



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



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www.wheelrights.org.uk

National Cycle Route 4 is upgraded



NCR 4, where it runs along the north side of Fabian Way between Port Tennant and the Swansea-NPT county boundary, has been upgraded. The picture, taken in early July when the work had just started, is looking east from the Port Tennant end. It was completed in August.

The machine laid wide tarmac path is a major improvement on the narrow, often overgrown, footpath which preceded it. Lacking a verge to separate it from the heavy Fabian Way traffic it is not a route for the seeker of peace and quiet. It will however provide a link between Swansea and the Bay Campus the opening of which is imminent.

If your destination is not the Bay Campus the path along the Tennant Canal to Jersey Marine provides an attractive alternative.

But there is a more direct route to the Bay Campus. It is along Langdon Road and then along the south side of Fabian Way.

Editorial

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Copy deadline

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

There is some significant local news in this issue, perhaps of most importance is the future of the Kingsway. See p. 2. Then there are write ups of three rides (p. 4, 5 & 7) which took place this summer. On p. 6 Nick whets our appetite with the prospect of cycling under rather than over the Bwlch, and on p. 8 tells us about a new Sustrans enterprise.

Once again I ask for more from you readers: articles and/or correspondence. Also it's time for another guest editor.

David Naylor

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Local News

Kingsway

In the last issue we reported on changes to the Kingsway in response to the recent spate of accidents. Barriers had then been erected on the central reservation. Shortly – and it may have happened by the time you read this – the bendy buses will be replaced by ordinary buses and the traffic layout changed. This altered layout is to be temporary while plans are prepared for a restructured Kingsway to include a ‘green plaza’ in two years’ time.

Wheelrights have been consulted on the immediate plan and have been assured that we, together with Sustrans, will be consulted on the long term plan. In the short term only east-west traffic is to be allowed: two lanes for cars, one for buses and taxis, and one for cyclists on a 2m cycle lane. We, together with Sustrans, are unhappy with this as it does not provide a satisfactory west-east alternative for cyclists. They would have to use the heavily trafficked Christina Street with its sharp hill, followed by Mansel Street. We are pushing strongly for a W-E Kingsway cycle route either by means of an additional cycle lane or by widening the proposed one way lane to 3m. Please take this up with your councillor.

A new route to Llansamlet

Construction of a cycle path linking Morfa with Llansamlet is expected to start this autumn. It will run south of the existing railway, part of it following the line of the erstwhile Swansea Vale Railway. It will cross the existing path between Bonymaen and the Enterprise Zone, providing a link to the former via Cwm Chapel Road and to the latter via Atlantic Close.

At the west end the path will go under Nantong Way by the underpass illustrated, then past Pluck Lake and wiggle through the woods along the line of existing tracks. This section in particular will be an attractive route both for recreational cyclists and for commuters.



Gowerton to Pontarddulais

This was extensively reported on by Nick Guy in the last issue. The main development – or rather lack of it – is that the legal process of sorting out the ownership of the land on which the path will be constructed across Stafford Common is languishing. The cause of the delay has been identified and we are working with the Council to get the matter sorted.

North Gower

Action on getting the shared use path extended across the half mile ‘missing link’ between Berth-lwyd and Pont-y-Cob Road has been on hold. However, pressure is being put on the Council to apply a Compulsory Purchase Order. With the increase in the number of cyclists using this route and the support of Penclawdd residents we are hopeful that this much needed section of path will eventually be constructed.

Pennard

The latest in the realisation of a cycle path across Clyne Common is the possibility of funding from educational sources. The thinking is that a safe route to Bishopston Comprehensive from the Mayals – West Cross area would remove the need for a school bus. The consequent saving would pay for the path. We shall see.

David Naylor

A crash landing!



Having modified his bike-plane and completed a 'test flight' our President, David Judd, unfortunately caught his leg on the cross bar while landing. He landed with the plane on top of him, a crushed vertebra and a broken bone in his left wrist. He has to wear a body harness for a while to let the vertebra repair and his left arm is in a plaster.

This happened in July when he was preparing the plane for the launch of the Gower Cycling Festival on 8 August. Despite these injuries he duly appeared at the launch and officiated in the opening of the Festival.

Those of you who have broken bones and are used to being active will be aware of the frustration and discomfort during the months of recovery, not to mention the inconvenience of not being allowed to drive or able to cycle. David not only participated in the launch but played a key role in organising the very successful "Birthday Bash" on 12 August which he also attended. I know I speak for all of you in wishing him a speedy recovery.

