



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 28 Summer 2014

www.wheelrights.org.uk

NCR 43 is open



It is over a year since National Cycle Route 43 was first diverted for a couple of miles south from the motorway. This work was meant to be complete by last Christmas but it was Easter before it was.

The diversion was to allow the construction of a new embankment immediately south of the M4 as part of the river Tawe flood alleviation works. The new cycle path (pictured) goes along it.

In addition the shared use section between the Beaufort and Mannesman Bridges has been upgraded as has the path south from the latter to the Liberty Stadium. This, together with the path on the new embankment and the earlier Connect2 work to the north, means that there is now an excellent cycle route most of the way from Swansea to Ystalyfera.

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Editorial

It's back to me now following David Judd's extended Spring issue. In this one the first two articles focus on how Swansea and NPT Councils and Sustrans are getting their act together to improve the cycle infrastructure in this area. This is followed by an article by Phil Snaith about the new Carmarthenshire cycle campaign group, set up by him and Geoff Rone. Then we have the second instalment of Fran Rolfe's story of how she got on a bike. The first was in the winter issue. This is followed by an article about canoeing on Swansea Canal (a cycling venue?), and then I describe my experiences on a memorable cycle ride in Yorkshire.

I hope that there will be some correspondence to include in the next issue. The article on page 2 in particular calls for a response.

David Naylor

Contents

- P. 2 A Swansea – NPT Cycle Network
- P. 3 Sustrans and Swansea: strengthening the connection
- P. 4 A Cycle Forum for Carmarthenshire
- P. 5 Why I ride my bike (Part 2)
- P. 6 Canoes in Gwilym Park
- P. 7 A birthday ride
- P. 8 Forthcoming events.

Copy deadline

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

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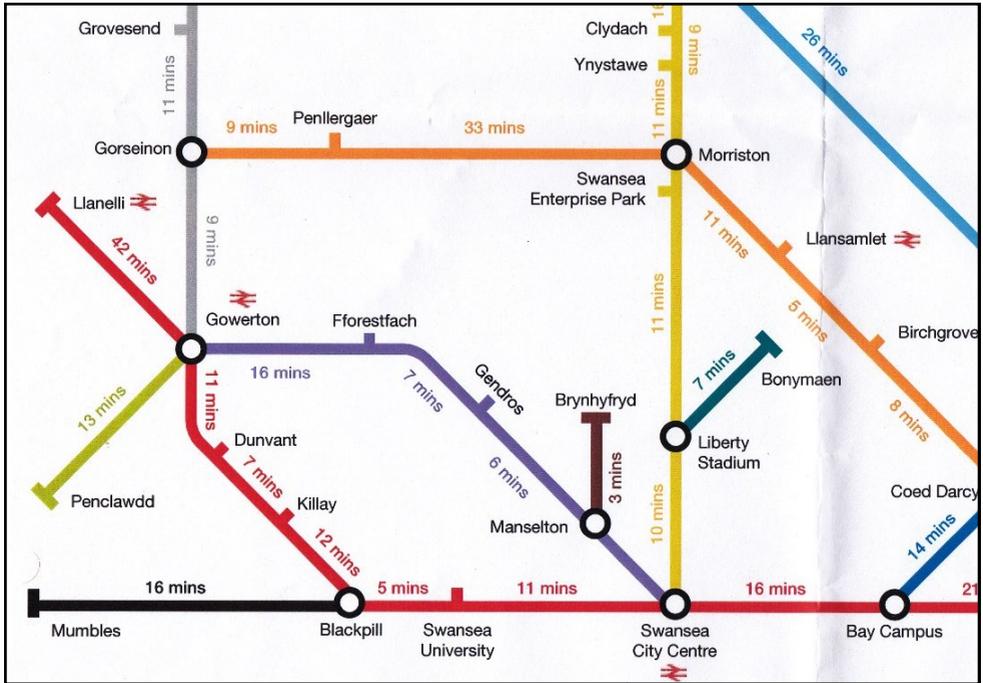
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A Swansea – NPT Cycle Network



Between them Swansea and Neath Port Talbot Councils are getting their act together to produce a comprehensive cycle network. The “tube” map above shows the SW part of a more comprehensive map which extends eastwards to Margam and Cymer, and north to Brynamman and Seven Sisters. These routes, plus some additional routes proposed by *Wheelrights*, are shown on a proper map on the ‘Infrastructure’ page of our website.

