



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 5 Autumn 2008

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Bob Burn

This bench was recently installed on the North Gower path. It is in memory of Bob Burn, co-founder of *Wheelrights*, who died in 2005. Fellow co-founder and near neighbour, David Judd, writes:

I remember Bob with huge fondness. To me he was a real cyclist, popping into town past my house sometimes several times a day on one of his Mercians wearing his distinctive purple top and cap. In company he regaled us with tales of his cycling tours, particularly to the West Coast of Ireland. His uncompromising assertive riding (especially when faced with that train on the Foreshore Bikepath) and knowledge of cycling issues has been of great value since we set up Wheelrights in 1995.



There were many other facets to his life, his family and grandchildren, his love of poetry and particularly his knowledge of all things to do with nature, especially on Gower. He taught with his huge enthusiasm many local children in a way that inspired them with a love of nature. At night he would set traps to catch creatures to bring life to his lessons (always releasing them afterwards).

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by 1st Dec. 2008.

I was very pleased to arrange the making of this memorial bench, cut out of an oak trunk by Matt Carroll (a friend of his) and wanted it to be something different. This it certainly is and the location on part of our North Gower Trail (near the former Berthllwyd Inn) provides a setting he would have approved, overlooking the wonderful North Gower marshes.

...

There will be a ride to consecrate the seat, provisionally on Saturday, 4 October. Meet at Blackpill at 10.00am to cycle there or at the seat at 11.00, then to a pub in Gowerton. This will be an opportunity for us all to pay our respects and remember him in our own particular way.

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Parks and Rides

Parks provide an ideal training ground for children to learn and enjoy the art of riding a bike.

They can also provide scenic cycle routes which are alternatives to busy and congested roads. London's Hyde Park is an example.

A hidden gem in Swansea is the cycle route through Singleton Park linking Sketty to the Mumbles Road/Brynmill Lane junction via the Swiss Cottage café/kiosk.

I propose the following improvements:

1. A new bridge over Mumbles Road close to the eastern access to the University to link Singleton Park and the University to the foreshore cycle path (NCN 4). This would require a short new section of cycle path in Singleton Park to link the existing path to the bridge. This is shown by the broken line on the map.

The high ground on both sides of Mumbles Road make this a good location for a bridge. In addition to providing a link with the University it would avoid the dangerous Brynmill Lane – Mumbles Road crossing.

2. Measures to make cyclists feel welcome in the parks – in particular Singleton and the adjacent Brynmill Park. This, for a start, would require the removal of the petty 5mph speed limit. Instead notices at the park entrances on the lines of “Considerate cyclists welcome” perhaps augmented with a code of practice for both cyclists and pedestrians.

The green lines on the map indicate the key paths across Singleton Park. They are widely used by cyclists, but, apart from on the north/south divided path, they may not be meant to. This makes little sense in view of current strategies to promote cycling.

Wheelrights has already highlighted the bridge idea to the City and County of Swansea. What do members think of these proposals? I would value feedback.

Nick Guy
Chairman

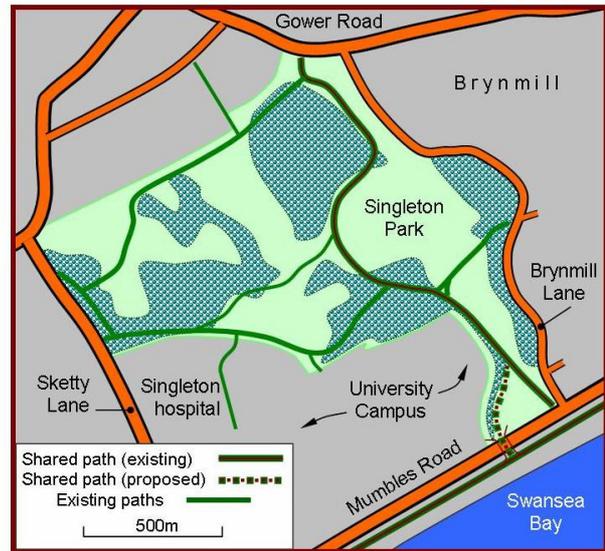
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-A Swansea cycling map

I like maps, provided they are to scale and meet high standards such as one finds in the OS Landranger series. This also applies to cycling maps.

There are many good cycling maps for towns and cities across the UK: those of Oxford, Cambridge and York to name but three. Sustrans new *Discover* series also provide good examples. They avoid the drawback of the strip maps, which they replace, by having north pointing up the map.