David Naylor

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The Gower Cycling Festival (8-15 August)

This year's Festival again proved popular, a key factor being the provision of camping at the Dunvant RFC. About two dozen availed themselves of this facility, most being visitors from afar, from North Wales and from North to South England. As in the last two Festivals we were again pleased to welcome a number of *Stourbugers* from the Midlands.

A speciality this year was the celebration of the 20th Anniversaries of the formation of *Wheelrights* and the National Cycle Network. For this reason the Penclacwydd and Copperopolis evening rides were designated Sustrans rides. Cardiff based Sustrans staff took part in them and in the "Birthday Bash" on the Wednesday.

Another speciality was the arrival of the Paris-Swansea *Wheelrights* ride, just in time for the launch. In fact they arrived ten minutes before *Badger* of the *Wave* radio station kicked it off. The purpose of this ride (apart from it being a jolly) was to raise funds for the Environment Centre. Rachel Elliott – a participant – reports on it on p.4.

An article on the Festival from a *Stourbug* participant should appear in the next issue.



The Dunvant RFC camp

Paris to Swansea

The trip began in central Paris, cycling a lap of the Arc De Triomphe – a once in a lifetime experience for most of us! From Paris we cycled 60 miles to Pace-Sur-Eure. It was an eventful first day to say the least, with the group being split, both groups getting lost, and one ending up in a corn field.

On the second day we left Pace-Sur-Eure to head to Rouen. The famous last words from Alan were “make sure you take the yellow bridge”. Of course, we took the white bridge, and ended up on a French motorway. Thankfully we survived and arrived safely in Rouen.

Day three was an important day as we had to make it to the ferry on time. After strict instructions from Alan to be down for breakfast by 6.30am, Nick and Scott set their alarm for British time and were awoken at 6.50am by Alan knocking on their bedroom door. We hit the road not long after 7am to begin our cycle to Le Havre. There was one word to describe day 3 – Windy! It was a long, hard ride into the wind. As if by miracle we followed the instructions, didn't get lost, and made it to Le Havre with half an hour to spare, ready for the crossing to Portsmouth.

On the fourth day, the reality hit us: we were back in the UK! We were shouted at by pedestrians, beeped by drivers and the general feel for cyclists was very different to that in France. It even began to rain, and we donned wet weather gear for the first (and thankfully last) time .

Unsurprisingly, we got a little lost on our ride to Salisbury, and ended up cycling three miles in the wrong direction. Our total mileage for the day was a very long 73 miles! After some laughs over dinner, we had a good night sleep, ready to start again and head to Bristol the next day.

The ride to Bristol was mainly on cycle paths, with a slight detour to the Bath Two Tunnels – another amazing experience where we cycled in the dark through a mile long tunnel. We were met in Bristol by our hosts Veronica and Geoff, who kindly looked after us for the night. We woke up very excited on Friday at the thought of arriving back in Wales, and cycling over the Old Severn Bridge, again, something we will never forget. On arrival in Cardiff we all went for a lovely meal to celebrate our last evening of the trip.

Before we knew it, the final day had arrived – we were cycling home to Swansea! Another early start was made easier by Alan, who delivered bacon rolls to the hotel for us. Our aim was to arrive in Black Pill by 1.45pm. We were as laid back as ever, and stopped for coffee in Cowbridge and then again for a drink whilst we met Patrick. Before we knew it, it was nearly 1pm and we had to pick up the pace. With a hard final push we arrived back in sunny Swansea just after 1.45pm to be greeted at the opening of the Gower Cycle Festival by friends and family.

Overall, we had a fantastic time, with new experiences and an amazing achievement. We became great friends, and I'm sure we'll all meet for rides, and maybe even another challenge...

Rachel Elliott



Cycling Spain's Costa Verde

Its easy to see why Spain's Costa Verde translates as the Green Coast. It is very green. Probably as green as Wales and with only slightly less rainfall in a year. The area runs along the northern coast of Spain crossing several regions but our cycling trip was to take us through the Asturias region bordered by the Atlantic ocean and the Picos de Europe mountains.

We started high up in the hills about 50 miles from Santander from where we headed west. The scenery here is stunning. Beautiful mountains and valleys with remote hill top villages. The cycling is hilly but well worth it for the amazing views and lovely downhill descents. Farming is still a major industry here and whilst there is plenty of sun and warmth during the summer months, they can experience cold harsh winters.

