



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 29 Autumn 2014

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Gower Cycling Festival



After a sunny launch on Sat. 9 August the tail end of hurricane Bertha threatened to disrupt the Festival on the Sunday. In the event sunshine followed a heavy shower and the rides went ahead as planned. The views were fantastic as this view of Worm's Head taken on the Gower Circuit ride testifies.

Numbers ranged from 5 to, on several rides, more than 20 – less than last year but the rides were of a size conducive to the enjoyment of the participants.

There was a colourful start to the Festival with several dressed 1920's style for the Family Tweed ride. See the pic.s on the Festival web page. The visits to the Riverside Centre in Pontardulais on the "Ports and Pottery" ride for a talk and to the Bridge Pottery in Cheriton where salt-glazed ware is made in a wood burning furnace were much appreciated, as was Adrian Metcalf's commentary on the ride round Dylan Thomas's Swansea haunts.

The Festival was again a success. We have however ideas for improving it next year.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to the Secretary (address below) by mid November.

Editorial

On p. 3 our Chairman looks to the future. This is followed by some information and then descriptions of cycle rides during this lovely summer. This highlights the need for more cycle capacity on Arriva Trains which I address on p. 7. Finally a note about our newly formed *Routes Group* on p. 8.

More material from you readers is needed. There is too much written by me!

David Naylor

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Correspondence

Tube map

You asked for responses so here goes. In my opinion the "tube" map [*Last issue, p. 2.*] is a gimmick, a waste of time and effort and probably money. There was no key shown but I cannot tell which routes are cycle paths and which are roads. We all know of the road links between various districts so the map tells us nothing new. As you say the times are relative, would it not be more sensible to give distance, in miles, we are still in Britain, then we can calculate how long WE will take to ride the given distance? Also gradients could be shown. The "ups" by arrows. The more arrows the steeper the gradient.

Alun Evans (by email on 2 June.)

Ed: This initiative of Swansea and NPT councils is clearly important but, as Alun's response indicates, is controversial. So could we have some more feedback please? This should help establish a Wheelrights position. To help you with this visit the website: www.cycleswanseabay.org. As well as providing more information about the routes it offers a virtual ride along some of them.

Alun also commented on the front page article about the newly opened NCR 43. He disagreed with my comment that the NCR 43 is an excellent route. I have to accept that qualification is needed (for which there was not space in the article). Of Alun's comments on the lack of excellence of this route I pick out three which I think are the most important: that the road crossings at the Liberty Stadium are confusing and dangerous, that the crossing of the road at the Mond is dangerous and that the barriers at Pontardawe are a nuisance being too narrow. The Mond crossing issue has recently been raised with the Council.

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The longest freewheel

In last year's Summer Newsletter (No. 24) we invited submissions for the longest freewheel in Swansea County. The only one we received was disqualified because you couldn't freewheel all of it. However recently another has been received from a *Wheelrights* member . This is a 2.1 mile freewheel from a high point SE of the upper Lliw Valley Reservoir (GR 672050) to Rhyd-y-Pandy (GR 667019). Unless anyone can find a longer one this is the definitive answer.

Ambassadors for Cycling ?

Recently David Naylor and I were privileged to be invited to a meeting of the National Sustrans Trustees, which was hosted in Swansea. (Pictured below.) Over drinks I was chatting to a young trustee who works for *Transport for London* and I described the role of *Wheelrights* as being a “voice for Swansea cyclists”. He replied that maybe we should rather be “Ambassadors for cycling” which got me thinking.

2015 will be the twentieth birthday of *Wheelrights*, which was founded in 1995 by a band of pioneers, when cycling was perceived by many to be an eccentric pastime. Since then there has been a significant increase in the numbers cycling, and recent statistics are showing a decline in the number of car miles driven for the first time in decades. Highways staff talk about the end of “peak car travel”. There appears to be a real generational shift away from cars especially by younger people with increases in travel by rail, bike etc.

So as we approach our twentieth year how about a debate about how *Wheelrights* can reach out to people who ride bikes seldom (or not at all), but who might want to, particularly parents of young children.? Other cycling organisations have rebranded themselves including CTC and Sustrans so how about us? Perhaps our Logo needs changing, and our website revamping?

It's a good time to think about how we can reach out and engage with younger people, women and new cyclists, and the term “Ambassadors for Cycling” could embody a new direction for *Wheelrights*.