Some local maps are by my standards below par. For example the widely distributed *Swansea Bay Travel Map*. This appears to be to scale but is only approximately so. Oxwich and Three Cliff Bays are shown as just one sweep of sand, to name but one inaccuracy. It also lacks a scale. (I feel bad about this as I was involved in its design!)



We need a decent Swansea cycle map. I am pleased to report that Swansea Council think likewise and at the *Cycle Forum* in July it was decided to get things underway. It was agreed that *Wheelrights* would be involved.

I have already done some work on this. To help us decide on colour conventions I have compared those used in half a dozen cycling maps of towns and cities across the UK. There is considerable variation but green or red is mostly used for cycle lanes and off-road cycle paths, with light brown for quiet roads. A particular scheme I liked was that used in the Gloucester cycle map where a pale green is used for residential areas. If the current country wide “20’s plenty” campaign is successful 20 mph will become the norm for these areas. I will be recommending this convention for the Swansea map with a separate colour for through routes on quiet roads.

By my criteria a map must both be to scale and have this shown on the map. The scales on the maps I have compared range from 2½ to 4 inches/mile and the sizes from A2 (420x584mm) upwards. A2 is a nice size to handle. I have worked out that at a scale of 1:20,000 (approx. 3¼ inches/mile) Swansea from Gowerton in the west to Llansamlet in the east and Mumbles Head in the south to the M4 in the north would fit on an A2 sheet using both sides. I will be recommending this for the Swansea cycle map.

We could do with feedback from *Wheelrights* members, so if you have thoughts about this map, in particular what roads should be identified as suitable for cycling, please let me know. One way of doing this would be to send me a marked up copy of, say, an A-Z map. My contact details are on page 1.

David Naylor

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Civic Centre

In the last newsletter Nick Guy reported on the unsatisfactory arrangements for cycle access to the new Civic Centre, and that we had not had a reply to our 12 March letter to Rob David about this. A reply was eventually received in June, but not before we had lodged a complaint. This offered no way forward except to suggest that our recommendation to upgrade the Oystermouth Road footpath to shared use be “explored” as part of the European Boulevard project. Their letter went on to spell out their strategy in some detail.

Wheelrights replied to this 9 June letter on 27 June. We pointed out that CCS’s strategies conflicted with the Assembly’s. Rob David responded with another letter (dated 22 July) which basically defended their strategy and actions. If you would like to see this correspondence I can send you a copy. Our 12 March letter can be viewed on the ‘Various’ page of *Wheelrights* website.

There is however one good bit of news. Ten Sheffield stands have been installed at the bottom of the ramp leading to the main entrance. These appeared round about the time we sent our first letter – just conceivably in response to our request for them, but this is probably wishful thinking! They are conveniently located and readily accessible from the City Centre – provided you don’t follow the Council’s recommended route!

David Naylor

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Give us your Views

Would you like the opportunity to contribute to the development of a new Cycling Action Plan? Then the City and County of Swansea is giving you the chance.

The Councillors are reviewing their Cycle Policy with the objective of assisting in the development of a Cycling Action Plan. The review aims to promote cycling in Swansea as an environmental and healthy form of travel for both transportation and leisure.

Chair of the Environment, Regeneration and Culture Overview Board, Councillor Rob Speht, said: *“Cycling is an important way of reducing our city centre congestion, and improving the health of local residents. We are interested in looking at new ways of encouraging cycling in Swansea and are keen to hear the views of people that may be interested.”*

We plan to gather information from various interested organisations, Council officers, users and members of the public. The information gathered over the coming months will then be used to put together a set of recommendations for the development of a new Cycling Action Plan which will be discussed by the Council’s Cabinet early in the New Year.

Rob Wachowski, the local authority Walking and Cycling Officer, said that *the review was a constructive and encouraging development and is looking forward to a positive outcome.*

If you wish to contribute to this review or would like some further information on the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny function you can contact us by e-mail to: scrutiny@swansea.gov.uk, by post to: Overview and Scrutiny Team, Civic Centre, Oystermouth Rd, Swansea, SA1 3SN or phone 01792 637256

We are developing a questionnaire to gain your views which will shortly be available on www.swansea.gov.uk/scrutiny

For further information on Cycling in Swansea please phone 01792 636353 or see the Council’s Cycling Web pages on: <http://www.swansea.gov.uk/index.cfm?articleid=19327>

Rob Wachowski

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Cycle Stands

It’s not as if we have too many of them in the City Centre so how come the four (or was it six?) stands at the bottom of Portland Street were reduced to two during the recent refurbishment?

No, the photo was not taken in Swansea. It’s not a very good design of stand. I think actually its a spoof to illustrate that for every car you can have six bikes.



