



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 45 Autumn 2018

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Santander bikes now for hire in Swansea

On 5 July Swansea University's Santander bike hire scheme was launched. After speeches from the Vice Chancellor, the Lord Mayor of Swansea and others a peloton set off on the new bikes from the Singleton Campus. (Pictured.) Spot the *Wheelrights* members – there are at least two in the picture.

They rode to the Bay Campus, dropping off bikes at the docking stations, or 'hubs', at County Hall, the Waterfront Museum and Fabian Way Park & Ride. These plus those at the two campuses comprise the five hubs.



Details of the scheme can be found on www.santandercycles.co.uk/swansea. For the payment of an annual registration fee of £60 the first half hour is free, then it is 50p for each additional 30 minutes with a cut off at £5.00 which covers up to 24 hours. If not registered the charges are twice the above except that the first half hour also costs £1.00.

The initial take up has been good with, by the end of July, all the bikes having been in use.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to me:
davidnaylor27@gmail.com by mid November.

This issue

We start with an upbeat message from our Chairman. Next our Secretary exhorts us to join a ride on 2 Oct., and then I report on another successful Festival. I then describe my not-so-good experience of taking bikes on the new Hitachi trains. This is followed by an update from Al on the Cappuccino rides. Then an account by Dawn of her and Chris's Rhine cycling holiday in which a boat was their moving hotel. On p.7 our President describes a work camp in the south of England, and finally I summary a BBC report about transport and CO₂ emissions.

David Naylor

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Swansea hits the Jackpot!

It's been a long time since we have seen headlines like this. After the failure to get electrification and the tidal barrage it must have seemed as if Swansea would always be the bridesmaid in any infrastructure decision.

But lo and behold, it came to pass that in August, the Welsh Government saw the benefits of investing in Swansea by giving us 20% of the active travel budget which has to be spent by April 2019. The £2M coming our way is more than that awarded to any other council!

The big news is that the Welsh Government has accepted the need for a new East-West link from Frederick Place, Llansamlet to Morryston Hospital, linking up with the existing NCN route 4 at Briton Ferry. Hopefully this will be the start of a route that will continue to Llangyfelach through Penllergaer and over to Gowerton or Gorseinon.

And more good news for Llansamlet residents is that a new off-road track will be built from the old Jersey Road through an unspoilt wildlife area in Trallwn and finishing at Lidl's on Trallwn Road. This is a *Wheelrights* route that we have been advocating for a while. All in all, this means that two more communities (Morryston and Llansamlet) will have a direct link to the city centre. Just another 8 suburbs to go before the Council meets its 2021 target !!

Other areas to benefit from the £2M will be Brynhyfryd with a new link from Eaton Rd alongside Cwmlevel rd to NCN43 at the Liberty Stadium and Ynystawe with a link over the river to Clydach.

To help with the Santander bike scheme and increase cycle usage is a revamp for NCR 4 from Sketty Lane to Blackpill, meaning that there will be less hassle between pedestrians and cyclists on this section. Nearby in Singleton park, there will be some new and improved paths to help commuters and leisure cyclists alike.

Next year with the Government doubling its money to £20M for Active Travel routes, there will be another opportunity for Swansea to put forward its case to the Civil Servants. We want to work alongside the Council in the next 8 months, so join us at the Campaign group meeting on September 8th at 10.00am in the Environment centre to plot our next moves!

John Sayce (*Wheelrights* Chair.)

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A Senedd Bike Lobby

The Cardiff, Carmarthenshire and Swansea Bay cycle campaigns are joining forces to lobby the Welsh Govt in Cardiff at 1pm on Tuesday 2nd October for better provision for cyclists.

We are to lobby a meeting at which the implementation of the *Active Travel Act* is to be discussed. Our main aim is to press for more money to be allocated for cycling in Wales.

We were delighted a few weeks ago to hear that the Welsh Govt are giving £10m this year for cycling across Wales, and as John has noted above Swansea Council has successfully bid for £2m of this. This equates to approx. £3 per person per year across Wales which, while a welcome step in the right direction, should be increased over the next few years. *Wheelrights* are supporting *Cycling UK*'s campaign for £10 per person pa, and the lobby will be asking Welsh Govt to match the Scottish Parliament's promise to raise their spending to £17 per person pa!

