



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 22 Winter 2012/13

www.wheelrights.org.uk

A new bridge for cyclists and walkers at Clydach



The *Avon Tawe* Bridge was officially opened at the Clydach Connect2, Phase 2, launch on 9 November. While the weather was lousy the occasion was made memorable by the arrival of Brunel (aka David Judd) coupled to a contemporary locomotive. The pistons even “chuff-chuffed”, thrilling the local children attending the event.

The bridge has actually been open since July. It replaces the nearby dreaded (by cyclists) ‘pipe’ bridge. Previously the section across the pipe bridge and past the playing fields could only be used courtesy of the owners. NCR 43 had been severed. Thankfully it is now continuous.

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Editorial

I am experimenting with a new format for this issue. Previously the source document comprised separate A4 pages which were accessible as a pdf from the website. These were reduced by the printers to produce an A5 booklet. This I thought not ideal because the margins were disproportionately large and the font too small. Now with the original A5 both the screen and the printed version will be the same size. The font will be larger than in the previous booklet and the margins narrower. There is a little less space for content.

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Copy deadline

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

In this issue on p. 3 Gordon Gibson provides a written version of his AGM presentation. I hope to follow this up in the next issue with an article which will show how *Wheelrights* agenda fits in with his grand scheme.

Mike Cherry updates us on cycle training on p. 5 and this is followed by a note from me on shared use.

Finally we have an account by David Judd of a memorable cycle tour this summer.

David Naylor

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Cycle lanes on Culfor Road



In October cycle lanes were painted on Culfor Road where it runs alongside the tidal marsh. The picture is taken from the start of the new NCR 4 path. The road here goes under the A484 and the railway.

Already several motorists have complained that these lanes will prevent overtaking. However, because they are *advisory* (broken white lines) they can be used by motorists when not occupied by cyclists.

The point about these advisory lanes is that they make motorists expect cyclists. They are particularly important round blind bends. There are other similar roads in Swansea where they would be appropriate, eg on Pennard Road between Pennard Church and Southgate.

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Sustrans Volunteer's day (6 October 2012)

30 – 35 Sustrans Rangers attended the event. The day started with an enjoyable ride up the Afan Valley path (NCR 887) from Port Talbot Station to the Cwmafan Community Centre. Here we picked up a few more riders before venturing further north to the Portrait Bench. This features Richard Burton, Rob Brydon and ranger Dick Wagstaff (From right to left in the pic.). From here we continued north of Ponrhydyfen and over the new section of path which bypasses the unstable section on the SE side of the valley.



Back at the Community Centre we had a good day overseen by Tim John. Lee Waters opened with a presentation which highlighted the impressive achievements of Sustrans in S. Wales. Also of interest was a discussion of the WG's Active Travel Bill. This should be law by next May and will hopefully lead to better cycling provision in Wales.

Fraser updated us on Connect2, in particular the Afan Valley Route and in our patch the Afon Tawe Bridge behind the Mond works in Clydach. [Ed: Launched on 9 Nov. See p.1]

Following a superb buffet lunch we split into three groups for the workshops with myself opting for the "How to plan and run a workday" which I found extremely useful in view of our forthcoming workday. [Ed. This took place on 3 Nov. on the path E. of Port Tennant.]

At the close of the day the opportunity was taken to officially give a big thank-you to our long standing Group Coordinator David Naylor who had recently stood down. We thanked him for the hard work he had given and continues to give to the group.

Mike Lewis

Swansea: *People Street City... to be*

In September, the Evening Post published a series of articles by local urban designer, city campaigner, and Wheelrights member, Gordon Gibson. His "Ten Projects" for Swansea City Centre" elicited wide popular response. We asked him to address our October AGM, with a particular focus on cycling. Here is his summary.

In designs for city, our city, first consideration should be given to pedestrians: children, young and older people, and those with disabilities; then cyclists and routes to where these people want to go. Next comes public transport and service vehicles. Once all that is established, the engineers can be asked to solve car routes and parking.

For Swansea's major assets – the seafront and the river, our industrial heritage, and culture – the priority is, first and foremost, to ensure safe, easy and convenient access. Decide on pedestrian and cycle routes, convenient links to local communities, access points to other attractions and resources before we even think of roads. Get it right for pedestrians, ramblers, weekend walkers, shoppers, cinema goers, young people using the town centre, local businesses, all-sorts, and it will be good for city centre footfall and retail. And for cyclists.

In the city, work has started on the new boulevard. Despite consultations with Wheelrights (obtaining minimal improvements, if the truth be known), there is to be *not one* new pedestrian route linking the city to the sea.