To get more stands for Swansea send an e-mail to Rob.Wachowski@swansea.gov.uk, our Cycling Officer, saying where you think they are needed. This will help him get some installed.

David Naylor

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European Mobility Week

(16-22 September)

This is a rather odd title; it should be *European Sustainable Travel Week* for that's what it's about. I wonder where "mobility" came from – Brussels? But may be they have a point: it's the *lack* of mobility due to traffic congestion which this event seeks to address.

The main focus has been on *In Town Without My Car Day*. This has always been on 22 September and within EMW. It falls this year on a Monday; for reasons not clear to me, but presumably to include this day, EMW in Swansea runs from the preceding Tuesday.

The events planned for EMW include *Wacky Ways to Work* – which is self explanatory – a *Commuter Challenge* – a race to the City Centre between different modes of transport, including of course a bike – and various promotional activities. On Saturday 20th we are running an Adult Beginners Class (see p. 8). As this fits in with the theme for EMW the Council are including it in their programme. Other events which involve us are as follows:

Mass ride to advertise EMW on Saturday, 13 September

All are invited to join this ride. We leave Blackpill car park by the cycle path lights at 11.00 am (so please arrive before then) and cycle as a peloton to the City Centre. We will have A4 placards pinned to our backs with a message for passing motorists. Details on our website (Events page).

The photo on the home page of the website shows us assembling at the start last year. We are looking for a good turn out this, so if you can please join us.

City Centre cycle ride on Monday, 22 September

This ride, organised by *Wheelrights*, is for Councillors and senior Council Officers to show them what provision is needed for cyclists in the City Centre. It starts from the *Civic Centre* at 11.00am. Note that, unlike the 13 September ride, it is just for those responsible for the provision.

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Bikes on trains

Mixed news about this. The bad news is that Arriva are planning – at least in England – to reduce the space for cycle carriage to provide space for more passengers and other luggage.

The rather better news is that cross-country trains, presumably the Virgin service that runs from the SW of England to the NE, via, eg, Bristol, propose to make available more space which can be used for bikes if not required for other purposes such as wheelchairs. One presumes that this additional space is not reservable.

My own experience of Arriva in Wales has been good. Although on most of their trains there is only official space for two bikes, there are fold-up seats which allow an additional two bikes per carriage if they are not used as seats. I (and others) have found the train managers (I think that's what 'guards' are now called) accommodating.

David Naylor

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Cycle training in the City and County of Swansea (CCS)

Cycle training within the Swansea area is carried out by the Cycle Training Officer, Clive John. Clive introduced National Standards cycle training to CCS in May 2005. These standards are known as the *Cycling Proficiency for the 21st Century* and the aim is to have “more people cycling, more often and more safely”.

Year 6 Primary school children (10/11 year olds) are taught to cycle to at least National Standards Level 1, which is basic cycling skills in a traffic free environment; i.e. School yards. This level is in line with current CCS policy of not teaching children on-road cycling, which in Swansea is only taught to adults.

Other groups taught cycling are the South Wales Police, Cubs, Brownies, Junior Park Rangers, play groups and special needs individuals.

Some South Wales Police Officers have been trained by Clive to teach basic cycle awareness in local primary school's.

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has recently agreed proposals to increase cycle training in Wales, including the adoption of the UK's National Standards for cycle training. This is the *Bikeability* scheme which, since April 2007, has been adopted by all English Local Authorities for teaching both children and adults. There are three levels:

- **Level 1** – Basic cycling skills in a traffic free environment.
- **Level 2** – Introduction to on-road cycling, on quiet roads.
- **Level 3** – Cycling on busy roads, incorporating real traffic and advanced road features.

As a key part of this project WAG are to make £250,000 available to train over 100 National Standards Instructors in Wales.

In the year to 31st March 2008 52 out of 85 Primary Schools in the County received National Standards cycle training.

The rewards for giving the children of Swansea the best possible cycle training include making them fitter, safer and happier. The photo shows Clive in action.



Extracted by David Naylor from a report by Clive John,
Assistant Road Safety Officer (Cycle Training)
City & County of Swansea

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Cycling – a woman’s perspective

I was invited to write about cycling from this perspective, but with the summer we have had so far, the only perspective that suggests itself to the everyday cycle commuter is a waterlogged one. So I can at least confidently assert that women get as wet when it rains as men do. A bit like the Inuit people who are popularly believed to have hundreds of different words for snow because they need to be attuned to the nuances of weather and environment, Welsh cyclists are alert to subtleties and variations in wet and windy weather that escape the cocooned motorist. We are generally rather smug about our ability (with the right gear and the right attitude) to laugh in the face of torrents and monsoons, while our puzzled friends and colleagues exclaim incredulously “You’re not going out in *that?*”.