The idea is to make these routes suitable for cyclists, particularly for those who use a bike to commute or for transportation in general. It will involve upgrading existing off-road paths, providing some new ones and making the roads involved safer for cyclists. Now that the Active Travel Act is in force this is what is expected of Councils.

Wheelrights together with Sustrans and the CTC will need to continue to work with Swansea and NPT Councils to try and ensure that the infrastructure is of high quality.

One of the key routes is that shown by the yellow line. Most of it is NCR 43, and as reported on p.1, has been recently renewed between Swansea and the M4. Other routes currently on Swansea Council’s agenda include the red University – Bay Campus link and the blue-grey one between Gowerton and Gorseinon.

The above map is interim and changes at least in the times can be expected. This is where you come in. The times are meant to be what an average cyclist would take. So if you think any need changing let me know. I am not sure whether the times are for uphill, downhill or for an average in sections where there is a significant level difference. Maybe a time for each should be given, like when you have your blood pressure measured? Let me have your feedback to pass on to the Council.

David Naylor

Sustrans and Swansea: strengthening the connection

Cycling along Route 4, admiring views of Swansea Bay I have to pinch myself that it is all part of my day job! In Swansea we are lucky to have not one but two National Cycle Network routes, namely Route 4 along the coast and Route 43 through the Swansea Valley. In recent years Sustrans has developed the cycle network through the delivery of the Big Lottery UK programme, including the scheme at Clydach. This scheme was driven by local community group, the Clydach Volunteer Steering Group. It focused on improving connections between the National Cycle Network Route 43 and the villages of Clydach and Glais. The project included upgrading the dilapidated bridge with artwork inspired by local industry in the area. Upon completion of the scheme in 2012 we recorded a 75% increase in the number of people walking and cycling along the route.



Afon Tawe Bridge, Clydach

Making the connections between where people live, work and spend their leisure time is Sustrans' vision for our future work in Swansea. Our vision is that by 2020 we want *4 out of 5 local journeys* to be made by bike, foot or public transport. Achieving this vision would benefit people's health, the environment and the economy through reduced traffic congestion.

We have already started to think about how we could connect Route 43 to the city centre and the train station. The extension of route 43 would provide users of the National Cycle Network with traffic free access to the facilities and amenities in the city centre. We will continue to work with *Wheelrights* and the Council to develop ideas and maximize opportunities for walking and cycling.

We would also like to build on the community-led approach that was so successful in Clydach. We will enter into a dialogue with local people to find out what they like and do not like about living in their community and how their neighbourhood can be improved to make it safer and more attractive to walk and cycle. Our future volunteer programme puts this approach at its heart and our approach will also help Local Authorities meet the requirements of the new Active Travel Act.

And finally....To celebrate 20 years of the National Cycle Network, Sustrans is hoping to deliver a participative art project in Swansea, in partnership with *Wheelrights*. The project invites cyclists (via a computer device attached to their bike) to explore their city at dusk. Their mission is to find messages left by other participants and share your own experiences. We are hoping to deliver a range of events leading up to the arts event which will widen participation, particularly with young people who don't already cycle around the city. Look out for us at local events in Swansea over the summer or drop us a line if you are interested.

Lindsey Curtis (Sustrans Area Manager: SW Wales)

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A Cycle Forum for Carmarthenshire

Geoff Rone and I are in the process of setting up a cycling forum in Carmarthenshire and hope to be “active” during the Summer. We have both been involved in cycling in different capacities in the past and recognised that Carmarthenshire needed a *Wheelrights* type group to engage directly with the County Council. This is especially so given that the Active Travel Bill is soon to be live and requires a direct dialogue between a County Council and its cyclists.

