



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 36 Summer 2016

www.wheelrights.org.uk



A new cycle path.

Early this year a magnificent new path from Morfa to Llansamlet was completed. It starts between Morrison's store and Nantong Way under which it passes, then alongside Pluck Lake (Pictured.), to end in Nantyyffin just short of the A4217. Half a mile from the start it crosses the cycle path between Atlantic Close and Bonymaen. It is a lovely 1.2 miles remote from the roar of traffic.

It is called "Upper Bank", that being the name of the erstwhile Railway Station nearby. It can be accessed from the Liberty Stadium by heading east and going behind (north side of) Morrisons. NCR 43 between the White Rock car park and the Liberty Stadium has also been re-routed and upgraded. From White Rock it follows the eastern side of the Tawe to a new Toucan crossing of Brunel Way on the west side of the Tawe. A cycle lane has been marked across the White Rock car park and access to the new section provided.

More direct access from the south to the Upper Bank route is along the old NCR 43 from the White Rock car park to Nantong Way.

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Editorial

Thanks to contributors we have a cross-section of articles in this issue. It starts with Ian's letter on p. 2 which illustrates the sort of problem we need to bug the Council to fix.

After reading Chris's account on p.4 perhaps you will shed a tear that he will not be going to Rio this summer!

As you can read on p.5 there's quite a lot going on (for a change) in Bike Week. Also on that page Nick highlights the Gower Cycling Festival. Once again your support is sought.

My note on p.7 should be of interest if you take bikes on trains.

David Naylor

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Copy deadline

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

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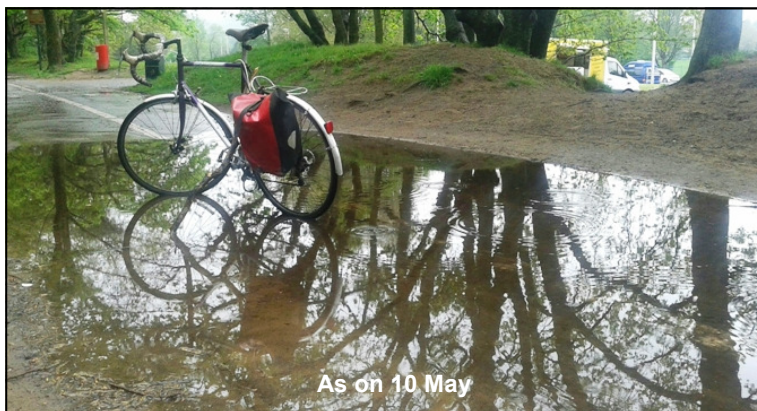
Correspondence and an update

Correspondence

You will know the flooding problem on the path next to the car park at the Sketty Lane/ Mumbles Road junction. Anything more than a shower fills the width of the path with sandy water forcing cyclists and walkers up the bank. Regular users get a soaking and, with a replacement chainset costing from £60, tentative cyclists are often deterred altogether.

This issue comes up often at *re-cycle* [Ed: see p. 6.], and came to a head recently after a chat with a council digger driver working on the city-wide road repair programme. He said that drainage could be installed in an afternoon and the problem resolved. I've been splashing through the puddle for 25 years and several chainsets, and wonder why we can't look after one of Swansea's jewels?

Ian Williams.



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Mass ride

The mass ride scheduled for the last Saturday in Bike Week (18 June) has been called off. The reason included perceived difficulties (such as liability) in making the ride a success. The theme of the ride was to have been “Space for Cycling”. A short video, produced by the CTC and thus titled, was shown at the “Skate, Street and Sport” event in Castle Square on 21 May. This to some extent compensates for the cancellation.

David Naylor

A question for you.

It is: should *Wheelrights* be singular or plural?

Unless contradictory answers are received I will attempt in future to follow any advice given.

Cycling in the Big Apple

Mention the city of New York and it conjures up a scary intimidating place with muggers on every street corner. The reality could not now be further from the truth as from the early 1990s, a couple of forward thinking Mayors have revitalised it into a much safer vibrant city. Like many big cities of the world it now promotes cycling in an effort to reduce car usage and to create a healthier lifestyle.

