portraits' are cast iron cut-outs of, from left to right: Dick Wagstaff (a local instrumental in bringing the project to fruition), Rob Bryden (TV personality from the area) and Richard Burton.



The Gower Cycling Festival needs you!

September 2010 promises to be an exciting time for cyclists in Swansea. In addition to our very own Gower Cycling Festival (18-25th September) we are hearing news of the following events:

- Monday, 13th September: the *Tour of Britain* race enters Swansea with an arduous climb up Constitution Hill before the stage finishes in the Kingsway.
- Sunday, 26th September: National Kick-bike Competition in Singleton Park. (This is organised by Rob Wachowski. For details see the Council website nearer the time.)

The arrangements for our Cycling Festival are nearly complete. As well as the programme of 18 rides ranging from 4 to 60 miles we now have confirmed:

- An official launch by Jane Davidson AM, Reena Owen (CCS Head of Environment) and hopefully Martin Caton MP.
- A Festival Party on Friday 24th September at the Gower Heritage Centre. There will be live music by local song writers and singers, and a bar plus food.

The Festival Working Group is now putting the finishing touches to a flyer (which also opens up into an A3 poster). We plan to circulate 3000 copies.

Your help is needed.

If you have a friendly corner shop or café which would stock flyers or display a poster we'd like to hear from you. We hope to bring the flyers to the *Wheelrights* public meeting on 24th June; they will also be available from the Environment Centre and Mumbles Tourist Information Centre.

If you can help as a riding marshal – this gives you free entry – please contact David Naylor or myself (our e-mails are on page 1).

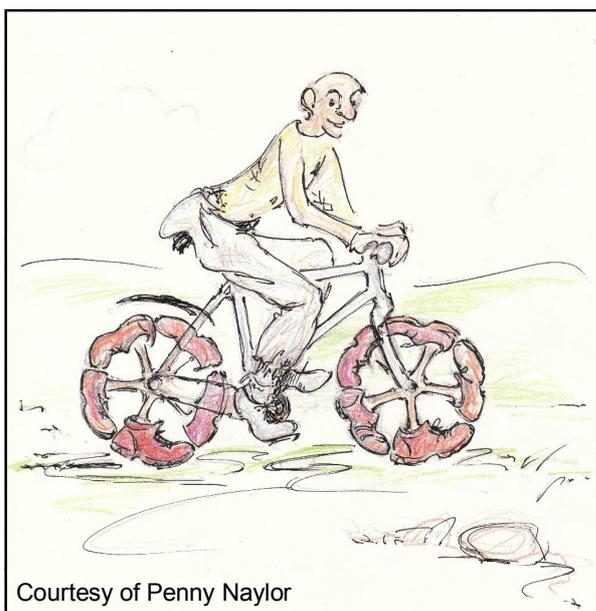
And, most of all, spread the word to colleagues, friends and family, and encourage them to book their rides in advance. Details will be on the flyer but are available now on our Festival web page: www.wheelrights.org.uk/gowercyclefest.htm. Booking can be done either through the Mumbles TIC or by downloading a booking form from the web page.

All we need now is good weather!

Nick Guy (Wheelrights Chair)

—o0o—

Not just for walkers



Courtesy of Penny Naylor

The Gower Walking Festival's "walk" on Saturday 19th June is novel in that the walk is sandwiched between cycle rides.

It starts at 10.00 at the car park by the Commercial pub in Gowerton. A 14 mile cycle ride then follows, ending up at the Wildflower Centre at Blackhills for lunch but gets there via Crofty and Three Crosses. Then after lunch a three mile circular walk followed by the short (5 miles) direct cycle ride back to the start.

To book this (or other walks) visit the Mumbles Tourist Information office, either in person or on line: www.mumblestic.co.uk.

Guess who's leading the cycling bit? Yours truly.

David Naylor

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Correspondence (Letters are welcome on any cycle-related topic. Ed.)

Bikes on trains

The last Newsletter contained two articles on this topic relating good and bad experiences. I feel strongly that cyclists should not tolerate this hit or miss approach and we should campaign for better cycle provision on trains, most of which in Britain cater for only 2, 4 or 6 bikes. (We are lucky in Swansea to have access to *First Great Western* which carry 6.)

This can make it exceedingly difficult for commuters unless they have a folding bike. In addition group journeys can become a nightmare to plan, as I experienced trying to organise a touring holiday for two friends and myself across Wiltshire.

