



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 24 Summer 2013

www.wheelrights.org.uk

A new foreshore link

As those of you who cycle along the Swansea foreshore will be aware the footway which links Oystermouth Road to NCR 43 west of the Civic Centre has been widened to make it officially shared use. The photo, taken in early April before the work was complete, is looking west.

We are rather pleased about this as we had lobbied for it for six years. In October 2007 we had a meeting with John Hague, then Cabinet Member for Environment, principally to push for this measure. While he kept the door open the response from the Council at that time was: "Sorry, but we have no money!" Now, 5½ years later, it's there!



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Editorial

There was a good response from our membership for material for this issue, so thanks for that. Maybe it will spark some responses for the Autumn Newsletter. The two articles on p. 3 should. Maybe somebody can give chapter and verse to the law change John Sayce refers to? And Kerry Rogers' choice of bike (p. 4) might also engender comment.

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Copy deadline

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

The articles on p. 5 & 6 are a bit more serious, with Bill Gannon providing some useful information and then me venturing into the tricky area of pedestrian conflict. (The box on p.6 is unrelated – it is just for information.)

Finally Alun Evans relates the fascinating story of the creation of his trike. I edited out a whole lot of detailed engineering stuff. I would be pleased to put the mechanically minded who are interested in touch with Al.

David Naylor

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Local News

Bike Week (15-23 June)

There are lots of cycle rides planned for this week. Details are on the Events page of www.wheelrights.org.uk and are repeated on p. 8 of this issue.



Briefing at Blackpill start

We are particularly keen for support for the two mass rides on Saturday, 15th. Their purpose is to promote cycling as a means of getting around as well as for recreation. The two rides will therefore for the most part be on roads where passing motorists can read encouraging comments on placards which at least some will have pinned to their backs.

The two rides will both start at 12.15 (assemble at 12.00), one from Blackpill, the other from the Liberty Stadium. Both will converge on Castle Square at about 1.00pm. After a break for lunch we return to

the starts. (Using cycle paths rather than returning by the ways we will have come.)

There are a couple of posters, downloadable from the Events page of *Wheelrights* website. You are encouraged to print one out and display it where potential participants can see it, eg on a works notice board or corner shop window.

Byron Davies AM (Shadow Transport Minister) plans to join the Blackpill ride and will say a few words when we get to Castle Square. We hope that other prominent people will join the rides.

Another Bike Week event is our Adult Beginners Class, which also takes place on Saturday, 15th. It is at the usual time (9.30-11.30) and place (Civic Centre E. car park). In addition to complete beginners we will be pleased to take those who have learnt to ride, but are not ready to ride on roads, for a short ride along the foreshore path. This event finishes in time for those involved to take part in the mass rides.

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Boulevard work

As mentioned in the last issue the Phase 1 work between Princess Way and the Strand scheduled to start in March is now underway. A north-south link from Duvant Place to the foreshore between the Civic Centre E. car park and the Marriot Hotel car park has been completed.

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Gwrhyd Common

in the Spring 2012 Newsletter (Issue 19) we reported on plans for a new 2.2 mile long cycle path across this common. It will double as access to two new wind turbines and will link in the west to the A474, between Pontardawe and Gwaun-Cae-Gurwen, and in the east to the A4068, between Brynammon and Gurnos. The necessary Section 194 consent has now been given, so construction of this route can go ahead.

To the north of this a cycle path, which will provide an alternative to the A4068 between Brynammon and Gurnos, is in the early stages of planning.

A sign of the times

Coming back home after a holiday can be strange and sometimes a disconcerting experience. It's a bit like *the Prisoner*, that old TV programme of the 60s, when things weren't quite as you expected

Several years ago we went away for a month to South America and lost touch with all things British. To be honest it was a relief not to hear about the politics, sport or even soaps. Initially, I'd thought that Peruvian life was disorganised as we tried to make sense of the bus timetables, markets and tourist guides, but slowly things became understandable even for me as an excessive organiser.

Oh the joy of the return to good old blighty! But then the horror to discover that things weren't quite as they seemed. There were new laws for traffic management that meant you no longer had to indicate when turning left. This was surely an aberration, but, no, the drivers ahead of me didn't seem bothered at all, and, to be honest, neither did the police.