Our first stop for the night was at a lovely "Casa Indiano". These are large very grand houses many of which have now been made into small hotels or guest houses. They were built at the beginning of the 20th century by returning emigrants, known as "Indianos", who had made their fortunes in Latin America. They are often found on top of hills to command stunning views but this does not make for easy cycling!

After two very hilly cycling days, our route took us gradually down to the coast. As we descend, the beautiful coastline comes into view: turquoise seas and golden sandy beaches. The cycling is now a lot less lumpy and very picturesque.

Our next stop for the night was LLanes, a small, very pretty traditional fishing port. Plenty of nice restaurants, shops and lovely local sandy beaches. Some flattish coastal cycling in this area was a welcome relief, in addition to the many small beach cafes that are dotted along the coast. Three days here and we are off again with a slight detour back into the hills which then takes us back nearer the coast to our base at Colunga. From here its a couple of miles cycling before spending the day at the beach for a well earned rest. Then on to a visit to the nearby village of Lastres which could very well have been mistaken for Cornwall: houses built into the hillside, steep cobbled streets, quaint shops and quayside. In fact, it is where the Spanish version of Doc Martin is filmed; so easy to see the likeness.



Our final day takes us once again up into the mountains. More stunning scenery before we make our descent to our final stop at the city of Gijon, the regions largest city with a population of over 250,000. With a rich history it is now a modern coastal city and has a lovely cycle track running alongside the promenade.

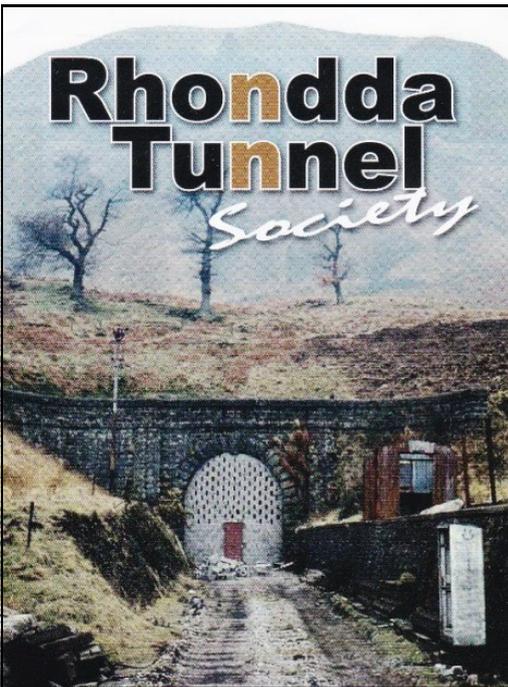
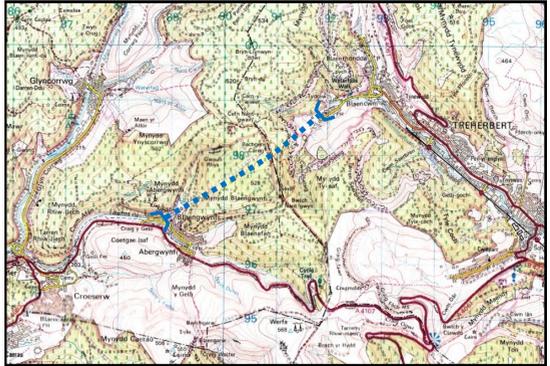
This beautiful region of Spain certainly gives some spectacular cycling, contrasting between high peaks and rugged coastline. Hardly touched by tourism, this Costa Verde is well worth a visit.

Dawn Aplin

The Rhondda Tunnel

Like others I have cycled the challenging climb and wondrous descent of the Bwch pass between the Afan and Rhondda valleys. I heard stories about a disused railway tunnel linking the two valleys – for example a local talked of walking through the tunnel from Abergwynfi to attend dances in the Rhondda in the seventies.

Then to my delight, whilst leading a *Gower Cycling Festival* ride to Glyncoed, I came across the *Rhondda Tunnel Society* which is dedicated to reopening the tunnel for cyclists and walkers. This Society is a registered charity and describes the iconic tunnel as being 77 yards short of 2 miles long, making it the 7th longest tunnel in the UK! A recent safety inspection found that 70% of the tunnel was in good condition, and the Society estimates that it needs about £6 million to restore it. The map shows it.



The bricked up NE portal.

The *Rhondda Tunnel Society* was founded in September 2014 and already has over 3,000 facebook members. However a priority is to sign up more individual members (at £10 each) which would help access grant monies. They have already had encouraging meetings with the Welsh Gov., Sustrans, etc, and support for this exciting plan is growing.

