



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 37 Autumn 2016

www.wheelrights.org.uk

ACTIVE TRAVEL (WALES) ACT 2014

Our CHANCE to make SWANSEA a CYCLING CITY

Monday 26th Sept. at 7pm

PUBLIC MEETING in the Environment
Centre

**Lindsey Brown will speak on the Active Travel
(Wales) Act and how we can use it to trans-
form cycle provision in Swansea.**

As summer draws to a sunny close we celebrate another successful Gower Cycling Festival. (See report on p.3)

Its time to look forward to the next challenge of helping Swansea Council deliver a comprehensive Integrated Network Map which could transform cycling provision in Swansea. The above public meeting will explain how.

Stop press: Swansea and NPT Councils have just produced their new free bike maps. These are available from the Environment Centre, bike shops and at the 26th Sept. meeting. They are reviewed on p. 5.

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Copy deadline

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

This issue

The focus is on the Active Travel Act and the need to provide more cycle friendly infrastructure to implement it. The articles on pages 2 and 6 relate to this.

Elsewhere, the article on p.4 gives the background to a special Festival ride; that on p.3 is about acquiring antique bikes and bits, and, on p.8, something new from the Environment Centre.

Nick Guy (Guest editor)

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Active Travel Act: an opportunity

The next stage of the Active Travel (Wales) Act presents *Wheelrights* with a great opportunity to push forward our vision of transforming Swansea into a real cycling city.

During 2017 Welsh Councils have to compile an Integrated Network Map (INM) of aspirational routes which could then be created over a 15 year timescale.

This is an exciting opportunity for all of us to put forward our ideas for those new routes and infrastructure improvements, which could make “everyday” journeys by bike and foot more possible. Sustrans has already held a successful public consultation event in Castle Square, and they are planning several more. *Wheelrights* own Routes Group has also started work on our submission, and is eager to hear ideas from members.

Our next Public Meeting, on 26 September, will be devoted to this topic, and we are pleased that Lindsey Brown, our local Sustrans manager, will explain the above process and challenges in more detail. She will also answer any questions on the Integrated Network Map. So please come along and encourage any cycling friends to join us.

WE NEED YOUR IDEAS AND INPUT.

Nick Guy

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How it could be

The more you read about cycling the harder it gets to see the wood from the trees or the hybrids from the mountain bikes. Every journalist seems to mention the Netherlands or Denmark as places to which the U.K. should aspire to. Photos show masses and masses of cyclists on city roads with slow moving motor traffic being kind and courteous. Surely the Sandfields and Neath Rd could look the same!

And yet in Swansea, cycling is mainly a leisure activity with most cyclists loading their bikes onto the back of the car in order to cycle from the Marina to Mumbles, before driving back home again. Cycling and walking is definitely not for getting to work, going to the shops or visiting friends. At a recent conference on children's physical activity in Wales at the Bay campus, there were calls for kids to be more active and stands full of walking and biking ideas. Yet when they asked delegates how they got to the venue, virtually everyone came by car despite the excellent walking, cycling and public transport provision to the Bay campus. So if the health professionals don't get it, is there any hope?



Would that this were in Swansea!

Funnily enough, the economic slowdown may be our saviour. In the U.S., cycle rates seem to have increased where the traffic jams are worse, like Washington D.C. If the City Council made car parking harder in the city centre and turned parking bays along roads like Walter Rd into cycle and bus lanes then, maybe, more people could see the economic and health benefits. The scales need to be tipped further in favour of walking, cycling and busing by charging employees for parking spaces at work. Currently cyclists, walkers and bus users are subsidising car drivers use of employee car parks. And cycle paths cost a fraction of a new road!

John Sayce

This year's Cycling Festival

(13-20 August)

The weather this year was better than in previous festivals in that it was pleasantly warm and sunny for the first six days. Then on the Friday there was heavy rain in the morning followed by warm sunshine, but on the final Saturday the weather was atrocious: gale force westerly winds and heavy showers.

Thanks no doubt to the good weather we had record attendance on the rides in the first six days with 20 to 30 on most of them. All the rides went ahead as planned except that on the Friday the start of the ride/walk was put back to avoid the morning rain and on the final Saturday Rides 20 and 21 were replaced by a shorter circuit of North Gower. The number attending was up on last year with, as then, more joining more than one ride than in previous years. A report giving details is under preparation and will be put on the website.

Following last year's precedent we provided camping at the Duvant RFC. Thanks to the efforts of the RFC's Manager, John Watkins and his staff, and our President, David Judd (Whose efforts ranged from cleaning the bogs to collecting money from the campers!), it worked well, the problems encountered last year having been solved. Marginally more (1 more actually) camped than last year.