So slowly I adjusted to the change and, without thinking, came to accept this as a matter-of-fact with British drivers. Now some of you may know that I've been sunning myself on the other side of the planet in 1960's Britain – a land of Morris Minors and TV sitcoms called New Zealand. I wasn't able to meet many of you in September, so would be interested to know your opinion about the recent change to a voluntary system for signals when driving in the U.K.

Do members think this is a good idea as it encourages cyclists and others to watch carefully and not trust whatever signals they see, or should road users have to tell others of their immediate intentions? I used to follow the latter argument, but now I think that this voluntary code may be a good thing.

[Ed. Due to John's recent sojourn on the other side of the world he could be expected to have a perspective such as one would have if standing on one's head. But is he not saying something rather pertinent about the attitude of drivers?]

John Sayce

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The longest freewheel?

A *Wheelrights* member is curious to know which is the longest freewheel hereabouts. This means that no pedalling is allowed between the start and the finish. To restrict the options we'll restrict the area to Swansea County, ie the start and finish of the freewheel must be within the county boundary.

Nominations should be sent to me. (See p. 1 for my contact details.) The start and finish points must be clearly defined, preferably by grid references. It will be interesting to see if more than one pick the same freewheel. (No collaboration please!) I'll report back in the next issue.

Consideration will be given to a prize for the first to identify the longest freewheel in Swansea County.

David Naylor

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The joy of being single

What is the one invention that perhaps more than any other enabled the bicycle to become the super-utilitarian transport device that it is today? Gears! Whether they are 27 speed triple chain-set derailleur, Sturmey Archer 3-speed or a state of the art Rohloff sealed hub they all enable you to vary the degree of effort it takes to spin the rear wheel and as a result pedal up hills without losing your knee-caps or sail along the flat getting maximum speed with minimum effort. Why would anyone decide to abandon such an insanely useful device and reject nearly 100 years of cycle development for a bike with just the one, solitary, sprocket? However, that's exactly what an increasing number of 'urban' cyclists are doing by choosing a 'fixie' or single speed bike.

The fixie has got a long and proud history of track racing and you won't see any derailleurs on the bikes used by Chris Hoyle or Vicky Pendleton to win gold at last year's Olympics. Super-light machines, the front chain ring drives a single fixed sprocket with the top speed dictated purely by how fast you can spin the pedals (hence the track cyclists mantra "If you want to win, you have to spin!"). Track cycling is often people's first experience of single speeds and is great fun, though be warned, as the name suggests, these bikes have no free-wheel mechanism, instead the rear sprocket is fixed to the wheel and while it goes round so do the pedals. This can take quite a bit of getting used to (for those old enough, think Hovis adverts or Last of the Summer Wine, where steep descents required sticking your legs out to the sides to avoid the spinning pedals), particularly if you are used to clip-less pedals! The other thing that might surprise you, is they usually don't have brakes either, slowing down comes from resisting the rotation of the pedals (or hitting something).



The less challenging alternative to the true 'Fixie' is one fitted with a standard free wheel. You may get a sneer from died-in-the-wool roadies and lose a bit of street cred for using one, but they at least enable you to coast down slopes and enjoy those "free miles". (Pedalling down hill is just plain wrong!) They also tend to have brakes...

But why do I love my single speed so much? Well, apart from the purely practical aspect of not having to think, worry about or take care of gears (No chance of losing your chain as you change gear, cleaning them is a piece of cake and you can replace your entire drive train for about £20.) they are amazingly good fun. They'll also out-accelerate almost anything on two or even four wheels (I've even beaten a Ferrari away from the lights though, to be fair, the driver did seem a bit nervous about the enormous speed ramp just ahead...) which is great for urban cycling. They are admittedly not that hot on hills (Cycling up Newton Road can be a challenge and forget Constitution Hill.) and cycling into a strong wind can be surprisingly hard (You start to really appreciate getting a 'tow' behind a considerate fellow cyclist.) but even somewhere as topographically diverse as Swansea they are still worth a go. It is probably as close as you can get to being a kid again when roads were there to be explored, hills always seemed to be down and your bike was more an expression of freedom than a mechanical device. So go on, get in touch with your inner child again and fling off the tyranny of gears, it's time to be single!

Kerry Rogers

The battle for Hearts and Maps

I've written about this subject once before (Newsletter 14) and I was pessimistic about what Google might produce, and rightly so. It launched the UK version of its cycle routing in 2012, and although it does know to avoid hills, it doesn't know about anything except major cycle routes. Let's test it out on a journey from Glais to NCR 43 just north of the M4. The maps compare the route from Google with that from *CycleStreets*. Glais is to the right.



