



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 4 Summer 2008

www.wheelrights.org.uk



Penclawdd path progresses

Sustrans had a work day on 31 May.

They said to be there at 9.30, but when I arrived at that time there were already around a dozen beavering away with rakes and shovels. They were spreading cockle shells to make a smooth path for horses alongside the cycle path. This had recently been asphalted, continuing the quarter mile of path laid in 2006 eastward. It now extends beyond the *Sea gardens* Chinese restaurant and lacks only a small bridge to connect to the existing path to Penclawdd.

Most of those beavering away were locals. So was it just their enthusiasm which brought them out so early? Or was it the fine weather? Or had David Judd been cracking the whip? In fairness a handful of Sustrans Rangers and *Wheelrights* members had also come along. The photo is looking towards Penclawdd. The young helper is the son of Joe and Beth through whose property this part of the path runs.

In addition to the raking of cockle shells there was 'haunching' – the spreading of top soil to border the path – land surveying – a cushy job which I landed to establish ground levels for surface drainage purposes in the vicinity of Joe and Beth's caravan – and finally, a task of particular significance to readers of this Newsletter: the concreting of footings to support a seat in memory of Bob Burns. Bob, who died in 2005, was a co-founder of *Wheelrights*. The seat has been carved from the trunk of an oak tree and is expected to be installed at about the time this comes out.

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by 2nd Sept. 2008.

The missing link referred to above, ie the small bridge at the east end of this section of path, is also expected to be lifted into position in mid June. Its abutments have already been constructed. With this bridge installed there will be an off road alternative to the busy B4295 for the last 1½ miles to Penclawdd. With the existing NCN 4 and the short length of shared use path east of Pont-y-Cob Road there remains only about half a mile to complete the link from Gowerton.

David Naylor

Chairman

Nick Guy, 5 Belgrave Gdns,
Walter Road, Swansea SA1 4QF
Phone: 01792 476178
E-mail: nick.guy@swansea.gov.uk

Secretary

David Naylor, Copper Roof, 45 Pennard Rd,
Southgate, Swansea SA3 2AA
Phone: 01792 233755
E-mail: d.j.naylor@swansea.ac.uk

Treasurer

Geoff Wood, 56 Bryn Aeron,
Dunvant, Swansea SA2 7UX
Phone: 01792 206617
E-mail: g.v.wood@swansea.ac.uk

From our Chairman:

2008 – a significant year for cycling in Swansea

Currently Swansea Council is working on several new developments that should provide important improvements for cycling to and from the city centre and in particular High Street Station. These include:

- Three new Advance Stop Lines (ASLs) in the vicinity of Mansel Street.
- A new shared-use path linking Mansel Street to Orchard Street and the Station.
- The Metro bus route along Orchard Street, the Kingsway and West Way (which can also be used by cyclists) offers a cycling link between High Street Station and NCN Route 4 at the Civic Centre.

New destination signs are springing up to help guide cyclists around some of these routes.

Unfortunately the Council has marred this progress by the ludicrous arrangements for the short link between Oystermouth Road and NCN 4 via the Civic Centre. By directing cyclists round the ridiculous S bend and through a busy car park the Council continues to give mixed messages to cyclists. *Wheelrights* letter about this, dated 12 March 2008, may be viewed/downloaded from the "Various" page of www.wheelrights.org.uk (under "Civic Centre cycle access"). At the time of writing no reply has been received to this letter. See also below for how you can help.

2008 also sees *Wheelrights* first year of the *Explorer* rides. These generally shorter rides provide good opportunities to bring along friends, relatives or colleagues who are just starting to cycle or who lack the confidence to ride on-road. The ride at 6.30pm on Tuesday, 8 July is of particular relevance as we will be checking out routes in the City Centre. (The rides programme is on p.6)

As always with new cycle routes the devil is in the detail. *Wheelrights* will continue to work with the Council for improvements.

The Future

There appears to be an encouraging increase in cycling in Swansea, whether caused by the rising cost of petrol or an increased awareness of the health and fitness advantages.