As we have tried to do each year we again retained the more popular rides while introducing some new ones. We also attempted to make the Festival family friendly. New rides included the 'Life Cycle' ride on the Sunday. In this actors portrayed the local history as they cycled along the Swansea foreshore. [Ed: See article on next page.] John Cardy's 'Top of Glamorgan' ride replaced his previous one to Henrydh Falls. It was well attended and went well except that the leader, back marker and one other all had mechanical problems and had to be rescued. Another new venture was to invite *Gower Riders* to provide a family ride. This was the "Bont'n'back" ride to Pontarddulais on the Wednesday. Unfortunately, because it used a busy road, it was not suitable for young children. Another innovation was Dale Hall's 'Estuary Wide' ride, which regrettably had to be cancelled because of Saturday's weather.

A highlight for me was the Grand Gower Circuit. There were two firsts on this: Mike and Lynette on their tandem cycling across Broughton Bay (pictured) and that four of us actually



got into the sea. Another highlight was the King Arthur's Stone ride which featured an ascent of the stone – a first, I think, as far as this Festival is concerned.

David Naylor

GCF's Life Cycle Ride

Last year, we were approached by Sustrans Cymru to develop an 'entertainment' to mark the development of the Swansea Bay Cycle Paths. It made perfect sense to us to create something that celebrated the former history of the pathway as a railway – let's be honest, Mr. Beeching and his works have been responsible for the creation of about 50% of the cycle routes all over Britain; and although we can't blame Mr. B for the Mumbles Railway's demise, then it bears all the same hallmarks.

As the longest serving passenger railway in the world, it struck us very early on that the railway must have transported some amazing characters from Swansea's history and its heyday as a smelting capital of the world. Moreover, as a mobile performance on bikes it was hardly likely to be a gritty realistic kitchen sink drama! This gave us great scope to do pretty much whatever we wanted. That was how we fell upon the concept of the final journey of the railway and a time-travel journey at that.

Now, I know most of you won't believe it having seen me [*Ed: He was the train driver at the Festival launch!*], but I don't remember the railway! However, there are many in my pub who do. So I talked to them about their memories of that final journey. I looked in the archives and online for pictures and maps showing the routes and stations, and I charted a journey. After that it was merely the small matter of deciding who to pick up on the way ...

Every day that I cycle on that path, I pass a blue plaque dedicated to Amy Dillwyn; believe it or not, every morning, I raise my cap as I pass her plaque. She's a heroine of mine. She was the first one on the top deck ... I was struck by the memories of one Mumbles local, Grafton Maggs, who told me about looking at Swansea from Oystermouth during the Three Nights' Blitz and that helped me decide upon Laurie Latchford (whose diaries include the description of looking at the town from the roof of the train), but Grafton still gets a mention! And finally, Ruby made it in as a contemporary of Dylan and pretty amazing woman – her memory enshrined in the Dylan Thomas Theatre on Gloucester Place.

The list of people we could meet and learn from on the route of the railway is almost endless: Dylan Thomas, Wynford Vaughan Thomas, John Charles, Emily Phipps, Vernon Watkins, Daniel Jones. We could go on and on. Anyone for a Return Journey?



Lighthouse Theatre Company presents in partnership with
Gower Cycling Festival
and Wheelwrights

a performance Cycling Tour based
on the final journey of The Mumbles Railway

Life Cycle of the Bay
Sunday 14th August, Tickets £5
11.00am & 2.00pm from Dunvant Rugby Club
(30 mins later from Blackpill)
Tel: 07551 538825, www.gowercyclingfestival.org

www.lighthouse-theatre.co.uk .

Phone: 07801 418135.

Twitter: @LighthouseTheat.

Adrian Metcalfe
(Lighthouse Theatre Ltd.)

Ed. Adrian is asking for help with crowd funding their future production of *Aberystwyth Mon Amour*. Please visit the link below if you wish to donate to this production (based on the books).

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/aberystwyth-mon-amour-the-play#/>

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Map review

This summer Swansea and Neath Port Talbot councils issued new cycle maps covering their respective counties. The Swansea map replaces the original cycle map for that area which came out several years ago. The first map was a *Wheelrights* initiative and it needed updating.

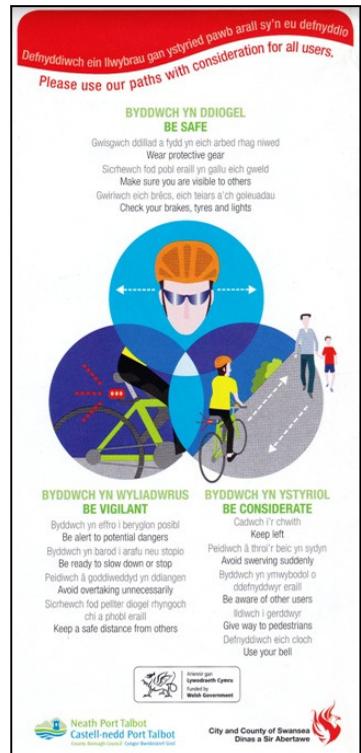
Like the old map the new ones show roads purportedly suitable for cycling in yellow. They also show on and off-road cycle routes but, unlike the old map, a single colour – dark red – is used for both. The soothing background colours, ranging from grey through different shades of green, are helpful in that they indicate hills, albeit without a key to the heights.