Shared Streets are not rocket science. Netherlands and Denmark have done it for 4 decades now – not *Play Street* cul-de-sacs by the way, a concept being used to seduce us away from tried and tested *Home Zones*. For our main streets, there are fine examples the world over – Amsterdam of course, Berlin, Freiburg, Seville, and lots more. In "car-city" New York, the biggest, busiest car street of all, Broadway, is closed to all but buses and taxis; space is given to pedestrians and cyclists. A cycle priority network is operating. Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn riversides are transforming from their heavy-duty sea-going past to top quality public spaces, with ample cycle routes given high status. Best of all, this relatively modest public sector investment has provided the impetus for private sector investment.



Money is tight so, while these projects help form the strategy, let's start with some simple low cost initiatives, like bike-racks on buses, to save us from the 'Le Tour' climbs home to Townhill, Bonymaen, Dunvant or Penlan. Or street schemes and sheltered secure bike-stores at schools and colleges to encourage children and young people onto bikes again. In fact, let's make one of our objectives, new signs to drivers entering our city - *Drive carefully. This is Swansea: a children cycling city?*

Let's bring confidence and pride in our city assets to the fore. Our seafront, our riversides, our city centre – think of them as 'people places' and the future of our city will be just fine. For cyclists too.

The original 'Ten Projects' article can be found on Gordon's blog at <http://bit.ly/UA37OY>

Gordon Gibson

Local stuff

Gower Cycling Festival

Our third in September again went well. The weather by the standards of last summer was good. I think it was on just one ride (to Castell Carreg Cennen) that the participants got seriously wet. A very successful innovation was the introduction of the three evening rides. Numbers were up on last year and marginally less than our first in 2010. A disappointment was that once again we failed to attract people from outside South Wales.

After some deliberation we have decided to hold next year's Festival earlier so that it comes within the summer holiday. Also measures to encourage people to make a Gower holiday of the event are planned. These include arranging discounted accommodation in the Parkmill area, starting the Festival on the Saturday afternoon instead of morning and adding the Sunday on the final weekend preceded by a party on the Saturday. Hopefully, with rides on the last Sunday the party will be better attended. The dates are 10 – 18 August 2103. The bank holiday is on 26 August.

With the extra day we will be offering 25 rather than 22 rides. So we will need even more help from *Wheelrights* members.

Details of the 2013 Festival will be added to www.gowercyclingfestival.org as and when they become available. Meanwhile it contains pictures and a detailed report on this year's.

David Naylor

Geoff and Vee Wood

are moving to Bristol in the New Year. Vee was one of *Wheelrights* founders. We send them our best wishes and look forward to seeing them before too long – at next year's GCF?

Wheelrights Christmas Dinner

This is planned for Thursday, 13th Dec. at 7.30pm in the *Mumbai* on Mill Lane, Blackpill. If you intend to come please phone Claudine on 07918 140124.

WR meetings

Wheelrights meetings have been arranged for 7.00pm in the *Environment Centre* on the following Mondays in 2013:

- 14 January
- 11 February
- 11 March.

Gower Commuter

*I freewheel down the Mayals at 30 miles per hour,
I'm off to work from my home in the Gower.
Cars wait until I slow and they can see
To safely pass. Would not the driver be like me?
The fresh air flowing past me blows the blues away.
It clears my head of cobwebs and prepares me for the day.
Oh car commuter, are you not stressed tied up in that tin can?
Would you not do the same as me and make another plan?
To cycle is so simple; can be quicker than the car
Unless you do not live nearby and have to come from far.
It keeps you fit, it's lots of fun,
What better way to get about before the day is done?
I pedal up the Mayals at 5 miles to the hour.
I'm hungry now but there is food at my home in the Gower.
Oh car commuter in your box of steel
Will you like me have earned your evening meal?*

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Cycle Training in Swansea

The profile of cycling has never been so high with a stunning summer of achievement from our British athletes. First was Bradley Wiggins winning the Tour de France. Then the London Olympics where Team GB swept to Gold in 7 of the 10 events. The public imagination was truly captured and even bike retailers reporting dramatic sales increases.

Cycling is good for your health, wealth, and the environment. Yes the Swansea weather is not always sunny but remember there is no such thing as bad weather just poor clothing !

There is a perceived danger that today's roads are too dangerous for cycling. A view sadly reinforced by the recent accidents suffered by Bradley Wiggins and his coach. So how are we to avoid the danger of a lost generation of cyclists on the roads of Swansea?

In a word: TRAINING

Whilst there are a number of excellent cycle paths in Swansea for cycling to become a viable and safe means of transport improvements are needed. However one thing that individuals can do relatively quickly and easily is learn how to cycle safely on today's roads.

What was formerly called *Cycling Proficiency* has been updated and revised to equip people for cycling safely in the 21st Century. *Bikeability* is the current National Cycle Standard scheme administered by the Department Of Transport and available in Swansea.