With this in mind *Wheelrights* needs to prioritise a few key issues in the year ahead. To stimulate debate I suggest the following:

1. Raise with the Council the need for a Swansea City cycle map.
2. Continue to promote additional cycle routes, in particular to connect schools and communities not yet served by existing routes. (See *Wheelrights* submission to the draft Regional Transport Plan for our ideas. It can be viewed/downloaded from the website: near the bottom of the "Various" page.)
3. Build on our successful track record of Adult Beginners Cycle Training and continue to link these with the *Explorer* rides,

How you can help re. the Civic Centre

As mentioned above *Wheelrights* has already written to the Council about the serious mistakes made in their provision for cycle access to the Civic Centre, but have had no reply. You can help by writing to your own Councillor about this. Please feel free to download and copy *Wheelrights* 12 March letter (the link is given in the article) to send with your letter. Note that our letter includes a map of the Civic Centre which shows the routes; this map originally appeared in the *Swansea Leader*.

You can obtain your Councillor's contact details either from the Council's website (www.Swansea.gov.uk, click "Councillors, Democracy & Elections" on right of home page, then "Councillors") or phone 01792 636000.

Nick Guy
Wheelrights Chair

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Exploring Swansea – on a bike

Well, I've tried the first two of the new Swansea Explorer Rides so I suppose I'm as qualified as anyone to put together a few words about them. So here goes!

The first one took place on a glorious, sunny evening when even the wind behaved itself by being completely absent or merely a gentle whisper about our ears. There were only seven of us but we learned later that two others (who shall remain nameless) had set off half an hour before the appointed start time having misread the promotional leaflet.

Anyway, I think we all enjoyed the lazy ride through SA1 and out to the Tower hotel. We had a look at the potential danger spot near the Village Leisure Centre, where the cycle and bus lanes cross each other to the certain detriment of any unwary cyclists, and we got pleasantly lost at the new Amazon roundabout. But we will know the way next time we ride that way. And then we had a very convivial chat and pint sitting outside in the garden area of the Tower before meandering back to the city centre and away home.

The second ride was in complete contrast. Do you remember that day in late May when it rained cats and dogs in Swansea from dawn to dusk? Yes, that was the day of the second planned Explorer Ride. Amazingly, seven people turned up. We even had a David Naylor e-mail offering his reluctance to turn out because, having checked the BBC forecast, he thought no one else would be there. But we did turn out and, like all good and sensible cyclists, went straight to the pub for a little more conviviality. And why not indeed?

So far we have not attracted any new cyclists to the rides. That remains one of the important features of the Explorer Rides, offering a safe way to gain experience in the company of friendly, local enthusiasts. We hope some of the people who come along to our 'Learn to Ride' sessions will join us in due course. But that's not the only important feature. I've really enjoyed meeting other Wheelrights members and spending a couple of hours just relaxing together. And I've learned a little more about the cycle routes around our city. So why not give them a try and come along and join us next time?

David Croxall

Editor's note: Wheelrights have taken up the danger spot mentioned in the third paragraph above and a similar problem at the Amazon roundabout with the relevant LAs. See the 'Various' page on the website.

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Bike week events

Bike week is from 14 – 22 June. There are a number of cycle rides on it including Explorer rides on 16th and 18th. These and the remainder of the Explorer program for this year are given on p.6. Other bike week rides are listed on the Events page of our website. An adult beginners cycling class also features in Bike Week. The full programme for these classes is as follows.

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Cycle Training

There will be Adult Beginners Class sessions at County Hall E car park on Saturdays: 14 June, 12 July and 20 September. Classes start at 9.00 (not 9.30 as previously).

For those of you who are not aware of the beginners classes, the pedals are first removed so that the bike is ridden like a hobby horse. When you can balance and steer the pedals are put back on. The next challenge is to get going and turn those pedals. For most this is soon achieved and before you know it you are cycling away!

Contact Veronica Wood on 01792 206617 or Sustrans Office on 01792 454490 for details.

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Living Streets and Swansea City Centre

Gordon Gibson of *Sylfaen Cynefin* gave a PowerPoint presentation titled as above at a *Wheel-rights* open meeting on 20 March in the Environment Centre. This was a potentially important meeting as a clear picture was presented of the need for a paradigm shift in traffic infrastructure design in Swansea. The following is a summary.