A useful feature of the maps is that, by means of coloured circles, they relate the routes to the colours shown on signs and on the councils “Tube map”. There are 14 colours! The NCN route numbers are also shown. Another useful feature is that symbols show the locations of cycle shops, railway stations, other key buildings and road crossings. There are text boxes which provide visitor information, tell you about the *Active Travel Act* and provide a link to *Travelline Cymru*.

Unfortunately the maps have some unsatisfactory features. The back cover (pictured) of both maps feature a helmeted, begoggled cyclist in a yellow top on a road bike; the image of a *Tour de France* racer, not the sort of cyclist at whom the maps are aimed. Furthermore it advises “Wear protective gear” (followed by some sensible advice). This is out of place on a map intended for people who cycle to work or to shop in *their ordinary clothes*. “protective gear” suggest the users of these maps engage in a dangerous activity! A man on a bike in a suit or lady in a frock would be more appropriate.

A quite different criticism relates to the use of just one red line for all identified cycle routes. The legend shows a fat red line bounded by unbroken black edges for on-road routes and a thin red line bounded by broken lines for off-road routes. On the maps however there is a lack of consistency in the thickness of the lines, and it is difficult to distinguish between off-road paths and on-road routes. Furthermore there is nothing to distinguish between routes on roads with no lanes (eg Elba Crescent), those with lanes (eg Culfor Road) and those which use bus lanes. It would have been better if separate colours had been used for the different categories as in the original Swansea cycling map or on other cycling maps.

Despite their faults these maps will be a useful tool, particularly for those new to the area or to getting on a bike.



David Naylor

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Freiburg: a Cycling City

This summer I had the opportunity to join a group cycling down the River Neckar in Germany. This tour started at the source of the Neckar in Villingen in the Black Forest. Villingen being a day's cycling from Freiburg, I decided to spend a day in that city before joining the tour.

Freiburg is famous for its sustainability. It has excellent public transport and cycling infrastructure, designed so that inhabitants can get around without a car. I was particularly interested in studying the provision for cyclists, with the thought that there might be some lessons for Swansea. The two cities are of similar size.

I found a friendly B&B near the station (I had travelled with my bike by sea and rail.) where I stayed the nights before and after my day there. I first visited the *Altstadt* with its impressive *Munster*. This and much of Freiburg was badly damaged in the war and like many towns and cities in Germany has been carefully restored. I then spent the rest of the day exploring Freiburg on my bike.



My first stop was the district of Vauban. This became available for development in the 1990s when a French military base which occupied much of it was closed down. It is the sustainability showpiece of Freiburg. Flats there have PV solar panels and these together with a combined heat and power plant which burns wood chips provide most of their energy. To use a car in this district is quite expensive as space in a multi-story or underground garage has to be bought. The trams (pictured) together with safe cycling routes make it easy to manage without one.

Leaving Vauban I cycled through the suburbs getting somewhat lost. In the process I sampled *Fahrradstrassen* (Cycling streets – typically identified by a sign on the road as illustrated on p.2 and below.) on which cyclists have priority over cars, chatted with a cycle-rickshaw driver and photo'd a postie on a bike. This being a University City there were masses of bikes, rivalling any Dutch city. The picture below show them parked outside the impressive University Library.



Freiburg is the hottest place in Germany and I was glad that it was only in the mid 20s on that day. On the next day, using a train to take me past the hilliest bits, I had a lovely ride to Villingen: gentle climbs up to nearly 1000m on quiet roads in sunshine, and it was pleasantly cool.

David Naylor

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A sale in Llandrindod Wells

It is funny how things work out in life. A day out in Swansea a year ago brought me into contact with BikeAbility (Wales) and rekindled a dormant love of all things bicycle. That meeting led to another, a couple of months later during the Gower Cycling Festival. Alun who has a passion for classic bikes and myself became firm friends, both sharing a love not only for cycling but for the history of the bicycle as a mode of transport.

One morning, I was pleasantly surprised to receive an email from Alun to say he was going to a sale of the National cycle collection at Llandrindod and would I be interested in coming along? I jumped at the chance of a day out with nothing else but all things cycling.