My (not entirely serious) theory about Nicole Cooke winning the Olympic road race is that the distinctively Welsh weather that day in Beijing gave her an advantage over the rest of the field. My other (admittedly optimistic) theory is that the success of the women in the outstanding British cycling team will trigger a wave of enthusiasm for cycling amongst British women, who remain much more reluctant than men to try cycling either for sport or utility *. For those of us who campaign to increase cycle use, this is largely a matter of seizing the moment. CTC have already been encouraging women to try cycling this summer with their *Five Miles to Fabulous* campaign. I welcome this, but remain slightly dismayed by its implication that the only thing that will get women on bikes is the promise of becoming more glamorous. I would like to hope it was possible that women could enjoy cycling in the same way that men do – because it is liberating, absorbing, joyous, useful and sometimes even challenging. And that they would get over the fact that it makes you a bit sweaty. [Editor: *I thought women glowed?*]

One of the more disheartening things I read last year was a study (quoted in *The Times*) that found that women are more likely than men to be killed by HGVs at junctions. This is not because lorries are driven by crazed misogynists, but because women have a tendency to cycle apologetically, to adopt a “don’t worry about me, I’m not really here” attitude which disadvantages them on the roads as it does elsewhere. The causes of women’s self-abasement and under-confidence are obviously too deep and too pervasive to be tackled by cycle campaigners alone, but anything that can be done to boost women’s confidence is a step forward.

I will start the ball rolling by confirming from experience (as a relative latecomer to cycling) that there is no reason that women cannot derive exactly the same benefits from cycling that men do. It is the norm in our culture for men to talk and behave as if their hobbies require the skill levels of a fighter pilot and the specialist knowledge of a rocket scientist. No wonder women are daunted. The good news is that it’s all a hoax. Assuming you can already ride a bike from point A to point B (if you can’t, *Wheelrights* can help), all you need is a bike in working order, some reasonably practical clothing, and at least one source of good advice. The rest (fitness, confidence and expertise) will come gradually. The other good news is that although female cyclists do experience *some* hostility, my overwhelming experience is that most men are more than happy to have female cycling companions and allies. Once the men in your life get over the surprise at you mending your own punctures and the slight bruise to their egos if you overtake them, the conviviality and camaraderie fostered by cycling can only be good for relations between the sexes.

Claudine Conway

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* BMRB/Sustrans research (July 2008) found that around 8% of men cycled every day compared to 1% of women (www.sustrans.org.uk)

From our Membership Secretary:

Membership cards

Some members have never received membership cards. If you need one (to obtain discounts from cycle shops etc) then please let me know. These are valid to the end of 2008, when new cards will be available – once you have paid your £5/£3 fee for 2009!

CTC Membership

Wheelrights has affiliated to CTC. The main reason for this is that CTC offers insurance for our activities, particularly the *Explorer* rides. Another advantage of this is that individual members of *Wheelrights* can become individual members of CTC at a reduced rate. Instead of £35, the cost is only £12 a year. Most of the benefits apply – third party insurance, discounts and benefits with your CTC membership card, and the weekly CTC email newsletter “Newsnet”. However you will not receive the bimonthly CTC magazine “Cycle” or access to the CTC comprehensive technical and touring information service. If you are interested in this contact me for further details – 206617 or G.V.Wood@swansea.ac.uk

Geoff Wood

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Adult Beginner’s Class

There will be a class from 9.30 – 11.30 on Saturday. 20 September in the Civic Centre East car park. Please contact Veronica on 01792 206617 or Rhian on 01792 510 480 if you would like to attend. Fee is £5.00 (which also entitles you to a year’s membership of *Wheelrights*).

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Swansea *Explorer* Rides 2008

There are just two rides left this year, both in September, as follows:

- Thurs 11th** Llandarcy. Meet at the Tower Hotel car park at 6.30pm – Jersey Marine to Llandarcy – visit the Harvester (5m/8km). Leader: Eifion Francis (01792 796735).
- Tues 30th** Llansamlet. Meet at B & Q car park – Explore cycle routes around Llansamlet – visit Ramada Jarvis bar (4m/7km). Leader: Nick Guy (01792 476178).

Please note

- Just turn up at the meeting point. If in doubt, check the *Wheelrights* web site (www.wheelrights.org.uk) or call Rhian or Dave on 01792 510470.
- Participants must be over 16 years of age unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.

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Annual General Meeting

This will be at 7.00pm on 10 November in the *Environment Centre*. Following the election of officers, etc. we plan to discuss the proposed Swansea Cycle Map. (See article on p. 2).

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