



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



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www.wheelrights.org.uk

The 'GAP' closes?

With over 2000 having now signed the on-line petition in support of the Gower Access Path, ie the shared-use path across Clyne Common, (1000 more than when we reported on it in last Autumn's Newsletter.) and strong support from Councillors it is coming closer to reality. In fact preliminary work on the site has started. The overlay on the photo (View east from Champion Gardens.) gives an indication of its location, if not its colour.



The hunt is now on to find the around £200k needed to build the path. The case for it is based on the increasing number of commuting cyclists now crossing Clyne Common, as well as local enthusiasm for it. Also on evidence that providing for cyclists in areas where a demand exists, as here, can create one where few people cycle but provision is proposed.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to David Naylor by mid May.
(davidnaylor27@gmail.com)

This issue

First, food for thought from our Chairman, then, on p. 3 and 4, articles relating to Active Travel and the need to promote cycling in Wales. On p. 5 we have the second and final instalment of John Cardy's epic ascent of Mont Ventoux. This is followed by an account of CTC Swansea's tour across Devon last summer. If you haven't yet cycled it this report should whet your appetite! Finally our Secretary comments on how a facility in Jersey could be copied in the Gower.

If you are looking for a bike rack for your car, a member has one for sale. See p. 7.

Note the reminder on p. 2 that this year's sub.s are due. Not a member and wish to support what we do? Then please become one.

David Naylor

Chairman

John Sayce, 46 Lon Cadog,
Cwmgwyn, Swansea SA2 0TN.
Phone: 01792 537226
Email: john.sayce@ntlworld.com

Secretary

Nick Guy, 5 Belgrave Gdns,
Walter Road, Swansea SA1 4QF
Phone: 01792 476178
Email: nick.bike@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer

Chris Walsh, 8 Emily Court,
Swansea SA1 8RA.
Phone: 07941 823729
Email: c.walsh@ntlworld.com

Electric cars: a boon or a curse to cycling?

Some of us were swooning when the Toyota Prius came out. At last a vehicle that isn't totally polluting. Then came the first all electric cars – well actually the second wave as most of us recall milk floats! As a man driving both diesel and petrol vehicles, salvation is just round the next bend ... or is it?

Sure the emissions are zilch or close to them, but still they use an awful lot of non-renewable resources. Made with the use of oil in the plastics and masses of heavy metals for the battery. Then on top of that, they need constant recharging which will be fine for those of us in houses consuming renewable energy. But what about those living in flats, etc, without access to a daily charging point? An article on the BBC news website is advocating charging points being set up in factory and works car parks. For those in retirement or out of work, is it just tough luck?

So, the travel to work answer is still seen as a matter of more tarmac to answer the traffic jams and larger car parking spaces for private cars., Their drivers will still want to get as close to their work/shops/health centres as possible and expect cyclists, walkers and bus users to subsidise their transport mode whilst they get increasingly unhealthy with their lack of exercise and growing waistlines. The DVLA in Swansea for example spends millions of our taxpayers money subsidising car users, but next to nothing on any other transport mode.

We are probably in a similar scenario to rubbish disposal in the 90s when landfill sites were never going to run out! But then the Welsh government changed the rules and made local councils bear the true costs, resulting in a massive change in behaviour in recycling. The resulting Landfill tax has paid for green initiatives throughout the land. It may be harder with a behaviour change in transport as the vested interests of the car producers will tout electric cars as a 'green' solution. But who should pay for the true costs of resource depletion, ill health and congestion? Maybe there should be a council tax on office and works car parking to fund bike and bus lanes. Businesses could either pick up the tab themselves or pass it on to individual car drivers. Ford and Nissan might then decide to open up bike showrooms!

John Sayce

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Wheelrights sub.

This will (if necessary) remind you that this year's sub. is now due. Our Treasurer/Membership Secretary, Chris Walsh will be pleased to receive your £5.00. Visit the 'Join us' page of our website to renew as well as to join.

Note that of the five options our first preference is for you to set up a standing order. We would also prefer that you don't pay by PayPal as this both costs you more and causes us extra work.

Cyclists, walkers and Active Travel

On 6 February there was a meeting of the *Wales Cross Party Travel Group*. Our Secretary attended this and writes about it on p. 4. Roy Spilsbury, a *Cycling UK* member from North Wales, who would have attended but couldn't, submitted a report for it. Roy has claim to fame for having succeeded after a seven year battle in persuading Llandudno Council to allow cycling on their promenade. His views are always worth noting and I have picked out an important distinction he makes in his report between the needs of cyclists and walkers.