National Cycle Standard - Bikeability comprises 3 Levels:-

Level 1:- You learn to control and master your bike. The training takes place in a traffic free environment, usually in a playground or closed car park.

Level 2:-Training takes place on the quieter residential roads, and enables you to deal with traffic on short journeys such as cycling to school.

Level 3:-Teaches you the skills to tackle a wider variety of traffic conditions than in Level 2. When you reach Level 3 standard you will be able to deal with all types of road conditions and more challenging traffic.



This training is now being delivered in our local Primary Schools. Swansea Council's Road Safety officer has employed Cycle Training Wales to deliver Levels 1 and 2 to 15 primary schools in Swansea (for year 6's /10-11year olds).

In addition *BikeAbility Wales* based in Dunvant is providing Levels 1 and 2 to both children and adults often together within a family.

Young or old, novice or experienced cyclist will learn much from these training courses. Nobody would consider jumping in a car and driving on our roads without training so why should a bicycle be any different? The more competent and safe cyclists we have on our roads the more we all benefit.

Further information and links:-

Bikeability Wales:

<http://www.bikeabilitywales.org.uk/>

National Standards Training:

<http://www.dft.gov.uk/bikeability/>

Mike Cherry

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On shared use

There is always a potential conflict when vehicles which travel at different speeds share space. For example oil tankers sharing waters with small ships or power boats with swimmers. Here we are concerned with cyclists sharing roads with motorised vehicles and paths with pedestrians. The focus is on shared-use paths.

The CTC recently carried out a survey about segregation (*Cycle Digest* issues 68, 69 & 70). They looked at the pros and cons of sharing road space and the provision of traffic-free routes. The purpose of the survey was to determine measures to encourage cycling and make the roads safer for cyclists. Of main significance here is that there was strong support for traffic-free routes provided they met stringent quality criteria: continuity, careful treatment at junctions and a good surface. The booklet *Crap Cycle Lanes* * illustrates what is wrong with cycle paths in Britain. Examples for a new edition are not needed!

In the UK cyclists get a bad name because a minority behave badly: jumping red lights, startling pedestrians and riding on pavements. These incidents are often exaggerated by the media. I classify the measures to reduce these problems as *hard* and *soft*.

The *soft* measures comprise education – which includes cycle training – and policing. With current trends and the introduction of such measures it seems to me that:

- As more people cycle the proportion of older people on bikes will increase thus leading to more mature behaviour.
- As cycling on shared-use paths increases pedestrians will get used to cyclists and will be no more bothered by them passing than a cyclist on the road is by a car.
- Cycle training and education should reduce bad behaviour, both on roads and on traffic-free routes, but policing is needed as well. Motorists also need to be taught to share roads with cyclists. This means little more than obeying the Highway Code!

By *hard* I mean infrastructure. A sometimes contentious issue is whether or not shared-use paths should be divided. Some parts of Swansea's Foreshore path are and some are not. My opinions about this are as follows:

- Don't subdivide if usage is light and/or the path is less than about 3m wide. This is usually the case with rural paths.
- Don't subdivide if the path is a *destination area* as opposed to a *through route*.
- Do subdivide if the path is a *through route* such as used by commuters, is at least 3m wide and has more than a threshold of users. I believe a recommended figure, based on Dutch practice, is about 100 movements/hour.



By these criteria the part of the Foreshore path where it passes the Blackpill paddling pool which is divided should not be because it is a destination area. Conversely the divided section between Blackpill and Sketty Lane (illustrated) works well. Here the path is a through route, is about 3m wide and often busy. I have noticed that, for the most part, cyclists and pedestrians stick to their lanes, to the benefit of both.

As our cycling levels build up can we not look forward to a future of less conflict?

* Published by *Eye Books*; c. £5.

Devon Coast to Coast

Ilfracombe to Plymouth: 102 miles or thereabouts

The 3rd Annual Pioneers Ride for Sustrans vet's, old-stagers and friends. July 2012.

With advancing years (and not being famous for long rides, hills or keen on camping) because I thoroughly enjoyed the previous two Pioneers rides, I thought yes I'm game for this one. It's the scenery, construction, chat and stopping I enjoy most on rides and when you have the cream of Sustrans staff (past and some present) including John Grimshaw (JG) as company its bound to be memorable. There was a nagging fear some hills might be involved, and Dartmoor...but I was told 71 miles was off road –.more of that later.

The original plan was to meet at Plymouth as a hub, be driven to Ilfracombe and cycle back, but the logistics of those riding it all (others joined for part) meant this idea was abandoned and a start at Ilfracombe (or Barnstaple en route) was agreed. I should say at this moment I have little recollection of the map detail of route, it's fairly complicated. We had two very knowledgeable guides: JG (with past involvement and encyclopedic memory), and Graham Cornish (GC) (who is with the County Council and has made huge progress in developing the route). I needed to borrow David Naylor's (DN) map to remind me where we went to write this article. I would recommend you get one if you are going to do it.