So *Wheelrights* is asking for a good turn out, and for as many of us as possible to join this lobby on your bikes. We plan a mass ride to the Senedd (along with the Cardiff and Carmarthenshire campaigners). We meet at 11am at Radyr Train Station, and cycle together along the Taff Trail (NCR 8) to arrive at the Senedd by 12.30pm, and hope you can join us.

At the Senedd we are trying to arrange for anyone interested to talk to one of our AMs including Julie James (Labour), Helen Mary Jones (Plaid Cymru) and Suzy Davies (Conservative).

Due to the vagaries of our current poor provision for bikes on trains, alternatives are: A couple of us taking bikes by car (There is safe parking near Radyr station.) or hiring a *Next Bike* from the central train station in Cardiff.

Check the Events page of our website nearer the time in case there are changes, but please ring me on 07551 538825 if you have any queries.

Nick Guy (*Wheelrights* Secretary)

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Gower Cycling Festival

As the advance registrations before the Festival were significantly down on previous years we were concerned that this year's would have been poorly attended. But we need not have worried; despite the weather (It rained on all except the last day.) the numbers were comparable with last year's, which was one of the best attended. There were between 20 and 30 on most of the rides and without exception the feedback from them has been good.



Having last year had problems with estimating the numbers for the buffet at the party on the Friday evening (Moved from the Wednesday of previous years to allow longer rides on that day.) we offered pre-booking at a reduced price. This worked, in the end feeding around 50. These included the six members of the *Mardi Jug* band, whose superb Jazz/Western music set the tone for a most enjoyable party. The picture shows 9 year old Tatiana and 11 year old Lia beating time to the music.

One particular ride illustrates the 'go-go' attitude of the participants. On the way home on the Grand Gower Circuit I stopped between Rhossili and Scurlage to see if anybody would be interested in taking a short cut which avoids a down and up via Scurlage. There were some 20 of us and the consensus was to go for it. This was actually a mistake as the route was hard going and muddied our hitherto clean bikes. Instead of taking me to task the feedback I got was that at least some had enjoyed the experience!

Thus is to be my last Festival as organiser, so I am pleased for it to end on a high note. Will somebody take over the reins?

David Naylor

A Paddington experience

I was on my way home from three weeks of cycle touring in Germany. I had spent the previous night with my cousin in Cambridge and had that morning travelled by train with my bike from Cambridge to King's Cross. I had then cycled the four miles across London to Paddington. Arriving in good time for the 12.45 to Swansea, on which I had my bike booked, I was enjoying a coffee on Platform 1. Having had a lovely holiday and the weather being superb, I was feeling relaxed. That's when things started to go wrong!

I had propped my bike against some railings a short distance from where I was seated and where I could keep an eye on it. My attention temporarily diverted – maybe I was stirring my coffee – I looked up and bike had disappeared! Panic stations; my rucksack with all that I needed for the holiday including passport was on it. What to do?

A bored looking security man was standing nearby so I reported the loss to him. He suggested that it had probably been taken away to be blown up. After letting me suffer for a while he said would make some enquiries. A little later he directed me to a room close to my coffee table, and there it was complete with rucksack. The lesson from this: I should have locked it to the railings; at least then they couldn't have moved it so quickly.

By this time it was 12.30 so I sat down to wait for the platform number for the 12.45 to appear on the screens. 12.45 came and went. The next train to Swansea was the 13.15. I had to assume that my cheap advanced purchase ticket and the bike reservation was valid on this train. It was 13.10 before its platform was announced. This left me only 5 minutes to get to the platform and find where to put the bike.

It was one of the new Hitachi trains with 12 carriages. Enquiring where to put the bikes an official I found near the London end told me to look for a bike sign further up the train. Having got nearly to the front and finding no bike signs I was beginning to despair. By this time it was 13.15. Fortunately I encountered another railway employee near where there actually was a bike compartment and he directed me to it. Departure whistles were sounding. (Or was it flags waving?)