That's one failure for Google; but the new route is, well, very new, so it's understandable they haven't added it yet. But how long will it take them? On the other hand don't you think it's amazing that someone has already added the new route to *CycleStreets*? It's only been in existence since the end of November, and yet someone has already decided to ride it, track it, and upload it. Good on them!

But how about a well established route? Let's try again on the route from near the railway station to Mansel Street which I wrote about in Sep. 2010 in Newsletter 14. While there is not space to show the maps here, once again *Google Maps* fell short: it failed to pick up the well established cycle route along Alexandra Road but showed a longer route via the Kingsway. *Cyclestreets* showed the direct route.

This difference is because Google, as a commercial organisation, can't afford to take the risk of basing their maps on information from *OpenStreetMap* (the power behind *CycleStreets*), which (like Wikipedia) is an on-line resource that anyone can edit. And, yes, I mean anyone. Perhaps more to the point they wouldn't be able to claim ownership of the data either. What this means is that Google Maps, from a cyclist's point of view, will remain cumbersome, slow and wrong.

Lets look into a crystal ball. Imagine an app that knows nothing about the person who uses it except that they ride a bike. It would use GPS to track their route and know from their speed that they were cycling. The route would be anonymously uploaded to a central computer where, along with routes from thousands of cyclists, a database of cycle desire lines would be set up. This would show changing patterns from summer to winter and between wet and dry conditions; it would indicate which routes are suitable for the less confident rider and which for the racer. It would be like being able to cycle in a strange town or city without the inconvenience of actually having to live there first.

Bill Gannon

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Conduct on Shared-use Paths

While problems are few and far between on shared paths cyclists do have a bad image and there is a case for taking action to try and get the few who cause problems to cycle responsibly. And this also applies to the few walkers – perhaps particularly those with dogs – who cause cyclists problems.

Apart from the obvious advantages of space being shared amenably there are political gains in taking effective action. In particular to be able to work with the blind, partially sighted and disabled lobbies. We have common interests and they have political clout. So it makes sense to work with them when we can.

Cardiff Council in February announced plans to provide classes to instruct adults on safe cycling. They were scheduled to be held in Leisure Centres in the Spring. (Not known, however, if they have been provided.) The Council are working with the police and others to produce an action plan. Perhaps Swansea Council should do something similar.

The following Code of Conduct has recently been produced by Sustrans.

- *Give way to pedestrians and wheelchair users and take care around horse-riders leaving them plenty of room, especially when approaching from behind.*
- *Be courteous and patient with pedestrians and other path users who are moving more slowly than you – shared paths are for sharing, not speeding.*
- *Slow down as needed when space is limited or if you cannot see clearly ahead.*
- *Be particularly careful at junctions, bends, entrances onto the path, or any other 'blind spots' where people (including children) could appear in front of you without warning.*
- *Keep to your side of any dividing line.*
- *Carry a bell and use it or an audible greeting – avoid surprising people, or horses.*
- *However, don't assume people can see or hear you – remember that many people are hard of hearing or visually impaired.*
- *In dull and dark weather make sure you have lights so you can be seen.*

David Naylor

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Commuting Modes

Data from the 2011 Census. The figures are %

Where	Home	Pub tpt	Drive	Cycle	Foot	Other
England and Wales	3.5	10.8	40.9	1.9	6.9	36.0
London	3.3	32.9	20.2	2.6	5.8	35.2
Wales	3.3	4.4	45.3	0.9	6.5	39.6
Cardiff	2.3	8.7	38.4	2.3	9.5	38.8
Swansea	2.2	4.3	44.3	0.9	6.1	42.2

Notes 'Home' means those working from home.

'Drive' covers cars, vans & motorbikes and includes passengers.

'Other' is assumed to cover the unemployed and retired.

Al builds a Trike

Why on earth would anyone want to build a trike? I came back to bikes in my sixties as a means of keeping up with a grandson who had a bike. My first problem was that due to a bad knee I can no longer bend my leg enough to pedal a normal bike. However I managed to buy a cheap one with cranks which I could shorten. Once again I enjoyed riding. Jan then bought a tricycle as she was not confident on two wheels. When riding with young children one has to go slowly and an old man riding slowly wobbles. Three wheels have advantages so I looked around. Livvy of BikeAbility Wales showed me a KMX recumbent. Quite fun but not the easiest to get on and off, or in and out depending on how you view it. I looked on-line and found a kit to convert a bicycle to a trike, but it cost around £450.