We could use the winter months to discuss possible changes and to kick this off I would like to float a couple of ideas:

- For *Wheelrights* to start regular short family fun rides? Julian at Schmoos is interested in helping with this in 2015.
- Recruit younger members to help use facebook and social media more effectively.
- Consider a “Critical Mass” ride?

But above all we need your ideas and thoughts on how to celebrate our twentieth birthday.

Our AGM (on 27 October) could be a good time to start this discussion, but in the meantime please send any ideas to David or myself.

Nick Guy



The picture shows the Trustees at the briefing before a tour of some of Swansea's cycle paths. Jane Lorimer, Sustrans Cymru CEO, is on the extreme right.

A café for cyclists in Kingsbridge

Whilst visiting the new , bigger, *Urban Cyclery* in Kingsbridge I was delighted to discover their adjoining *Black Chilli* café. I couldn't pass over the chance to sample their coffee and a bonus was their delicious homemade brownies served on a wooden platter. They also sell teas, smoothies and other soft drinks.

There was a comfortable settee to sink into with cycling magazines and books to browse. On the wall was a large screen, and as this was in the run up to the *Tour De France*, it was tuned into a channel showing all the teams` preparations for the great race.

In sunny weather they have tables and chairs on a decking area outside, and plan to open 7 days per week. The staff are friendly and chatty, and you can eye up your next Ridgeback or Pashley bike next door.

So if you are passing near Gorseinon on a ride I would heartily recommend dropping into this new cyclists' café.

Ed: If you can recommend other cafés suitable for cyclists, within say 40 miles of Swansea, let me know and a list of them could be included in a subsequent newsletter.

Nick Guy

Urban Cyclery relocated

Around the turn of the year they moved from Castle Square to larger premises in Kingsbridge. Heading towards Swansea on the B4620 from the mini-roundabout (near *Swansea Sound*) they are in the yard on your left. The cycle path to Grovesend goes past the shop. Visit www.wheelrights.org.uk/links.htm for their address, etc.

Note: they give a 10% discount to *Wheelrights* members.

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Bikes for sale



Dawes Horizon Tandem.
700c wheels.Reynolds
501 frame, £120 ono



Pashley Picador Tricycle.
3 speed hub gear, 20"
wheel. £100 ono.



Raleigh Zodiac Kids bike.
5 speed , 20" wheel.
£25 ono.

If interested contact *BikeAbility Wales*

Livvy on: 07584 044284 or

Mike on: 07968 109145 or

Email: bikeabilitywales@ymail.com

www.bikeabilitywales.org.uk

CTC's Rhayader weekend

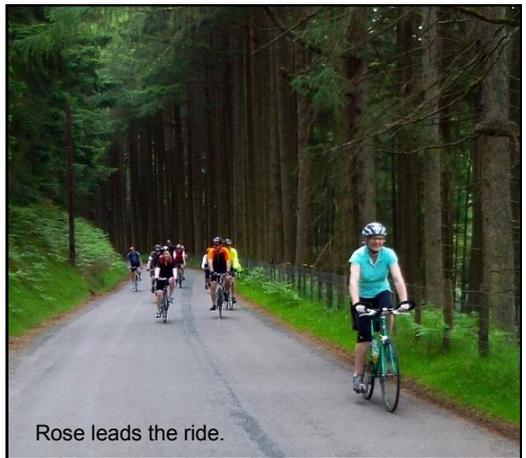
Over the years I've done several really great cycle rides based at Rhayader in Powys. The scenery in that part of the world is spectacular, with more than enough mountains, hidden valleys and lakes to offer challenging but enjoyable cycling. At a Swansea CTC meeting in February the idea came up of a summer weekend getaway to Rhayader, and in the depths of such a dark and stormy winter this was very appealing. I eagerly started planning.

We chose the weekend 13-15th June, by when there were eleven recruits. We stayed in a bunkhouse just two miles outside Rhayader where we all arrived early Friday evening by various means: train, bike, car and a bright red Morgan two-seater!

Luckily the weather looked to be set fair and so on Saturday morning we set off in the sunshine for the first day's ride. This took us east of Rhayader up a fairly short but steep climb to Abbey-cwm-hir where lie the ruins of a Cistercian Abbey by the lake – a secluded and atmospheric spot. A pleasant downhill run on to the Newtown road and then a gradual gradient took us to Llanbadarn Fynydd for lunch – the one and only eating place along the route! After lunch we continued gradually upwards for 4 miles or so, then a left turn towards Bwlch y Sarnau led us over a mountain ridge road with stunning views in all directions. After this it was mainly downhill, much to everyone's delight, with the penultimate section taking us down a beautiful hidden valley to join the A470 for the final few miles back to Rhayader. Back at the bunkhouse in time to change and shower we ventured into Rhayader for our evening meal at the locally renowned Triangle Inn. Fabulous venue and food – highly recommended.