During a whistle stop tour of New York, bike hire was a must. A nice flat city with dedicated cycle tracks. The very friendly Blazing Saddles bike rental shop on the west side of Manhattan Island offered a good choice of bikes and from there we headed north on the cycle track alongside the Hudson river to our left. After a few miles we turned inland and headed east as Central Park was to be our first destination. To reach the park, we cut through the quiet side streets where, in towering multi million dollar apartments, reside celebrities such as Madonna and Sir Paul McCartney. Despite neither of us having ever visited the park before it has a strong familiarity about it due to the countless films that have been made there. Surprisingly, whilst Manhattan is flat, Central Park is quite hilly, but it is a very peaceful oasis and is well maintained.

From there we continued out of the park to pick up the cycle path running south on the east coast. Unfortunately there is a missing link on this part of the track so we had to head back into the busy streets to pick up a bike path running down 2nd Avenue. Unlike in the UK it is not kerb-side but a green strip running for several miles on the outer side of parked cars. A bit hair raising to say the least with parked cars pulling out, cars pulling in and turning left down many side streets along with several lines of traffic. However New York drivers, specially the yellow cabs, are very courteous towards cyclists, but it's not a ride for the faint hearted.



Eventually we were able to pick up the dedicated coastal bike path again and continue south on the east of Manhattan Island. Very soon Brooklyn Bridge and the Statue of Liberty came into view. Such iconic landmarks, we really were in New York. The track continues around the south of Manhattan past the Freedom Tower built on the site of the Twin Towers. Time to stop at the 9/11 Museum and Memorial. A very poignant reminder of the tragedy but in true New York style, very tasteful and moving memories have been created which will be remembered by many generations to come.

Our final leg was northwards, past the numerous moored sightseeing boats, for our return back to Blazing Saddles. A round trip of 21 miles and a great way to see New York.

Dawn Aplin

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Fatties Vs Thinnies or last chance for Rio!

A recent article in Cycling UK magazine (formerly CTC's) reminded me of something I've been wanting to do for awhile.

Find out if thinner tyres are quicker than thick ones.

I figured my last secret trial to make the British Cycling Team for Rio would be a good time to assess.

So I switched my 35mm cyclocross tyres for a more vulpine 28mm Gatorskin and cycled off to the 'Amazon Street Circuit' for my final Olympic trial.

I noted a little more hardness on the ride over. I could certainly feel the imperfections on the road more than I was used to. I wondered if the potential benefits of speed would outweigh the cyclists curse of bum fatigue ... especially on a longer ride.

By the start line were Sir David Brailsford and Steve Sutton exiting their Skybus with stopwatch and clipboard in hand I noted a raised eyebrow on the former as I flew by. He'd clearly noted I'd taken his incremental gain ethos to heart. Not only the skinny tyres but a water bottle, only half full!

Didn't have time for pleasantries, as I wanted to keep my momentum going over the start line into my first of 5 laps. My PB on fatties is 7min dead for the the 2.3 mile lap and was mightily encouraged as I comfortably broke the 7min barrier on Lap 1 by a good 10 seconds. A massive amount when the margins are so small.

Adrenaline pumping and heart rate in the high 160's I swung round the roundabout to begin the second lap. I heard Sutton's motivating exclamations: 'You're cycling like an old women, move it'. Oddly that was the last time I saw him. Later, when I was outside the Skybus, I overheard a few words muttered by Sir Dave, 'straw' and 'camels back'....

And then it was all over. Sir Dave's expression said it all, maybe I should have worn thinner socks? Oh well there's always Tokyo.....

By the way I calculate my average speed to be 1.8% quicker on thinnies but my average heart rate was 5% higher suggesting I was pushing out more power. So for me back with the fatties as the gain was not compelling enough to sacrifice comfort.

Fatties <http://cyclometer.com/817e1a904d34158f/Cycle-20160412-1012>.

Thinnies <http://cyclometer.com/817e1a904d34158f/Cycle-20160428-0837>.



Chris Walsh

Bike Week (11-19 June)

There are plans to mark this year's Bike Week in new ways in Swansea.

Sustrans and *Wheelrights* have arranged with Richie Saunders to extend the traditional 43-2-C ride into Swansea's City Centre and link it with an Active Travel event in Castle Square at lunchtime on Sunday 12th June. There Sustrans will organise a consultation exercise to ask the public what are their preferred routes for walking and cycling. Sustrans plans to organise six such events which will feed into the Council's new Integrated Network Map (INM). The INM will be an aspirational map with new routes to be considered over a 15 year timescale to make cycling in Swansea a safer and more popular choice. Every Welsh Council has to complete an INM by end of 2017, and fully consult with the public, so *Wheelrights* are keen to support this initiative. In addition to the 43-2-C ride Sustrans plans a ride from Blackpill along NCR 4. The two would meet up for the event in Castle Square.

