



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 25 Autumn 2013

www.wheelrights.org.uk

This year's Gower Cycling Festival



The Grand Gower Circuit ride heads north from Rhossili.

was once again a success – at least nobody has yet told us it wasn't! Although it rained on three of the nine days all the rides on those days took place as planned. Over 200 took part and more people joined more rides than in previous festivals. This was probably because we had more non-local visitors: 32 from England, one from Norway, two from California and a family from Germany. This increase is probably a combination of it being in August and that people across the UK and beyond are getting to know about it.

Swansea Cycle Challenge

9 - 29 September.

Your support is needed! See p. 8.

Editorial

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Copy deadline

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

Once again a number of different people have contributed to this issue. Following local news I pass on some information about what's happening in the UK, then a couple of articles by our President in the second of which he shares his experiences of a cycle tour. Next a novel CTC ride, and then on p.7 John Ridd's poem adds flavour to the Grand Gower Circuit ride illustrated above. And on p. 8 Philip McDonnell explains how you can support the Swansea Cycle Challenge.

Finally: some feedback please! eg a letter or a response to the box on p. 2.

David Naylor

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Local News

A new route to Kidwelly

The long established route of NCR 4 through Pembrey forest has been replaced by a new four mile section between Burry Port and Penged where it rejoins the old route on the A484, a mile south of Kidwelly. The reason for this is that the Pembrey route sometimes gets flooded and the surface is badly rutted in places due to forestry work. Meanwhile it remains open, is signed (except at the ends) and is cycleable in normal weather.

The new route makes an attractive and more direct route between Burry Port and Kidwelly. The first three miles are on an old railway line. To access this from Burry Port harbour keep to the right after crossing the two footbridges and follow new NCR 4 signs. Initially the path narrows to go under the B4311 and then, after a short rough section, over a mile of new tarmac takes you to the A484. The path continues under it but the tarmac ends and becomes a grassy track (pictured). This is rideable and continues for a mile before ending on a minor road. A right turn takes you through Penged to the pre-existing NCR 4 on the other side of the A484 opposite the turn off to Pembrey forest. Turn right here to continue north on NCR 4.



The grassy section on the new NCR 4.

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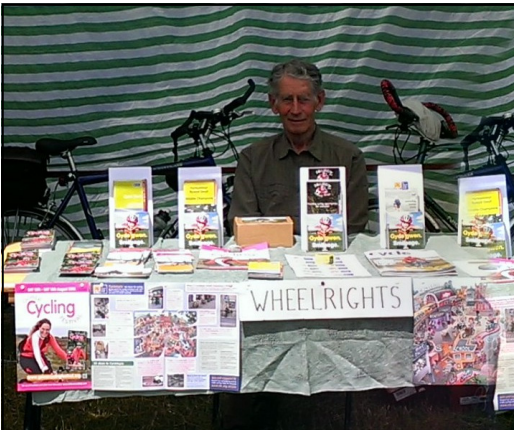
Festival of the Tides.

This took place on 6 July at the usual venue in Penclawdd. *Wheelrights* had a stall. The weather was perfect – it was the start of the July heat wave.

While there was some interest in the stall, unfortunately, as no volunteers took over from myself and Mike Lewis, we had to close it mid afternoon when the crowds were at their maximum.

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David Naylor



The longest freewheel

The invitation to identify the longest freewheel in Swansea County, given in the last issue (No. 24), is still open. The one entry I received was invalid because it overlooked an up.

Come on readers: there's a bottle of wine for the first correct entry!

Cycle funding in England and Wales

There have been significant developments – some positive, others not so – in funding for cycling in England and Wales. Of particular note is the apparently large sum earmarked for England and the lack of such a commitment in Wales.

In England we learnt a while back that nearly £1bn would be spent on cycling over the next ten years. This sounds a lot but, when compared with road funding, it is not much. It would pay for just a few miles of motorway. Recently some detail on how this money would be spent has become available.

According to a CTC source David Cameron has recently announced that £148m is to be spent over two years. The breakdown of this is: £77m of national funding for eight areas in England and £17m in four National Parks, backed up by £54m of local funding. It is not clear how this local money will be raised – from Council taxes?

The eight areas, the total funding and what this amounts to per inhabitant are as follows: (From CTC's website with the figures rounded.)

