



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 13 Autumn 2010

www.wheelrights.org.uk

The Festival is nigh!

The publicity has been done: 3000 flyers have been distributed and the link (www.gowercyclingfestival.org) has been passed to a wide range of outlets.

The ingredients for a successful Festival are there: leaders and back markers are lined up; Jane Davidson, WAG's Environment Minister, accompanied by Swansea Council's Reena Owen, will launch it; live music with a gypsy band is planned for the party on the 24th.

At least two other celebrities are planning to take part: Gower born poet Nigel Jenkins will be a guide on Ride 13. He says "It looks like a wonderful Festival with something for everyone from old plodders like me to younger fitter cyclists." Rugby player Colin Charvis plans to join rides 10 and 17.

Because we have not required – but have encouraged – pre-booking we are not sure who and how many will be coming. So if you are planning to and have not pre-booked please let David Naylor or Nick Guy know (contact details below). Also please ask others you know who are thinking of coming to do likewise.



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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by mid November.

Editorial

For some time Wheelrights have been aware of the need to follow up our beginners classes. A way of doing this, with which we are experimenting, is to offer short excursions on traffic-free paths for those who have got to the stage of pedalling. Andrew Brown's report on p. 3 with the story of how he got on his bike should encourage others who have not yet got to this stage. So some more stories like this, please, for inclusion in subsequent issues.

The response to Bill Gannon's article in the last issue on p.4 draws attention to the importance of using a bike for transportation, and this should feature strongly in our future campaigning.

Cycle rides and tours feature strongly in this issue, thus underlining that Wheelrights is about riding a bike as well as cycle campaigning.

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David Naylor

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We meet Rosie

For many Rosie Swale Pope will need no introduction. She is famous for running round the world between 2003 and 2007 and earlier this year running 27 marathons in 27 days. She comes from Tenby where her round-the-world trip started and ended.

So it is perhaps not surprising that her latest venture took place not so far from home: just a little run this time from Cross Hands to the *Waun Wyllt* in Horeb on 30th August. Its purpose was to open the Tinker's Hill Birds of Prey Sanctuary. She had the chariot "Icebird" in tow. This had been her home during the latter part of her world trip, also during the 27 Marathons and indeed on this one.

The mother of the Landlord of the *Waun Wyllt* runs the Tinker's Hill Sanctuary, hence this venue for the opening. Rosie was due there at 1.00pm. David Judd had arranged for gates to be opened so that she could run unhindered down NCN 47. I led a ride from Blackpill timed to arrive at the pub just before her. This is roughly what happened.

It was a lovely day – cloudless sky from dawn to dusk with the freshness of early autumn. There were 12 on the ride from Blackpill. Phil Snaith (Carmarthen's Cycling Officer) joined us at Llanelli and we arrived at Horeb



Rosie and Icebird en route for Horeb



Rosie speaks

promptly at 1.00pm. But Rosie had been delayed and at this time had just left Tumble, six miles up the path. What to do? Carry on to meet Rosie or a pint in the pub? Three of us carried on and met Rosie some three miles up the path. David Judd was with her. Guess what the other ten did?

There was quite a reception for her at the *Waun Wyllt*, including some feathered Sanctuary residents. Following short speeches from the Landlord and his mother Rosie spoke, first in support of the Sanctuary and then of her round-the-world run experiences, all the while with a young buzzard perched on her wrist. She had not yet eaten. Meanwhile we were sitting in the sun sipping our pints and munching hamburgers. It occurred to me that this remarkable lady, having hauled her 300lb chariot the eight miles from Cross Hands, had been neither fed nor watered. Later I did see her munching a hamburger,

Mid afternoon most of us cyclists made our way back to Swansea, missing out on other events planned for later on that memorable Bank Holiday Monday.

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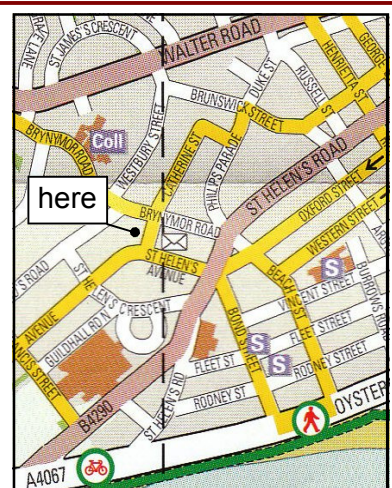
David Naylor

Re-cycle need bikes

If you have a bike which you don't need could you please give it to *Re-cycle*. And ask anyone you know who has a surplus bike to do likewise.