On the Continent many trains have dedicated carriages where passengers can travel with their bikes. [*Nick had in mind this photo taken in a German IC train. Ed.*]

If these work on the Continent why not in Britain? Train design takes years to change, but the disability lobby has had a successful impact. So come on *Wheelrights*, lets get some letters off to the train companies and our MPs for a better deal for cyclists!



Nick Guy (in a personal capacity)

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Sand on the sea front

Some years ago I was cycling along the Swansea sea front deep in conversation – it was a CTC ride – when I ran into a cyclist going the other way. Fortunately neither of us were hurt nor our bikes damaged. This occurred a short distance east of the St Helen's car park where the cycle lane (the path is segregated here) suddenly narrows due to sand encroachment. Whereas I had been riding in the middle of the lane I found myself on the right just as the other cyclist approached.



So when asked to find a Duke of Edinburgh Award project for young Ben, clearing this sand was an obvious choice. At that time the sand encroached on the path over only a few metres, but since then more had blown on to it.

At 9.30 on the morning of Saturday, 27th February this year Ben, Eifion and myself started digging, shortly to be joined by Brian. Conveniently the wall separating the path from the beach was low so that we could barrow the sand to it and dump it on the beach. Judging by the size of the cone we had built up after three hours hard work we had shifted some three tons of sand.

We had cleared little more than half the obstructing sand, but within two weeks the Council, bless them, had cleared the rest.

If Ben has to work as hard to complete the rest of the 12 hours needed for his D. of E. Award he will certainly have earned it.

David Naylor

A London Away Day

Swansea CTC's monthly away day rides have a reputation for being well organized and a bit out of the ordinary! Typical previous away days have included meeting up with other CTC cycling groups, a trip to the Velodrome in Newport (which proved so popular it's now a permanent fixture on our rides list) and even a trip via the ferry to Ireland. On these trips we get to cycle new routes; the extra effort of a drive or a train trip to the start is always worth the effort; John Cardy's London Away Day was no exception.



On the way to Paddington

Getting 13 cyclists on the train from Swansea to Paddington and back was slightly tense when we couldn't find the train manager. Having got all bikes safely on the 9.28 train, the rest of the journey went smoothly. Great weather and detailed forward planning meant we could concentrate on the experience of cycling across London. The highlights for me were the obvious landmarks we cycled past. Having driven through London and having experienced the frustratingly slow pace thanks to heavy traffic congestion, it was a sheer joy to be cycling past Buckingham Palace across London Bridge and along the canal paths to Camden Lock.

Pedestrians were very tolerant of us as we considerably cycled alongside the Thames towards London Bridge. We were asked on one occasion to get off our bikes and of course we obliged straight away, which was just as well because straight after we bumped into Boris Johnson. He in turn very obligingly shook our hands and posed for a quick photo before heading off to eat his lunch.

Despite it being busy, I didn't find it at all uncomfortable riding through London. As all traffic was moving slowly, motorists had time to see us. Taxi drivers were very friendly and one asked me, after learning we were from Swansea, if we were also in a choir. As it happened, at least two of us were! If there was anything at all that was a bit more difficult than a usual city ride, I'd say it was the speed at which traffic lights changed so it was sometimes a problem to get all 13 of us through in one go.

Best of all was the laugh we all had..



Princess Di' fountain, Hyde Park



Abbey Road



Somewhere in East London

Our next away is Wednesday May 26th, a moderate ride:- an away day to see the beautiful countryside and wildlife of Carmarthenshire. Lunch stop to be decided – maybe Abergorlech.

—o0o—

Jan Garvey



Ryan cycles to school

Bike-it, is a practical project which increases numbers of children choosing cycling as a means of travelling to school.



We know that millions of children want to cycle to school in this country, yet only 2% do. Sustrans has stepped in to sort this out with *Bike-it*, a ground-breaking project that has already quadrupled the number of children cycling to its target schools.

The *Bike it* project has been running in Neath Port Talbot for the past two years and we are currently working with 17 schools to promote cycling and demonstrate the benefits to health and the environment. The schools have participated in a whole range of activities from playground skill sessions, bike mechanic lessons to bike rides on fantastic local cycle paths. Classroom lessons have linked cycling into the curriculum. This has included the history of the bike, health & exercise and the very popular bike breakfasts where parents have cycled in with their children for a healthy breakfast.