- *Greater Manchester*: £31m; £6/head/year
- *West Yorkshire (Leeds and Bradford)*: £29m; £11/head/year.
- *Birmingham*: £24m; £11/head/year.
- *West of England (Bristol, Bath and S Gloucestershire)*: £11m; £11/head/year.
- *Newcastle*: £12m; £21/head/year.
- *Cambridge*: £8m; £33/head/year.
- *Norwich*: £5.5m; £13/head/year.
- *Oxford*: £1.4m; £5/head/year.

A figure of £10 per inhabitant per year is considered to be appropriate, and, as can be calculated, the average for the eight areas works out at about that. This is less than half what is spent in the Netherlands and very much more than that spent on cycling in Wales. (If any one has this figure please let me know.) Those whose 'cup is half full' think that the above figures are excellent; those for whom it is 'half empty' note that taken over the whole of England it works out to be about £1/head/year. But it is a start.

Here in Wales we have the *Active Travel Bill*, currently being debated by the Welsh Government. *Wheelrights* contributed to the consultation. (See the 'Campaigns' page of our website.) We were enthused by the original white paper but were disappointed and critical of the draft Bill itself. Many key measures in the original were watered down, in particular there is a wooliness about where funding would come from. One item in Stage 2 of the process for considering amendments to the Bill raises particular concern, as follows:

Amendment 44 tabled by Eluned Parrott AM *requiring authorities to consider the provision for walkers and cyclists in highway construction and improvement works* was turned down by the Minister (John Griffiths AM, Minister for Culture and Sport.) who "felt that it could cause significant cost or delay with roadworks ...". This is an essential requirement since, if this provision is not considered at the planning or design stage, it will either not be made at all or it will cost a lot more. Hopefully the amendment will be reinstated in Stage 3. In the meantime strong lobbying of the Welsh Government is needed.

David Naylor

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Afon Tawe Bridge opening



Isambard Kingdom Brunel did not do much for cycle development although we all benefit from his magnificent railway work still. If he had developed an engine ... this is my impression of what might have been. I rode it at the opening of the new Pont Afon Tawe – part of the fantastic Connect 2 project at Clydach. If you haven't been to ride the new routes then do it.

The local primary schools who attended the opening had recently studied Brunel and I was delighted to have a group of five year olds tell me who I was!

David Judd

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The Longest Promenade - Pioneers 2013 Ride

After a rather lumpy C2C across Devon last year, this year it was decided to go for flat. Bangor to Morecambe around the coast taking in promenades, seawalls, beaches and whatever else: a distance of around 200 miles over 3½ days.

Cyclingwise, for me North Wales is a foreign country, only having ventured there a few times and so I looked forward to getting to know it better. The first problem was logistics: how to get to Bangor and back from Lancaster plus bike, so car ruled out. Being not the most frequent user of public transport my first lesson was do not accept the first end to end rail quote, investigate split journey tickets. (From Lancaster it went from £102 to £55 splitting at Manchester). Second lesson book your bike – its free but should you get a problem without booking they will abandon you.

As always David Gray (Chain Events) organised it in his inimitable style: camping with back up vehicle and breakfast. But with a group of around 30 he found great difficulty in finding a campsite to take groups. Presumably they have had bad experience – more later. Stayed in Bangor Uni Hall and arrived at the Pier for an 8.30 start on the first leg of around 40 miles.

With the Menai Bridge in the background we rode eastwards with the wind behind on main road past Penrhyn Castle entrance and on quiet roads, even a hill inland, till we crossed the A5 to the coast, and cycle track to Llanfairfechan, Penmaenmawr and on to Conwy. Coastline certainly but not as good as I am used to. Conwy, its estuary and castle was special though, and I will return. We then skirted the Great Orme and took in the wonders of Llandudno and its ever so wide prom. (On which the right to cycle was finally won.)

On via Colwyn Bay, Kinnel Bay, Rhyl; along the sea wall and via chalet and caravan sites – missable – and due to aforementioned camping difficulties we stayed at Rhyl Rugby Club near Rhuddlan. It seemed miles inland but there was a former railway cycletrack almost to it. (To be retraced in the morning.) Did I mention the weather? No? Well it was getting wetter so we decided to a man (and woman) to stay inside in the club – very basic accommodation but dry, a very helpful steward (from Glyncorrwg).

Back to Rhyl and the promenade/sea wall to Prestatyn and then on a new cycle track towards Point of Ayre. On-road past Mostyn, along the Dee estuary and past the spectacular decorated wreck of the Duke of Lancaster to cross the Dee over Hawarden Railway and then experience a brilliant new boardwalk track at the Wales/England border to link with the disused Wirral Way railway up to West Kirby and then follow the Mersey Estuary to Birkenhead and New Brighton.