Re-cycle are a charity who do up bikes and sell them at very low prices to those who need them. They are reliant on grants. At the moment demand is exceeding supply; hence this request.

Contact: Anthony Nicholls: Mobile 07847 474880 or Amina Ali on 01792 468271. Their workshop on Catherine St, off Bryn-y-Mor Rd (at end of alley between 19A and The Mill pub) is open Mondays and Tuesdays, 9.30 – 5.00pm.



On yer bike

For over a decade *Wheelrights* have provided beginners' classes for adults, most of whom learnt to ride during the two hour class. It therefore seemed appropriate to get some feedback to find out how they got on. Unfortunately we were only able to contact a small proportion – about two dozen – of the hundreds out there who attended our classes. And of these only two responded.

One lady reports that while she much appreciated the class she has still not made that transition to pedalling. She has however bought her 13 year old son a bike and is hoping to make this key step on this.

The message for her and others like her is that they are welcome back for another lesson. (No charge for a second attendance.) Also we are now offering short rides along the prom. for those who are pedalling but need to build up confidence.

Andrew Brown learnt to ride at one of our classes in 2005 and describes his experiences as follows.

“Perhaps it was to do with being the youngest of four – maybe I got forgotten? Or, perhaps, I was just doing other exciting things. In any event, I managed to escape the childhood rite of passage of learning to ride a bike and I’m not sure how. And then, once you hit adulthood, it is something you forget about; and there are cars, buses, trains and you seem to function normally.

*However, having a partner who’d always been a keen cyclist, it seemed to be something I was missing out on. She did try to teach me, but riding around on a bumpy football pitch in Crewe on my sister’s bike didn’t work for me. Soon after landing in Swansea in my late thirties I came across *Wheelrights*’ Saturday morning class. I signed up, went along and was transformed. Was it really that easy? Well, it worked for me. At breakfast time, I couldn’t ride a bike. By lunchtime, I could.*

The following week, I bought my first ever bike – a £200 Giant Cypress from Action Bikes. We did some practising around a deserted car park on a Sunday morning and soon I plucked up the courage to cycle to work.

After that, I was pretty well hooked and have been for the last five years. I’ve always been very keen on Green issues and was now putting these into practice in the coolest way. Through rain or shine (and this is Swansea so it does rain), I commute to work on a daily basis on my little bike. I also use it for business trips and cycle regularly from the office in town to West Cross, Gorseinon and Morriston – and even to Margam (in light snow) and uphill to Cefn Hengoed (in gusting winds). It gives me a sense of satisfaction to be one of the very few who do use a bike for work trips and to “make a point” in reminding the legions of car drivers that there is a viable alternative. The mileage rate is small but helps to cover the cost of punctures.

*Outside of work, we’ve managed a cycling holiday in France and had trips to the Wetland Centre and the National Botanic Gardens – these wouldn’t have been possible but for a leap of courage and *Wheelrights*’ tuition*

And finally, this year we had a baby boy. I can guarantee he’ll be riding a bike as soon as possible and won’t be waiting 30-plus years as I did.”

There must be lots of you out there who are now riding regularly having learnt to ride at one of our classes. So if you are one and read this, or know of somebody who is, please get in touch (my contact details are on page 1). Your story may then feature in a later edition.

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Correspondence

(Letters are welcome on any cycling-related topic. Ed.)

The three letters all respond to Bill Gannon's article in Issue 12.

In the light of Bill Gannon's article it's a good time to focus on *Wheelrights* strategic direction. And to move on from our 'Wish List' and focus on some short term priorities for next year.