In this respect the *Carmarthenshire Cycle Forum* has already been welcomed and given support by senior Council officials, Councillors, AM’s and MP’s. From its initial inaugural meeting in February the group has already been involved in the County’s draft Cycle Strategy and been invited to a number of other seminars. Only 25 strong at present the next stage is to finalise its constitution, set up a bank account and then open its online discussion formats. Once this is done it is anticipated that numbers will grow significantly as was the early experience of *Wheelrights*.

Given the size and spread of its population centres the group’s nature will be primarily a discussion point and pressure group driven through internet discussion. A larger membership might require more regular meetings but at this early stage the group is agreed on a 10 point Mission Statement and a Constitution which is “meetings-lite!” The Mission Statement can be forwarded if you contact us. See below for our email address.

I say that “we are not aiming to take the car out of Carmarthenshire. With a noticeable growth in cycling it is increasingly important for cyclists and drivers to share our road space more responsibly. Our group will be offering advice to road engineers and local politicians whilst promoting safe and considerate cycling. The aim is to make Carmarthenshire as cycle friendly as possible and this will include pushing for off road provision where practicable”.

Geoff Rone says: “I want to see a Carmarthenshire that leads the whole of Wales in taking a full and active role in the Active Travel Act. I want to see Carwyn Jones’s vision of “Wales a Cycling Nation” take hold and to do that we need to ensure that our cycle routes are safe, secure and direct so that anyone from eight to eighty can feel confident to cycle to school, the shops or wherever”.

Look out for a Facebook page soon with a link to discussion topics pertinent to Carmarthenshire. To give your support or be part of Carmarthenshire Cycle Forum you can also contact the Forum at cyclefriendlygar@yahoo.co.uk

Phil Snaith

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Ed: Not all of Carmarthenshire is quite so flat!

Why I ride my bike (Part 2)

In Part 1 in the Winter issue I described how I was motivated to get on a bike, how after my first attempt I gave up; and then came the 2012 Swansea Cycle Challenge. I pick up the story from there.

The Cycle Challenge was my opportunity to beat someone at something by encouraging my fellow workers to get on their bikes. I'd be a bit of a hypocrite if I didn't lead by example. I'm not quite sure what happened: it could have been the combination of other people cycling to work that made it so hard to have a silly excuse or that it was summer and mild weather. The route along the canal had opened so I no longer had to ride on Fabian way. This was the single biggest improvement on my commute to work.

I had sat opposite a cycle-obsessed team leader for three years who regularly reminded me that I had a bike and maybe I should ride it sometime. My reasons for not cycling were often dismantled. They even put hair dryers in the changing rooms so I could no longer use my wet hair excuse. The bottom line was: I found it easier to get out of bed into a shower, into a car, listening to the radio with a cup of freshly made coffee beside me. The down side of my car commute was I felt lethargic most of the time and didn't get any fitter. When I rode my bike I felt amazing, I even slept better.

After the Cycle Challenge my fitness soared, I lost weight and I felt pretty darn happy with myself. I continued to cycle through the winter, not every day but I tried to twice a week. I was loving it. I decided to invest in a bike that was more suitable than my mountain bike. I bought a shiny red hybrid bike, which rolled like a dream and is a pleasure to ride. I was now enjoying riding so much I wanted more of an adventure. My partner got a bike in January 2013 and by June we had gone on our first cycle touring holiday: three weeks in Portugal. It was amazing, off we went off into the distance, up and down mountains, through tiny villages I would never have seen if I were not on a bike. It was awesome.

I do however still battle my lazy tired morning self and find myself craving the comfort and warmth of my car. I still don't think that once you start enjoying riding you can suddenly find it easy to ride it all the time. My boss says if you like riding your bike you just do it. He makes it sound so simple, I like riding my bike but I find excuses not to. The biggest barrier to cycling is me; I'm working on it. I wonder what your barriers to cycling are?