A swift ferry across the Mersey, a run through derelict dockland and we picked up the beautiful Leeds Canal that was an oasis in the surrounding grot till we escaped to the lovely Crosby with its 100 nude statues on the beach ... everyone the same ... supposed to be life size but I have my doubts, and then on to the second campsite on the outskirts of Formby. This was a farm that David conned to let us stay at, with a hay barn that provided shelter for the softies (me included) to tent under, and as the weather had perked up several camped in the nearby field with one portaloos between us. Some used the local sports centre to wash etc and some stayed dirty ... for the duration.

On and on via Southport and on to Preston with hardly a pause, and I was beginning to suffer from a back pain that worked its way up to my neck, making looking backwards difficult, but managed. In Preston Park we rode part (JG and a few rode all.) of the Guild Wheel, a 20 mile circuit of Preston devised by the late great Mike Atkins, former County Cycling Officer, who made a huge contribution to cycling provision in the UK. Onward we continued via country lanes to the next campsite near Lytham St. Anne's. This was a commercial site with caravans and campervans and a large bar/hall holding a real Wild West night. It was amusing to see JG in a cowboy hat listening to the music and watching line dancing ... but most, after a meal and a few pints, retired to the camp alongside, dropping off to sleep to the sound of whoopees and gunshots. What went on inside I do not know.

Next day we rode along a deserted Blackpool seafront, past the tower and on to Fleetwood to catch the tiny ferry across the Were and followed the Lune estuary to Lancaster and on to Morecambe and its promenade where there was a festival of kites, for me a fantastic end to the trip. My neck trouble resulted in a lift from Lancaster for the last three miles to Morcambe and back to catch the train. My troubles with the train journeys would take another article, but I eventually arrived back in Swansea in time to go to bed before getting up.

It was a great trip with the usual good company and, whilst very enjoyable, I think after 75 years I can manage without another venture to most of it, Conwy/Llandudno excepted. If you find some of this vague, inaccurate or made up then I should add EOE to everything except my neck.



David Judd

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The CTC do archery

I live with my husband, David, in a beautiful spot in the middle of the Towy Valley close to Gelli Aur. Both of us do archery, and we have a target range set up at home so that we can practise in between club shoots. It occurred to us one day that it may be possible to organise a cycle ride with a difference – a circular ride around the back roads of Llandeilo, starting and ending at home, with a plentiful supply of tea, coffee and cakes and the chance to ‘have a go’ at archery. The idea was mooted to the cycling club [Ed: Swansea and West Wales CTC Member Group] and people seemed keen, so the stage was set and the ride booked into the Swansea CTC midweek rides calendar for the 3rd July.

Luckily we had a lovely day – both cycling and archery are much more enjoyable when the weather’s fine! 12 riders turned up on the day – a good turnout – and we left the house at 10.15. The route took us out towards Ammanford then up through Derwydd and Llandyfan on to the Black Mountain. The small road winds along the shoulder of the mountain giving spectacular views of the back of Carreg Cennen Castle, a perspective not seen from anywhere else. The road then took us down to Llangadog where we were booked in for lunch at the Telegraph Diner. This is a new venture, open since January, and provides impressive fare for hungry cyclists – highly recommended.

The afternoon started with an unexpected route uphill from Llangadog roundabout on the A40 – at least unexpected to some of the riders. This tended to form a pattern for the rest of the afternoon in that the second-guessing as to which way we were going to go at junctions was invariably wrong! The back roads around Llandeilo led us through Cwmdru, Salem and Penybanc then eventually to a quiet road alongside the Towy, across the river, and home at 4.30.

Tea, coffee and cakes were laid on, and as soon as everything had been sampled and eaten, it was time for the archery session. David, being the more experienced archer, took charge of this and gave tuition in turn. Three targets had been set out and everyone had a try. One or two people fell immediately into competitive mode – ‘just one more go!’ – archery can be highly addictive! Eventually people wended their way home after a very enjoyable day all round, and it looks as if the cycling/archery day will become a fixture in the Swansea CTC calendar from now on. Watch this space!



John Cardy takes aim.

[Ed: As one privileged to have been on the receiving end of both the archery instruction and the cakes I can confirm what a magnificent event it was. Rose’s cakes were out of this world, particularly appreciated after what was quite a tough ride. Maybe we should not be surprised since she won the CTC cake competition; reported in the last issue.]

Rose Pritchard

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[This picture relates to page 7.](#)

Grand Gower Circuit

We all met up at 10am, with David Naylor for our guide,
With a careful planned route, with which I know he takes such pride.
Another sunny day again, with cyclists leaving, in total 24,
as we hit the tarmac, just as we have done so many times before.