In official documents, especially the Active Travel Act (ATA), cyclists and walkers tend to be lumped together. Roy makes the case that they should not be. He writes:

Cycling and walking as defined by the Act are given equal status with neither pedestrian nor cyclist having priority over the other. However here lies a paradox. Of the two modes, cycling has a distinct advantage in addressing the aim of the Act to encourage people to travel under their own steam rather than drive. Its convenience, low cost, journey range and weight bearing capacity, makes it particularly attractive in delivering an alternative to travel by motor car, or indeed public transport. Walking on the other hand has outstanding social value, but is constrained in these respects, with limited potential to rise above its current base line for journeys of even a modest distance.

Furthermore, whilst dedicated footways in even modest sized towns may be counted in tens or even hundreds of miles, that allocated for cycling is but a minor percentage, often of a low grade.

Whilst understanding the public policy expediency of linking walking and cycling together under one umbrella, the reality is that this fails to acknowledge surface tension between the two modes, with conflict often fuelled by isolated incidents of perceived discourtesy blown out of all proportion, whereas minor acts of failing to consider the needs of others are woven into the very fabric of our society. But for some odd reason cycling is seen as possessing a particularly pernicious capacity to harm others, far beyond reality.

He goes on to make a number of related points but I am passing this on to you as it clearly articulates an issue I was aware of, and indeed raised in *Wheelrights* consultations on the ATA draft which I wrote. (On the Campaigns page of our website.)

David Naylor

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New cycle racks

Thanks to Pennard Councillor, Lynda James, the Sheffield bike stands, pictured, have been installed outside the Pennard Surgery. They replace the front-wheel-bending variety which have been removed. These will be welcomed by those visiting the surgery or pharmacy by bike.



A Welsh Cycle Campaign Forum.

Recognising that the Active Travel Act has good aims but that Councils lack the funding to implement it our chair John Sayce discussed this with *Carmarthenshire Cycle Forum's* Phil Snaith. They agreed a joint approach to the Welsh Government was needed Accordingly they approached Lee Walters, AM for Llanelli.

Thus on 6th February I represented *Wheelrights* at a Cross Party Advisory group meeting in Cardiff on the Active Travel Act. This was chaired by Lee Walters who started by asking participants for their impressions of the early stages of implementation of the Active Travel Act. The responses were:

- Concerns over poor levels of consultation on the Integrated Network Map (eg only 105 responses received by Swansea Council)
- Concerns about the lack of funding of the Act. For example *Wheelrights* calculated that in Swansea only about 65p per person was spent on cycling in 2017; this compares with *Cycling UK's* target of £10 per person per year.
- Only Cardiff Council seems to have grasped the nettle in a pro-active way, and now have a superb cycling strategy which includes 2 cycling super highways.

Following the official part of the meeting several of the various Welsh cycling campaign groups met and agreed to form an all Wales network. We represented Swansea Bay, Carmarthenshire, Cardiff, and Bangor, with individuals from other counties who were mostly *Cycling UK* Right to Ride reps. The 2 main aims of this “forum” are:

- To campaign for higher levels of funding for Active Travel,
- To share information, especially about future “consultations” at a Welsh level.

Already this “forum” has sparked discussion. eg Roy Spilsbury's submission on the previous page. After the meeting we heard that the Welsh Govt has allocated Swansea about £300,000 for cycling in 2018/19, so above £1 per person – a step in the right direction but still a long way to go!

Nick Guy

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Planning Policy for Wales

A new *Planning Policy for Wales* is in draft form and consultation on it is invited. It proposes measures which, if enforced, would ensure that the needs of cyclists (and walkers) are considered at the planning stage.

Both the document and a questionnaire can be downloaded from <https://consultations.gov.wales/consultations/planning-policy-wales-edition-10>. *Wheelrights* are considering submitting a consultation. If you would be interested in helping to draft this please contact me. Alternatively please submit an individual response.

Nick Guy

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Mount Ventoux (Part 2)

*The Ventoux is a god of Evil, to which sacrifices must be made.
It never forgives weakness and extracts an unfair tribute of suffering.*
(Roland Barthes, French philosopher and bicycle racing fan)

Greg LeMond, Marco Pantani, and Eddy Merckx, are the heroes of cycling who started me off with a life long interest in the Tour de France. It is generally accepted that it's the toughest cycle race in the world taking in some of the toughest climbs. The toughest climb of them all is Mt Ventoux (Windy Mountain), with its unrelenting gradient, searing heat in the forest during the first half and gusty winds at the desolate top.