Like Bill I too would like to see more people commuting by bike. As a returning cyclist I started with leisure rides (and, I must confess to taking my bike by car to the foreshore path and to Afan Argoed.) It took a few years to re-build my confidence and now I occasionally commute using main roads. Most cycling commuters I know started this way and I think there are messages for ways forward for *Wheelrights*:

- To join the "10% project": ie get high profile people to commit to cycling to work at least once every 10 days. I have discussed this with Reena Owen and she's agreed to publicly commit to do this.
- Making Swansea City Centre more cycle friendly. The new "Boulevard" proposals include a new cycle route which addresses one of *Wheelrights* long standing Wish List demands.
- Routes for new cyclists. Some of the routes marked yellow on the Cycle Map could be signed as cycle routes (and provide better links to our excellent NCN).

As well as encouraging more people to commute the above priorities could also promote other utility trips like cycling to school, shopping, visiting friends, etc. A topic for a *Wheelrights* meeting?

Nick Guy

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What a shame that Bill Gannon wishes to further categorise cyclists. First there are the ruddy idiots who don't wear a helmet, oh and the ones who do, lycra too; then there are the ones who shouldn't be on the roads because they haven't paid road tax and the annoying ones who just get in the way. Now it seems there are the fake ones who also drive!

Jan Garvey

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Bill is right to emphasize the importance of the bike as an alternative to the car – this is the 'modal shift' the Government would have us bring about (but without providing the necessary finance) – and I think *Wheelrights* should give this higher priority.

But he is unrealistic if he thinks that transporting bikes in cars can be avoided. Beginners need to use one to get to traffic-free paths where they can develop confidence; the experienced cyclist too will sometimes have to resort to a car to get their bike to where they want to cycle, even if this is for leisure.

He makes a valid point when he notes that leisure cycling generates car journeys, but, despite the logic of his reasoning, leisure cycling is too important for this to be a reason not to promote it. What we can do is push (and this is best done by example) for less car use. There are many fit cyclists who use a car to join or return from a ride when they could cycle from home or take a train.

David Naylor

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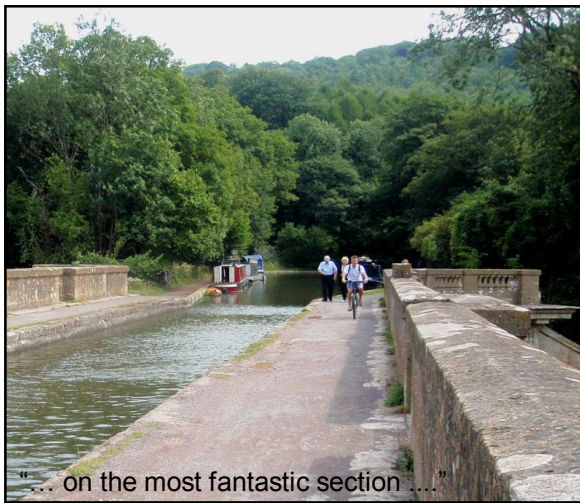
From London to Swansea

It seemed like a good idea six months ago when trustees discussed ways of raising money for the Environment Centre, now on a parlous financial footing mainly due to reduced grant funding opportunities.

To the initiated it may not seem a long way: 260 miles over 5½ days, but for your President it began to look like a case of mind over matter, and as the time closed in I was afraid to train in case I peaked early before the ride. So I packed my clothes (too much) and oiled the chain and in no time we were off. Alan Kreppel and Brian Pawson were my company to Bristol, where Helen, Tania, Pete and Sam joined us.

Alan did the lion's share of the organising and route selection and steering, and Brian looked after me from behind...

We were sent off at Westminster around 1pm by Boris's Traffic Commissioner Peter Hendy (and Alison Porter whom I was delighted to see again). We used route 4 for a bit but were concerned to get to Eaton so we cut off the loop following the Thames and followed the A4 through Heathrow – grotty in the extreme.



It came as a surprise to me that the Kennet and Avon Canal was such a rough ride, and by the second night I was knackered and we were all muddy needing hosing down before entering the B&B. After Devizes and some on road sections it improved and by Bradford on Avon we were on the most fantastic section through to Bristol – a real education on how it should be: a high standard of provision and hugely popular.

Out of Bristol I took a route through Blaise Estate and managed to take the group up a 1 in 4 stepped footpath (no going back with me) but they forgave me and we were over the Severn Bridge in no time, after hacking along a section of the Severn Way (lifting bikes over gates etc.)