The ride, organized by David Gray (DG) of Chain Events (former Sustrans staff and C2C founder), meant they had driven from up north, resting at Bristol (with the minibus towing trailer for backup and carrying luggage) and then following the ride The bus was driven by Andy with his old dog Tess – some may remember them from last year at Dunvant. On these rides they provide a valuable mentoring service and famous breakfasts.

I joined the bus at Bristol (9am) with JG (and Mrs) and after a few niceties we were ready to start, that is until we found Tess had done a runner, totally out of character. We scoured Clifton to no avail, *tempus fugit*, so after half an hour's frantic searching and shouting we had to leave Andy to find Tess and hopefully make their own way to Barnstaple, where we would meet them. Meanwhile David Gray would drive to the start and until such time Andy (with or unthinkably without Tess) caught up with us – a cunning plan by DG: scaring Tess off to avoid some cycling I thought.

By some miracle the weather remained fine.

Day 1: Ilfracombe to Bideford

Ilfracombe is a charming place but I was glad to be up and out of it and travelling along the trail past Slade Reservoirs and then via narrow and lumpy roads to Woolacombe. The views are magnificent on the surprisingly quiet undulating coast road with picturesque and largely deserted beaches. I imagine at busy times these narrow roads are stuffed with cars.



On to Braunton and Tarka Trail to Barnstaple past RAF Chivenor (helicopters and gunfire) along the river Taw. Legs seem to be working fine but found soon enough this section was wind assisted. At Barnstaple we met DN and a few others and by some miracle Tess was found in Clifton and they joined us as planned. After meeting and greeting we continued along the Tarka Trail around the estuary with wind now against us (ever thus we are told). The route runs through Isely Marsh Nature Reserve along the Torridge to Instow for a brief

rest at the beach (JG kite flying) and harbour before continuing Bideford, where we shopped for our evening meal ingredients (exciting what) to cook on GC's barbeque; we were to camp in his garden that night. We continued along the Tarka Trail over more magnificent restored railway bridges and viaducts, till we arrived at GC's home near Bideford. His picturesque thatched cottage with 1m thick mud walls overlooked the river, a superb campsite and a wonderful host (plus family). After a pleasant evening's socialising I crawled into my tent, just, and DN chose to put his bivvy-bag on the kids trampoline. We planned to bounce him out of in the night, but in the event didn't – too tired. [Ed. *Trampolines are comfy but putting your trousers on, especially when overlooked by grinning breakfasters on the nearby patio, is a challenge!*]

Day 2: Bideford to Lydford

We continued along the Tarka Trail for a few miles then on minor roads, hill up to East Yarde (cafe stop) where we met JG's brother and three daughters who joined us for the ride to Lydford. Then up and down to Hatherleigh, where we had our lunch stop and excited the local newshound, a delightful lady, who was most impressed by the company and promised a feature in the local paper, wonder if it made it? [Ed. *Yes it did: in the Hatherleigh Journal on 26 July.*] We emptied the local pie shop and rested in the square. On to Great Torrington and busy Okehampton with ever present Dartmoor looming in front, then on to camp at the *Fox and Hounds* near Lydford (and eat plus the odd drink) and enjoy a fantastic sunset.



Day 3: Lydford to Plymouth

Aware that we had to finish the ride to Plymouth and get back to Bristol (DG, Andy and Tess much further) we did press on a bit. After a sandwich at Tavistock (in my case half as I was a bit behind) GC took us through the tunnel just beyond (under construction, not yet opened) over yet another viaduct and on to the Gem viaduct (pictured) a 300m, 30m high concrete and steel replacement (for Brunel's 400m, 40m high structure), opened this year at a cost of £2.1million. What a spectacle! It restored my faith in County Councils.

Then on to Yelverton and downhill all the way on the well used (ped. and cyclist) Plym Valley Path taking us past the Plym Valley Railway (saw steam train – that was exciting) virtually into Plymouth with just a short run through a built up section of the docks to the harbour, where we abandoned plans to continue to the Hoe, some caught the train and then back to Bristol.

In Conclusion.

A brilliant route that moved me to write to the County Council in praise.

A fantastic variety of scenery, mostly on high standard off road routes and quiet roads that makes this a must do. Allow three days and take your time.

The use of the structures (and a few tunnels) is without equal in my experience of UK routes. They provide so many exciting views and there are many sculptures to see as well. As usual I would have liked more and longer stops to take it all in and perhaps even remember exactly where we were at any given time along the way.

David Judd