On Wednesday 16th June David Naylor will lead a *Wheelrights*/CTC ride to Parkmill on the Gower to see the film "Belleville Rendezvous". It will be viewed in the 'smallest cinema': an old railway carriage in the Gower Heritage Centre. This quirky French film is loosely connected to the Tour De France. It being silent no French is needed to enjoy it!

Please check *Wheelrights* website or contact David Naylor or myself for more details of any of these events.

Nick Guy

Gower Cycling Festival (13th – 20th August 2016)

This is our seventh Festival and this year we are teaming up with other organisations to give it several new twists:

Following our traditional launch by the Junction Café at Blackpill we are making one of our three rides a "Tweed Ride" for which the participants are invited to dress in 1920s gear.

A novelty on the Sunday will be the "Life Cycle ride" around the Bay. (There will be am and pm repeats.) In these rides actors from the Lighthouse Theatre group (Pictured) play key figures from Swansea's past. There will be a £5 fee (in addition to registration) for this entertaining ride.



Two other new ventures are a family ride to Pontarddulais on the Wednesday, new in that it will be led by another local cycle group (Gower Riders), and a ride up the Afan Valley to meet the Rhondda Tunnel Society at Blaengwynfi to hear more about this exciting project.

For eight of the Festival rides we have linked up with Swansea Council to make them "Park Lives" events. We hope to benefit from the additional publicity this will bring.

Once again we are making the Dunvant Rugby Club our Festival HQ with the Festival Party on the Wednesday evening, hopefully entertained by a local male voice choir.

More information can be found on the rides' programme downloadable from the Festival page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.

Nick Guy

Re-Cycle: FAQs

Some common questions asked at the *Re-Cycle* workshop in Swansea;



Where is Re-Cycle? When are you open? Just off Bryn-y-Mor Road, in a courtyard behind the Mill Pub on the lower end of Catherine Street, Swansea SA1 4NE. *Re-Cycle* opening hours are 10am-5pm, Thursday to Saturday.

Here's an unwanted bike for you – what happens to it now? All donated bikes are cleaned, safety checked, and worn components are replaced. About one in five bikes are given to volunteers in exchange for their time, the rest are sold to support *Re-Cycle*.

Does Re-Cycle take bikes in any condition? Yes, we can harvest spare parts from most bikes – we refurbish about 80% of donated bikes.

Do you buy bikes? No. All bikes, parts, furniture, some tools and even the odd cake are donated.

Do you sell bikes? Yes. Bikes start at £30 for kids, £60 for adults – all with 3 months' guarantee and a free service. We also have a wide range of spare parts.

Do you service and repair bicycles? Yes. This is an expanding area of activity – our team of qualified mechanics offers a friendly and competitive service to get your bike back on the road. Bronze service from £30.

What is your set up/are you a charity? *Re-Cycle South Wales* is a community interest company, running since 2006. It is a not-for-profit social enterprise. Our aims are to reduce the widespread waste of serviceable bikes by selling or donating bikes on at low cost to those who need them. We also provide maintenance training in classes and for volunteers, and fix-your-own-bike sessions by appointment.

Who volunteers? How do they benefit? *Re-Cycle* takes on up to four volunteers a week, most will help receive, prepare and test bikes with the support of the regulars. Most volunteers will ride away on a bike earned in exchange for their time. All volunteers gain experience in bike maintenance, repair and riding, some go on to gain vocational qualifications in maintenance with Agored/OCN.

Why has my supermarket bike developed expensive problems so soon after purchase? It's better to see a supermarket bike as a toy. The quality is often so poor as to be dangerous. We strip these for spares rather than sell them.

Why 'one less car'? Even the most ardent petrol head would appreciate one less car on Swansea's streets. *Re-Cycle* provides accessible and reliable bikes ideal for those returning to cycling, those who want a second bike for shopping, outings or to lose a few pounds. As most car journeys are less than two miles, we aim to help more get into the saddle and so help reduce respiratory illness, obesity, and climate change from fossil fuel-powered traffic.



For more about *Re-Cycle* visit: <https://recyclesouthwales.wordpress.com>.

Ian Williams: *Re-Cycle* Director/Manager

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Bikes on GWR trains

At a meeting of the newly formed *Swansea Bay Cycle Forum* on 12 April we learnt that GWR were to require pre-booking of bikes on their Swansea-Paddington service, starting on 16 May. Prior to then bikes could be taken without a reservation provided there was room. There usually was and many (including me) took advantage of this. At the meeting I was briefed to take this up with Great Western, which I did.