The following article has been written by a pupil at a Neath Port Talbot *Bike it* school.

Hello I am Ryan I am aged 11 and I am in the Sustrans Bike-it crew at Blaenhonddan Primary School.

To become a Bike-it crew member I had to write a few sentences saying why I would like to be a Bike-it crew officer and what I would do if I became one.

What I said was that if everyone would ride a bike to school then less people would use cars and it would reduce the carbon footprint.

The other pupils in school then decided who would be in the Bike-it crew and I was fortunate to be elected. Now every Thursday many children bring their bikes in and sometimes Louise Powell the Bike-it officer comes in to talk to us about biking to school and safety, and runs different activities for us.

Every Thursday the four Bike-it officers go out to the front yard to count how many people have brought their bikes and then we record it. We had also made a suggestion box in which you can post suggestions for future ideas.

Louise also comes in to check that the bikes are okay and sometimes to repair them, and the Bike-it crew helps her.

What I have most enjoyed as a Bike-it crew member is when Louise comes in and we do some bike skills and games out in the front yard.

The Sustrans Bike it project is great fun and encourages us all to cycle to school.



A typical Thursday at Blaenhonddan Primary

If you would like to volunteer and help out at events such as on bike rides, bike mechanic lessons, playground skills, etc with the Sustrans Bike-it project in Neath Port Talbot, you can contact me on louise.powell@sustrans.org.uk phone 07979 246025.

If you are a school interested in having a Bike-it officer, ask your local authority to contact Sustrans and express its support for an extension of Bike-it. You can register your own interest on the following website: <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/what-we-do/bike-it>.

Louise Powell
(Sustrans *Bike-it* officer)

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Crystal Ball Gazing

As a cycle campaigner I regard it as my duty to try not only to adapt to the current traffic situation, but also to gaze into my crystal ball and anticipate what is to come. After all, the planning and execution of any additional cycling provision will take years to come to fruition, to say the least. Now I don't claim to know the future, but there are a few certainties that I think are as plain as the nose on your face.

First of all it's time to split cycling journeys into two types: those that replace a car journey and those that do not. Laudable no doubt as the second variety of cycle journeys are to the health of the nation, they do nothing to mitigate the damage caused to the environment by excessive car usage. As an environmentalist I therefore give leisure cycling no priority whatsoever.

In fact it's highly likely that a good few hundred additional car journeys are created for every thousand leisure cycle rides. It now seems obligatory to first strap your bike to the back of your car before you begin your 'ride'. How therefore can we promote leisure cycling without also increasing car journeys? It can't be done. I would also question whether it **needs** any promotion, since there are already so many vested financial interests who make a profit from it. Seems to me like we would be doing other people's jobs for them.

That leaves us with cycle journeys that replace a journey by car, and of these the mother lode are without doubt commuters. The most important question is therefore: what do commuters need to tip the balance in favour of cycling? This depends on the commuter of course, but there are certain predictions we can make. If we can make conditions more viable, then more journeys will be made. The recent upsurge in cycle commuting in London **proves** there is huge latent demand.

Any commuter weighs up the options available to them: car, motorbike, cycle, bus, walk. They know that cycling will most likely take a bit longer than a car or motorbike, but it depends precisely **how much** longer. On the upside they get 'a free gym membership', and can thereby use the otherwise wasted time they spend commuting to keep fit. With inventive route planning they can avoid the major roads and junctions, if they're lucky they will find their journey time much more predictable. Who on earth would choose to commute by car?

Well, sadly the vast majority still do. The biggest factors (that we as campaigners can influence) are going to be time and safety. The time that a cycle commute takes depends on the route that you take. Anyone who has done this will know that major roads are faster than minor, and that avoiding traffic lights will save heaps of time. It's therefore vital to develop fast routes that cyclists are capable of using (but not necessarily specifically for cyclists) that avoid traffic lights.

It certainly seems to me that every factor that makes a cycle journey faster also make it riskier, but that is the trade-off every commuter makes. Major roads are full of multi-lane speeding traffic, and will by definition connect to major junctions. But it is precisely these roads that a commuter cyclist will end up having to use if they want to make it to work on time. Please note that it is **not** simply a matter of 'leaving earlier'. If the journey by bike takes too long when compared to the car, then they will use the car. Speed **is** of the essence.