As my wife was working there were no worries apart from two warnings: be on time to pick her up from Morriston Hospital, and don't come back with another bike or spend too much money. The first promise was, as they say, a no brainer, but the second I must admit I fudged. Promises like that are very hard to keep and there is always room for another bike!

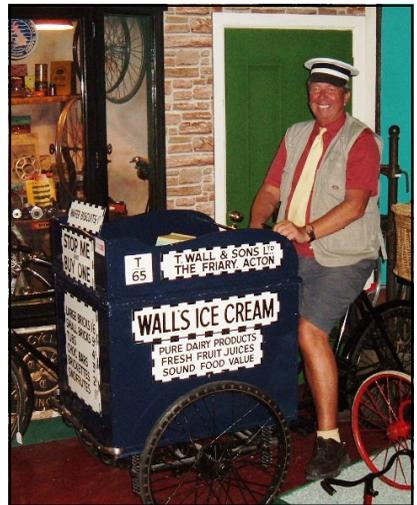
A nice run up through beautiful countryside and we were at the Automobile Palace. Once the doors opened there was a stampede for the spares tables. Items were snapped up, sometimes after a bit of haggling, for a few pounds or less. These are things no longer sold by High Street cycle shops. Al bought a set of unusual gear changers, a pin spanner and a set of brake blocks (old style) still in their packet. While I had a very nice new old Rollo saddle bag, a C spanner, an old fashioned chain break, and a set of bottom bracket cups. Having never been to an event such as this I was fascinated at what grabbed the attention of folk. One conversation I overheard was on the intricacies of Paris cycles and the differing badges of the Company. This enthusiast wanted a specific badge and the haggling was a good as ever I had seen in a Tunisian souk!

We also took the opportunity to take in the museum itself and once again I reacquainted myself with the original Dursley Pederson, a cycle which has long fascinated me.

The auction took place at noon. There were some nice 60 - 70's classics and some older roadsters. A Carlton Criterium in good clean condition fetched around £200 and a Raleigh road bike a similar sum. A F.C. Grubb had the bidding flowing while a Moulton with only one wheel went for about £50. Some frames of around the same period in very good condition were also being auctioned, the most memorable being a 23" Viking and an early 70's Claude Butler which I was very tempted to buy.

The day went by too quickly and all too soon we were back on the road home. But my day didn't end there. A cup of tea and biscuit in Al's house, with his lovely wife Jan; and then I was treated to a visit to his shed and his collection of all things cycling, including his classic Carlton, which unfortunately he cannot ride until he has his leg seen too.

A perfect end to a perfect day of all things cycling.



[Ed: Better than a mannequin?]

Les Woodward

The Environment Centre welcomes cyclists

At the Swansea Environment Centre we really want to encourage people to cycle. It's not just great for the environment but it has been so instrumental in movements for social change too! These are the reasons why we want to team up with *Wheelrights* to hold some events at our Exchange Café on cycling. Because we want to tell everyone just how great cycling and the bicycle really is.

In our Exchange Café we are holding a new series of discussions and activities for people to exchange ideas and take collective action. (Go to *What We Offer* then to *The Exchange Café* in the link below.) Look out for something cycling related in January when our theme is travel and transport.

At the Environment Centre we believe small actions can make a big difference. Have you visited us in Pier Street recently? We're making some changes! If you're out for a cycle pop in! We're trailing Saturday opening time for our Exchange Café and Green Shop. (*What We Offer/Green Shop* in the link.) We're open from 10am to 4pm on weekdays, and for those of you who are busy then, from 10am to 2pm on Saturdays. We have secure bike racks tucked away in the garden of the Centre so you can rest assured your bike is safe while having a coffee or doing some eco shopping. You could pop in and pick up the great new cycle map for Swansea too!

Visit <http://environmentcentre.org.uk> for more information about us.

Sarah Kersey
(Environment Centre Manager)

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Forthcoming events

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

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

Saturday, 10 September (and first Saturday in the month thereafter.)

Cappucino rides. (10.00am in the Coast Café, SA1 3SN.)

Monday, 3 October (and first Monday in the month thereafter – weather permitting.)

September

Monday, 12th: A Rhondda Tunnel ride

Start: Blaencwm at 1.45pm. (Leanne Wood AM is joining the ride.) Details to come.

Wednesday, 14th: Ride to Work Day

Up to you, but see 'Rides & Commutes' page for advice.

Monday, 26th: U3A ride up Neath Canal to Aberdulais and Melincourt Falls.

10.00a m: McDonalds Briton Ferry.

Monday, 26th: The Integrated Network Map

Wheelrights meeting: a presentation by Sustrans's Lindsey Brown. All welcome.

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

November

Monday, 7th: Wheelrights AGM

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

Details of October and later events on the 'Events' page when known.

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