So from Parkmill and straight into the first climb,
of what was to come, this surely was a sign,
as I cycled with friends both old and new,
and hills ahead I knew there'd be a few.

Down the hill and into Oxwich, we did descend,
as we cycled and chatted making many a new friend,
out the other side and on to the church in Penrice,
as through the lanes, with many a passing car we did dice.

David set off for Mary's grave, and he didn't go alone,
as he educated others of the story of her stone.
We cycled on a few more miles, and then at a junction
were nearly hit by a bus, as someone's brain had ceased to
function.

Onwards we continued, to the turning to Rhossili,
I thought cycling over rough stuff on skinny tyres would be silly,
so we split into two groups as ours hit the road once more,
and David's group headed down to the path above the shore.

We met back up at Hill End at the café there for lunch,
and once again regrouped into our rather large bunch.
We cycled up to Llangennith with views so grand,
and split in two again as David headed for the sand.

We met back up at Oldwalls, in the beer garden of the Greyhound,
when David's group arrived, me with a pint in hand they found.
All rested up, we headed down Llanrhidian, and along the marsh,
which today with sun shining and wind behind, really wasn't too harsh.

We continued on through Penclawdd, to the bench of Bob Burn,
where David told us his story, which we all were keen to learn.
Onward to Gowerton, and on to the Clyne valley path,
as we cycled side by side chatting away and just having a laugh.

Down to Blackpill, and along to Mumbles we did go,
as some started to ask how many miles, how many more?

We stopped at the Big Apple for ice cream, before climbing up Plunch lane, [\[See p.6.\]](#)
and thinking to myself, this is what we do for pleasure, are we really sane?

Not far to go now I kept saying to spur them on,
but the girls said yeah just like you said: only small hills John.
I mustered up some reserve energy for the last climb of the day,
and then back to the start, now downhill all the way.

Well, 44 miles later, 24 riders and not a puncture in sight,
and the weather was kind to us, making the ride such a delight,
another good ride, with good company, what more do you need,
going away with more cycling memories to treasure, indeed.



Will you Rise to the Challenge?

Wheelrights is supporting the **Swansea Cycle Challenge** again and all members are invited to join in – its fun, easy and free – and lycra is strictly optional!

The Cycle Challenge, in Swansea for a second year, aims to get more people cycling across Swansea by taking part in a workplace competition. Work colleagues encourage each other to make a cycle trip of at least 10 minutes during the Challenge period, which this year takes place **9th-29th September**. Organisations and businesses compete to see which can get the largest proportion of staff cycling.

But what if you don't work in Swansea? You can still join in – just sign-up as an individual or join up as part of *Wheelrights* or another voluntary group you are involved with. It's very straightforward and quick to register – just go to www.swanseacyclechallenge.org.uk and fill in your details. Choose an organisation or business already on the system or just add a new one.

We all know that cycling has many benefits – its great for health and wellbeing, reduces road congestion and pollution, and contributes to safer, friendlier communities. But as an added incentive, there are **lots of prizes** to be won through the Challenge: cinema tickets for new cyclists and everyone that participates is entered into prize draws each week to win some great spot prizes – including a brand new bike!.

Last year, *Swansea Cycle Challenge* was very successful with almost 100 organisations and 1,000 individuals participating. Close to half the participants hadn't cycled for at least a year and many said they were still cycling months after the Challenge.

We hope to get even more involved this year so please lend us your support to **give cycling a big push in Swansea**. Register now and find out more at www.swanseacyclechallenge.org.uk.

Can you spare a little time during the Challenge weeks to support Tryabike sessions at a local business? *Wheelrights* will be supporting several sessions, usually during lunchtimes, to offer advice and short cycle rides at large workplaces across Swansea such as Admiral, HSBC, DVLA and the Civic Centre. If you can offer an hour or two to help out, please get in touch with Nick Guy or David Naylor.



Reena Owen, Swansea's Director of Environment (front left); Pablo Rees, trustee of *Bike Ability Wales* (front centre); Andrew Davies, Chairman of ABMU Health Board (front right); along with Nick Guy, chair of *Wheelrights* (back left); Rob Wachowski, Swansea Council's Cycling Officer (back centre); and Mike Cherry, Manager of *Bike Ability Wales* (back right); and other cyclists kick off the *Swansea Cycle Challenge* campaign for 2013 with a fun ride to Blackpill, Swansea.

Philip McDonnell