Gordon's presentation was in three parts: the *vision*, the *reality* and the *hope*.

But first he made clear the need for a reversal of the present car-centred approach to urban design. Pedestrians should come first. The needs of other traffic will then fall into place. The priorities should be: pedestrians, cyclists, public transport, utility vehicles and lastly private cars. The 'bible' for implementing this is the DfT's *Manual for Streets*.

To illustrate the vision he showed some computer generated perspectives of an improved Swansea City Centre. He made comparisons with places where *Living Street* principles (see below) had been implemented. These included the Ramblas in Barcelona, which provides a model for our Kingsway, and the recently refurbished Kensington High Street in London.

In *Living Streets* street furniture is drastically reduced; surface colouring rather than signs and traffic lights is used to indicate crossings and pedestrian areas. Incidents are reduced because people look where they are going. Traffic flow is improved because people do not have to wait for lights to change. Pedestrian can take direct lines. There would normally be a 20mph speed limit.

The reality in Swansea is that the City Centre has been designed to facilitate the movement of motorised traffic at the expense of pedestrians and cyclists. The focus has been on gyratories – 'Grand Prix circuits' as Gordon described them – of which the Kingsway provides a recent example. In these the number of traffic lanes proliferate (up to 7 or 8 in the Westway), with lanes added for buses.

A problem with the new developments in Swansea is that the developers are not required to pay for adjacent paths. Although these cost very little compared with the development the money to pay for them has to be found elsewhere. This applies for example to the paths needed along the Tawe by Park Tawe. In discussion it was suggested that planning conditions could require that developers pay for these paths. But it appears that this is easier said than done.

Gordon was particularly concerned that the city centre Tesco should not be moved to Park Tawe. This would spoil the area's potential. A bus station near here, ie close to the railway station, would however be a good idea. Unfortunately this is not planned.

He did allow that the recent Princess Way redevelopment incorporates some living streets principles: it provides a wide pedestrian zone. However it falls short in that it lacks proper provision for a pedestrian road crossing.

The hope for the future lies in what is happening in Continental Europe, initially in the Netherlands, followed by Denmark, Germany and in other countries; also in England: London as mentioned above, Oxford and elsewhere. In these cities the living streets principles are being applied.

In the discussion we considered how this paradigm shift could come about in Swansea. Symposia for Council Highway designers in which speakers would promote the *Manual for Streets* as the basis for street design would be a start. But how to ensure that the right people attend remains an unanswered question.

David Naylor

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CCN/CTC Conference in Cambridge (10 May 2008)

By chance the date coincided with my return to Swansea from a cycling holiday in the Outer Hebrides. I had travelled south on the overnight sleeper from Scotland and arrived in London early on Saturday, 10 May, in nice time to catch a train to Cambridge to attend the conference.

It took place in the splendid new premises of the *Mathematical Sciences Centre*. I was one of 115 delegates. Most were from Cambridge or the London area, with just me and Ken Barker (Cardiff) from Wales. Proceedings began at 10.30 and finished at 16.30.

In addition to seven presentations to all, each of about half an hour including questions, there were so called "break-out" sessions. In these we were divided into four groups to attend three out of a possible four talks.

It is only possible in a short report to give a flavour of the meeting. It started well with a ten minute opening address by the local MP, David Howarth. He emphasized that cyclists were normal people, not a special breed who wear lycra, and that in Cambridge "everybody cycles". He also mentioned the problems of liability, or rather the lack of it for motorists who hit cyclists; he hinted that he would attempt to get the law changed.

The photo taken by me the next day illustrates both the popularity of cycling in Cambridge and the good infrastructure. It was taken on Maddingley Road; the continuation of the cycle lane as red strips across minor junctions gives the cyclist priority.



Tom Bogdanowicz of the London Cycle Campaign Group reported that there had been a very significant increase in cycling in England in recent years, especially in London. There a fourfold increase in cycling is expected between 2000 and 2025, it having already nearly doubled since 2000. The 'modal split' (ie the proportion of people cycling) is expected to increase to 5% from 2% (in 2006). Ken Livingston had assigned £500m over 10 years for cycling in London. Boris Johnson, promises to continue with Ken's plans and do even better.

