



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 17 Autumn 2011

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Who'd have thought it's open!



This recent picture shows the eastern end of the new cycle route on NCR 4 immediately east of the Loughor Bridge. As reported in the last issue this route was completed in April this year – that is except for the removal of these chunks of concrete and the altering of the old signs.

Local cyclists in the know use it, but what about visitors? Those travelling west would have shrugged their shoulders and carried straight on. Those travelling east would probably not have known to turn right shortly after crossing the Loughor Bridge so would also have missed this delightful path.

Instructions have apparently been given to the appropriate Council Department to carry out this work so by the time you read this maybe those concrete blocks will no longer be there.



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Editorial

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Copy deadline

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

The Gower Cycling Festival is more than just a fun activity for existing cyclists. It is indeed that but it is also aimed at those new to cycling: to give them confidence and encourage them to use the bicycle as a means of transport as well as for leisure.

On p. 2 we have some positive news on the campaigning front, and on p. 3 a bit about two very successful Bike Week events which *Wheelrights* organised, the second of which picks up the theme about the role of the bike for transport. On p. 5 we see how the new Cork Ferry provided an excuse for an even more ambitious CTC ride and on p. 6 how it tempted a bunch (pelaton?) of Irish cyclists to come over for the day. And then on p. 7 I have my say and risk losing some readers.

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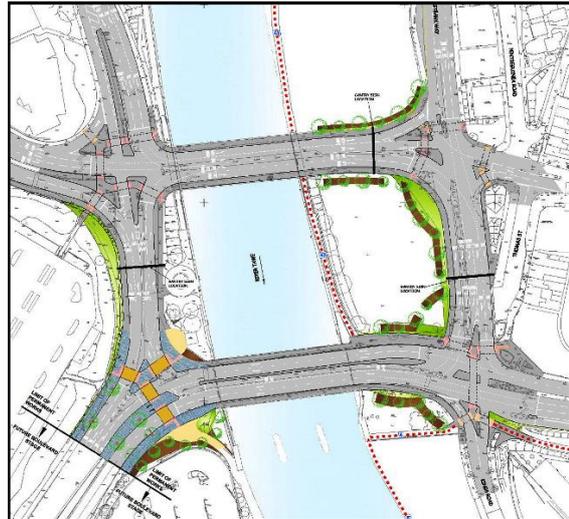
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Tawe Bridges

If you are local you will be aware of the recent change in use of the two most southerly road bridges across the Tawe to a clockwise gyratory. The most significant effect on cyclists is that, as for motorists, they will have to use the southern bridge to cross from east to west.

This work was ahead of schedule and *Wheelrights* were not consulted until the plans were virtually complete. We have however now been consulted and have been able to agree some measures to improve the situation for cyclists.

Our main concern was the one way on the north bridge. Next to this was loss of the single stage Toucan across the west side of the south bridge which is to be replaced by a multi-stage crossing.



There is sufficient width on the northern bridge for a cycle contra-flow lane and had this been considered at the design stage might have been a possibility. However the junctions at either end present a problem and changes to them would have been necessary. An east-west cycle route on the north bridge was therefore ruled out.

Cyclists for NCR 43 from the east side of the Tawe will as before access it from the south bridge. A wide shared use path has (or will shortly) replace the pavement running east from the start of NCR 43. There is also the possibility of a link north of the northern bridge to NCR 43 from Pentreguinea Road.

To make it easier for cyclists from the north and east to access the south bridge measures to make the south end of Pentreguinea Road across Delhi Street more cycle friendly are planned.

Preferred access from the south is now on the east side of the Tawe along the new path from the Sail Bridge. There will be a new Toucan crossing of the Kings Road/Fabain Way junction which should make it easier than at present to cross here and get on to the aforementioned wide path to NCR 43. The timing of these lights is to be tuned to make crossing here easier.

We have asked for, and this has been agreed in principle, a 5m. wide shared use path on the north side of Quay Parade to link the crossing at Wind Street to the bridges. This will extend the proposed shared use route on the south side of Oystermouth Road, eventually providing a cycle friendly route all the way from the Foreshore west of the Civic Centre to the bridges.

Finally, it has been agreed (again in principle) to upgrade the pedestrian route for cycle use on the west side of the Tawe under the north bridge. This will enable cyclists travelling south down New Cut Road to get to the south bridge (and NCR 43) avoid both the junction and the one way north section of road here. It will in effect be a contra-flow.

Key meetings

Our good relations with the Council have recently been reinforced by meetings on 30th June with Chris Vinestock (Head of Transportation) and on 25th July with cllr John Hague (Cabinet Member for Environment).