We were off early next morning for a ride around the Elan Valley dams. We said goodbye to Alison, our excellent host at the bunkhouse, and transferred to the car-park in Rhayader. We used the the Elan Valley Trail, a dedicated cycle path up and around the dams, which begins on the outskirts of Rhayader.

It was a balmy summer's day, perfect for cycling, and the trail path took us gently up towards the first of the dams. After a short stop at the Visitor Centre – some for the educational experience, others for coffee and cake – we continued around the lake to the Garreg-ddu bridge. After a short detour around part of Caban Coch reservoir to admire a magnificent stand of tall pines (pictured) we rejoined the main trail around the Garreg-ddu and Penygarn reservoirs. Such a picturesque route, and flat and easy cycling. We picnicked in the sunshine at the Craig Goch dam and then a short, sharp climb to the Aberystwyth Mountain Road, and back to Rhayader.



Rose leads the ride.

The mileage wasn't huge – some 42 miles on Saturday and 25 or so Sunday, but the scenery made it all worthwhile. Breathtaking views and some breathtaking hills too! Our bunkhouse accommodation at Beili Neuadd was terrific – Alison looked after us well, including providing a substantial packed lunch for Sunday that was really welcome.

We all had a great time and may very well do the whole thing again next year!

Rose Pritchard

Dylan Thomas Centenary ride

Last Autumn *Wheelrights* were approached by Huw Morris of Swansea University for help in organising a ride from Laugharne to Swansea to celebrate the Centenary of Dylan Thomas's birth. A small steering group was set up, drawn from the University, the CTC and *Wheelrights*. Included were myself and Phil Snaith from Carmarthenshire. After some vacillation to avoid clashes Sunday, 6 July, was fixed for the date of the ride.

Our initial plan included T shirts, finishing medals, numbers for photo identification, a refreshment stop a short way into the ride in the *Fox and Hounds* in Bancyfelin and lunch in the National Botanic Garden. To cover this we decided on a £20 entry fee. This also had to pay for a bespoke website. In the event we dropped the T shirts, medals and numbers so had funds not only to pay for bacon butties in the *Fox and Hounds* and a buffet lunch in the Botanic Garden but also a complimentary pint and hamburger at a BBQ in the Railway Inn, Killay, that afternoon.

Sunday, 6 July, saw some 50 cyclists assembled in the Castle car park in Laugharne. The sun was shining and with a fresh SW wind to push us along the prospect was good. The weather man had threatened the occasional shower. This led Phil to comment that this would not be a problem as long as it didn't rain when we were on the A40. Promptly at 10.00 the mayor of Laugharne sent us on our way.



Our 57 mile route was on quiet roads or cycle track except for an unavoidable three miles on the A40 between St Clears and Bancyfelin. On this stretch it rained heavily. Clearly the Gods did not approve of our ride – there was blue sky to the north and south! Despite being wet we enjoyed the bacon Butties at the *Fox and Hounds*.

What had been seen as a problem turned out to be a blessing. This was that the B4300 was closed just east of Carmarthen while a section of the road, washed out last year, was repaired. We had discovered that there was a narrow footway which bypassed the works, which could be used when there was no site working, as on Sundays. We therefore used it. Not only did we avoid a hilly diversion but enjoyed four miles of traffic free road.

I was meant to lead the ride from this diversion. But there was no way I could keep up with those young roadies or even the MAMILs and MALILs *. I think, however, that I did an excellent job leading from the back as we all arrived as planned at the Botanic Garden for lunch.

This was less than half way. From here we went via Porthyrhyd and Drefach to Cross Hands. And from there along NCR 47 to Llanelli from where NCR 4 took us to Swansea. Well not quite, as at the Railway Inn the BBQ was in full swing with live music, and we had our tokens for a free pint and a hamburger. I was not alone in dallying there a while. In fact I believe only four made it to the official finishing point at the Dylan Thomas Centre!

It was great fun. That those in front went much faster (when they had the chance) than those at the back and that, particularly after lunch, we were widely spaced didn't matter.

A ride like this looks like being an annual event.