The bike storage was a pokey cupboard with two hooks from which you hang the bike by its front wheel – an awkward operation. Fortunately mine was the only bike. Having learnt previously that these 12 carriage trains can accommodate 4 bikes I expect there was another similar unsigned bike compartment on it.



On getting to Swansea I picked up a First Great Western feedback form on which I reported my experiences and requested that at the very least they sign the locations of the bike compartments. In 2013 Alan Kreppel had made a concerted effort on behalf of *Wheelrights* to get Hitachi to provide adequate bike storage (Specifically for 12 bikes.), but to no avail. This is briefly reported on p.7 of the Autumn 2014 Newsletter (Issue 29).

Provision such as on the equivalent German trains (Pictured.) is needed.

David Naylor

Cappuccino Rides

These rides started a year or two ago, mainly for new or returning cyclists.

They take place every two weeks – see “Events” page of the website for exact dates.

The weather this summer of course has been a cyclist’s dream but in the case of our attendees and leaders has also meant people have been away more, and perhaps been unable to attend as much as they would have liked.

Everyone is most welcome but we do tend to have more women than men, though one brave man – if that’s the right description?! – is a regular attendee.

There has been a core of 4-6 people who try to support every ride which is really appreciated. The company is most enjoyable and it’s great showing people new routes in and around the immediate Swansea area that some were unaware of, and of course it goes without saying that the coffee stops are great too!

On one ride recently Reena, my co-leader, led us to the top of the headland looking down on Pwlldu. We huffed, puffed and complained up almost all the hills in Swansea, or so it seemed at the time, but the end point was well worth it and we sat and ate our lunch taking in the fabulous views.

I do think these rides play a very useful part in getting people back on their bikes. It does amaze me that some people won’t cycle by themselves. I have had some lovely comments from our appreciative cyclists, on the one hand things like “good company” and “great social activity” to “My confidence improved hugely from the Cappuccino rides – thanks to all.” and “Thanks for showing me that new cycle path, I’ve been wondering how you got to . . .”

A few of these riders have said they intend joining a ride or two on the Gower Cycling Festival which will be a great achievement for everyone involved. I’m sure they’ll have a great time.



We will continue with these Cappuccino rides for another few months at least, and until the weather dictates we hang up our helmets and give our bikes a few months well earned rest.

As a back up plan for the winter months, I have decided to lead a monthly walk for the U3A group, and some of my fellow Cappuccino's who are also U3A members are quite interested, so we can all keep fit during our “resting” few months and come back fit and raring to go, next March/April.

Allyson Evans

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Cycling the Rhine

Cycling Holidays can be lots of fun but the daily logistics of moving luggage from hotel to hotel can be daunting. What if the hotel could move instead? So, the idea of a cycling river cruise sounded very appealing. Our chosen river was the Rhine in Germany and the route would take us from Cologne upstream to Mainz. A distance of about 140 miles over 6 days taking in some very historic towns listed on the UNESCO World Heritage Site such as Koblenz and Rüdesheim.

A free day in Cologne before boarding gave us the chance to explore. A walking tour, followed by an open top bus ride and a visit to the spectacular Cathedral just about gave us a whistle stop flavour of this lovely city.

It was then time to board our boat the Arlene II, our home for the next 7 days. A very comfortable boat with around 70/80 passengers. Time to meet some fellow shipmates, the majority of whom were German, with a handful of Brits and Danish, 2 Americans and 2 New Zealanders.

Day one started with a briefing from our on board Tour Manager. Maps were distributed with notes of where the route would take us and places of interest to spend time if we so wished. The route was a flat river side path but with plenty of opportunity to explore the scenic riverside towns. We disembarked Arlene II, the bikes having already been offloaded and waiting for us on the quayside. We were free to set off when ready and at our own pace rather than mob-handed. Our Tour Manager was the last one to leave so that she could deal with any problems she came across en route.