As I am quite practical I decided that it would be possible, even easy, to build my own. But the transmission posed a problem. Having given this some thought I realised that the practicalities were too much for me so I started looking around for a rear axle assembly. After some searching I was able not only to get one from Mission Cycles for £60 but also gears, wheels and tyres – a big saving on the £450 kit.

I now had to find a bike to cut up. On a visit to a rubbish tip I saw what I wanted and was able to take it home for a small sum. The small front wheel would have done for my trike but the bike was the next size up to what my grandson, Lewy, was riding and it had gears. All it lacked was a brake block and air in a tyre. Soon Lewy had a new five speed mountain bike and I had his old one to cut up for the trike. "What about the other grandsons? They may want that bike so you had better not cut it up!" My daughter Ruth said she would find me another one, and, fair enough, a couple of days later rang to ask if I minded a pink bike. As I planned to spray it I didn't. It was a Raleigh in quite good condition, suitable for a little girl, and I have two young granddaughters. What to do? It so happened that we were looking after our son's dog and while walking him on some waste ground I found what I wanted: an old bike with odd wheels, flat tyres and no brakes. Within the hour, before the family could argue, it was cut up ready for use. A few days later Ruth turned up with three old bikes in various stages of decomposition, and my son with another bike. I renovated two and donated them to a Romanian charity, the third I stripped down for spares.

Next I had to design it. I realised that this was not as simple as I had first thought. A particular challenge was to set the distance between the seat and the pedals. Due to my knee problem, which limits movement, this had to be set carefully. On a bicycle this can be achieved by altering the saddle height, but this is not an option on a recumbent. To get this right I built a wooden mock-up. By sitting on it I could determine the best positions of crank and seat. I decided to put the seat almost over the rear axle to make the overall length as short as possible but with the front wheel ahead of the crank for a more comfortable and controllable ride.

The job complete I found the trike fun to ride, very comfortable and stable. On the minus side it is heavy and I could do with lower gears. When I took the bike to the opening of the new bridge in Clydach it received the ultimate accolade from a group of school children: *COOL BIKE*.

Alun Evans

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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 August** on

Saturdays 15 June, 13 July and 31 August.

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 2013

15-23 June is BIKE WEEK

Saturday 15 June: Blackpill and Liberty Stadium Mass Cycle Rides.

Both rides start at 12.15 and will converge on Castle Square at about 1.00pm. Their purpose is to promote cycling. (And in the process have a bit of fun!) Details can be found on the 'Events' page of our website, alternatively phone David Naylor (01792 233755) about the Blackpill ride or Mike Lewis (01792 795933) about the Liberty Stadium one.

Saturday 15 June: BikeAbility Wales Fun Day

11.00-15.00 Duvant 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.

Sunday 16 June: Cycle Ride to Pembrey

Meet at 10.00 on the coastal path outside Swansea's Civic Centre. This is a gently paced ride with local CTC members. An *en route* coffee stop is planned. Leader: Don Ashman; phone: 07816 472571.

Thursday 20 June: Cycle Ride to Aberavon

Meet at 10.00 at the Railway Inn, Killay (on the Clyne Valley path). Another gently paced ride with local CTC members with an *en route* coffee stop. Leader: Don Ashman.

Friday 21 June: Wheelrights Midsummer North Gower Cycle Ride

Meet at 6.30pm at the Railway Inn, Killay (on the Clyne Valley path). This classic 18 mile North Gower circuit being on the longest day fancy dress is encouraged. So come disguised as a *Druid*. Bring lights in case we dally in a pub. Leader: David Judd: 07967 613920.

Sunday 23 June: CTC's annual 100 Miler, also a National TriVets ride.

Meet at 8.00am on the Sail Bridge, Swansea. A moderately paced ride with local CTC members. Allow 12 hours for this long ride.

Sunday 23 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.

Sunday 23 June: Cycle ride to Aberdulais

Meet at 10.00 on the coastal path outside Swansea's Civic Centre. This is a gently paced ride with local CTC members to Aberdulais and the canal basin. Leader: Don Ashman.

August 2013

10-18 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.) and if you are planning to stay in the Gower this will entitle you to discounted accommodation.

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