It's also worth noting that to be of real use it must also be possible to use these routes in the dark, and in Winter. As someone who made the decision to live without a car five years ago, the most shocking thing that has struck me is how few cycle 'facilities' can actually be used in the dark, or in Winter. What exactly **was** the point of building them?

I do wish minor roads were more viable as an alternative to major ones, but especially here in Wales the minor roads are just too narrow and too hilly to be of use. That is not to say we shouldn't make use of them now and again, but our priority should be to keep the major roads and major junctions at least navigable by cyclists. It's all too common for the reverse to be the case, and it's notable that 'Sustainable Transport Cymru' doesn't even list junction design as one of its objectives. Why? Is it just too hard, or too controversial? Do they actually believe they've lost before they start? I'd actually really like to know the answer to that one.

Forthcoming events

in addition to the rides below. More information on the Events page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.

- Saturday, 12 June: *Adult Beginners Class*, 9.30am Civic Centre East Car Park. Phone Veronica on 01792 206617
- 19-27 June: *Bike Week*. Lots happening, starting with the ride/walk on 19th (see below).
- Thursday, 24 June: 7.00pm. Public meeting. Chris Vinestock, CCS's Head of Transportation will speak on the Council's *Cycle Provision: Plans and Priorities* and attempt to answer your questions. *Wheelrights* members have been asked to submit questions by the end of May. If you have questions for Chris and have not yet submitted them please let David Naylor know what they are without further delay.
- 18-25 September: *Gower Cycling Festival*. See www.wheelrights.org.uk/gowercyclefest.htm for details. NB: the booking form on this web page is ready for use.

Rides Programme

The *Wheelrights* rides still to come are tabulated below, but check www.wheelrights.org.uk/events.htm in case there are changes. Also changes may be made on the day according to who turns up and the weather conditions.

Key to the ride start/finish (S/F). GR = Grid Ref. eg on OS 1:50,000 sheet 159.

BP Blackpill Lido café (GR 593323) Com Commercial Inn car park, Gowerton (GR 593323)	Dcp Duvant Car Park by NCN 4 (GR 596939) RI Railway Inn by NCN 4 (GR 598924) SB Sail Bridge, Swansea (GR 662929)
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Date	S/F	Time	Description
Saturday 5 th June	BP	10.00	A SE Gower Exploration. A short ride in the Mumbles area following the opening of the <i>Gower Walking Festival</i> . Leader: Claudine Conway
Saturday 19 th June	Com	10.00	Blackhills Wild Flower Centre. 14 mile ride there; lunch, then 3 mile (optional) walk. A <i>Gower Walking Festival</i> event Leader: David Naylor.
Monday 21 st June	Dcp	18.30	Wheelrights mid-summer ride.* Normally this classic ride follows the coast to the N. Gower Hotel in Llanrhidian. Leader: David Judd
Saturday 17 th July	SB	10.00	Crymlyn Bog circuit. NCN 43 to the Enterprise zone, up and over to the east, back via Jersey Marine and NCN 4. Leader: Eifion Francis
Saturday 14 th Aug.	RI**	9.30	Pontardulais: A flat ride up the Lliw Valley cycle path and back west of estuary. (19 miles from Rly Inn, 13 from Gowerton). Leader: Bob Smith.
Saturday 18 th Sep.	BP	10.00	Gower Cycling Festival: choice of rides following the formal opening. (See Festival programme.) Leaders: Nick Guy/David Naylor.
Saturday 25 th Sep.	RI	10.00	Gower Cycling Festival: choice of North Gower ride. Leader: Bob Smith; or (if you are one) the teenager's ride. (See Festival programme.)
Saturday 16 th Oct.	SB	10.00	A ride to the east: maybe a circuit of Crymlyn Bog via east side of Kilvey Hill or alternatively a flat ride to Aberavon . Leader: Jan Garvey.
Saturday 20 th Nov.	RI	10.00	Mumbles/S. Gower. An easy ride in this area to suit the participants. Leader: Phil Jones

* Bring lights in case we dally in the pub.

** Or Mill St./Gowerton By-pass traffic lights at 10.00

Ride leaders' phone numbers:

Claudine Conway: 07918 140124	Nick Guy 01792 476178	David Naylor 01792 233755
Eifion Francis: 07773 139058	Phil Jones 01792 234705	Bob Smith 01792 850650
Jan Garvey: 07861 684722	David Judd 07967 613920	