The Tawe Bridges constituted the main agenda in both these meetings. In addition the so called *Action Plan* featured strongly in the first. This is a plan of action for cycle provision to which the Council are committed. Most of the items on it are *Wheelrights* initiatives. Chris has asked that these meetings be held quarterly and the next is scheduled for 30th September.

A highlight from the cllr Hague meeting was a positive move to bring about our long sought after upgrade to shared use of the footpath from the Civic Centre to the Foreshore to the west.

David Naylor

Bike Week

Bike Week this year was from 18th to 26th June. Unlike in previous years *Wheelrights* managed to get their act together and organised two very successful events. The first was a *Mass Ride* on Saturday, 18th and the second a *Commuter Challenge* on Wednesday, 22nd.

Mass Ride

The sun shone. About 25 turned up at Blackpill where they had a selection of A4 placards pinned to their backs for the edification of passing motorists. We got away promptly at 12.30. The peloton proceeded at a steady 8 mph to St Helens, occupying one lane of the Mumbles Road. There was some debate as to whether a toot from a passing motorist was friendly or not, but we assumed it was. Then through the Sandfields and along the Kingsway Metro route to end in Castle Square (pictured). There Byron Davies AM, Conservative Shadow Transport Minister who had been on the ride, said a few words of encouragement.



What was the purpose of the ride? In addition to being a fun activity to give those of us who cycle a sense of togetherness it sought to draw attention to the role of the bike as a means of transport, that ordinary people can ride one in their everyday clothes.



A Commuter Challenge

Again the sun shone. Nine of us left the car park near the *Commercial* pub. in Gowerton at 8.15am sharp. Three were on bikes and one on a kick-bike. Two ran! The remaining three travelled by car, bus and train. By 9.00 all had reached Castle Square, their arrival times having been carefully recorded by Vee and Geoff Wood. The Evening Post's Chris Peregrine interviewed us in depth and their photographer took pictures. A two page spread appeared in the 24th June Evening post.

These quotes from the challengers provide a flavour of the event. [] show their times in minutes.

Claudine Conway (Bicycle) [23]: As a regular commuting cyclist, I was confident that my mode was the smart choice. It's what they call a no-brainer. Though I certainly underestimated the kick-bike!"

Rob Wachowski (Kick bike) [25]: Travelling down Carmarthen Road in the 40mph zone at the same speed as the traffic was a school!" [*An amalgam of scoot and hoot, Ed*]

Alison Sandy (Bicycle) [27]: Great fun, great result. Eat my dust, car drivers!

Mark Roberts (Runner) [31]: Losing to those petrol heads was not an option!

David Naylor (Bicycle) [31]: Although two miles longer the foreshore route was almost as quick."

Nick Guy (Car) [34]: I usually justify driving by car as being much quicker, I expected Claudine to beat me, but was really surprised that David, Alison, Rob and Mark were all faster than me.

Chris Allton (Runner) [37]: I had a great time: the bikes got away from me from the start as I expected, but I was pleased with my time.

Colin Fielder (Train) [37]: Let the train (and bike) take the strain.

Mike Lewis (Bus) [40]: It was an enjoyable experience as I usually commute by car. The alternatives highlighted by the challenge have certainly made me rethink my travel arrangements.

Conclusion? No doubt about it: two wheels – and even two feet – have it over four!

For some more pictures visit www.wheelrights.org.uk/various.htm.

David Naylor

Clydach Connect2 Phase 1 Launch



On Saturday, 11th June councillor Ioan Richards, Mayor of Swansea, formally opened the first section of the Clydach Connect2 project. Following a short ceremony in the Forge Fach Centre the assembled company walked or cycled the mile to Coedgwyllym Park where the 'Portrait Bench' was unveiled. The metal cut-outs feature local celebrities.

Meanwhile a party was underway in the park: There were lots of people, fun activities and various stalls..

Phase 1 comprises the section of path along the canal south of Clydach to beyond Coedgwyllym Park. The route is the same as previously except that a direct route through the Depot on the east side of Clydach will be provided. The canal path has been upgraded. The new route through the Depot was temporarily opened for the launch. It is expected to be permanently opened later this year.

The crucial Phase 2 of the work will see a new route between the A4067 underpass and the canal. It will follow an old railway embankment to the east of the playing fields and cross the river on the disused bridge to the east of the pipe bridge, Just when work will start on Phase 2 is not known, but hopefully it will be in 2012.