Our first destination was Bonn, some 25 miles along the river. The lovely scenery was interspersed with some industrial areas but still made for very pleasant cycling. On arrival in Bonn, early afternoon, we were glad to see Arlene II already moored up waiting for us. Back on board to cool down from the 35°C heat before heading out to explore on foot. A quick visit to the old town, including a visit to the birthplace of Ludwig van Beethoven and then we scurried back to the boat again, out of the heat, where afternoon tea and cakes were served daily at 3.30pm. How very civilized.



And so our holiday continued in very much the same pattern, where the scenery became more spectacular as we entered the Rhine Gorge with its rows of castles line up on the hill tops. All too quickly we arrive at our last destination, Mainz, and the next morning bid *Auf Wiedersehen* to our fellow cyclists. What a relaxed easy way of cycling and not a hill to climb!

Dawn Aplin

Waddesdon Workcamp

Greenways and Cycleroutes (aka John Grimshaw Associates) volunteering adventure this July was the construction of around 5km of new route linking Aylesbury Station with Waddesdon village via the Rothchild's National Trust Waddesdon Manor Estate.

The large part of the track work had already been done by the contractor and we volunteers were enlisted for the construction of two serious bridges, numerous headwalls and traffic controls.

John Grimshaw was engaged at looking at HS2 potential for cycling additions to avoid severance and new opportunities. This route is affected by HS2 and it replaces a dangerous section of the A 41. In two short years John has negotiated a route, obtained HS2 funding and built this brilliant facility – a remarkable achievement.



The land affected is largely low lying, subject to flooding and mostly used for vegetable growing. As a consequence the work was delayed till the ground dried out and a network of ditches and culverts (large diam. plastic pipes) installed at crossings in advance. The workcamp volunteers were charged with the major task of building two bridges (one steel 12m span and one long timber trestle), constructing lean mix sandbag headwalls (2000 bags) and various traffic controls along the way. Artwork seats with dovetail joints and a series of menhirs (standing stone sculptures in Cortem steel.) were added artistic features.

As last year we mostly camped with excellent food provided by John's brother Chris and wife Claire from their camper van.

Most stayed for the nine days and as last year at Brean we enjoyed the expertise of David Gray and the two Andys, together with some skilled and some not so skilled volunteers (who soon got the drift).

The weather was hot and working 8 till 6 for nine days took its toll but we are all now fully recovered and wallowing in the afterglow.

If you are ever in this vicinity it would be well worth having a look at it and indeed Waddesdon Manor itself.

David Judd

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Over-reliance on cars in Wales

This is a paraphrased summary of a BBC report thus titled dated 26 June.

It makes the point – which is hardly news – that the Welsh are too reliant on their cars. No doubt the same can be said for the rest of the UK. However the report does note that transport is more dominated by the car in Wales than elsewhere in the UK.

Emissions need to be cut by at least 80% by 2050.

The report notes that travelling in Wales could be challenging due to its topography and that its history has not been conducive to the development of a cohesive network linking people and communities.

Despite efforts to encourage more people to cycle, numbers of walkers and cyclists were static or declining. (Just active travel cyclists? This is not clear.) Furthermore there were less journeys by bus and train, the former reducing by 20% between 2004-05 and 2016-17.

Recommendations include:

- A default 20mph zone in built-up areas, with exemptions allowed.
- Transport for Wales to prioritise integrating buses into the South Wales Metro.
- Taking steps towards a green bus fleet "with the utmost urgency".
- Making sure new Metro trains have adequate space for bikes.

I would add that the last recommendation needs to be extended to all trains.

The link to the report is: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-44604025>. Thanks to Nick Guy for this link.

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

Wheelrights Routes Rides (meet 10.00am in Environment Centre café.)

Saturday, 6 October (and first Saturday in the month thereafter.)

Cappucino rides. (1.00pm in the Coast Café, SA1 3SN. See the Rides/Commutes page.)

Tuesday 18 September. (Check the Events page for subsequent dates.)

U3A rides. (10.00am various venues. See the Rides/Commutes page.)

Mondays, 10 September and 15 October (Check the Events page for subsequent dates.)

October

Tuesday 2nd: Cycle funding rally in Cardiff.

1.00pm outside the Senedd. A ride is planned to the venue. See Events page for details.

Check the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk in case of changes to the above and for subsequent events.

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