On Sat. Sept. 23rd, 2017, three of us clutching our Easy Jet £38 tickets to Marseilles, set off on a cycling adventure. It being out of season we were able to hire a nice house with swimming pool and a BMW to get us there from the airport. This region of Provence was beautiful with it's tall cypress trees, quaint buildings and churches, but most of all, all those village patisseries: mmm....

On Sunday we explored our starting town of Bedoin and hired bikes; mine a nice carbon job: Trek SL6 pro, with gears slightly lower than my road bike at home. For the technically minded it had a two speed 50/34 tooth chain wheel and an 11 speed 11-28 rear cassette.

Monday was my birthday [Ed: his 69th.] and what cyclist wouldn't want to spend it cycling!

At 8.30am we were off. The first 5km was rather pleasant with just a 4% gradient, but then we rounded a sharp bend and into the trees where the climb began in earnest. Into my bottom gear and the mindset that I might have to do this for the rest of the day. The nicest part of this section of the climb are the many picnic spots where people would shout encouragement or clap as you slowly passed by. The worst part, apart from the never ending gradient, was when you heard a whirring sound behind you and someone on an electrically assisted bike would sail past nose in the air. On the road are painted many tributes from fans to their cycling heroes; on a particularly difficult stretch "Come on mun, Geraint" is painted and I couldn't help but raise a smile at the thought of Geraint Thomas, our most famous Welsh cyclist, doing what I was doing albeit about three times faster. At last we reached the tree line and the ski resort of Chalet Reynard came into view.

From here the climb gets a little easier, there is just a white desolate landscape with a winding ribbon of road. Although the gradient is less the wind is not and it's a battle to the next bend where the wind will be behind you for a short period. Then at last the aerials at the summit could be seen and, with the finish line in sight, the last 2 particularly steep km are hardly noticeable.

After two and a half hours non-stop cycling from the start we'd done it, we'd finished. Legs like jelly and starving we headed for some well earned omelettes in the summit cafe. Would we do it again? Well Aye Mun, but not today.



John Cardy At the Tom Simpson memorial on the descent. (He died on the TDF in '67.)

Devon's C2C with the CTC.

The C2C (Coast to Coast ride) Ilfracombe to Plymouth had been on my agenda for some time, the difficulty however, was the problem of getting back to the start without having to cycle both ways. Using the rail option these days is a no go – it just cannot be relied upon to work if a number of cyclists are involved. The solution was to use a Devon cycle tour Company who transported riders and bikes back to the start point in a mini-bus and trailer.

First problem solved – now we were ready to get going. Ah! Another problem! No suitable/secure place to park vehicles at Ilfracombe. Ah but! Another solution – a former member of Swansea CTC now living in Barnstaple (Dale Hall) was joining us and had sufficient parking space at his home for our vehicles, so off we went.

Day 1. (Tuesday, 27 June, 2017.)

There were eleven of us. We arrived at Dale's home in Barnstaple in the early afternoon. We gratefully and greedily accepted his hospitality. (hic!) In the late afternoon we started the tour: Barnstaple to Ilfracombe and back. We got soaked on the way back – not planned! The week before we had soaring temperatures and Florida sunshine, now it was pay-back time!

Ilfracombe's attractive harbour would be a suitable maritime location to start the tour, but we couldn't get there for the start. We went there anyway en-route, taking pictures and stopping for a beer and snack. We detoured on quiet lanes for five miles or so on the way back until the railway path resumed at Braunton for an easy five mile ride to Barnstaple. After another evening of Dale and Rachel's very generous hospitality, we departed to our accommodation in a Travel Lodge at Rounswell Services in Barnstaple.

Day 2. (Wednesday, 28 June .)

On a wet morning we drove back to Dale's home. The plan was to cycle from Barnstaple to Okehampton and – to everyone's amazement – that was what we did!



We followed the Tarka Trail on NCR 27, one of Britain's best loved railway paths, completely level for miles on end. It followed the Taw estuary to Bideford where we stopped at the railway station café. From here the route went inland, criss-crossing the River Torridge on restored viaducts. The central section mostly followed quiet country lanes; being Devon, this meant hills, but also unspoilt villages.