David Naylor

* Middle Aged Men/Ladies in Lycra.

Bikes on Arriva Trains

Last year *Wheelrights* member Alan Kreppel had a go at National level to try and ensure that the new electric trains due to ply between Paddington and Swansea in 2017 or 2018 would have adequate bike spaces (specifically 12 on the longer trains.) He did not receive the assurance sought. Sustrans and the CTC have likewise been lobbying for this. We await the outcome.

When this was discussed at a *Wheelrights* meeting last year (on 16 July) I offered to take up the issue of inadequate bike space on the Arriva trains in Wales. I eventually got round to doing so this summer. Aware that Sustrans had relevant experience I first sought the advice of Martyn Brunt, their bikes-on-trains supremo. (He had been involved with the earlier Paddington – Swansea electric train lobbying.) Martin was very helpful and sent me an informative 18 gage report titled “Good cycle-rail carriage design”. This can be downloaded from the ‘Campaigns’ page of *Wheelrights* website.

In 2008 I had approached ATW on behalf of *Wheelrights* but had got nowhere, I felt that this year I could make a stronger case. Basically that, if properly marketed, provision for more cyclists would be financially viable and need not reduce seating capacity (at least on off-peak trains). A recent journey I took on an Arriva train provides an example of what could be done. Next to an inadequate bike space comprising two fold-down seats were two pairs of opposing seats. These could be replaced by four fold-down seats along the carriage side thus extending the bike space from two to six such seats.

Accordingly I sent a letter to Ian Bullock, Managing Director of ATW, attaching the report Martyn sent me and including a couple of photos. The first illustrated the inadequate provision described above and the second (shown here) how they do it in Germany. A few weeks later a nicely worded reply came from a subordinate advising that they had improved the bike access arrangements on their Class 158 trains but had no intention of providing more bike spaces – at least not until 2020 when the existing fleet is due for replacement. The reply I received in 2008 was on similar lines.



I forwarded the correspondence to Martyn and he proposes raising this at a (National) Cycle Rail Working Group, so the door is not completely closed.

I often hear of people planning a cycle tour who would love to use the train one way, but either give up on the idea or make complicated arrangements to come or go by car. An example is the crossing of Wales, eg from Swansea to Bangor. If there's just one or two of you a train bike reservation can usually be made, but for four or more this is not normally an option. CTC's Rhayader long weekend described on page 5 provides another example. Two of us did use the train, first to take us to Llanwrtyd Wells from where we cycled to Rhayader, and then to take us home from Llandrindod Wells. The others came and went in several cars. Had Arriva provided continental style bike provision those cars could have been left at home. But I have to admit I did enjoy a short spin in John Cardy's *Morgan!*

David Naylor

Wheelrights Routes Group

This year a subgroup was formed to focus on the provision of quality cycle routes. Chris Walsh chairs this group. Its aims and purpose are as follows:

1. Ensure existing Cycling Infrastructure is 'fit for purpose' identifying issues and discussing/prioritising with Local Authorities (CCS & NPT) to resolve.
2. Identify & prioritise new Cycling Routes liaising closely with CCS & NPT and integrating with the Active Travel Act.

In the two meetings held so far this year it has shortlisted routes from the list provided on the 'Tube' map and shown to scale on the Infrastructure page of our website. These are to be put to Swansea's Council at the next CAP meeting on 14 October.

If you have matters you would like to put to the group please contact Chris. (Email: c.walsh@ntlworld.com)

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NCR 4 news

The widening of the constricted and overgrown section on the north side of Fabian Way between Port Tennant and the County boundary is expected now to be done in 2015.

The official route east of the County boundary, ie along Elba Crescent to the Amazon roundabout has been changed to the cycle path on the north side of the new road which runs parallel to and north of Elba Crescent and the Amazon warehouse. While this route is quiet and, at the time of writing glass free, an alternative is the path along the Tennant Canal to Jersey Marine. Although the eastern half is gravel it avoids the section of path due for widening referred to above. It also avoids the climb over the railway bridge.

Forthcoming events

(This and more information is provided on the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

Adult Beginners Classes.

Saturdays 30 August and 20 September: 9.30-11.30 in Civic Centre East car park. Phone Rhian Evans on 01792 510470 or Allyson Evans on 01792 475521 if you wish to attend.

Wheelrights meetings (at 7.00pm in the Environment Centre, Pier St, SA1 1RY)

Monday, 22 September: Ordinary meeting.

Monday, 27 October: AGM.

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