It seems a great idea, and something *Wheelrights* could consider supporting. In practical terms I suggest:

- Members visit their website: www.rhonddatunnelsociety.com
- We consider inviting them to address a *Wheelrights* public meeting.
- We join as individuals, and buy their products which include T shirts, ruck-sacks, calenders etc

Nick Guy

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The CTC in Yorkshire

As if there are not enough hills in South Wales Ian Gofton, who I think was looking for an excuse to visit old haunts and old friends, organised four days of cycling in June in the North Yorkshire Moors for our local CTC Member Group. He used to live up there and knows it like the back of his hand. I, who also have roots in these parts, thought this would be a good excuse to visit my sister in Hull, from where I would cycle to Osmotherley, the base for our four days of touring.

Osmotherley is an attractive little village on the west side of the Moors with a Youth Hostel and pubs. Ian had booked *Cote Ghyll*, a cottage next to the YH. There were seven of us.

The village is guarded on all sides by very steep hills up which you have to cycle to get to either the pubs or the cottage. I had come on my *Orbit Orion* bike equipped with an Alfine 11 hub gear. This has a granny gear of about 25", much needed in these parts; but for some reason every time I engaged it to access that village it emitted a nasty crunch and I had to go into the next higher gear (or get off). This had happened once or twice elsewhere, but since then I have used it on the Continent and on the Gower Cycling Festival and the problem has not recurred. There must be some spirit lurking in Osmotherley which tries to keep out those riding bikes with Alfine 11 gears!

We were a jolly crowd. In addition to Ian there was John Cardy, Mike Brewer, Theresa, Adrian and Helen. For me, who enjoys eating but not cooking, a highlight was that Adrian and Helen both enjoy cooking and produced superb evening meals for three of the four evenings. We dined out in an Osmotherley pub on the other evening.

So what about the cycling? I had had a quite tough ride to get to Osmotherley from my sister's in Hull. (I shortened it to 56 miles by taking the train from near where she lives to Great Driffield). This was testing because heavy rain in the morning got me cold and wet. And then the last ten miles while exceptionally pretty were exceptionally hilly. I tried to persuade the others to use this route, but they declined – what's wrong with today's youth?



This 'selfie', taken by Helen, shows all of us.

The weather was lovely and warm for the remaining three days and we had great rides; on the Tuesday to Danby on the north side of the Moors; on the Wednesday west to Richmond; and on our last day, Thursday, to Saltburn on the east coast, north of the Moors. They were quite hilly rides; all between 50 and 60 miles. We all coped, and apart from my crunching gear, no punctures and no bike problems (at least none that couldn't be fixed on the spot).

David Naylor

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Celtic Tales – a Sustrans campaign

A new app is being launched by Sustrans to celebrate 20 years of the National Cycle Network (NCN) in Wales, and to encourage families to explore cycle routes more. The app is called *Celtic Tales*, is free to download, and covers local routes 4 around Swansea Bay and the Afan valley route from Port Talbot to Afan Argoed.

On downloading the app to your mobile device you will be transported back in time and will discover hidden histories from the area, eg about the Mumbles tram. There are also “mysteries” which invite you to step into the shoes of a detective to solve local crimes and riddles, while picking up fragments of narratives and clues along the way.

Celtic Tales will also provide information about local amenities, bike hire and attractions -- allowing cyclists and walkers to make the most of their free day out on the National Cycle Network.

We are lucky to have two major routes converge in the Swansea Bay area, NCN route 4, from London to Fishguard, and route 43 up the Tawe Valley. Both routes have a track record of encouraging families and new cyclists to cycle more.

The app is live on Android phones, on which you can download both Welsh and English versions, but on Apple only the Welsh is currently available. The English version should follow shortly.

Sustrans are grateful for our help in promoting this unusual campaign, and ask us in particular to spread the word to any new cyclists and families we know.

We have Flyers and posters to help with publicity. Please contact me (or the Sustrans office in Cardiff) if you can distribute any.

Nick Guy

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Forthcoming events

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

Adult Beginners Class.

Saturday 19 September: 9.30-11.30 in Civic Centre East car park. Phone Allyson Evans on 01792 475521 if you wish to attend.

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

Saturday, 5 September (and first Saturday in the month thereafter.)

Wheelrights meetings (at 7.00pm in the Environment Centre, Pier St, SA1 1RY)

Monday, 21 September: Ordinary meeting. (Downstairs in the Centre.)

Monday, 26 October: AGM.

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