The flats took us to Newport Suspension Bridge, then a poor section of NCN 4 to Tredegar Park and a delightful run through Wentloog flats and a bus route into Cardiff centre via Pengam.

It was a surprise even to me that there is still no identified route to Swansea, let alone signed. Having failed to agree a coastal route because of uncertainty at Penarth and Barry and the need to get to Swansea by 5pm to meet the Mayor, we devised a route through St Fagans using the new Ely Trail (crap construction by CCC) and Peterstone Super Ely to Cowbridge and then skirting Llysworney to Ewenny and Kenfig Hill to Margam. This will be put up as the NCN following our trailblazing ride.

We were aghast at the state of the Port Talbot Section and barriers but made it home to a marvellous welcome at the Environment Centre.

The company was great and we had a memorable time and my nether regions are recovering well.



David Judd (Wheelrights President)

A day in the Cotswolds

The CTC's 'away days' are getting more adventurous and more fun. The last issue featured their away day in London and this is about another one in England.

It was Phil's idea, and when he told us at the start of the year that he had made a block booking in the Stow-on-Wold Youth Hostel for two nights in June we had little option but to commit ourselves; especially as he sought – and mostly got – payment up front.



Dai passes on his recumbent

So it was that 11 of us assembled in the YH on a sunny Tuesday in late June. We had come by various means: most by car but three had cycled all the way taking two days. Dai H. had cycled from Bristol Parkway on that day and I from Swindon. We had both taken the train from Swansea – nothing special about this except that Dai was riding a tricycle recumbent, wider than the entrance to the bike compartment. Undaunted, resourceful Dai tipped the bike on its side to get it in and out.

It was fun in the YH, if a little hot and crowded when it came to sleeping. We took advantage of the kitchen provided for visitors to have several tea brew ups, thereby reducing the temptation to counter dehydration with beer. There was some debate about where to dine: an Indian curry or English Hostelry? We agreed on the latter and on the Tuesday the Queen's Head had our custom and on Wednesday, the King's Arms. Both were good albeit pricey – but this is a pricey part of the world.

On the Wednesday – another sunny day – Phil took us on a 50 mile circular tour west and south of Stow. We went through lots of pretty villages. There were many stops both to re-group as we spread out on the numerous hill climbs – the Cotswolds are not flat – or simply to admire the scenery. The picture shows Margaret (the only lady in our group) by this unique 'crocodile' spring.

Phil had found us a nice pub for lunch and another for a tea stop. But then as we neared Stow the idea caught on that tea and cake would go down well at the end of the ride (there being no cake at the tea stop). Phil knew of a cake shop in Stow, but could we get there before it closed? Our hitherto leisurely pace hotted up and for the last few miles it was like a *Sportive*. We got to the cake shop just in time. Tea and cake in the YH garden made a fitting end to a splendid day's ride.

Returning to wind and rain in Swansea on Thursday emphasised what a superb 'away day' we had had.



It won't bite, Margaret!

David Naylor

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Sustrans routes in Scotland

The excuse was a reunion with old friends in Inverness. But that's a long way to go for a party. So what better way than by train and bike with visits to family and friends on the way?

So it was that in early June I headed north: by train to York; then by bike and train to Edinburgh where my son Don lives, calling in at my sister's in Hull on the way.

Don accompanied me for the first two days of the ride from Edinburgh to Inverness. The first of these was to Milngavie, on the north side of Glasgow, where we stayed overnight with an old friend and his wife. You can cycle nearly all the way between these two cities along the now navigable canal. This we did. It is great for cycling: a good surface with bridges you don't have to duck to go under. We stopped for lunch by the Falkirk Wheel. Two tanks on the huge rotating wheel lift boats plus the water in which they float between the two levels, thus replacing a string of conventional locks.



I followed NCN 7 most of the way from Milngavie to Inverness. I have learnt from hard experience that one needs to apply a 'Sustrans Factor' when using the NCN. This is the factor by which you multiply the distance you would plan to cover using non-Sustrans routes and is typically around 0.7 or 0.8. To my pleasant surprise no factor was needed for NCN 7, except perhaps on our first day north from Milngavie, but Sustrans couldn't be blamed for that.