The route left the old railway just before Petrockstow dumping us on the busy A386, Dale however, found a way around this which meant some ups and downs. In due course we arrived in Okehampton, soaked to the skin. By this time it was raining Welsh fashion, proper rain it was – just like Swansea!

We arrived at the Sourton Cross Travel Lodge, just off the cycle route a few miles out of Okehampton, absolutely drenched and filthy. Having been told that there was nowhere to store our bikes the lady receptionist, originally from Cwmbran, said she would make some reservation amendments so that we could take our soaking wet and filthy dirty bikes into the rooms with us. How's that for service?

Day 3. (Thursday, 29 June.)

The plan was to cycle from Okehampton to Plymouth for our transport back to Barnstaple.

We again picked up the old railway path NCR 27 along the Granite Way and across the magnificent Meldon Viaduct, a feat of engineering with wonderful views from the top. Such a pity the weather was so miserable at this point.

On the outskirts of Tavistock we crossed another magnificent structure – The Wallbrook Viaduct. We had lunch in Tavistock and, the rain having stopped, we ate outside.



We picked up NCR27 again, now called Drake's Trail, which would take us all the way to Plymouth Hooe where we hoped to find our transport. What a path it was, including tunnels and viaducts – and of the latter, the most striking was the Gem Bridge. (Pictured.) Opened in 2013 this new £2M viaduct for cyclists and walkers replaces a demolished railway structure.

There were some steep climbs up to the summit at Yelverton. Further along we stopped at a viewpoint to look for nesting Peregrine Falcons on the cliffs above the route.

We arrived at Plymouth in one piece and on schedule but found part of the route blocked. There being no visible diversion signs for cyclists so some Google map research was required to get us around the blockage. We arrived at the Hooe with half an hour to spare; no sign of the transport but after a short while he arrived. We proceeded to load up the bikes on the trailer just as the rain started again, but so what? We arrived back at Barnstaple in daylight and loaded up the cars ready for the last leg of the journey home.

Ian Davies

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Bike rack for sale.

The rack featured on the back of this van – a Fiamma, Model 200DJ – is for sale for £100. It takes two bikes. If interested phone Brian Jones on 01792 830330 or email: brian.jones@phonecoop.coop.



A Gower Green Lane

Wheelrights is currently campaigning for new cycle routes in the urban areas of Swansea, partly in line with the Active Travel Act. However there is also increasing interest in the opportunities and potential for income generation from cycle tourism on the Gower.

A few years ago I travelled to Jersey and was impressed by their network of “Greenways” – quiet country lanes with 15 mph speed limits to encourage cycling and walking, and I think there is a good opportunity to pilot a “Green Lane” on Gower.

The Marsh Road from Crofty to Llanrhidian seems a prime possibility; there is a parallel main road for faster traffic, and there are nice sights and facilities for family cycling.

At the Crofty end there is a playground with limited parking. There is also a cockle processing factory shop where, for example you can buy lavabread. Then a quiet two mile road with beautiful views over the salt marshes where Gower ponies and sheep graze.

At Llanrhidian there is a traditional pub, the Dolphin, with a nice beer garden, which is family friendly. There is also a bistro, historic church and shop at the garage.

This “marsh road” forms part of the Gower Coastal footpath and the (incomplete) North Gower cycle route, both of which link to longer walks and rides.

As a pilot scheme lessons could be learnt, which could be applied to other similar stretches of quiet roads such as Green Cwm at Parkmill.

Wheelrights has recently been consulted on a Council study into “Sustainable Transport in Gower and Rural areas around Swansea”. We are also contributing cycling information to the website: www.swanseabaywithoutacar.com.

Nick Guy

[Ed: Comments on this would be welcome for next newsletter.]

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Forthcoming events

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

Wheelrights Routes Rides.

Meet 10.00am in Environment Centre café when route will be decided. (But check ‘Events’ page of website for possible changes.) First Saturday in month: **3 March, 7 April & 5 May.**

U3A Rides.

10.00am starting at various places. Last Monday in month: **26 Feb., 26 March & 30 April.** See the ‘Events’ page for details and confirmation of dates.

June

BIKE WEEK: 9-17 June.

Details on ‘Events’ page when available.

August

18-25 August: GOWER CYCLING FESTIVAL.

Full details on our ‘Cycling Festival’ page: www.wheelrights.org.uk/GCF18. Note that we would like you to register in advance. (It is only £5.) You can also now book the buffet (on the Friday evening) in advance at a reduced price.