Philip Darnton of *Cycling England* informed us that the £5m allocated for cycling in England in 2005 (when CE was set up) had been increased to £10m in 2006. Of this half is earmarked for children, principally through the *Bikeability* cycle training scheme (not to be confused with Laura Bolton's Swansea project with the same name for disabled people). He informed us that more than half the LA's in England had introduced bikeability schemes and that this was expected to increase to 75% by the end of this year.

He talked about the six cycle demonstration towns in England. These are Aylesbury, Brighton & Hove, Darlington, Derby, Exeter, Lancaster & Morecambe. £5 per head of population is being spent on cycling in these towns. This is not just on infrastructure, but also on other measures such as cycle training. A 20% increase in cycling was claimed. Ten more demonstration towns are planned by 2012. Also by this date *Cycle England* hope to have 500,000 ten year olds cycling to school and 250 (more?) safe routes to schools across the country.

Another speaker described a new type of cycle lane - a *hybrid* lane. This would feel like an off-road path but would be on-road and separated from the carriageway by something more substantial than a white line. It would typically be 2.5m wide. It is in effect a dedicated cycle route inaccessible to motorised traffic (and presumably would not be used by pedestrians).

There was some discussion of the introduction of 20mph zones in residential areas. The key to the successful enforcement of these limits is for them to be fully accepted by the communities involved. This has been the experience in Portsmouth.

A 40 mile cycle ride in the countryside to the south of Cambridge took place on the Sunday. I joined it. It was a splendid ride, in which about 20 took part. The opportunity to talk with people on this ride made up for limited opportunity for discussion during the conference.

David Naylor

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Swansea Explorer Rides 2008

The Explorer rides are a natural follow up to the very successful adult cycle training sessions that Wheelrights has provided for several years. All the rides are short, in the evening, on gentle and safe routes that explore Swansea and pass close by hostelrys where we can stop for a quiet drink and a chat.

The planned rides for Summer 2008 are:

June

16th Mon North Gower. Meet at Duvant car park at 6.30pm – NCN 4 via North Gower Hotel (15m/24km) Leader: David Naylor (01792 233755).

18th Wed Three Bridges. Meet at Sail Bridge car park at 6.30pm – Marina, explore SA1 - visit the Victory pub. (4m/7km) Leader: David Croxall (01792 510470).

July

Tues 8th City Centre Metro. Meet at Sail Bridge car park at 6.30pm. Explore new City Centre routes on & around Metro - visit Pumhouse pub (3m/5km). Leader: Nick Guy (01792 476178).

Wed 30th River Tawe Banks. Meet at Sail Bridge car park at 6.30pm – NCN 43 to Morfa, both banks of the Tawe – visit Morfa Parc pub. (5m/8km). Leader: David Croxall (01792 510470).

August

Wed 20th Sea Front. Meet at new County Hall Café at 12.15pm. Family Bike Ride to Blackpill for a picnic in or around the Junction café (5m/8km) Leader: Nick Guy (01792 476178).

September

Thurs 11th Llandarcy. Meet at the Tower Hotel car park at 6.30pm – Jersey Marine to Llandarcy – visit the Harvester (5m/8km). Leader: Eifion Francis (01792 796735).

Tues 30th Llansamlet. Meet at The Pod car park (opposite B & Q) – Explore cycle routes around Llansamlet and visit Ramada Jarvis bar (4m/7km). Leader: Michael Lewis (01792 795933).

Please note

- Just turn up at the meeting point. If in doubt, check the Wheelrights web site (www.wheelrights.org.uk) or call Veronica Wood on 01792 206617.
- Destinations are subject to change depending on weather conditions or other circumstances beyond our control.
- Participants must be over 16 years of age unless accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Personal accident insurance is the rider's responsibility. Wheelrights cannot accept responsibility for individual rider's safety or possessions and reserves the right to refuse participation to anyone who endangers others or rides irresponsibly.
- It is each rider's responsibility to follow advice from the Highway Code at all times.
- Your participation is acceptance of these terms.

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