When I look at these barriers I find that:

- Cyclists seem a bit mental in all that lycra – it didn't seem like something I'd do.
- Route to work. My route along the dreaded Fabian way with a killer hill and a threat from cars was a major obstacle.
- Lack of knowledge: Which is the right bike and gear? How much must I pay?
- Too much too soon: Cycling seven miles when you're grossly overweight and under fit as I did is not the best starting point. Better to start with short rides.
- Embarrassment at being unfit and fear of not keeping up with the people who were nice enough to let me tag along on their commute.
- Cost of maintaining a bike (and the knowledge to do it)
- Showers: We have showers at work, lack of them would, for me, be a problem.
- Drivers don't realise that they are simply too close to the cyclist. I give cyclists a lot more room now I ride myself.
- Laziness: A problem for me which I'm working on.

Fran Rolfe

Canoes in Coed Gwilym Park



Many people fondly remember the Lliw Valley Council initiative to hire canoes and pedaloos on the Swansea Canal in Coed Gwilym Park in the late eighties and early nineties. Well, after twenty years, the boats are back.

It's canoes and kayaks this time and it's all due to the grant that the Swansea Canal Society received from the Welsh Government via Natural Resources Wales's water based activities initiative, SPLASH. The Society received the money in October last year and managed to get the project ready for a March deadline.

The society had great support from many people: from Richard Preece at Splash; from Sports Wales who paid for our canoe instructors; from the Millennium Stadium Charitable Trust; from Glandwr Cymru who own the canal; and from the City and County of Swansea, particularly the Parks Department. The last named let us use the very canoe store that was built by Lliw Valley for the old hire business. When we cleared it out we found the original sandwich board they had used to advertise their venture!

As this is a community based project, charges have been kept to a bare minimum. The three-seater canoes cost £5 per boat for a 45 minute session and the single sit-on-top kayaks cost £3. We have a few double seater kayaks at £4

To start with our hours will be 11.00 am to 3.00 pm on Sundays throughout the summer. We will also be open to schools and youth organisations on Tuesday mornings. For the details visit: www.swanseacanalsociety.com.

What are our aims? We want to see people on the Swansea Canal – even cyclists! It is a wonderful amenity and it needs to be used. When we have completed clearing work canoes will be able to go all the way to Lower Trebanos Lock which is also being restored. Then we must expand the canoe enterprise to the north and have another base at Ynysmeudwy near the Riverside Arena.

This project is just one part of a jigsaw which can transform the Swansea Canal for the benefit of the local community.

[Ed: There is already a Gower Cycling Festival precedent for cycling to a canoeing venue so maybe this is another one?]

Martin Davies (SCS secretary)

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A birthday ride

It was my 80th actually. My cousin, Ruth, had turned 80 three months earlier and we had decided to hold a celebration in Grassington in the Yorkshire Dales. The highlight was a splendid dinner in the Grassington House Hotel on 10 May. We were 17 – all related.

How to get to Grassington? By bike of course! But I took the train part way. First from Swansea to York. From there it was an afternoon's ride to my sister's in Hull. The next day I took a train to Great Driffield and cycled from there to my nephew Patrick's home in Great Ayton, a village on the north side of the North Yorkshire Moors. This 60 mile ride was a 'warm up' for the next day's ride to Grassington – on my birthday (9 May).

The weather throughout was unsettled: cold, strong west or southwest winds and showers. I was lucky to be only lightly rained upon. My three days of cycling were entirely in Yorkshire, and for those who don't know this part of the world it is a great place for cycling. There's a choice of lightly trafficked roads and of pub.s and cafés for tea and cake.

While much of the county is flat there are significant hills. The sting in the tail of the otherwise flat journey from York to Hull is a 150m climb over the southern Wolds. On the next day there was a similar climb over the mid Yorkshire Wolds and then between Helmsley and Stokesley two more big climbs over the western end of the North Yorkshire Moors. With the wind across or behind me and great views this was a lovely ride.