In early May I emailed GWRs Customer Support people expressing our concerns. I made two requests: could a bike booking be made shortly before departure when buying a ticket and could bikes be reserved on-line? To my knowledge the latter was not an option.

The reply I received was that bikes could not be booked just before departure, but, yes, they could be booked on www.gwr.com. I checked this but, as with www.thetrainline.com (which I normally use to find train times), I could not find an option to book bikes. I then discovered that if you proceed to buy a ticket there is an option to reserve bikes on the page where you book seats.

I came back to them asking if they could modify their website to provide a box to book a bike on the first page where you indicate proposed route and times and whether or not you have a railcard. This is the way the German website www.bahn.de is set up. It then proceeds to list just the trains which take bikes. This useful site covers much of Europe.

Before I got an answer from Customer Support I had received from two *Wheelights* members email correspondence which partly answered my queries. Both were identical emails from Mark Hopwood, GWR's Managing Director, one to Mike Hedges (AM), the other to Jayne Cornelius (who now works at Swansea University). The content was encouraging in that it indicated there would be some flexibility. He (Mark Hopwood) has briefed station staff to allow bikes on board if there is space and if pre-booking "has not been possible". Also that, although bikes should normally be booked by 18.00 on the day before, on some services bookings can be taken up to two hours before departure.

Now having Mark Hopwood's email address I promptly emailed him with the suggestions I had sent to Customer Support (who had not by then replied) namely that they alter their website and allow bookings immediately when buying a ticket just before departure. Soon after this a reply came from Customer Support to the effect that they expect to implement both my suggestions when the new electric trains come into service in 2017. I then had a reply from Mark Hopwood indicating that my website request would be considered.



We'll wait and see! Also, how many bikes will the new trains take? In 2013 we had lobbied for 12 bikes on the longer trains. I've heard rumours that there will be 8. Anybody know?

The photo, taken last summer, shows the bike storage on a German IC train. Anybody recognise my bike?

David Naylor

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Forthcoming events

(See the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk for possible changes to these events.)

June 2016

Saturday 4 June: *Wheelrights Routes Group meeting and ride.*

10.00 am in the Civic Centre café.

Monday 6 June: *Capuccino ride.*

10.00 am: Junction Café, Blackpill. This is an easy ride for near beginners or returning cyclists. See the 'Rides and Commutes' page of website for more information.

Monday 6 June: *U3A ride.*

10.00 am: Cwmafan Community Centre. Up Afan Valley to Afan Argoed and/or Glynccorwg Mtn Centre. See the 'Rides and Commutes' page of website for more information.

11-19 June is BIKE WEEK

Sunday 12 June: *43-2-C and Sea to the Centre (Sustrans) rides.*

The 43-2-C *Community Fun Bike Ride* starts at 11.00 am from Coed Gwilym Park, Clydach and the Sustrans ride at 11.30 from Blackpill, Swansea. Both rides will end in Castle Square soon after noon for music, fun events and stalls. Both are mostly on cycle paths so are suitable for families with children.

Wednesday 15 June: *Belleville Rendez-vous ride.*

10.00 am: Railway Inn in Clyne Valley: a circular ride to the Gower Heritage Centre to see this film in the smallest cinema in Wales. Joint CTC and *Wheelrights* ride.

Monday 27 June: *U3A ride.*

10.00 am: Liberty Stadium. To Clydach with option to continue further up Swansea Valley. See the 'Rides and Commutes' page of website for more information.

July 2016

Saturday 2 July: *Wheelrights Routes Group meeting and ride.*

10.00 am in the Civic Centre café.

Monday 4 July: *Capuccino ride.*

10.00 am: Coast Café, SA1 1XA. This is an easy ride for near beginners or returning cyclists. See the 'Rides and Commutes' page of website for more information.

Sunday 17 July: *BHF ride.*

Start 08:00-10:00 am from St Helen's Rugby Ground. £15: adult entry; £5: under 18 (Link for further information on 'Events' page.)

Tuesday 19 July: *Swansea Bay Cycle Forum meeting.*

6.30 pm in the Environment Centre, Pier St. SA1 1RY.

Monday 25 July: *U3A ride.*

10.00 am: Visitor Centre. N. Dock, Llanelli. 'Swiss Valley' to Cynheidre with shorter/longer options from there. See the 'Rides and Commutes' page of website for more information.

August 2016

13-20 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.)