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New bikes for our classes



Thanks to a £1,200 grant from the Co-operative Group we have been able to purchase some much needed new bikes for our Adult Beginners Classes. We have used part of this to purchase three folding bikes. We checked these out at the class on 6th August. An Evening Post photographer was there as was David Evans in his role as a representative of Coop members in South Wales. A photo plus article duly appeared in the Evening Post on 9 August. The picture shows the group posing for the photographer. (A different photo accompanied the article.) Two learners are on the bikes with David Evans in between

David Naylor

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Further West than Pembrokeshire!

In early June ten cyclists from the Swansea and West Wales CTC Member Group sailed to Cork on the revived ferry, the Julia, for a four day cycle tour. The regular CTC Wednesday rides had, a few years ago, extended their scope by having monthly "Away Days"; more recently some of these had morphed into mini-cycling holidays. Last year it was the Cotswolds, and this year first a two day trip to London and now Ireland. [Ed: An account of the Cotswolds trip appeared in the Autumn 2010 Newsletter and the London trip in the last issue.]

Like all the best things in life, this visit to the Atlantic shores of County Cork came about more by luck than judgement. The CTC helped us financially and Pennard Community Council, anxious to restore links with their twin-community of Passage West, near Cork, helped with the arrangements. The enthusiastic support of both the local Member Group and *Wheelrights* contributed to a most enjoyable break.

So, on a Sunday evening, weighed down with rain-gear and gloomy weather forecasts, the party embarked on the ferry bound for Cork. A calm and comfortable crossing followed – marred only by a surprising absence of Guinness! The Julia delivered us in Ringaskiddy the next morning. We cycled that day to Skibbereen, stopping on the way for a second breakfast in Kinsale. We stayed in the superb Rossagh Mill independent hostel just west of Skibbereen on the Monday and Tuesday nights



The plan was to take the small ferry from nearby Baltimore across Roaring Water Bay to Cape Clear Island, explore that island and claim it for *Wheelrights*. Roaring Water Bay indeed lived up to its name and the ferry crossings that day were so exciting and we were so well entertained by the Irish songs which the ferry captain sang as he steered the rocking boat, that we totally forgot to claim anything for anyone! Cape Clear Island was steep, sunny and stunning, with every road containing a 1 in 4 gradient somewhere in its length. Despite strained knees and exaggerations as to who climbed what we survived .

We spent two days on the return to Cork, staying in a superb B&B overlooking the stunning Courtmacsherry Bay.

Before boarding the boat we had a reception to attend at Passage West, provided for us by their Community Council. There was free beer and sandwiches. Cycle-touring gets no better than this.*

Throughout our travels we met with nothing but warmth and friendliness. The Rossagh Mill hostel would have suited families as well as a group like ourselves. The B&B couldn't have done more for us. Locals in the bars were cheerful and chatty. With the hostel charging €15 per head including food for a d.i.y. breakfast and the B&B €30 we had excellent value

Thanks to newly developed links with a charity group from the Beara Peninsula we hope to return to South-West Ireland again next year. It would benefit everyone here and in Southern Ireland to see the Julia more used.

Most surprisingly, we needed none of that rain-gear.



* We later received the book "Salt Water and Rust in their Blood" by Councillor Jim Murphy. It is a history of Passage West and the harbour area and is a gift to the community of Pennard. It has been placed in the Pennard Library from where it can be borrowed.

Phil Jones

Have you ever been across the sea to Wales?

July 1st saw our local CTC group hosting a group of about 40 Cyclists from Beara in Southern Ireland. They came on the Cork Swansea ferry equipped with support vehicles: a chuck hospitality wagon, not to mention their own Red Cross Irish ambulance. Our group of eight had arranged a route of up to 100 miles taking in the Millennium coastal path, Carmarthen Bay and a wiz around the Gower. A particularly amiable bunch, they were most impressed with the quality of our bike paths; but who could fail to be when riding along our top notch billiard table smooth route to Burry Port!

At Ferryside car park it was like a Tour de France stage finish, with cyclists, bikes and vehicles strewn everywhere. Following a route along North Gower on the return they took in the saltings of Penclawdd. The mention of pubs and the salt air must have made them feel thirsty, but the intrepid organisers had thought of that and had included the Railway Inn as a pit stop. Tired, thirst quenched and happy our new found Irish friends were herded back from pub to the Ferry for their trip home.