The plan for my birthday was that Patrick and Ruth's son Andrew, who had travelled to Great Ayton the day before, would accompany me to Grassington. My son Don, who had earlier driven to Grassington, was to cycle towards us and meet us halfway. And so it came to pass.

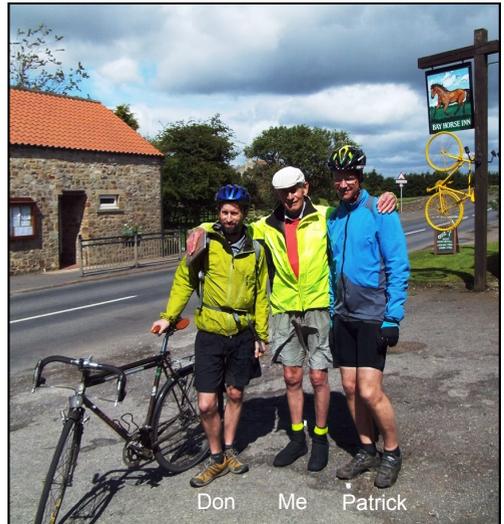
The various weather forecasts we had consulted indicated that we would get wet at some stage and that there would be a "moderate" west wind. We were lucky in that early rain ceased soon after we left Patrick's at 10.00am. The wind forecast was correct except that, cycling into it, the term "moderate" was clearly an understatement!

We followed a lovely route on minor roads: south of Richmond, through Middleham and then up Coverdale over a pass at 500m followed by a steep descent to Kettlewell. A further 6 miles south took us to Grassington.

Don met us further east than planned because of our late start. We stopped for a pint and some food in a pub in the village of Tunstall south of Richmond. (Pictured). The yellow bike indicates that the Tour de France will pass here or nearby .

It was a tough ride. The climb up from Coverdale would be a challenge even without what felt like a gale force head wind. It took us 9 hours to cover 64 miles. I was very tired by the time we got to Grassington.

What better way to celebrate one's 80th? And we had a superb dinner the next day.



Don Me Patrick

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

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

Adult Beginners Classes from **June to September** on

Saturdays: 14 June, 19 July, 30 August, 20 September.

9.30-11.30 in Civic Centre East car park click. See the 'Novices' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for how to register, etc.

June 2014

Wednesday 11 June: *Wheelrights* meeting

7.00pm in Environment Centre, Pier Street, Swansea SA1 1RY.

14-22 June is BIKE WEEK

Saturday 21 June: *BikeAbility Wales Fun Day*

11.00-15.00 Dunvant RFC, Killay. A cycling fun day for people of all abilities and ages. Try an amazing range of specialist and unusual cycles, such as tandems, recumbents and kick bikes. For more information phone Mike Cherry on 07968 109145.

Saturday 21 June: *Wheelrights Summer Solstice Ride*

Meet at 6.30pm at the Railway Inn, Killay (on the Clyne Valley path). A ride to an appropriate North Gower hostelry. All welcome..

Sunday 22 June: *British Heart Foundation rides.*

Choose your own start time between 8.00am and 4.00pm from St Helen's recreational ground, Swansea. Choice of 12, 28 and 46 mile rides around the stunning Gower Peninsula. Registration:£10 adults; £5 children. Register on line or on the day.

July 2014

Sunday 6 July: *Laugharne to Swansea Dylan Thomas Centenary ride*

10.00am from main Castle car park, Laugharne, finishing at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea. This approx. 57 mile cycle ride is through stunning scenery, mostly on cycle paths and quiet roads. There will be a £20 entry fee, payable by 24 June, or £25 on the day. Any surplus will go to Maggie's Cancer Care, Swansea. Further information on www.dtcycleride.co.uk.

August 2014

9-16 August: *GOWER CYCLING FESTIVAL.*

Full details on www.gowercyclingfestival.org (which links to the Cycling Festival page on our website). Note that we would like you to register in advance (It is only £5.)

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