It rained from before dawn to after dusk on that day (and I had a puncture). That was a pity because the route takes you through the Trossachs – a particularly lovely part of the Highlands. Although we only covered 35 miles this was the toughest day. Tough because of two 200m climbs: the first between Drymen and Aberfoyle, and the second the off-road section between Aberfoyle and Loch Venacher.

Don left me at the excellent backpackers hostel near Callendar to return to Edinburgh. From there I enjoyed fine weather for the remaining three days to Inverness. NCN 7 is a mixture of quiet roads and cycle track, the latter often following old railway lines. A lovely example of this is Glen Ogle which takes the A66 up to the pass between Lochearnhead and Killin. Here NCN 7 zig-zags steeply up from Lochearnhead to join an old railway line which then climbs gently to cross the main road at the high point. There are splendid views across Glen Ogle and then on the descent to Killin a superb tarmac cycle path through a forest.

Some of the quiet roads were on the opposite side of lochs to a main road, the best example being the 15 miles on the south side of Loch Tay. Further north, for my last two days between Pitlochry and Inverness, much of the route follows the old A9. As this is no longer a through road it is lightly trafficked and in places open only to cyclists and walkers. Where the new A9 covers the old a very acceptable cycle path is provided, most of it remote from the roar of traffic.

There are fewer barriers on NCN 7 than I have encountered on other Sustrans routes, and I found them more 'permeable'. Also the signing was excellent – most, it would appear, put up by highways engineers; there were relatively few Sustrans stick-on signs.

I was covering 50 to 60 miles per day between Callendar and Inverness. Despite a persistent head wind this was comfortable. The climbs over the two 400m plus passes were gradual and therefore not so demanding – a sinecure compared with the hills north of Swansea!

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

See below for the Wheelrights rides and also the Events page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.

- 18-25 September: Gower Cycling Festival. See www.gowercyclingfestival.org for the full programme and for a booking form. Note that the ferry trip to Devon has had to be cancelled for lack of a ferry. A ride to Kidwelly along the Millenium coast path will replace it.
- Saturday, 25 September. Adult Beginners Class. This has been added because the class on 21 August was largely, if not entirely, a wash out.
- Monday, 25 October. Wheelrights agm. Following the formal business David Judd will give a presentation on his experiences cycling from London to Swansea in August. See his article on p.5

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Rides Programme

The *Wheelrights* rides still to come are tabulated below. If you are interested in joining a ride **please check with the leader beforehand**. He or she can then confirm or modify the planned route to suit who comes. This is necessary to ensure that the leader does have somebody to lead! (There have been occasions in the past when there has been nobody but the leader at the start.) Note that these rides are aimed at 'returning' cyclists and the distance and pace will be adjusted accordingly. They have been provided as a follow up to our Adult Beginners Class and as a stepping stone to the longer rides provided by the CTC.

Key to the ride start/finish (S/F). GR = Grid Ref. eg on OS 1:50,000 sheet 159.

BP Blackpill Lido café (GR 593323)	SB Sail Bridge, Swansea (GR 662929)
RI Railway Inn by NCN 4 (GR 598924)	

Date	S/F	Time	Description
Saturday 18 th Sep.	BP	10.00	Gower Cycling Festival: choice of rides following the formal opening. (See Festival programme.) Leaders: Nick Guy/David Naylor.
Saturday 25 th Sep.	RI	10.00	Gower Cycling Festival: Teenager's ride. There'll be a non-teenagers as well as a teenagers group on this ride. (See Festival programme.)
Saturday 16 th Oct.	SB	10.00	A ride to the east: maybe a circuit of Crymlyn Bog via east side of Kilvey Hill or alternatively a flat ride to Aberavon . Leader: Jan Garvey.
Saturday 20 th Nov.	RI	10.00	Mumbles/S. Gower. An easy ride in this area to suit the participants. Leader: Phil Jones

Ride leaders' phone numbers:

Jan Garvey:	07861 684722	David Naylor	01792 233755	Bob Smith	01792 850650
Nick Guy	01792 476178	Phil Jones	01792 234705		

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