It was a truly memorable and enjoyable day and our visitors have been Twittering on the internet about it ever since. Next year there is every likelihood we'll be taking up their offer of a return tour in Ireland. Thanks must go to all who took part, but a particular thanks to the main route planner and organiser Brian Croft ably assisted by Don Ashman and Phil Jones. Like all good experiences though, there's a good chance we'll be asked to repeat it again and again.

John Cardy

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Bike Maintenance

The CTC have arranged with Schmoos Cycles for evening (6.30-8.00pm) classes on bike maintenance in the Environment Centre. The first is planned for 18th October. Details will be provided on *Wheelrights* website.

These classes will be open to non-CTC members.

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Taking the lane

This refers to the recommended practice for cyclists of moving out into the so-called 'primary' position when it is not safe for a vehicle behind them to overtake. This practice is sometimes misunderstood by motorists and recently one of our members had a bad experience because of this.

The member in question had, having first signalled, 'taken the lane' at a point where it narrowed due to a central island. A van had squeezed in front of her causing her to brake suddenly. There followed a confrontation with the driver. In this case there was not an accident.

Is there a lesson to be learnt? The main one is the need for motorists to be better educated. The practice is supported by the Highway Code, but it appears that many are unfamiliar with the relevant sections (162-163 & 212-213.) We cyclists just have to be careful to be aware of what's coming up behind us, make our intentions clear and try and anticipate the driver's actions.

Hub gears

Those with whom I go cycling may at this stage utter a groan and flip to the next article; but, in self defence, I have in recent years been careful to avoid making snide remarks when we have to stop to put back that derailleur gear chain!

So why, to paraphrase Henry Ford, is it that “you can have any bike you like as long as it has a derailleur gear”? A bike with a hub gear is a rarity in this country, less so in Europe, at least in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria, countries in which I have cycle toured. This is very odd as hub gears have a number of advantages, as follows:.

You don't have to be in motion to change gear; gear change is simpler: a single twist grip on most models; the mechanism, being inside the hub, is protected from the weather; there is no 'dishing' to cause problems (I will explain) and: the chain is always in the plane of the sprocket wheels thereby making it harder for it to come off (and the associated oily hands).

What are the disadvantages? Very few. The main one I think is that compared with a clean derailleur a hub gear is marginally less efficient. This I suppose is why you don't find hub gears on the *Tour de France*.

From an engineering standpoint derailleurs are an abomination. The lack of alignment of the chain with the sprocket wheels has already been mentioned. Also the dishing. This refers to the fact that – to leave room for the block – the angle the spokes on the block side of the rear wheel make to the plane of the wheel is less than on the other side. This dishing causes the tension in the block side spokes to be higher ¹. So, unless stronger spokes are used these will break first, and, to add to the problem, the block has to be removed to replace them.

So why do we all ride bikes with derailleurs? A key reason is that a quality bike equipped with a hub gear is hard to get. Your normal bike shop doesn't stock them. You have to go to a specialist supplier like St John's Street Cycles, and then you may well find yourself paying over £1000 for something which is more than what you need, like a 14 speed *Rohloff*.

The question then arises why don't bike shops stock a range of reasonably priced hub gear bikes? You might be able to get an inexpensive shopper with a 3 speed hub, but a touring bike with 5 or 7 speeds? No way! I have two bikes; both have hub gears, one 5 and the other 7. The 7 (pictured) was an off-the-shelf *Orbit Orion* but they are no longer produced



We are ruled by marketing people who play up the glamour of bikes. The gullible public seem to think that a bike designed for a racing cyclist is what they need; that with 27 gears they can get up hills easier than with 7 ², or that it is worth paying thousands for a Titanium frame and carbon forks.

There are now a wide range of hub gears but, as already indicated, some are hard to get. These range from the well known Sturmey Archer 3 speed, little changed since first produced around 1900, to the 14 speed Rohloff, with 5, 7, 8, 9 and 11 speeds in between. For me my 5 and 7 speed Sachs-designed gears are just what I need, the 5 for general use around town and the 7 for touring. Both have given me thousands of miles of trouble free cycling. It annoys me that people are so undiscerning, that fashion rather than utilitarian considerations rule. And that we don't put pressure on the manufacturers to produce what we need.

It would be much better if 5 and 7 speed hub gears built to Rohloff quality were available. Perhaps a step in that direction is that Shimano do now produce an 11 speed hub gear which – like the Rohloff – runs in oil. Come on manufacturers!

David Naylor

¹ That this must be so is easily proved by resolving the spoke forces parallel to the wheel axis.

² The energy to ascend a hill is, neglecting friction losses, simply the product of your weight plus bike and the height ascended. Being in an appropriate gear makes a difference, but not that much.

